

A fabulous ECI 3 amp from Electrocompaniet worth £1,000!

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

Mordaunt-Short's stunning new speaker takes a bow...

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS

6)

Heavenly hi-res hi-fi from Advantage

Superb new CD sound from **Naim**

Brilliant pre/power amps from **Conrad-Johnson**





FEATURING Arcam CD192 Creek CD50 MkII Cyrus CD8x

Exposure 2010 S Marantz CD17 MkIII Onkyo C-1VL



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INTENSE The Rotel RA1062 and RCD1072

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Individually, Rotel's latest CD player and amplifier will make a striking difference to the way you hear music. When they hook up with each other, though, it's a match made in hifi heaven. The chemistry is instant, thanks to a shared pedigree of meticulous component selection, painstaking refinement and balanced design by Rotel's award-winning team of engineers. It's an intense relationship, and a powerful listening experience. Get them connected.

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ELCOME TO HI-FI CHOI To ensure you get the best information, opinion and advice, *Hi-Fi Choice* employs the most knowledgeable and experienced hi-fi writers in the business.



"Music digs deep into our emotional core like no other art form. It touches the soul and makes grown men weep. Hi-fi is simply a means to a musical end – it provides the conduit for its energy and detail, delivers scale and space.

ensures you get closer to the tone and impact of the original performance. It makes music seem more real and hence achieve its emotional goal. Quite simply, the music that moves you, moves vou more." Tim Bowern, Editor



PAUL MESSENGER A former HFC editor, Pau has been writing about his beloved hi-fi hobby for nearly 30 years. In that time he has become one of the world's most respected sonic scribes and probably the LIK's foremost loudspeaker reviewe



RICHARD BLACK Richard is a professiona musician, an experienced recording engineer and a highly knowledgeable hi-fi analyst to boot. He has a particular knack for writing about complicated subjects in a comprehensible way and he only writes for HFC.

ESTABLISHED 1975

HI-FI CHOICE is your essential quide to audio excellence in the home, from vinyl records to the latest digital music formats. For 30 years, our unique tests have brought you the most thorough and reliable hi-fi journal around. And our mix of cherry-picked kit, rigorous group tests and in-depth equipment reviews continues to ensure that HFC is the magazine you can trust. Published 13 times a year, it's the smarter hi-fi read ...



t



Alvin cut his hi-fi teeth in retail, and has been writing about his obsession for more than 20 years. In that time he has contributed his encylopaedic knowledge to most every hi-fi periodical you can think of (and several more besides



JASON KENNEDY Jason previously edited HFC, but can now be found swanning about the wilds of Sussex indulaing himself with the very best hi-fi money can buy. His own system is simply sensational (trust us) and his love of music knows no bounds



PAUL MARCHANT Lab expert Paul is a seni engineer and lecturer at one of the UK's top broadcast colleges, and is often hidden behind a mountain of test gear A hobby for nearly 20 years, hi-fi has progressed into an obsession for Paul



ALAN SIRCOM After a stint selling hi-fi, Alan began his journalistic career at HFC some 12 years ago. Now a successful freelancer, you too can benefit from his extensive hi-fi knowledge, from purist two-channel stereo to the latest multichannel gear

HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE >>

ULTIMATE GROUP TEST Six of the best new CD players, priced from £550 to £1,000, are placed under the Hi-Fi Choice microscope

PINNACLE OF PERFORMANCE Mordaunt-Short's new flagship loudspeaker

delivers a world-class Performance

'X' MARKS THE SPOT Naim's new CD5x makes its musical mark in the £1,000 to £2,000 CD player arena

HYBRID AMP PERFECTION Top valve preamps and solid-state power amps from Conrad-Johnson and Hovland

AND MUCH, MUCH MORE ... The next issue of Hi-Fi Choice is on sale 10 February. Don't miss a thing - see p72 for our latest great subscription offer

ears, he ensures that only the most interesting products make it into HFC

DAN GEORGE

whose dream came true

when he became HFCs

a bristling contacts book

and a pair of razor-sharp

ART DUDLEY

One of the most respected

written for numerous titles

including Hi-Fi Heretic,

Sounds Like and Listener

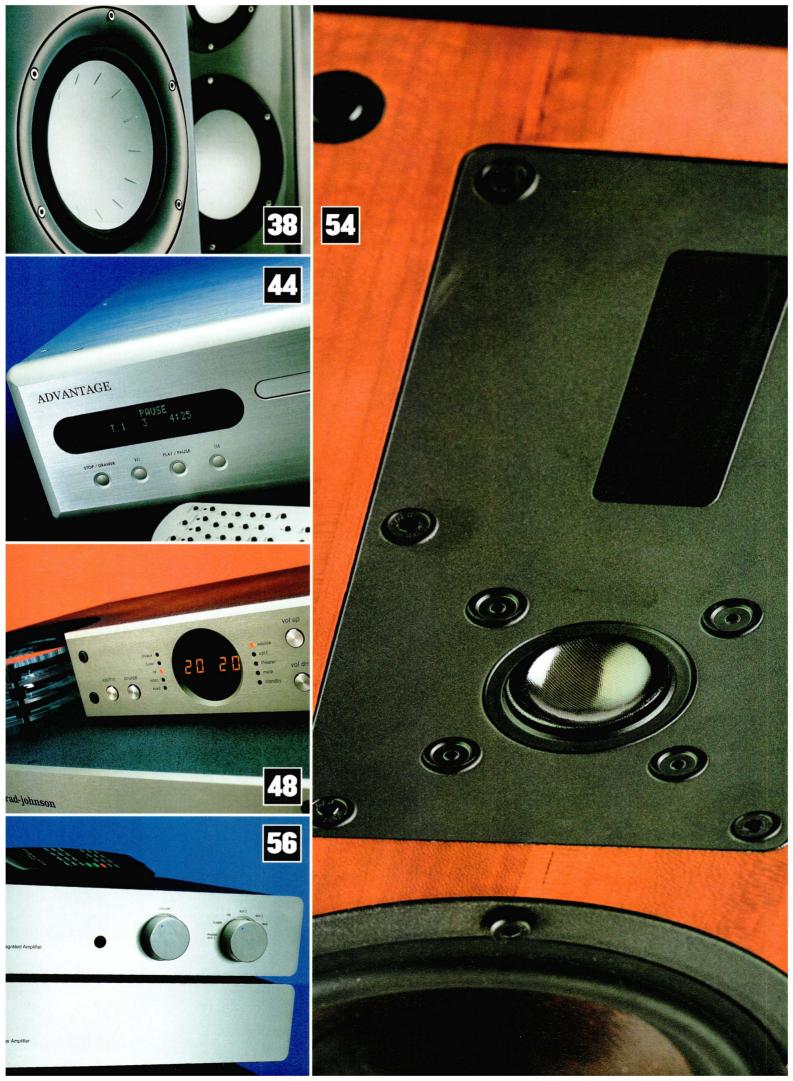
US journal Stereophile.

Among other things, he is

currently 'editor-at-large' of

commentators on the American hi-fi scene, Art has

reviews editor. Armed with



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Guide to 2nd-hand kit - this issue,



6 1/2" 2-WAY LOUDSPEAKER

Piano Black

Designed To Extract Precision Acoustics



To be officially unveiled at Sound & Vision Bristol Show 2005. For more information please contact NBIEN by e-mail at info@nbien.com or visit www.nbien.com

■ NEW PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

ROTEL RA-03 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

TONE

6

Heard about the two-channel resurgence? People are forsaking multichannel and returning to stereo in droves. It's almost official... and here's the latest hot potato from the experts at Rotel.

It comes hot on the heels of Japanese rival Denon with its £500, 70-watt, PMA-1500R MKII tested in the last issue. Rotel's new 70-watt stereo integrated, however, is a clever mixing of two established amplifiers, the RA-02 integrated and the RB-03 power amp. The preamp section from the RA-02 has been incorporated with the power amp section from the RB-03 and sprinkled with a generous handful of audiophile circuitry from the likes of Burr-Brown. There's also a special Rotel-built toroidal transformer, new US-made low-noise resistors and advanced protection circuits on the output stage. Rotel suggests the RA-03's 70-watt rating is a continuous figure, so there's likely to be plenty of headroom for those dynamic crescendos! Could this be the new champion of the £500 stereo arena?

POTEL

To find out more, see our exclusive in-depth review in the next edition of Hi-Fi Choice

PRODUCT Rotel RA-03

TYPE Integrated stereo amplifier

PRICE £500

BALANCE

KEY FEATURES Five line-level inputs • 02 system remote • Custom-built toroidal transformer • Rated power: 70 watts per channel

CONTACT 2 01903 221500 www.europe.rotel.com

Hello



Say hello to Genie

Genie[™] is a revolution in home cinema systems, combining Mordaunt-Short's passion for music reproduction with stunning design. Featuring a host of ground-breaking technologies Genie delivers truly awesome performance in any environment. Visit www.mordaunt-short.co.uk or call 0845 128 3951 for more information.

MORDAUNT-SHORT

S NEW PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

MARANTZ SA11-S1 AND PM11-S1 SACD/CD PLAYER AND INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

These two gorgeous chunks of exotica represent Marantz's latest idea of hi-fi heaven. They're both top-end products from the brand's Premium Series and comprise a heavyweight stereo SACD/CD player and a knockout matching amplifier.

The feature list for both products reads like an audiophile dream – the SA11-S1 player, for example, has a selection of user-definable digital filtering options for fine-tuning the sound, with a further noise shaper for the hardcore tweaker. Both products share a generous helping of copper plating and an advanced Super Ring power transformer that is said to offer low vibration and minimise electromagnetic distortion. The PM11-S1 amp employs a current-feedback design and is upgradeable to multichannel specification thanks to its floating bus architecture.

marantz

marantz

Customised components feature throughout both products, with a number of switchable functions that deliver a flexibility that's unheard of amongst its peers. And, as ever, Marantz claims fantastic CD sound, too.

To find out more, see our exclusive in-depth review in the next edition of Hi-Fi Choice

PRODUCT Marantz SA11-S1 and PM11-S1 TYPE Stereo SACD/CD player and integrated stereo amplifier

PRICE (SA11-S1) £2,000, (PM11-S1) £2,500

KEY FEATURES (SA11-S1) Selectable filters • Coaxial and optical outputs • Super Ring transformer • (PM11-S1) Seven line-level inputs

MM/MC phono stage
HDAM amp modules
Rated power: 100 watts per channel

CONTACT 2 01753 680868 Www.marantz.com

NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

SUGDEN A21SE

Yorkshire two-channel aficionado Sugden Audio has released a new upmarket variant of its acclaimed A21 integrated amplifier (Best Buy, *HFC* 224). Running concurrently with the standard version, the A21SE has maintained the deployment of Class A topology and is designed and built here in the UK. Power output and current delivery have increased significantly – the A21SE will output twice as much power than the A21 (30 watts into eight ohms/48 into four ohms), yet still runs in pure Class A operation. The amp incorporates a new dual-mono design line stage with separate current-shunt power supplies, and comes supplied with a remote control. Eagle-eyed readers may spot the new casework. This has been re-designed to incorporate the new heat sinks and now also features a 10mm aluminium faceplate and titanium front panel controls.

Price £1,995 Due Now 🕿 01924 406016 🗰 www.sugdenaudio.com



ELAC X-JET FS 607

Aluminium is the name of the game with Elac's new high-end floorstander - the FS 607 X-Jet. The German marque's latest three-and-a-half-way tower speaker features both an aluminium cabinet and new alloy drivers. X-Jet is the name assigned to Elac's new midrange/tweeter drive unit, which has been designed to act as an ideal point source, as it combines a planar aluminium diaphragm with a Jet II ribbon tweeter. Bass is provided by two 180mm, long-throw drivers that are said to offer extension down to 28Hz. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the X-Jet ribbon tweeter happily goes up to 50kHz. Finishing touches include a crossover wired with van den Hul cable and gold-plated WBT speaker cable connections. Price £6,000 per pair Due Early 2005



ANEXTEK GP-2000

The AnexTEK CP-2000 is the UK's most affordable Apple iPod rival. Like the iPod, the player sports a sizeable 20GB hard disk and features a blue backlit LCD display, an SD/MMC card reader (enabling photo storage) and even an FM radio. There's support for MP3, WAV and WMA internet audio file formats and the device can also be used as an external hard drive. It uses USB 2.0 for fast data transfer and weighs in at a respectable 158 grams. **Price** £140 **Due** Now



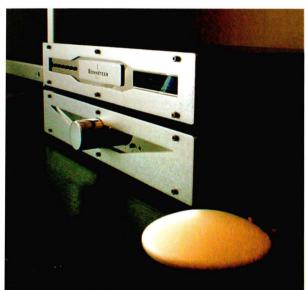
CANTON VENTO

Canton's new flagship Vento speaker range sits at the top of the German specialist's product portfolio and consists of four new models. Named after the Italian word for 'wind', the Vento line-up includes two floorstanders, the 809 DC and 807 DC, plus the 802 standmount and a matching centre speaker, the 805 CM. All models share a wide-bandwidth, aluminium tweeter and a 180mm bass/mid driver. The fully braced cabinets employ a sandwich construction and are available in a choice of cherry veneer or silver lacquer. **Price** From £700 to £1,660 per pair **Due** Now **a** 02392 501888 **#** www.canton.de



MARANTZ DV9500

Marantz has a new HDMI-equipped universal disc player called the DV9500. The multiformat machine forms part of the brand's entry to mid-level Range Series, and boasts the very latest 14-bit/216MHz video DAC plus Analog Devices' NSV noise shaping technology for enhanced picture quality and high-definition video scaling. Marantz has developed a high-quality mechanism for accurate data retrieval and its own discrete circuit boards for all six output channels. Further features include PAL/NTSC progressive scan pictures and Dolby headphone for late night pseudo multichannel sound, plus DVD-R/RW and MP3 playback. **Price** £1,500 **Due** Now **2** 01753 680868 **#** www.marantz.com



SONNETEER BARDONE

A new high-end digital wireless sound distribution system from hi-fi expert Sonneteer promises simplicity and high-quality sound for a fraction of the price of conventional multiroom systems. The Bardone system comprises a transmitter for attachment to the source (CD player, tuner, PC and so on) and a receiver, which can be connected to an amplifier or active speaker system. With both modules set to the same channel, Bardone then transmits the signal digitally using the 2.4GHz band, uncompressed and in real time. You can add up to eight stereo modules to distribute wireless audio through the home. Sonneteer has promised further products from the Bard range, including some very high-end digital wireless solutions.

Price £330 (transmitter and receiver set) Due Now ☎ 020 8286 6661 ⊕ www.sonneteer.co.uk

NAD NETCAP

NAD's first network receiver enables audio, video and movie files from any networked PC to be played though AV systems. The NetCap unit connects to an AV receiver and can access data from either hard-wired or wireless Ethernet networks, effectively transforming a home PC into a music server. NAD claims ease of use is a key feature of the packaged software, and all on-screen menus can be navigated from the remote. **Price** £350 **Due** Early 2005

☎ 01908 319360 ⊕ www.nad.com



EPOS ELS SUB

UK loudspeaker specialist Epos has produced a new subwoofer – the company's first. The ELS Sub is aimed at music reproduction. It uses a 250mm doped paper driver that's said to extend down to 20Hz. A separate section at the back of the unit houses the 300-watt, Class D amplifier, which offers the usual array of controls from the back panel. The 20kg ELS Sub is available in a choice of three finishes. **Price** £350 **Due** Now

> Soundbites



GOLDSTER AUDIO has developed a high-end amp and speaker system for "audiophile iPod owners". The German company's valve-based Concertino system is said to balance the unwanted effects of compressed audio signals. The package comes with a pair of full range speakers and sells for around £2,200. ⊕ www.goldster-audio.com

ROBERTS has unveiled its cheapest DAB digital clock radio yet. The Gemini 9 DAB has five station presets, a backlit LCD display and a pigtail aerial alongside sleep/snooze functions. The unit is finished in silver and retails for £120. **2** 01709 571222



SOLLATECH has developed a new mains filtering product called PureAC that's designed to remove harmful spikes and surges. The device plugs directly into a wall socket, allowing products to be connected to it. PureAC features two kinds of filtering: one for electromagnetic interference (EMI) and another for radio frequency effects (RFI). Prices start at £52. @ 01753 688300

RESOLUTION LOUDSPEAKERS of

Christchurch in Dorset has launched its first product. The 26kg Resolution floorstander features a triaxial driver and an 2.4m-long transmission line. Resolution claims its metal diaphragms offer "the world's best midrange". The speaker is available in a choice of real wood veneers and is priced at £1,200 per pair. **20** 01202 470184

audiofile

⊘ The Insider

THIS MONTH HFC TALKS TO.

JOHN JEFFRIES Job Title: Proprietor Company: Sounds Of Music



What's your most exciting product in development at the moment?

The new Lumley Stratosphere Mkll turntable, which is about to be re-released. Originally conceived around 1993, it now has several improvements and offers a great musical and very dynamic performance.

What's the future of hi-fi?

I believe that the top end of the hi-fi market is as good as it has ever been, as there are still a huge number of (music) enthusiasts that want to hear the very best rendition of well-recorded music. The bottom end of the market is, however, a different story. Home cinema has almost become dominant with many customers trying to get both good home cinema and stereo music from one system. This has not proved to be so easy. In the high-end, many customers tried to mix the formats, and have now returned to conventional stereo, or use two entirely separate systems. As retailers, we specialise in stereo and top end home cinema where we can easily satisfy our customers requests, but stereo hi-fi components amount to 80% of our business

What's a good album that you've heard recently?

A tribute to Schnittke, released on Capriccio 67016 – it's wonderfully recorded with great dynamics. Track 15, *Concert for Piano and Strings* is particularly ethereal and very dynamically recorded.

Tube speaker

American company Tymphany has come up with a speaker system that it describes as "the most innovative transducer to address bass since the inception of the horn". Unlike conventional bass drivers and subwoofers, Tymphany's linear array transducer (LAT) technology uses a stack of small diaphragm drivers inside a vented, 75mm wide

tube. This is said to generate the range from low bass (20Hz) to low treble (4kHz).

The LAT design uses a motor drive system at either end of a tube. Each motor drives half of the cones in the array, with the sound exiting the system via slots in the tube wall. The technology is scalable from 50mm to 300mm in diameter and it is claimed that the opposing motors cancel structural vibration. Tymphany expects that LAT loudspeakers will be licensed by manufacturers for use in everything from PC sound systems to full-blown home cinemas.

WEEE passed by EU

The new waste electronic and electrical equipment (WEEE) directive from the EU means that, as of August 2005, manufacturers will be responsible for the cost of the collection, treatment and disposal of all new products and those from the last decade. This is likely to add between two and six per cent to the cost of manufacturing according to the BFA (British Federation of Audio). This figure is close to the profit margins of many audio companies, according to Peter Bartlett, managing director of Cyrus. He points out that high-quality products made in the UK are highly unlikely to end up as landfill.



1111

The BFA feels that the fairest way to pay for WEEE would be through an environmental recycling charge (ERC) added to the cost of goods at the retail level. Unfortunately, the Government will not make this a mandatory scheme and it is unlikely to succeed. Andy Napthine at B&W favours a recycling charge, but can see that a flat fee would be a problem for cheaper goods, as WEEE applies to anything with a mains plug. B&W has not yet established what effect – if any – it will have on pricing.

🛇 Hi-Fi Diary

FEBRUARY

13 Audiojumble 2005 Tonbridge, Kent 01892 540022 Find a home for that valve amp

25-27 Sound & Vision 2005 Mariott Hotel Bristol www.bristolshow.co.uk The only show you shouldn't miss

MAY

5-8 High End 2005

Munich, Germany Glisovic@HighEndSociety.de Indulge your senses - but remember to raise the limit on your credit card!

Power Supply (Gain Control) DSD in \rightarrow DSD Signal Control \rightarrow Power Switch Driver \rightarrow Switch Driver \rightarrow Switch \rightarrow Switch

DSD amplifier to get PAM power

Professor Malcolm Hawksford of Essex University has designed a digital amplifier specifically for use with the DSD signal that forms the basis of the SACD music format. Unlike existing LPCM (linear pulse code modulation) or PWM (pulse width modulation) digital amplifiers, Hawksford's design keeps the DSD signal intact up to the final filtering stage of the output. It incorporates an H-bridge MOSFET power switch output stage. This has its gain controlled by the power supply, thus eliminating the volume pot in the signal path. Hawksford describes this approach as pulse amplitude modulation (PAM) and has used it to produce a topology that "maintains low distortion, high efficiency and incorporates wide range gain control".



Myryad joins Veda

Armour Group, which owns QED, Veda and Goldring, has also just acquired the electronics maker Myryad. Armour's managing director Glenn McClelland says the group "wished to strengthen its offering to installers and specialist retailers by adding an affordable, high quality electronics brand to our portfolio". Myryad's founder Chris Short says the acquisition is "excellent news for the company". Manufacturing will remain at Myryad's Portsmouth base, but sales and distribution will be taken over by Veda.

JIMMY'S TWEAKS #30

HANDY HINTS FROM JIMMY HUGHES - HI-FI'S SUPER TWEAKER



Reversing the direction of cables Sometimes, a hi-fi system doesn't sound quite right. The sound is by no means poor or unpleasant; just missing a certain indefinable 'something'. If that's the case, try reversing the direction of a set of cables – for example, the interconnects between pre and power

amp, or CD player and amp. You could

even reverse the direction of your speaker cables. You could end up with a worse result, but it may do the trick. Change one set of cables at a time, and switch everything off before doing so. Keep volume levels unchanged, and listen carefully over some time for any differences. Although many audio cables are marked for 'correct' direction, sometimes results may be preferable the opposite way!

TOP 10 TOP 10 BEST-SELLING UK ALBUMS

- 1. Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band The Beatles (1967) (4.5 million copies)
- 2. (What's The Story) Morning Glory Oasis (1995) (4.2 million)
- 3. Brothers In Arms Dire Straits (1985) (3.9 million)
- 4. Bad Michael Jackson (1987) (3.9 million)
- 5. The Immaculate Collection Madonna (1990) (3.6 million)
- 6. Abba Gold Greatest Hits Abba (1992) (3.6 million)
- 7. Stars Simply Red (1991) (3.6 million)
- 8. Thriller Michael Jackson (1982) (3.3 million)
- 9. Greatest Hits (Volume One) Queen (1981) (3.3 million) 10. Jagged Little Pill Alanis Morissette (2002) (3.0 million)

New Music

IN THE STUDIO

ARTISTS RECENTLY ABSENT FROM THE CUT AND THRUST OF SHOWBIZ HYPE DUE TO FINISHING THEIR LATEST ALBUMS



KEANE Title: tbc Release date: 2005

Keane are showing indecent haste in following-up 2004's chart-topping debut album *Hopes & Fears*. Pianist Tim Rice-Oxley has been busily composing new songs in the back of their tour bus and the trio were planning to start recording over Christmas. Two of the new songs, *Hamburg Song* and *Nothing In Your Way*, were featured on their recent UK tour.

STEVIE WONDER Title: A Time 2 Love Release date: 2005

2005 is shaping up to be the year of the comeback. Heading the list of giants returning to the fray is Stevie Wonder, whose last new studio album, *Conversation Peace* appeared way back in 1995. "In those years I've done more than just the songs that will be on the album," he says. "It's going good. I've found the songs that feel most comfortable for me."

THE WEDDING PRESENT Title: Take Fountain Release date: 21 February

Dave Gedge's Wedding Present took a break in 1997 and morphed into Cinerama. Now exactly 20 years after their debut, they return in their original incarnation with the band's seventh album recorded in Chicago and Seattle with producer Steve Fisk, who helmed 1994's acclaimed *Watusi*.

KATE BUSH Title: tbc Release date: 2005

Kate Bush hinted a couple of years ago at the *Q* Awards that the follow-up to 1993's *The Red Shoes* was 'almost' ready. Now there's corroborating evidence from Peter Gabriel, a man who himself went a decade



without releasing a studio album. "She's just about finished on a new record," he reports. "She pointed out she's taken even longer than me."

MOBY Title: Hotel Release date: 14 March

Recorded and mixed in his Manhattan apartment and at Electric Lady and Lolo studios, Moby proudly boasts that his fifth album is his first not to include vocal samples. He sings on 12 of the 14 tracks, two of which are duets with Laura Downes. "Runs the gamut from quiet instrumentals to anthems via down-tempo jams, uplifting electro-disco and ballads," an insider says.

ALSO COMING SOON JAZZ/ CLASSICAL

Takacs Quartet Beethoven Late Quartets (Jan), Aled Jones Aled, Special Edition (Feb), Anne Sofie von Otter Music For A While, Lynn Ariale Come Together (Feb), Monty Alexander Live At The Iridium (Feb)

DVD-A/SACD

Thomas Quasthoff Bach Cantatas (SACD, Jan), Jerry Goldsmith The Great Train Robbery (SACD, Jan), The 5 Browns The 5 Browns (DualDisc, Feb), REM Automatic For The People (plus eight more REM titles – DVD-Audio/CD, Feb)

audiofile.



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The mains event

Juiced up for the best possible sound

t's something like twenty years since the issue of mains pollution and its unpleasant consequences for the sound of our hi-fi systems first emerged. At the time, I was less than impressed, feeling that those early attempts provided a cure that was worse than the disease – a pre-frontal lobotomy for the sound, no less.

Years pass, the mains (and the RF environment for that matter) have become dirtier, but the techniques for combating their effects have become more refined. And, at last, I'm finding treatments that are truly effective in improving my system, by perceptibly lowering the background 'hash', widening the resolved dynamic range, and allowing details to be heard more clearly. All without emasculating the dynamic expression at the same time.

"Those early attempts provided a cure that was worse than the disease – a pre-frontal lobotomy for the sound, no less."

I recently got to spend a short time trying out the latest 'second generation' Isotek products, and while the relatively inexpensive MiniSub wasn't transparent enough for my system, the more upmarket Titan and Nova both gave very positive results that well justified their asking prices, lowering the 'hash' floor without sacrificing any bandwidth or detail.

Perhaps more interesting still is the work that a company called Vertex AQ has been doing, not just on mains treatment but also into the much wider business of eliminating vibration throughout the system. "What vibrations are these?" I hear you ask. According to Vertex AQ, many of our hi-fi components generate very low-level, very wide-bandwidth mechanical vibrations. These get passed around via connecting and mains cables, interfering with and messing up low level sound information.

It's a controversial concept that few have yet considered, but I believe it could be the most important development since equipment stands came to maturity a decade or so back. I've been using the Vertex AQ bits and pieces for around a year now, and I'm fully convinced that it has taken the sound quality of my system up to a new level, especially with digital sources.

Vertex AQ's components are expensive, but they do work very much 'as advertised', and make plenty of sense in a high-end system context. Mains treatment is handled by small (17x11x5cm) alloy blocks called Jaya, which combine vibration absorbing materials with circuitry to remove electrical mains 'dirt'. These are 'shunt' devices, plugged into a spare mains socket, so are not 'in circuit' with the system.

Other components include Roirama mains leads, Solfonn interconnects and Moncayo speaker leads, all of which use high quality plugs and sockets, and feature the company's alloy-box mechanical vibration absorbers placed along their length. There's also a granite support platform with hardened steel tripod spike called Kinabala which proved surprisingly effective, even under the internally spring-decoupled Naim CDS3 CD player, and an as-yet-unnamed link for twin speaker terminals, to prevent woofer vibrations from interfering with tweeters. The crucial point about Vertex AQ components is that they're distributed throughout the system, in such a way that each new addition builds the effects in a cumulative manner. Sceptics will no doubt cast doubt on the theory and rail against the seemingly astronomical prices, but I am convinced that this new company has come up with a truly original approach that could well represent the future of serious hi-fi.

> Paul Messenger is a former editor of Hi-Fi Choice and has been writing about his favourite hobby for nearly 30 years



Multichannel mastery

Last year's best SACD and DVD-Audio discs

N ow we are all happily ensconced in 2005, what better time to look back at some of the best high-resolution releases from the last twelve months... or thereabouts? Some of these discs you might recognise, but a number have been completely overlooked by the popular audio press.

The first of these has to be *The Window*, a bluegrass release by American guitarist, singer and composer David Elias. The multichannel SACD is particularly special because of the way it captures – as live – the acoustic space in which it was recorded. There is a truly uncanny sense of 'being there', a delicate, intimate and thoroughly engrossing experience that just cannot be achieved via any two-channel medium, no matter how good.

Over in Toronto, a group of ex-Ryerson University students calling themselves 3Bone Audio recently released their first commercial DVD-Audio title. *KAJE* is an eclectic mixture of vocals, rhythm and blues, electronic funk, and dance. The music is upbeat, fun and experimental – with a surround mix to match. Using all six channels to the fullest, the 3Bone guys have produced one of the most progressive multichannel presentations to-date, but that hasn't stopped them including a CD version in the box, even though their slogan is "Stereo is Dead".

In a similar vein is Brimstone Butterfly's Normality Killed the Cat, a guitar-driven

REL STYGIAN SUBWOOFER

HI-FI REVISITED

Richard Lord, founder and proprietor to this day of one of the very few specialist subwoofer producers – REL – related to me in a recent conversation that before he

started the company, he was a fully paid up audiophile ('a flat earther' in this own words) with a Linn/Naim system, the works. At one point, he moved to a smaller house and when he installed his Linn Saras (a truly oddball medium-size standmount speaker) in a 3x4m living room, the bass became boomy and poorly controlled.

Received wisdom at the time was that you simply couldn't generate deep bass (with frequencies whose wavelengths are longer than the longest room dimensions) in small rooms. It used to be said that it was best to have clean 'right' bass than too much 'wrong' bass. True enough... but Richard Lord was not willing to make the sacrifice. In a startling piece of lateral thinking that was to change his life, he decided to resolve the problem by building his own subwoofer, reasoning that if he could get it to work exclusively below the room eigentones (standing waves), it wouldn't be able to boom.

At the time – around 1990 – subwoofers were fairly well established in the US, but not widely used in the UK. There were some predominantly low-cost passive models, but just a trickle of more serious designs: Audio Pro and the acquired taste of the dipolar SL6000 from Celestion, for example.

Ever heard of the Stygian? It was REL's first semi-commercial subwoofer (the name was suggested by writer Ken Kessler, and means 'a dark and moody river') which was coupled to an external low pass filter unit. Again in Richard's own words, "The filter unit is the very first product I ever made. Constructed by me over a weekend for my own listening, it was to be used in conjunction with a separate power amp into the subwoofer which came to be known as the Monochord, a passive design, the details of which were published in a magazine as a DIY design. The subwoofer was based around a big KEF B300 300mm bass unit in a box, which I covered in



"Received wisdom at the time was that you simply couldn't generate deep bass in small rooms."

cushions so that it could be used as a window seat. There was no intention at that early stage of selling anything.

"The filter was only on the market for around three months before I introduced the Stygian, both as a kit and ready built. They were sold direct and the filter was sold usually as a bare bones PCB only, or sometimes as a kit. At that time, REL was still just a hobby".

With the unexpected success of the Stygian project, the a decision was made to sell only through specialist dealers, which demanded a change to much better built and fully finished enclosures. At this point, the electronics were integrated into the enclosures, and safety regulations mandated a change from XLR as a speaker-level input to the Neutrik Speak-On connector that has become synonymous with REL over the years.

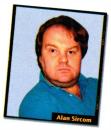
So, what happened to the Stygian? After it had been tidied up for production it was renamed as the Stadium. Remarkably, the design is still produced today, albeit in a much more refined and more fully developed Mark III guise.

These days, the subwoofer has become an established part of the landscape, thanks to home cinema. But it's worth remembering REL's distinctly hi-fi roots. HFC



pop/rock disc that, although performed in English, was Denmark's first DVD-Audio title. Boasting a surround mix that helps delineate the recording's subtle elements and a dedicated stereo track that is also of outstanding fidelity, the disc scores particularly heavily for the value-added content. This includes a video for each track - sometimes 'arty', sometimes MTV-style - and a large amount of production footage. But that's not all; in the DVD-ROM zone are PDF lyric sheets (sing up that man at the back), guitar chords and the entire album as MP3 files to help you practice while on the train home from work.

The classical market benefited from the release of a number of outstanding discs last year, a lovingly restored version of the Utah Symphony Orchestra performing Brahms' Symphony No. 1 under Maurice Abravanel being one particular highlight. Abravanel conducts the seminal performance of this challenging work, which was recorded in four-channel surround during May of 1976 by Vanguard Records legend Seymour Solomon. The disc is also packed with extras, including a touching video sequence featuring Ardean



Apple sauce

Is everyone obsessed by the iPod?

lick through any magazine – not just computing, hi-fi or music titles - and the Apple iPod will magically appear somewhere as an icon of style or cool. You can see the relevance (perhaps) of raving about the iPod in HFC or a Mac-azine of some description, but where's the point in drawing attention to its divine whiteness or its sophisticated interface in Straw Hat User or What Dibber?

Okay, so the basic idea of the iPod is a good one and the execution is even better, but as yet it hasn't provided a cure for cancer, found a way to reverse global warming or even brought

"Witness the scores of Macolytes queuing around the block at the launch of the Apple Store in London... it's just a shop, people!"

Watts, who re-reads the eulogy from the great conductor's memorial service.

Ending this brief run-down is perhaps the finest classical release of the year, Michael Tilson Thomas' recording of Mahler's Symphony No. 4 with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. While the two-channel SACD presentation is noteworthy in its own right, the multichannel mix captures the acoustics of the venue perfectly - just the right sense of space is conveyed both in terms of stage width and auditorium depth. Tilson Thomas adopts Mahler's own orchestral layout and treats the work with an obvious affection, and even his own interpretations of the more leisurely passages still manage to impress

Here's hoping for lots more releases of the same high standard this year, too. Whoever said multichannel was dead?

Stuart NI Robinson is editor and publisher of HighFidelityReview.com, a website dedicated to high-resolution digital sound

Appleosity. It's just a shop, people! Oddly, the last time there was such fevered following of electronics, it was also to do with music replay. The early 1980s saw the Sony Walkman as the must-have fashion accessory, just like the iPod or a PuchiBag (that's a \$400 handbag designed to fit a small dog... if you are

this successful

Britney Spears or Paris Hilton) are today. A few years later, on a far smaller scale, the Linn/Naim hegemony came to dominate the British hi-fi scene. This helped keep the flame of vinyl burning through its darkest days, but also engendered a fanatical level of following that was highly disturbing. It wasn't cult-like ... but it wasn't far off. Fortunately, more level heads prevail at both companies these days.

peace to the troubled parts of the world. In

fairness, although Apple second-guessed the

market and 'bet the farm' on the iPod, I doubt

even Apple would have dreamed it would be

Some of the attraction to the iPod comes

higher than average Mac ownership among

magazine journalists, editors and designers.

lifestyle decision than a computing solution;

around the block at the launch of the Apple

Store in London. Some came as far as Germany

to be the first into the new store and gawp at

its expanse of drab peppered with white shiny

And, to some. Mac ownership is more a

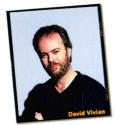
witness the scores of Macolytes queuing

from the magazine staff themselves. There is a

Pundits always want to use the iPod as a model of success for a company trying to make a success of itself. Trouble is, there is no real model to follow. The iPod is a unique success, and uniqueness is not necessarily something any other brand can replicate. Even Apple itself may have difficulty capitalising on its success - the big colour screen and the smaller pastel shade models seem to complete the iPod concept, so where does

Apple go from here? Apple may well come up with an iCam digital camera this year ... but how does this have any bearing on the future of hi-fi? So, let's put the iPod where it belongs... and hope that this creates enough interest in music to buy things without an Apple logo.

> Alan Sircom began his journalistic career at HFC some 12 years ago. He has since become one of the hi-fi and AV industry's most respected scribes



Nnnnice

Hi-Fi Choice briefly becomes a jazz-mag

like jazz. There, I said it. Not an easy thing. Not when you also have a beard and, as you surely must have guessed by now, a penchant for hi-fi. You don't have to listen to jazz on a ludicrously expensive system but it certainly doesn't do any harm. And I admit that, when I'm feeling lazy, I do little else.

And yet... John Thompson's wickedly observed Jazz Club bloke on *The Fast Show* some years back just about nailed the image. Who could forget the trumpeter with the grotesquely ballooning cheeks? Or Paul Whitehouse scatting? Admit to someone you like jazz? Grreattt. That's the response now and for the foreseeable future. I do feel guilty about my jazz habit; I shouldn't but I can't help it.

Time Out magazine's erstwhile radio columnist Sid Smith once memorably wrote something along the lines of jazz being a constipated, fiddly music form lacking the open-mouthed quality of rock – a bit like a fat man trying to eat spaghetti with chopsticks. He thought that Jazz FM, which had troubled beginnings but is now well established, should have been strangled at birth. His point was that Jazz FM was founded on a fundamental misconception: that people don't like jazz because they don't know about it. He asked why should people like it more if it's on radio?

Jazz FM's early scattergun 'isn't all jazz wonderful?' approach wasn't even touching base with jazz anoraks. The station's contempt for hard-core jazz buffs was hardly concealed. That didn't stop Jazz FM's populist intentions being roundly misunderstood.

I listen to Jazz FM then and I listen to it now. It's not like Melody which plays stuff middle-aged people listened to when they were teenagers, or Kiss which is aimed at the current teenage market. The charm lies in the variety; old and new, up-tempo and slow, from blues to funk, big band to soul. Jazz gives you a tremendous spread.'

It took years for Jazz FM to finally find its sense of direction. The station remains at its best when the DJs know a good tune from a bad one which is more and more frequently these days. It wasn't that the infamously mumbling George Reid didn't play some good stuff, just that he took too long to do it. He

CLASSIC ALBUMS

ELTON JOHN GOODBYE YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Goodbye Yellow Brick Road appeared in October of 1973 and became the double album that would define Elton John's career. Recorded in a golden burst of creativity lasting 15 days, Yellow Brick Road would top the charts on both sides of the Atlantic and, in the US alone, it stayed on the chart for two whole years!

But it almost never got there. In early 1973, Elton went to Kingston, Jamaica where the Stones had cut *Goat's Head Soup*. Studio conditions were appalling (John remembers the studio surrounded by barbed wire and gun-toting police), so he stayed in his hotel room and banged out 22 arrangements on an electric keyboard. Hearing that the Chateau d'Hierouville in France (where Bowie would later cut his masterpiece *Low*) was available, Elton felt that he got his band got out of Jamaica by the skin of their teeth.

At the Chateau everybody was imbued with a sense of mission. Elton remembers "writing and recording four songs a day – and that's writing, recording, overdubbing, vocals, harmonies, the lot!" His working habits were structured; lyricist Bernie Taupin would give him lyrics the previous night and by morning Elton would breakfast with his group and play arrangements on his personal electric piano with the help of a mini drum kit. The band would learn it and then record it that day.

Gus Dudgeon produced the album with Davey Johnstone on guitars, Dee Murray on bass and Nigel Olsson on drums. Engineer David Hentschel added ARP synthesizer while Del Newman handled the orchestration. For his part, John played Farfisa organ, piano, electric piano and Mellotron.

The album's title track was a fond memory of Bernie Taupin's Lincolnshire homeland which Elton had picked out "some little chord sequences for" at the Chateau. The eventual castrato voice John adopts for this song was the key to its million-selling sales late in 1973.

Amazingly, both John and Taupin claim to have no memory of either writing or recording *Candle In The Wind*. Its title derives from an Alexander Solzhenitsyn novel and is about the



"Recorded in a golden burst of creativity lasting 15 days, it would stay in the charts for two years."

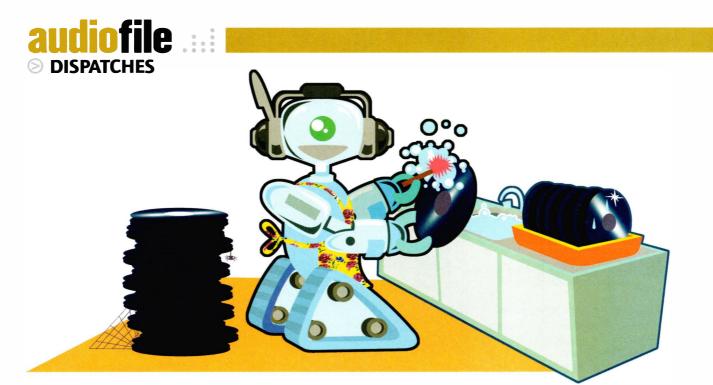
destruction of reputation, in particular Marilyn Monroe's. Gus Dudgeon pushed the sound envelope at every possible opportunity. Another million selling single – *Bennie & The Jets*, with its rollicking piano – utilised looped applause from a Jimi Hendrix concert, whistles plus handclaps at the wrong beat, and SFX from a London Elton concert from years before, all EQ'd to make it sound live. But that song's most striking feature is still the stabbing Farfisa organ that punctuates the music.

Davey Johnstone, Elton's guitarist should not be neglected here. His backwards guitar solos define *I've Seen That Movie Before*. Moreover, his killer riff for *Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting* made John a stadium-pulling rock and roller in the US.

Remixed at Trident studios in London, the album's final key sonic factor was Del Newman's wonderful orchestral arrangements, which were normally tied to the backing vocals. Today, John considers the double album that made him a superstar as relevant as The Beatles' *White Album* or Jimi Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland:* "I was on fire back then and that time in France was the happiest and most creative time in my life!"

Goodbye Yellow Brick Road is now available in a special double 30th Anniversary SACD edition with a bonus DVD. **HFC**

Mark Prendergast



had a habit of introducing songs like he was reading an impossibly difficult exam question out aloud to himself.

It's a certainty that there isn't a single person who likes 'jazz' in its entirety – it's too disparate, even contradictory. Given the 'image' though, I'm constantly surprised we have jazz radio at all. Yes, I know it's a bit like a fat man trying to eat spaghetti with chopsticks, but at least I don't feel so alone.

David Vivian has been wallowing in gorgeous hi-fi and then describing its virtues and vices in Hi-Fi Choice since 1990



Dirty scrubber

Clean up at the local used record store

The village I call home lacks a wine shop, clothing store, or even a tandoori take-away. But, it does have two places to buy used records – and I've been keeping them busier than usual in the days since Loricraft loaned me a PRC4 record cleaning machine.

The PRC4 draws its inspiration from the same source as those famous Keith Monks machines of the 1970s. This was an original design by the late Percy Wilson of *Gramophone* for a wet-wash, vacuum-dry device capable of restoring all but physically damaged discs to utterly new shape and sound. And while other choices remain, Loricraft deserves credit for striking what I think is the right balance between efficiency and economy.

"A wet-wash, vacuum-dry device capable of restoring all but physically damaged discs to utterly new shape and sound."

Here's how it works; the belt-driven platter of the PRC4 spins the record surprisingly briskly, yet with enough torque that a good scrubbing with a nylon-bristle brush and the solution of your choice won't faze it - and that, of course, is the idea. Once you're sure that the dust and grime are suspended in all that fluid, you set the brush to one side and gently lower a longish pivoting arm onto the lead-out groove, on the side of the label farthest from you. The arm is in fact the business end of a vacuum pump, and the need for both high speed and backward operation becomes apparent as you realize that centripetal force is tugging the solution toward the edge of the record – and that the arm is catching up with it a little at a time, sucking the whole record playably dry in just over a minute.

The PRC4's arm is propelled by a motor of its own. Thanks to a magnetic clutch, you can lift it away from the record and return it to its resting place at will. Or send it back for rings of wetness it might have missed, as occasionally happens. (Lead-out grooves and the bands between songs have been observed to give the arm fits every once in a great while.) The arm also uses a renewable bit of nylon thread to cushion the smooth nylon tip and create just enough of a gap between it and the record to encourage suction; the thread dispenser looks more Bob the Builder than Isembard Kingdom Brunel, but it gets the job done.

And so does the PRC4, which proves me wrong on an almost daily basis: so many of the records I thought were ruined were merely dirty. And the increase in clarity and transparency it can bestow upon records I already thought were okay – a well-loved copy of Neil Young's *Harvest* comes to mind – is little short of stunning. God bless Percy Wilson.

The Loricraft may be expensive, but some would call it a must – and others would do well to pool their funds with like-minded friends and neighbours. As for this rural hobbyist, I'm cleaning as fast as I can... Art Dudley has written for Hi-Fi Heretic, Sounds Like and Listener. He lives in the US and works as Stereophile's editor-at-large



2005 – A convergence odyssey

Big changes are coming to your system

This year, the stunning evolution of digital convergence will continue at full pace. Many of us will become audiophile nomads, streaming our vast audio collections across wired and wireless networks. This means marrying the high-end audio and video equipment in our living rooms with a home office computer. Sure, there will be hold-outs, but several interesting technologies will make media streaming much more viable.

In late 2004, UPnP (Universal Plug and Play) became en voque with media streaming companies. The D-Link MediaLounge DSM-320 (www.d-link.com), for example, is a wonder of UPnP engineering. If you download high-quality audio files from Napster.com and save them in a shared folder, the MediaLounge finds them automatically (a concept the engineers call 'automatic discovery'). UPnP is also a 'zero configuration' protocol, which means a media streaming device such as the MSN TV 2 can find audio and video files on your computer without any configuration hassles. In 2005, expect more audio and video products that support UPnP and possibly the first UPnP home receiver.

The most attention-grabbing trend of late 2004 was Microsoft Extender technology. 2005 will be the year that Microsoft makes an even bigger splash. Once installed, Microsoft Extender accepts streamed audio files from your PC without all the configuration nightmares. In fact, Microsoft Extender products can start streaming music in less than five minutes. And, you can watch and record live television over a wireless connection. Products such as the Linksys Media Center Extender MCE54AG (www.linksys.com) are just as impressive as UPnP devices, although you will need a computer running Media Center 2005.

None of this digital convergence works unless the network supports high-quality audio and video feeds, and increasingly, the network is wireless. In 2004, the 802.11g and 802.11a wireless networking protocols made big gains with consumers, but this will be the year for 802.11 n, a specialized wireless standard that uses Airgo Networks (www.airgonetworks.com) Multiple Input, Multiple Output (MIMO) technology. MIMO beams multiple wireless signals to extend network range to about 500 metres at speeds around 40 Mbps. That means a 200 MB video file will transfer in less than three minutes. Wow.

Okay, so the concept of portable audio has been a reality for some time. This year, the trend will continue and – for the first time ever – new products will support 802.11 wireless networking, so you can stream audio from your computer to a device that looks and acts like an Apple iPod. The Microsoft Portable Media Center initiative started with a thud in late 2004, but consumers want more portable entertainment. Once the momentum starts, expect mobile gear that connects more easily to a home stereo, streams wirelessly and matches the best current-generation MP3 players note-for-note and bite-rate for bit-rate.

John Brandon is a US-based technology journalist with the inside track on hi-tech digital convergence

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

THE MYSTERIES OF BI-AMPING

In this issue, on pages 56-57, we look at a bi-amping combination from Exposure. Bi-amping is a well established technique where

two stereo amplifiers are used: one driving the tweeters, one the woofers. Obviously, each connects via a separate cable, but the bass and treble sections of the crossover remain in place, separated from each other but each receiving the full bandwidth of the audio from its respective amplifier.

So, if each amp is handling the full bandwidth, and the crossovers are still in place, where's the advantage? There's not even much of a net increase in power, because most of the power goes to the woofer anyway. The power limit of the bass amp affects the sound much as it would if it handled the tweeter too.

The difference is in the current flow. The amplifier driving the woofer still has the full treble voltage floating around but relatively little HF current is flowing, and vice versa. Amplifier distortion is very much a function of current as well as of voltage. Some of the flakiest amps ever made can turn in a decent enough performance when unloaded and delivering no current to speak of.

So, the bass amplifier – relieved of the necessity of putting out significant HF current – features lower HF distortion too. Harmonic distortion at high frequencies is not of much interest because such distortion is blocked by the crossover. But intermodulation distortion is another matter. It may be a product of high frequencies but it appears lower down the band. And the current splitting can reduce intermodulation by a significant margin.

Meanwhile, the treble amplifier benefits similarly, but with the additional boon of lower LF harmonic distortion (because of the lower LF current). This distortion would otherwise get into the tweeter with potentially audible results. A win-win situation, then?

Not quite. For a start, the better the amplifier, paradoxically, the smaller the benefit since it wasn't producing much distortion in the first place. And really bad amplifiers could end up giving worse performance, because the treble amplifier may end up producing worse



"Bi-amping is a technique where two stereo amps are used: one driving the tweeters, one the woofers."

crossover distortion in the absence of bass current to force it away from the crossover point. We tried this, and it does seem to be true – though few if any real hi-fi amps are that bad.

With pretty good amplifiers, the benefits are often highly noticeable and worth the added expense, especially when bi-amping is done as an upgrade rather than a first-off purchase. There are other benefits, especially if you can face the added hassle of using different-brand amplifiers (which will invariably mean some custom level-matching measures). Less power is needed for the treble, so you can use a more refined but lower-powered amp there, and you can of course use different cable types for bass and treble.

Ultimately, you can start moving towards true active amplification, with the crossover placed upstream of the power amps, the latter being connected directly to the drivers. As a first step, removing the 'padding' resistor in series with the tweeter, which adjusts its level to match the woofer can yield good results (usually, anyway) if you make sure you redress the balance before the relevant power amp. But the benefits of a true active system have to be heard to be believed... just ask the likes of ATC, Linn or Naim. Amazing there are so few around, really! **HFC**

Richard Black

audiofile



MICROMARK SURGE SUPPRESSOR MAINS DISTRIBUTION BOARD £15

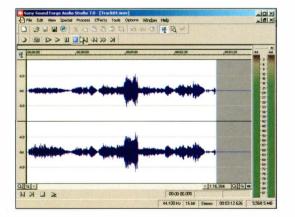
635

You can pay a lot of money for dedicated hi-fi mains leads and boards. So, we had to ask – do the cheap ones work just as well? At a very reasonable price, this simple unit offers transient absorbers to prevent over-voltage spikes from reaching your equipment (there's an impressive guarantee against equipment damage by spikes). In a click-ridden system, there was indeed a reduction in audibility. As with more audio-specific products, there's some lowering of perceived noise floor, though not by much, and there's a slight softening of the sound. It does what's claimed for it, then, but no more. Better than nothing! 201753 842017 @ www.micromark.co.uk

BLACK RHODIUM POLAR MELODY DCT ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT £95 (1M PAIR)

Without 'DCT' cryogenic treatment, the Melody normally costs around £30. Freezing the cable entails a hefty premium, but not so great as to make experimenting impossible. The cable is made up of an unscreened parallel pair of silicone-insulated stranded conductors, which makes it more prone to hum pick-up than shielded types. In common with other Black Rhodium silicone cables we've tested, the sound has a forward upper bass, but otherwise good tonality. However, there seems to be a bit of an 'etched' quality that we've not previously noted. But, there is something that makes treble detail stand out in a very informative manner. Due to DCT? Whether or not, it's a recommendable cable at a sane price. **2** 01332 755766 **(#)** www.polarcables.co.uk





SONY SOUND FORGE AUDIO STUDIO AUDIO EDITOR \$70 (US)

Now that Adobe has taken over Cool Edit (renaming it Audition) and abandoned the budget version, there is no obvious replacement. Lots of sound editors are available at the \$50-ish mark, but most of them don't do much. Sound Forge Studio, recently added to Sony's portfolio, is more capable than most and for simple cut/paste editing, it's a complete breeze. It also features one of the best cheap audio restoration processes we've seen and a remarkably good speed changing function (without changing pitch, that is – a hard trick). Buy it for either of those features by all means. But... we can't recommend it for real hi-fi duty, only because it doesn't dither its calculations. In fact, we can't find any budget audio editors that do. So any volume adjustment, EQ and other 'effects' result in distortion. Let's hope the next version corrects this. # www.mediasoftware.sonypictures.com

BLACK RHODIUM POLAR WARRIOR DCT MAINS CABLE £200 (1.2M)

For most folks, shelling out two ton for a mains lead is very much in silly territory and, sure enough, we aren't going to recommend this cable for budget systems. It's intriguing, though, if only for its use of DCT (deep cryogenic treatment – super-chilled) conductors, and like many Black Rhodium cables, it uses silicone rubber insulation. Different, then. It's reasonably flexible and practical, and used to hook up a variety of source and amplification components in a well-tweaked high resolution system, we did feel that it offered a small, but distinctive, extra level of resolution over other specialist mains cables. Recommended for the already well-set-up system.



NIKKAI MINIJACK PHONO ADAPTOR £5

For the odd times you want to connect a portable audio device to your hi-fi, you can buy a specialist lead or an adaptor. Adaptors are available for £2 but we'd urge you to spend the extra. This is gold plated and – perhaps more importantly – sufficiently carefully made to give a good fit in the socket and hence decent contact. The cheap ones we've found to be frequently intermittent. There's one caveat, though, in that the wide body makes this a no-go in recessed sockets. Second in sound quality to a dedicated lead, it's a pretty small sacrifice for the gain in convenience and money saving. Put one in the spares box! **2** 0870 4296000 the www.maplin.co.uk



IXOS XFV02 AERIAL LEAD £9 (1.5M)

Just the thing for connecting your telly or FM radio to the socket on the wall. But does it affect either sound or picture? Not that we could tell. All the same, we recommend it wholeheartedly. Look, you've shelled out well over the odds for some decent sounding and/or looking kit. Are you going to want to look at a bit of cheesy white cable with moulded plastic plugs? No, you want a smart, chunky, silver-grey wire like this, with really most impressive metal-bodied, gold-plated plugs and a real chance of surviving over a dozen insertions/withdrawals. At this price, we're talking generous perceived value. Just buy it. 201844 219012 the www.ixos.co.uk





CHORD COMPANY COBRA 3 ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT £50 (1M PAIR)

Another unshielded interconnect cable, this one scores highly for practicality – it's very flexible and well affixed to good quality plugs. The sound is decent, but not outstanding; we never quite managed to find an application for it where it didn't close images down a little. There is some variation in its performance from one job to another, though, and it may be coincidence, but we liked it best linking digital sources to amplifiers. Its bass is excellent and tonality is just a shade on the dull side, while detail is good but never superb. All the same, at its fairly modest price, Cobra 3 makes a good first upgrade.



HENLEY DESIGNS MR5 EQUIPMENT RACK £300

With 122 individual components in the box, this is not a product for the screwdriver-shy. Assembly is simple, but does take a little time: the results, however, are very smart. The main frame material is an anodised aluminium extrusion, with the thick glass shelves sitting on three steel bumps. Shelf height is adjustable, though adjustment after assembly isn't for the faint-hearted, involving the loosening of 30 bolts. Assembled weight is in the region of 45kg. Sound is frankly not neutral, nor is it claimed to be – Henley's literature mentions that the stand has been 'tuned' in the manner of Mana. The overall effect will please some as surely as it frustrates others, for there is a tonal coloration that adds a little 'zing', which may be perceived as greater zest and attack, but also some smearing of detail. Try it, though – if only for the great looks! **20** 01235 551116 **(#)** www.henleydesigns.co.uk

BELOW FRESCO CENTER / REAR CHANNEL MOSAIC LOUDSPEAKERS GROTTO SUB WODFER

LEFT PRODIGY LOUDSPEAKER

BOTTOM CLARITY LOUDSPEAKER







MARTIN LOGAN

ABSOLUTE SOUNDS' commitment to Martin Logan has been rewarded with a line of hybrid electrostatic speakers so comprehensive that it now encompasses every permutation of home theatre and audiophile performance, and a price band from entry-level to cutting edge. Because of their sheer beauty - both aural and visual – the Statement Evolution 2, Prodigy, Odyssey, Ascent i, Aeon i and Clarity have established hybrid electrostatic technology as the obvious choice for those who want state-of-the-art sound without suffering a profusion of ugly boxes.

All of the speakers are immediately recognisable as Martin Logan products because of the peerless, oft-imitated, room-friendly appearance, with the captivating see-through panels and furniture grade finish. Best of all, the sound is as clear as the panels themselves. This year, in recognition of its astonishing performance and sensible price, the Clarity - the 'baby' of the line - won the coveted EISA award, proving that the Martin Logan look and the sound are acknowledged across Europe.

For the new season, Martin Logan has applied its years of experience to even smaller, room-friendlier systems suitable for a wider range of applications, by launching a second hybrid technology called ATF. Martin Logan had already demonstrated its skills with home theatre applications with the Theater i and Cinema i centre-channel models, the Script i main and surround speakers, the awesome Descent selfpowered subwoofer and its baby sister, the Depth.

Thanks to ATF, an even wider audience can savor the Martin Logan experience. The ultra-compact Fresco hybrids can be used horizontally or vertically, wallor shelf-mounted above or to the sides of plasma or other flat-screen display, while the Mosaic and Montage floor-standing models have the look of a 'baby Clarity'. Even the subwoofer's size has been addressed: the new ATF designs work wonderfully with the Grotto, literally a miniature Depth!





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...........

Canned music

Can carved an alternative and influential brand of German prog rock. Now that the band's back catalogue is being remastered for SACD, founder member Holger Czukay takes time to reminisce

s the 1970s lumbered into view, UK prog rock was in its pre-pompous infancy. In Germany however, five musicians created other-worldly sounds similar to the avant-garde experiments of Karlheinz Stockhausen, mixed with garage rock, dub, funk, jazz, psychedelia and even heavy metal.

Can's influence on later generations of rock and pop musicians was seismic. Primal Scream, Public Image Ltd, Stereolab, even The Fall owe much of their sound to drummer Jaki Liebezeit, bassist Holger Czukay, late guitarist Michael Karoli, keyboard player Irmin Schmidt and singer Damo Suzuki (who replaced artist Michael Mooney following his nervous breakdown in 1969)

They recorded all their material live, and edited together long tracts to make the pieces. some of which had hummable tunes, some of which were more free-form, but all of which have a magnetic presence even today.

Their entire back catalogue is being made available on SACD, with the first batch of four available now. Though some tracks were recorded in 5.1, intended for release at a later date, the first four albums are presented in stereo, albeit with improved, though deliberately not artificially 'enhanced' sound

Today, bass player, tape operator and founder member Holger Czukay is still experimenting. He sees SACD as another step in the future of music, but took a little convincing at first.

"SACD was a very good decision, although we had been very critical about it. We thought that a hardcore band like Can wouldn't fit into these new formats. Then, we tried it out and were completely convinced that it worked, especially when the engineers didn't try to 'improve' the sound. That means that we got back to the original sound as it had been recorded, without any attempts to make it artificially better, and that worked out very well indeed.

Can on SACD 1. Monster Movie

Can's first album

features artist Michael

Mooney on vocals. He

'retired' shortly afterwards.

(1969)

"It's a remastering, not a remix, because we recorded everything in stereo, straight onto tape, and we mixed it during the recording. We used two microphones that were facing the singer; the one on his right side was standing by the organ box while the one on the left was standing by the guitar amp, and the band were all playing into these two microphones.

"When we made a recording, we then had to go back and overdub it as a group, not separately. We were only allowed two overdubs, because otherwise the hiss would become too predominant. We needed time to develop our music, and this was only possible in our own studio. We edited stuff together

used to reduce reflections and echoes. Czukay is currently building a new studio, which he intends to make into a "meeting point and a special magic place" where musicians can be inspired to create, record and perform live over the internet.

...: audiofile

"With rock and pop bands, they are always on the same level. What I would like to see is the first violinist of the London Symphony Orchestra discussing with Sid Vicious. Taking people from different fields, and bringing them together is something I think could become the future." Which is pretty much were Can first came in 35 years ago. HFC

Dave Oliver

"SACD was a very good decision, although we had been very critical about it."

and recorded much more than we actually needed. The editing process is one of the most essential things we did, as we understood that the editing is even more important than the mixing."

All the equipment from Can's original studio in Cologne has now been moved to a rock and pop museum, everything from the microphones to the mattresses

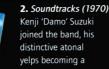
Below: Czukay and Can were strongly and smokily backlit through most of the 1970s



4. Ege Bamyasi (1972) The entire concept of

still at the height of their game.

Can came from this can of Turkish okra. Made while the band were



joined the band, his distinctive atonal yelps becoming a band trademark



3. Tago Mago (1971) Can's masterpiece a double album that ranges from sweetsounding pop tunes to full-on monster rock







A SUPERB ELECTROCOMPANIET ECI 3 STEREO INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER WORTH £1,000

e were delighted to discover that top Norwegian hi-fi marque Electrocompaniet is back in the UK and distributed by Castle Acoustics. Electrocompaniet rose to fame back in the late 1970s, when its legendary 25-watt power amplifier took on the finest, most powerful products of its day – and won. Today, Electrocompaniet has a stunning new ECI 3 integrated amplifier which delivers similarly fine sound... and you could win one, without even putting pen to paper!

Two issues ago, we had the pleasure of testing this gorgeous amp in our rigorous *Ultimate Group Test* environment, where it was deservedly awarded a Best Buy badge. This 70-watt retro beauty delighted our panel's ears, making a fine impression and drawing universal praise from the blind listening team. We loved its resolving abilities and the insight it delivered throughout our test programme. The presentation, although slightly laid back, is refined and articulate, making long listening sessions thoroughly enjoyable. The ECI 3 is a fine example of musical truth and accuracy and has build quality – and looks – to die for. For your chance to win one, simply answer the question below. The lucky winner will be drawn at random.

CONGRATULATIONS...

to our last winner, Mr Steve Rutter of Sheffield. He receives a superb pair of Ruark Talisman III speakers!

QUESTION:

Who did the ECI 3 draw praise from? A: The blind listening team

- B: The deaf listening team
- **C:** The Marcel Marceau International School of Mimodrama listening team

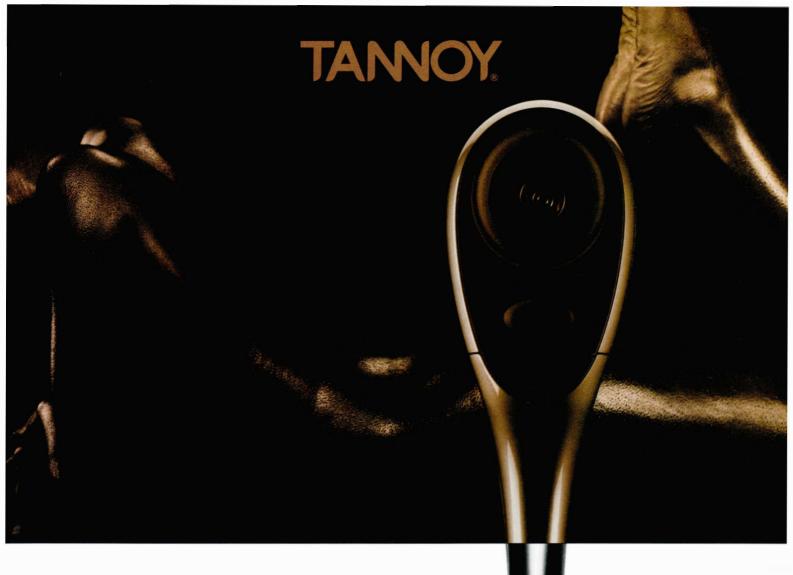
TO ENTER:

By Phone: Simply call **0905 053 3352** and follow the instructions (your call will cost 50p per minute and last no longer than 90 seconds).

By Text: Send the text message **HFC COMP1** with the answer A, B or C to **83070**. For example, if you think the answer is B: The deaf listening team, then text HFC COMP1 B to 83070

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Arena is a radical new Home Theatre system from Tannoy. Blending form and function, this beautifully crafted audio system offers much more than gorgeous styling; exceptional acoustic performance combines with application flexibility to deliver a system that defines the category.

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AUDIOPHILE VINYL

OTIS SPANN

The Biggest Thing Since Colossus Pure Pleasure/Blue Horizon 180g vin Music: Muddy Waters' pianist got on so well with Fleetwood Mac that he recorded this LP with them in

1969. Featuring Peter Green and Danny Kirwin on guitar, John McVie on bass and Spann's regular drummer SP Leary, this is a classic confluence of British blues and the genuine article.

Spann brings an edge to the party that Fleetwood Mac could never quite muster themselves. The ivories tinkle along effectively, but they blend in rather than stand out, which the voice does to great effect. The then-young British players bring energy and enthusiasm to the recording, and there's also some fine guitar playing from Green. *** Sound: Pure Pleasure has done a great job with this Blue Horizon recording. Remastered from the original quarter-inch tapes, this is a quiet piece of vinyl with energy and space and a rough edged but authentic sixties sound. $\star \star \star \star JK$

FLEETWOOD MAC Blues Jam At Chess

Pure Pleasure/Blue Horizon 2x180g vin Music: When Peter Green and John McVie left John Mayall's



Bluesbreakers they went on to form the first incarnation of Fleetwood Mac, a purist blues combo very different band to the one that made Rumours. On a visit to Chicago's Chess studios in 1969, they played with

many of the greatest bluesmen of the time, including Willie Dixon, SP Leary, Honeyboy Edwards and Otis Spann, alongside Walter 'Shakey' Horton and JT Brown. Not all legends perhaps, but good enough to make this an interesting session with some fine playing and insightful studio banter between takes ****

Sound: Another nice remastering by Ray Staff at Alchemy for Pure Pleasure, this captures the atmosphere in the studio and all of the instruments involved, with the live nature of the occasion well preserved. **** JK

These and other audiophile LPs are available from Vivante: 20 01293 822186 # www.vivante.co.uk

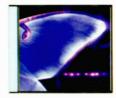
COMPACT DISC & VINYL



MISTY ROSES

Komodo Dragons Frog Man Jake

Music: The brainchild of London-based electronica buff Jonny Perl and New York singer songwriter Robert Conroy is a glorious mix of the more interesting bits of the pair's record collections. Sixties bossa nova rubs un against French chansons, classic seventies soundtracks and middle of the road mavericks like Dusty Springfield, Burt Bacharach, Serge Gainsbourg, Ennio Morricone and Scott Walker. Thanks to Conroy's rich and expressive tenor, this steers a course just the right side of camp to keep it cool. **** Sound: Though he cut his teeth as engineer for sonic sandpaper acts like Wire, producer Stephen Wright has delivered a rich, enveloping sound with electronics augmented by real instruments to give the right mix of warmth and detachment. $\star \star \star \star DO$



JON HOPKINS Contact Note Absolute Zero

Music: Ambient keyboard king Hopkins is barely in his twenties, despite working with Eno and Lou Reed and supplying soundtrack items to Sex In The City. His second album is an ambient-electronica hybrid that evokes the music scores of classics like Clockwork Orange and Akira Kurosawa's Dreams. Not that it's a work of mere mimickry - most of the melodies here are both excellent and original, supported by beats that build and fade over complex yet smooth-sounding soundscapes. Tracks like Reprise are, quite simply, beautiful. A wordless concept album that says plenty - time to make Contact. ****

Sound: Listened to end-to-end, at serious volume - and on a serious hi-fi system - this reveals a wealth of musical detail, all expertly mastered by Simon Heyworth. **** PS



JOAOUIM HOMS Piano Music: Piano Sonata No. 2,

Presences Jordi Masó, Miguel Villalba (pianos)

Marco Polo 8 225294

Music: The styles in this third volume in a set of complete piano works by Catalan composer Homs vary widely. It moves from tonal to 12 tone, from minimalist to Bach-like (Toccata). The disc covers many moods, but they're all short, from a fragment of just 14 seconds to just over 11 minutes for the three-movement Piano Sonata No 2 The music has the concentration and constant inventiveness reminiscent of Berg. ****

Sound: Played on Steinway pianos at the Auditorium, Jafre in Spain, the sound is clean and articulate, much better in fact than you will often hear from the big labels. This disc is an adventurous program, but oddly compelling. $\star \star \star \star \star AG$



ROOTS MANUVA Awfully Deep

Big Dada

Music: He won a MOBO for his 1999 debut. was Mercury-nominated for its follow-up in 2001, and there's no reason why Rodney Smith (aka Roots Manuva) shouldn't be similarly lauded for this third album. The South London rapper mixes plenty of styles, from dub to



calypso to electro, with the occasional touch of tango to keep things freaky. The emphasis is on reggae flavours, the deep dub bassline of Cause For Pause being a standout, as is the single *Colossal Insight* – definitely a grower with its disjointed, bleepy backing fusing into an addictive hot-stepping ode to doing the right thing in the face of temptation. $\star \star \star \star$

Sound: Generally a more lush production than the prevailing British grime scene, with plenty of booming but controlled bass complemented by sweeping strings, brass stabs, organ riffs and electro fills - a cornucopia of modern British dance music in other words, topped with Roots' clever, funny and wry lyrics. **** DO

TCHAIKOVSKY Tchaikovsky For Cello

Jens Peter Maintz (cello), David Geringas (cond), Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra

Arte Nova Classics 74321 80791 2 Music: This programme of music for cellos and a small, mainly string, orchestra is from Tchaikovsky and fellow travellers (Fitzhagen, Davidov and others). They receive performances of idiomatic warmth and grace. The Variations On A Rokoko Theme and Andante Cantabile, both Tchaikovsky, are the best and best known of these 12 works, but all the music presented here is in the mainstream romantic tradition, and played with great elegance and beauty. *** Sound: This naturally graceful recording conveys a real sense of the scale of the recording space - the Recording Studios in Vilnius. **** AG



THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "Exposure has not dimmed its impact."

FLEETWOOD MAC Rumours Warner Bros

Music: One of the most successful albums ever, selling 17m copies in the US alone, this is also a great-sounding album with outstanding songs, harmonies and composition. Songs like *Never Going Back Again, Gold Dust* Woman and *Oh Daddy* have an emotional power that is rare. There some overplayed tracks such as *The Chain,* which will forever be linked with Grand Prix racing in the ears of a generation, yet this exposure has not dimmed its impact. ****

Sound: Vinyl is the definitive format for this album and it sounds polished and fine, and if the emphasis is on slick rather than grit, that doesn't get in the way of the music. There is now a DVD-A version which gives the vinyl a good run, albeit with slightly sharper edges and some alternative mixes. It brings multichannel to the party, too, but there is still much to be had from the vinyl, especially if you get your hands on a top-notch pressing. $\star \star \star \star JK$



MERCURY REV The Secret Migration

v2 Music: Mercury Rev is the only band currently rivalling Flaming Lips as standard-bearers of everything that is best about left-field American music. Mercury Rev's follow-up to 2001's All Is Dream is another album full of exultant melodies and enchanting mystery. Quite how



they manage to sound both ethereal and earthy at the same time is extraordinary, as if the roots-rock of The Band has been given a psychedelic makeover with mellotrons and theramins. The pastoral soundscapes of tracks such as *Diamonds* and *First-Time Mother's Joy* shimmer like morning sunlight in a newly-mown meadow, while *Secret For A Song* and *In A Funny Way* recall early Neil Young/Buffalo Springfield in *Expecting To Fly* mode. Simply magnificent.

Sound: Surely no coincidence that both Mercury Rev and the Lips are produced by Dave Fridmann, whose palette of sounds makes him the Van Dyke Parks/Jack Nitzsche of our times. $\star \star \star \star NW$



JOHN MARTYN One World (Deluxe Edition)

Music: After the loss of friends Nick Drake and Paul Kossoff, John Martyn went to Jamaica to stay with Island supremo Chris Blackwell and hooked up with Lee Perry, Max Romeo and Burning Spear. Back in England he was inspired to make his 'blackest' album ever. One World, released in 1977, is a wondrous merging of black music styles - subtle vibraphone, Steve Winwood's mesmerising moog synth solos, 'Scratch' Perry's dub visions and lush soul strings. The opium-laden sessions at Blackwell's Berkshire farmhouse resulted in a true hymn to the silence, Small Hours, a sonic dream of distant geese, train echo and echoplexed Gibson guitar recorded at 3am across a lake! **** Sound: Liquid, weaving, rich and spellbinding. ★★★★ MP



HUBERT SUMLIN About Them Shoes Ryko/Artemis

Music: Although his voice has gone (he only sings on one track), Howlin's Wolf's legendary guitarist's electric blues playing still blows up a storm. Eric Clapton and Keith Richards help out on a set that includes seven Muddy Waters songs and four Willie Dixon/Howlin' Wolf favourites all delivered in pure Chicago style. Keith struts in all his ragged glory on Still A Fool and Little Girl, while Clapton sounds more energised than we've heard him on his own records in a long time. Yet rightly, it's Sumlin's own stinging lead lines that steal the show. \star Sound: Producer Rob Fraboni mixes the guitars way up-front and attempts to recreate the rawness of the old Chess sides but with a sympathetically modern gloss. *** NW

DVD-AUDIO & SACD

BEETHOVEN/RESPIGHI

Beethoven: Symphony No. 6, Respighi: Pines of Rome Zdenek Macal (cond), New Jersey Symphony Orchestra DVD-Audio (24/96 surround, 24/96 stereo, Dolby Digital, DTS) AIX Records 80006

Music: Two masterpieces from the mainstream repertoire are used here as a showcase for high resolution and multichannel recording technologies. You get separate 'audience' (Dolby Digital) and 'stage' (DTS) mixes and multiple recording formats with multi-camera angles, extensive on-disc music and set-up notes, a commentary track, photos, web links and more, all on a



two-sided disc. The performances are measured, cool and meticulous, but somewhat lacking in passion and grip in the *Pastoral*. Conversely, the understated approach pays dividends with the *Pines*. *** * * * Sound**: Pristine and lush, with spice added by offstage bass in the Respighi, though it is somewhat airless with excessive use of the surround channels even in the audience mix. But AIX make no pretence that this recording represents a traditional 'documentary' approach. *** * * * A**

RICHARD & LINDA THOMPSON Shoot Out The Lights

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer) Hannibal

Music: Richard and Linda Thompson were splitting up during the making of this album and such emotional exposure makes for very compelling songs like an overlooked British version of Dylan's *Blood On The Tracks. Walking On A Wire* describes Linda's hopeless attempts to patch things up and it's surprising to see that it was penned by Richard. The only Linda original is *Did She Jump Or Was She Pushed*, which pretty well sums

it up. As ever with Richard Thompson, there is some great guitar playing with the title track taking the honours for 'rock-tasticness'. The line that sums this album up is from *Wall Of Death*, a fairground ride they consider to be the "nearest thing to being alive". $\star \star \star \star$

Sound: This is quite a hard-edged SACD, which might well reflect the nature of digital recording in 1982 when the album was made. This does a lot for definition but means that it's most definitely not as tonally rich as Richard's more recent albums. $\star \star \star JK$

ELTON JOHN

Madman Across The Water SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer) Island

Music: One of five new Elton SACDs from Island. This 1971 release is an account of Elton in America, and while it might not show lyricist Bernie Taupin in his best light, Elton's elegant sense of composition was never more evident than in the legendary opener, *Tiny Dancer*. It's a hugely underrated collection of music; the quality of arrangement harks back to the young tyro's first album

(this was his fifth in 18 months). With instruments played to perfection, thanks in no small part to the introduction of session musicians for the album, and the flowing vocals neatly enrobed in a ten-strong backing-vocal clan for several numbers, this is another fine example of SACD's potential. $\star \star \star$ Sound: These new releases offer the same pin-sharp accuracy as the recent, much-celebrated *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* hybrid, using spatial effects and the rear channels well. There's something about the simplicity of the arrangements that really benefits from the multichannel treatment, which could be why many of these early seventies recordings scrub up so well. $\star \star \star DG$





A Point of **Reference**

Introducing the new Reference Series 250 System and Reference 300 Mk. II. Following the stunning success of the original award winning Reference Series, TEAC is proud to announce these brand new products. Both feature DAB tuner, beautiful silver finish and offer high quality hi-fi performance in a micro/mini sized package. Ease of use comes naturally with a full function remote control.

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Reference 300 Series Mk.II

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Reference 250 The New Reference 300 Mk. II

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

BURGLE BUNGLE

It's a good thing that burglars don't read hi-fi magazines. Last month, some ingrate decided to help themselves to some of the contents of my house. They happily nicked the VCR, a handful of DVDs and some CDs (approximately £200 worth of goodies) but completely ignored nigh on £15,000 worth of hi-fi equipment. Even my good quality Arcam DVD was left alone. Either this means the robbers were too weak to lift up heavy hi-fi, or they realised the products were too specialist to fence. Or they were just too dim to realise there is life beyond Sony. It's a small comfort.

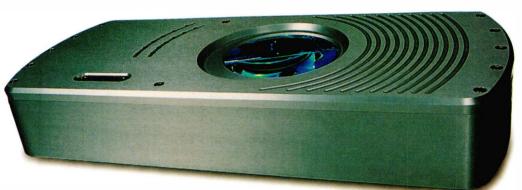
Gary address withheld

HFC Cold comfort indeed! Choosing products that are outside of the public domain may mean they are less likely to get nabbed by the TWOCing class. However, we wouldn't recommend choosing specialist products for that reason alone!



WIN KIMBER TIMBRE INTERCONNECTS!

The author of our letter of the month receives a free pair of 0.5m-long Kimber Timbre interconnects worth £72, featuring a trio of hyper-pure copper conductors and Teflon insulation. So get writing! (250 words max please...)



Above: The Chord DAC 64

FLASH CONVERTERS

It seems that these days, the Chord DAC 64 is the DAC of choice if you're looking to upgrade an aging player. I have an Audionet ART V2 CD player that seems to hate being left on 24/7. This is the second one that I have had and both seem to suffer from a dull sound after long periods of being left permanently on. But, when I switch it off for a few moments, it then springs back to life. It might be that it gets too hot and something in the player shuts down? Anyway, I am thinking of getting a DAC to upgrade and wondered what the real recommendations are?

Denney10 via email

HFC Chord's DAC 64 has legendary status amongst DAC users (with deep pockets) and offers a significantly improved sound when used with older machines. If your budget is generous, you could look at a Townshend Master Reference DAC or dCS solution, which is perhaps the ultimate DAC. If you want to spend less than the Chord, look at Musical Fidelity's A342 or the new X-DACv3 reviewed on p59.

VINYL VALUES

In response to one of your readers in *Choice Mail*, (*Turntable Turn Off, HFC* 262), I would say that the world of vinyl replay *is* all about condition, as well as the time and generation of pressing, production values, and being rewarded for care and hard work. This is what makes LPs so interesting! I would also like to say to your reader that I would not recommend buying vinyl without seeing it first, and if in doubt, take a friend who knows what they're doing.

Name withheld

ALL DAY AND ALL OF THE NIGHT

Does leaving your hi-fi on 24/7 wear it out quicker than if you turned it off at night? I usually leave mine

"It seems that these days, the Chord DAC 64 is the DAC of choice if looking to upgrade an aging player."

on all the time, but I'm wondering if it's healthy to have it running warm with the transformer working all the time without a rest?

Taz via email

HFC Time was when audiophiles would leave their gear powered up 24/7 so it was always ready to play music. Today, we're much more likely to just turn it on about an hour before use, without fear of detrimental sound quality. It depends on the manufacturer, so consult the manual, the website and the forums. It's worth noting that valve equipment shouldn't be left on at all time as the tube's lifespan is finite, and it's probably advantageous these days to power down solid state gear for both longevity and environmental reasons.

DIAMOND GEEZER

I am wondering why you always test certain brands and ignore others? For example, in the last couple of years you have tested many Monitor Audio and B&W models. But the last Wharfedale you tested in a group test was the Diamond 8.2 way back in 2002 (this despite being the most famous British loudspeaker brand of all). I hope you will test the new Diamond 9.5 and maybe even like it?

K Fonseka Australia 🖾

[Choice Mail] Readers' letters



Above: Apple's latest iPod

► HFC We certainly don't ignore brands – in fact, we approach all the key manufacturers for relevant products and invite them to participate when compiling a group test. For every brand that accepts our invitation, there is another that doesn't want its product put into a group test environment. This may be because they prefer a stand-alone review, where the product is not compared against its peers. So, products are never ignored, but some brands shy away from our comparative testing – the most rigorous in the business. We are as keen as you to test key products from the new Wharfedale Diamond range and we are currently working with Wharfedale to secure an exclusive review. Expect to see the results soon...

PLAY AS YOU GO

Is it me or is this iPod phenomenon spiralling out of control? It now seems that *everyone* is talking about them – TV, radio, the press and the man in the pub. It's no coincidence that the iPod was the most popular search item on price-comparison website Kellkoo in the run-up to the Christmas period. It's gone from being an expensive luxury for trendies and technophiles, to an 'essential accessory' – perhaps we'll all have them soon in the way that most people have mobiles? As this technology penetrates more and more homes, traditional hi-fi will become a thing of the past. I don't remember the masses obsessing with CD personals. Why does everyone want portable music all of a sudden – is it simply fashion?

Graham Worley via email

HFC The iPod is a brilliant little device if you want to carry large quantities of music around with you, but it's not about to replace the concept of hi-fi for home use. Hard disk storage will

"The iPod has gone from being an expensive luxury for trendies to being an essential accessory."

become more important for home entertainment, but the market for high-end playback remains.

RUN-IN MAN

I have recently started looking around for some new speakers. To my great horror I've discovered that auditioning them is hardly possible. In the shops that I have visited, I found that the speakers on display were not properly run-in. Equally, they were not bi-wired. One shop even assured me that bi-wiring made no difference. My own experience is that it makes a substantial difference, as does running in a speaker – in my experience, those not run in sound compressed, shouty and crude straight from the box. Worst still – the more exclusive the shop, the more limited the range. I can't help feeling that there must be a place for regional hi-fi superstores with a large range and well set-up equipment.

Stephen Hudson via email

HFC Regional superstores, eh? We can only dream – though they're common in China, we hear (see *Great Haul of China* in last month's *Choice Mail*). We can sympathise with the opinion that bi-wiring often makes little difference (though the effect depends on how a speaker is designed), but not running a speaker in is unforgivable, especially if customers use the audition to make buying decisions.



ANTASTIC NEW ISSUE OUT NOW! resh off the press, the August issue of Hi-Fi tholee is packed full of exclusive in-depth ests of the latest high-performance kit, ncluding...

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I liked the Dec 2004 *Hi-Fi Choice Awards* issue, but wish they'd said more about Silver and Bronze medal winners.

CharlieStumpy

Manufacturers claim some CD recorders and recording media can produce CD-Rs better than the original. Does anyone have experiences of this...?

Blue Max

...I would have thought that you only get out what you put in...? Wanfield

...The theory boils down to the error correction. A recorder puts the data through error correction. This provides a more accurate data source, thereby creating an 'easier read' and less error correction at playback. Daglesj

I have got the chance to pick up a cheap Toshiba 520e DVD-A player, which plays two-channel stereo. Will I get any benefit from the advanced resolution that DVD-Audio is supposed to deliver...?

Beck's Boler

...Not really – it's a dead format isn't it...?

Woody

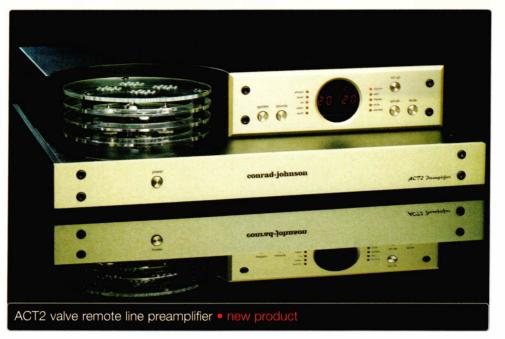
...Yes, in fact I only use DVD-A and SACD in two-channel mode anyway. I find the 5.1 mixes too gimmicky. The two-channel modes, at least on DVD-A, are of a higher bit rate too – so the sound quality is better.

Rozzar

for the love of music...



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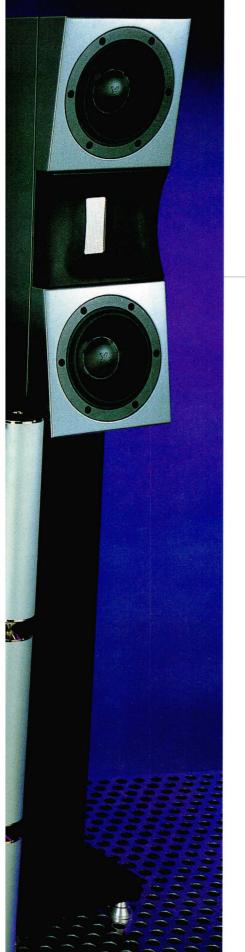
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BURMESTER 001 CD PLAYER | HOVLAND HP-200 PREAMPLIFIER | HOVLAND RADIA POWER AMPLIFIER EBEN X-CENTRIC LOUDSPEAKERS | £28,445



Afterglow

The sound of most hi-fi systems sets out to impress. Not this one. But once under the spell of its slow-burning charms, there you'll stay

ere's the truth. On first listening to this system, I nearly sent it back. All £30k-worth of it. I couldn't quite believe what I was hearing from such a system.

The 'plug' part of setting up went well. Boy, did it go well. Three Nordost Vishnu mains cables are more than a little out of the ordinary. Fact is, they don't have much choice, costing the best part of £500 each. It hardly seems possible that some people power up their superb, multi-thousand-pound high-end kit with what amounts to little more than kettle leads. Apart from their high-tech mono microfilament technology, the lilac-hued Nordost items are both very pretty and exquisitely well made; jewel-like by comparison with similar offerings.

Just knowing that this ridiculously handsome, super-shiny, softly glowing coalition of high-end hardware culled from both sides of the Atlantic - German CD player, American amps, Danish speakers - is backed up by the very finest ancillaries and supports lends the usually thoughtless act of mating plug and socket a sense of occasion. There was a sense of occasion resting the heavy three ply laminate glass shelves of the gorgeous Music Tools support table on the tripod frame's location cones and nothing less than a momentary scalp tingle of anticipation as over £10k-worth of Nordost Valkyrja interconnect and bi-wire speaker cable made all the right unions.

Naturally, the frisson of expectation builds as 'plug' hands over to 'play'. Not before some eye-narrowing and inexpert fumbling, though. Our £9,000, belt-drive CD player's remote has accidentally been left at the photographic studio and one chrome button on the chrome facia of the Burmester 001 looks much the same as another; the labels are beautifully etched but small. For the record, 'play' is third from the left, just in from the buttons that control the 001's electronic volume output, which allows it to by-pass the preamp altogether and drive the power amp direct.

DEUTSCHE DIGITS

The 001 is Burmester's best single-box CD player, and slots in on the second row of the grid, just behind the Reference Series products occupying pole. Sensationally well built and finished, the 001 isn't just a CD player but also a full function preamp for a digital-only system. There are four digital inputs of three different types, again selected by uniformly neat chrome buttons on the front-panel button. A small green LED confirms that the unit has synced to a digital input. These are upsampled to 24-bit/96kHz via a proprietary

Burmester DSP algorithm, prior to D/A conversion. There are both single-ended and balanced outputs, and the 001 can be configured for either variable or fixed analogue output level by simply turning the unit off and back on while holding down the volume button. The 001 also has three types of digital outputs, so full marks for flexibility.

The belt-drive transport is based on Philips' top loading CD Pro unit and made in house but keeps only the laser head assembly. Burmester's engineering includes such exotica as a 'super precision ball bearing' that runs on a

"This ridiculously handsome, super-shiny, softly glowing coalition of high-end hardware is backed up by the very finest ancillaries and supports."



Burmester 001 CD player £9,000

Think German hi-fi sounds cold and clinical? Think again. This is arguably the least 'digital' sounding CD spinner on the planet. Build and finish are off the scale, too.



Hovland HP-200 preamplifier £6,450

All hi-fi should look this good. Not your typical preamp, the HP-200 is a dream to use, design-as-art contemporary and wonderful to listen to when hooked up to the Radia.



Hovland Radia power amplifier £7,995 Providing the solid- state grip and grunt to complement the HP-200's verve, delicacy and

transparency, the Radia is up for a long relationship.



Eben X-Centric loudspeaker E5,000 per pair Not the prettiest speaker we could find but, as a sonic match for the front end, it's made in heaven. Very different tonal balance but once you 'get it' you get it..



Sapphire bearing surface and a belt that's frozen, shaped and cut at -40°C, for stability and long life (90,000 hours). The whole transport assembly is mounted on a substantial aluminium slab suspended by elastomer mounts. And simply sliding back the precision machined aluminium transport cover must count as one of hi-fi's great tactile experiences. It's just so, uh, velvety. The op-amp-based analogue circuitry is fully balanced, DC-coupled, and runs in pure Class A. Lovely.

Loveliness is, of course, Hovland's stock-in-trade. The LA-based company's HP-200 and Radia pre/power combo is no stranger to the pages of *HFC* and brings exactly the right degree of visual magnetism and sonic talent to the dinner party. (Well, just look at it – this isn't knees-up hi-fi, is it?). The guiding design philosophy behind the £6,450 HP-200 remote line preamp and partnering £7,995 Radia power amp is to fuse the verve, transparency and lucidity of a valve preamp with the power and damping control of a solid-state power amp.

As extraordinary on the inside as it is out, the Hovland HP-200 and Radia are built with the company's signature attention to detail and ergonomic simplicity. For instance, I love the huge power switch that dominates the front panel of the Radia and the blue glow of the 25mm thick frosted acrylic face panel. Weighing in at 33.6 kg, this 125-watt (200 watts into four ohms) amplifier is a fully dual mono design with a robust power supply that uses handcrafted, oversized power transformers and what Hovland describes as 'ultra high-speed capacitors', along with Schottky rectifiers.

DANISH X-CENTRICITY

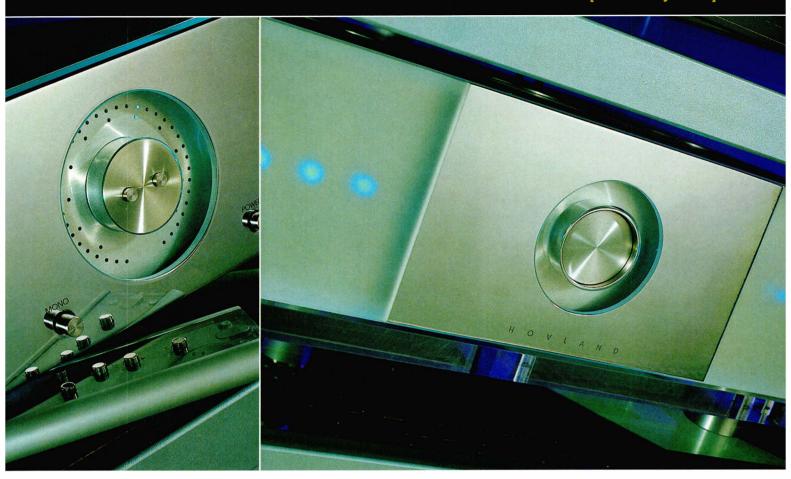
Completing the line-up is a £5,000 standmount speaker from Denmark. To say the Eben X-Centric unusual is something of an understatement. Truth is, it looks distinctly different to its rivals, sandwiching a sort of hybrid ribbon/ planer semi-horn-loaded tweeter between two conventional dynamic drivers in a classic time aligned D'Appolito arrangement. At first, the two polypropylene drivers look like Dynaudio designs but are, in fact, made by Audiotechnology, a company started by the man who founded Scanspeak and Dynaudio. Internally they are wired with the same Nordost monofilament cable used between speaker and amp and connections are for single terminations. The large reflex port is rear facing.

Initially, this system sounded wrong. Or, rather, it must have sounded wrong, if all the other combos to have passed through *Beautiful Systems* were right. I use the past tense, here, because over the course of a couple of days, my perception of its performance rotated through an entire 180 degrees. Did the system really get that much better? No. True, it settled in and warmed up and underwent the kind of improvements most high-quality systems do in the first 48 hours or so. But main difference was acclimatisation and a massive realignment of thinking on the subject of what it is a hi-fi system should do.

I guess I had become too used to a certain type of presentation where openness, clarity and detail are pushed to the fore. Switching from this to the Burmester/Hovland/Eben system's way of doing things was shocking. Immediate impressions were of a dull and recessed presentation with curiously cuppy vocals and a deficit of life, dynamics and imaging precision. I hit the stop button and scratched my head. In fact, I vacated the building, leaving the CD player on repeat for the evening and, indeed, the night. When I returned next morning and started to listen again, though, things began to improve. I found myself being lured deeper into the music and missing the brightly lit detail of other systems less and less. It was also becoming apparent that the system could project an impressively deep and



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"This system has an inclination to make everything sound, well, just great. CDs that would otherwise be gathering dust more than pass muster when treated the Burmester, Hovlands and Ebens."

stable sound stage in which imaging specificity seemed to matter little; CDs which previously sounded flat filled out in a subtle but seductive way. Instruments and performers simply sounded more tangibly believable than they had before. The sense of cohesion was remarkable, too – clearly this was a system that didn't pull music apart for detailed analysis.

Which isn't to say that it didn't convey detail. It's ability to reproduce the subtlest of micro-dynamic nuances was astonishing, as was the naturalness and harmonic richness it brought to instrument timbre. It combined articulacy and warmth.

All right, there is an issue here. This system has an inclination to make everything sound, well, just great. CDs that would otherwise be gathering dust – Eric Clapton's *August*, for example – more than pass muster when treated to the combined talents of the Burmester, the Hovland duo and the Ebens. Again, this goes against the conventional grain, but I can't, for the life of me, think what's wrong with it. Nor is it that the system's apparently laid back presentation is better suited to classical, jazz and 'lite' forms of music than heavy metal. It does that, too. And you know what? A sweeter sounding Motorhead works. It shouldn't but it does.

UNOBTRUSIVE RELAXATION

It's hard to single out facets of this combo's sound. Of course, the balance is relaxed, musical and unobtrusive. The real achievement, though, is that it's so unobtrusively informative. The slim, deep Ebens are smooth and tuneful at low frequencies and fabulously subtle resolvers of detail through the mid and treble. They go loud without strain and always stay impressively in control. Their delivery always sounds fast, natural and unforced. Rhythmically lucid and surefooted, you never feel they're smearing the beat. In fact, their ability to time is fairly awesome - they'll start and stop on the proverbial dime. And you soon begin to appreciate their intelligibility which brings benefits to all

kinds of music but is especially seductive with female vocals which are handled with tremendous finesse and refinement.

So, what does it all boil down to? How does this system score when judged by the usual Beautiful System criteria? On the style front, I don't think there's much doubt. This is one of the best looking systems so far. It's just a pity that the Burmester's green LED display doesn't quite match the ethereal baby blue backlighting of the Hovlands. As for the sound. I suspect it will either make converts for life or send people packing, wearing a bemused expression. Had I listened to the system at a dealer, I'd have probably been one of the walkers. But I'd have lost. Like most things in life, the greatest rewards aren't always the most immediate. Yes, the presentation will be too rich for some tastes and yet I can't think of another system that's so genuinely insightful and effortlessly musical. If you listen to one hi-fi system before you remortgage the house, make it this one. HFC



David Vivian





Super





"Amazing value and massively impressive performance." What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision

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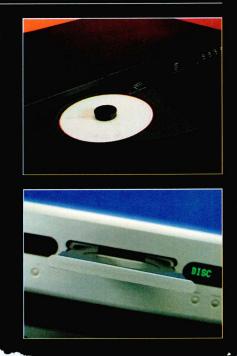


REVIEWS

Welcome to the HFC hardware reviews section – the only place for definitive tests of the latest hi-fi components. Our unique combination of extensive listening, unsighted comparisons and scientific lab reports, conducted by the UK's most experienced set of reviewers, ensures you're holding the most comprehensive and reliable guide to high performance hi-fi in the world.

EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

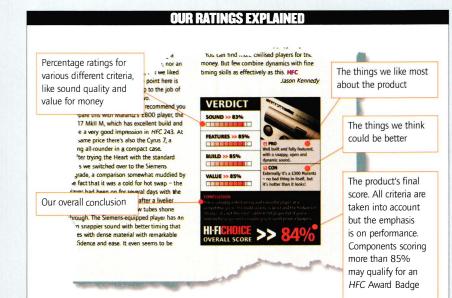
- **38** Mordaunt-Short Performance 6 loudspeaker
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69 Onkyo C-1VL





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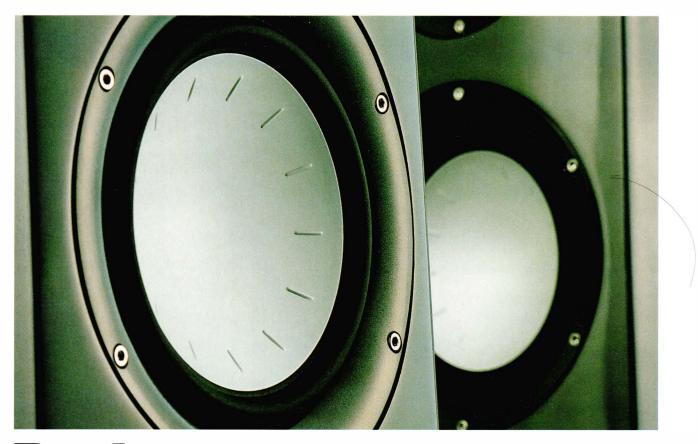


Editor's Choice This Badge is awarded only to those components that are judged to deliver reference-standard performance, regardless of cost. These products may be considered among the very best of their kind.

HI-FICH

Turn the page for the most rigorous tests of serious hi-fi in the business...

Review Mordaunt-Short Performance 6 loudspeaker



Peformance art

Mordaunt-Short's new flagship lives up to its moniker. Performance by name, performance by nature...

PRODUCT Mordaunt-Short Performance 6
TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £3,500 per pair

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 24x121x37cm ♥ Weight: 30kg each ● Decoupled 'ATT' tweeter with 25mm aluminium dome ● Alloy 'CPC' drivers: 1x100mm mid, 2x165mm bass ● Sensitivity/impedance: 89dB/4-8 ohms (nom) ● Injection moulded polymer resin enclosure CONTACT ● 01753 680868 ₩ www.mordaunt-short.com

he mess that was Mordaunt-Short at the end of its previous life, as a member of the TGI group (Tannoy, Goodmans, Mordaunt-Short), has finally been turned around, albeit at a rate that makes a supertanker doing a U-turn look like a dancer performing a pirouette on speed. It has been a slow, stately programme of improvement, and at times it has been hard to see which way things were going. But Mordaunt-Short has a not-so-secret weapon - a worldwide distribution deal with Marantz, itself part of a powerful multinational combine, which has meant there was no rush to market with underdeveloped or immature products. Performance, which is the brand new senior range of five loudspeakers in the Mordaunt-Short line-up, showcases all the

technologies that have been painstakingly developed over the three years (officially at least, but some elements of the design go back to the 1990s), along with others which are completely novel. Ostensibly at least, the Performance 6 – the senior model in the range – is a worthy flagship for the new and revitalised Mordaunt-Short.

It is tempting to suggest that the headline features of this speaker are the enclosure and the tweeter, for reasons which will soon become clear. While this is entirely justified in technical terms – both are highly innovative – it would do an injustice to what is, by any standards, a thoroughly holistic exercise. Just about every design element pulls together towards a common goal, described in conversation with the Head of Acoustic Engineering, Graeme Foy, as low distortion and clarity.

The remarkable ATT tweeter – and it really is remarkable – is described separately in the *Tweeter Tech* box (opposite). The goal of the equally remarkable enclosure was to control stiffness and damping to a high standard, which is not readily done with traditional materials. Any self-respecting engineer wants to work with curves rather than flat panels because they are intrinsically better controlled, and the company's big idea is to use structural foams. These foams can be formed into any shape, and can even have variable thickness walls. Both ideas are exploited here, using low pressure moulding techniques to provide the required combination of stiffness and damping.

Working to a pattern which aims for an overall stiffness similar to wood, it is possible to control the behaviour of the material so that it forms a very stiff skin on the outside, and has a density gradient with depth. This results in what is claimed to be exceptional damping (each layer effectively 'damps' the next layer of lower or higher density) combined with low energy storage properties. The stiffest part of the enclosure is the curved 'spine' at the back, and the bass units are anchored to it, and resiliently decoupled from the baffle using rubber gaskets to reduce energy being fed into the baffle. A 10kg cast iron base built into the bottom of the enclosure acts as a mechanical ground, and an anchor point for the crossover to reduce acoustic feedback.

As already indicated, the Performance 6 is designed to do a consistent job using a variety of technologies, techniques and materials. At



TWEETER TECH



The ATT (Aspirated Technology Tweeter) design is a completely new departure, which is introduced with this model and combines several elements to address various design goals. The designer wanted an open-back tweeter, so there would be no acoustic loading on the diaphragm. However, a purely open diaphragm would operate as a dipole which would produce a highly lobed figure-of-eight radiation pattern. Worse, the front and back outputs would be out of phase, resulting in cancellation at lower frequencies. Other solutions, such as large back chambers and tweeter tubes, tend to imply more or less (less with B&W's tweeter tubes) resonant cavities. Mordaunt Short's solution is the aspirated

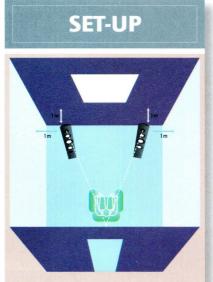
Mordaunt Short's solution is the aspirated tweeter, in which rear radiation from the dome enters a number of fine tubes with a logarithmically varying length. This radiated sound is then released to the outside air using the 'spike' on the back of the enclosure, with exit holes arranged along its length. In this way, back radiation is allowed, but the phase information is essentially stripped from the signal, and the result is constructive interference with the main front output of the tweeter. For even greater insulation, the tweeter itself is mounted in a rubber decoupling 'glove'.

the simplest level, it is a three-way, four-driver floorstanding system. It features a 25mm alloy dome tweeter, a 100mm dished alloy midrange unit and two 165mm bass drivers, also with dished alloy diaphragms.

All three larger units are third-generation CPC (Continuous Profile Cone) designs, which use smooth dish-shaped diaphragms with extended radial ribbing on the mid and bass units, to help control mechanical break-up under drive. Third generation here refers to modifications to the radial ribbing, the design of the surround and some modifications to the basket. The way the voice coil is married to the diaphragm has been introduced with the Performance range. The 100mm midrange driver, which operates

"The goal of the remarkable enclosure was to control stiffness and damping to a high standard."

Review Mordaunt-Short Performance 6 loudspeaker



POSITIONING

The tweeter is unusual in its construction, and this presents some key differences in the way it behaves on audition. It has a somewhat wider dispersion that normally expected from a 25mm dome, and appears to have an unusually clean very high frequency behaviour. The first HF resonance is said to be around 28kHz, with useful output to about 38kHz, combined with better than usual control over resonant behaviour. The result is that tweeter orientation is not too critical, and the use of a dedicated small diameter midrange unit also helps preserve wide imaging in the midband.

This speaker is as close to a 'set and forget' design as you will find from a model this size, but there are still some points to watch. In particular, the well extended bass does need room to breathe, which points towards placing it a meter or so from the back wall to reduce 'room boom'. Toe-in is a matter that will vary with the room available. We would advice a wide baseline between the speakers (up to 60 degrees subtended angle from the listening seat may work) as long as this doesn't mean placing the speakers near side walls. Then adjust the speaker angle inwards just sufficiently to fill in the centre of the soundstage.

SYSTEM MATCHING

Here is where things could become slightly tricky. Don't expect this system to deliver with flaky amplifiers or source components. Towards the end of the test period, we were able to drive the Mordaunt-Short with a Marantz PM11S1 amplifier and SA11S1 stereo SACD/CD player (the subject of an exclusive review next month) that injected a touch of warmth combined with good control, and helped resolve a tendency to sound over-analytical and upfront. This combination is clearly one that works well – and was used during the development of the speaker.

It is, of course, possible to go even further. You can certainly stay within the Marantz range, but also – as we discovered using the newly introduced Classé electronics – it's possible to build a system that produces a very bold yet superbly controlled sound. Most of all, this is a speaker that will allow you to hear what the rest of your system can do. So, at the risk of banging an old drum, we strongly advocate a careful and extended audition, ideally at home if this can be arranged.



"This loudspeaker delivers a level of detail and transparency that is virtually unprecedented in a moving coil design."

■ between 350Hz-3kHz, is completely new and uses compact rare earth magnets to reduce the area of magnet that is available to reflect back-radiated sound through the cone. The chassis employs what Mordaunt-Short describes as sound deadening steel – two dissimilar layers of steel sandwiched together with an elastomer layer (okay then, rubbery glue) – to dampen down ringing on the chassis.

SOUND QUALITY

There is something more than a little unusual about the musical behaviour of the Performance 6, and we confess it is not easy to put into words. Very quickly it became apparent that the loudspeakers – and we talking here about the midband and lower treble in particular – combine a number of qualities that are normally only found in electrostatic panel speakers. There is a level of detail and transparency that is virtually unprecedented in a moving coil design. This is combined here with an uncommonly flat, uncoloured tonality.

Not only is the treble open and detailed thanks to a good quality tweeter (of which more soon), the Performance 6 lacks that 'hooded' quality – the damped midband feel, experienced even with very sophisticated moving coil loudspeakers. Some may hear this speaker as over-energetic, even a little hyperactive, but you will find that this impression tends to fade with time. It fades not because of acclimatisation, but because the speaker takes a long time to run in and settle down. But this tendency does make the Performance 6 unusually system fussy – see the *System Matching* box (left) for more on this.

Conversely, the Mordaunt Short is not especially troubled by the room, or at least it wasn't in the author's room, which from experience (and measurement) is known to be relatively neutral and easy going. The dispersion of the tweeter is wider than you might expect, which appears to be a helpful side effect of the aspirated technology. The result is a degree of presence and liveliness from a variety of listening positions, and a relaxed requirement for speaker orientation.

If all this leads you to expect a bass performance that is overshadowed by the upfront midband, think again. Given the size of the enclosure, the bass stretches a long way down – deep enough to capture the 32foot organ pedal notes on a full scale orchestral organ with some ease and a real sense of power. But in the grand scheme of things, quantity of bass comes a long way down the Richter scale when compared to integration, tunefulness and 'speed', and it is in these areas that the Performance 6 really makes its mark.

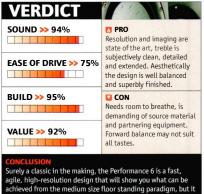
Yes, the bass is deep and it has real power and authority, but most of all it sounds genuinely tuneful, relatively non-resonant (in larger rooms) and gratifyingly 'quick'. Well recorded bass lines sound like part of the action, and not as though they were recorded in an isolated booth and patched in the following week. In short, the bass sings and sings wonderfully; it ebbs and flows in a natural, progressive and organic way.

The subtly rounded and tilted baffle has been carefully shaped to mitigate the effects of cabinet edge diffraction, to provide a measure of time alignment and, incidentally, to improve mechanical stability. This, combined with the quick start and stop nature of the design, has imbued the Performance 6 with holographic imaging, as was discovered when seated well off axis. It was not just that the instruments and voices were laid out coherently in an arc in front of the listening seat, though this much is true. The way that each instrument and voice appeared to inhabit its own position in space, with a definable acoustic contributing to the overall sense of acoustic space was extraordinary. Again, this hints at the kind of imaging sometimes delivered by electrostatic panels, without the bowed geometric distortion that often arises, and with a much more prescient sense of depth and space.

Add all these things together and you have a loudspeaker that tells you more about the recordings you listen to than most, almost like listening through good headphones, but without the anomalous sense of scale and the peculiar in-head imagery. If there is a downside, it's that the Performance 6 does nothing to sanitise inadequate recordings or equipment. But, that's about it.

Performance 6 is a real milestone product for Mordaunt-Short (and designer Graeme Foy in particular). It's a loudspeaker we suspect will come to be seen as a classic in years to come. For the user, the Performance 6 emerges almost from nowhere, fully formed, as a serious contender at the high-end. Chinese manufacturing is probably its making, as it has helped to keep the price out of the stratosphere where it would probably have been stuck if made in the UK. And just in case the pictures that accompany this review don't tell the whole story, it looks like a quality item, as well as sounding like one. It will take up valuable living room real estate, but it looks great from a distance, and it also looks great under a magnifying glass. The gloss finish is absolutely superb. HFC

Alvin Gold



agne, mgr resolution design that while show you what can be achieved from the medium size floor standing paradigm, but it deserves – demands – careful system matching.





The 'x' factor

No longer content with one CD5, Naim has added something x-tra to the new CD5x

PRODUCT Naim CD5x

BEST BUY HI-FICHOIC magazine

TYPE CD player

PRICE £1,450

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 5.8x43.2x30.1cm ♥ Weight: 5kg ♥ Analogue output: DIN or RCA phono ♥ Manual tray and magnetic puck ♥ Power supply upgrade socketry ♥ Circuit boards decoupled from case CONTACT ♥ 01722 332266 ♥ www.naim-audio.com

he CD5i replaced Naim's original CD5 late last year and has since garnered considerable acclaim within these pages, most recently storming an *Ultimate Group Test* of like-priced CD players in *HFC* 259 and then scooping a Gold Award in the annual *HFC Awards*. Perhaps spurred on by this success, Naim has now introduced a more upmarket version of the CD5 with an 'x' suffix. It's part of a small range of 'x-series' components that sits just above entry level and also sees an 'x' added to the NAC 112 preamp and NAP 150 power amp, as tested in *HFC* 262.

The changes introduced to take the CD5 up to 'x' grade are not visible in the published specs, which mirror those of the CD5i, but we are told that the differences can be measured if you delve deep enough in the right places. It would be interesting to see what these specs are; the company states that the communication of music is the most important goal for its components, but quite which measurements tell you as much is not divulged. One of the reasons why CD players continue to improve, even though the technology is over 20 years old, is that engineers are still discovering which parameters are the most important ones to measure and improve upon – has Naim found something that everyone else has missed?

The similarities between the existing CD5i and the new CD5x appear fewer than the differences, but extend to a Philips VAM1202/12 transport mechanism, which has the ability to play CD-RW discs as well as their more popular CD-R cousins. Both players have switchable analogue outputs that allow you to choose between DIN and phono; you can run both at the same time, but this has significant sonic compromises. Neither player has a digital output, but this is true to type for Naim.

The new bits for the 'x' version are a dedicated circuit board for the transport mechanism and a toroidal mains transformer which provides a stiffer power supply. At the conversion stage, 24-bit Burr-Brown DACs of the sort found in Naim's CDX2 and CDS3 players have been employed, while the analogue output stage has been upgraded and now has its own PCB. If that weren't enough, the digital filter is now an HDCD decoder, the PMD200. There is also an RC5 socket for external remote control and the option to include a RS232 connector for multiroom systems.

Unlike the CD5i, there is the option to upgrade the CD5x with an external power supply, which, as it powers the output stage, will have a distinct effect on sound quality. The drawer is Naim's usual manual affair, with a single pivot and removable magnetic puck, the hands-on nature of the procedure being distinctly reminiscent of putting a record on in the 'old skool' sense.

As well as the DIN and phono output sockets, the rear panel connections also include DIN socketry for power supply upgrades. There's a strange rattly nature to the panel, however, because the case and the sockets are decoupled in an effort to minimise resonance – in fact, the circuit boards themselves are decoupled from the case. Controlling the player can be done with the shiny front buttons or the less shiny remote, which can also operate a Naim preamp or the Nait integrated amplifier.

UCOUL







"It has the traditional Naim virtues of snappy timing propelled by distinct bass lines, yet this is more subtle than it used to be."

In its natural state, the CD5x's display sticks to track number alone and an illuminated play button to let you know it's spinning a disc. There is the option of a clock display, or you can extinguish the green LEDs altogether for a minimalist look. If what they say about displays is true, then this should be the best sounding option, but a static number is unlikely to be much worse.

SOUND QUALITY

This player has the option of regular phono outputs, so this is how we started out using it, but once we'd heard the improvement brought about by using the DIN output there was no going back. We used a Living Voice interconnect with a DIN plug at the source end. This allowed the CD5x to reveal more of the character and body in voices as well as the definition in the bass and the leading edges of notes in general. The phono socket performance is by no means poor, but it is clearly second best to Naim's preferred means of signal transfer.

Naim's CD5x has the traditional Naim virtues of good, snappy timing propelled by distinct bass lines, yet this characteristic is more subtle than it used to be with the brand and overall it's a very even handed player with no undue emphasis. But it's still far from dull - if a band is playing cohesively through the CD5x, it sounds that bit tighter and snappier than usual. This is something we noticed on the Fridge album Happiness. This band can sound not unlike Tortoise when they lean into it and the player brought out a taut, live feel in the disc, which isn't always apparent. It inspired the selection of a Tortoise track, Why We Fight - here, the CD5x served up a drum sound that was appreciably live and real. The guitar and bass playing fell perfectly into place despite the complex nature of the arrangement, the Naim finding a musical coherence where others can stumble.

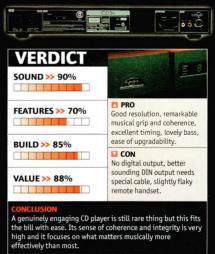
Naim CD5x CD player [Review]

The areas where the Naim is less adept are openness and imaging, with an apparent lack of high frequency extension compared to some of its price peers. Rather than bringing the shape and placement of notes into sharp focus, the CD5x keeps its sights trained on core musical values, the things you hear at a live concert of the amplified variety – in effect, the energy, power and interplay of the musicians. It's not a raw or unrefined player, however. Put something on of a precise nature and it sounds crisp and open, even making swift, easy work of Lambchop's *What Another Man Spills*. With its lap steel guitar, this track has all the ingredients of country music, but there's no danger that you might mistake it for such. In the Naim's tender grip it proved a hard album to turn off.

If anything, image scale shrinks a little with this player, so that Adem's expansive *Home Songs* didn't fill the room as it might. Some may call this 'focus', but it seems more likely that it relates to the restrained nature of the player's treble. Whatever it is, it doesn't get in the way of the character in his voice, which has an uncanny presence on this close-miked recording.

As Naim had supplied a FlatCap 2 power supply along with the CD5x, it seemed like a good idea to see what you get for the extra £515. The bass acquired greater depth and solidity, and there was a distinct improvement in three-dimensionality too. Madelaine Peyroux's interpretation of *Dance Me To The End Of Love* took on a greater buoyancy and realism with the big box plugged in. It's a worthy upgrade that increases resolution quite effectively while underpinning the player's existing qualities.

In our Ultimate Group Test featuring the CD5i, Alvin Gold found little to criticise in the context of the player's peers and remarked that it was the only player to be identified by the 'blind' listening panel. That would suggest that it has some character, but in the case to the 'x' version that character is a strong reflection of the music being played and not a lot more. **HFC** Jason Kennedy





Universal super trouper

This Swedish multiformat audio/video disc player is a modular, sweet-sounding Eurovision dream

ΕÞ

DISC

PRODUCT Advantage S12.3

TYPE Universal disc player **PRICE** £9,350

ADVANTAGE

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 43.5x12.8x44.5cm ○ Weight: 14kg ○ Extensive firmware and hardware upgrade options ○ Internal volume control ○ balanced and single-ended audio outputs CONTACT ☎ 01892 539245 @ www.metropolis-music.co.uk

DITOR'S CHOICE

•FICHOI magazine

he Advantage S12.3 is an unapologetically high-end multiformat DVD-Video player from Sweden that can also play DVD-Audio, CD and SACD discs. Better still, the S12.3 is modular, and is available in three quality levels; the basic S12.1, which costs £7,150, the S12.2 (not available in the UK) and the £9,350 S12.3 tested here. Moving to level three brings with it separate circuit treatment and DACs for SACD and PCM, and full differential mode D/A conversion.

The S12.3 has its own volume control stage, and you get a choice of upsampling multibit and single-bit D/A conversion, selectable through the menu system. Any S12 will be also be able to accept a preamplifier input module (not available at the time of writing), which is capable of accepting one balanced and four unbalanced stereo analogue inputs. Output stages are all discrete Class A and the modular design of the player makes it feasible, in principle at least, to upgrade DACs or other key components if better ones become available. For example, a superior HDMI-equipped video card with superior progressive scan processing is under development, and firmware is readily upgradeable via a PC.

The player is built around a Pioneer mechanism, and the circuitry boasts multiple levels of voltage regulation, making it almost impervious to mains noise. It uses a proprietary circuit that is claimed to eliminate (rather than just reduce) jitter modulation of the output signal – a bold claim. Included are Dolby Digital and DTS decoders and integral speaker management. This last, along with the internal volume control, eliminates the absolute need for a preamplifier, though the setup options are less complete than with separate preamplification. Bass management, for example, centres around a fixed 80Hz filter where a 40Hz setting would have been useful for the Focal-JMlab L&R Utopia Be speaker system used for this test. This was available from the Lexicon RV-8 receiver, which powered the test system during some of the review period.

Video outputs include component video and the five-socket RGB-VH connection used with professional monitors, as well as S-Video, composite video and DVI. Audio can be tapped from unbalanced outputs (up to eight channels, depending on configuration), balanced AES/EBU (stereo only), along with coaxial and optical digital outputs. An RS232 connection is available for system control using an external touch screen controller, along with 12V trigger in and outputs, a wired remote control input and an RJ45 data connector which talks to other Advantage components. Conspicuously lacking is i-Link or an equivalent full-bandwidth multichannel digital audio out.

The set-up menu includes simple and advanced options, and a Set-Up Navigator that guides users though the basic settings. Video adjustments, such as noise reduction and colour saturation, are included for tweaking the picture. Few of these settings will need adjustment in practice, partly because the default settings are well chosen, but also because it is often more convenient to make these settings on the partnering display device, especially if the latter is a projector.

There are two front panel displays, one showing disc related information (disc type,



"Ironically, for a player whose speciality is multichannel replay, the most impressive performance was delivered from CD."

FORMAT COMPATIBILITY

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v	DVD+R	v
~	DVD-RAM	*
 	MP3 AUDIO	¥
v	WMA AUDIO	*
*	AAC AUDIO	*
¥	VIDEO CD	~
v	JPEG PICTURES	*
	v v	

track timings and so on) and the other showing internal processor settings – volume for example. The player is solidly built, and is supplied with a solid aluminium remote control, which is in keeping with the player, but the very tiny control buttons make it something of a trial to use in practice. A well designed plastic wand would have been a more practical proposition, and cheaper too.

SOUND QUALITY

This is an entirely new player from a source without a proven track record in the UK. Nevertheless, it all looks very good. Noise levels are extremely low, and player behaviour is predictable and solid, except that the test sample occasionally switched into standby mid disc – hopefully an isolated sample fault.

Ironically, for a player whose speciality is multichannel replay, the most impressive performance of all was delivered in plain stereo from CDs, specifically using single-bit conversion through the balanced stereo outputs into a Krell KSV-400xi stereo integrated amplifier driving the previously mentioned Focal-JMlab loudspeakers.

There is a sense of scale combined with subtlety about the Advantage in this mode which combined with unusually consistent behaviour with changing musical dynamics makes sense of difficult recordings in a particularly gratifying way. Brian Wilson's Smile sounded gloriously real, almost like a live performance, when the volume was turned up to realistic levels. The sound has an unusually articulate 'open-mouth' quality that is difficult to pin down on paper with any real precision, but which is very hard to gainsay on audition. Stereo CD supercharged the replay system, but there was also a clear advantage through the balanced output, in part of course because the Krell is a true balanced mode design. Against expectations, it was multibit operation that sounded more wooden.

DVD-Audio and SACD were almost as good, with DVD-Audio taking the honours as is often the case with universal players. Perhaps this is because the musical presentation was just a little more CD-like in its bold architecture and upfront presence. But it was a close run thing, with some comparisons of discs recorded in both formats sounding a little sweeter and more subtle, if less gripping, from SACD. However, for SACD, the PCM masters were not full 96kHz resolution. But regardless of the high-resolution format, there was a slight loss of tension and range, specifically when compared to CD in balanced mode (though single ended CD had no such advantage).

There were no problems using the Dolby and DTS outputs, but again it was no revelation either. The Lexicon receiver used for this test has a particularly good decoder built in, and in a 7.1-channel context can also bring the benefits of Logic 7 to bear, which gives a much more three-dimensional image at the sides and back of the room. Even in 5.1-channel mode, the Lexicon is just a little more subtle and honed, but the Advantage processing is still detailed and the imaging is explicit.

VIDEO PERFORMANCE

Video quality is first rate, especially through the DVI output, though the analogue outputs also deliver a great picture. Component video has a clear edge on the other analogue outputs, but when using a short, good-quality lead, S-Video shows very little colour spread, and just a little moiré. Even this, though,

[Review] Advantage S12.3 universal disc player



Unfortunately,

Advantage's designer Michael Bladelius was not available for comment at the time of the review for personal reasons. Instead, we spoke with Werner



Barden, sales director of Advantage, about the player's design – and the vision of its designer

HFC: Tell us about the designer, Mike Bladelius. **WB:** Mike is quite remarkable, without doubt one of the most talented designers in the world, both in the analogue and the digital fields.

Born in Gutenberg, Sweden, he was a designer for Nelson Pass's Threshold, but when his wife became pregnant, they returned to Sweden, where he designs or has done design work for various companies, including Sony, Texas Instruments and Primare. He approached me to collaborate in the project that became Advantage, where he would do the design work, and I would help with voicing and marketing. But it soon became obvious that he didn't need help with the voicing. Our geographic locations – I operate from Germany, he from Sweden – made close day to day cooperation difficult, so this was just as well.

What was the reason for including both single-bit and multibit conversion options in the \$12.3?

The idea a was to create a player with various different quality levels – hence the 12.1 and 12.3 options. This combines with the twin DAC arrangement to provide as much choice as possible for different tastes.

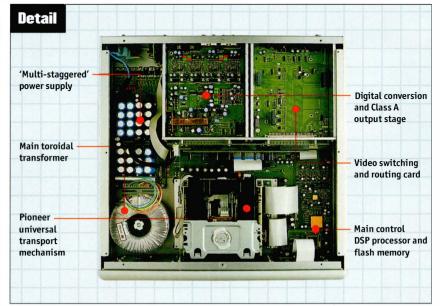
Where are Advantage products sold?

We operate exclusively in European markets at present: Norway, Sweden, Germany, Italy, the UK, Hungary, and we're just starting up in Russia. It is our intention to address the American market in due course.

What's your take on the present state of the market for your kind of product?

The home cinema market is growing, but in mature markets where music is important – Germany for example – the high-end stereo market is holding its own, though it is no longer a growth area.

The way we address this with the S12 is that users can chose what level of audio or video capability they require, and upgrade at a later stage if they find the need.





RESAMPLING ON

only appeared in practice with the Video Essentials test disc. Picture quality was crisp and clean, with an output whose black levels and shadow detail were fully able to exploit the Yamaha DPX-1100 test projector's capabilities.

Truly excellent video discs, such as a special high bit-rate version of Jet Li's *Hero*, reproduced with exquisite level of detail and with motion artefacts handled well without any special adjustment of the video parameters. There is a real suggestion of depth when the background is just out of focus, as the foreground practically jumps out of the screen. But the Advantage is no better in video terms than other high-quality DVD players we've tested recently, and Arcam's DV29 looked even bolder and more impressive.

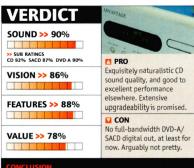
The Advantage S12.3 is a superb universal player –a strong performer with each of its compatible formats, and especially impressive as a legacy CD player. In level three guise, as reviewed, it is a player that is clearly heavily



geared towards the audiophile, with a musicality few multiformat machines can dream of matching. DVD-Video playback is impressive too, though there is less 'wow-factor' here – there are players available for significantly less that perform even better. With music though, and particularly CD, the S12.3 will be a hard DVD-compatible machine to beat. **HFC**

Alvin Gold





High-end player with some unique features such as switchable

multi/single-bit conversion, and various levels of audio and video replay. It holds open the promise that it will keep up to date with evolving requirements and replay technologies.





"Best New Analogue Component Award" Hi-Fi News, UK "Best Buy" Hi-Fi Choice, UK "Highly Recommended" Audio & Video, Brazil "Brilliant" Hi-Fi World, UK "Fantastic" Image Hifi, Germany "Best New Record Player & Arm" Stereo Sound, Japan "Excellent" Hi-Fi review, Hong Kong



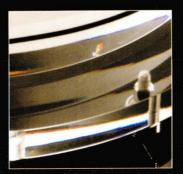
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Two act masterpiece

conrad-johnson

Do the ACT2 and Premier 350SA really repesent the pinnacle of American amplification?

conrad-johnson

PRODUCT Conrad-Johnson ACT2 and Premier 350SA TYPE Valve preamplifier and solid-state power amplifier PRICE (ACT2) £12,000, (Premier 350SA) £8,000 KEY FEATURES (ACT2) Size (WxHxD) 48.3x13.7x40cm ♥ Weight 13.6kg ♥ Valve line preamplifier ♥ Zero feedback design ♥ Five single-ended line inputs ♥ (Premier 350SA) Size (WxHxD): 48.3x22.9x48.3cm ♥ Weight: 38.6kg ♥ Rated power: 350W per channel ♥ Zero-feedback FET/bi-polar architecture ♥ Single-ended phono inputs only CONTACT ₱ 020 8948 4153 ₱ www.audiofreaks.co.uk

EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FICHOIC magazine

arlier this year, in our special high-end edition called *The Collection*, we discovered one of the finest power amps ever in the Conrad-Johnson Premier 350SA. Now, it's met its match in the guise of the ACT2 preamplifier. An all-valve preamp and a solid state power amp – to many, this represents the ultimate combination of grace and power. Here's a quick recap of the Premier 350SA, as tested in *HFC* 258. It's a solid state design, using both bi-polar transistors and FETs. It delivers 350 watts per channel in a stereo chassis. Like all C-J products (including the ACT2 it's partnered with), the Premier 350SA is a zero-feedback model, which makes it harder to design but helps it to sound faster and cleaner than amps with feedback in the system.

Both the power amp and the ACT2 preamp are single-ended designs, but there is no problem using long interconnects from preamp to power, as the whole system is effectively noiseless when not playing music.

As common to most modern C-J preamps, the interfaces are microprocessor and relay driven. This allows the preamp to run through 100 volume steps of approximately 0.7dB each, but the volume control is linear, not logarithmic as in most preamps and preamp stages, so you

may have to turn up the volume more than usual to hear large differences in output. Add to that a lower than usual gain of 21.5 dB and it's pretty clear, the ACT2 is about maximising refinement, even down to the way the volume and output gain stages are designed.

Normally, expensive preamplifiers are unremittingly complex. The ACT2 takes a simpler route. This is essentially a single amplifier stage, with the four 6N3OP double triodes acting as one big composite valve. This composite triode design is unique to high-end preamps from Conrad-Johnson and is the key to the ACT2's performance, as it produces a low output impedance without necessitating a raft of active gain stages (in essence, there's just the one active stage here).

Of course, the simplest circuit necessitates extremely demanding surroundings to make it work effectively. The little-big triode is fed DC







"There is so much detail going on, so much information passed from disc to speaker, the limitation is often the listener."

by discrete cascaded voltage regulators. This system isolates the audio circuit from the power rails, by keeping near zero impedance across all audio frequencies. To keep noise further at bay, the heaters for the triodes are fed DC voltage from another discrete regulated power supply. As the noise generated by the heaters is infrasonic, this is seldom considered a problem and other amps often feed power from the same supply driving the rest of the triode. Here, however, there's no such thing as compromise.

Component quality has always been a watchword with C-J products. The ACT2 has

fine quality components throughout, including metal foil resistors everywhere (even in the power supplies – another example of overkill done right) and the best quality polypropylene, polystyrene and Teflon capacitors in the power supply. Cleverly, C-J manages to avoid using electrolytic capacitors in either the audio circuits or their power supplies

There's much to praise about the overall look of the preamplifier. The main controls sit on an almost L-shaped box, which stands proud of – but stepped back from – the base, giving the ACT2 the elegance of an Art Deco building. The four circular Perspex layers act as protection for the four valves on show, but don't add any nasty microphonic effects. The overall look is like something out of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, in microcosm... and champagne gold. The Premier 350SA is, in contrast, a rectangular black box with a champagne front panel, a big on/off switch and a LED. Perhaps its not that simplistic (there's a swoosh across the front panel too), and the design cues of preamp are echoed in power amp, but by its very nature, the case of the power amp is going to look less exciting than the preamp.

Even the remote for the ACT2 continues the chunky gold line. It's not filled with buttons, but has all the volume, source, mute and balance controls needed to drive the preamp.

SOUND QUALITY

It's a paradox – describing the character and sound of components that have next to no inherent character and sound in their own right. Taken separately or together, these products are two of the most transparent, least sonically intrusive components around, to such an extent that changing over an interconnect cable has more of a sonic signature than the combo itself.

The lack of sonic signature means you may well have to redraw the rest of your system. Yet, the combination is not stark or desperately analytical and doesn't require you to continually change bits and pieces in a futile search for the ultimate. It will get the best out of every component, but also present their hidden natures without damaging the performance. All of which implies this combination gets closer than most to delivering the sound, the whole sound and nothing but the sound.

This absence of character changes your perception of music. There is so much detail going on, so much information passed from disc to speaker, the limitation is often the listener. Sounds appear almost slow, but in fact it's just your brain processing the wealth of information. Even bad transfers of classic discs that have poor recording quality come across wonderfully - Stevie Wonder's Innervisions is an album of rare musical genius, but with a recording quality that arguably leaves much to be desired. Play this through the ACT2 and Premier 350SA combination, however, and the poor recording quality ceases to be so important. Instead, you are so impressed by the actions of the musicians, you seem to transcend the sound quality. Listen into the recording and every aspect of it is correctly paced and when you take all these aspects as one big musical whole, there is no sense of slowing down the sound. Yet, when you first approach the sound, it is so overwhelmingly information-packed it seems slow. Usually, this only happens when listening to the live musicians themselves or in the recording studio. In short, this means C-J is doing something really right.

[Review] Conrad-Johnson ACT2 preamplifier and Premier 350SA power amplifier



Lew Johnson, co-founder of Conrad-Johnson, talks about the genesis of the ACT2 and Premier 350SA pre/power amps



HFC: How did you improve

upon the two-box ART in the one-box ACT2? L: The single most important factor was the switch to our new Teflon, Conrad-Johnson designed capacitors, which replace the earlier polystyrene capacitors used in the ART. Teflon is an even better dielectric than polystyrene, which means capacitors that produce less of a 'ghost' image in audio signals (due to lower dielectric absorption). The ACT2 also benefits from several execution detail improvements that we have uncovered over the course of the eight years since the introduction of the ART.

Why does this preamp use fewer valves than other reference-class valve preamps?

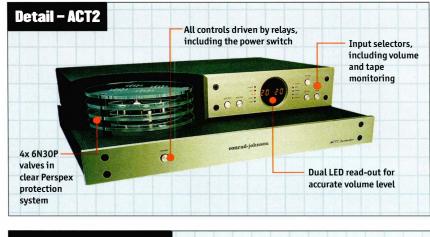
Like the ART, the ACT2 uses what we call a 'composite-triode circuit' in which small triodes are connected together in parallel to create the equivalent of one 'large' triode. The 6N3OP twin triode chosen for the ACT2 is an extremely highcurrent, high-transconductance tube. We elected to run the tubes conservatively, resulting in the same 'size' composite triode from four sections of the new tubes as we managed with 10 sections of the old.

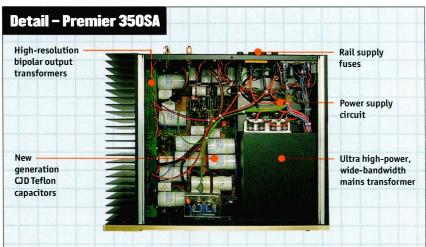
Is there a big difference between designing amps with valves and those with solid-state circuits? The circuits look entirely different, biasing considerations are different, transistors have thermal stability issues that are non-existent in tubes and so on. And yet, the general principles are much the same. Our basic approach to both is to fine-tune simple circuits, executed with carefully selected parts. From a practical viewpoint, I would say that the big difference is that it is hard to make a tube circuit that sounds bad, and it is hard to make a solid-state circuit that sounds good.

Why is gain considerably lower on the ACT2, compared to the ART?

Both units run the tubes for literally maximum gain – there is no local feedback. The 6N30Ps are a somewhat lower gain triode than the 6922. In fact, this is another point in favour of that tube, as the ART had more gain than is really needed.







■ The sense of effortlessness is something that is almost impossible to imagine or describe. The ACT2 and Premier 350SA let the music flow unimpeded with rare simplicity. Whatever you play through the system doesn't sound like you are hearing it anew, just that you are hearing it without impediment.

The two components blend together perfectly. If there is a flaw in the combination – which is highly doubtful – it is that it's hard to get a raucous sound. Strangely, this is more to do with self-editing on behalf of the listener than any intrinsic smoothing in the amplifiers themselves. You simply move away from the raucous end of the spectrum.

So, these two amplifiers combine beautifully. But how do they fare individually? In terms of

detailing, soundstage, dynamics and musicality, there is little – if anything – between them. The differences are slight, but noticeable if you really focus. Ultimately, the ACT2 is more rounded and 'beautiful' sounding (in the manner of classic C-J products, only with much less in the way between you and the music), while the Premier 350SA is more '21st Century', excitingly dynamic and fractionally forward-sounding. The ACT2 isn't 'laid back', nor is the Premier 350SA 'in your face', though. And there's an added bonus, too – when matched together, their synergy is seamless. Such clarity and effortlessness requires the best possible components elsewhere in the chain, but that's obvious if you're thinking of blowing twenty grand on a brace of amps. Yet in that heady, rarefied atmosphere of the highest of high-end, the ACT2/Premier 350SA does that special thing: it raises the standard and establishes a new reference point. Stereo amplification doesn't get much better – and in the case of the ACT2, there's good reason to suggest that it's the best preamp yet made. **HFC** *Alan Sircom*

VERDICT - ACT2 SOUND >> 98% aps the best preamp made today. Unbelievably natural sound is just one faced of a virtually flawless performance that redefines FEATURES >> 85% BUILD >> 94% VALUE >> 87% VERDICT - Premier 350SA SOUND >> 94% The perfect solid-state powe match for the ACT2. A erful, dynamic yet ful, dynan FEATURES >> 85% incolored performer that lemands the best quality components around it. BUILD >> 94% VALUE >> 86%

50 HI-FI CHOICE | march 2005



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Audio Counsel

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Audio

Lifetime warranty

- The best warranty in the industry

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- "The remote must have caused competitors to tear their hair with envy" Hi-Fi4all

Award winning musical sound

- "So, do I like this Densen amp. No, I love it." Hi-Fi Choice

Whether it is Madonna, Miles Davis, Mozart or AC/DC; all have put their heart and soul into their music. No matter if the quality of the recording is good or bad. Reproduction of music is supposed to be made with all the energy that has been put into it by the artist. You might think that this comes natural for any Hi-Fi system. However, it does not! Too many systems today are only able to play perfect recorded music. Though it is a fact that only a fraction of today's music is really well recorded. So what do you do when you want to listen to The Beatles?!? On most systems it is better to use your Beatles CD's as Frisbees than actually listening to them! High-End systems today have a tendency to sound very boring and not being able to play ordinary recordings. It is our finest mission to make music sound as engaging as it was intended. The way we see it, a Hi-Fi system is a musical instrument that must be able to play all kinds of music, regardless the quality of the recording. Music must make you want to stand up and play the airguitar or be an "air conductor" and forget all about the Hi-Fi. If you always end up analysing the quality of the recording and not listening to the music then your system might just not be able to play music!

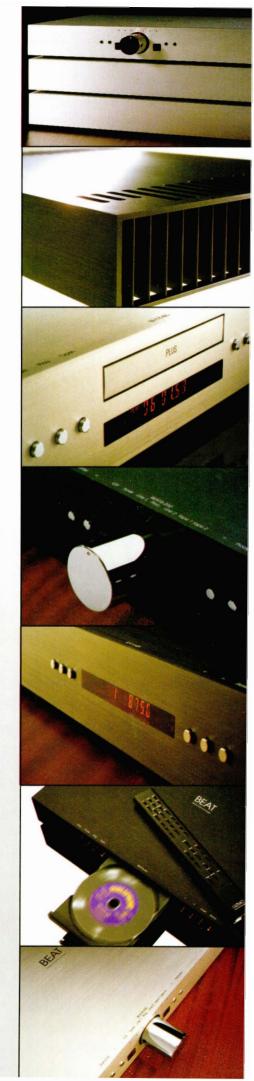
We challenge you and your system. Experience the musical difference. Experience Densen.

Life is too short for boring Hi-Fi.

"The best advice I can give you is to audition the beat for your selves. It does so much right that really expensive amps get wrong, that it might even start you thinking!" B-100 in Hi-Fi Plus

"I absolutely loved the Densen. I can confidently state that the B-200 gave me more of everything that I treasured, not in the sense that it emphasized any aspect of the music but rather that it brought me closer (as far as I could tell) to it. I bought the review unit, and it is now part of my reference system."

B-200 in Secrets of home theater





Danish sizzler

This tasty Danish loudspeaker is a game of two and two halves in the driver department

PRODUCT Dali Helicon 400

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £3,300 per pair

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 22x103x46cm • Weight: 32kg • Twin tweeter arrangement: 25mm fabric dome plus ribbon super-tweeter • Two 165mm bass/mid drivers with pulp cones • Twin terminal pairs • Sensitivity/impedance: 90dB/4 ohms (min) CONTACT • 01977 798844 • www.dali.dk

egular readers might have noticed this speaker's smaller brother was featured in a recent *Ultimate Group Test*. (*HFC* 260). For a compact standmount, that £1,980 per pair Helicon 300 looked a capable but costly prospect, against which this seriously hefty (32kg) Helicon 400 floorstander seems rather better value at £3,300.

Dali is short for Danish Audiophile Loudspeaker Industries. It has links to Denmark's largest hi-fi retail chain, has been around for a great many years, and makes a huge range of models, which are now imported to Britain by distributor 'A' Audiosolutions. In the extensive Dali portfolio, the Helicons sit between the Royals and the Euphoniae, and this 400 is the middle model in a three-strong range of Helicon stereo pairs.

A price tag of more than three grand is still a lot to ask for any pair of loudspeakers, but this example comes with rather more than its fair back of the speaker is significantly narrower than the front. This not only looks good, it's also functional, adding considerable stiffness, avoiding the parallel sides that create focused internal standing waves and distributing reflections. The glue layers help to provide some damping for the panels and further stiffening is supplied by internal braces. Besides the bracing and the division into two separate bass chambers, a further small sealed chamber has been created at the bottom of the enclosure to house the crossover network. This keeps it as clear as possible of the pressure changes and vibrations that occur inside the enclosure.

There are four drivers in toto here, though the configuration is a 'two-and-two-halves-way'. It's essentially a two-way, with the sole crossover point between the upper bass/mid driver and the dome tweeter occurring at the usual 3kHz. Twin terminal pairs allow each 'leg' to be addressed separately, with bi-wire or bi-amp connection and drive. A second bass/mid driver mounted below the first is only used to augment the bass region, and is rolled off above 700Hz. The ribbon tweeter, mounted above the dome in the treble module, only comes in above a high 13kHz.

The two main drivers both have 165mm cast frames and a 125mm diameter pulp cone, impregnated with long wood fibres and with a curved-profile. Each operates into its own

"Helicon 400 is unquestionably one of the most neutral speakers we've encountered."

share of special features. Opening the massive flight cases used to ship these hefty speakers revealed a top-class lacquer-over-real-wood shiny finish that can certainly be expected to command a handsome price premium. The speaker is fashionably slim when viewed from the front, with additional elegant scalloping narrowing the enclosure either side of the tweeter module, but makes up for this with considerable front-to-back depth. This, along with a chamfered plinth and the massive weight, all goes towards ensuring impressive physical stability. Generous 8mm spikes provide good floor coupling, though these are only locked by thumbwheels, which have a tendency to work loose.

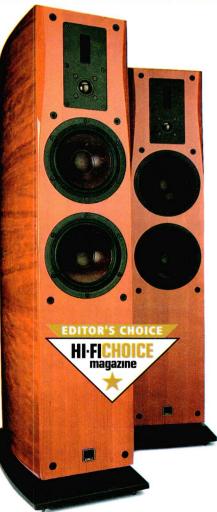
The enclosure is not only beautifully finished, it's also very attractively shaped. By building up glued together layers of thin MDF, the sides are formed into a shallow curve, so that the sub-enclosure, each reflex-loaded by its own rear port, which is tuned to 32Hz. The treble module is a particularly interesting feature, similar to that also found in the more upmarket Euphonia models. It mounts a 25mm fabric dome and a 10x55mm ribbon device on a single alloy chassis to ensure fine mechanical integrity. The ribbon is used to extend the bandwidth at the top of the dome's operating range, while also ensuring consistent lateral distribution.

The measured performance is very impressive. The frequency response (measured under farfield in-room averaged conditions) looks exceptionally smooth and neutral through the broad midband and treble, with just slight unevenness through the upper midrange and presence (1-4kHz). The bass goes deep and is reasonably even, if perhaps a shade strong below 60Hz, while the extreme top end, above 10kHz is also a shade stronger than average. Dali's claimed sensitivity of 88dB is quite conservative – on our tests 89-90dB is closer to the reality under far-field conditions, though the amplifier load is 4-6 ohms through most of the band, so current demands are on the high side.

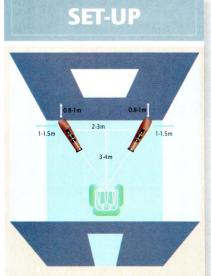
SOUND QUALITY

The measurements translated very effectively into the listening experience, and this Helicon 400 is unquestionably one of the most neutral speakers we've encountered, both in terms of the overall tonal balance it delivers, and also in its beautiful freedom from boxiness.

There's a tendency to emphasise the extreme bass and treble, both of which occasionally make one aware of their presence, but never to the point where either becomes distractingly obtrusive. Rather the reverse, in fact, as the bass here is clean, powerful and deep, adding convincing scale and weight without unwanted thump or thickening. And if the top end has a slight tendency to draw attention to itself, it does so with such silky smooth sweetness



Review Dali Helicon 400 loudspeaker



POSITIONING

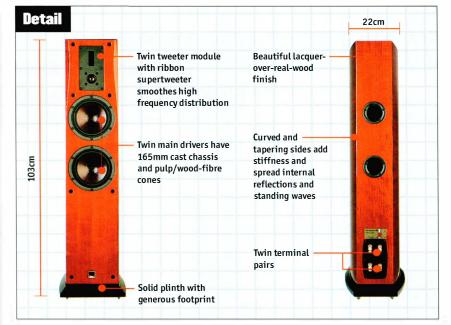
Even with the speakers positioned well clear of side and rear walls, the bass end is strong here, so close-to-wall siting is clearly not a practical option. Under some room conditions (such as trying to shoe-horn these speakers into very small or almost square rooms), the bass end could well sound a little too heavy, even without close-to-wall reinforcement. If this is the case, it could well be worth experimenting with techniques to block (or at least partly block) the ports, both of which are tuned to 32Hz.

Because the ribbon tweeter is just 10mm wide, it delivers wide sound distribution right up to the very highest audible frequencies, so the lateral orientation of these speakers is largely uncritical. If you prefer to place your speakers square on to the room boundaries for aesthetic reasons, that's no problem here, though we still prefer angling stereo speakers so that their main axes cross a little in front of the listening zone, as this tends to give more consistent imaging across a wider arc. Note, however, that because the ribbon tweeter is 55mm tall, its vertical distribution will be very limited, so for the best air and transparency one should try to sit so that your ears are almost at the same height as the ribbon units.

SYSTEM MATCHING

The impedance follows the continental tradition by being a four-ohm load, so its current demands will be on the heavy side, but this Dali is by no means extreme in this regard; four ohms is the minimum here, and the average is around six ohms above 500Hz. This will pose no problems for any decent modern amplifier, especially as the load has been compensated through the crossover region, and therefore stays very consistent at all frequencies.

Furthermore, bass extension is very generous, registering -2dB at 20Hz under in-room conditions, and the sensitivity is a very useful 89-90dB too, so even modestly powered amplifiers will do a decent job. Note, however, that the full bandwidth, wide dynamic range and especially the essentially sweet and extended treble has the capability to show up any deficiencies in the sources, amplification, cables, other system ancillaries and even mains quality. In resolution terms this is a top class speaker that deserves to be used in a top class system.



that the result is extra air and detail, with no unpleasant spitch or splatter.

Imaging is superbly spacious and 'out of the box', with precise focus and good depth layering. Shut the eyes, and one simply isn't aware of the location of the speakers, merely of the soundstage spreading out between, around and behind them. Choral Evensong (Radio 3, 4pm on Wednesdays) was particularly effective, as indeed was any material involving acoustic instruments and unamplified voices captured using simple miking in a spacious acoustic.

Colorations are very well controlled, with just a little extra nasality and a slightly 'pinched' character audible on speech. There's no evidence of 'boxiness' from the enclosure, which feels remarkably 'dead' to the touch, even when the speaker is working really hard. The Helicon 400 is just so downright competent, I simply left them in the listening room doing their thing, and they left me wondering whether there was any good reason to opt for something more costly and exotic. Ultimately, the midband is perhaps lacking in both transparency and dynamic tension, but only to a modest degree. That may well be because the slight excess at the extreme top and bottom leaves the midband sounding a little laid back. However, the unusually flat impedance trace suggests that a compensated network is probably used here, and the extra complexity involved might also be a factor.

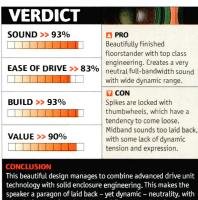
During the time that the Helicon 400s were installed, they were used for several listening tests with industry visitors. None had seen the model before, and all were impressed by both the classy presentation and the fine sound quality, and surprised the speaker wasn't more expensive than its actual asking price. One reason for leaving the 400s in situ in these sessions was simply that the speaker proved very adept at revealing the differences when

components were changed elsewhere in the chain. The very superior inherent neutrality combined with the wide dynamic range and fine coherence made it very easy to hear the changes made when using the various new Vertex AQ components I tried recently.

A new vibration-absorbing 'bi-wire link' set was inserted to replace the conventional wire links supplied by Dali, and the improvement in dynamic range that resulted from inserting these components brought an immediate and obvious improvement in low-level resolution and dynamic range, as vibrations generated by the bass units were blocked from interfering with the tweeter.

Although the 'two-and-two-halves-way' configuration is rare, this is the second example to come our way recently (see also Rega's R9 in HFC 256), and provides further evidence for the excellent results this approach can provide, combining the fine coherence of a simple two-way with the additional extension at both frequency extremes provided by the extra drive units. HFC

Paul Messenger



eedom from boxiness and fine stereo imaging, too.



Not for conservatives



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Double exposure

Can adding a near-identical power amp improve the performance of an integrated? We think so!

PRODUCT Exposure 2010 S Integrated Amplifier and 2010 S Power Amplifier

TYPE Integrated amp plus power amp (bi-amp system) PRICE (2010 S integrated) £599, (2010 S power) £499 KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 44x9x31cm each • Weight: 7kg each • Power output: 75W per channel continuous • (Integrated) Inputs: 5x line plus tape loop

xposure's 'S' makeover of the popular 2010 series continues with this power amp version of the integrated amplifier, which our blind listening panel liked so much in a recent *Ultimate Group Test (HFC* 262). Similarities between the two are remarkable, apart from the obvious lack of selector switch, volume knob and (at the rear) the integrated's multiplicity of inputs. Pull the lid off and the theme continues, with the exact same mains transformer and a near-identical circuit board stuffed with mostly the same components. You get the same twin pairs of output sockets per channel, too.

Yet this power amp is sold as an upgrade to the integrated, not necessarily as a partner to a preamplifier. Is someone having a laugh? The integrated has 'preamp' outputs, which follow the selector and volume controls, but clearly if you fed the power amp from those and drove the speakers conventionally you would be getting at most a rather minor improvement due principally to reduced hum modulation within the integrated's case. There didn't seem to be a problem there in the first place, so 'fixing' it really isn't likely to be a chalk and cheese difference – certainly hardly worth 500 quid.

Benefits accrue, however, when you retain the services of the integrated's power section and bi-amp your speakers. Exposure recommends using the integrated to drive the treble and the power to drive the bass; the reverse should work just as well, though most who've tried it would agree with Exposure's scheme, which keeps the largest current flows furthest from the preamp stages. Bi-amping like this will always work as long as your speakers have separately accessible terminals which can be linked or not at will. See this month's *Techno* column on page 19 of this issue for more details of what bi-amping entails and how best to achieve good results.

You can even switch the 2010 S power amp to mono mode, paralleling (not bridging) the channels to give extra current. We didn't try this but it's yet another upgrade possibility. Power output is 75 watts per channel, exactly the same (surprise!) as the integrated.

SOUND QUALITY

Another non-surprise: the basic sound of the unit is not at all dissimilar to the 2010 S integrated. In case you missed that *Ultimate Group Test*, here's a quick précis. We found it punchy, rhythmic and tonally well-balanced, with a very open and natural treble, offering excellent dynamics and fine imaging. Above all, it was considered very musical and communicative, really drawing the listener into a performance. Measurements confirmed that its basic electrical performance is of a high standard, and its manners are good. In fact, about the worst thing we could find to say particular favourite orchestral track, for instance, sounded well-rounded and detailed with good spatial separation of the various instrumental groups. There didn't really seem to be anything much to criticise. But with the power amp added (handling the bass as suggested), images firmed up even better and seemed to extend a few degrees further at each extreme. This was achieved with absolutely no change in basic tonality (that we could hear, anyway) but there was a small gain in the precision with which the timbre of each instrument was differentiated from the whole. And no, this wasn't a case of trees being highlighted at the expense of the wood because the homogeneity of the ensemble was if anything improved

Synth-based, bass-heavy, danceable rhythms told a similar story in many ways. The various

"With the power amp added, images firmed up even better and seemed to extend a few degrees further at each extreme."

about the integrated is that the presentation is just a touch 'forward' compared to some other fine models in the same general ballpark. A matter of taste, really.

Fed from the same source (a CD player with an integral volume control, for instance), the 2010 S power amp is slightly clearer than the integrated, which figures given there's less in the way (there's no volume control, source selector or buffer stage, naturally). That means that regarded on its own it's a stonkingly fine power amp at a price where there's very little competition. If you're after a 'starter' pre/power system we would have some trouble suggesting a better place to start. So far so good.

Now, add the power amp to the integrated to form a bi-amp system and things really get interesting. At first, the similarities dominate, since the basic character of the system is not much changed. But after a track or three the penny begins to drop that there is a significant amount more musical information coming across. Images that before seemed clear enough are now even more clear and considerably more concrete and stable. Instrumental timbres are more naturally preserved, and inflections more meaningful. As upgrades qo, it's a goody.

A few specific examples illustrate just what bi-amping can bring to an already good system. With the 2010 S integrated on its own, a



Exposure 2010 S integrated amplifier and power amp upgrade [Review]

strands making up the texture were more clearly and consistently revealed but at the same time the big picture was clearer than ever and listener involvement was quite significantly improved. The overall life of the music came more to the fore and distanced the potentially impersonal audio and recording technology used to create it.

You'll notice that both those examples (orchestra and pop/dance) invoke relatively dense music. With much lighter material, such as solo voice and guitar, benefits are less obvious. But there still are benefits, most obviously in clarity of attack on transients, including guitar notes and vocal sibilants. Solo piano gained quite markedly in natural, 'woody' timbre and even a solo flute, supposedly an 'easy' sound to reproduce (is there truly such a thing?) became more believable thanks to seemingly better integration between attack and sustain.

One feature of bi-amping that we learned to love is that it is very easy to audition – you can leave everything connected up to mains and source and plug/unplug only a couple of speaker wires to make the change. This of course makes it easier than usual to spot differences and we thought at one stage we were becoming 'super-tuned' and hearing things one wouldn't normally notice, but the occasional return to familiar references suggested this wasn't the case. The sound is not dramatically transformed but it is quite significantly improved in subtle areas which, however, seem to have quite an impact on how we hear the overall result.

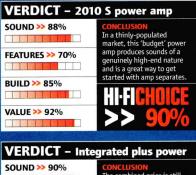
So, is this a sane upgrade? We'd have to say... absolutely. The cost/benefits of bi-amping may look very different with different products at higher prices, but in this case the upgrade cost is not much more than a group set of fancy cables and the improvement in sound is of at least the same order, or arguably greater. How else do you improve an already good £600 amp for less than its own price? Even allowing for a generous trade-in, you'll probably be looking at more than that to get a truly upmarket integrated, never mind a full pre/power combo.

We often tend to counsel against buying an integrated plus power bi-amp set-up straight off – some combinations do not strictly match in terms of output and the sound is not always worth the financial outlay. But so strong is the

VOLUME

performance of this pair at a still-modest total of £1,100 that we would urge you to try it if you are in the market at that price. As a possible alternative to high-grade integrated models (including Exposure's own 3010), it's a remarkably strong contender. **HFC**

Richard Black



 SUUND >> 90%

 FEATURES >> 82%

 BUILD >> 85%

 VALUE >> 90%

AUX 2

CD

TUNER

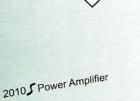
PHONC

AUX 3

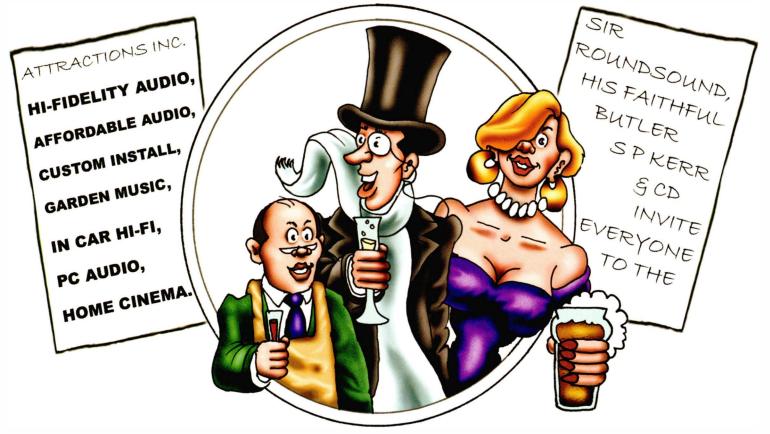
The combined price is still less than some integrated models of similar spec, and the result is very fine with a real lift over the good performance of each alone.

2010 S Integrated Amplifier

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2010 Power Amplifier



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Outboard action

Musical Fidelity continues its line of add-on audio upgrades with two new outboard gadgets

PRODUCT Musical Fidelity X-DAC^{v3}/X-10^{v3} TYPE Digital-to-analogue converter/valve output buffer PRICE £399/£299 CONTACT ☎ 020 8900 2866 ಈ www.musicalfidelity.com

o many, the days of the DAC are long past. In the early 1990s, the default audiophile position was to upgrade a CD player with an add-on digital converter or transformer. Now, CD players have evolved to such a point where DACs and other digital ephemera are superfluous and extra boxes are limited to the high end. Or so you might think... In reality, although the CD market is pretty much sorted in performance terms, the need for aftermarket DACs and output transformer buffers has never been greater, as people switch from CD to DVD players. Which is where Musical Fidelity comes in.

MF has a long history of add-ons – no-one has been more dedicated to the provision of off-board DACS, output stages and the like. The latest X-DAC^{v3} and X-10^{v3} demonstrate that maturity. They are almost identical, solid alloy boxes, the only differentiation from the front being the logo and number of blue LEDs on the thick front panel. Within the X-DAC^{v3} lies a dual differential 24-bit Delta-Sigma converter with an eight times oversampling filter, giving rise to 192kHz resolution. It can accept optical and coaxial digital inputs, has a pair of big gold-plated phono outputs and comes with a plug-top power supply (this can be upgraded with an X-PSU^{v3}).

The X- 10^{v3} is a new spin on a classic MF product – the X-10D. Nearly 50,000 units of that original valve output buffer were sold, but

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X-DACV3

MUSICAL FIDELITY

production of this one – as it sports a pair of rare 6112 'mu-vista' valves – is capped at just 4,800 units. It works by presenting a high input impedance and low output impedance, exactly what the output of a CD player and the input of an amplifier respectively like to 'see'. In essence, if players were better designed, there would be no need for the X-10^{v3}.

SOUND QUALITY

The X-10^{v3}'s ability to improve the lot of many products demonstrates how far these products have to go. In fairness, through most decent CD players on the market today, the X-10^{v3} is almost redundant and it makes almost no change to the sound. Plonk it behind a DVD player, however, and a dramatic transformation takes place. What's more, Apple's now ubiquitous iPod portable player is audibly improved when MF's output buffer is placed between it and a hi-fi system. Unlike its X-10D predecessor, the new model doesn't warm up the sound or seem to tangle with detail levels. The X-10v3 acts like a beneficent audio spectre, upping the soundstage ante where needed, improving the solidity of insubstantial-sounding products and tickling out more dynamic range in vaguely flat products. Specifically with the iPod, the X-10v3 sweeps away some of that codec 'mush' that prevents it from sounding like a true hi-fi source when hooked up to a good system.

The X-DAC^{v3}'s performance is more demonstrably full of character. It's very clean, exceptionally detailed and possessed of a huge soundstage, the likes of which you won't find in any budget CD player. 'Clean and detailed' is often a veiled way of saying 'soulless', but

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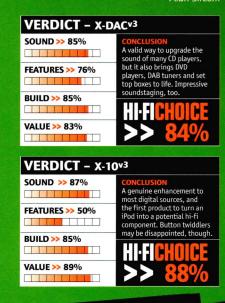
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not here. Instead, the X-DAC^{v3} is simply a resolution enhancer, improving the sound of basic DACs by a country mile, especially in the all-important midrange.

Adding the X-DAC^{v3} and X-10^{v3} together is an interesting exercise, because the whole is greater than the sum of the (already good) parts. There's no magic matching going on – the X-10^{v3} simply pulls the best from the X-DAC^{v3}'s output, the soundstage gaining some extra air in the mid and treble.

Arguably perhaps, the X- 10^{v3} is the more useful of the duo, simply because its benefits are more readily heard through a range of sources and its ability to transform the iPod (and digital radio tuners) makes it a natural for many modern set-ups. Buy one while you can. **HFC** *Alan Sircom*



X-10V3

MUSICAL FIDELITY

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march 2005 | HI-FI CHOICE 59

GROUP TEST: RICHARD BLACK LAB REPORTS: PAUL MARCHANT

CD PLAYERS

Despite SACD and DVD-Audio, reports of the death of the CD player have been greatly exaggerated. These six say there's life in the old disc yet



he move to high-resolution disc formats should have happened like the switch to LP from 78s. As new players support old discs, so players specifically designed for old discs - and the discs themselves - were expected to become obsolete almost overnight. And yet... well, it just hasn't happened, has it? Oh, plenty of people are playing their CD collection on DVD players and - in a few cases - the results are not unpleasant, but there's a pretty widespread realisation (among audiophiles, at least) that a dedicated CD player is not a bad idea, sonically or even practically.

While budget CD decks may be disappearing, the more upmarket models have only thinned out a little, leaving us plenty to look at. Here are six of the best. There are plenty more available, some of which we've looked at in the recent past, while others we're still looking forward to inspecting. Some even come from manufacturers that make very serious DVD and/or SACD players, but still regard dedicated CD as a worthwhile pursuit.

A point that hasn't been strongly made is that budget DVD-Audio or SACD audio is, in a sense, a bit of a waste of time. Here's why: to get the best out of CD requires some pretty careful optimisation of both digital and analogue domains (the usual stuff, such as jitter, hum, conversion accuracy, output stage distortion, noise and so on). If a budget CD player has trouble properly dealing with a 16-bit/44.1 kHz signal, how much of an advantage is any amount of extra notional resolution on the disc itself going to give? Just slapping a '24/96' badge on a piece of ho-hum audio electronics won't make it sound any better.

Where, then, is the crossover point where high resolution confers unarquable benefits? It may yet prove to be quite exalted. All six of these players achieve high technical and sonic standards from CD and between them demonstrate beyond doubt that really good CD replay is A) not trivial and B) worth striving for. High-resolution players at the same sort of price would add bandwidth but might end up sacrificing some of the musical resolution of these machines. And apart from your existing CD catalogue, how many high-resolution discs do you buy for purely musical reasons at any rate?

The following pages introduce some very relevant hi-fi source kit from that crucial price zone where quality gets serious without the dreaded law of diminishing returns biting back. Prepare to be impressed¹ **HFC**

EOUIPMENT USED

- Electrocompaniet ECI 3 integrated stereo amplifier
- Kimber, Furukawa and Bespoke Audio audio cables
- ATC SCM20 loudspeakers

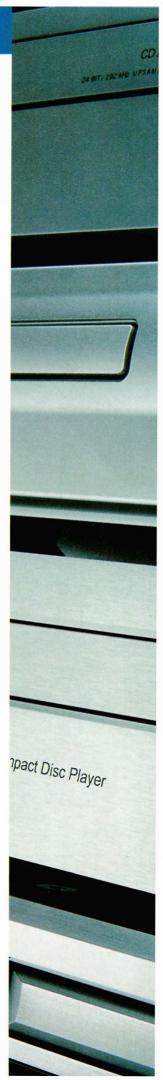
MUSIC USED

- Various Artists Altitude (Roksan compilation)
- S Miles Davis Kind of Blue
- Ouzmán Ambrosio
- S Malcolm Arnold Symphony No. 2

EARS USED

The following kind souls donated their time and expertise freely and companionably for our 'blind' panel listening exercise ♥ Keith Martin (hififorsale.com)
♥ Touraj Moghaddam (Roksan)

Selley (Cambridge Audio)





STRUCTURED LAB AND LISTENING TESTS

Each of these CD players was subject to a penetrating series of lab and listening tests, which provide a unique insight into their performance and compatibility. The equipment was thoroughly analysed using a broad range of state-of-the-art measuring instruments, all of which are highly regarded within the hi-fi, recording and broadcast industries. Analogue level and distortion measurements were taken with an Audio Precision System One, digital filter artefacts were measured on a Hewlett Packard 3561A Dynamic Signal Analyser, and digital measurements were shared between a Neutrik Digilyser and a Kikusui KJM6135 Jitter Analyser.

Our comprehensive listening tests were no less rigorous, being conducted under blind, level-matched conditions with some of the industry's most experienced hi-fi panellists. In addition, there were extended sighted listening tests by the author, using a wider variety of equipment and music and under a varied range of volume levels to attempt to determine real-world performance.

No other magazine offers an equivalent test and listening programme for comparative tests.

LAB REPORTS: THE BAR GRAPH

Our 3D bar graphs are a simple way of showing how the products compare across five key technical measurements. In each case, a percentage is given that falls above or below the group average. In this test, the five measurements are: **1] Total harmonic distortion:** The purity of reproduction of various test tones across the whole audio spectrum at differing levels.

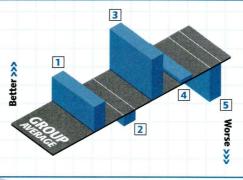
2] Jitter: The accuracy of the digital clock, in terms of its consistency of timing. Inaccuracy here can give rise to peculiar forms of 'digital' distortion. Above-average bar graphs mean low jitter.

3] Linearity: A measurement of how accurately lower-level (quieter) parts of the musical information are reproduced – the quieter details and subtleties, and their level with respect to the louder parts.

4] Dynamic range: Again, this reflects several tests at various volume control settings, taking into account noise generated by both the preamp and power amp.

5] Digital filtering: How well the DAC suppresses the inevitable artifacts that are inherent to the D-to-A conversion process. We measure this by reproducing a OdBFs (full-level) 20kHz test tone, and quantifying any other signals that are erroneously reproduced with it.

OUR BAR GRAPHS: AN EXAMPLE



TRACK

OP

AYER CE



£850 ≥ 01223 203200 ⊕ www.arcam.co.uk

A well-specified player, stuffed with high-performance electronics

s anyone who read our initial 'solo' review in *HFC* 260 will know, the CD192 is Arcam's latest mid-market CD player, now sitting at the top of the DiVA range. This range also includes some fine DVD players, yet Arcam is far from alone in believing that if top-flight stereo is the aim, a dedicated CD player has a lot to offer.

As CD players go, this one's fairly hefty. In fact, the case is made from thin (and non-resonant) aluminium. There's a fair-sized toroidal transformer and a standard-looking transport, but the dominant internal feature is a large metal screen above an upside-down circuit board which runs from front to back and is several inches wide. This carries the D/A convertor circuitry, a complex piece of work using two high-performance DAC chips per channel for lowest noise and distortion.

There's a clue in the model name. This is an 'upsampling' player and it uses an asynchronous sample rate converter, a relatively unusual component to find in a single-box player. To some extent that makes this more like a twobox (transport plus DAC) solution, though, as ever, the devil will be in the detail. Analogue components, as usual with Arcam, are good quality commercial types rather than fancy brand names. The player is nice to use, with a clear display, sensible buttons and support for CD Text. It doesn't play MP3 discs but does accept CD-RW. Both flavours of digital outputs are present, plus twin analogue output sockets.

SOUND QUALITY

The panel liked this player on the whole, criticisms being mild and infrequent. The listener who liked it least found it unexciting on a few of the tracks and lacking some detail, but even he conceded that it had a great punch in the bass and – in general – plenty of life, energy and impact. All agreed that it had a particularly clear midrange with good definition of instruments, especially within small ensembles. It scored a big hit with its rendering of piano, which was felt to



have good dynamics and realistic body, making it one of the most believable of the group.

Our longer-term listening tests concurred with most of that, particularly the dynamics – these are clearly and unfussily conveyed, making for nicely lifelike sounds across a range of music. All the same, detail is not always the absolute best and careful listening to a selection of well-known imaging test tracks suggested that this player was only average for image depth. Despite the flat frequency response, the treble sounds more pronounced than with other players but this doesn't lead to any kind of fatigue. On the contrary, it makes for good involvement with the sound.

There's no great preference for particular musical styles, but rock and so on likes the strong bass and jazz seems well served by the treble. As ever, Arcam is not the brand of choice for those who seek lashings of added excitement from their hi-fi.

One small but significant gripe: this was noticeably the noisiest player, mechanically, in the group. It had an distinctly audible tuned hiss at a level which, were it present in the electrical outputs, would lead to instant damnation long before the product got to a reviewer. It's mildly irritating and should be dealt with. That apart, a fine CD spinner. **HFC**

VERDICT	e eee
SOUND >> 87%	A finely balanced player with civilised manners – one which doesn't add
FEATURES >> 88%	excitement but remains engaging, informative and relaxing to listen to. A pity
BUILD >> 87%	the noise levels from the transport are so high.
VALUE >> 87%	HI-FICHOICE 87%



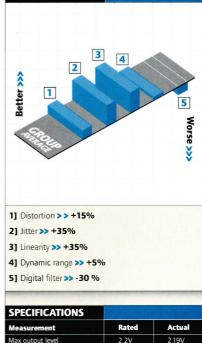
LAB REPORT

The latest player from Arcam truly shows off the company's capabilities. In almost every measurement we conducted, performance matched or exceeded our expectations. The only area where the machine showed significant weakness was in the linearity of its frequency response - absolutely constant except for the extremes upper and lower areas. Even at its worst, the +/- 0.07dB error is forgivable given the other aspects of the machine's performance. It would seem that the Wolfson Microelectronics DAC (used in a number of current Arcam products) is something for Arcam to shout about, with consistently low distortion and very accurate linearity measurements (better than 0.1dB error down to -70dB) among the best-on-test, preserving low-level detail very well. The measurements on the digital output suggest a well-designed clock circuit jitter measuring at <100ps, and with an overall clock accuracy of better than 0.25Hz.

HOW IT COMPARES

Distortion (1kHz @ OdBFs)

ignal-to-noise ratio



0.0008%

114dB

0.0045%

108.9dB



£699 ≥ 01442 260146 ⊕ www.creekaudio.co.uk

Without deserting the classic look, Creek uprgrades its technology

reek knows what it does best, and what it does best is make neat hi-fi. This player is pretty much exactly as big as it needs to be, with hardly a wasted centimetre in any direction. It's smartly executed and completely unpretentious, but the thick solid aluminium fascia does look very nice and the buttons are light in action but decisive.

The original CD50 used a Philips audio CD mechanism, but MkII units have all been based around a DVD-ROM drive, which reads at double speed – Creek buffers the data suitably to give low jitter. Actually, this is not the same MkII specification that we tested in *HFC* 252 as there has been a firmware upgrade (available to existing owners via Creek's website) that allegedly improves readability of older discs. These things have been known to affect overall sound, so we thought a re-test not unreasonable.

A particular deluxe touch is found internally, with two mains transformers supplying the analogue and digital sections of the electronics. One or both of these hummed slightly in the review sample, though only in the very quietest conditions was it audible. The transport seems reasonably - if not completely - quiet mechanically. The main functions of the player are carried on a single board, filled with surface-mount components, including the output buffer amplifiers, though critical passive components are conventional (should we start saying 'old-fashioned' yet?) through-hole types. A single pair of analogue output sockets is joined by optical and electrical digital outputs and a pair of phone-style sockets for data connections to multi-room controllers.

SOUND QUALITY

On the whole, Creek products have done pretty well in these pages. Nevertheless, all the panel members expressed at least some reservations about this player. There was praise for its toe-tapping qualities and also for its timing (not necessarily the same thing), and its overall



presentation was well enough liked. All the same, its bass came in for some criticism, one listener finding it subjectively curtailed, another lacking in punch. In terms of detail, it seemed to favour the big picture over the individual strands, and in a recording of ensemble voices, one listener commented specifically that they sounded more like a choir and less like individuals – take that as you will, it's not necessarily criticism!

Tonally, its treble seemed very slightly subdued to at least one listener, who liked its way with a bright trumpet recording but conceded that other players may be more accurate. In fact, all these transgressions were clearly felt to be slight but taken together they do begin to weigh against the player. Over time though, we found it a grower, one which makes a better impression the longer one listens, but it still didn't match the best of the group for detail and effortless extension in the bass and treble.

Where this player does score – and the relatively quick-fire listening panel presentations could hardly evaluate this – is in self-effacement. Its sins are of omission rather than commission and so for general day-to-day listening it is unintrusive and relaxing. But the best of the competition offers that and higher levels of detail too... **HFC**

VERDICT	000 (5 5158 000 (5 5158
SOUND >> 81%	Technically a real star, the upgraded Creek offers decent sound all round, but
FEATURES >> 80%	neither bass nor treble seems to match some of the others for extension and
BUILD >> 85%	ease. Low listener fatigue counts in its favour.
VALUE >> 84%	HI-FICHOICE 83%

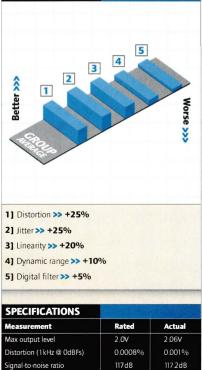


LAB REPORT

This compact machine certainly seems to pack in the performance. Distortion measurements were low and consistent, ranging from 0.021% at 500Hz to a worst-case figure of 0.04% at 20kHz. Our testing of the DAC's linearity revealed very good performance indeed. As we worked our way down the dynamic range, there was no more than a 0.3dB error until we got to the levels where the noise floor started to affect the results. This is the principal benefit of Creek's utilization of the 24-bit DAC circuitry.

The reconstruction filter in this DAC is amongst the best seen – during our stress-testing, we managed to measure only the tiniest squeak of artifacts – nearly 70dB below the 20kHz test-tone. This is, once again, a reflection on the 24-bit/192kHz DAC design, and provides justification for what might otherwise seem an extravagance in terms of component selection during the design process.

HOW IT COMPARES



the AUDIO CONSULTANTS

FINE TWO CHANNEL AUDIO SYSTEMS



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Final Electrostatic loudspeakers. All the transparency and imaging that only comes with this type of speaker design. Model shown is the F500 panels with S200 300wpc active sub. All inclusive price of £3495. Also demonstrating the 400i package at £2000.

Clearaudio Emotion turntable. Beautiful looking, non-suspended design with the Satisfy unipivot tonearm. Incredible value, including cartridge at £655. Also demonstrating the Champion Level 1 turntable.



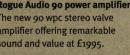
Rogue Audio 90 power amplifier. The new 90 wpc stereo valve amplifier offering remarkable sound and value at £1995.

Sugden Masterclass phono amplifier. Very lucid, sonically on a par with some valve phono stages but with noise free high gain £1299.



A.R.T. V6 loudspeaker. This new model has a very open, transparent sound and capable of good quality low bass. Well worth a listen. £3250. Model shown in ebony £3500.

Amphion Xenon loudspeakers. Fast and articulate with neutral tonal balance. Slim floorstander which does not mind walls £2500. SME Series M2 tonearm. Wonderful engineering for this price. A much better sound than we expected at £613. Cartridge shown is the excellent new Lyra Argo at £849.



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CD Players £550-£1,000 [Ultimate Group Test]



£1,000 ☎ 01480 435577 ₩ www.cyrus.co.uk **CYRUS CD8X**

Gorgeous sounds from a gorgeous unit. Who needs big-case hi-fi?

he 'x' on the end of the model name denotes an upgrade on the original CD8, which was already a rather fine CD spinner (we called it a Best Buy in *HFC* 252), though it seems nothing fundamental has changed. The power supply has been upgraded (though you can still push things further up the ladder by adding the external PSX-R power supply for another £400) and indeed the way Cyrus has managed to fit two toroidal transformers into the case along with the transport is a masterpiece of shoe-horning. Too bad they had both managed to work loose on the review sample – a little extra fixing security required (like some nail polish), perhaps?

The features are the usual set, with a few extras on the connections front – twin analogue outputs and the Cyrus MC-Bus for connection to other matching components. The CD drawer, when open, conceals operating buttons but if you absolutely can't remember which one does what, pressing either of the accessible ones (left or right end) will close the drawer anyway. It's a nice little bit of thoughtful design which is typical of Cyrus. The display is nicer than most to look at, too.

Circuitry is also typical of current good practice, with top-ranking DAC chips and great care taken against jitter. In fact, Cyrus's spec for the latter of 80ps is state-of-the-art and getting hard to measure. Once again, the ubiquitous Cyrus case not only looks smart but is practical and acoustically non-resonant, a useful fillip. Little or no audible mechanism noise leaks out.

SOUND QUALITY

After the mixed reception given to a Cyrus amplifier (the 6vs) by some of the same listeners in the same system (*Ultimate Group Test, HFC* 262), this player proved a welcome hit. It was hard to find any criticism at all in the listening notes, although in the Miles Davis track, one listener thought its presentation of double bass was just a shade



shy of one or two others, while another found it a little unconvincing with piano.

That apart, everyone was full of praise for the strong and effective bass, clear treble, crisp detail, accomplished imaging – the whole shebang, effectively. And indeed it was hard subsequently to find much amiss, even with the trickiest test tracks available. Perhaps the treble is not always quite as open as with the Arcam, for instance, but it was hard to be sure. The bass is especially praiseworthy, very clear and extended but always treading the fine line between bloom and dryness.

Once again, it's worth mentioning that this is not the player for listeners who like their hi-fi actively to 'do something' with the sound. Its neutrality will not be to all tastes and with synth-heavy music, say, it might seem a little dull. Blame that on the poor equipment used by too many mixing and mastering engineers.

Well made recordings of any kind of acoustic music really blossom on this player and come to life convincingly. Even some slightly over-produced (to the extent of often sounding synthetic) classical problem discs seemed as realistic as we've ever heard them.

As it stands, it's a clear Best Buy. Add the optional PSX-R supply and it's better still.... **HFC**

VERDICT	• <u>15 67:58</u>
SOUND >> 90%	A highly detailed and very musical player, effortlessly extended in the bass and
FEATURES >> 85%	with fine treble too, that makes the most of any recording. With the promise
BUILD >> 86%	of better sound thanks to the PSX-R upgrade cor!!
VALUE >> 89%	HI-FI CHOICE 90%

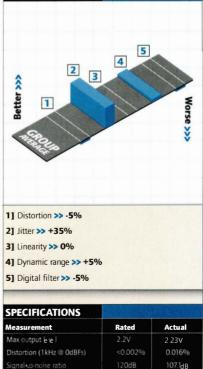


LAB REPORT

The newest diminutive CD spinner from Cyrus incorporates a number of improvements over the older CD8, and is marketed in-between the 6-series components and the new top-end 'X' product range. In common with the CD8, it features multi-stage cascaded power-supply regulation circuits to preserve the signal integrity. There are other subtle changes from the CD8 model we reviewed some time ago – even the casing has been subtly improved (by means of a coating of silver-alloy on some of the bodywork to improve screening). The output level of the sample tested seems bitisheadthe superserve that the sample tested seems

higher than average – measuring 2.23V at 1kHz, possibly giving rise to impressions that this machine somehow sounds a little fuller than it's competitors. The digital measurements were impressive indeed – clock accuracy measured as better than +/- 0.1Hz, and jitter measurements were found to be at the resolution of our jitter analyzer (<100ps).

HOW IT COMPARES



[Ultimate Group Test] CD Players £550-£1,000



£599 2 01273 423877 **⊕** www.exposurehifi.com **EXPOSURE 2010 S**

Exposure gambles on its own CD drive - we think it wins

he typical Exposure smart but functional slab case gives little away, but there is one significant and unusual feature to this player – Exposure has commissioned its own CD transport. The majority of specialist CD players these days are based on CD-ROM or DVD-ROM drives, but those can be a pain to interface and are not necessarily optimised for audio in any sense. Optics and pickup are by Sony, but congratulations are in order to Exposure for having the courage to push the boat out on the rest. All the same, the familiar gremlin of mechanical noise is present in small – but not vanishing – measure.

The feature set is simple and dedicated to traditional hi-fi rather than multiroom installations. You get both flavours of digital output (the electrical one on a BNC socket, which is only a benefit if you use an appropriately-terminated cable) and audio outputs, and of course you get a remote control. You'd better not lose this handset, as the front panel buttons give no way of searching within a track.

Pet peeves aside, it's a nice enough machine to use and its very well assembled. There's nothing remarkably fancy inside; some components are downright unfashionable in audiophile circles, but performance suggests much careful attention has been applied. A particularly large toroidal transformer feeds a brace of well-regulated power supplies.

SOUND QUALITY

Chalk up another hit for Exposure, apparently. After the success of the 2010 S integrated amp in *HFC* 262, this matching CD spinner had a lot to live up to and – lo and behold – it did. It didn't quite outperform the best of the group, but then it's the cheapest player taking part in this test and it certainly didn't sound like it.

The word "enjoyable" cropped up several times in listening notes (both from blind and sighted sessions), which says a lot about the player's way of engaging the listener. It was



liked on more specific grounds too, including bass (again) and detail. One listener, for whom it is clear that instrumental definition and separation is a priority, commented that it doesn't quite distinguish between instrumental lines as well as the best of 'em, and this is indeed justifiable. However, even that picky customer was happy enough to agree that what it makes of each instrument is a very convincing picture, in detail and in outline.

Intriguingly, one listener asked, "was this louder?" in his notes. It wasn't (and seeing that comment we went back and checked our volume settings), but that may well say something about the player's happy knack of communicating intimately. It offers good imaging with some of the best depth we've heard around this price, very sweet treble and an extremely even-handed midrange. It also seems exceptionally catholic in its music tastes, being completely at home with everything from solo piano to glam rock to jazz ballads, and perhaps the most assured of the group with high-energy pop or dance material.

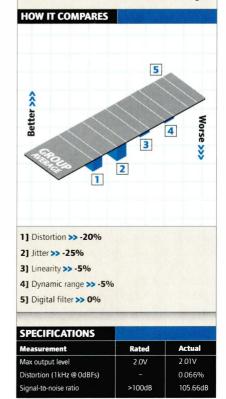
Our initial 'solo' review of the 2010 S in *HFC* 261 extolled its musical enthusiasm but noted some lack of refinement. There's truth in that statement, but the player rarely gets too carried away. It's an engaging Best Buy. **HFC**

VERDICT	
SOUND >> 87%	A spirited performer that really gets to the heart of the music, though not
FEATURES >> 80%	ideally suited to the detail freak or anyone seeking an overtly relaxing listen. The
BUILD >> 86%	cheapest in the group, but also one of the best.
VALUE >> 91%	HI-FICHOICE 89%



LAB REPORT

The newest incarnation of the established 2010 continues Exposure's fine lineage of machines. It has a lot of commonality with its predecessor in terms of internal layout and front-panel design. When it comes down to measured performance. consistency is what this machine is about. Distortion figures vary by only 0.01% across the audio band, creeping up slowly and smoothly with frequency. Frequency response is ruler-flat from 20Hz to 10kHz, and then rolls off gently approaching 20kHz. Linearity measurements are also consistent, showing a fairly high-precision DAC. In terms of digital-domain measurements, the machine performed decently - less than 3.7ns of clock jitter on the S/PDIF output, with clock accuracy better than 2.3Hz. The DAC's reconstruction filter appears very decent as well, with the highest-level digital artifact being better than 55dB below the 20kHz-fundamental test signal.



CD Players £550-£1,000 [Ultimate Group Test]



£800 № 01753 680868 @ www.marantz.com

Great looks, slick operation – but can the sound keep up?

ew CD player manufacturers have as long – or as distinguished – a history as Marantz. This player, too, has been around a while. Or has it? We've looked at the MkII in its basic and 'KI Signature' guises in the past, but the MkIII is noticeably different, if only in the choice of DAC chip. A Burr-Brown part now replaces the original Philips chip, though the mechanism is still a Philips – Marantz must have bought a job lot, since these Philips mechs seem to be extinct elsewhere, to many manufacturers' regret. Apart from anything else, it reads a freshly inserted disc very much faster than most current drives, which saves a lot of frustration!

As befits an upmarket player, build quality is good and remarkably heavy, with extensive internal bracing and damping. There's plenty of solid and plated copper around, too, screening critical components including the famous 'HDAM' output amplifier modules. On the features front, the most unusual is a volume control (accessible only via the remote control), which is best used as a trim to match other sources in the system as it doesn't go below -30dB and always defaults to full level on switch-on. There is also a choice of two digital filter responses, the 'fast roll-off' one being the usual not-quite-fast-enough filter, featured by the majority of the world's CD players and the 'slow' one even slower, though offering a shorter impulse response.

Add a smart if slightly idiosyncratic display (available track numbers rather oddly aligned along the bottom, for instance), nice chunky buttons and a very high standard of fit 'n' finish and this is one of the more aspirational players around, externally at least.

SOUND QUALITY

Even Marantz nods occasionally, it seems, for this was not the top choice of any listener. The comparison between the players in this group was not by any means chalk and cheese, and in describing this as one of the less successful, we



would not like to make it seem incompetent – it's not. It has good clarity throughout the frequency range and very well-bred manners. The bass is unfailingly tuneful too; a valuable attribute in any audio kit. All the same, it seemed to lack insight and that elusive trait, shown by some of the others, of really drawing the listener into a musical performance.

There was comment, too, on a lack in the timing department, something which is perhaps related to involvement, as it all deals with instinctive reactions rather than analysis. Analytically, it is hard to criticise the player, though one listener felt its treble seemed a touch "closed in". But, it is possible to pick out the separate musical strands quite clearly, there are no tonal anomalies to point to and imaging seems generally good.

In the end, it seems there is a hint of veiling – something that in isolation might hardly have been noticed, but which in such talented company as the Cyrus CD8x made itself known all too readily. After several days of living with the players, it became clear that there is another level of resolution available over and above what this player can offer. It's a shame to criticise such a good-looking machine with great usability, but if sound is your first and last criterion it's worth looking further afield. **HFC**

VERDICT	Ö Ennen ö
SOUND >> 80%	The Marantz never quite grabbed our listeners attention and seems to
FEATURES >> 87%	suffer from some slight but pervasive veiling. Superb manners, just a
BUILD >> 90%	little unexciting. It looks fabulous, though.
VALUE >> 82%	HI-FICHOICE 82%

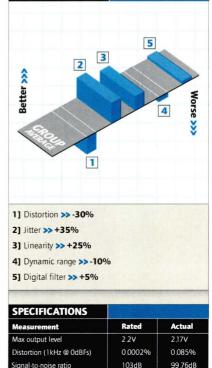


LAB REPORT

For the most part this is another accomplished performer from Marantz in the lab, which is no suprise given the brand's long and distinguished experience with the CD format. Frequency response measurements show a very gentle roll-off of level as frequency climbs, in conjunction with a very, very level midrange response. DAC linearity seems to be better than merely 'acceptable', if not stunningly precise in comparison with the other distinguished performers on test here.

Distortion was found to rise slightly as levels fell during the DAC linearity test, disproportionate to the behaviour of the CD17 MkIII's competitors in this test. Try as we might, we were unable to reproduce the claimed 0.00002% distortion figure, our tests yielding results that were a little less impressive. Measured performance of the clock circuitry shows a solid basis for performance, with less than 100ps jitter, and a basic accuracy of +0.25Hz.

HOW IT COMPARES



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£800 2 01494 681515 ⊕ www.onkyo.co.uk **ONKYO C-1VL**

A welcome return to the two-channel fold with this smart unit

he Onkyo brand has not been a major player in the UK specialist hi-fi scene of late, but despite occasional lapses into home cinema and near-invisibility it never went away. Onkyo has now come back with a splash to launch this upmarket-looking player. The colour scheme is a bit garish, but the overall appearance is distinctive and pleasingly slimline, while to the touch it's remarkably solid. The construction is ingenious and robust, with a straightforward chassis covered by a skin that is both decorative and functional, it being made of solid metal.

Internally, the build is typical of the breed, with a mix of through-hole and surface-mount components on a single multi-layer circuit board. The DAC chip is from Wolfson, the same part as used by Arcam in the CD192 (though only the one is used here), while the output buffering uses familiar op-amps and some basic passive components. The power supply is well specified, with a toroidal transformer of generous size and large reservoir capacitors.

Onkyo makes mention of its 'Vector Linear Shaping Circuitry', which seems to be just another slow roll-off oversampling filter. Actually, if it's not the one built into the DAC chip, it's as near as makes no odds. Mention must also be made of the 'Direct Digital Path', which seems to be a two-inch bit of good quality wire. The digital output can be switched off from the front panel. Apart from the generous provision of three digital outputs (two Toslink, one electrical) and possibly the world's slowest CD tray, that pretty much wraps up the features. Clearly performance was the main criterion.

SOUND QUALITY

And performance is what our panel noticed about this player. They expressed surprise on learning afterwards which machine they were commenting on, which shows the value of blind listening and should, we hope, encourage you to cast aside preconceptions



and investigate the C-1VL. In many respects, it scored as well as any here. There was the odd, isolated remark about a slight "closed-in" quality to the sound but otherwise it was predominantly positive comment.

Bass was thought weighty, credible and punchy and the midrange open and detailed, while treble, perhaps significantly, was neither specifically praised nor criticised by any listeners. That at least suggests there is nothing bothersome about it, which is good if one accepts that the function of hi-fi is to get out of the way. In our operatic test track, one listener found the sound a little uninvolving but that was specifically countered in another track, by another listener, who found its presentation most attractive.

Sighted listening brought up a further comment – in very 'busy' music the treble can sometimes harden up, affecting overall detail and involvement. However, the solid impression made by lower frequencies was reinforced and the player's manners were appreciated – they make for very relaxed long-term listening.

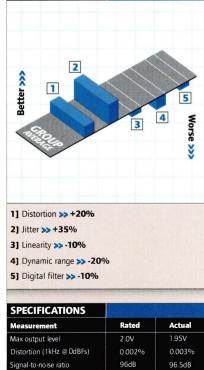
It's clear that, while not quite all things to all men, this is a more than competent CD player that deserves attention. We await the acquaintance of its colleagues from Onkyo's stereo range with interest. **HFC**

VERDICT	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
SOUND >> 84%	Onkyo's return to the two-channel world is a solid player, which manages to
FEATURES >> 80%	produce some very fine sounds, especially in the bass. Good detail and just a
BUILD >> 87%	touch of (slight) treble hardness now and then.
VALUE >> 83%	HI-FICHOICE 84%



This is a solid (in every sense of the word) performer, let down only by the reconstruction filter in the DAC. Under the worst-case circumstances. arquably unlikely to exist in a musical recording, we managed to measure reconstruction-filter products from our full-level 20kHz test signal as high as 1%. In some respects, the artifacts measured shouldn't be referred to as distortion, generated as they are by the D-A conversion process and not harmonically related to the fundamental (test-signal), but nonetheless, the lowest one comes in at only 24kHz. This is, in some way, connected to the rolling off of the frequency response as 20kHz is approached. This was unfortunate, as in every other respect this is a winner of a machine. Linearity measurements are exceptionally good and build quality is high. The signal-to-noise ratio is up with the best, clock jitter is gratifyingly low (<100ps) and overall clock accuracy is better than 0.1 Hz.

HOW IT COMPARES



CONCLUSIONS

This group of players shows a high standard overall, with some truly outstanding successes

he most important thing about this group is that all the players are more than just competent. Subjective comparisons with long-standing references and objective measurements of basic audio parameters concur in finding a very high standard among the six. On that basis, you could safely buy any of them and be unlikely to face disappointment.

Still, differences were found between them. Once again, our blind listening panel methodology was invaluable in pinpointing subtle sonic effects with considerable precision – listeners each responding individually, but with a considerable degree of agreement on certain key factors. There was no argument at all about the overall winner on sonic grounds though: Cyrus can step up to the podium unchallenged. The CD8x is the most expensive player here but evidently the money is well spent.

Second place is harder to define. Arcam's CD192 and Exposure's 2010 S both offer excellent sound in every area, if rather different characters overall. In the end, the Exposure's lower price counts in its favour, while the persistent mechanical noise that emanates from the Arcam's drive is a minus point. Exposure could improve matters in that area, too (actually, to be really fussy all but Cyrus could usefully do so) but the Arcam was the most obvious. Just don't sit too close to it! In fairness to both players, though, their performance is such that it would be unjust not to give them Best Buy ratings.

What about Onkyo's new baby? Onkyo products that we've investigated over the last decade or more have been inconsistent in styling and performance, and the range has never been heavily stocked or promoted in the UK. But with a UK office now firmly

>> When auditioning CD players, watch

between them, which can unfairly bias

your judgements. You will always like

mechanical noise problems at a stroke

out for very small level differences

the slightly louder player.

>> Minimise microphony and

established and a good-looking, great-sounding model like this in the range, we look forward to improving fortunes for the brand on these islands.

And what of Creek and Marantz? We've parcelled out a lot more praise than blame to both models tested, on average, and are truly sorry to see them sharing bottom place. Bottom, that is, of a top group, so no shame attached. However, there were mild yet specific criticisms of both that can't be overlooked. In other company, though, either might have walked it – but the CD market is still tough. Better luck next time! **HFC**

by putting the player out of direct

good equipment table helps, too.

TVs/DVD players too, to reduce

subliminal interference.

earshot and away from loudspeakers. A

>> Switch off the CD player display if

possible, and nearby unused radios/

HINTS AND TIPS

TRY THEM WITH THESE

AMPLIFIERS ELECTROCOMPANIET ECI 3 £995 Confident, muscular, detailed and devilishly good looking.

EXPOSURE 2010 S £599 Matches the CD player, but also sonically flatters any source component. ATC SCM12 £999 Near-miniature with terrific resolving power. Needs plenty of watts on hand. B&W 704 £1.400

Exceptionally wide bandwidth from this cleverly designed model.

CD PLAYERS AT A GLANCE

		CERT CALL Reporting New				ē a
MAKE MODEL	Arcam CD192	Creek CD50 MkII	Cyrus CD8x	Exposure 2010 S	Marantz CD17 MkIII	Onkyo C-1VL
PRICE	£850	£699	£1,000	£599	£800	£800
SOUND						
FEATURES						
BUILD						
VALUE						
OVERALL						
CONCLUSION	Beautifully built and well-featured player with a clear, open and involving sound.	Neat looks and good to use, but the sound lacks some detail.	Very impressive combination of detail, musicality, analysis and appearance.	Highly communicative sounds with good bass, though not always the most analytical.	Slightly veiled sound, despite good basics – not Marantz's best.	A good, solid performance with lots of heart. Well built, too.
KEY FEATURES						
ELEC DIG O/ P	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
OPT DIG O/ P	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CD-RW	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
CD TEXT	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
BAL AN O/ P	No	No	No	No	No	No
LAB CONCLUSIONS	E = EXCELLENT • G = GOOD	A = AVERAGE • P = POOR				
DISTORTION	0.0045% E	0.001% E	0.016% <mark>G</mark>	0.066% A	0.085% A	0.003% E
JITTER	<100ps E	<200ps G	<100ps E	3700ps A	<100ps E	<100ps E
LINEARITY	+/-0.12dB G	+/-0.197dB G	+/- 0.69dB A	+/-0.83dB A	+/- 0.19dB G	+/-0.93dB A
S/ N RATIO	108.9dB G	117.2dB E	107.1dB G	105.66dB <mark>G</mark>	99.76dB A	96.5dB A
STOPBAND REJECTION	30.7dB A	67.76dB <mark>E</mark>	52dB G	55.2dB G	66dB E	41.98dB A





U Z

47 LABORATORY

For some it's Zen. For others, radical.

Call it what you will, but at the end of the track, it's all about trusting your ears. About letting the simplicity of design, the energy and flow of the music carry you away. Small in size, big on sound, and more music than mere audio jewels, 47 Lab distills technology down to its simplest, purest form. And when you listen you'll know that this path - your path - is the one to follow. Why? Because designer Junji Kimura preserves the life of the music. There are no compromises. No unnecessary flash. No B.S. Just dynamic, unadulterated music.

Radical? Maybe.



John Roberts: t. 01562 731100 f. 01562 730228 m. 07721 605966

THE OLD CHAPEL, FORGE LANE, BELBROUGHTON. DY9 9TD sales@midlandaudiox-change.co.uk Accuphase, Audio Analogue, Audio Research, Belcanto, Conrad Johnson, Copland, Creek, Densen, DCS, Electrocompaniet, Krell, Lavardin, Magnum Dynalab, Nagra, Orpheus, Pathos, Primare, PS Audio, Reson/Resolution Audio, Spectral, Sugden, Trichord, Unison Research, Wadia, 47 Laboratory.

LOUDSPEAKERS

ELECTRONICS

Audio Physic, ATC, Avalon, JM Labs, Konus Audio, Pen Audio, Proac, Peak Consult, Martin Logan, REL, Sonus Faber, Velodyne, Verity Audio.

CABLES / SUPPORTS / ACCESSORIES

Cardas, Clearaudio, Eichman, Finite Elemente, Furatech, Grand Prix Racing, Nordost, Quadrasphire, Siltech, Shakti, Shun Mook, Transparent, Van de Hul.

TURNTABLES / CARTRIDGES

Avid, Benz Micro, Dynavector, Koetsu, Kuzma, Lyra, Michell, Rega, Roksan, RS Labs, SME, Triplannar, VPI.

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INTRO BUYER'S BIBLE

FICHOICE BUYER'S BIBLE

Welcome to the *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible* – the ultimate guide to the very best high performance hi-fi and AV gear you can buy. Here, you'll find all our favourite current products listed under easy to use categories, together with useful information on what to look for and how to get the most from your components.

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How to use this guide

The *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible* is the best way to make a shortlist of components for your system. Pick the ones that best suit your taste and budget, then use our *Dealer Classified* section to find specialist outlets where you can audition these components with your favourite discs.

Products that score more than 80 per cent overall are automatically featured in the *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible*. Any Best Buy or Editor's Choice Badges awarded are also displayed.

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BUYER'S BIBLE CD PLAYERS

CD PLAYERS

Audio disc players for music only

Despite the emergence of new formats and the resurgence of an old one (vinyl), CD is still the king of formats if you require breadth of choice. And despite the fact that

choice. And despite the fact that other sources will play CDs, if you want to hear your discs at their best there's little substitute for a dedicated CD player.

It's also the most enduring format on the market. Despite high-resolution contenders like SACD and DVD-Audio, nothing has been able to undermine this universally popular format.

CD players work by reading a stream of 1s and 0s off a disc that spins at a constantly changing speed (to counteract the increasing length of 'groove'). This bitstream is then digitally filtered before undergoing digitalto-analogue conversion in the DAC (D-to-A convertor). Thereafter, the signal is filtered



again before being amplified and sent to the output sockets.

The processes of reading the disc and converting the data are sometimes split between a CD transport and separate DAC in socalled two-box players. A popular approach with very high-end kit, this separates the electronically noisy elements from the sensitive analogue stages, but can introduce timing errors known as jitter, therefore one-box players usually offer best results where budget is a consideration.

SUPER AUDIO CD

SACD or Super Audio CD is a relatively new audio-only format introduced by Sony and Philips. It offers higher resolution than CD in the form of considerably greater bandwidth and improved dynamic range. It also has the potential for uncompressed surround sound using up to six channels, and most new discs take advantage of this. SACD discs are usually hybrids and will play on normal CD players, but you won't be able to appreciate their highest quality or their multichannel capability without an SACD-compatible player. Some SACD players also play DVD and even DVD-Audio – these are listed in our DVD section.

Q&A

WHAT'S A DAC?

A DAC or digital-to-analogue convertor is a fundamental part of any CD player and converts the digits read from the disc into an analogue music waveform which is amplified to line level.

WHY HAVE SEPARATE TRANSPORTS & DACS?

Discs are read by a transport or disc drive, which creates radio frequency 'noise'. Separating the DAC means the conversion can be done with less interference.

CAN I USE AN OUTBOARD DAC WITH MY INTEGRATED CD PLAYER?

Yes, if it has a digital output - and most do.

DO I NEED DIGITAL CABLES FOR A CD PLAYER?

No. All analogue cables are suitable for connecting a CD player to an amp. Digital specific cables with 75ohms impedance are useful when connecting the player to a digital recorder or DAC.

WHAT IS OVERSAMPLING/UPSAMPLING?

Oversampling involves multiplying the sampling frequency by a whole number, usually between four and 32, but sometimes higher, and is designed let the DAC to work in a more linear fashion. Upsampling is where the data stream is stretched out by interpolation and is typically used to refer to large changes in sampling rate such as from 44.1kHz to 192kHz.

CAN I PLAY SACDS ON A NOR MAL CD PLAYER?

Yes. The vast majority of SACD discs are hybrids, with a CD layer that all CD players can read.

CAN I PLAY DVDS ON A CD PLAYER?

No, the same applies to DVD-As. But you can play CDs and DVD-As on normal DVD players.

TOP BUYS



Marantz CD7300 £350

The latest in a long line of highly successful sub-£500 CD players from Marantz is an absolute beauty. Engaging and sonically refined, there's little to touch it at the price.



Naim CD5i £825 If you're looking for sub-£1,000 CD player, park your ears here. Naim's entry level beauty combines the brand's tradional rhythm and timing with considerable poise and panache.

CD PLAYERS BUYER'S BIBLE

SOURCES

SPECIFICATIONS

8

HEAL V

Our favourite BEST BUY CD PLAYERS

Audi	io-only CD and SA	CD pl	ayers	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	D-RW COMPATIBLE	6	AL ANALOGUE OUT	ADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	ISSUE NUMBER
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	TIBLE	TPUT	TPUT	TIBLE	CD TEXT	OUT	CKET	TPUT	ABER
UP TO	£1,000				1999		1.					
88	Arcam DiVA CD73T	400	Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic - a finely judged balance for budget to mid-price systems		•	•	•	•				247
88	Arcam DiVA CD192	850	Contemporary below the lid upsampling player with articulate, if slightly understated sound quality		•	•	۲					260
88	Cambridge Audio Azur 640C	250	This elegant little player can hold its own in very elevated company - a budget system will barely do it justice		0	0	0					249
88	Cyrus CD8x	1,000	Strong in terms of timing, imaging and resolution. Adding the £400 PSX-R power supply makes it stronger still		•							261
	Exposure 2010 S	600	Bespoke mechanism makes for a thoroughly involving listen. Not the most rounded, though		•	•	•					261
	Marantz CD5400 OSE	200	Nicely thought out player with useful features and good sound, though some mechanical noise		•	•	•	•		•		256
88	Marantz CD7300	350	Astonishingly capable sub- \pounds 500 player with effortless bass, detailed mid and treble and vast soundstages		•		•	•		•		250
88	Musical Fidelity X-RayV3	900	Think of this as an A3.2 CD player in a smaller, cheaper box. Great, earthy CD sound for the money		0	•	۲					255
88	Naim CD5i	825	As idiosyncratic as ever, but sonically the CD5i is the definitive player at the price				•					259
	Quad 99 CD-P	1,000	Good but not outstanding player that also doubles as a preamp, with digital inputs and volume controls			•	•					259
BB	Roksan Kandy MkIIID	650	Clean, tidy and expressive player - a more than worthwhile improvement on previous versions		•		•					259
	Rotel RCD-02	375	Against some strong competition in the same price area, this Rotel generally holds up well		•		•					231
88	Sony SCD-XA3000ES	800	A revised and refined version of the SCD-XA333ES that provides an almost holographic sound	•	•	•		0	•			248
ABOVE	£1,000											
38	Audio Analogue Maestro	1,650	The new Maestro 192/24 delivers a sound that's slightly rosy yet always musical and thoroughly enjoyable		•		•		•			257
EC	Audionet ART V2	2,300	Built to last forever, this CD has a dark natural sound with excellent bass and would be cheap at twice the price!		•		•					231
EC	Ayre CX-7 CD Player	2,950	Superbly built and natural sounding player that will win you over with its range of capabilities and transparency		•		•		•			251
EC	BAT VK-D5SE CD Player	5,495	Superb valve CD player that is smooth and refined but with real guts that doesn't conform to valve stereotypes		•		•					251
	Exposure XXII	1,395	Natural sounding player, great with voices and acoustic instruments and makes for engaging listening		0	0						238
	Hegel CDP2A	1,500	A technically proficient and masterly-sounding player built by people who clearly know what they are doing				•					252
EC	Krell SACD Standard	4,244	A landmark SCD player and an excellent CD player at what by Krell standards is a relatively affordable price	•		0						251
EC	Lindemann 820	6,999	Stereo SACD player with sumptuous build and sound, onboard analogue volume control and multiple digital inputs	•	۲				•		۲	262
	Meridian G07	1,595	Immaculately conceived and executed player with a softly-spoken voice. Needs careful system matching		•		۲		•			259
EC	Meridian 808i Signature	8,250	Stunning CD player with added preamp functions. Versatile and quite delightful			•	۲	۲	0		0	263
EC	Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista	4,000	Limited edition stereo-only SACD/CD player that is simply the best player MF has ever made	0	0		•	0				237
EC	Naim CDX2	2,700	Fine quality one-box CD player, but its best feature is upgradeability via outboard XPS supply				•					238
	Orelle CD100evo2	1,299	Relaxed, but strong on refinement and detail. An intelligent choice, particularly strong with acoustic music		0	0						259
88	Resolution Audio Opus 21	2,850	Dynamic, well timed and 3D performance with an analogue volume control and digital input for a second source				0		•		0	244
	Roksan Caspian M Series	1,100	An enjoyably dynamic-sounding player featuring a positively unique choice of digital components				۲					252
EC	Sony SCD-XA9000ES	2,400	State-of-the-art CD and SACD player with full SACD bass management and i.Link-encrypted digital output	0			•				0	253
EC	Wadia 302	3,999	A dynamic and gripping player, with bass to die for and resolution to change your listening habits		•	•	•		•		•	253
EC	Wadia 861se	9,999	Stunning player with a full digital preamp and an all-revealing sound that'll keep you up all night									256

SPECSKEY SACD COMPATIBLE Plays high-resolution SACD discs in multichannel and/or two-channel mode. ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT Electrical coaxial output for digital connection to a DAC or digital recorder. OPT DIGITAL OUTPUT Optical Toslink output for digital connection to a DAC or digital recorder. CD-RW COMPATIBLE Will play CD-RW (rewritable) discs, most CD players can cope with CD-Rs. CD TEXT Will display album and track titles from inserted disc. BAL ANALOGUE OUT Balanced XLR output connections for similarly equipped amplifiers.

HEADPHONE SOCKET Quarter inch (6.3mm) headphone jack fitted to the CD player. VARIABLE OUTPUT Player features both fixed level and variable, volume adjustable outputs.



Audio Analogue Maestro 192/24 £1,650 A beautifully crafted CD player that brings many traditional 'analogue' qualities to digital replay. If you want your CDs to sound natural, detailed and dynamic, this is a fine buy.



Resolution Audio Opus 21 £2,850

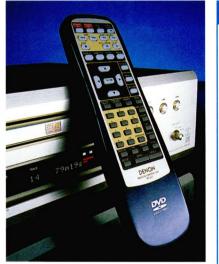
This player is king of subtlety. Outwardly, the music sounds dynamic and well-scaled, but it's the level of inner detail resolved here that is truly outstanding.

BUYER'S BIBLE DVD PLAYERS

DVD PLAYERS Disc players for audio and video

DVD has proved a phenomenal success in commercial terms and has virtually extinguished the market for budget CD players – you can't really beat a multiformat player when it comes to features. Early DVD players were not particularly good CD spinners because of the enormous amount of RF interference produced by video circuits, but as this problem has been identified manufacturers have begun to tackle it. Nowadays, most DVD players are competent CD players and a few are very good – often as not they are the ones that play DVD-Audio discs as well.

The great advantage of DVD is that it offers sufficient capacity to hold a feature length movie or music concert *and* discrete multichannel sound on a disc the size of a CD. In the case of plain DVD-Video discs, the audio is encoded in either the Dolby Digital or DTS format, both of which use 'lossy' compression to fit the audio onto the disc alongside the video data. You can use



a DVD player with your stereo system by connecting the stereo outputs, though this won't give the surround sound benefits that the format specialises in.

DVD-AUDIO

DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player. While offering similar benefits to SACD, it has the advantage of on-screen display for information – lyrics, images and so on. To save you having to decide which format to go for, a few brands are bringing out universal players to cover SACD and DVD-A, alongside CD and DVD-Video – a neat and relatively future proof route into high-resolution multichannel music. Higher-end models featuring high-bandwidth compatible digital audio links are now also appearing, enhancing DVD-A/SACD sound when used with similarly equipped amps.

Q&A

WHICH AUDIO OUTPUTS GIVE THE BEST QUALITY?

Use the analogue outputs for CD, DVD-A and SACD, and the coaxial digital output for DTS and Dolby Digital movie soundtracks.

WHICH VIDEO OUTPUTS GIVE THE BEST QUALITY?

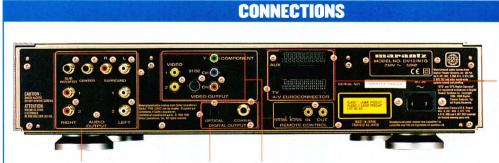
The best connection is component video closely followed by RGB Scart, which is clearly superior to S-video and the basic composite video option.

DO I NEED A MULTICHANNEL AMP TO USE A DVD PLAYER?

Only if you want to hear music and movie soundtracks in multichannel surround. DVD players can be used with stereo amps and just two speakers to great effect, but you'll only get stereo, not surround sound.

DO I NEED PROGRESSIVE SCAN VIDEO?

It's worthwhile for the very best picture quality, but make sure your DVD player and display device support PAL progressive.



ANALOGUE AUDIO OUTPUTS: For stereo and multichannel connections, use these for best results with DVD-Audio, SACD and CD. **DIGITAL OUTPUTS:** For Dolby Digital, DTS and PCM audio bitstreams VIDEO CONNECTIONS: Yellow sockets are composite; red, green and blue sockets are for component which gives best results, while the black multipin socket is S-video, which sits qualitatively between the two.

SCART CONNECTIONS: These are a goodquality option for video, especially ones that output RGB.

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Our favourite BEST BUY CE EDITOR'S CHOICE DVDD PLAYERS

Audi	o/Video disc playe	E COMMENTS In DIVA DV78 700 Imagine almost all of the DV88 Plus at a knock-down price. Top picture and sound performance for the money Indige Audio Azur 5400 200 Very respectable and well presented DVD-Audio player at a knockdown price In DVD-2910 600 Denon's entry-level universal player lives in the shadow of the '3910, especially on CD, but is a fine overall model In DVD-3910 900 Exceptionally well-specified universal player with a performance to match. A true class-leader Intz DV6400 400 Good starter universal player with decent CD replay quality, but slightly disappointing SACD performance er DV-575A 150 A universal player for peanuts! CD ain't great, but it's decent with DVD and allows you to try DVD-AxSACD at very little cost er DV-668AV 600 HDMI-equipped universal player with next-gen digital outputs – HDMI for video and i.Link for high-resolution audio In FMJ DV29 1,600 An excellent DVD player, very fine with both CD and DVD-Audio music discs and superb in its video role In V-12S2 2,000 An inversal player for audiophiles, with top-notch video playback too. Sonically refined and enjoyably understated Iian G91 3,895 A DVD-AV player, preamp/processor and tuner combined – great as a two-channel player, or in a complete Meridian rig Iian 800	OVD-A COMPATIBLE	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OU	OPT DIG OU	ADPHONE SO	ISSUE NUMBER	
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	TIBLE	TIBLE	OUTPUT	OUTPUT	SOCKET	ABER
UP TO	£1,000								
BB	Arcam DiVA DV78	700	Imagine almost all of the DV88 Plus at a knock-down price. Top picture and sound performance for the money			•	•		254
	Cambridge Audio Azur 540D	200	Very respectable and well presented DVD-Audio player at a knockdown price	•		•	•		257
88.	Denon DVD-2910	600	Denon's entry-level universal player lives in the shadow of the '3910, especially on CD, but is a fine overall model	•	•	•	•		262
88	Denon DVD-3910	900	Exceptionally well-specified universal player with a performance to match. A true class-leader	•	۲	•	•		260
	Marantz DV6400	400	Good starter universal player with decent CD replay quality, but slightly disappointing SACD performance		٠	٠	•		254
86	Pioneer DV-575A	150	A universal player for peanuts! CD ain't great, but it's decent with DVD and allows you to try DVD-A/SACD at very little cost		•		٠		261
BB	Pioneer DV-668AV	600	HDMI-equipped universal player without i.Link audio output, but still absurdly well equipped and highly capable for the price	0	•	•	•		252
88	Pioneer DV-868AVi	1,000	State of the art universal player with next-gen digital outputs - HDMI for video and i.Link for high-resolution audio	0	•	•	٠		252
ABOVE	£1,000								
88	Arcam FMJ DV29	1,600	An excellent DVD player, very fine with both CD and DVD-Audio music discs and superb in its video role	•		•	٠		263
	Cyrus DVD8	1,200	An impressive step up from the DVD7+, which includes component video outputs			•	٠		238
EC	Linn Unidisk SC	2,995	Groundbreaking universal player with built-in preamplifier, with excellent picture for home cinema and sound for hi-fi	•	٠	•	•		259
EC	Marantz DV-12S2	2,000	A universal player for audiophiles, with top-notch video playback too. Sonically refined and enjoyably understated	•	٠	•	٠		255
EC	Meridian G91	3,895	A DVD-AVV player, preamp/processor and tuner combined - great as a two-channel player, or in a complete Meridian rig	٠		•	•		260
EC	Meridian 800	10,805	The ultimate in DVD replay, modular construction, buffered ROM drive, upsampling and high-res digital outputs	0		•			230
EC	Naim DVD5	2,565	Naim's first DVD player is a real success, notable for its class-leading sound with CD and (optional) multichannel DVD-Audio	•					263
EC	Primare DVD30	2,000	A universal player for audiophiles - no wideband digital outputs but masterful with music and a good picture too		٠	٠	٠		253
EC	Townshend TA 565 Evo II	2,995	If you care more for results than aesthetics it's unbeatable. This is probably the best universal player on the planet	•	•	•	•		259

SPECS KEY DVD-A COMPATIBLE Plays high-resolution DVD-A discs in two and multichannel modes. ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT Electrical coaxial output for digital connection to a multichannel amplifier or receiver. OPT DIGITAL OUTPUT Optical Toslink output for digital connection to a multichannel amplifier or receiver. HEADPHONE SOCKET Quarter Inch (6.3mm) headphone jack fitted to the DVD player.

TOP BUYS



DVD-Audio and SACD playback at an astonishing price - and very decent DVD-Video too!



New-generation Denon is currently the most complete universal player below £1,000.



Arcam's best DVD player yet - a world-class, HDMI-equipped audio/video feast.

Townshend Audio TA 565 Evo II £2,995

This player builds on Pioneer essentials to deliver breathtaking sound across all formats.



HI-FICHOICE

BUYER'S BIBLE VINYL

VINYL Turntables, cartridges and phono stages

Record players or turntables offer the digital revolution serious competition when it comes to sound quality. Even a modest model can turn musical tricks that most CD players struggle with. Some call it vinyl warmth, but in reality it's a lack of digital hardness that makes the format so engaging. True, the software requires a bit more care, but even a knackered LP is more playable than a scratched CD.

Record players are made of three, perhaps four, fundamental parts. The turntable is the plinth and platter, usually also containing the motor and any suspension system. A tonearm sits on the plinth and allows the cartridge to trace the vinyl groove by pivoting or parallel tracking over the record. The cartridge contains the means of turning the mechanical movement of the groove wall into an electrical signal.

A fourth element is an amp dedicated to the delicate job of amplifying and equalising the cartridge's insubstantial output. This is called a phono stage and can be found in some integrated amplifiers and preamps, but is increasingly purchased separately for use with line-only amps.



There are two types of phono cartridge: moving magnet (MM) and moving coil (MC), and with a few exceptions the latter outperforms the former. But MCs produce a lower output and require better-quality amplification to be heard at their best. As a general rule, MCs offer a broader bandwidth, greater dynamics and more detail, but the better moving magnets do most things well enough to distract you from your CD collection.

Setting up a turntable varies from model to model, but the general principle is to level the platter by adjusting the suspension or, as with solid platters, the surface it sits on. Sprung suspensions sometimes require a bit of fine-tuning to sound their best, but the principle is to achieve a smooth, pistonic bounce. Cartridge set-up is even more critical, as the angles at which the stylus traces the groove affects its tonal balance and levels of distortion. A good alignment protractor is essential if you are intending to set up your own cartridge, as is a degree of patience. In essence, there are two angles you need to get right: the tracing angle as the cartridge crosses the record if you are looking from above, and the vertical tracking angle (VTA), which is adjusted by raising or lowering the arm base to bring the arm parallel with the record surface.



Pro-Ject 1 Xpression £210 The latest model from Czech turntable specialist Pro-Ject is remarkable value

specialist Pro-Ject is remarkable value for money – an Ortofon OM10 cartridge and carbon fibre arm are included in the price.



P5 £698 Rega's latest is a non-suspended design with a highly entertaining sound and a great sense of musical 'timing'. The new RB700 arm is included in the price.



Roksan Radius 5 £850 A beautiful mid-price turntable with an impressively well-sorted sound from low bass to high treble. Price includes matching Nima tonearm.



Michell Orbe SE £2,015 A fine example of the turntable art, the stripped down SE version of Michell's flagship now features a DC motor. Does justice to the best arms and cartridges.

SPECIFICATIONS

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SPECIFICATIONS

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Our favourite E BEST BUY E EDITOR'S CHOICE ΤΠΟΝΤΑΡΙ Ες

_	ord players		IEJ	SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	UPPLIED WITH CART	ISSUE NUMBER
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SQE	SIS	é.	RM	ART	BER
98	Audio Note TT1/ARM1	728	Simple and unpretentious, it delivers a real taste of true high-end performance at an affordable price	33/45	0	۰	۲		203
88	Avid Diva	1,100	A solid and powerful sounding deck with fine build, requires a smooth, relaxed cartridge for best results	33/45	0				247
EC	Avid Volvere Sequel	3,500	Heavyweight turntable that will deliver more of what's in a vinyl groove than most of the competition	33/45		۲			229
EC	Avid Acutus	6,000	Extremely capable design with no apparent shortcomings. Don't sell your vinyl 'til you've heard it on this!	33/45	•	0			194
EC	Clearaudio Master Reference	12,610	Revealing and exciting turntable that revels in the fine details (reviewed with Master TQ-I arm/Accurate cartridge)	33/45		0	۰	0	256
BB	Goldring GR1/RB250	140	The best value 'Rega' yet and a new benchmark for budget turntables. Vinyl nirvana on a shoestring	33/45			٥	۲	252
88	Michell Gyro SE	1,058	New DC motor-equipped Gyro offers great looks and even better sound. Price includes RB300 arm	33/45			•		239
EC	Michell Orbe SE	2,015	A superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price. Now features new DC motor	33/45	•				235
798	Nottingham Analogue Horizon	529	A fluid midrange and nimble but rich bass are two of the many attributes of this bargain deck (price inc RB250 arm)	33/45					253
88	Pro-ject Debut III	120	Superb budget deck offering fine build and performance	33/45			۲	۰	261
88	Pro-Ject 1 Xpression	210	Well designed and executed budget deck with an entertaining and revealing sound	33/45			0	•	248
88	Rega P2	198	Updated Planar 2: just as much fun as ever and now even better value as the competition falls away	33/45			۰		214
	Rega P3/RB300	298	Updated Planar 3, building on the strengths of the P2 with added subtlety and detail	33/45			•		214
88	Rega P5/RB700	698	Combines a great sense of timing with market-leading resolution and a phenomenal tonearm - a hard act to beat	33/45			۲	opt	257
88	Rega P7/RB700	1,298	A highly capable player that could hold its own in the most exalted company - a vivid and natural performer	33/45			۰	opt	257
EC	Rega P9/RB1000	2,498	Exceptionally elegant hi-tech player with complex outboard supply, ceramic platter and wonderful RB1000 tonearm	33/45		0	۲		228
88	Roksan Radius 5/Nima	850	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation (acrylic version tested)	33/45			۲		248
EC	Roksan TMS2/Artemiz	7,500	Typical Roksan sound, but better: pitch-accurate, lean, detailed and controlled, without the 'bloat' of lesser designs	33/45		0			246
EC	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V/309 hybrid arm	33/45	0	۲	۲		195
EC	SME Model 20.2A	5,274	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	33/45/78		۲	0		186
EC	T+A G10R/PH-G10MC	2,550	Style meets substance in a highly credible complete package, with integral phono step-up	33/45		۲	۲	۲	261
EC	Townshend Rock Anniversary	8,000	If you want to get to the meat and bones of the music this is a great tool for the job (price inc. Excalibur arm)	33/45	•		۰		259

Our favourite 🖻 BEST BUY 📧 EDITOR'S CHOICE **PHONO CARTRIDGES**

MM and MC cartridges

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BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	MM	MC	SI	\$
	Goldring Elite	250	A remarkably subtle and persuasive design that should tempt anyone		۰		235
	Grado Prestige Black	40	Offers admirable detail and treble extension, with good bass and ambience too	•		٥	214
88	Grado Prestige Gold	110	Produces rich, open and expansive music with the minimum of fuss	0		۲	235
EC	Linn Akiva	1,800	With fine dynamic expression and a wide bandwidth, what you hear sounds very close to master tape		0		242
EC	Lyra Helikon	1,095	Highly capable and highly neutral, this is a cartridge for all seasons, albeit fussy about vinyl quality	0			215
88	Sumiko Blue Point Special	250	A no-nonsense performer with engaging musical properties - one of the best around for less than £300		0		192
88	Van den Hul MC One Special	699	A gorgeous cartridge that's worth the price every time you hear a familiar track in a whole new light		0		235
EC	van den Hul Colibri XGP	2,699	Phenomenal resolution, custom building to suit hard and software, but needs 500 ohm loading and is vulnerable to damage		0		244
EC	Wilson Benesch Naked Analog	1,450	With its smooth clean highs, transparent midband and nimble bass, this is a lot of performance for the money		0		253

Our favourite I BEST BUY C EDITOR'S CHOICE **PHONO STAGES**

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Phor	10 stages			INPU	INPU	U. GA	DAN	IUMB
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SI	SI	SN N	R	FR
	Musical Fidelity X-LPSv3	249	Simple, well turned out valve-driven phono stage lacks adjustability, but sounds sweet, open and well-behaved	۲				248
BB	NAD PP2 phono stage	50	A fine buy for turntable users on a tight budget - open tonality and clarity is distinctly impressive for the money	٠	٠			245
88	Tom Evans Microgroove	400	For dynamics and real bass extension with good tonal colour this is the one to beat. The Plus version (£700) is even better!		•			234
EC	Tom Evans The Groove	1,800	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for maximum information retrieval off any LP		۲			201
BB	Trichord Dino/Dino+	498	Relaxed yet resolute with very good image depth and natural balance, not to mention great flexibility	0	0	0	۲	234

TURNTABLE SPECS KEY SPEEDS Speeds offered in rpm. SUSP SUBCHASSIS Turntables with a sprung or suspended support for the platter and arm. SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE Some decks require manual lifting of the belt from one pulley to another to change speed, but not these ones. SUPPLIED WITH ARM Deck is supplied complete with tonearm - some require a separate purchase in this department, but the dealer will fit it for you. SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE Some decks are supplied with a starter cartridge and this is included in the price shown,

CARTRIDGE SPECS KEY MM Moving magnet cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type, MC Moving coil cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type REPLACEABLE STYLUS Some cartridges have separate styli for ease of replacement, but it compromises sound quality.

SPECIFICATIONS

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ADJ. IMPI ISSUE

MC PHONO MM PHONC



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PINEWOOD **MUSIC** of Winchester and Taunton

PRIMA LUNA PROLGUE 2

The more you spend, the harder it is to get right - just like cars, just like houses. Yes, of course it can be done, but if you want music without tears and still have that pride of ownership feeling, then we invite you to treat your ears and eyes to the Prima Luna Prologue 2. Priced at under £1000 (just) and sporting four lovely KT88 tubes, this beautifully built and reliable little integrated amplifier will bring a smile to your face - and maybe your bank manager's as well.

AUDIO RESEARCH VSi55

Let's move up the ladder a little to the Audio Research integrated amplifier. If you have a pair of Sonus fabers or the smaller Martin Logans, this will drive them with real force and finesse. Underpowered at 50 Watts? Sounds like it on paper, doesn't sound like it in reality.

KRELL KAV-400xi

All the power you need, and then some. Slim, beautifully formed and built like a Swiss watch that sings, this integrated amplifier has a musicality that some people don't equate with solid state designs. Not for nothing is it an award-winner.

SONUS FABER CREMONA AUDITOR

Did Franco Serblin and his team understand just what they were unleashing a couple of years ago with this little marvel? Maybe. Maybe not. But the fact is that this gorgeous design not only makes your room look better, but the music it produces hits you where it matters: right in your heart.

PATHOS LOGOS

So try this one with your Sonus fabers: a match made in heaven? We think so. Both Sonus faber and Pathos are designed and made in Vicenza, and a more beautiful and musically historic city you could not find. Hear these at Pinewood, and you'll want to see the place itself.

Agents for: Krell, Audio Research, Jadis, Sonus faber, Martin Logan, Koetsu, Copland, Prima Luna, Dreamvision, Pathos, Oracle, Lyra, Unison Research, Transparent, The Chord Company, finite-elemente, BCD Engineering, Futureglass

You are invited to contact Brian Rivas or Alison Holmes for a discussion and demonstration

The PINEWOOD MUSIC COMPANY Winchester: 01962 776808 Taunton: 01460 54322 Mobile: 07860 351113 e-mail: brianriv@mac.com

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TUNERS BUYER'S BIBLE

RADIO TUNERS

FM and DAB hi-fi separates

Radio is a fantastic musical resource that's in danger of being taken for granted, but whatever your tastes there's someone out there catering for it. If you haven't got a decent tuner hooked up to your hi-fi already, you're missing out!

DAB or FM?

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Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) is said to be available to 80 per cent of the population and the long-term plan is to switch public broadcasting over to digital, but hardware prices have yet to come down to a point where this would be acceptable. Its advantages over FM include hiss-free reception, the potential for a wider range of stations and the ability to display comprehensive programming information. FM's RDS system means that station name and occasionally track titles are displayed, but the range of information is fairly limited.

Where FM scores over DAB is in the lower cost of hardware and the greater reception

area. It can also provide higher sound quality if reception conditions are favourable. Absolute sound quality judgements are muddied by the fact that you are listening to different forms of compression and processing at the studio for each station.

What is clear, however, is that there are more and more radio stations broadcasting on DAB that aren't available on FM. So if it's variety of programming you're after, they have a lot to offer.

RECEPTION

The quality of signal you feed a tuner will dictate its sound quality. So serious FM listeners should get a decent external aerial and connect it with as few junctions and splits as possible. Every time you split the cable (ie take a feed for another tuner) you halve signal strength! With DAB the same applies but get a DAB-specific aerial. See www.bbc.co.uk/digitalradio for details.



Denon TU260L II £130 The benchmark for all other budget AM/FM tuners, with great sound and features.



Cambridge DAB500 £150 A low-cost DAB radio that gets very close to much more expensive digital models.



Creek T50 £499 A thoroughly accomplished AM/FM tuner with a substantial and detailed sound.



MAGNUM Dynalad MD 90T £1,195 FM tuner with valves – 'affordable' for an MD, but still streets ahead of most radios.

					SPE	CIFIC	CATIO	NS		
	UNER			WA			REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE
FM	& DAB HI-FI SEPAR	ATES		WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	-	CONTR	'H METER	ING KN	ISSUE NUMBER
	? PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SGI	TS	RDS	P	ĒŖ	10B	Ĥ
FM T	UNERS Creek T50	499	Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics	FM,M,L	128	0		0	0	251
88	Denon TU-260L II	130	The return of the all-time favourite, now enhanced with RDS and sounding as fine as ever	FM.M.L	40	0	-		0	193
EC	Magnum Dynalab MD 90T	1,195	No remote or presets as standard, manual everything and valves but its sound is simply sublime	FM	opt		opt	0		257
EC	Magnum Dynalab MD 102	2,200	Superb remote control analogue FM tuner delivers a superbly transparent sound that makes radio fun	FM	5			0		241
88	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity	FM,M	30	0		•		250
BB	NAD \$400	600	One of the best around - bass and treble are both well extended and detail is excellent	FM	30			0		230
88	Primare T21	600	Identical to NAD S400 and likewise a very fine tuner	FM	30	•		۲		230
88	Rega Radio 3	398	Unpretentious unit which does what it claims, very well. Unusually fine FM sound in all areas	FM,M	20					242
	Rotel RT-02	279	A highly competent tuner which always sounds appealing and fuss-free	FM,M	30	0	۲	0		242
DAB	TUNERS									
	Arcam DiVA DT81	650	A very smart and polished DAB performer	DAB	16		0	0	0	221
88	Cambridge Audio DAB500	150	Very good sound, plus optional response tweaks, and slickest operation yet	DAB	10		0	0	0	248
	Cambridge Azur 640T	200	Slightly ahead of the pack in DAB performance, though FM is never better than decent	DAB,FM	60	•	۰	۰		260
	Pure Digital DRX-701ES	250	An excellent introduction to DAB, fine value, simple to use and feature loaded	DAB	99		0	•	0	234
	Pure Digital DRX-702ES	330	Very flexible DAB (inc L-band) and FM tuner. DAB is good, FM a touch disappointing	DAB,FM,M	99	•	٠	٠	0	242
	Sony ST-SDB900	200	Nicely designed UK-tuned model is a touch bright with both DAB and FM but generally insightful and clear	DAB,FM,M	60		0		۲	259

SPECS KEY WAVEBANDS Which bands are supported: FM, M – medium wave, L – long wave, DAB – digital audio broadcasting. **PRESETS** How many stations can be stored in memory. **RDS** Radio Data System – station names and program titles can be displayed among other facilities (FM only, DAB has more comprehensive display potential). **REMOTE CONTROL** For the couch potato. **SIGNAL STRENGTH METER** Useful for setting up an aerial. **ROTARY TUNING KNOB** An ergonomic alternative to buttons

DIGITAL AUDIO RECORDERS

CD, MiniDisc and hard drive recorders

MiniDisc

MD's strength is versatility. You can record and then re-record many times over. Editing facilities are second to none you can erase mistakes, name tracks and reorder a disc's contents with a few simple button pushes, making it ideal for building compilations. They're pretty robust too.

Sound quality is below that of CD-R/ CD-RW. The format uses a Sony-developed compression technology called ATRAC, which discards part of the data in order to squeeze it on the disc. If you're copying from CD to MD, the result tends to sound a little cold in comparison, lacking a degree of detail and ambience. But to most people it still sounds light years ahead of cassette - clean and hiss-free.

Recordable CD

With recordable CD you have a choice of two disc types: CD-R discs are the cheapest, but you can only record once; and CD-RW discs are a little more costly, but you can rerecord on them ad infinitum.

Though the latest machines incorporate some useful editing facilities, CD-R/RW is not as flexible as MD. However, sound

quality is higher - if you're recording from a CD, the best models will give you a copy that is very close to the original. In terms of compatibility, most CD players will play back a CD-R disc, but older models might have trouble with CD-RW (though you can, of course, play the disc back on your own recorder). If you want to play a CD-R/RW on a DVD player, check for compatibility.

Hard drive

The latest contender on the digital recording scene is also the most flexible. Some HDD (hard disk drive) recorders can store whole music collections if you use a compression format such as MP3. HDD recorders are taking over from multidisc CD changers as sound servers in multiroom installations, where their ability to play more than one piece of music at a time is a great boon. HDD also offers impressive editing facilities on a par with MD, and they can also record from CD (or to CD-R/RW) at high speed.

At present, sound quality isn't the driving force behind the format - flexibility and storage capacity being bigger issues - and a plain CD-R/RW machine will outperform an HDD recorder in fidelity terms.



Philips CDR802 £300 Multidisc recorder that's slick and capable. albeit with a slightly flaky build.



Quality in a box – it eschews gimmickry but it does a simple job very well



Yamaha CDR-HD1300 £600 Combining hard disk with CD-R makes CD recording a whole lot more flexible.



OPTICAL IN ELEC IN/I

Imerge S2000 £1.599 Impressively flexible hard disk music server for multiroom applications.

Our favourite I BEST BUY C EDITOR'S CHOICE **IGITAL RECORDERS**

CD-I	R/RW, MD and HD	D reco	orders	DE	CITY (GB)	OUTPUTS	OUTPUTS	NUMBER
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	CKS	(GB)	SIN	SIN	BER
CD-R/I	RW RECORDERS	-11-22-64						
	Denon CDR-1000	400	A respectable player and recorder, though some midband congestion was noted when recording	1		0	•	218
BB	Marantz DR6000	400	No frills, but in its fundamentals this is one of the finest CD recorders on the market	1		۰	۰	233
	NAD C660	500	Audiophile twin deck offering high-speed copying, HDCD replay and notably fine recording from analogue	2		۰	•	243
88	Philips CDR802	300	Tacky looks and build notwithstanding, this is a well-equipped and technically sound 3-to-1 autochanger/recorder at a good price	2		٠	•	233
88	Philips CDR951	380	An improvement on previous models, it delivers the musical goods in some style	1		۰	۰	205
88	Pioneer PDR-609	270	Classic CD recorder with outstandingly good sound for the money on both record and replay	1		0	۰	243
	Pioneer PDR-W839	350	Good-quality twin CD burner makes recordings that can be hard to distinguish from the original. Good value too	1		0	۲	218
MD RE	CORDERS							
	Pioneer MJ-D508	200	Well equipped, but musically sleep-inducing player that receives its Recommendation owing to the price	1		•	0	205
	Sony MDS-JE480	130	Straightforward and effective, but the three real killer features are price, price and price	1		0		233
HDO RE	CORDERS							
	Imerge S2000	1,599	Intended as the centrepiece of a multi-room installation, this three-output server combines flexibility with good sound	2	80	۰	۲	243
88	Yamaha CDR-HD1300	600	Superb combination of high-speed CD-RW drive and hard disk, adding editing flexibility to CD recording	2	80		۰	243

SPECS KEY DECKS Amount of drive mechanisms on board - twin-deck recorders use one to play while the other records. HD CAPACITY Amount of gigabytes of storage capacity, for HD only OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS Optical Toslink in and outputs for digital connection to a CD player or DAC. ELEC IN/OUTPUTS Electrical coaxial in and outputs for digital connection to a CD player or DAC.

Sevenoaks sound & vision



Sevenoaks Sound & Vision - Manchester and Sheffield will be exhibiting at the superb Northern Sound & Vision Show, 29-30 January 2005. On display will be an exceptional range of audio and visual equipment from the finest companies, along with live entertainment.

For further information on this event, contact our Manchester or Sheffield stores.

SUNDAY OPENING

Many of our stores are open on Sundays during January. For up-to-date information, please call your local store or visit our website.

VAINTER SANTER CONTINUES.

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

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

NEW STORES



ABERDEEN

We are pleased to announce our new exciting Aberdeen store opened on the 30th October. Situated on Crown Street, which is only a short

walk from Union Street, the store has three fantastic demonstration areas where you can audition the very best in home cinema and hi-fi. Easy parking available at the rear of the store.

57 CROWN STREET ABERDEEN 01224 252797



EALING

The long-awaited store in Ealing is now open.

Part of a newly developed parade in the heart of town close to Ealing Broadway tube and on the fringe of the Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre, the

store offers an unrivalled experience to shoppers searching for the best in audio and video equipment.



SWINDON



We're back.

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



facilities and quality of service remain the same. The store is located in Commercial Road, close to the town centre with parking nearby.

8-9 COMMERCIAL ROAD SWINDON 01793 610992



Sevenoaks SOUND & VISION

"A perfect

mbination of early Arcam

finement and

tlety, combined

with new-found

freshness." DIVA CD192 WHAT HI-FI? Nov *****

SEPARATES

vitality and

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

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

WINTER

CONTINUES...

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

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

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

WHAT HI-FI? *****

"The added 'x' factor brings a level of CD playback previously unheard at this price." CDB X THI-FI?



Cyrus 6vs Amplifier £599.95

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



Mission m31i **Speakers** £119.95

Arcam DiVA

CD192 CD Player £849.95

A90 Amplifier £849.95

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



'improved' and these speakers fully deserve **** the suffix."



£349.95 (Brittex Black) Bass reinforcement for both your hi-fi and home

cinema system. It's such a capable subwoofer - it handles both music and movies exceptionally well.

The Quake delivers bass with both power and finesse."



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

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

PM7200 Amplifier £239.95

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

Pure Digital DRX702ES Digital/Analogue Tuner £269.95



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



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

 \bigcirc

Marantz CD5400 CD Player £119.95



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

Best Buy

200

CLAIM UP TO ACCESSORIES

KEF Q4

When you purchase any product from the following brands:-ARCAM • B&W • CYRUS • ROKSAN • REL • ROTEL Choose Accessories From QED • GRADO • SOUNDSTYLE etc **CLAIM 10%** £250 WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **CLAIM 15%** £500 WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **CLAIM 20%** £1000 WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **CLAIM 25%** £2000 WHEN YOU SPEND OVER

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



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

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

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



Wharfedale Diamond 9.1 Speakers £ SALE

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



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

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

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



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

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

X-SERIES

X-80 Amplifier _____£ SALE X-150 Amplifier £ SALE X-Ray^{v3} CD Player _____£ SALE

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

The X-Ray^{v3} CD player, replacement for the legendary X-Ray, uses the same DAC and upsampling principles as the acclaimed Tri-Vista SACD plaver





PRICING POLICY

your money, this combo can't be ignored."

Roksan Caspian M Series

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

CD Player £1099.95 Amplifier £999.95 "A real class-contender, the new M Series-1 is a canny piece of kit and well worth the money." M SERIES-1 CD PLAYER

Preamplifer/2 x Monoblocs £3449.95

you want the most honest-sounding amp you can get for

"This Roksan is an excellent buy that puts most of the opposition to shame when it comes to sonic ability ... If

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

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FINANCE OPTION* Spread the cost of buying.

0% finance option is available on the majority of products we stock. est. Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subi

3

PLEASE NOTE: SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. PLEASE CALL BEFORE TRAVELLING. *ADDED VALUE OFFERS - FROM RANGE AVAILABLE IN-STORE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. ADVERTISEMENT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 10/02/05, E&OE.

Sevenoaks SOUND & VISION





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

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

First impressions of the RCD-1072 are excellent. This is the slickest machine in this group: the casework feels solid and the finish exceptional at the price... On its own terms it remains an enjoyable and informative CD player." WHAT HI+FI? SOUND AND VISION . SEPTEMBER 2003

Acoustic Energy Aelite Three Speakers £ SALE

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

CD RECORDERS

Yamaha CDR-HD1300/II £479.95 New replacement for the Award-winning CDR-HD1300. Now includes a larger hard-disk for extra storage.

Pioneer PDR-609

£199.95 LIMITED STOCK AVAILABLE

"Features include 24-bit/96kHz digital-analogue-

Product

conversion plus manual recording level controls, ideal when making compilations to standardise levels. All this means you get great copies from the Pioneer... and remarkable value.



Denon DM31 UD-M31 CD Receiver £189.95

"The D-M30 was exemplary, as its three What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Awards clearly show. The D-M31 is even better. making it phenomenal value for money." **NB - DENON DM31 PRICE EXCLUDES SPEAKERS**

Monitor Audio

SILVER **S6 Speakers** £499.95

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





GOLD **Reference 20 Speakers £ SALE**

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

BRONZE B2 Speakers £179.95

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



Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII Speakers £ SALE

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



PLEASE NOTE: SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. PLEASE CALL BEFORE TRAVELLING. *ADDED VALUE OFFERS - FROM RANGE AVAILABLE IN-STORE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. ADVERTISEMENT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 10/02/05, E&OE.

B&W **704 Speakers** £1399.95

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



CLAIM UP TO ACCESSORIES

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N CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PRO PLEASE CALL TO CHECK AVAILABILITY REFORE TRAV E APPLIES TO ACTUAL SPEND ON BRANDS SHOWN ABOVE. NOT TE - SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES

SUGGESTED **HI-FI SEPARATE SYSTEMS**

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



Rotel RCD-02 CD Player **RA-01** Amplifier

Monitor Audio Bronze B2 Speakers



ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES

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



OED CABLES Audio & Video

Interconnects • Speaker Cables • HDMI Cables Component Video Interconnects Comprehensive Custom Cable Service



GRADO **HEADPHONES**

Range includes the Awardwinning SR60 and highlyacclaimed RS1 plus the worldfamous Grado Cartridges



SOUNDSTYLE **RACKS & STANDS**

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



We always try to ensure our prices are highly competitive.

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







KEF Q4 Speakers



Roksan

Arcam

CD73T CD Player

A80 Amplifier

Kandy KD1 MKIII CD Player Kandy KA1 MKIII Amplifier

Monitor Audio Silver S6 Speakers

Musical Fidelity X-Ray^{v3} CD Player X-150 Amplifier

Monitor Audio Gold Reference 10 Speakers



Sound & VISION

WINTER CONTINUES ...

TURNTABLES

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE
Goldring GR1
Michell Gyro SE/RB300 £ SALE
Michell TecnoDec (Ex Arm) £ SALE
Project Debut Phono SB £ SALE
Project Debut III (Black) £ SALE
Project Debut III (Colours)
Project 1 Xpression
Roksan Radius 5 (Wood)

TUNERS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAG
Arcam DiVA T61
Cyrus FM X
Denon TU260L MKII
Harman Kardon TU970 DAB/AM/FM
Marantz ST4000
Pure DRX-701ES DAB
Pure DRX-702ES Analogue/DAB
Roksan Kandy KT1 MKIII

CD PLAYERS

UDIENE				
SEE OFFER AT	THE	TOP	OF T	he page
Arcam DiVA CD73T				£399.95
Arcam DiVA CD192 .				£849.95
Arcam FMJ CD33T .				£1349.95
Cyrus CD6				£599.95
Cyrus CD8 X				£999.95
Cvrus DAC X				£1099.95
Denon DCD485				£119.95
Linn Genki				£ SALE
Linn Ikemi				£ SALE
Marantz CD5400				£119.95
Marantz SA11 S1				£ SALE
Musical Fidelity X-R	ay 🕫			£ SALE
Musical Fidelity A3.	2			£699.95
Musical Fidelity A5				£ SALE
Musical Fidelity A30	18 ⁰⁸			£1399.95
Quad 99 CD-P				£ SALE
Roksan Kandy KD1 N	KIII			£649.95
Roksan Caspian M .				£1099.95
Rotel RCD02				£379.95
Rotel RCD1072				£594.95

CD RECORDERS

Pioneer PDR609 CD-RW	 E199.95
Yamaha CDR-HD1300/II	 E479.95

AMPLIFIERS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE
Arcam DiVA A65 Plus
Arcam DiVA A80
Arcam DiVA A90
Arcam FMJ A32
Сугиз бvs
Cyrus 8vs
Cyrus Pre X vs Pre
Cyrus Mono X Power
Denon PMA355
Linn Kolector Pre
Linn LK85 Power
Marantz PM4400£139.95
Marantz PM7200
Marantz PM11 S1
Musical Fidelity X-80
Musical Fidelity X-150
Musical Fidelity A3.2
Musical Fidelity A3.2 Pre
Musical Fidelity A3.2 Power
Musical Fidelity A5
Musical Fidelity A308
Quad 99 Power
Quad 909 Power
Roksan Kandy KA1 MKIII
Roksan Caspian M£999.95
Roksan Caspian M Pre
Roksan Caspian M Stereo Power
Roksan Caspian M Monobloc Power , (Each) £1099.95
Rotel RA-01
Rotel RA-02
Rotel RA-1062

SPEAKERS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE P	AGE
Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo One	29.95
Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo Three	49.95

Acoustic Energy Aelite Two
Acoustic Energy Aelite Three
Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII
AVI Neutron IV
B&W DM601 S3
B&W DM602 S3
B&W 704
B&W 705
KEF Q Compact£ SALE
KEF Q4£ SALE
KEF XQ1£ SALE
Linn Katan £ SALE
Mission m31i£119.95
Mission m34i
Mission 780SE
Mission 782SE £ SALE
Monitor Audio Bronze B2
Monitor Audio Silver S1
Monitor Audio Silver S6
Monitor Audio Silver S8
Monitor Audio Gold Reference 10
Monitor Audio Gold Reference 60
Quad 11L £ SALE
Quad 12L £ SALE
Quad 22L£ SALE
Ruark Epilogue II £ SALE
Ruark Talisman III£ SALE
Ruark Sabre III
Wharfedale Diamond 9.1£ SALE
Wharfedale Pacific Evolution 30

HI-FI SYSTEMS

Denon 201 Ex Speakers	 	 £479.95
Denon DF101 Ex Speakers	 	 £299.95
Denon DM31 Ex Speakers	 	 £189.95
Linn Classik Music Ex Speakers		 £ SALE
Teac Legacy 600 Ex Speakers	 	 £199.95

DVD SYSTEMS

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

MULTI-ROOM AUDIO

SEE OFFER A	T	1	Γ	-	E		T	C)	Ρ	(C	F		T	F	IE PAGE
Cyrus Linkserver 16	0																£2999.95
Cyrus Linkserver 25	0																£3499.95
Cyrus Linkport																	£649.95
Cyrus Linkwand																	.£199.95
Yamaha MusicCas	t	M	2>	()	41	0								×			£599.95
Yamaha MusicCas	t	M	\sim	Ċ	10	0	0										£1799.95

DVD PLAYERS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF T	HE PAGE
MAKE & MODELREGION 2	MULTI REGION
Arcam DiVA DV78£699.95	£699.95
Arcam DiVA DV79	£999.95
Arcam FMJ DV29£1599.95	£1599.95
Cyrus DVD8£1199.95	£1199.95
Denon DVD-1710£ SALE	£ SALE
Denon DVD-1910£ SALE	£ SALE
Denon DVD-2200 Universal£339.95	£349.95
Denon DVD-2900 Universal £489.95	£499.95
Denon DVD-2910 Universal £ SALE	
Denon DVD-3910 Universal £ SALE	
Denon DVD-A11£ SALE	£ SALE
Harman Kardon DVD22£199.95	£199.95
Harman Kardon DVD31	£ SALE
Marantz DV4500 £ SALE	£ SALE
Meridian G98 £ SALE	£ SALE
Pioneer DV370	£79.95
Pioneer DV575A Universal£119.95	£129.95
Pioneer DV668Av Universal£ SALE	£ SALE
Pioneer DV868Avi Universal£ SALE	£ SALE
Toshiba SD240E	£69.95
Toshiba SD340E£69.95	£79.95
Yamaha DVD-S550£119.95	
Yamaha DVD-S1500£ SALE	£ SALE

DVD RECORDERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Panasonic DMR-E55 DVD-RAM	£199.95	£219.95
Panasonic DMR-E65 DVD-RAM	£ SALE	£ SALE

Panasonic DMR-E75 DVD-RAM £ SALE	£ SALE
Panasonic DMR-E85 DVD-RAM £ SALE	£ SALE
Panasonic DMR-E95 DVD-RAM £ SALE	£ SALE
Panasonic DMR-E500 DVD-RAM £ SALE	£ SALE
Pioneer DVR-220 DVD-RW £199.95	£219.95
Pioneer DVR-320 DVD-RW£ SALE	£ SALE
Pioneer DVR-420H HDD/DVD-RW £ SALE	£ SALE
Pioneer DVR-520H HDD/DVD-RW £ SALE	£ SALE
Pioneer DVR-720H HDD/DVD-RW , . £ SALE	£ SALE
Pioneer DVR-920H HDD/DVD-RW £ SALE	£ SALE

A/V AMPLIFIERS RECEIVERS & PROCESSORS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE Arcam AVR300 A/V Receiver £1299.95 Arcam AV8/P7 A/V Pre/Processor/Power £5749.95 Cyrus AV8 A/V Processor £1099.95 Denon AVC-A1SRA A/V Amplifier£ SALE E SAL Denon AVC-A1XV A/V Amplifier Denon AVR1705 A/V Receiver £199.95 Denon AVR2105 A/V Receiver£ SALE **F SALE** Denon AVR2805 A/V Receiver Denon AVR3805 AVV Receiver £799.95 Harman Kardon AVR630 A/V Receiver £ SALE Harman Kardon DPR2005 AV Receiver ... E SALE Marantz SR4500 A/V Receiver £299.95 Marantz SR5500 AV Receiver £ SALE Pioneer VSX-D814 AV Receiver £249.95 Pioneer VSX-AX3 A/V Receiver £ SALE Pioneer VSX-2014i A/V Receiver E SALE Pioneer VSX-AX5i A/V Receiver £799.95 Pioneer VSX-AX5Ai A/V Receiver £999.95 Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai A/V Amplifier E SALE Rotel RSX1056 A/V Reciever £1199.95 Rotel RSX1067 A/V Receiver £1799.95 Rotel RSP1066/RMB1075 AV Pre/Power £1799.95 Rotel RSP1098 A/V Processor £2294.95 £ SALE Yamaha DSP-AX750SE A/V Amplifier Yamaha DSP-Z9 AV Amplifier E SALE Yama Yam Yam Yama Yama

A/

Acoustic Energy Evo 3B Acoustic Energy Aego P5/II	
Acoustic Energy Aelite 5.1	
Artcoustic Diablo	
B&W VM1/AS1	£849.95
B&W DM300 AV	£899.95
KEF KHT1005	£299.95
KEF KHT2005.2	. £ SALI
KEF KHT5005	£ SALI
KEF Q7 AV	. £ SALI
M&K K5	. £ SALI
М&К КЗ	. £ SALI
M&K Xenon 25	£ SALI
M&K 850/CS35/V850	E SAL
Mission M30 AV Pack	£399.95
Mission Elegante e82 7.1 Package	. £ SALI
Monitor Audio Bronze B2 AV	£799.95
Monitor Audio Bronze B4 AV	£949.95
Monitor Audio Radius 270	£499.95
Monitor Audio Radius 5.1	£999.95
Mordaunt Short Genie	£ SALI
Quad L-Series	£ SAL
Wharfedale Diamond 9 HCP	£ SAL

CUDMODEEDC

JUDWUUFENJ
SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE
B&W PV1
MJ Acoustics Pro 50 (Black)
MJ Acoustics Pro 100 (Black)
MJ Acoustics Ref 100 (Black) £ SALE
MJ Acoustics Ref 200 (Black) £ SALE
MJ Acoustics Ref 1 Mkll (Black)
Quad L Series
REL Q150E MKII (Brittex Black)
REL Q201E (Brittex Black)
REL Q400E (Brittex Black) £999.95

REL Quake (Brittex Black)	5
REL Stampede (Black)	5
REL Strata 5 (Brittex Black) £699.9	5
Wharfedale Diamond SW150	E

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SALE

Fujitsu P42HHA30 42"
Fujitsu P50XHA30 50" £ SALE
Hitachi 32PD5200 32" £ SALE
Hitachi 42PD5200 42" £ SALE
Hitachi 55PMA550TE 55" £ SALE
Panasonic TH37PW7B 37" £ SALE
Panasonic TH42PW7B 42" £ SALE
Panasonic TH37PE30B 37" £ SALE
Panasonic TH42PE30B 42" £ SALE
Panasonic TH50PV30B 50" £ SALE
Pioneer PDP435XDE 43" £ SALE
Pioneer PDP435FDE 43" £ SALE
Pioneer PDP505XDE 50" £ SALE
Yamaha PDM4210 42"£ SALE

LCD TV

Hitachi 28LD5200 28"
Panasonic TX22LX2 22"£ SALE
Panasonic TX26LXD1 26"
Panasonic TX32LXD1 32"
Philips 32PF9986 32"
Sharp Aquos LC-20S1E 20" £ SALE
Sharp Aquos LC-26GA3/GA4 26" £ SALE
Sharp Aquos LC-32GA3/GA4 32" £ SALE
Sharp Aquos LC-32GD1 32" £ SALE
Sharp Aquos LC-37GD1 37"£ SALE
Sharp Aquos LC-37GA3/GA4 37" £ SALE
Sharp Aquos LC-45GD1 45" £ SALE

PROJECTORS

FREE SCREEN WITH SELECTED PROJECTORS
Marantz VP-12S3 DLP £ SALE
Screenplay SP4805 DLP
Screenplay SP5700 DLP £ SALE
Screenplay SP7205 DLP £ SALE
Sharp XV-Z91E DLP £ SALE
Sharp XV-Z200 DLP £ SALE
Sharp XV-Z201 DLP
Sharp XV-Z2000 DLP £ SALE
Sharp XV-Z12000 DLP £ SALE
Sim 2 Domino 18 DLP
Sim 2 Domino 20 DLP
Sim 2 Domino 20-H HDMI DLP
Sim 2 Domino 30-H HDMI DLP £ SALE
Sim 2 HT300 Xtra HDMI DLP £ SALE
Sim 2 HT500 Link DLP
ThemeScene H30 Cinema DLP £ SALE
ThemeScene H57 Cinema DLP £ SALE
ThemeScene H77 Cinema DLP £ SALE
Yamaha DPX1100 DLP£ SALE

REMOTE CONTROLS

Marantz RC5400 £399.95 £799.95 Marantz RC9200

WINTER SALE CONTINUES ...

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL STORE OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR OUR UP-TO-DATE PRICES

£ PRICING POLICY

SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION OPERATES A PRICING POLICY SEE OPPOSITE PAGE FOR DETAILS

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

*Added Value Offers- From range available in-store Not in conjunction with any other of Advertisement valid until at 1 ast 10/02/05, E&OE.

aha RX-V650 A/V Receiver £3 aha RX-V1400RDS A/V Receiver £6 aha RX-V1500RDS A/V Receiver £6 aha RX-V1500RDS A/V Receiver £6 aha RX-V2400RDS A/V Receiver £6	629.95 SALE
aha RX-V2500RDS AV Receiver	
V SPEAKERS & PACKAG	EC
OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE P	
ustic Energy Evo 3B	
istic Energy Aego P5/II	
Istic Energy Aelite 5.1	
oustic Diablo	
VM1/AS1	49.95
DM300 AV	
KHT1005£2	
КНТ2005.2	
КНТ5005	
Q7 AV	
K5	
K3	
Xenon 25	
850/CS35/V850	
sion M30 AV Pack£3	
ion Elegante e82 7.1 Package	
itor Audio Bronze B2 AV	
itor Audio Bronze B4 Av	
itor Audio Radius 5.1	
	99.95

When you purchase any product from the following brands:-ARCAM . B&W . CYRUS . ROKSAN . REL . ROTEL Choose Accessories From QED • GRADO • SOUNDSTYLE etc **CLAIM 10%** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER £250 **CLAIM 15%** £500 WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **CLAIM 20%** £1000 WHEN YOU SPEND OVER ACCESSORIES **CLAIM 25%** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER £2000



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SEVENOAKS STORES NATIONWIDE

ABERDEEN 57 CROWN STREET NEW • 01224 252797

BEDFORD 29-31 ST PETERS STREET • 01234 272779

BIRMINGHAM ARCH 12, LIVERY STREET • 0121 233 2977

BRIGHTON 57 WESTERN ROAD, HOVE • 01273 733338

BRISTOL 92B WHITELADIES ROAD, CLIFTON • 0117 974 3727

BROMLEY 39A EAST STREET • 020 8290 1988

• 01223 304770

CARDIFF 104-106 ALBANY ROAD • 029 2047 2899

CHELSEA 403 KINGS ROAD • 020 7352 9466

CHELTENHAM 14 PITTVILLE STREET • 01242 241171

CRAWLEY 32 THE BOULEVARD • 01293 510777

CROYDON 369-373 LONDON ROAD • 020 8665 1203 OPEN SUNDAY

EALING 24 THE GREEN NEW • 020 8579 8777 OPEN SUNDAY

EDINBURGH 5 THE GRASSMARKET • 0131 229 7267

EPSOM 12 UPPER HIGH STREET • 01372 720720 OPEN SUNDAY

EXETER 28 COWICK STREET • 01392 218895

GLASGOW 88 GREAT WESTERN ROAD • 0141 332 9655

GUILDFORD 73B NORTH STREET • 01483 536666

HOLBORN 144-148 GRAYS INN ROAD • 020 7837 7540

HULL 1 SAVILE ROW, SAVILE STREET • 01482 587171

IPSWICH 12-14 DOGS HEAD STREET • 01473 286977

KINGSTON 43 FIFE ROAD • 020 8547 0717 OPEN SUNDAY

LEEDS 62 NORTH STREET • 0113 245 2775 OPEN SUNDAY

LEICESTER 10 LOSEBY LANE • 0116 253 6567

LINCOLN 20-22 CORPORATION STREET • 01522 527397 (OFF HIGH STREET)

MAIDSTONE 96 WEEK STREET • 01622 686366 OPEN SUNDAY

MANCHESTER 69 HIGH ST, CITY CENTRE • 0161 831 7969

NEWCASTLE 19 NEWGATE STREET • 0191 221 2320



NORWICH 29-29A ST GILES STREET • 01603 767605

NOTTINGHAM 597-599 MANSFIELD ROAD • 0115 911 2121

OXFORD 41 ST CLEMENTS STREET • 01865 241773

PETERBOROUGH 36-38 PARK ROAD • 01733 897697 OPEN SUNDAY

PLYMOUTH 107 CORNWALL STREET • 01752 226011

POOLE LATIMER HOUSE, 44-46 HIGH STREET • 01202 671677

PRESTON 40-41 LUNE STREET • 01772 825777 OPEN SUNDAY

READING 3-4 KINGS WALK SHOPPING CENTRE • 0118 959 7768

SEVENOAKS 109-113 LONDON ROAD • 01732 459555

SHEFFIELD 635 QUEENS ROAD, HEELEY • 0114 255 5861 OPEN SUNDAY

SOLIHULL 149-151 STRATFORD ROAD • 0121 733 3727

SOUTHAMPTON 33 LONDON ROAD • 023 8033 7770 OPEN SUNDAY

SOUTHGATE 79-81 CHASE SIDE • 020 8886 2777 OPEN SUNDAY

STAINES 4 THAMES STREET • 01784 460777 OPEN SUNDAY

SWINDON 8-9 COMMERCIAL ROAD NEW • 01793 610992

SWISS COTTAGE 21 NORTHWAYS PDE, FINCHLEY RD • 020 7722 9777 OPEN SUNDAY

TUNBRIDGE WELLS 28-30 ST JOHNS ROAD • 01892 531543

WATFORD 478 ST ALBANS ROAD • 01923 213533 OPEN SUNDAY

WEYBRIDGE 43 CHURCH STREET, THE QUADRANT • 01932 828525

WILMSLOW 3-5 GROVE STREET OPENING SOON • 01625 419747 ·SUBJECT TO LEGAL COMPLETION

• 01376 501733

WOLVERHAMPTON 29-30 CLEVELAND STREET • 01902 312225 OPEN SUNDAY

OPENING HOURS: PLEASE TELEPHONE OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE E-MAIL: [insert store location]@sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk

WHO ARE SEVENOAKS?

Founded in 1972, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision is one of the largest and most successful hi-fi and home cinema retailers in the country.

Each Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store stocks a wide range of quality products, covering all categories of specialist home entertainment, from Hi-Fi separates and systems to DVD players, widescreen plasma televisions and projection systems, all at highly competitive prices.

Friendly staff are available in all stores to advise, demonstrate and guide you through the home entertainment jungle.

DEMONSTRATION FACILITIES

Our comfortable demonstration rooms are among the finest in the country, many complying with full THX specifications.



CUSTOM INSTALLATION

Sevenoaks Sound & Vision's Custom Installation Service enables the integration of a home cinema or hi-fi system into your home as neatly and seamlessly as possible. All electronics can be hidden away, speakers discreetly mounted either in the wall or ceiling and the complete system operated via remote control.

Our installation experts are fully trained to the highest standards in all areas and provide a prompt, reliable and professional service. Whether you're looking for a multi-room system, a dedicated home cinema installation with a retractable screen and built-in speakers or an integrated control or lighting system, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision has a diverse range of products available to cater for all your requirements.



FREE 8 Page Custom Installation Brochure available now from your nearest store or via our website.

SEVENOAKS WEBSITE

The Sevenoaks Sound & Vision website has news and information on the Sevenoaks group and detailed pages to help you locate your nearest store.

SPECIAL OFFERS

There are hundreds of special offers and stock clearance items available from our stores nationwide - many with savings of up to 50%. To view our regularly updated product lists, visit www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk and click on special offers

PRICING POLICY

Whilst we do not claim always to be the cheapest, we try to ensure our prices are highly competitive. Take into account the expert advice, unrivalled product selection, demonstration facilities and excellent pre, during and after sales service and the lower price might not look such good value.

In the event you can find the same products and excellent service at a lower price, please bring it to our store managers' attention. We will always endeavour to offer you the best deal.

NEW Pick-up a copy of our NEW 72 PAGE GUIDE at your nearest Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store or order a copy via our Website. The brochure will be posted to you (UK mainland addresses only) free of charge.

www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk

STEREO AMPLIFIERS

Integrated and pre/power amps

Amplifiers come in two basic forms: integrated and preamplifier (pre) plus power amp combinations. Integrated simply means that both pre and power sections are in one box. There are definite advantages to separating the low level, delicate signals in the preamp from the radiations of a power amp, so the more ambitious designs come in two or more cases. In some cases, each channel has its own power amp called a monoblock.

Amplifiers use two basic technologies: transistors or valves. Transistors are popular because of their practical and technical advantages, but valves - aka tubes - live on owing to aspects of sound quality that trannies can't replicate. If you want to play vour music loud. use trannies: if you appreciate acoustic music, try valves.

The fundamental of amp/speaker interfacing is power rating and speaker sensitivity. You can drive a high-sensitivity speaker with a ten watt valve amp, but it takes a 200W behemoth to get the best out of speakers which present a difficult load. As a rule, you can't have too much power.

How to choose an amp

The main areas in which amps vary are: timing, dynamics, stereo imaging and transparency. Timing is the ability to present the attack and decay of each note precisely; amps with strong timing have a snap and coherence that is very appealing.

HOME CINEMA STEREO

Stereo amps can be used in home cinema set-ups as well. You don't get the surround and centre channels, but well set-up stereo speakers do a remarkably good job of creating atmosphere for movies. Stereo amps



Dynamics is a general term for the ability to portray variations in level between individual notes and is different to dynamic range (the difference between the loudest and softest notes). Dynamically strong amps tend to have more life and energy.

Stereo imaging is how solid or threedimensional an instrument or voice sounds. The point of having two rather than one speaker is to make it possible to recreate the soundstage of the original recording, thus amps that have strong imaging skills can create a sonic space that seems to extend the room

Transparency of detail is the most obvious difference between amps. One amp will present more subtlety than another, but the drawback with using this as your main criterion is that a forward or 'bright' sounding amplifier will emphasise detail at the expense of overall musical coherence.

tend to be better at reproducing music as they don't have the (electrical) noiseinducing digital processing of AV amps. AV amps cost three to four times as much as stereo models of a similar quality.

0.**&**.A **SHOULD I LEAVE MY AMP ON ALL THE TIME FOR BEST RESULTS?**

All audio electronics perform better when they are warmed up, and this is particularly the case when it comes to amplifiers. If there's no way that you can leave it on all the time, make an effort to switch it on at least 20 minutes before listening.

WHAT IS BI-WIRING AND **BI-AMPING?**

Bi-wiring is when you run separate cables to the treble and bass/mid terminals on the speaker. In most instances, this improves sound quality so long as identical cables are used. Biamping is using two stereo amps to drive one pair of speakers, using one amp to drive the treble and the other for the bass/mid sections of the speakers.

WHY DO VALVE AMPS HAVE **SOLITTLE POWER?**

Valve amps are inherently low powered in absolute terms - at least when you compare them to their transistor-based cousins. But when partnered with high-sensitivity loudspeakers, they are quite capable of producing perfectly adequate head-banging levels.





PM7200 £330 A true budget belter from Marantz - power and finesse in equal measure, plus the ability to switch between Class A and Class AB operation. Giant killing amps are back!



Exposure 2010 S £599 Another cracking integrated from the Exposure stable - admirable musical insight and communication at a thoroughly sensible price. Top stuff.



NAC 112x/NAP 150x £1,475 Naim's new entry-level pre/power amp is a fabulously engaging combo. As you'd expect, rhythm and timing are to the fore, with a healthy dollop of finesse to boot.



PRE30/A30.2 £2,400 Beautifully made and with a sound to match, this Scandinavian pre/power combines warmth and body with energy and detail - a truly musical performer.

STEREO AMPS HI-FICHDICE BUYER'S BIBLE

Our favourite BEST BUY CE EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO AMPLIFIERS

	grated amplifiers			LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	EADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (M)	ISSUE NUMBER
	PRODUCT \$1,000	£	COMMENTS	S	=	-	-	5	R
88	Arcam DiVA A65 Plus	370	Highly articulate and fluent, offers unusual insight for its price	5		۲		40	232
	Arcam DiVA A80	600	Arcam's most successful mid-range amp to date – sophisticated control system and crisp, detailed sound	6	•			90	251
88	Arcam DiVA A90	850	Enhanced replacement for A85, convertible to 7.1 sound with the addition of an add-on module and extra P90 power amps	6	opt	۲		90	250
8 B	Audio Analogue Primo	475	Small, stylish amp with a smooth and beguiling sound. Makes a fine partner for AA's equally compact Primo CD player	5	opt			70	255
88	Cambridge Audio Azur 540A	200	A well built and fully featured amplifier that costs this little should not sound this revealing	6	opt	۲	•	50	255
	Cambridge Audio Azur 640A	250	Cambridge has a powerful weapon in the battle for budget amp supremacy, it's a lot of musical entertainment for the money	5	opt	۲		65	250
	Cyrus 6vs	600	Best seen in a Cyrus rack but capable of sweet sounds elsewhere too. Upgradeable.	7		0	٠	40	262
	Cyrus 8vs	800	Slightly inferior to Cyrus 6vs, but the tables are turned with the add-on PSX-R power supply - in that form it's a real Best Buy	7		•	0	70	261
88	Electrocompaniet ECI3	999	Large and fairly powerful, with individual looks and very refined sound	6		•		70	262
88	Exposure 2010 S	599	Beneath the unassuming exterior lurks a very capable performer that's passionate about music	6	opt	۲		75	262
88	Marantz PM4400 OSE	250	Highly competent and well specified – a lively performer that makes great music	5	•			50	256
88	Marantz PM7200	330	High power, plenty of features and remarkably clear and informative sound with lots of impact	6	0	۲		105	248
	Marantz PM7200KI	500	Smart and fully-featured, with sound that's full-bodied and confident at high levels	6	0	۲	0	85	262
88	Musical Fidelity X-80	600	The entry-level to Musical Fidelity's amplifier range sounds both powerful and refined	4		•		55	255
BB	NAD C352	350	Dynamic and musical sounding update on what was already a star product	7		•	0	80	253
88	Naim Nait 5i	699	A trade-off of more power and better connectivity against less inputs works surprisingly well in a grunty, musical manner	4		•		50	252
88	Primare I20	750	An amplifier with attitude: punchy fast and secure sounding, with excellent build quality for the money	4		۲		70	239
	Rega Mira 3	598	Lively sound with good timing and frequency extension, if not quite as detailed as some	5	0	•		60	262
BB	Roksan Caspian M Series	1,000	Improved mid-range model from Roksan is a fine, expressive amplifier - right at the top of its class	6		۲		85	248
<u>88</u>	Rotel RA-02	349	Agile and capable slimline design with an engaging sound that draws you into the music	4	0	•		40	232
88	Rotel RA-1062	595	A great value amp with a detailed and engaging sound, and the ability to drive almost any speaker in its path	5	0	•		95	251
BB	Sugden A21a	899	This single-ended, Class A transistor amp has exquisite resolving ability and presence - an authentic classic	5				25	224
ABOVE	£1,000								100
BB	Arcam FMJ A32	1,150	Remarkably flexible and well-featured, with excellent sound quality for the price	7	۲	۲	•	100	228
88	Audio Note Oto Line SE	1,599	Single-ended valve amp lacks power but sounds remarkably delicate and coherent	5	opt			10	254
88	Audio Analogue Maestro S.	1,750	The beautifully made Maestro Settanta sounds fast, deep and very smooth, though perhaps not the most dynamic	5	۲	•		70	257
88	Audio Research VSi55	2,895	Superb all-rounder provides the delights of valve amplification without sacrificing convenience	5		۰		50	254
88	AVI Laboratory Series	1,399	Terrific power, control and resolution - effortlessly musical and fine value	6	opt	0		200	241
88	Copland CSA29	1,900	A hybrid valve/solid state amplifier that gets close to offering the best of both worlds	6	opt	0		85	255
EC	Karan KA-i180	3,900	Lean, sharp and articulate, this impressively constructed heavyweight is almost up there with the audiophile pre/power elite	4		۲		180	236
EC	Krell KAV-400xi	2,698	The best integrated Krell yet is quick, agile, solid and finely detailed	5		•		200	247
88	Myryad MXI2080	1,100	A sound of great assurance and clarity - perhaps a touch bass-light at times, but otherwise superb for the money	7		•		80	260
EC	T+A V10	4,000	Complex but well engineered, stylish and genuinely innovative high power integrated valve amp	5		•		80	261

Our favourite BEST BUY CE EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO AMPLIFIERS

	DENEU power amplifiers		VIFLIFILNJ	PREAMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CON	POWER OUTPUT	ISSUE NU
	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	UFIER	LIFIER	IPUTS	INPUT	CONTROL	JT (M)	NUMBER
UP TO	£2,000									
88	Arcam FMJ A32/P35	1,980	One of the few correctly matched integrated/power combinations, the sound has real gravitas and sophistication	0	•	7	•	0	100	227
88	Croft Vitali/Series 5C	2,000	Oddball retro style and ergonomics, but truly magical voice coherence and projection, great transparency	۲	•	3	۲		30	216
	Densen Beat 200/300	1,985	Classy jet black cast boxes pack plenty of punch with good total musical coherence (remote £300 extra)	۲	۲	6	opt	opt	100	216
88	Naim NAC 112x/NAP 150x	1,475	Uprated entry-level Naim pre/power is a master of musical communication	0	۲	6		۲	50	262
88	Quad 99/909	1,650	Well thought out and well executed, with good strong sound and just a little veiling	۲	۰	5	۲	۲	136	256
ABOVE	£2,000				Siz.					
EC	Border Patrol P20	6,750	Muscular 300B P-P design with fluidity and dynamics to match the best	۲					20	231
	Bryston BP25/4BSST	4,000	Extremely transparent, high-power combo, you'll listen louder and longer because you can	۲	•	8	opt	۲	300	241
EC	Chapter Preface/II+	9,800	Among the finest amps available, the resolution of this preamp and power amp challenges the best at any price	۲	۰	6		•	300	249

EXPECS XXY LINE INPUTS Input sockets for source components with a line level output: CD players, DVD players, tape decks, tuners, phono stages etc. PHONO INPUT input sockets and onboard phono stage for a cartridge. Either MM (moving magnet) or MC (moving coil), occasionally both. REMOTE CONTROL A remote control is supplied with the amplifier. HEADPHONE SOCKET To drive your cans with. POWER OUTPUT Manufacturer's rated output in watts per channel.

P E P

SPECIFICATIONS

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Our favourite 📧 BEST BUY 📧 EDITOR'S CHOICE **STEREO AMPLIFIERS** continued P

	power amplifiers			PREAMPLIFIER	WER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INP	NOTE CONTROL	er output (M)	ISSUE NUMBER
BADGE?		£	COMMENTS				5	6		
	EAR 864/534	4,156	Valve combo delivers fine measured and subjective performance and inspires great confidence	•	0	6	•		50	254
EC	ECS EA-1	6,000	Understated monoblocks with real transparency to the fine detail, passion and energy in your record collection		•				180	253
	Exposure XXIII/XXVIII	2,790	Highly natural and dynamic amplifier that offers the fluidity and energy of valves via transistors	•	۲	6	opt	۰	70	241
EC	Gamut D200 Mk3	3,950	A great power amp that's now even better - one of the best regardless of price		۰				200	247
EC	Halcro dm10/dm68	25,550	Extravagant, extreme and massive amp combo will probably polarise opinions, but delivers stunning midrange clarity		۲	5	۲	۲	225	243
EC	Hovland HP-100/RADIA	12,745	Uncommonly musical valve/transistor hybrid transcends stereotypes, one of the genuine high achievers	0	۲	9	opt		125	250
EC	Krell FPB 700cx	14,998	Reference class amplifier may represent overkill in many systems, but when no compromise is called for, this is it		0				700	234
EC	Linn Klimax Kontrol	6,000	Beautifully executed example of Scots audio art, sounds as clean as it looks and is a lot more transparent than most	•		4		•		238
	Naim NAC 202/NAP 200	2,720	More sophisticated than its forebears with a fleet-footed sound that draws you into the music	۰	•	8			70	241
EC	Naim NAP 500	11,875	Wonderful neutrality, bandwidth and dynamic range, plus Naim's traditional leading-edge definition		0				140	208
EC	Naim NAC 552	12,100	Extremely expensive preamp, but still solid value. Magnificent sound with fine flexibility and convenience	0		6		۲		233
BB	Primare PRE30/A30.2	2,400	Smart kit that lives up to the visual promise with gorgeous sound - a really musical performer	۲		7		•	128	256
EC	Quad QC-24/II-40	4,007	Big, muscular valve sound that's smooth and easy on the ears, plus solid engineering with good power delivery	•		7			40	254
	Roksan Caspian M Series	2,050	Confident and highly enjoyable sound with lively music, perhaps a little less sure with subtler, complex scores		۲	6		۲	78	256
BB	Stello DP200/S200	2,990	Flexible preamp with purist leanings, plus classic stereo power amp offer great value by high-end standards	0	0	3	۰	0	200	259
EC	Sugden Masterclass AA	5,600	Yorkshire's finest Class A kit. Dynamic and tonally rich, this gives even valve amps a run for their money	0		7		0	35	246

AV AMPLIFIERS Surround sound amps for music and movies

The multichannel, surround sound or AV amplifier is a popular option, thanks to the success of the DVD player and home cinema. Now you can buy five channels or more of amplification for the price of two. Now that multichannel music is also on the agenda, there's a lot to be said for a good AV amp or receiver (an amp with a radio tuner built in).

So if you fancy hearing what DVD-Audio, SACD or even music DVD-Video can do, then check out a multichannel amp and speaker set-up - they're stunning with movies and none too shabby with music.

AV amps are usually designed primarily for movies and come with digital processing for the various soundtrack formats - Dolby Pro-Logic (analogue). Dolby Digital and DTS, which offer discrete surround sound in 5.1 and 7.1 channel formats. More ambitious designs also offer THX post processing, designed to emulate the sound of the mixing theatre at home.

Processing in AV amps is needed because the surround formats on DVD-Vs are compressed, limiting their high-fidelity



potential. This is why new formats SACD and DVD-A, which don't use 'lossy' compression, were created for music.

All this processing power can take its toll on analogue formats. The best multichannel amps for music are often the simplest, but any that offer a complete bypass option with six-channel input are suitable. It's also worth looking at real power - five or seven channels of amplification are not easy to produce with a feeble power supply, and the cheaper amps in particular often fail to live up to the claims.

0&A

SPECIFICATION

POW

HOW MANY CHANNELS?

Depends on how many speakers you want. Multichannel music discs come with six or 5.1 channels, but for new movies, 7.1 systems are where it's at. 7.1 set-ups also mean you have speakers directly behind you preferable for music discs.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE **BETWEEN A PROCESSOR** AND AN AV AMP?

Processors don't have amplification on board and you need separate power amps. AV amps and receivers have processing and amps in the same box.

WHAT DOES THE .1 **IN 5.1 STAND FOR?**

This is the LFE (low frequency effects) or bass channel that is reproduced by a subwoofer.

HI-FI MEETS SURROUND SOUND

With DVD-Audio and SACD offering highquality multichannel music, surround sound is no longer just a home cinema thing. An increasing number of people want to build a multichannel system that will do their music as well as their movie

DVDs justice, and the number of AV products delivering sufficient quality is on the increase. But most aren't cheap building a top-quality system with five or more channels is inevitably more

expensive than sticking with stereo. There

are some very decent integrated options below £1,000, though the best (and most costly) route is to buy a separate processor and power amp(s). Or you can add AV amplification to a stereo model you can't bear to part with.

AV AMPS BUYER'S BIBLE

TOP BUYS



STR-DB795 £300 Sony's latest little box of AV tricks is astonishingly good for the money – great with cinema and unusually fine with music.



AVR-3805 £1,000 Combines admirable sound across all music and movie formats with features like full auto set-up, i.Link and the latest surround formats – a class act at £1,000.



VSA-AX10Ai £3,200 An astoundingly thorough multichannel *tour de force*, stuffed with features and impressive in both stereo and full surround – state of the integrated AV amp art.



AV8/P7 £5,750 A fantastic achievement from this respected UK brand – a top-ranking AV processor and seven-channel power amp.

	ir favourite				SPE	CIFIC	ATION	IS
		L	IFIERS		_	7.1 C	5-CHANNEL POWER (M)	ICCI
lul	Itichannel amplifiers			RECEIVER	LINE INPUTS	7.1 COMPATIBLE	POWER	SOUE NUMBER
	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	IVER	SINc	IBLE	3 (W)	IDEN.
MULI	TICHANNEL INTEGRATED AMPS				1	E.		
	Arcam AVR200	800	Upgraded AVR100 with Dolby Pro-Logic II and some bass management. Great for stereo, a bit bass-light for multichannel	•	6		70	2
B	Arcam AVR300	1,300	Cracking all-round music and movie ability sets the Arcam apart from the AV crowd	۲	8	۲	100	25
	Denon AVR-2803	650	Merely 'average' sound but it's impossible to argue against the flexibility and value of its engineering	۲	9	۲	130	25
8	Denon AVR-3805	1,000	Upgraded sound, new processing algorithms and a great remote control make this a superb mid-market multichannel buy	•		۲	120	25
	Denon AVC-A1SRA	3,000	An AV amp with genuine high-res hi-fi credentials. Feature set now upgraded to the AVC-A1SR'A'		8	۰	170	2
	Marantz SR9300	2,000	Not a high flyer, just a thoroughly enjoyable, warm and attractive sounding receiver with music and film soundtracks alike	•	8	۲	105	2
	Marantz SR-12S1	3,000	A multichannel amp that can be taken seriously in stereo too. Resources are in the engineering rather than the gimmickry		3	۰	160	2
3	Pioneer VSA-AX5i	1,200	Standard setter in its price category, with i.Link digital interface and MCACC auto set-up	•	11		100	2
	Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai	3,200	State of the art one-box amplifier with enhanced sound quality, auto set-up and other enhancements		10		150	2
8	Sony STR-DB795	300	A superb value little amplifier, well appointed technically and successfully tuned for UK ears		7	0	100	20
	Sony TA-DA9000ES	2,600	Arguably the first convincing fully digital amplifier, an excellent match for players with i.Link encrypted outputs	0	10	•	200	2
HULT	TICHANNEL PREAMPS/PROCESSORS	AND POW	ER AMPS	1.13	177	1		2
8	Arcam A90+7.1 mod, P90/3	1,920	Add Arcam's multichannel module and a P90/3 power amp to the A90 stereo integrated and you've got got superb purist 5.1		8	٠	90	25
	Arcam AV8/P7	5,750	State-of-the-art processor (£3,150) and seven-channel power amp (£2,600). An excellent fusion of stereo and surround sound		7	۰	180	2
	Copland CVA306/CVA535	3,748	Tube analogue six-channel pre transforms multichannel audio from a novelty into a genuine advance for the high fidelity art		5		125	2
	Cyrus AV8/3x Smartpower	2,900	Classic Cyrus sound translated to a multichannel arena, limited features and power, but civilised sound		3		105	2
	EAD TheaterMaster 8800	4,500	One of the most 'musical' sounding AV processors to date - great with the matching PowerMaster 8300 multichannel power amp		9	•		2
	Linn Exotik	1,750	Is hi-fi ready to make the jump to multichannel music? Linn think so with this musical preamplifier		4			2
B	Marantz PS-17/2x SM-17	3,400	Classy and capable system, great steering, warm solid sound and high detail resolution, and some great gadgets		10	•	60	2
	Meridian 861	9,833	Powerful surround processor with flexible modular construction, marvellous versatility to drive any speaker configuration		6	٠		2
	Naim AV2/NAPV175/NAP150	4,175	First truly credible multichannel system from Naim is idiosyncratic but offers excellent basic sound with modest spatial steering		5		50	2
	Parasound Halo C1/A51	8,500	Powerful and flexible processor/power amp combo with impressive sound. Excellent value – processor includes onboard screen		11	0	250	2
8	Primare SP31.7/A30.5	4,200	Great all-round system which brings the qualities of good stereo high fidelity to a multichannel world		5		120	2:

SPECSIVEY RECEIVER Integrated multichannel amp with built-in radio tuner. LINE INPUTS Input sockets for source components with a line level output: CD players, DVD players, tape decks, tuners, phono stages etc. 7.1 CHANNEL COMPATIBLE The amp either has seven-channel in and outputs or in some instances is equipped with seven channels of amplification. 5-CHANNEL POWER (W) Power output in watts per channel of all channels driven by the amp.





What, How & Where TO BUY YOUR HI-FI SYSTEM

Get the best system for your money by asking our Top Twenty UK specialist hi-fi dealers.

Isn't it easy to buy a new system? You read the magazine product reviews, you find out who sells the recommendations, five-star favourites or best buys at the cheapest price, you order the system, get a friend who knows his onions to install it - and live happily ever after.

This is a fairly well-trodden path but it leads to dissatisfaction, endless upgrades and a lot of wasted money. It's likely that the system will help you lose interest in music pretty rapidly. The problem is that there are more myths about hi-fi than Aesop's Fables. CD gives you perfect sound. All CD players sound the same. A £50 CD player plays high fidelity music. All magazine reviewers are experts. Big speakers are always better than small ones. More watts per channel is everything. MP3 format gives you high quality. A collection of 'Best Buy' components will be a great system. And so on and so on. All myths.

Music - the real aim

Our aim must be to buy a hi-fi system that will prove musically satisfying, reliable and deliver true value for money. If the system doesn't excite you musically you've wasted your money. What is even worse is that you may not even realise you've bought a bad egg - you'll just switch the TV on instead and your desire to listen to music will gradually diminish. Have you ever been in a pub or club where you realise it's very difficult to conduct a conversation, even to the extent of being really tiring? A poor quality system continuously distorts but I don't mean it necessarily reaches the point of audibly breaking up. With a top quality system you can play music very loudly and still hold a conversation because it's free of distortion

A poor system is tiring to listen to even when it's played at low volume. If you want proof, go into a shoe or clothes shop where they play background 'music' and try to enjoy listening. It's odds on you'll fail.

Mhat and Where to buy

So where do you start? Perhaps it's better to say what you don't start with and that is WHAT. It's better to start with WHERE. There is only one way to give yourself the best chance of getting it right first time, and that's through a specialist hi-fi dealer. Now it's likely you have preconceived ideas that may put you off visiting one. Although you would welcome the advice and guidance, you don't know the technical jargon. You don't want to be talked down to. Your friend has said they only sell expensive gear and they're not interested if you don't have a big budget. They're expensive. Again, just myths. Most specialist hi-fi dealers are running their business because, above all, they love music. They spend a large portion of their time listening to music and

66...too many people today know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Oscar Wilde





comparing systems to get the best possible results. They know the component combinations which don't gel together and, conversely, they know the combinations which give the best performance within a given price range. But they all also know the system must suit you.

Buying or being sold to?

Now there's a group of long-established specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer first. Their idea of 'selling' is to discuss your requirements, offer their advice, give you the best options, then play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge.

Listening to your choice of music in a peaceful, well organised demonstration room, you may be surprised and, almost certainly, relieved to discover how easy it is to hear the differences between components and between systems. You'll be able to make a clear and informed decision about what to buy. It comes down to trusting your own judgement rather than the opinion of a reviewer you've never met ...and who won't refund your money if you're not satisfied or be at the end of a phone to sort out any problem you might encounter. The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put your hand in your pocket. They won't leave you to set up the system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it sounds great, and make sure you're entirely happy with the way it works. Why? Because a high proportion of these dealers' custom comes through people who have bought from them before, either directly or by recommendation. It's vital to them to get it right for you.

Getting the best deal

Oscar Wilde wrote "...too many people today know the price of everything and the value of nothing." Specialist retailers know that not all potential purchasers will seek them out. They tend to attract the more discerning, thoughtful customers. Let's face it, a good deal is about a great deal more than just price. After all, unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years. Most of these dealers offer much longer equipment guarantees than provided by the manufacturer, a very worthwhile benefit, but it also makes it in the dealer's interest to ensure high build quality and reliability. Maybe you could save a few pounds by buying piecemeal but you'll

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

Listed below are 20 of the best hi-fi shops in the country. They have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give them years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.

STAR QUALITIES



OUR TOP 20 UK SPECIALIST HI-FI DEALERS

LONDON

 N1 GRAHAMS HI-FI

 190a New North Road

 020 7226 5500

 SW11 ORANGES & LEMONS

 61/63 Webbs Road, Battersea

 020 7924 2043

SOUTH Ashford, Kent

SOUNDCRAFT HI-FI 40 High St. 01233 624441 Chelmsford RAYLEIGH HI-FI 216 Moulsham Street 01245 265245

Colchester RAYLEIGH HI-FI 33 Sir Isaac's Walk 01206 577682

East Grinstead AUDIO DESIGNS 26 High St. 01342 314569 Horsham AUDIO DESIGNS 7-9 Park Place 01403 252255 Brighton THE POWERPLANT 40 Church Road, Hove 01273 775542 Kingston-upon-Thames

INFIDELITY

9 High Street Hampton Wick 020 8943 3530

Maiden Bradley, Wiltshire FLAMING BOX Perry Farm. 01985 845440

Rayleigh, Essex RAYLEIGH HI-FI 44a High St. 01268 779762

Ringwood, Hampshire PHONOGRAPHY Star Lane 01425 461230

Southend-on-Sea BAYLEIGH HI-FI

132/4 London Road 01702 435255 **Southampton PHASE 3 HI-FI** 37 Bedford Place 023 8022 8434 Worthing PHASE 3 HI-FI 213-217 Tarring Road 01903 245577

MIDLANDS

Banbury OVERTURE 3 Church Lane 01295 272158 Birmingham SOUND

ACADEMY 152a High Street, Bloxwich 01922 493499 Coventry FRANK HARVEY 163 Spon Street

024 7652 5200 Leicester CYMBIOSIS 6 Hotel St. 0116 262 3754

NORTH

Cheadle THE AUDIO WORKS 14 Stockport Road 0161 428 7887 Oldham AUDIO COUNSEL 12/14 Shaw Road 0161 633 2602

Nottingham

CASTLE SOUND & VISION 48/50 Maid Marian Way 0115 9584404 Sheffield

MOORGATE ACOUSTICS 184 Fitzwilliam St

0114 275 6048 Warrington

CHRIS BROOKS AUDIO

29 Gaskell Street 01925 261212 York SOUND ORGANISATION 2 Gillygate 01904 627108

SCOTLAND

Glasgow STEREO STEREO 260 St. Vincent Street 0141 248 4079

N. IRELAND Belfast LYRIC HI-FI 429-431 Lisburn Road 028 90 381296



BUYER'S BIBLE STEREO SPEAKERS

STEREO SPEAKERS

Speaker pairs for stereo sound

While loudspeakers are relatively straightforward in construction, they have one of the most difficult jobs in hi-fi – turning an electrical signal into an acoustic one. Most consist of two or more drive units in a box that usually has a port in it to make life easier for the cone in your mid and/or bass driver. Alternatives to this arrangement include panel speakers, which use electrostatic or ribbon technology, and horns, which use drive units in complex cabinets that greatly improve efficiency.

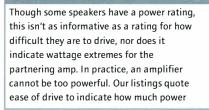
Box speakers are either designed to stand on the floor (floorstanders) or on a stand (stand or shelfmounts). Floorstanders have greater internal volume which can translate into greater efficiency and/or bass extension, but less substantial designs also introduce cabinet resonance and thus distortion. But they don't need stands and therefore have the aesthetic edge. Standmounts have less cabinet to vibrate and often score in terms of imaging and timing, but need good stands to work well.

Positioning

The closer the speaker is to a wall, the greater the reinforcement of bass. As all rooms differ, there's no simple formula for placement and experimentation will yield the best results. Altering the angle at which the speakers face the listener can also make a difference to balance and stereo image.

Going multichannel

Many stereo speakers can be augmented with centre and surround channels from the same brand to create a multichannel system. The most important element is a centre channel, which needs to match the stereo pair as closely as possible. For the best musical results, surrounds should be as per the front left and right channels, but if space or funds don't permit, smaller designs can be used quite effectively.





Choosing speakers

Because speakers and the rooms they are used in vary so much, choosing a pair tends to be quite subjective. To find some that will suit you, try to listen to a good variety to hear how they differ, and if possible, audition some at home. Tonal balance tends to vary the most, but is less important than more subtle factors such as timing and dynamics. Finally, listen with your ears not your eyes – great-looking speakers aren't necessarily great sounding.

Spikes

21

Floorstanding speakers and stands have threaded inserts for spikes that allow rigid coupling with the floor. These have the advantage of draining resonance from the speaker and giving tighter bass, but can result in more vibration getting back to the electronics and often cause the floor to resonate as well.

your amp needs to avoid a mismatch. An above-average (A+) speaker will work with amps rated at 25W plus, while an average (A) speaker will need 50W or more, and a below average (A-) speaker could require 100W plus to sound its best. These are guidelines rather than rules.

Q&A

IF SPEAKERS ARE RATED AT 75 WATTS, DOES THAT MEAN 1 NEED A 75 WATT AMP?

No, see the box on power for the full story.

WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR SMALL ROOMS?

Those designed to work close to the wall will be smoother in confined spaces. Speakers that have relatively dry, tight bass will also sound better.

WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR BIG ROOMS?

Big, efficient, easy-to-drive designs are more likely to be able to fill a room better than compact models.

DO I NEED TO BUY CENTRE AND SURROUND CHANNELS FROM THE SAME BRAND AS MY STEREO SPEAKERS?

Yes, assuming that you're wanting to create a homogenous surround sound experience, where voices don't change when they move from one channel to another.

STEREO SPEAKERS BUYER'S BIBLE



Sensys DC1 £449 A new dual-concentric main driver plus super-tweeter in a solid standmount box results in a neutral yet expressive speaker at a very tempting price.

Our favourite I BEST BUY EL EDITOR'S CHOICE

PMC

GB1 £995

An attractively compact floorstander with

remarkable freedom from boxiness. A great

buy if you've just under a grand to spend.

a beautifully articulate sound and



703 £2,000 A hi-tech, three-way floorstander sporting a 'surroundless' midrange driver. Delivers a thoroughly engaging sound with great bass and an expressive midrange.

Focal-JMLab Micro Utopia Be £3,500 The smallest model in the top-end Utopia Be range is a remarkable piece of speaker engineering, complete with beryllium tweeter and a highly revealing sound.

-					SP	ECIF	ICATI	ONS		
Ste BADGE	PRODUCT	٤	SPEAKERS COMMENTS	SIZE W,H,D (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO	£1.000	100		10.00.01	10		00			000
88	Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo 1	180	An unusually classy and sophisticated performer for the price; laid-back sound and good looks too	19,36,24		A	30	•		226
BB	ATC SCM12	999	Magnificent main driver confers great authority, grip and smoothness, though upper bass a little lean	22,39,26		A-	55	-	۲	253
BB	AVI Neutron IV	499	A great example of what can be done with a genuinely small speaker, but the warts-and-all balance won't suit all	15,27,21		A-	65			260
BB	B&W DM303	180	Chunky looking and lively sounding, with deep bass, a fine midband and a restrained top end	20,33,23		A	23	-	۲	226
BB	B&W DM602 S3	300	Old-fashioned size/shape, but this timeless design has a rare combination of grip, authority and headroom	24,49,29		A	25	0		234
BB	B&W DM603 S3	600	Excellent all-rounder, smooth for its price with fine bass and mid, though top might be more refined	20,91,29	0	A-	25	0		231
88	B&W 705	900	Deft, delicate and delightful, if a little bass light, with clever enclosure and driver engineering	22,42,29		A	35	0		253
88	Castle Richmond 3i	320	Does most things well and the most important thing - musical communication - remarkably well for the price	17,33,23		A	60	۰		260
BB	Castle Conway 3	930	Lovely real wood finish and a beautifully balanced sound, fine dynamics and transients, but might have more 'air'	22,91,27	۲	A+	30	•		237
88	Castle Harlech S2	1,000	Improved Harlech is slightly aggressive, but lots of fun, and very good-looking too	20,96,33	۲	A	50	0		219
B8	Dynaudio Audience 42	400	An aristocrat of the vinyl-covered miniature breed. A terrific small speaker for the price	17,29,24		A	40	.0		215
	Dynaudio Audience 52	557	Brilliant neutrality, though a little understated dynamically (wood veneered version, as tested $-$ £647)	20,33,26		A-	30	0		250
	Dynaudio Audience 62	729	Pricey but cute vinyl floorstander that is a class act sonically – lightweight, but clean and dextrous	20,86,26	۲	A	30	0		231
_	Elac BS 203.2	599	A fine and finely made speaker – if you want good vocal projection and great grooves it's a serious contender	17,29,22		A-	45	•		262
BB	Epos ELS3	200	Few affordable speakers sound as clean and convincing while taking up so little real estate	18,27,19		A-	60	0		241
88	Focal-JMlab Chorus 707 S	350	The size and shape might be unfashionable, but this is an outstanding all-round performer at a very sharp price	24,49.30		А	25	0		251
88	Focal-JMlab Chorus 716 S	550	Not the smoothest around, but combines coherent voicing with fine dynamic expression and real authority	22,95,30	۲	А	20	0		250
	Focal-JMlab Chorus 726 S	780	Big generous sound with good dynamic freedom, hampered by some voice-band congestion	22,100,32	•	A+	55	•		253
88	Focal-JMlab Cobalt 816 S	999	Great all-rounder - lively and dynamic, smooth and neutral, marred only by a slight treble 'sting'	22,98,31	Θ	A-	25	0		242
	Harbeth NRG2	650	Strikingly styled stand-mount majors on dynamic excitement at some expense in smoothness and coloration	19x34x29		A+	42		•	263
	Jamo E 700	150	Superb staging and detail for the price, but needs a sub to deliver real bass	14,24,20		A-	60		۲	260
	KEF Q1	250	Stylish if slightly small-sounding stand-mount with fine midband coherence; works well close to a wall	22,35,30		А	30		0	234
	KEF Q4	400	Beautiful, bijou three-way floorstander lacks some bass weight but has a lovely midband with low coloration	18,82,25	۰	А	38		0	255
	Leema Xen	1,000	A true micro-mini-monitor with remarkable powers of analysis and great musical insight, if a touch forward	14,22,23		A-	50		۰	245
	Mission m35	400	Very good material value - a big speaker with ample bass and a notably open yet also rather bright top end	26,103,37	۰	А	23	0		255
	Monitor Audio Bronze B2	200	A lively and entertaining speaker with tight, controlled bass and a pronounced midband	19,35,25		А	42			238
BB	Monitor Audio Bronze B4	350	A beautifully balanced loudspeaker with fine overall dynamic range and good imaging	19,85,26	0	А	23			255
	Monitor Audio Silver S8	800	A thoroughly impressive all-rounder, notable for its wide dynamic range, excellent imaging and fine neutrality	19,90,27		А	20	0		237
BB	Mordaunt-Short Avant 906	350	Capable and engaging, this neat design will complement the majority of sub-£500-per-component systems	18,85,27	۲	А	45			254
	Neat Petite III	845	The treble is peaky, but this is still one of the most coherent and communicative miniatures around	20,31,20		А	30		0	211
	PMC DB1+	625	Now with sweeter treble, this fun-size tiny lacks some weight and authority, but is beautifully balanced	16,29,24		А	50			261
88	PMC TB2+	795	This fine allrounder has a lovely laid-back neutrality, fine transparency, low coloration and a sweet treble	20,41,31		А	30			261

SPECS KEY SIZE WXHXD (CM) Width, height and depth of one cabinet in centimetres. FLOORSTANDER Speakers that don't require stands. EASE OF DRIVE How much power the amplifier needs (approximately) to drive the loudspeaker effectively. A+ 25 watts plus A 50 watts plus A- 100 watts plus A- 100 watts plus ACT Active – the speaker has its own in-built amplifier. BASS FROM How low the speaker goes – the smaller the number the deeper the bass. FREE SPACE The speakers work best away from wall(s). CLOSE TO WALL The speakers will work best when up against a wall (but avoid corners).



Johann Sebastían would have been very proud.

The Kontrapunkt series from Ortofon. Named as a sign of respect for possibly the greatest, and the last, of Johan Sebastian Bach's works - The XIXth Contrapunctus. From around £400 and available from most quality Hi-Fi stores.

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STEREO SPEAKERS BUYER'S BIBLE

Our favourite E EST BUY E EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO SPEAKERS continued

U				SIZE	FLO	EAS	BASS	-	CLOS	22
Ster	eo speakers			SIZE W,H,D (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
BADGE?		£	COMMENTS	(CM)	NDER	DRIVE	(HZ)	PACE	WALL	MBER
BB	PMC GB1	995	Ultra-compact floorstander is beautifully clean, articulate and free from boxiness, with a notably delicate top end	16,92,24	0	A+	30	۲		257
68	Quad 21L	695	Elegant lacquer finish floorstander has a smooth, well balanced sound, even bass and good detail projection	21,80,26	0	A+	25	۲		263
	Quad 22L	895	Lovely lacquer finish over birds-eye maple veneer, with a sound that's more open and forward than usual	21,87,28	۲	Α	25	•		257
BB	Rega Ela	749	Might have more grunt, but few can match its impressive agility, delicacy, and superior musical communication	23,89,30	•	А	28		0	250
	Spendor SR5	1,000	This wall-mount very cleverly avoids the usual colorations, delivering a very dynamic if rather dry sound	31,31,18		A+	50		٠	240
86	Tannoy Fusion 4	350	This big d'Appolito twin two-way has fine coherence and dynamics. A neutral and even all-rounder	21,97,29		А	20	٠		255
28	Tannoy Sensys DC1	449	Modest sensitivity but beautifully balanced with fine authority at a very realistic price	21,41,29		А	40		•	245
	Tannoy Eyris 1	600	Pricey but very cute standmount miniature; oddball, but has marvellous midband subtlety and delicacy	17, 35, 26		A+			•	227
	Tannoy Sensys DC2	649	Has impressive scale and weight with fine stereo imaging, but is also rather laid back, lacking easy agility	21,97,29	٠	А	20	•		250
	Tannoy Eyris 2	999	This super-slim and cutely different-looking floorstander is very communicative, despite weak treble	17,91,26	۲	А	20	•		231
68	Triangle Antal ES	975	Neither pretty nor smooth but a very exuberant and involving communicator, with plenty of scale and expression	20,108,34		А	20			263
ABO	/E £1,000	1.2.2.1				1.20		199	8.16	SHA
EC	Acoustic Energy AE1 MkIII	1,690	Luxury miniature has a laid-back but bouncy sound, a marvellous dynamic range and very superior imaging	19,31,25		A-	30	•		251
	Acoustic Energy AE3 Mkll	4,490	A beautifully neutral speaker with very wide dynamic range and superior imaging, plus lovely Art Deco styling	19,99,29	٠	Α	20	•		251
88	Anthony Gallo Nucleus Ref	2,400	Occasionally raw, but engaging and capable beyond its physical stature	20,89,41	•	А	34	•		257
	ATC Active 10	1,269	Stylish, active powerhouses with plenty of subtlety when required (balanced connection only)	23,39,31		act	45	۲		221
88	ATC SCM35	1,999	If you want to hear the uncoloured truth about your record collection in all its glory, this is a speaker to treasure	23,88,30	•	A-	48	۲		250
EC	ATC SCM50 ASL	7,255	350W of power combine with superb drive units and a 48kg cabinet to provide alarming resolution	35,72,48		act	38	•		218
BB	Audio Note AN-E/LX	2,650	Though not very pretty, this is a thoroughly entertaining speaker with great dynamic subtlety and integrity	36,79,27	•	A+	22		٠	256
38	Audiovector Mi 3 Signature	2,320	Smooth and beautifully balanced with superb neutrality, wide dynamic range and a warm, sweet character	20,100,29	٠	A-	24	٠		260
	Aurum Cantus Leisure 3SE	1,200	Fabulous lacquer finish and a classy ribbon tweeter. Sounds smooth and sweet, if a touch laid back	25,40,30		Α	28	•		263
BB	B&W 704	1,400	Cleverly tapered enclosure and external tweeter delivers superior bass and treble, with a laid-back midband	22,96,32	0	А	20	•		257
68	B&W 703	2,000	Bass is immensely powerful and even, and the overall sound is lively and dynamic, though not overly smooth	23,101,36	•	A-	20	•		260
88	BC Acoustique ACT-A1	1,195	Exceptional focus, dynamic coherence and expression through the voice band, but bass could be more even	21,90,33	•	A+	25	•		257
	Beauhorn B2.2 Revelation	3,984	Magnificent midband and fine overall balance but limited bass is best with small-scale material	34,130,75	•	A+	80		•	244
	Dali Helicon 300	1,980	Lively and essentially sweet sound is beautifully free from boxiness, if a little lean and forward overall	21,44,36		А	24	•		260
88	Dynaudio Audience 82	1,460	Bulky, with vinyl finish, but offers exceptional neutrality, bass extension, power handling and loudness potential	22,106,36	•	А	30	•		229
	Dynaudio Contour S 1.4	1,850	Sound has fine mid-to-treble coherence and neutrality, though port tuning was ill-suited to our room	19,40,36		A-	28	٠		260
	Eclipse TD Lulét 307/316	1,250	Extraordinary satellite plus sub solution sounds a cut above other sub/sats. Can be expanded to multichannel	12,16,16		act	40	•		247
EC	Focal-JMlab Micro Utopia Be	3,500	New 'Be' version is clearly an exceptional standmount, capable of revealing the innate quality of the music	25,42.5,38		А	50	•		245
EC	Focal-JMlab Diva Utopia Be	7,599	Lovely slimline speaker combines remarkable transparency with fine dynamics and gorgeous bass	25,110,53	۲	A+	30	•		255
EC	Focal-JMlab Alto Utopia Be	11,000	Attractive and beautifully balanced, with fine bass alignment and focus, low coloration and very clean top end	37,121,53		A-	20	۲		248
	Harbeth Super HL5	1,699	Looks old-fashioned, but classic monitor combines authority and transparency with good neutrality	33,64,31		А	30	•		233
EC	KEF Reference 207	7,000	A true statement speaker with a majestic, transparent sound to match the build	40,129,69	0	А	40	•		263
	Living Voice Auditorium	1,700	Gloriously coherent and dynamic midband, though the top end is restrained and bass was uneven in our room	22,86,28	•	A-	30	•		247
EC	Living Voice Avatar	2,700	Dynamic and highly resolved, yet physically discreet design with a relaxed balance	22,104,27	0	A+	40	•		218
EC	Living Voice Avatar OBX-R2	4,000	Has Dynamics, tonal colour, detail, space and time resolution in spades. External crossovers require extra cabling	22,100,27	•	A+	35	•		244
	MartinLogan Mosaic	1,799	Curious hybrid construction marries many panel speaker-like attributes with moving coil simplicity	24,102,30	•	A-	46	•		257
86	MartinLogan Clarity	2,498	Relatively affordable and easy to live with electrostatic hybrid with class-leading resolving power	26,135,31		A-	46	•		245

LOUDSPEAKERS

SPECIFICATION



MUSIC MATTERS



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344 UXBRIDGE ROAD, HATCH END, MIDDLESEX HA5 4HR TEL: 020 8420 1925 FAX: 020 8420 1928

Our favourite EST BUY CE EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO SPEAKERS continued

•				SIZE	FLO	EAS	BASS	_	CLO	SSI
Ster	eo speakers			SIZE W.H,D (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
BADGE?		£	COMMENTS	(CM)	NDER	DRIVE	N (HZ)	PACE	WALL	WIBER
BO	Mission Elegante e83	1,990	Uncommonly clean, agile and refined floorstander, and as elegant as the name	33,111,36	0	A-	44	•		257
	Naim Ariva	1,275	Cute and discreet floorstander has superb bass and a wide dynamic range, but it could be smoother and sweeter	23,88,31	•	Α	25		•	259
EC	Naim SL-2	4,995	Delivers magnificent musical analysis and communication skills in a notably discrete physical package	28,103,33		A-	20		•	232
EC	Neat Ultimatum MFS	2,995	Wonderful five-driver standmount sounds bigger than it looks. Very spacious and informative	22,38,37		A+	25	•		241
EC	Neat Ultimatum MF9	8,500	Superb musical communicator with splendidly deep and agile bass and fine open neutrality	22,150,40		A-	20	•		226
BB	PMC FB1+	1,625	Nicely proportioned floorstander has a sweet top and a beautifully natural, open and restrained midband	20,100,30		Α	20	0		260
	PMC 0B1	2,450	Genuinely deep bass and lovely overall neutrality, though mid could have more tension and bass more punch	20,103,33	0	Α	20	۲		243
EC	PMC IB2	6,150	Stunning in an understated way, this speaker creeps up on you and hooks you with its transparency and power	33,74,47		A-	25	•		237
EC	ProAc Response D25	2,995	The traditional ProAc high-end detail mixed with greater efficiency and more pace - a splendid speaker	22,107,25	•	A+	20	۲		254
68	Rega R9	2,498	This subtle, laid back but very informative performer has a very superior dynamic range, especially in the bass	17,103,39		A	20	•		256
88	Ruark Talisman III	1,499	No bass demon, but a sophisticated and agile speaker epitomising Ruark's design ideals	22,84,31	•	Α	22	0		259
EC	Sonus Faber Cremona A.	2,149	Standmount 'Auditor' version of the Cremona makes a soundstage bigger and better than its size suggests	19,35,32		Α	48	•		246
	Spendor S6e	1,495	Combines deep, powerful bass with an attractively open midband, but perhaps too much restraint up top	30,88,19	•	A+	23			257
	Spendor S9e	2,895	An improvement on the original S9 - very entertaining at high levels with a fabulously open and weighty bass	24,101,38	٠	A+	40	٠		256
EC	Tannoy Dimension TD8	4,000	This stylish speaker is a splendid all-rounder, with fine dynamics, precise imaging and minimal coloration	31,86,30		A-	25	۰		240
EC	Tannoy Dimension TD10	5,000	Extremely competent and rhythmic speaker, a futureproof supertweeter and detail to die for	35,101,37	•	A-	38	•		215
EC	Tannoy Dimension TD12	6,500	Art Deco-inspired style, plus magnificent headroom and genuine monitoring neutrality - a tour de force	42,126,41	•	A-	23			225
EC	Tannoy Yorkminster	9,000	Deliciously delicate and expressive at low listening levels, it still has massive headroom when your in the mood	62,102,45	•	A+	20	•		255
88	Totem Forest	2,390	Low sensitivity but wonderfully open neutrality, at heart a beautifully communicative and musical loudspeaker	20,90,27	٩	А	25	0		247
	Triangle Naia	1,900	Exciting, vivid and communicative, but also a bit untidy and uneven, the Naia is a whole lot of fun	23,119,32	•	A-	25	0		247
EC	Triangle Magellan Concerto	9,995	Scintillating midrange and treble, with tuneful, well-timed bass - a thoroughly engaging musical ride	28,149,34	•	Α	35	•		262
	Vandersteen 2Ce Signature	1,990	Very superior midband neutrality, impressive freedom from boxiness and splendid stereophony. A classic	41,109,26	•	A-	30		•	229
EC	Vivid Audio B1	6,590	Impressive cabinet design combined with hi-tech drivers to make truly world class speaker	27,110,38	•	A-	40	٠		261
EC	Waterfall Victoria TWN	2,000	Stunning transparent glass enclosure and a sonic treat too, with great dynamic expression	22,100,22	•	Α	28	٠		262
EC	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,000	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package	23, 91, 37	٠	Α	28	•		254
EC	Wilson benesch Discovery	5,500	Innovative three-way with built-in stand, combines great subtlety with weight and headroom	23,47,38	•	A-	45	•		212
EC	Wilson Benesch ACT	8,400	Superb enclosure gives uncanny freedom from 'boxiness'. Well balanced, but top end might be sweeter	23,108,37	•	Α	20	٠		252
EC	Wilson Benesch Chimera	15,000	Elegant with lovely sonic delicacy and plenty of weight too. Works best at low levels, but a difficult load to drive	24,145,55	۲	A-	20	٠		234

AV SPEAKERS

Speaker solutions for multichannel surround sound



Multichannel speaker systems have a front left/right (L/R) stereo pair, a centre or dialogue channel, two (5.1) or four (7.1) surround speakers and often a subwoofer. For best results, each of these speakers bar the sub should be identical. The problem is that few surround systems are dedicated to music and perform a home cinematic role as well, meaning the centre speaker has to sit above or below a video monitor. Centre channels are usually wide and short for this reason.

This should not be a barrier to great surround for music and movies however, as many brands make centre channels with a very close sound to their L/R designs.

Music vs movies

High-resolution SACD and DVD-A music recordings tend to be mastered with

SET-UP

Ideally you should set up surround speakers with as much care as you would stereo systems, but practical issues tend to have a significant bearing on surround and centre speaker placement. Surround channels can be floorstanding or wallmounted, and centres usually have to perch on the TV or underneath it. Given these limitations, adjust your L/ R front speakers to give the best tonal match with the centre. If there's more than just you listening, 'toe in' the speakers so that their axis crosses in front of the listening position – this gives a wider stereo image. And if there's a subwoofer it should be placed near the front speakers. Use a sound pressure metre (available from Tandy among others) to accurately set levels. surround speakers in the ITU standard position which is as far behind the listener as the front channels are in front. 5.1 movie soundtracks tend to place surround channels not so far behind and to the side of listeners. Usually, practical limitations will dictate a limited range of placement options, but if you are a dedicated music fan, check out the ITU set-up regulations in the booklet supplied with SACD discs.

SPECIFICATION

SUBWOOFERS

Subs start working where stereo speakers run out of steam at low frequencies. The idea is to create deeper, better-controlled bass rather than more of it. They usually have onboard amplification (active) and connect to either the LFE (Low Frequency Effects) channel in a home cinema set-up or the speaker terminals in a stereo set-up.

AV SPEAKERS BUYER'S BIBLE

TOP BUYS



B&W 600 S3 package £900 Incorporates 602s, 601s and an LCR 600 centre speaker. Great in both stereo and multichannel surround modes.



Q AV7 £1,300 With the latest Uni-Q refinements, this system is astonishingly accomplished and amazing value.



ATC Concept 3 £4,877 It might not look as flashy as some, but the quality of engineering in this ATC package ensures superb all-round performance.



Akurate package £13,750 Linn has worked wonders with its new multichannel speaker system – it's not cheap, but its performance is breathtaking.

BASS FROM (HZ) NUMBER OF SPEAKERS

LOSE TO WALL FREE SPACE

EASE OF DRIVE

Our favourite e est buy e entrors choice AVGEP ACCACCES Nultichannel speakers BADGEP PROUCT £ COMMENTS MATC Concept 3 4,877 Extremely engaging, revealing and musical multichannel system providing 360 degrees of full-on entertainment B&W 300 package 900 An excellent compromise between the requirements of music and those of home cinema (inc. subwoofer) B B&W 600 S3 (602/601/LCR 600) 900 Unquestionably delivers the sonic goods. High-quality drivers in standmount enclosures

BB	ATC Concept 3	4,877	Extremely engaging, revealing and musical multichannel system providing 360 degrees of full-on entertainment	A-	6	12	۲	opt	255
	B&W 300 package	900	An excellent compromise between the requirements of music and those of home cinema (inc. subwoofer)	А	6	27	•		241
88	B&W 600 S3 (602/601/LCR 600)	900	Unquestionably delivers the sonic goods. High-quality drivers in standmount enclosures	А	5	22			224
	Castle CAV Sterling	1,250	Lovely real wood veneers. Sound has fine dynamic drive and expression, but can sound a little hard	А	5	28		0	224
	Dynaudio Audience 42 package	1,142	Multichannel package for hi-fi purists with real authority and imaging, but needs subwoofer for full-bore movie sound	A-	5	53	۲		241
	Final Sound Electrostatic system	4,875	Slim, attractive, electrostatic panels have clever connections, limited loudness but a breathtaking transparency	A-	6	20	۲		251
	Focal-JMlab Electra package	3,017	Bold, solid system, tremendous consistency and easy to expand with an added subwoofer	А	5	50	0		232
88	KEF Q AV7	1,300	With latest Uni-Q refinements, this system is astonishingly accomplished and amazing value	A+	5	35			232
EC	Linn Akurate (242/212/225/221)	13,750	An extremely capable system that offers new insights into the potential for multichannel audio	A-	6	18	۲		253
	Mirage Omni 2	2,650	Dark tonality, but superb imagery makes this an excellent all-round choice	А	5	30	٠		232
88	Mission m5 package	1,450	Main m52 is a clean, attractive full-range stereo speaker, while the m5as sub does big bass for movie fans	А	6	28	۰		241
	Mordaunt-Short Genie	800	A prince among sub/sat packages - good integration and impressively little compromise compared to full-size models	A-	6	38		۲	262
	Mordaunt-Short Declaration 500	1,600	Good value vinyl THX Select package with Power Towers. Good authority, but must be 5.1-connected	А	5	25			210
	Rega Jura/Ara/Senta	938	Classy real wood package does a good all-round job, though some may find it a touch bright	А	5	25		0	210

SPECS KEY EASE OF DRIVE How much power the amplifier needs (approximately) to drive the loudspeaker effectively: A+ 25 watts plus A 50 watts plus A- 100 watts plus. NUMBER OF SPEAKERS The amount of individual loudspeakers in the package. BASS FROM How low the speaker goes, the smaller the number the deeper the bass. FREE SPACE The speakers work best away from wall(s). CLOSE TO WALL The speakers will work best when up against a wall (but avoid corners).

Our favourite BEST BUY CE EDITOR'S CHOICE SUBWOOFERS

Bass	spea	kers
------	------	------

			2014/20172	D (CM)	VER (M))M (HZ)	UMBER
BADGE?	PRODUCT B&W PV1	£ 950	COMMENTS Gorgeously styled sub shakes the air but not the floor, delivering a very clean sound with negligible coloration	29,34,35			259
EC	B&W ASW850	2,000	Does all the things subwoofers should do with music and movies alike, but transparently and seamlessly	53,56,52	1000	18	246
	Monitor Audio ASW100	300	For the price, this compact subwoofer performs particularly well	32,32,34	120	27	225
88	REL Q150E	500	Great value compact 'cube' sub adds genuine weight and drive thanks to superior filtering	29,32,33	150	20	239
88	REL Stampede	550	Few subs at this price match the Stampede's subtlety and ease of integration. Much more hi-fi than AV	28,40,29	100	18	257
88	REL Strata 5	700	Highly musical sub that integrates well but the REL Stampede offers near-identical performance for less money	32,46,33	150	18	257
	REL Storm III	900	Excellent sub with powerful, detailed and deep bass. Comprehensive facilities, including flexible filter adjustment	42,62,33	150	18	225
EC	REL Stadium III	1,500	It's a bulky piece of furniture, but offers superior filtering as well as an ability to delve deep into the bass nether regions	59,56,39	200	16	217
	Titan Saturn	800	Very bulky sub has curious styling, but decent filtering gives good weight and headroom	72,48,72	200	20	239

SPECS KEY SIZE WXHXD (CM) Width, height and depth of one cabinet in centimetres. POWER (W) How many watts the onboard amplifier of active models delivers BASS FROM How low the sub goes, the smaller the number the deeper the bass SPECIFICATIONS

8

SIZE W.H

BASS FRO

ISSUE N

AUDUSA EUPEN CSA 2.5 AUDIO AC POWER CORD

AUDUSA LUTEN CSA 2.5 AUDIO ACTONER

GNLM 05/04 and GNLM 05/2.5 (CSA 2.5) Cable with **FERRITE TECHNOLOGY** - A polymer material mixed with a considerable quantity of homogeneously fine high quality ferrite powder.is extruded around the copper conductors. GNLM cables are further protected with a foil shield and a drain wire, specifically manufactured for High End audio use.

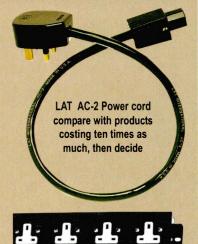
NEW for 2004 CSM Analog, Digital and Video Interconnects, with extruded ferrite - RCA or XLR, £75 for 1m pair.

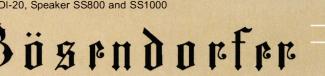
Power cables are fitted with IEC (Martin Kayser) and MK Tough plug Cable is also available with our all steel 4, 6 and 8 way distribution blocks. We can rewire the distribution blocks with Eupen cable as an extra cost option. Refer to our web site for details.

AUDUSA – OOM Silverlink OCC balanced speaker cable stranded, silver on OFHC plus three strands of OCC for improved bass performance. Mylar infill and with designed in protection against RF and EMI.

LAT INTERNATIONAL Inc USA - Analogue, Digital and Video interconnects and Speaker cable better than most at double the price.

We have developed a cabling (weaving) pattern along with an unusual shielding/filtering system that gets rid of the garbage that contaminates your components. The difference you hear with our cord is astounding. Our power cord takes advantage of silver in its design through use of our proprietary Silverfuse conductors. The conductors are 10 gauge and with PTFE; the best insulation available. Fitted as standard with IEC / MK Toughplug. . 60cm £62, 90cm £75, 1.2m £88, 1.5m £101, 1.8m £112 etc Other lengths available and off the reel. 4, 6 and 8 way all steel mains distribution blocks fitted with UK, Schuko or USA sockets.CE tested & approved mains distribution units manufactured of heavy gauge steel, finished in black and fitted with highest quality 13amp sockets. It has no filters, circuit breakers, surge protection, transformers, resistors, capacitors, LED's, on/off switches, chokes, regulators, just fitted with 1m of AC-2 mains cable. From £166 for 4 way, £198, 6 way, £229 for 8 way. Interconnects IC-200, IC-100, IC80, IC50, Video Vi-6, VI-6 Component, Digital -DI-20, Speaker SS800 and SS1000









Bosendorfer, One to One, Acoustic Active Principle, like no other loudspeaker in the world. Models 1, 2, 7, Wall and Centre finishes include piano black, hand matched veneers, white and with Swarovski Crystals

GNLM 05/2.5 (CSA2.5) £48 for 1.0m, £58 for 1.5m, £68 for 2.0m.

GNLM 05/04 £58 for 1.0m, £72 for 1.5m, £86 for 2.0m. Both GNLM cables are available off the reel and for export.

ACOUSTIC SOLID



Small Royal, 60cm aluminium platter,topped with a 6mm acrylic platter and leather mat. Nylon thread belt - weight 25kg, rrp £1280 without tone-arm





Stasis

pre amp

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HEADPHONES BUYER'S BIBLE

HEADPHONES

For your ears only

Headphones come in several varieties and some are designed for particular usage. The majority of 'cans' use dynamic cone and coiltype drive units and can be used with anything from a personal stereo to a dedicated amplifier. Other types also exist, most significantly electrostatics that use a charged panel membrane to produce a distinctly refined sound. These are supplied with their own dedicated amplifiers, which tends to increase the price.

Cans are split into several types. There are open and closed-back designs, the latter being best for noisy (or noise sensitive) environments as they minimise leakage and intrusion. Open-back types tend to have a more open, less 'in-head' sound. There are also three variants of earpad design: circumaurals enclose the ear and press on your head, supra-aurals press on



	LAUPI		UNES	ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUMAURAI	OPE	CLOSED BACK	WE	5MM JACK ADAPTOF	ISSUE N
Ster	eo headphones			OSTAT	-AUR	MAUR	OPEN BACK	D BA	WEIGHT (g)	DAPT	NUMBER
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ΠC	₽	₽.	R	읒	(g)	OR	99
88	AKG K44	20	Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed: a bargain			۰		۲	190	۲	219
88	AKG K270 Studio	129	Pro oriented design which is very transparent and great with acoustic material						270		230
EC	AKG K1000	600	Neutral, analytical and completely out of the head sound, suitable for connection to speaker outputs only						270		244
	Audio Technica ATH-D40fs	105	Detailed and involving sound with a professional 'studio' quality appeal			۰		•	250		194
88	Beyerdynamic DT990	160	Impeccable balance, very extended bass and treble, and bags of detail place this model ahead of the pack				.0		250	0	245
88	Grado SR-60	90	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste		۲		.0		200	٠	194
88	Grado SR-80	110	Not perhaps as neutral as some but they communicate well and that's the point of the exercise				•		200		230
88	Philips HP890	70	A remarkably sophisticated and very comfortable headphone			۲	0		330	0	219
BB	Sennheiser HD590	160	Assured and confident headphone with very low coloration and great comfort			•			270	0	205
EC	Sennheiser HD650	300	Astonishing resolution and hardly less impressive tonal balance make this a true hi-fi experience			0	۰		260	0	252
	Sony MDR-CD480	40	Generally neutral and nicely detailed - comfortable too				•		250	٠	219
EC	Stax SRS-2020 Basic Sys. II	349	Luxury option at its price, but the sound delivery is five-star quality all the way	۲			•		295	0	205

ESPENSIVATE ELECTROSTATIC Uses electrostatic film instead of more common cone or dome dynamics. SUPRA-AURAL Earpads sit on ear rather than around it. CIRCUMAURAL Earpads rest on the head around the ears OPEN BACK Vented capsules let sound in and out. CLOSED BACK Sealed capsules. WEIGHT in grams. 3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR Allows connection to personal stereos, computers etc.

AVID DIVA - AFFORDABLE HI-END

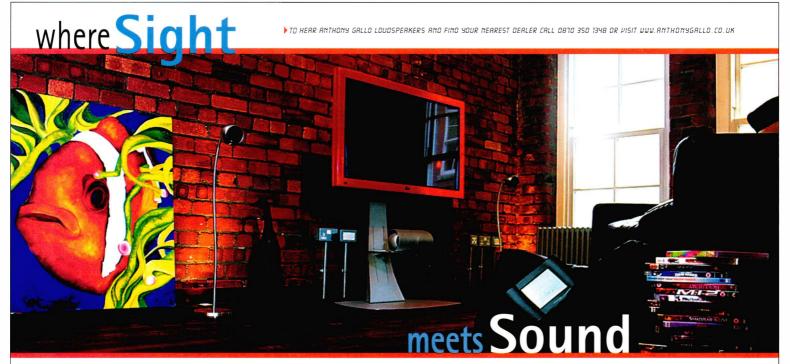


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the ear and intra-aurals sit in the ear and are particularly popular with personal stereo users.

Getting the best from your cans

Getting a good result with headphones is not quite as straightforward as it should be. Merely plugging them into the output on your CD player or amp will not give particularly engaging results unless you are very lucky. If you are planning on serious listening, invest in a dedicated amp – the increase in dynamics is not in the least bit subtle. A variety of models are made and prices start at around £80 for a QED, a little more for designs from, say, Creek or Musical Fidelity. And if you're really into cans, look up the valve-powered Earmax.



Anthony Gallo doesn't make ordinary speakers ...

Instead he designs *beautifully different* loudspeakers. He doesn't build conventional 'boxy' rectangular speakers either, preferring to **design** his *creations* around **spheres** thus *eliminating* internal resonance and external diffraction, the two main causes of loudspeaker distortion

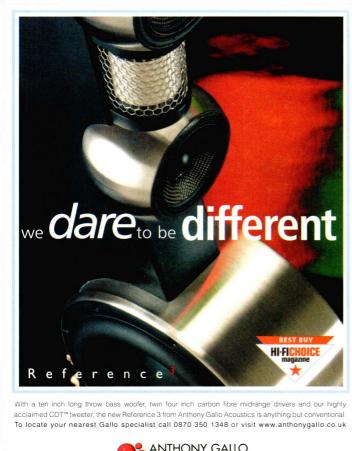
Quite simply - Anthony Gallo produces the world's finest 'small' speaker systems,

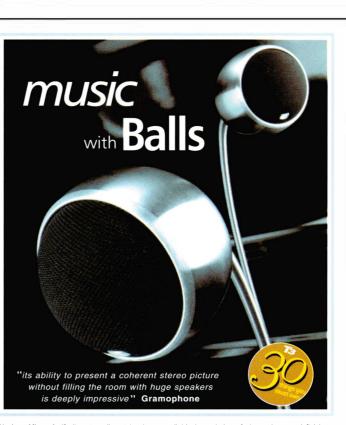


ANTHONY GALLO A C O U S T I C S t. 0 8 7 0 3 5 0 1 3 4 8 e. enquiries@anthonygallo.co.uk Gallo loudspeakers are available in a variety of *colours* and *finishes* to **complement** any room, from *striking* **polished** *stainless steel* to **vibront conory yellow**

Above all, Anthony Gallo speakers bring *exceptional*, expansive *sound* to living spaces **large** and small.

Whether your interest is Stereo, Home Cinema or Multi Room use, why not visit an approved Anthony Gallo dealer and discover why black speaker boxes are yesterday's news.





Nucleus Micro: A 4^e diameter, all metal sphere, available in a choice of nine colours and finishes Capable of producing a quality and quantity of sound that defies its modest physical dimensions To locate your nearest Gallo specialist call 0870 350 1348 or visit www.anthonygallo.co.uk





CABLES BUYER'S BIBLE

CABLES



Wires to hook your system together

Hi-fi cables come in two varieties: interconnects and speaker cables. Analogue interconnects come in preset lengths, generally with RCA (phono) plugs attached, though some equipment uses XLR connectors for balanced connection –this can be sonically advantageous, especially over longer runs. Speaker cable is commonly sold by the metre and can be used without plugs or can be fitted with screw or solder-on types.

Choosing cables is not quite as straightforward as it might seem. One problem is that components interact with the cables you use and this often results in audible effects, but there are few cables that are fundamentally incompatible with any components, and we recommend the advice of a good dealer. In any case, you should look to spend as much as you can afford. Digital cables come in two flavours: electrical and optical. In most instances electrical varieties sound better than optical, given the choice, but optical cables may be a better bet over long runs (10m+). Optical inputs/outputs usually use Toslink connectors, while most electrical types use RCA plugs, but some opt for BNC connection instead –check your components before you buy.

		BEST BUY CE EDITOR'S CHOICE		SF	PECIF	ICATIO	ONS
ABLES			SIF	SOLI			DIGITAL CABLE TYPE
rconnects and spe			STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	ETYP
PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	D	m	R	R	m
Avid Black Reference SCT	700	Rich, slightly dark sound that is beguiling and highly informative					
Black Rhodium Illusion	77	An upfront, lively, exciting cable which still manages subtlety when needed. Slight coloration though		•	•		_
Black Rhodium Opera	297	Very open, clear and detailed sound, with excellent extension at frequency extremes		•		•	
Chord Company Signature	499	Silver plated, triple screened. Some granularity but great resolving ability, a good match for Chord Signature loudspeaker cable		•	•		
Chord Company Chorus	200	Very even-handed balance with notably extended bass	•		•		
Ecosse The Composer	30	A high degree of realism and delicacy, and a fantastic price (0.8m)	•		•		
Ecosse The Diva	100	Very good performance in all areas, with particularly fine, tuneful, bass (0.8m)	•		•		
Kimber Silver Streak	242	Not the cheapest around, but more than justifies itself with terrific poise and balance of virtues	•		•		_
Kimber Timbre	83	Typical Kimber construction with ditto sound - clean, extended and detailed	•		•		
Monster Interlink 400 Mk2	70	Really lively and enjoyable sound	•		•		
Townshend DCT100	100	Unusual construction with copper strip conductors, giving very detailed sound, but just an occasional hint of hardness		•	•		
Townshend Isolda DCT	300	Unusual construction and cryogenically treated too: whatever the reason, a remarkably capable wire		•	•		
van den Hul The Bay C5	45	Terrific detail, nice balance – a great cable	0		0		
van den Hul The Well	85	Hybrid cable with carbon-fibre conductors added. Very slight bass coloration does little to detract from fine performance			•		
van den Hul D102 Mk III	79	Hybrid conductors (carbon and copper) and intelligent construction give strong bass and excellent detail			•		
Wireworld Solstice 5	70	A cable with all-round appeal - treble is slightly 'dark' but bass is excellent and the overall balance very good indeed					
L INTERCONNECTS	19523		-				-
Kimber Select KS2020	629	Provides a subtle but rewarding lift in musicality with any DAC, justifying the price			٠		Е
QED Qunex P75	25	A superbly capable interconnect that's highly detailed and well balanced					E
QED Qunex SR75	50	Lots of bass and good clear midrange and treble at a sensible price	•		•		Е
Supra ZAC	32	High grade fibre and quality plugs add up to a noticeable improvement over giveaway optical leads					0
van den Hul Optocoupler II	49	Noticeably has the edge over other optical leads, but still second best to electrical types					0
ER CABLES PRICE PER METRE	1.50			332		12535	-
Black Rhodium S300	18	Tight, precise and extended bass makes this a great cable for rock 'n' roll	٠		•		
Chord Company Signature	117	Dynamic, solid sounding cable, but it's bulky and not very tractable	•		•		
Ecosse Reference MS2.3	23	Favours excitement over refinement: can be slightly bass-shy, but plenty of life	•				
Electrofluidics 20/20	45	Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere - one of the best all-round cables available		•	•		
Kimber 4PR	5	Considering the price, this cable's very slight dryness is forgivable when everything else is so right	٠		•		
Kimber 8VS	18	Beautifully full, open and transparent sound right across the board. Price for 1m terminated pair			•		
Kimber 8PR	21	Bass very full, just occasionally a touch flabby, but detailed and sweet upper frequencies make this a good value cable	•		•		
Kimber 8TC	39	Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass. Price for 5m terminated pair	•		•		
QED Silver Anniversary	5	A few minor flaws, but overall performance is very assured for this price	•		0		
QED X-Tube XT300	10	A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems		•	0		
Townshend Isolda DCT	50	Cryogenically treated 'impedance matched' cable with stabilising components added: great sound all-round		•	•		
Wireworld Terra 5	5	Deep powerful bass, clear treble and very solid imaging add up to above-class performance	•		•		-
Wireworld Solstice 5	20	Unfriendly to handle, but makes up for it with very assured sound - heaps of bass and great insight	•		•		-
			•	t	•		

SPECS/KEY STRANDED Cable has a number of (usually) twisted strands to conduct the signal. SOLID CORE Cable has one or more individually insulated strands to conduct the signal. COPPER Material used to form the conducting element of the cable. SILVER Alternative material used to form the conducting element of the cable. DIGITAL CABLE TYPE E – electrical, 0 – optical. Cables are one metre length unless otherwise stated. Do you want to choose your hifi or home cinema system, in a comfortable and relaxing environment...? Do you want friendly and impartial advice (and a cup of tea) ...? Do you want to buy your system based on what you hear, and see, and not what somebody tells you...?

Do you live in GUILDFORD ...?

.....or Addlestone, Aldershot, Ashford(Middx), Ashstead, Bagshot, Basingstoke, Bracknell, Bookham, Bramley, Camberley, Chertsey, Chipstead, Chobham, Cobham, Cranleigh, Crowthorne, Dorking, Epsom, Esher, Farnborough, Farnham, Fleet, Frimley, Godalming, Hartley Wintney, Hampton, Haslemere, Hook, Horsham, Kingston, Liphook, Leatherhead, Liss, Molesey (East&West), New Malden, Odiham, Petersfield, Reading, Reigate, Redhill, Richmond, Shepperton, Virginia Water, Walton-on-Thames, West Byfleet, Weybridge, Windsor, Woking, Wokingham, Yateley.

Nobody else in these areas carries all the following major hifi brands:

Apollo, Arcam(Diva/FMJ), Ash Design, Atacama, Atlas (spkr cables & interconnects) B&W, Chord Company, Creek, Cyrus, Denon, Epos, Exposure, Genelec, Anthony Gallo Acoustics, Harman Kardon, Infinity, Iso Tek, KEF (including Reference), Linn Products(including Knekt), MJ Acoustics, Meridian, Michell, Mirage, Mission, Musical Fidelity, NAD, Naim, Ortofon, Pioneer, PMC, Primare, Proac, Project, Pure, QED(including Systemline), Quad, Quadraspire, REL, Rotel, Sennheiser, Soundstyle, Spendor, Stands Unique, Tag McLaren, Wharfedale, Yamaha.

Nobody else in these areas carries all the following major Home Cinema products: DVD players: Arcam & FMJ, Cyrus, Denon, Harman Kardon, Meridian, Rotel, Tag McLaren, Yamaha, Processors: Arcam FMJ AV8, Cyrus, Lexicon, Linn, Meridian, Rotel, Tag McLaren. Amplifiers: Arcam/FMJ, Bryston, Cyrus, Denon, Harman Kardon, Lexicon, Naim, Rotel, Tag McLaren, Yamaha.

Display devices: Plasma screens from Loewe, Panasonic, Pioneer and Yamaha. Televisions/LCD: Loewe. Projectors: Barco(CRT/DLP), Sim (DLP), Yamaha(DLP/LCD) Screens: Stewart/Draper/Vutec, Video Processing: Faroudja, I-Scan, Key Digital, Lumagen, Tag. Control systems: Crestron, Lutron lighting. Specialist set up services: ISF Display Callibration.

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STANDS AND SUPPORTS BUYER'S BIBLE

STANDS AND SUPPORTS

Equipment racks and speaker stands

If you want to get the most from your source and amp components. it's important to consider good quality support. Dedicated equipment supports are racks and tables made specifically to hold hi-fi gear, and the best can have a profoundly positive effect on sound

because, for example, they can help to isolate kit from ground-borne vibrations and mechanical or electrical interference. Equally, if you own a pair of small 'bookshelf' or 'standmount' speakers, it's important to place them on good quality, purpose-built speaker stands.

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Our favourite I BEST BUY CONTOR'S CHOICE **EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS**

Equi	pment supports			HEIGHT	IZE (CM)	WELDED	SHELVES	LF TYPE	NUMBER
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	독	M)	8	S	R	æ
	Aavik Furniture A4	350	Good sound and stylish Scandinavian looks at an affordable price	80.5	47		4	MDF	193
	Alphason A5-G	399	Nice looking, very solid and practical with a pretty well balanced sound, but lacks a little detail	80	66,46		5	Glass	247
	Atacama Equinox	280	Stable, modular design with style. Excellent bass transients and a fresh design concept	81	50,50		4	Glass	217
88	Audiophile Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities - a worthy upgrade	82	43		4	MDF	193
	Avid Isoschelf	1,100	An enthusiast's equipment support stand free from coloration, if a little fiddly to set up	87.5	48		5	MDF	193
88	Clearlight Audio Aspekt	600	Stunning neutrality and detail from a well-damped design. Its performance makes the price tag good value	75	53.5,45		4	MDF	217
	Custom Design Aspect 650	270	Smart looks and practical thanks to adjustable shelves. Sound is fair with some loss of detail	66	46	.0	4	Glass	206
EC	Custom Design Icon 400	599	Beautifully built, conveniently adjustable and with little sound of its own, a very classy rack	75	57, 41		5	Glass	263
88	Custom Design Concept 400	700	Slightly drab looks, but great sound and efficient use of space ('Acoustic' version tested – standard version £300)	74	48,40		4	Metal	247
EC	Naim Fraim	1,825	Pricey but very classy looking and sounding, with modular flexibility	96	45,34		5	Glass	232
	Isoblue 'The Stand'	460	Attractive modular design that's as easy on the ear as on the eye	47	48,40		4	MDF	247
	Quadraspire Q4 Reference	480	Excellent performance from the school of wobbly racks. Natural sounding and plenty of detail	51.5	49,39.5		4	MDF	217
	Russ Andrews Torlyte Rack	988	Attractive modular system made of very light Torlyte: a touch of added warmth is its only vice	68	54,49		4	Torlyte	240
88	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!	92	50,40		5	Glass	217
EC	Townshend Seismic Stand 2/5	1,100	Multi-shelf air-suspension support which isolates like few others. Recommended	92	58, 45		5	MDF	24

Our favourite BEST BUY E EDITOR'S CHOICE SPEAKER STANDS

Cooker stands

Shee	aker stanus			EIGHT	(CM)	LABLE	LDED	LEGS	MBER
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	4	5	Fi	0	ŝ	30
88	Atacama Nexus 6	60	An excellent all-round performer and a genuine hi-fi bargain	60,50	14.5,18			3	202
	Custom Design RS 300 MkII	100	A solid stand improving on the original, with better focus and detail	61,56,51	16.5,18			2	202
	hne Cableway	395	Looks great, sounds great, so start saving! Clean and sweet, and neutrality is exceptional with orchestral material	63	17,20	0		1	220
99	Kudos S50	159	Formidable bass with real authority, and a wide dynamic range across a broad bandwidth	61	15, 20	0		1	220
	Partington Ansa 60	90	Elegant flat-packer 'disappears' sonically; restrained but neutral and coherent	62	18,15	۰		4	232
88	Partington Dreadnought	100	Fully welded high-class engineering gives a very clean, open sound at a sharp price	61	17,15	•	٠	5	220
	Sound Organisation Z522	95	Very hefty build for the price helps to deliver a solid sound with good authority and drive	60	16			4	220
	Townshend Seismic Sink	499	Unique inflatable plinth that works wonders with decent floorstanders, as well as standmounted speakers	4	38,48			0	202

EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS SPECS KEY HEIGHT Of complete stand. TOP PLATE SIZE (CM) Width by depth of the supporting platform(s). Single figures indicate a square platform WELDED As opposed to bolt-together construction. NUMBER OF SHELVES To put your kit on (different configurations are often available). SHELF TYPE Material that shelves are made of.

SPEAKER STANDS SPECS KEY HEIGHT Of each stand, not including spikes. TOP PLATE SIZE (CM) Width by depth of platform. Single figures indicate a square platform. Speakers generally overhang top plates. FILLABLE The stand can be mass-loaded with sand and/or lead to stop ringing. WELDED As opposed to bolt-together construction. NUMBER OF LEGS That support the stand

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Arcam DV27A FMJ DVD Player (2Yr G/tee)(1899.00)	£1195.00	Naim CDS2/XPS Player & P/Supply S/H (1Yr G/tee)(6265.00)	£2995.00
Arcam CD62T CD Player S/H Blk (1Yr G/tee)(369.00)	£209.00	Naim CD5 CD Player (1Yr G/tee)	£795.00
Arcam CD82T CD Player - New (2Yr G/tee) (599.00)	£449.00	Naim NAC 112/150 Pre-Power S/H (1Yr G/tee)(1455.00)	£985.00
Audiolab 8000A Amplifier (1Yr G/tee)	£195.00	Naim NAC 102 Preamp S/H (1Yr G/tee)	£695.00
AVI Pro 9 Plus Speakers - Cherry (2Yr G/tee)(799.00)	£569.00	Naim NAP 180 Power Amp S/H - (1Yr G/tee)(1225.00)	£795.00
Denon AVR 2803 AV Amplifier (1Yr G/tee)	£399.00	Naim Hi-Cap 2* P/S - old casework (2Yr G/tee)(930.00)	£639.00
Linn Majik Phono Amplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee)	£625.00	Naim XPS2* Power Supply	£1775.00
Linn KoleKtor Preamplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee)(575.00)	£345.00	Naim Supercap* Power Supply	£2065.00
Linn Movie Classik DVD/CD System S/H (1Yr G/tee) .(1995.00)	£1295.00	Naim NBL Speakers - Beech (2Yr G/tee)(7700.00)	£3795.00
Linn Kaim Pro Line Preamp S/H (1Yr G/tee)(1400.00)	£599.00	Pioneer DVD656S Multiplayer (1Yr G/tee)(349.00)	£219.00
Linn Klout Power Amplifier S/H (1Yr/Gtee)(1600.00)	£895.00	Pioneer DVR3100* DVD Recorder/Player (1Yr/Gtee)(349.00)	£219.00
Linn Trikan Centre Spkr - maple (2Yr G/tee)(549.00)	£299.00	PMC DB1 Speakers - Cherry (2Yr G/tee)(555.00)	£399.00
Linn Ekwall Centre - maple (2Yr G/tee)(795.00)	£559.00	PMC TB2 Speakers - Cherry S/H (1Yr G/tee)	£459.00
Linn Espek Speakers - maple (2Yr G/tee)(2800.00)	£1985.00	Vibe Zeta SubWoofer (2Yr G/tee)(600.00)	£469.00

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The Hidden Hi-Fi Store



TECHNICAL & DESCRIPTIVE TERMS BUYER'S BIBLE

GLOSSARY

TECHNICAL TERMS

S.1-CHANNEL AUDIO Six discrete channels, typically front left and right, centre, surround left and right, and LFE (Low Frequency Effects) for a subwoofer.BALANCE Most loudspeakers have a characteristic frequency balance resulting from emphasising 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 top octave (80-160Hz).

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 with separate access terminals to each driver can be driven by separate cable runs between the amp and each driver.

CD-R Recordable CD that cannot be erased, though discs that have not been completely filled can have tracks added until the disc is finalised.

CD-RW Re-writable or re-recordable CD, incompatible with older CD players. CLASS A The operation of an

amplifying stage or device in which current always flows, as opposed to Class B, where some of the devices are effectively turned off some of the time. Class A tends to have the advantage of offering lower distortion while Class B tends to generate less heat.

CLASS AB Most practical amps operate in Class A for the first fraction of a watt and Class B thereafter.

CLIPPING An amplifier's output waveform is 'clipped' if the volume is advanced too far and no more 'volts' are available to sustain ever-increasing power levels. Distortion increases dramatically at this point.

CLOCK Any electronic oscillator that is used to generate a timing reference signal. Used to synchronise the data being taken from a disc.

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.

DAB (digital audio broadcasting). Digital radio using frequencies in the band 217.5 - 230MHz. Broadcasters use varying degrees of compression and offer

a broad range of programming. **DAC** or Digital-to-Analogue Converter. The stage in any digital component at which incoming digital data is used to reconstruct a recognisable analogue (music) waveform.

DOLBY DIGITAL A compressed digital audio format that typically contains five or more entirely discrete channels, eg 7.1 EX where side and rear channels are used. DOLBY PRO-LOGIC, DPL Forerunner to DD that 'steers' information to the front *LR*, centre and mono surround channels via an analogue matrix. DRIVE LINIT/DRIVER A transdurer

DRIVE UNIT/DRIVER A transducer which converts electrical energy into acoustic energy, eg bass driver, tweeter. DSD (direct stream digital) The coding format used for SACD offers a frequency response of over 100kHz and a dynamic range over 120dB, it has over four times the data capacity of CD.

DSP or Digital Signal Processor. Integrated circuit that handles the decoding of digital audio streams. In 5.1 processors it separates the left from right and front from rear while managing the various bass options.

DTS or Digital Theatre Sound. Competitor to Dolby Digital with a reduced 41 compression ratio that, ostensibly, promises higher quality.

DVD-AUDIO High-resolution variant on DVD offering up to 192kHz bandwidth and 24-bit dynamic range. Discs are compatible with standard DVD players. ELECTRICAL DIGITAL Any digital

connection that uses an electrical cable rather than optical. Includes the balanced ('AES/EBU') interface.

FILTERS Filters are intrinsic to digital audio, both analogue and digital. These are often very sophisticated in design, and in total they probably have rather more to do with the 'personality' of CD player sound than most other factors.

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

IMPEDANCE With speakers, the complex electrical load that a loudspeaker presents to the amplifier which is driving it.

JITTER An insidious distortion specific to digital audio caused by the clock, used to regulate the conversion of data into analogue audio, being imprecise.

KBPS (Kilobits per second) Digital data rate measurement system used primarily with highly compressed formats such as MP3, DAB etc. The higher the amount, the better the ouality.

LINE LEVEL Practically every modern

source component (except phono cartridges) gives an output in the region of 1-2V, referred to as 'line level' It follows that all inputs labelled 'CD', 'tuner', 'aux' or 'tape' are designed for this input level and are thus interchangeable.

LOSSLESS COMPRESSION A method of reducing the number of data bits (density) without corrupting the original description of the musical signal.

LOSSY COMPRESSION Reduction in data density by recourse to a psycho-

acoustical model that predicts what is, and what is not, 'audible' within a sequence of music. 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 3kHz.

MP3 (MPEG layer 3) Lossy compression format for digital audio that drastically reduces data content in order to squeeze music through internet connections or allow hundreds of CDs to be stored on a hard disc.

OUTPUT IMPEDANCE A measure of resistance to alternating current, a source with low output impedance (below 100 ohms) helps ensure compatibility with most amplifiers, even with long interconnect cables.

PCM (pulse code modulation) The digital coding system for analogue waveforms used for CD and DVD. Quality is limited by the oversample and bit rates used – CD is 44.1kHz/16-bit while DVD-A is capable of 192kHz/24-bit.

PRESENCE BAND Critical section of the audio band at the point where midrange and treble meet.

QUANTISATION NOISE A form of distortion or noise resulting from errors in the description of the musical signal by the digital code.

SACD (Super Audio CD) was launched in 1999 and is a Sony/Philips format based on DSD coding that offers high resolution stereo and multichannel sound from hybrid discs that can also be played on ordinary CD drives.

SAMPLE RATE The rate at which the musical waveform is sliced up into discrete chunks. For CD this is 44.1kHz or once every 0.023msec. DVD will also support 48kHz and 96kHz.

SENSITIVITY The relative loudness that a speaker generates for a specific voltage input. Expressed in decibels per watt (dB/ W).

THX Standards system for home cinema set-ups which includes amplifier power and speaker dispersion characteristics. THX Ultra is more stringent than THX Select.

TOSLINK The proprietary name given by Toshiba to the optical fibre signal transmission system it invented for

consumer applications. **TRANSISTOR/MOSFET** The two main types of power semiconductor used in solid state amplifier output stages. **TREBLE** High frequencies, the top end of the audio band, ie above 3kHz.

the audio band, ie above 3kHz. **TWEETER** Treble driver. **TWO/THREE-WAY** Loudspeaker

crossovers split the signal into two or three frequency bands, a two-way speaker can have more than two drive units.

WATTS (per channel) The watt is the unit of electrical power and the WPC rating is the maximum average undistorted power that an amp can deliver to a typical speaker. However, speaker sensitivity variations can make more difference than amplifier output. WOOFER Bass driver.

DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

AGGRESSIVE Forward and bright sonic character.

AMBIENCE The impression of an acoustical space, such as the performing hall in which a recording was made

ANALYTICAL Highly detailed. ARTICULATE Intelligibility of voice(s) and instruments and the interactions between them.

ATTACK The leading edge of a note and the ability of a system to reproduce the attack transients in music.

BALANCE Essentially tonal balance, the degree to which one aspect of the sonic spectrum is emphasised above the rest. Also channel balance, the relative level of the left and right stereo channels

BODY Fullness of sound, with particular emphasis on upper bass.

Opposite of thin. BOXY The sound of a loudspeaker with audible cabinet resonances. BRIGHT A sound that emphasises the

upper midrange/lower treble. DARK A tonal balance that tilts

downwards with increasing frequency. Opposite of bright.

DECAY The fadeout of a note, it follows the attack.

DEFINITION (or resolution) The ability of a component to reveal the subtle information that is fundamental to high fidelity sound.

DEPTH (of image) The perception of music being reproduced behind the loudspeakers and inhabiting a reproduction of the acoustic space of the original recording.

DETAIL The most delicate elements of the original sound and those which are the first to disappear with lesser equinment

DRY A sound that is devoid of 'juice', which usually comes across as finegrained and lean. Also a loss of reverberation as produced by a damped environment.

DYNAMIC The suggestion of energy and wide dynamic range. Related to perceived speed as well as contrasts in volume both large and small.

EUPHONIC An appealing form of distortion that generally enhances perceived fidelity, often ascribed to the harmonic elaborations of some valve amps.

FAST Good reproduction of rapid transients which increase the sense of realism and 'snap'.

FOCUS A strong, precise sense of image projection.

FORWARD(NESS) Similar to an aggressive sound, a sense of the image being projected in front of the speakers and of music being forced upon the listener.

GRAINY A slightly raw, exposed sound which lacks finesse.

GRIP A sense of control and sturdiness in the bass. **GRUNT** See grip.

HARD Uncomfortable, forward, aggressive sound with a metallic tinge

HARSH Grating, abrasive. IMAGING (stereo) The sense that a

voice or instrument is in a particular place in the room.

JUICY Sound that has joie de vivre, energy and life.

LOW-LEVEL DETAIL The quietest sounds in a recording.

MUSICAL or musicality. A sense of cohesion and subjective 'rightness' in the sound.

NATURALNESS Realism. OPAQUE Unclear, lacking transparency.

OPEN Sound which has height and 'air', relates to clean upper midrange and treble.

PACE Often associated with rhythm, a strong sense of timing and beat.

PRESENCE A sense of an instrument or voice occupying a

place in the listening room. **PRESENCE RANGE** The upper midrange.

SEISMIC Very low bass that you feel rather than hear.

SIBILANCE An emphasis of the 'S' sound, often heard on radio. SNAP A system with good speed and transient response can deliver the immediacy or 'snap' of live

instruments. SPEED A fast system with good pace gives the impression of being right on the money in its timing. STURDY Solid, powerful, robust read

THICK A lack of articulation and clarity in the bass. THIN Bass light.

TIMBRE The tonal character of an instrument.

TIMING A sense of precision in tempo. See speed and pace. TRANSIENT The leading edge of a

percussive sound. Good transient response makes the sound as a whole more live and realistic.

TRANSPARENCY, TRANSPARENT

A hear-through quality that is akin to clarity and reveals all aspects of detail.

TWEAK To tune a system or component in an attempt to get the best performance from it.

TWEAKER Someone who enjoys this process.

VEILED Loss of detail due to limited transparency.

WARM A fullness in the lower midrange/upper bass.

WEIGHT A sense of substance and underpinning produced by deep, controlled bass.

When detail matters.....















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ACCESSORIES SHOP

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Ortofon T Force Tracking Force Gauge
Pebbles 'The Weight' Rega Modification
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Ringmat's How to Set Up A Turntable
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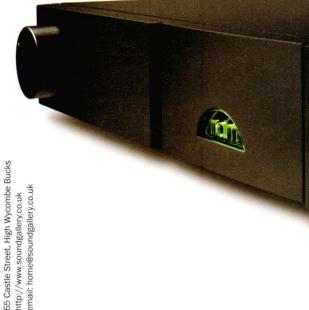
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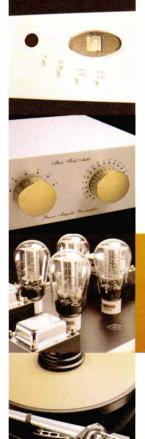
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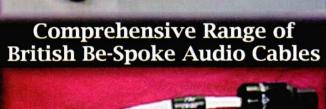
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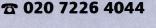
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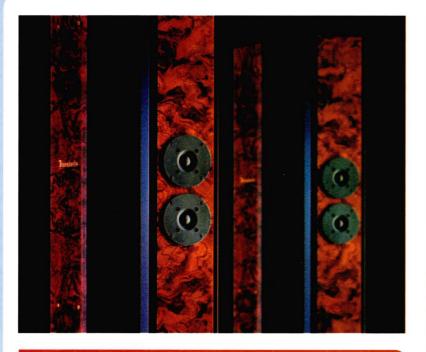
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A-Z GUIDE TO SECOND-HAND KIT #06 CYRUS

t's hard to believe the original Cyrus 'shoebox' amp is now 22 years old. Size apart, it's changed a great deal over the past couple of decades, but the good news is that none of the 11 or so versions are clunkers. Both the Cyrus One and Cyrus Two were first Jaunched in 1983. The Two was the more powerful and could except the upgraded external PSX power supply. Between 1983 and 1991. the models received no fewer than four upgrades, so it pays to be aware of these. The ones to go for are the post 1989 models, which feature a toggle, as opposed to push-button, power switch. These also boast the upgraded slit-foil capacitors (from 1987) and die-cast chassis (from 1986).

11 1 10

Age appears to have little effect upon price of Cyrus Ones and Twos, so go for one as new as possible. Expect to pay between £40-£125 for a Cyrus One and £50-£150 for a Two. As Cyrus keeps few cosmetic parts for these amps, it's important to seek out an externally undamaged model. These are reliable units, and shouldn't need servicing until about 15-20 years old. Cyrus offers a full service on all its amps, and will collect, overhaul, repack and deliver the unit for less than £100. In 1993 Cyrus launched the non-magnetic,

magnesium cased Cyrus III. This proved a



"It's changed a great deal, but the good news is that none of the 11 or so versions are clunkers."

worthy successor to the Two. It can be upgraded with the PSX-R power supply, but not by the standard PSX. The reverse, incidentally, is true of the Cyrus Two. In 1996 the Cyrus Illi was launched. It used a completely different circuit board that was derived from the Cyrus pre/power combo of the time. Be aware that early Illi models used 3mm speaker sockets, while later ones used the BFA connectors still used by Cyrus today. Either way, Cyrus supplies both types of plug, and is even happy to terminate customers' cables to fit.

Left: The Cyrus Two amplifier, in post 1989 finish

In 1997, the IIIi was improved and, for around £200-£350, this would be our pick of the Cyrus amps. Around the same time, the Straight Line (SL) was launched. It's essentially a pared down version of the Cyrus IIIi, and the spiritual successor to the One. The IIIi is the better amp, but if you can find a SL cheap enough (say, less than £200), it may be worth a punt.

Moving onto 1999 and we have the Cyrus 5 and 7, which, in 2002, were replaced by the familiar Cyrus 6 and 8. Both 7 and 8 accept the PSX-R, whilst 5 and 6 don't. This is worth bearing in mind as the effect the outboard power supply has is significant. Cyrus offers an upgrade scheme whereby a 5 can be upgraded to a 7 for £250. Perhaps

best of all is that a 6 can be upgraded to the very latest Cyrus 8vs spec for £300. Find yourself a cheap enough 6, and its one way of buying into Cyrus' latest technology without having to shell out £800 for a new 8vs.

Whichever Cyrus amp you choose, you're unlikely to be disappointed. With such a strong product, we wouldn't be surprised to see the design lasting another two decades. **HFC**

Dominic Todd Next month – Denon

DIY CORNER SPEAKERS

Part 6 Crossover networks (slight return)

s mentioned last month, placing a single capacitor in series with the tweeter will 'block' low frequencies from reaching the voice coil. It's a 'high pass' filter.

A single component such as this creates a 'first-order' network, with a very gentle roll-on slope of 6dB per octave. This gentle slope requires top quality drivers that will continue to behave themselves well beyond their nominal operating ranges.

This is one reason why most designers opt for the steeper slopes of second-, third- and sometimes even fourth-order networks. These give 12, 18 and 24dB/octave slopes using two, three and four components respectively. A second-order network feed to a tweeter, for example, retains the capacitor in series with the tweeter, but adds an inductor 'across' (in parallel with) the tweeter... and after the capacitor.

The inductor – a 'low pass' filter – serves to remove more low frequencies by letting them bypass the tweeter. Third-order involves adding a second in-line capacitor after the inductor, and fourth-order adds a second inductor after the second capacitor. This sequence in reverse may be used to roll off a bass/mid driver.

In order to get these different filter elements to add together properly and to create these steeper slopes – so the whole filter network is properly 'tuned' – their values must be chosen very carefully. Some designers deliberately avoid fourth-order filters because of the difficulty of achieving tight enough tolerances in production. **HFC**

Paul Messenger





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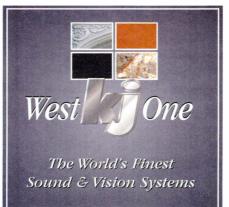
Whilst equipment reviews are helpful we quite often find that the Take a look at our own featured sum of the parts do not actually

systems we know are totally compatible and will provide a truly satisfying musical experience.

In the final analysis we do feel that our guiding criteria has to be outright performance versus investment.

We think we've got it right!

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Arcam	USED ITEMS Digital - CD, DVD etc Alpha 8 - nr mint, remote Alpha 8SE - nr mint, remote					
Arcam Arcam Audiolab AVI	CD72 - nr mint, silver, remote 8000DAC - ex, boxed					
B&O B&O Cambridge Audio	CD72 - nr mrt, silver, remote 8000DAC - ex, buxed S2000Reference - ex, superb CD3500 - ex, silver/black CDX - ex, silver/black					
Kenwood Krell Marantz	CDX - 8x, silverblack Discragic/CDacmagic - ex, nice combo for peanuts DP1100 - ex, v. underrated CD-DSP - ex, clear and smoked lids, remote, stunning CD80 - ex, boxed fantastic 80s heavyweight					
Marantz Marantz Marantz Marantz	CD60 - ex, remote					
Meridian Meridian Meridian	DV4100 CSE - nr mint, remote, boxed 201 transport and matching dac - ex, superb combination 208 - ex, with built in preamp stage and matching 209 remote 200 transport - ex, Trichord mod, exellent Stage 1 - ex, smooth sound on a budget					
Micromega Micromega Micromega	200 transport - ex, smooth sound on a budget Stage 5 - ex, sweet sounding player from renowned French manufacturer T-drive and T-dac - vg., remote, superb sound, F1000s new Trio - ex, the ultimate Micromega Onte- or mot budget into the the deliable of Micromona					
Micromega Micromega MusicalFidelity						
Musical Fidelity Musical Fidelity	X Ray - nr mint, boxed X Act - nr mint boxed X 10D - nr mint, boxed					
Myryad Naim NVA Quad	T20 - black, nr mint, boxed, remote, bargain! CD5 - nr mint boxed, remote The Transparent Statement - vgc, crated, remoteultimate NVA 67 - ex, sweet sounding player, much better than 66					
Rega Roksan Sony	07 ex, sweet subming player, indicativetter man ob Planet - ex, black, well reviewed Caspian - nr mint, silver, boxed, remote MDP850D - nr mint, remote, laserdisc, VCD, CD, PAL, NSTC					
Adcom	Amplifiers PreTuper and Power - bargain					
Arcam Arcam Arcam	2445 - ex, well reviewed weighty poweramp C200 - ex, boxed pre SA200 - ex, boxed power SA200 - ex, boxed power					
Arcam Arcam Arcam	SA200 - ex, boxed pair monos Alpha 10 integrated - ex, boxed Alpha 10 integrated DAVE - nr mint					
Arcam Audio Analogue Audiolab	AG5+ ex display, boxed, remote, silver P75 - ex display, remote, silver Puccini - n rmnt, well reviewed integrated 8000A - ex, black					
Audiolab Audiolab	80000 - nr mint, boxed, remote 80005 - nr mint Silver Kovehte - Stupping boxed valve monoblacke					
AVI S2000N Creek Creek	4330 - ex. Stereophile former 'Budget component of the Year'					
Crímson Cyrus Exposure	P52se - nr mint, boxed, superb stereo power 510/520 - ex, boxed, battery pre, lovely combo 7 - ex, black, boxed					
Harman Kardon Harman Kardon Heybrook	X integrated - nr mini, boxed, black Citation 17 and 19 - vgc, boxed PM655 - nr mini, varable capacitance phono stage C2 and P2 Pre/Power combo - ex, boxed					
Linn Linn Magnum						
Meridian Meridian Meridian	LK100 - nr mint, boxed MP300/MF125 x2 - ex, pre and monoblocks 605s - ex, boxed pair monblocks 505s - ex, boxed pair monblocks					
Meridian Meridian Meridian	2055 - ex, pair monoblocks 501 - ex, boxed with phono stage 555 - ex 501/505 x2 - combination as above					
Michell Mission Mission	Alecto - ex, Monoblocks					
Musical Fidelity Musical Fidelity Musical Fidelity	Cyrus Wone - from Cyrus Two and PSX- gc, nextel finish X-A2 - nr mint, boxed integrated X-P100 - nr mint, boxed remote pre X-AS100 - nr mint, boxed power					
N AD NAIM Onix	352 - ex display, boxed, titanium Nait 3 - ex, boxed					
Pioneer Primare Quad	AO21S - ex. great 80s integrated A300 - ex. phono A20 - nr mint integrated 405/2 - good, brown					
Quad Quad Quad	405/2 - good, brown 33/303/FM3 - nr mint 33/303 - ex 34/306 - nr mint, grey, boxed, you wont find better					
Quad Rega Roksan	34/306 - nr mint, grey, boxed, you wont find better 50D - good, pair monblocks Luna - nr mint, black, boxed, better than a Brio or Mira Caspian - nr mint, silver, boxed, remote					
Rotel Rotel AcousticEnergy	RB03 power ex display, backd silver RC395 - nr mint remote pre AE105SE - ex, red cherry finish, boxed AE1 - ex, black grittex					
Acoustic Energy Acoustic Energy Acoustic Energy	AE1 - ex, black grittex AE1 mk2 - ex, black ash c'w fluted stands AE2 - ex, piano black ciw fluted stands Nu Neutron - vgc, amazing baby					
AVI AVI ATC	Pro Nine - vgc, original version, fast taught sound SCM20 - or mint boxed vew finish					
Castle Celestion Epos	Durham 900 - good, larger bookshelf 5000 - vgc ribbon standmount M15 - rr muni, light cherry, boxed ES14 - nr mint, boxed 80s classic c/w dedicated stands					
Epos Heybrook Impulse	HB100 - vgc, superb vtm H6 - fair, but great sound					
Impulse Linn Linn	H2 - ex, very efficient horn loaded monsters Kaleigh - good, black, fully boxed Kan - ex, black, c/w matchinostands					
Lumley Mission Mission	LM2.5 - ex.4 driver design with famous Audax gold tweeter 752 - vgc, rosewood floorstander 7631 - ex, black floorstander, boxed					
Mission Mission Mission Cyrus	70 centre - ex display, boxed 77ci - ex display, boxed 780 - ex, biack larger bookshelf					
MissionCyrus Monitor Audio Monitor Audio	781 - ex, black larger bookshelf S6 - nr mnt, boxed Studio Centre - ex display, boxed					
Monitor Audio Monitor Audio Monitor Audio	R700MD - nr minit, black Bronze B2 - nr mint cherry, boxed Silver S2 - nr mint mahogany, boxed					
Mordaunt Short Mordaunt Short QED QUAD	Silver S2 - nr mint mahogany, boxed 912 - ex display, boxed 914 - ex display, boxed Ana - ex display, boxed mi ESL53 - nr mint Aulatever, boxed nois unrounds					
Rega REL	Aylariex, boxed pretty little cherry floorstander Q50 - ex, black Studio Monitor - Original vgc, with stands - suit valve amps					
Rogers Sequence Spendor	Studio Monitor - Original vgc, with stands - suit valve amps 200 - ex, cherry and grey, c/w dedicated stands SP1 - ex, c/w stone stands Sonique AV1 - nr mint, boxed					
Stands Unique Tandberg TDL						
TDL Wharfedale Aiwa	Studio 1 - vgc, wood finish transmission line RTL2 - ex, black Pacific P(30 - nr mint boxed, light cherry, excellent Tuners and Tape DOESE0, une 2, brand					
Alwa Cyrus Cyrus Nakamichi	ADF850 · vgc, 3 head FM7.5 - nr mint, silver, digital, presets, boxed Original 'Mission' tuner · vgc CR4E, vgc black					
Quad Quad Rotel	CR4E - vgc. black 66FM - ex FM4 - nr mint, grey, boxed 6T02 - ex disclay, boxed					
Sugden Audio Technica	FM4 - nr mint, grey, boxed R102 - ex display, boxed, silver DTFM - gc, rar, matches A46mK3 etc Systems, cables and miscellaneous Electronic stylus cleaner					
AUIO recrimica AVI B&O Bever	2000 series - Ref CD, MP pre and pair monoblocks 2200 system - ex, turntable, cassette and tuner, inc speakers					
Ixos Ixos Mission	DT231 galactic - new 1014 - new 1m interconnect 1014 - new 5m interconnect Stance - ex display, silver					
Pure Quad Sennheiser	Evoke - ex display, silver Evoke - ex display 34/306/FM4 - all nr mint, boxed, with matching rack IS380 - new, infrared					
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turntableworld has selected items from:

Audio Technica Clearaudio **Dynavector Goldring** Grado **Graham Slee Projects** G F C Hadcock Lyra **Michell Engineering** Moth Nottingham Analogue **Örigin Live** Ortofon Project SME Sumiko Transfiguration Trichord Research Wilson Benesch

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Plus our own range of accessories including a great wall shelf with twin level acrylic platform and two superb digital stylus pressure gauges from just £29!!!

We can also offer:

Home dems by arrangement Full set up in your home - whatever the deck Free loan of company anorak when you're feeling lonely Free amateur counselling for CD lovers With part exchange upgrades continuing to be our speciality, you'll also have access to the widest range of used items in the UK - many from manufacturers you'd half forgotten existed, and still supported by our in house warranty of course.

	USED ITEMS		Michell	Orbe/RB300 - ex/ex, boxed	1399
Alchemist	Bragi phono stage and Forseti p/s - vgc, superb flexible stage	399	Michell	Orbe - ex, smoked	1199
Alphason	Sonata/Alcaeus power supply - ex, black ash	599	Michell	Orbe/Wilson Benesch Act 2 - ex, smoked	194
Alphason	Sonata - good, light ash	299	Michell	Orbe/SMEIV - ex/ex, boxed	199
Audiolab	8000PPA phono stage - , vgc, tlexible stage, rare	449	Michell	Tecnoarm - nr mint original version	229
Audion	Sterling - ex, valve phono stage	299	Michell	QC power supply - nr mint, boxed	26'
EAR	834P - fair, mm/mc switchable version	549	Monrio	AND-N - mm/mc phonostage	179
Chord	Phono stage - ex, stunning	999	Mission	774 - ex, fab 80's tonearm	159
Creek	OBH8 - ex, mm stage	79	Musical Fidelity		79
Creek	OBH9 - ex, mc stage	99	Musical Fidelity		119
Dual	CS5000 - nr mint, 33/45/78, semi auto, in mahogany	179	MTM	The Source - ex, mahogany	599
Garrard	301/SME 3009 - ex, black sandwich plin h	699	NAD	533/OEMRB250 - ex, with Goldring cart	129
Garrard	401 - nr mint motor unit	179	Origin Live	RB300 - ex, early black stub and weight, full wiring mod	199
Garrard	401 - nr mint, boxed motor unit	249	Odyssey	RP1-XG - ex, the prettiest arm ever?	49
Garrard	401 · ex, plinthed	199	Pink Triangle	PT1 original - vgc, boxed	349
Garrard	401/SME 3009 - ex, gorgeous Aphelion plinth	499	Pink Triangle	LPT/RB250/Reson- ex/ex,	379
inn		1199	Project	Debut - ex display, black, boxed	89
inn		1199	Project	Classic - ex display, cherrywood plinth, boxed	249
inn	LP12/Valhalla/IttokLVII - nr mint, black, boxed	699	Rega	Planar 2/RB250 - ex/ex	149
inn	LP12/Armageddon/Aro - nr mint, black, boxed	1599	Rega	Planar 3/RB300 - vgc/ex	179
linn	LP12/Valhalla/Akito - vgc, black	599	Rega	Planar 78/RB250/Mono Čart - ex/ex	175
inn	LP12/Valhalla/LVX vgc, black	479	Rotel	RQ970 - ex, phono stage	79
linn	LP12/Armageddon/RB300 · vgc, black	979	Roksan	Xerxes - tbc	Due ir
inn	Basik, LVX - vgc, black	199	SME	V - nr mint boxed	999
linn	Axis, Basik plus - vgc, black	249	SME	IV - mint, boxed, just had full service	879
inn	Ittok 12" - ex, black, apparently one of only 20 made	999	SME	IV - ex, boxed	749
ogic	DM101/Datum ex, bargain LP12 challenger	249	Thorens	TD160 - vgc, smart silver model	149
Michell	(Transcriptors) reference hydraulic - ex, fluid arm	649	Thorens	TD160b - ex, c/w Mission 774	249
Michell	Gyrodec/QC - ex, boxed, armless	899	Townshend	Elite Rock Mk2/Excalibur - ex, no optional extras	579
Michell	Gyrodec/RB300 - vgc, gyropower ps, Orbe platter, smoked case	999	Transcriptors	Skeleton/Vestigal - ex/ex	799
Michell	Gyrodec SE/RB300 -ex, brand new arm	699	Wilson Benesch	Act/Act 2 - the best ever? Rare as	2499

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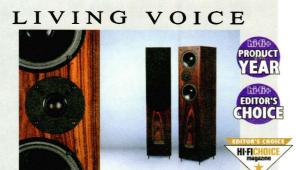
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Musical Fidelity Tri Vista Amplifier, 12 months. Boxed, shiny.	£3000	£4000
Lavardin phono stage. Rare bird.	£1500	£2500
Sonus Faber integrated amplifier.	£700	£1500
DCS Elgar Plus, Purcell, Verdi, Verona. Fully current spec including firewire.		
05/01 certificated except Verona (01/04). Four box CD playing solution.	£16000	£24000
Sugden A21A Integrated amp with phono stage. Very good condition + box	£700	£1050
Nagra PLP pre-amplifier. Looks good.	£4000	£7500
Clearaudio TQI Master Reference tonearm - massive acrylic linear tracking thing - unusual opportunity - spotless and as new but no box. Major mental		
health problem forces sale. Giveaway -	£1500	£3860
Merlin Music Systems VSM Millennium loudspeaker. Obscure here, popular		
there - unusual US design with cult following - includes BAM bass module.	£2500	\$9000
Living Voice Avatar 2 - European Maple - scrumptious.	£2000	£2700
Living Voice OBX-R Mk 1. Even more scrumptious.	£2600	£4000
Aloia PST 11.01i Hi-end 2 box line pre-amp - spotless - boxed.	£1500	£2800
Art Audio PX25 - 5 watt stereo power amp - big with Lowther fans.	£2500	£4500
Nott'm Analogue Interspace with Space arm and Living Voice Mystic Mat.	£550	£1180
Tom Evans Micro Groove - moving coil phono stage - 0.8mv/1Kohm	£300	£400
ATC SCM7 - cute mini-monitors on saucy bright finish Partington stands	£400	£700
Ruark Crusader II loudspeakers. Black. Good condition.	£700	
Eastern Electric Mini-Max all valve line pre-amp. New and boxed - half price		£800
Epos ES30 loudspeaker - substantial floorstander - some marks - giveaway	£499	
Cardas Neutral Reference 2.5m speaker cable with spade term - new	£500	£775
Cardas Neutral Reference 1m interconnect - new	£300	£500
Art Stiletto Ebony plus Orelle 100 CD player and amplifier. 1 lot boxed - new	£1900	£3650
Canary Audio Stock Clearance - High End bargain time		
CA309 - 45 watt 300B monos. Fantastic sound and build. Illustrious giants		
with champagne facia. Boxed, almost new	£4000	£10000
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4	Copland CDA266 HDCD Player S/H	1399	599
Ť	Cyrus DAD3 24Q CD Player S/H	N/A	399
A	dCS Delius 24/192 DAC Non Firewire S/H	5999	2995
B	dCS Purcell Upsampler Non Firewire S/H	2999	1695
A	dCS Verdi SACD/CD Transport x-dem	9000	5995
L		7495	3999
P	Mark Levinson No 360s x-dem	1099	650
D	Sudgen CD21 CD Player Black S/H		
Z	Theta Generation V Balanced S/H	6290	2499
ш	Theta Pro Basic II DAC with Oscom/Balanced S/H	2990	1195
T	Wadia 301 Silver CD player 8 months old S/H	3499	2395
FRONT END/PLAYBACK	Clearaudio Unify Unipivot Tonearm New & Boxed	795	599
R	Clearaudio Accurate MC x-dem	2800	1699
LL .	Clearaudio Victory MC New & Boxed	1030	699
	Koetsu Rosewood Re-tipped Low Hours S/H	N/A	599
	Kuzma Stabi/Stogi S Turntable New & Boxed	N/A	1399
	Linn LP12/Syrinx PU2 Valhalla S/H	N/A	399
	Linn LP12 Cirkus Black S/H	N/A	399
	Linn Lingo S/H	N/A	599
	Linn LVII Tonearm S/H	N/A	479
	Lehmann Audio Black Cube SE New & Boxed	650	449
	McCormack Phono Stage New and Boxed	650	399
	Rega Planar 3/Heed PSU/Bias S/H	630	239
	Systemdek X II900/RB250/Denon 103	N/A	250
	Audio Analonyo Bollini Domoto Droomplifior y dom	625	499
4	Audio Analogue Bellini Remote Preamplifier x-dem		
$\underline{\circ}$	Audio Research LS22 Valve Preamplifier S/H	4499	2300
AMPLIFICATION	Audio Research LS2 Hybrid Preamplifier S/H	2289	749
3	Audio Analogue Corelli Stereo Power Amplifier x-dem	695	479
N.	Audio Analogue Donizetti Mono Power Amplifiers x-dem	1050	729
4	Arcam Diva A85 Integrated Amplifier Black S/H	800	499
0	Arcam Diva P85 Power Amplifier Silver S/H	800	449
5	Cyrus 7 Integrated Black S/H	N/A	395
A	Cyrus PSX-R Black S/H	N/A	249
	Krell KAV300i Integrated S/H	2590	1399
	Mark Levinson 431 Dual mono Amplifier S/H	6500	3795
	Nagra VPA Mono 845 Valve Amplifiers S/H	10K	7495
	Sudgen A21a Line Graphite S/H	995	599
	Red Rose Sprit Integrated x-dem	1000	649
	ned hose opine integrated x-dem	1000	047
SPEAKERS	Audio Physic Tempo3 cerry x-dem	2300	1699
iii.	Martin Logan CLSII Anniversary Electrostatics 7 mths	6700	4295
X	Martin Logan Aerius I Hybrid Electrostatics Oak S/H	2389	1299
A	Naim Audio Intro Black Ash S/H 875 499	875	499
E S	Peak Consult Incognito Rosewood x-dem 7500 5799	7500	5799
SF	Rel Acoustics Studio II Oak Subwoofer S/H	4500	1995
	Rega Jura Floorstanding Black Ash S/H	450	199
	Rega ELA Cherry X-dem	749	579
	Verity Fidelios Brand new Black Lacquer	8000	4499
CABLES & TABLES	Cardas Neutral Reference 1m RCA-BNC S/H	550	375
SL	Cyrus Hark Floorstand Black S/H	N/A	250
AE	Madrigal CZ Gel 1.5m Balanced new & boxed	599	299
Ŧ	Madrigal MDC 2 1m Fatboy Digital cable new & boxed	319	159
8	Madrigal MDC 2 0.5m Fatboy Digital cable new & boxed	279	139
S	QED QNEXII 1m RCA-RCA Interconnect S/H	N/A	22
щ	Siltech SQ58G3 2x4m Balanced Interconnect x-dem	2370	1499
B	Siltech Signature G5 1m AES/EBU 110 ohm Digital S/H	625	449
A	Siltech SPX10 0.5m mains cable new & boxed	105	55
0	Spectral MH-330 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA x-dem	800	499
	Spectral MH-750 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA x-dem	1400	799
	Spectral MI-350 20 ft Speaker cable x-dem	2100	1199

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FOR SALE

ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE2A

speaker stands, lead filled, the best available (£530) £280 ovno. Mint and boxed Andy 0115 9126424 (Midlands).

ALMOST 600 classical CDs, mostly piano works. £2-£3 each or £1,000 for the lot. Wayne 02920 369052 (Cardiff) ARCAM A80 integrated amp and Arcam P80 power amp, black, boxed, (£1,000) £500. 07891 533084 (Swansea)

AVI BIGCATRON RED SPOT speakers in cherry, mint, boxed, £320. 01903 247779 (Sussex). AVI PRO NINE loudspeakers in cherry, excellent condition, boxed, £395. AVI S2000 preamp and monoblock power amps (includes MM/MC phone stage), excellent condition, boxed, £975. *Hi-Fi News* magazines, January 1991 to date, some in binders, offers. Audio Technica OC9 MC

cartridge, needs re-tip, £30. 01942 891741 (Wigan). **AVI \$2000** preamp, £975, AVI \$2000 CD player, £385. All

purchased new, three years ago, mint, with boxes. Julian 07795 671932 (Nuneaton).

AUDIOLAB 8000T AM/FM tuner. Non-working and needs attention. Very good cosmetic condition. New cost £800, sensible offers. Steve 07973 334623 (Solihull, West Mids).

AUDIO SYNTHESIS DAX

Discrete variable DAC. Upsamples to 706K, SACD and DVD-A compatible, 18 months old, mint, (£6,000) £3,000. Ian 07941 424322 (Warwickshire).

AVI S200MP MC/ MM preamp £395. TAG McLaren DAC20, as new £495. Acoustat Spectra II, electrostatic hybrids, £400. 01363 83072 (Devon). **B&W DM60153** loudspeakers, black ash, as new, boxed, £150. Atacama Nexus 6 stands £40. QED original bi-wire cable, 2 x 5m, terminated, £25 or £200 for the lot. 07810 850118 (Wigan).

CASTLE HARLECH floorstanders (yew). Great condition, boxed, £350. 01903 717826 (W Sussex). **CYRUS PRE X,** CD8, Power amps (Mono X) x2. All finished in silver. Pro Ac D15 speakers, finished in Maple, Nordost Red Dawn interconnects, QED XT 400 speaker cable. All products boxed and under warranty, in excellent condition, reluctant sale. 07800 926990 (S.Wales).

DACMAGIC DAC 3 Latest and the best. Designed by John Westlake, ex-Pink Triangle. Fully damped, mains cable upgrade. Perfect condition. Free digital cable and BNC adaptor, £99. 01903 505609 (W.Sussex).

DALI EUPHONIA Sub, centre and rears very good condition, in flight cases, in Alpi dark wood veneer (£7,500) £3,000). 07734 054534 (Sussex).

DALI PIANO AV set including Noble fronts, centre, rears and sub. All in aluminium. Very stylish set in good condition. (£2,800) £1,200. 07734 054534 (Sussex). DYNAUDIO SPECIAL 25 (new)

in masser birch, £2,000. Dynaudio1.4s (new), £1,000. Audience 82 (used), £650. Also, new Audience 42s, £250 and 52s, £400. 01732 741883 (Kent) **ELECTROCOMPANIET** fully

balanced 4.7 preamp and 120AWB dual mono power amp. Boxed, £1,800 ono. Kimber Select series 1120 balanced interconnects 0.5 and 0.75m, £150 and £200. Including carriage cases, both pristine condition. Craig 07990 898736 (Shropshire).

GALE 401 s mint, rebuilt, £400 ono. Pioneer C90 and M90 pre/ power reference amps £400. 01942 720220 (Wigan).

HEYBROOK DUET standmounts in rosewood veneer. Superb condition, complete with original box and packaging. HFC recommended, (£750) £325. Mr Bonnay 07753 625783 (Kent). INTEGRA RESEARCH RDV-1 DVD player, RDC-7 AV controller and RDA-7 amp, recent upgrade as new £5,000. George 07771 806234 (Gloucestershire). ISOTEK SUBSTATION 11 months old, as new. 2x600 VA, 2x300, and 2x150 VA. 01524 61903 or email

stephen@hennefer.fsworld.co.uk (Lancaster).

JAMO D590 floorstanding speakers. Mint, boxed, can demo, £500 ono. 07977 185216 (Kent). 972 amp, (£550) £200. Alan 07841 715340 (Staffs).

KEF Q35, Q95c and 60s speakers for sale. Good condition, boxed, sell as set £350. REL Q50 £150. Rotel RA-972 integrated amplifier (£550) £200. Alan 07841 715340 (Staffs). ▷

WANTED

A&R T21 tuner and A&R P60 power amp, must both be in good condition. 01873 856499 (Gwent).

AUDIOLAB 8000P Karl 07743 483571 (Manchester).

B&W HTM 2 centre speaker in red cherry finish. Alan 0121 742 8351 (Birmingham).

DENON AU320 MC

transformer. 01942 891741 (Wigan).

MARANTZ CD63MKII KI

Signature, fully functioning, black, made in Japan and in excellent condition. Will pay reasonable price. 07974 274615 (W.Yorks)

NVA DACON, junior. Alan 01254 705589 (Lancs).

PMC DB1 speakers in oak. Arcam A200/300/CD93 etc or Denon AV3805/DVD-A1/A11 etc in black. 01962 764839 day or 023 80611519 eves. (Hants).

PRO AC STUDIO 100 speakers in perfect sonic condition. Good price paid. 01353 659807 or email gjh29@cam.ac.uk (Ely). ROTEL RC5000 preamp and RB5000 power amp. 01942 720220 (Cheshire).

BUYING TIPS

Buying second-hand can be a great way to pick up a bargain. A formerly expensive second-hand component might well prove a better long-term bet than a brand-new product if the price is right.

Do some research on which brands have a good service back-up, so if something does go wrong, you can get it fixed. Unless you purchase from a dealer, you're unlikely to get any warranty, so it's up to you to ensure the fitness of any gear that you buy.

Usually, speakers should be less prone to breakdown than amps, and amps should be more reliable than CD players. But any abused component could be trouble – have a proper dem, and judge the seller as well as the goods!

FOR SALE

KEF Q4 loudspeakers.

Three-way slim line floorstanders, dark apple finish, absolutely mint., £300. Ian 01323 486216 (E Sussex)

KEF REFERENCE 1.2 new,

boxed, unwanted gift, £600 ono. Audiolab 8000A, black excellent condition, £220 020 8678 6853 (S.London).

KRELL KAV300i integrated amp, £1,000. Copland CD player CDA266, £650. Both with remote, boxed, hardly used, excellent condition. 01494 439689 (Bucks)

LEAK STEREO 20, valve power amp with Leak Varislope 2 Stereo preamp. Also Leak Stereo 30 Plus amp. Sensible offers please. 020 8830 8003 (North London) LINN CLASSIK MOVIE DI

version, warranty until August 2009. Silver, boxed as new, £1,700 ono. Richy 07940 450045 or e-mail thmpsnric@aol. com (Newcastle).

LINN UNIDISK 1.1 black, 18 months old, £5,500. Kisto system controller silver, £6,995. 020 8529 2261 (London, E4)

MAGNUM DYNALAB analogue FM tuner. Mint condition, black. 020 7223 8589 (London).

MARANTZ CD7300, gold, £210 or P/X Sony SACD. Marantz CD67SE £99. Soundstyle XS100 four tier rack £125. QED Qunex 3 cable £20. All boxed etc. 01766 781211 (Wales)

MARK LEVINSON 3905 CDP, excellent condition. Boxed with remote, manual and transport screw (£6,500) £3,750. Pete (01235) 763433 eves (Oxford). MISSION MINI 7 system. Amp, tuner, twin tape, CD, 731i speakers. Black with metal cases, 50 watts per channel, remote, mint, (£700) £295. Rod 01706 345418 (Rochdale)

MONITOR AUDIO GOLD reference 20, three months old, as new, little use, quick sale, £1,150. 07967 196873 (Yorks) MUSICAL FIDELITY A100 class

A integrated. Good condition, boxed, manual £125 ono. KEF Q1 Uni-Q loudspeakers, dark apple mint, boxed, manual £100 ono. Graham 01248 681514 eves. (N Wales)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A3.2 CD player and A3.2 amp. Silver, only eight months old, boxed with instructions, as new (£2,000) £1,350. 0116 2811567 (Leicester).

MUSICAL FIDELITY A3.2CR power amp in mint condition

£650 ono. Audiolab 8000C preamp in very good condition £165 ono. Paul 07773 385 504 or email pocfilm@yahoo.co.uk (London). NAD 3225 PE amp, NAD 4225 tuner, Philips CD 610 with remote, Wharfedale Delta 30 speakers with stands and cables. 020 7503 7220 (London)

NAIM NAIT 51 amp. Few hours use, boxed with two-year guarantee. (£700) £550. Mick Jones 01782 785734 (Stoke on Trent).

NAIM NAIT 3 amp, very good condition, can demo, £275 ono. Peter 07905 239941 (Guildford). PIONEER SA9800 Very nice condition. Recent professional service. 100 watt per channel at 8 ohms. Top of line silver era integrated by Pioneer. £150 plus postage. 01934 647875 (Somerset).

QUAD 11L speakers in light coloured wood. Veneer finish with gloss lacquer. Little used and in immaculate condition £250. 01626 835251 (South Devon) QUAD 405 power amp, audiophile upgrade £150. Five metre pair DNM Reson interconnects with bullet plugs



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QUAD 63s brown, £500, very good condition. 33 preamp with MM and MC boards, plus 405/2 power amp £250. 01743 289240 (Shropshire).

RED ROSE MUSIC M5

integrated valve amplifier, £6,000 ono. Red Rose Music Rossette 2 phono preamp, £1.300. Contact Max at lundchewse@yahoo.co.uk (Hampshire).

ROKSAN KANDY Mk111 CD player. Complete in box with remote etc. Silver front, (£650) £350 ono. Clive 01628 666526 (Slough).

SME MODEL 10 turntable and SME series IV arm and VDH MCS150 arm wire. Transfiguration spirit MC Mk3 cartridge set-up by SME, five months old. Ten hours use, seven months on warranty, £2,800. 01234 302769 (Bedford).

SME 3012, Garrard 401, Shure V15 II all in good working order £300. Vinyl record collection £200. Barrie 01564 776911 (Solihull)

SONY DVP-S7700 reference machine in gold. Multichannel component output. Matches SE series, a steal at £200 (£900). 01903 523 268 (Sussex).

SPENDOR PRELUDE large speakers. Excellent condition, with boxes. Bargain £80. Graham 01702 520063 (Essex) SPENDOR SP2/ 2 monitor

speakers, walnut, mint, boxed, £275. Sony CDP-XE210 CD player, mint, boxed, £35. 01403 255153 (West Sussex).

SONUS FABER CONCERTO

.

Home speakers. Adjustable wood stands, £650, 18 months old. 07941 174804 (Berks)

SONY CDP101 original flagship player complete with remote and handbook. Excellent condition, £70. 01278 782622 (Somerset).

SONY HOME CINEMA system.

Comprises combined DVD/ multichannel amp unit, five satellites and powered subwoofer. Good condition. 01689 397645 (Kent).

SPEAKER CABLES and

interconnects for sale. Chord QED, Ixos, Cable Talk. All mint, bargain prices. 01491 612883 (Oxford)

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