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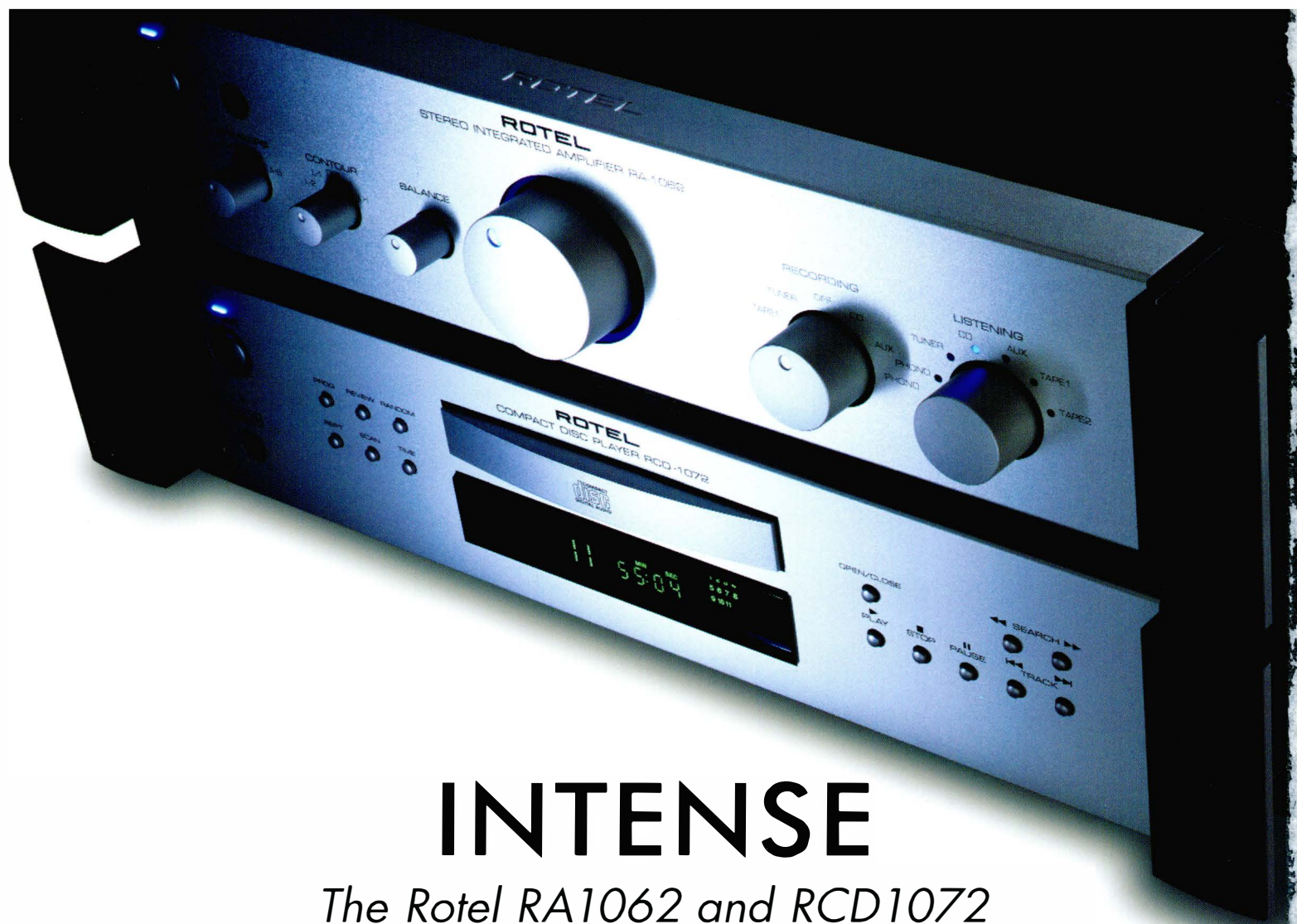
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- > Acoustic Energy Aelite Three
- > Elac BS 203.2
- > Epos M12.2
- > Quad 12L
- > Rega R3
- > Triangle Comete ES

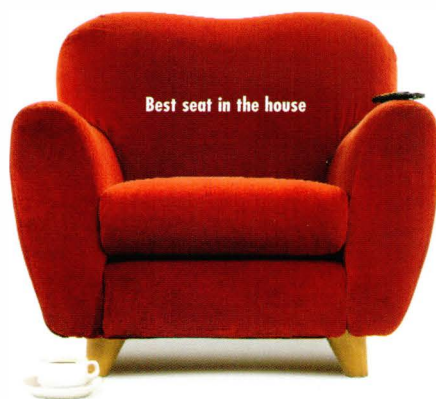


# INTENSE

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**ROTEL**

# HI-FI CHOICE

APRIL 2005 ISSUE 265

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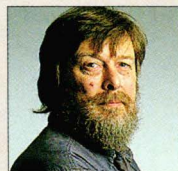
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## WELCOME TO HI-FI CHOICE

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 you more.”** Tim Bownen, Editor



### PAUL MESSENGER

A former *HFC* editor, Paul 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 UK's foremost loudspeaker reviewer.



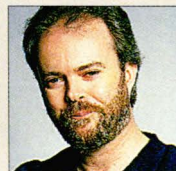
### DAN GEORGE

Dan is a huge hi-fi nut whose dream came true when he became *HFC's* reviews editor. Armed with a bristling contacts book and a pair of razor-sharp ears, he ensures that only the most interesting products make it into *HFC*.



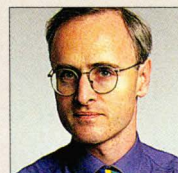
### ALVIN GOLD

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 encyclopaedic knowledge to almost every hi-fi periodical you can think of (and several more besides).



### DAVID VIVIAN

An award-winning journalist, David's sharp ears and equally sharp powers of description are a valuable mix for *HFC*. He also writes about cars, but who needs the latest Lotus when you've got the finest hi-fi to test drive?



### RICHARD BLACK

Richard is a professional 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*.



### ART DUDLEY

One of the most respected commentators on the American hi-fi scene, Art has written for numerous titles including *Hi-Fi Heretic*, *Sounds Like and Listener*. Among other things, he is currently 'editor-at-large' of US journal *Stereophile*.



### JASON KENNEDY

Jason previously edited *HFC*, but can now be found swanning about the wilds of Sussex indulging 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.



### 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.

## ESTABLISHED 1975

**HI-FI CHOICE** is your essential guide 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...



## HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE >>

### ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

Six new loudspeakers priced from £400 to £800, get the third degree from the *Hi-Fi Choice* interrogation squad

### BEST IN CLASS

Marantz's SA-11S1 CD/SACD player and PM-11S1 amplifier go under the microscope

### RESONATING SPEAKERS?

Bösendorfer rewrites the speaker design rule book with the VC 7

### AUDIOPHILE BARGAIN

Gamut's latest preamp is one of the finest around, regardless of price

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The next issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* is on sale 10 March. Don't miss a thing – see p72 for our latest great subscription offer



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For more information please contact NBIEN by e-mail at [info@nbien.com](mailto:info@nbien.com) or visit [www.nbien.com](http://www.nbien.com)



## COPLAND CDA823 CD PLAYER

Copland's CDA822 was one of our favourite sub-£2,000 CD players, so we were both intrigued to learn that Copland has sought to improve on this already excellent disc spinner with a new model – the CDA823. It retains the same critical DAC circuits and analogue output stage that were used by its predecessor, but adds increased 192kHz oversampling to “avoid the loss of energy and transparency in a complex analogue output

filter.” It also allows for future firmware updates with the provision of flash programmable microprocessors.

The player's impressive specification includes dual-differential 24-bit DACs, plus Copland's rather special output stage – an design priority that's said to contribute greatly to its smooth, natural and dynamic brand of music-making.

*To find out more, see our exclusive in-depth review in the next edition of HI-FI Choice*

**PRODUCT** CDA823

**TYPE** CD player

**PRICE** £1,750

**KEY FEATURES** 24-bit dual-differential DACs  
● Upgradable firmware ● Special output stage  
● Balanced and single-ended outputs

**CONTACT** ☎ 020 8971 3909  
www.absolutesounds.com



## Sex machine



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

To find out more about the award-winning range of Cambridge Audio two-channel and home cinema hi-fi, visit our website or call 0845 090 2288 (+44 207 940 2200 outside the UK). Developed in the UK, Cambridge Audio products are available from specialist hi-fi dealers across the world.

[www.thenewwave.co.uk](http://www.thenewwave.co.uk)

Cambridge Audio





## LEXICON RV-8 MULTICHANNEL RECEIVER

▶ The RV-8 integrated receiver from US-based digital specialist Lexicon is a superbly sculpted chunk of multichannel wizardry, capable of delivering detailed and precise stereo and surround sound to the most particular of audiophile ears. Lexicon's concept is to deliver separate, high-end component quality in a fully integrated package, and the RV-8 packs top-notch digital signal processing, audio decoding and high-quality power amplification into one impressive box.

The specification under the lid is as impressive as you'd expect from this famous multichannel marque, including every Dolby and DTS processing mode you can dream of, plus Lexicon's own Logic 7 processing suite – very impressive for the discerning multichannel enthusiast. A wealth of other facilities include three-zone multiroom capability, not to mention seven channels of amplification delivering 140 watts apiece.

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

**PRODUCT** Lexicon RV-8

**TYPE** Multichannel receiver

**PRICE** £5,000

**KEY FEATURES** Logic 7 audio processing  
▶ Multichannel downmixing ▶ 24-bit/192kHz A-to-Ds for stereo processing ▶ Power: 7x140W

**CONTACT** ☎ 01423 359054  
🌐 [www.csesolutions.co.uk](http://www.csesolutions.co.uk)

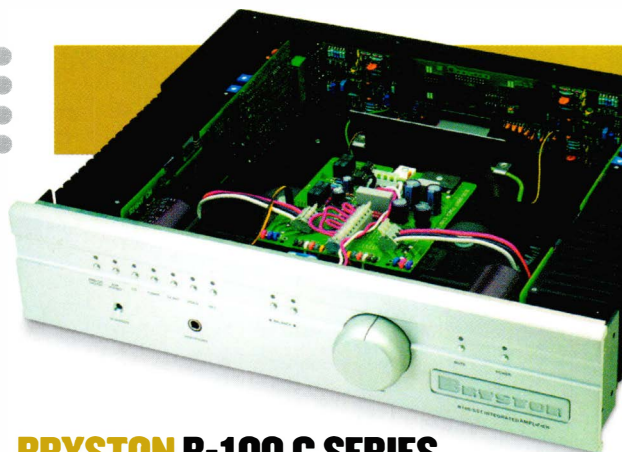
## NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

### DENSEN B-250

A new reference-level preamp has been dispatched for these shores from Danish firm Densen. It sports a number of special features, including add-on surround boards that enable the normally two-channel preamp to go multichannel, complete with suitable inputs and outputs.

The B-250's newly devised amp stages are based on Class A designs, while the output stage boasts a dual-mono configuration. Sonic performance may be further upgraded with Densen's DNRG external power supply, and customers can specify an MM or MC phono board. Densen has also fitted its own DenLink communication system, which allows two-way communication between components in multiroom environments.

**Price** £3,000 **Due** now  
 ☎ 01732 451938 🌐 www.densen.dk



### BRYSTON B-100 C SERIES

Canada's Bryston is set to launch a new high-end, 100-watt integrated amp at February's Bristol Sound & Vision Show (see *Hi-Fi Diary*, p12). The B-100 C Series will boast new cosmetics, the marque's contemporary SST circuit technology, a 20-year warranty, plus an optional onboard D-to-A converter. The amp forms part of the new C Series, which denotes the cosmetic transformation of the SST range.

Like Bryston preamps, the B-100 is available with digital inputs (two optical, two S/PDIF) for an additional premium. Further features include three ultra-low-noise power supplies, separate ground paths for the analogue and digital sections, plus a new volume control.

**Price** £2,600 (plus £800 for optional D-to-A facility)  
**Due** late Feb ☎ 0870 4441 0444 🌐 www.bryston.ca

### APPLE IPOD SHUFFLE

The iPod Shuffle is Apple's über-cool new flash memory portable music player. The svelte new range is both affordable and seriously stylish, and is available in 512MB and 1GB versions (the latter sufficient to hold up to 240 songs). There's no LCD screen, but Apple's iTunes software fires up automatically when the device is plugged into a Mac or PC.

**Price** £69 **Due** now  
 ☎ 0800 039 1010  
 🌐 www.apple.com/uk

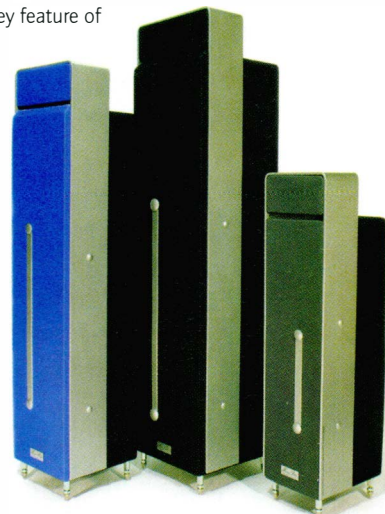


### MONOPULSE MODELS

Independent loudspeaker specialist MonoPulse has upgraded its distinctive speaker range for 2005.

Founder Alan Hendry has beefed up the main rolled-steel surround – a key feature of the cabinets' unusual steel and MDF design. The range includes three speakers: the Model 22, Model 32 and Model 42, which all denote the effective cabinet volume of the speaker. Each custom-built pair comes in a choice of colours and finishes.

**Price** £595 to £1,395 per pair **Due** now  
 ☎ 07785 558238  
 🌐 www.monopulse.co.uk



### LINN ARTIKULAT

Hi-fi stalwart Linn continues to cater for multichannel aficionados with the recent unveiling of two new speaker systems at the CES 2005 consumer electronics show in Las Vegas. First up is the high-end Artikulat system (pictured above), comprising the 350 floorstander, 320 standmount and 340 centre speaker. The speakers are available in active, or active bass versions, with a servo-driven subwoofer completing the system.

Then there's the Komponent, which is described as a 'lifestyle' multichannel speaker system. It features a floorstander, a standmount, a subwoofer and a flexible centre channel model that can also be configured as a left or right speaker, giving various package options.

**Price** tbc **Due** April/May  
 ☎ 0141 307 7777 🌐 www.linn.co.uk





## CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 640H

➤ An audiophile music server for the masses? It could be a reality with Cambridge Audio's new 640H hard drive server, which is said to combine the best bits from the 640C CD player (a Best Buy in *HFC* 249) with a substantial 160GB hard disk and CD recording functionality. The product will slot into the 'upmarket' (though still budget-priced) Azur range and is capable of storing an entire music collection, accessing music from networked computers and downloading songs from the web. It supports Ethernet connection but can also be used with wireless networks, meaning two 640H machines could communicate wirelessly in a multiroom audio environment. The player uses proprietary data management software called AudioFile, which is said to transfer and play back music at an "audiophile level" of quality. Its 160GB capacity equates to around 300 albums at full CD (PCM) quality, and users can choose to compress files if desired – a 128Kbps bitrate, for example, would allow something like 40,000 tracks to be stored.

**Price** £500 **Due** late spring ☎ 020 7940 2200 🌐 www.cambridge-audio.co.uk

## Soundbites



**TEAC** has unveiled a new table-top DAB radio/CD with an integrated digital clock. Part of Teac's compact audio range, the SR-L50DAB (above) combines a DAB/FM tuner with a CD player sporting CD-R/RW playback. It comes complete with full remote control for around £230. ☎ 01923 819630

**TOSHIBA** has launched a pair of wireless Bluetooth headphones, designed to hook up with any notebook or desktop PC with a Bluetooth 1.2 adaptor. The 'backband' style headphones weigh just 90g and have a range of up to 30 feet. They're available now in the US at \$100 (£55). ☎ 08702 202202

**ROBERTS** has added a new DAB/FM 'kitchen' portable to its traditionally styled radio range. The Gemini 11 has a solid wood cabinet with a blue leather and cloth trim around the speakers. The radio allows DAB broadcasts to be paused and then rewound for up to a 40-minute period, and costs £140. ☎ 01709 571722

**NEWNESPRESS** has published two new hi-fi-related books. *Building Valve Amps* (£20) is a practical guide to building, modifying and repairing all vacuum-tube amps and contains illustrated, step-by-step guides to design and testing. For wider electronics reading, the *Digital Consumer Technology Handbook* (£28) covers the latest engineering info for every digital consumer product category. ☎ 01865 474010

**NAD** has told us that its latest DVD/CD receiver is aimed at the audio and video lover who prefers two speakers to six. The L53 (below) is designed for use with stereo speakers only and offers 50 watts of power plus a 'pseudo surround' mode. Features include an AM/FM tuner, progressive scan, an optical digital output and two digital inputs. There's a subwoofer output to allow bass enhancement and it comes with a learning remote, which can also be used to replace other handsets – the TV's, for example. It's launched in April at £400. ☎ 01908 319360



## REGA LOUDSPEAKERS

➤ Rega's latest loudspeaker line-up is finally complete, with the addition of more brand new models. And although the series has no official moniker, there are now five speakers to choose from. The R1 is the only compact standmount, and is joined by four floorstanders – the R3 (as reviewed in this issue on p67), the R5, the R7 and the already established flagship, the R9 (a Best Buy in *HFC* 256). All models share paper-cone bass/mid drive units and fabric dome tweeters, with slim, stable cabinet designs. The floorstanding models sport additional side-firing drivers, which Rega says improves the speakers' timing accuracy.

**Price** £298 to £2,248 per pair **Due** now ☎ 01702 333071 🌐 www.rega.co.uk



## ONKYO TX-NR5000E

➤ Onkyo's rather nifty new flagship receiver, the TX-NR5000E, offers PC-style upgradability for added piece of mind. Key processing and interface features have been placed onto plug-in circuit modules, which may be changed or added to over time, with DAB and video upgrades already scheduled for later this year.

As it stands, the 7x200-watt receiver boasts THX Ultra2 certification, a pair of i.Link digital audio inputs for hi-res SACD and DVD-Audio data, an HDMI interface (two in, one out) for digital AV transmission and virtually every processing mode known to man.

**Price** £4,000 **Due** now ☎ 01494 681515 🌐 www.onkyo.co.uk

## SENNHEISER HD 465/485

➤ Two new open-backed headphones from Sennheiser are due for launch later this month. The HD 465 and 485 (pictured) share new diaphragms, aluminium voice coils and weigh in at just 220g.

**Price** HD 465: £50  
HD 485: £60 **Due** March  
☎ 0800 652 5002  
🌐 www.sennheiser.co.uk



### The Insider

#### THIS MONTH HFC TALKS TO...

##### PETER THOMAS

**Job Title:** Managing Director  
**Company:** PMC



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

The in-wall/on-wall speaker series, which includes advanced transmission line and HF steering technology. Sizes will vary from compact two-ways to much larger multi-driver speakers.

#### DVD-Audio or SACD – and why?

There is superb new and remastered material available on both formats, but the one that makes it will be the one that the record companies want the paying public to have.

#### What's a really great album that you've heard recently?

The *Kraftwerk 2004 World Tour*, due for release in the Spring. I had the privilege of sitting in during the mastering stage – it is truly outstanding in both stereo and surround.

#### CD or vinyl – and why?

The answer is very similar to that of the SACD versus DVD-Audio question. But there is certainly a relaxed feeling when putting the needle on the record.

#### What type of products will consumers be buying from you in five years time?

We will certainly be producing more innovative products for both the design conscious and custom installation markets, some involving digital amplification. We will also have a portfolio of extremely powerful active subs to service both the hi-fi and professional markets.

### Hi-Fi Diary

#### FEBRUARY

**25-27 Sound & Vision 2005**  
Marriott Hotel, Bristol  
[www.bristolshow.co.uk](http://www.bristolshow.co.uk)  
Premier UK hi-fi and AV showcase

#### APRIL

**14-17 The Smart Home Show**  
NEC, Birmingham  
[www.smarthomeshow.co.uk](http://www.smarthomeshow.co.uk)  
Intelligent AV installation extravaganza

#### MAY

**5-8 High End 2005**  
Munich, Germany  
[Glisovic@HighEndSociety.de](mailto:Glisovic@HighEndSociety.de)  
The ultimate high-end hi-fi show

### Show report – CES 2005

*Alvin Gold dons his white Elvis garb and goes in search of the best new hi-fi components, Vegas style*

**Place:** Las Vegas, Nevada in the USA

**Time:** 5-8 January, 2005

**The occasion:** CES, the largest (and easily the glitziest) annual trade-only consumer electronics showcase. CES covers a multitude of product areas, of which high-class (or sometimes just high cost) audio is only a part – but a key part.

Unfortunately, and not for the first time, the standard of many of the demonstrations was poor, due to inadequate set-up, lazy and unchallenging programme material, or equipment that was underperforming.

There were some gems though. In one of the Hilton suites, **MartinLogan** was demonstrating a prototype of the Summit, a new high-end design that will replace the Prodigy when it is released in a few months time. The way it has been constructed is radically different, and the final speaker is smaller and much more domestically acceptable than its predecessor, while sonically it impressed with its refined, tactile quality. A star in the making.

**Meridian** was trumpeting the mandatory inclusion of MLP lossless compression as part of the HD-DVD specification, and from **Sony** the news was that SACD/DSD will be part of the competing Blu-Ray format, which currently still looks the stronger bet for the future of DVD. There were strong rumours flying around concerning the future of SACD, but on investigation they seem to have been inspired by sources with an axe to grind. Certainly anyone trawling the show will have noticed that DVD-Audio hardware was thin on the ground, and DVD-A demonstrations were almost non-existent. SACD was much better represented, up to and including the exotic two-box **Teac** Esoteric P-01 and D-01, but the majority of software demonstrations were still CD-based, inevitably with a sprinkling of vinyl.

French speaker maker **Focal-JMLab** was represented in force, with a number of new models, including a new flagship for the Chorus range – the three-way 736 – and a 2.1-channel sub/sat system called iCub. This was but one of many prospective add-ons for the ubiquitous iPod, one of the driving forces of the show. Even **Arcam** was getting on board with the iPod with its new Solo one-box hi-fi system, which can also be used to route signals from an iPod or Playstation. There



**“The themes of 2005 were affordability, compact build and friendly aesthetics.”**

will also be matching speakers – the first time for many years that **Arcam** has dipped a toe in this market. But the Profile 900 range perhaps best sums up the themes of 2005: affordability, compact build and friendly aesthetics.

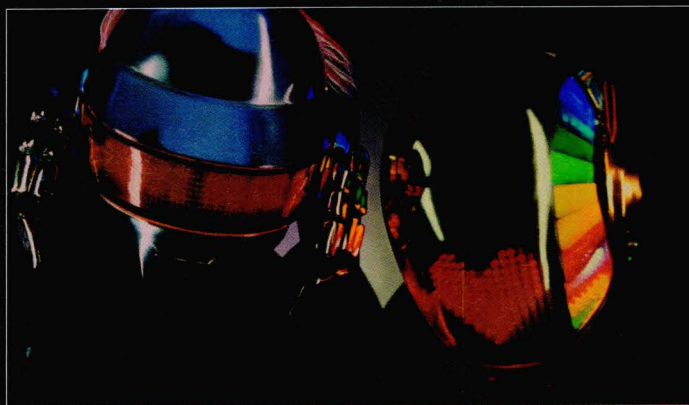
Staking a claim for British design and Chinese manufacture, **Mordaunt-Short** was showing some attractive siblings for its excellent Performance 6 loudspeaker, including a centre channel model and subwoofer. Another product range with new-found Chinese connections courtesy of the **IAG Group** (Quad, Wharfedale etc.) was the relaunched **Audiolab** range. This looks like the original **Audiolab**, but with **TAG McLaren** internals, and pricing nearer to **Rotel** and **NAD** levels.

**Halcro**, previously known only as a producer of ultra-high-end pre/power amps, used the springboard of CES to show its new range of home cinema equipment, initially consisting of two processors and four multichannel power amps. As before, all amplification is Class D, and although pricing is still upmarket, it's not totally unreachable (US\$4,490-\$9,990 per component). Innovative features include a wireless 'phone home' facility in the event of faults. Other exotic introductions include a pyramid-shaped power amp from **Nagra** called (strange but true) the Pyramid. Slightly more down to earth, one of the most unlikely stars of the show, if not exactly one of the best looking, was the Israeli-made Octave from **Morel**, an astonishing compact *tour de force* that's sure to make listeners sit up and take notice. **HFC**

## ➤ New Music

### IN THE STUDIO

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



#### DAFT PUNK

**Title:** *Human After All*  
**Release date:** 21 March

The French electronic duo are finally ready to release the follow-up to 2001's acclaimed *Discovery* – and after the long wait they ended up recording the entire album in six weeks, in Oct-Nov 2004. They promise "a mix of guitars and machines" and more spontaneity than we've heard before.



#### ROLLING STONES

**Title:** tbc  
**Release date:** mid-2005

Initial sessions for the Stones' follow-up to 1997's *Bridges To Babylon* began in Paris in late 2004. "Mick and Keith are writing songs together in a collaborative fashion that probably hasn't been seen since the late sixties," says producer Don Was. Drummer Charlie Watts, who was recently treated for throat cancer, has reportedly played a full part.

#### THE WHO

**Title:** *Who2*  
**Release date:** mid-2005

Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey got together just before Christmas to try out material for a new Who album, with a title that refers to the fact that they are the only surviving members of the original quartet. "It won't be a concept album," Townshend insists on his website, but it will be their first studio album since 1982's *It's Hard*.

#### GOLDFRAPP

**Title:** tbc  
**Release date:** summer 2005

Alison Goldfrapp is currently in Peter Gabriel's Real World studios near Bath, recording the follow-up to the Mercury Prize shortlisted *Black Cherry*. "A typically Goldfrapp move forward while retaining the glam and atmospherics of the past," says

our spy in the camp. Production is by Mike 'Spike' Stent, whose past credits include Björk, Massive Attack and Madonna.

#### DOVES

**Title:** *Some Cities*  
**Release date:** 28 Feb

The follow-up to 2002's number one album *The Last Broadcast* promises to be one of the biggest-selling UK albums of 2005. Jimi Goodwin of the Manchester-based trio says that the unusual recording locations included a Benedictine monastery and a Scottish studio "from which we could see Ben Nevis out of the window". Expect more guitar-led epics with such elemental titles as *The Storm* and *Sky Starts Falling*.

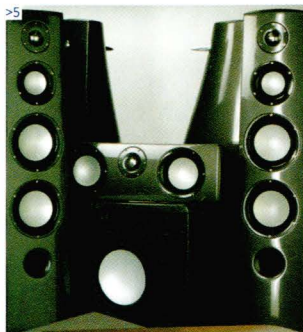
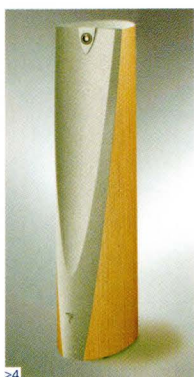
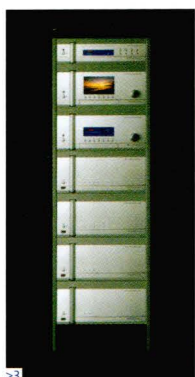
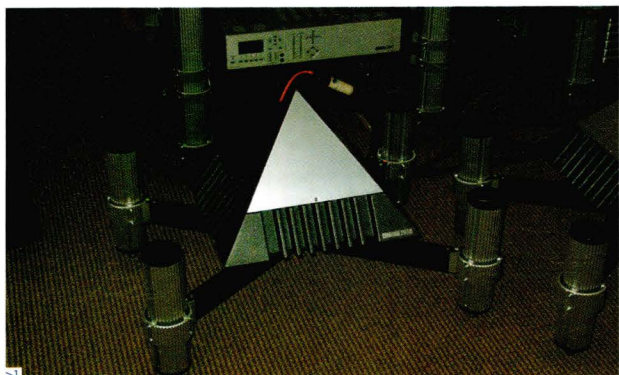
#### ALSO COMING SOON

##### JAZZ/ CLASSICAL

**David Sanborn** Closer (Feb), **Magdalena Kozena** Lamento (Feb), **Colin Steele** tbc (Mar), **Lang Lang** Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No2 (Mar), **Nguyen Le** tbc (Mar), **Keith Jarrett** Somewhere Before (May)

##### SACD/ DVD-A

**David Elias** Crossing (SACD, Feb), **St Louis SO** Smetana: Ma Vlast (SACD, Feb), **Yellowjackets** Altered State (SACD, Mar), **Julia Fischer** Bach: Sonate (SACD, Mar), **Porcupine Tree** Deadwing (DVD-A DualDisc, Mar)



- 1] Nagra's appropriately named Pyramid amplifier
- 2] MartinLogan's Summit prototype electrostatic speaker
- 3] Halcro's new range of multichannel electronics
- 4] A speaker from Arcam's new Profile 900 range
- 5] Mordaunt-Short's multichannel Performance package
- 6] Morel's "astounding" Octave compact loudspeakers





Jason Kennedy

## A needlemaker's world

*Welcome to an audiophile Aladdin's cave*

**C**artridge and cable guru AJ van den Hul must be one of the hardest working men in hi-fi. Now in his sixties, AJ runs his cable company during office hours, and builds and repairs cartridges in his spare time. As far as I can tell, he doesn't get much time off for his family... or to listen to his record collection!

I recently visited his farmhouse in Vaasen, Holland, and discovered a capacious listening room so full of vinyl and hi-fi that there is only enough space for a single listening seat in front of his towering Acapella Violon Cello speakers. The floor of this Aladdin's cave is covered in boxes of jazz and classical LPs, plus the odd turntable or tape recorder, with more classic kit stacked on shelves around the room. Hidden under a silk cloth, I found a Nakamichi Dragon turntable, a legendary beast that literally shifts the platter to iron out pitch variations caused by

## “AJ van den Hul's room is so full of vinyl and hi-fi that there's only room for a single chair.”

centre hole eccentricity – they don't build 'em like that any more. AJ had picked this up recently and not yet had time to cram it onto the jam packed area that functions as an equipment support. Here the turntable of choice is a Brinkmann La Grange, finished in white and fitted with a contrasting seventies Technics tonearm with a detachable headshell – essential if you are a cartridge maker, it would seem.

The amplification is all pretty exotic stuff too: a Blue Amp phono stage with balanced inputs and a Jelco Breath valve preamp from Russia. This sits on top of a 'resting' Conrad-Johnson ART preamp, just to give you an idea of how highly he regards it. Power amplification is Van den Hul's own no-longer-in-production 100-watt monoblocks and the cables are his favourite carbon variety with a very fine-sounding new tubular construction interconnect cable being tested prior to production.

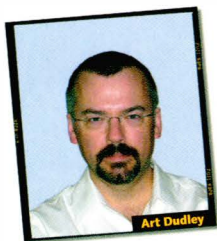
The sound in this room is extremely natural and dynamic, thanks to the horn-loaded (ion) tweeter and midrange of the Acapellas. You can hear the fine differences between versions of a single cartridge design with ease. He builds the cartridges in another, smaller room that seems to have as many things in it as the listening room, except that they are all much smaller. His bench is awash with mounting bolts and elastic bands(?), alongside numerous bits and bobs that may or may not have anything to do with moving coil cartridge construction.

Each cartridge that AJ builds can be tailor-made to the customer's tonearm, phono stage and more importantly musical taste. He can vary things like cantilever length to give a more dynamic or more spacious sound, choose from different suspension rubbers to alter compliance for different arms and even use metal or plastic bases to give a sound that

suits certain types of music. The biggest variable, however, is the coil wire – choose from copper, silver, gold or even platinum to get a sound that perfectly matches your record collection. Easier still, tell AJ what you listen to (and with) and he'll do it for you. His cartridges may not be cheap – the customisation doesn't really start until you get into the open bodied designs, which start at £2,400 for the Condor (see p57) – but you'll be hard pressed to find this sort of service with any other needle maker.

*Jason Kennedy began working on Hi-Fi*

*Choice over 15 years ago, eventually rising to the position of editor. He's currently indulging his passion as a freelance hi-fi writer*



## Getting the Benz

*Affordable, low-output Benz cartridge is ACE*

One thing I've noticed over the last twenty years: my choices in affordable phono cartridges are increasingly limited to moving-magnet and high-output moving-coil types. My justification for this is that the audiophile who can't afford a high-cost cartridge won't want a moving-coil head amp or step-up transformer. Not an unreasonable point of view.

But there are still a great many among us who don't lack for voltage gain – owners of vintage Naim preamps and integrations, for example – yet who crave the relative purity and freedom from sonic hardness that have always seemed to characterise low-output MCs, perhaps exclusively. What we need is an Audio Technica AT-F5 for the 21st Century.

Ernst Benz, the Swiss glider pilot, watchmaker, and phono cartridge maven, may have just the right cure with the low-output version of his ACE phono cartridge (£395). The Benz Micro ACE L combines a line-contact stylus with a solid boron cantilever and a motor assembly of medium compliance, all in a snazzy red package with conveniently threaded mounting holes. Its coil impedance is 12 ohms, and its output is a very traditional 0.4mV – just right for the Naim's S-type phono boards, or the 40 ohm inputs of my Tamura TKS-83 step-up trannies.

I tried the ACE L in an early Rega P9, using Rega's 2mm spacers under the RB900 arm for a better vertical tracking angle than stock. ▶



# RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

B&W DM70  
LOUDSPEAKER



Arguably the most iconic of early B&W designs, the DM70 remains a spectacular-looking loudspeaker even now. Especially so with the all-white finish and in the 'Continental' version pictured, the front panel of which is curved to match the high frequency diaphragms.

Introduced in 1979, the DM70 remained in serial production for about eight years, with a peak production rate of around 20 tweeter panels – rather less than ten pairs of speakers a week, allowing for units that failed to meet the specifications. When it was discontinued it was listed at around £320 a pair – a surprisingly modest price even then for what qualified as a high-end loudspeaker. It was one of the first B&Ws to be built entirely in-house, partly because the tweeters were difficult to build to the required standards, and because it was the first B&W speaker in which the tweeter was physically separate from the main enclosure, though it was not mechanically decoupled in the manner of the Nautilus tweeters in the current 800 Series.

What set the DM70 apart was its hybrid design, with a curved electrostatic panel covering the range above 400Hz. This was supplemented by a moving coil unit, in an arrangement remarkably similar to the MartinLogan range of hybrids. The complete system was supplied with a frame stand to lift it to an appropriate height. Low frequencies were handled by a paper-coned 305mm bass/mid driver in a large boxy enclosure, which also housed the crossover, plus the transformer and power supply for the electrostatic panel. This was the last time that B&W produced an electrostatic drive unit, but the bass/mid unit was developed further and eventually become the bass driver of the early 800 Series.

The DM70 measured 81cm wide and 82cm tall, and the eight-ohm speaker had a power handling rating of just 25 watts, the limit being set by arcing in the electrostatic diaphragm rather than the muscular bass/mid unit. The panel impedance dipped to around two ohms, though it was perfectly drivable by a Quad 303 amp – an industry standard of the time, created to handle Quad's own full-range electrostatics.



**“Diaphragms eventually lost tension and sagged, the solution for which was a spell with a hairdryer!”**

There were a number of inherent problems with the DM70. Stretching and tensioning the PVC diaphragm film (it was later changed to polyester, a more stable material) was apparently something of an arcane art. Its conductive coating was applied by spray and then had to be painstakingly rubbed down using a blackboard eraser until it met the specified resistance of 109 ohms per square cm. Sensitivity tended to reduce over time, the only practical cure for which was to reverse the HT polarity (2.75kV!) until it was restored, and the diaphragms eventually tended to lose tension and sag, the solution for which was a spell with a hairdryer!

A contemporary brochure from B&W suggests that the DM70 employed “new thinking (that) aims at exploring the advantage of an approximately spherical radiation pattern in the 400Hz-5kHz range”, but this was surely stretching the definition of ‘approximately’ beyond its (inherently) elastic limit. The electrostatic panel was of course dipolar, though its curvature was designed to widen its frontal radiation compared to a flat panel – another feature that saw further development within the MartinLogan range – and the bass section would only have been approximately omni-directional near the lower limit of its pass-band. **HFC**

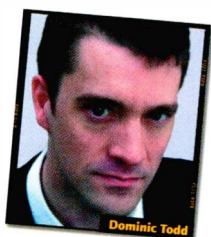
*Alvin Gold*

❑ The results were musically and sonically pleasing. My preferred cartridges are drier and tighter sounding than this one, and the ACE doesn't keep bass notes on a short enough leash. But it was just tight enough, and free from the excessive bite that I have come to associate, rightly or wrongly, with MC pick-ups in the 1.0mV range and beyond.

It also did well in terms of surface noise, being less perturbed by groove damage than other 'budget' cartridges I've heard. And it tracked quite nicely at 1.9g, a bit less than the 2.0g maximum recommendation.

My only complaint would be that a stylus guard is not included, making installation a bit more nerve-racking than usual. When I was 25 – half the age I am now – I looked down upon anyone who could be so feeble as to break a phono cartridge. Now it would appear that I am that feeble, and so it goes.

*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*



Dominic Todd

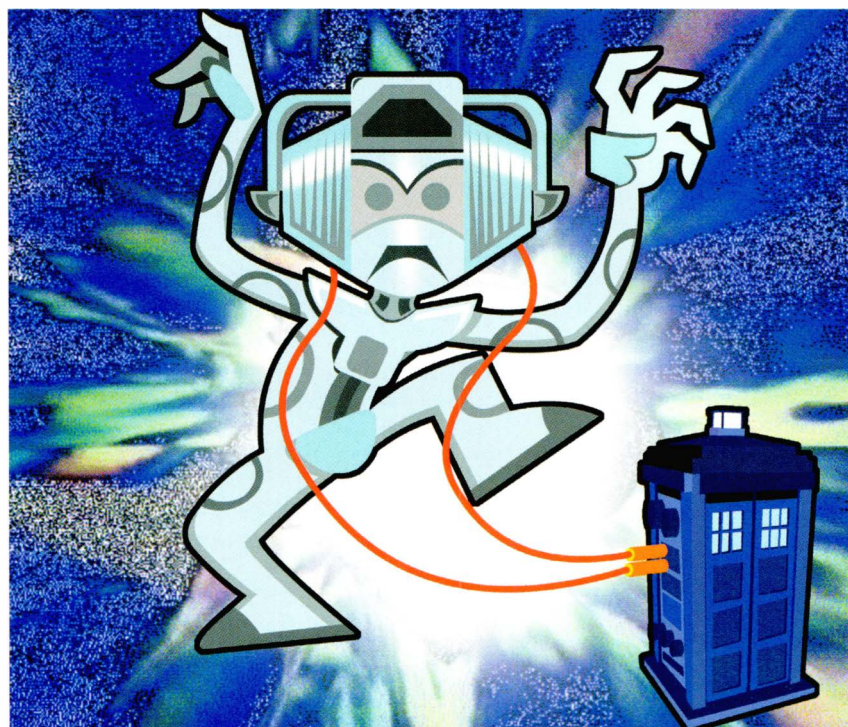
## Canny listener

*Nothing beats good head(phones)*

**R**ight now, you are probably in possession of one of the most accurate and involving hi-fi components around. Imaging is consistent and controlled, and fine detail – lost on lesser hi-fi – is always to the fore. I'm talking, of course, about headphones. Despite their many qualities they are, at this very moment, sitting at the bottom of a cluttered drawer, cable irretrievably knotted and largely forgotten about.

Even if you are 'big into music', those drawer-fodder 'phones probably aren't too clever either. Don't tell me, they're a ten-year-old set of Sennheisers or Beyers, bought because they won all the awards for being the best headphones for fifty quid. Am I right? Apologies to the enlightened headphones out there, but sales figures show you are very much in the minority.

Although I readily admit to doing most of my listening through conventional speakers, I do try and use my Sennheiser HE60/HEV70s as much as possible. The system is a wonderfully transparent electrostatic headphone/Class A driver amp combination that always makes me wonder why I don't listen to them more often. They are, of course, great for reviewing, as they



## “The headphone resurgence isn't coming from big old Cyberman-chic headphones...”

really let me hear every nuance of detail from a particular source. Yet, they can also maintain a fluid, cohesive balance that can beguile every bit as much as a pair of conventional speakers.

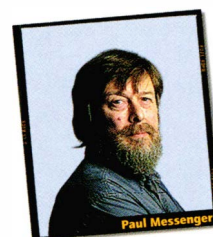
As a fan of the can, I've been pleased to see a recent resurgence of personal transducers. Yet, this resurgence doesn't come from the increase in urban living. In fact, it has nothing to do with the home market at all, but that of the explosion of music on the move. Either you're sick to death of hearing about the iPod, or you can't get enough of it but, either way, its rejuvenating effect upon the accessory market can't be ignored. Everyone's at it, and when companies as idiosyncratic as Naim and Bose are producing 'i-products', you know we have a true commercial phenomenon.

So, the headphone resurgence comes not from big old Cyberman-chic 'phones, but from 50 pence-sized banded and in-ear designs (notably the latter). Once there was the trusty old Sennheiser MX500 for £20 and that was your lot. Now we have the Sony MDRNC11s at £100, Etymotic's ER4-P at £230 and the wonderful Shure E5c at a ludicrous £500. Yes, £500 for a pair of in-ears! Mind you, you wouldn't have to try too hard to find them for substantially less and, thanks to dual micro-drivers and in-line crossovers, they do sound exceptionally good.

It's great to see the resurgence in headphone use, whatever the driving factors may be. Who

knows, it may even encourage more people to listen with them at home, as well as on the move. But there is one major downside to life with headphones – with more than one of you in the room, they do become rather anti-social. But then again, we could perhaps all keep a pair of cheap loudspeakers tucked away in a drawer somewhere...

*Dominic Todd began his hi-fi career in the retail business and has been a freelance hi-fi reviewer and columnist since 1993*



Paul Messenger

## Angus McKenzie MBE (1933 – 2005)

*Remembering Hi-Fi Choice's founding father*

**T**ime makes it difficult to say who came up with the original idea of *Hi-Fi Choice*. But there's no doubt that the most important person in its early years was hi-fi reviewer, radio



enthusiast and all-round polymath Angus McKenzie, who died in January.

Angus was an extraordinary individual with a formidable intellect. Despite losing his sight at the age of 26, he successfully pursued several different careers throughout a busy working life. Having studied electronics and acoustics at college, developing his passions for classical music, audio and radio at the same time, he founded Olympic Studios – one of Britain's first independent recording studios, still open today.

Failing sight led Angus to sell up and move on, well before Olympic became a musical home for the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, The Who, Led Zeppelin and others. Angus himself was never into rock'n'roll, but he continued to make top quality recordings of 'serious' music, and always retained great enthusiasm for the technology, which stood him in good stead when starting up *Hi-Fi Choice* some years later.

In the 1960s, Angus started writing for the new hi-fi mags. His recording expertise contributed to *Tape Recorder* (which became *Studio Sound*), while his *Hi-Fi News* column on FM Radio ran for decades, doing much to keep the BBC engineers on their toes. With his enthusiasm for hi-fi and music, hearing acuity seemingly sharpened by his blindness, and a rigorous engineering background, Angus was superbly placed to review equipment as hi-fi moved into the boom years of the 1970s.

*Hi-Fi Choice* would never have got started without Angus' unique expertise, enthusiasm and perseverance. No-one, anywhere, had previously attempted to review such a wide range of products, typically 60 at a time. And, because the co-operation of the hi-fi industry was vital, it was essential that impeccable methods were used to assess performance. Crucially, Angus established the rigorous standards that made the UK hi-fi press respected throughout the world.

He used creative engineering to fight his disability, adapting his instrumentation so he could 'read' by feel or voice synthesis, and with help from skilled assistants tackled the first four editions of *HFC*, covering cassette decks and tapes, receivers and speakers. As frequency increased, other reviewers helped spread the load, but as editor, I remember visiting Angus's place for listening tests for *HFC* 11 in 1978. There was no need to know the house number – I just looked for the forest of radio antennae!

His tireless work on behalf of the blind received due recognition with the award of an MBE in 1979. Angus could be stubborn, sometimes arrogant, but his formidable creative intellect always commanded respect, and his contribution to British hi-fi was immense.

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

# M

## MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

CHIC  
RISQUÉ



Forget the birth of Thatcherism or the Winter of Discontent; for many in Britain, 1979 will be remembered as the year disco died. Just a few short years after this most democratic of dance styles moved overground out of New York's gay scene, the backlash of America's 'Disco Sucks' campaign was taking hold, and disco's party seemed to be reaching its end. But there was still one last great record to play before the lights went out, and it would prove to be the greatest long player of its era.

The songwriting and production team of Nile Rogers and Bernard 'Nard' Edwards were the brains behind Chic, and as such were the golden boys of disco. Their chart-topping sound was not only a winner for their own group but also, as the Chic Organisation, with a host of others including Sister Sledge and Sheila & B Devotion. It also provided Diana Ross with her smash comeback album, *Diana*.

*Risqué* was Chic's third album and marked the end of their chart-topping tenure, but by this stage the 'Chic sound' was fully developed and mature. It involved stripping disco back to basics with intense drums, sparse staccato guitar chops, and aerobic basslines, all of it crisp and clear, with no element superfluous or wasted. On top of the meat came the gravy, rhythmic keyboard and string lines, brushed up and polished descendants of James Brown's primal funk for a new, upwardly mobile generation. And then there were those instantly recognisable vocal lines – apparently so simple, yet concealing some very clever constructions.

It's often forgotten that Chic's singers weren't all female. As well as Luci Martin and Alfa Anderson, one Luther Vandross had put in time on the band's early records, although as his own career began to take off, he was replaced by Fonzi Thornton. Chic's vocal sound was actually made distinctive by combining the girls' chorus with a man singing slightly too high for his range. The resulting soulful sound, with its dense, claustrophobic impetus, had no peer.

The key to Chic's enduring legacy however, was the melancholy depth that lay behind the party groove. Chic's lyrics were rarely just about boogying and getting on down, as their



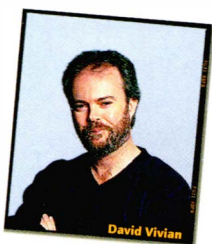
**“By the group’s third album, the ‘Chic sound’ was fully developed and mature.”**

greatest single, *Good Times*, testified. It's not actually a good-time song at all, but instead contrasts contemporary Studio 54 hedonism against the Great Depression of the 1930s. The fact that it did so against one of the most infectious dance grooves of that or any other era meant, of course, that almost no-one noticed. But, if you were prepared to look, there were hidden depths to Chic.

In fact, the album's centrepiece proved to have another life beyond Chic and long after the death of the disco era that spawned it. The bassline was used to drive Queen's *Another One Bites The Dust* and also to launch the nascent hip-hop movement into the mainstream, when it was used as the basis for the Sugarhill Gang's *Rapper's Delight*.

Chic's time in the spotlight was relatively brief. The pressures of success led Nile and Nard into a descending spiral of drugs and recrimination in the early eighties. But both proved successful as solo operators, Rogers producing the likes of Madonna (*Like A Virgin*) and David Bowie (*Let's Dance*), Edwards playing with eighties supergroup Power Station and others until his death from pneumonia on a tour of Japan with a reformed Chic in 1996. Despite their subsequent success, it's Chic that remains the pair's crowning glory, and *Risqué* its brightest shining jewel. **HFC**

Dave Oliver



## Wife Swap

*DV's getting hitched and his hi-fi's coming too*

Whitstable occasionally pops up in my *Beautiful System* features (see p32). Here's the deal. The flat in Maidstone I bought after my divorce six years ago (wife shacks up with best friend and listening buddy, Steve) is for sale. It's a great flat, folks; tip-top condition, newly redecorated, stunning riverside views, structural integrity tested by some of the most powerful hi-fi systems money can buy. Don't listen to those doom-mongers who say the property market is on the slide. It's a steal. Someone better buy it before I change my mind.

Not that I'm going to do that. *Marriage: The Sequel* is at the trailer stage and screens this summer. Denise lives by the sea in Whitstable

hates. Something that ruins the appearance of a lovely room. The potential for a bust-up is enormous. For a while, I actually believed I might get away with it. From my kit store, I cherry-picked three items of extravagant beauty – all Italian and loveably small.

My mistake was placing the CD player and amp on a support made, essentially, out of metal bars, and the speakers on stands of Welsh slate. When I looked at the system *in situ*, all I could see was a fusion of beauty and function that would make Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen proud – my view informed, of course, by the knowledge that it would sound fabulous.

But what Denise saw was hi-fi components that didn't look utterly awful sitting on a table and stands that did. And she was right. She wasn't the bitch fiancée from hell and I wasn't about to tell her there can be no compromise with a no-compromise system. As it turned out, the stands stayed, but the electronics now sit on a much prettier bedside table from IKEA. So what if it doesn't extract the last scintilla of performance? Point is, we're both listening.

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



## The rumour mill

*The latest hi-res whispers from CES 2005*

With the same inevitability as death and taxes, January brings another Las Vegas Consumer Electronics Show. And with CES comes a collection of high-resolution products nobody can afford, software news, exciting developments from mass-market companies and a good sprinkling of scurrilous rumour.

Meridian flew the flag for DVD-Audio and introduced a whole raft of product upgrades, to DAB, of all things, together with the G68J, a more 'affordable' surround controller – circa £3,500 – that omits video switching and multi-room ability but retains the company's proprietary MHR Smart Link interface, which enables the transmission of hi-res signals from DVD-A. Making for strange bedfellows, the Meridian booth was also used by Panasonic to demonstrate its DVD-Audio equipped HTiB (Home Theatre in a Box) systems.

NAD was also publicly backing the DVD-Audio format, its T534 player finally putting in an appearance. Only a US retail price was given (\$500), but with the inclusion

**“When I looked at the system *in situ*, all I could see was a fusion of beauty and function that would make Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen proud.”**

in a big, three-storey house. And, increasingly, so do I. It has loads of rooms and we quickly decided on one I could use for listening/reviewing/writing. Denise has her own 'work room', so that's fine: space to do our own 'things', a blueprint for a life more harmonious than a Beach Boys concert.

Except... well, we want to be together, not apart. Denise loves to read, but wants to get more into music. I love to listen, but really should read more (serious novels, that is, not car mags). The solution is obvious: a library-cum-music room where we can both while away those long winter evenings. And there it is, between the living and dining rooms. Ideal size, eggshell blue, book-lined alcoves, 'vintage' sofa and accessories.

Sooner or later, it's going to happen. The male audiophile's partner will be asked to let something into her life that, from an aesthetic view at least, she



of HDMI connectivity and video upscaling, it looks like a very attractive package.

Speaking of upscaling, Denon's DVD-5910, the daddy of players from the mainstream manufacturers, was also in attendance. Its accomplished DVD-Audio and SACD playback has largely been overshadowed by the inclusion of the Silicon Optix Realta Hollywood Quality Video chipset (now there's a name that rolls of the tongue) and DVDO-HD+ scaling. The HQV software supposedly runs one trillion operations per second to de-interlace, de-noise and control video/film cadence detection, and the result is truly impressive. If you want top-notch audio but don't want a player with the chroma bug or uncertain pull-down abilities on the video front, this is the one for you.

At the other end of the spectrum, a product that would set any bank manager's pulse racing was displayed by Esoteric Audio, the up-market TEAC brand. The P-01 transport weighs in at \$25,000, and you'll still need to budget for the matching DACs, a snip at \$12,500 per channel, which means a complete SACD multichannel front-end costs \$100,000. Ouch. Given that the level of high frequency noise in DSD is about the same as that generated by the sound of crashing surf, give or take a dB or two, that money would probably be better put toward a Waikiki beachfront property.

For a change, there was some good news for DualDisc. According to various DVD-Audio Council members, sales are exceptionally buoyant, so if their figures are accurate – in two weeks of December, 750,000 titles were delivered to the retail chain and 350,000 of them sold – it is encouraging to see consumers taking precious little notice of the ridiculous 'warnings' issued by various hardware manufacturers over the last couple of months. Also on the horizon, the introduction of DualDiscs with printed labels, rather than just a colour-coded red/black inner ring. A 'new technology' has been developed that makes the printed surface transparent to transport lasers, thereby enabling the deployment of more idiot-proof artwork to differentiate the CD side to that of the DVD... "Look bozo, this is the DVD side, it won't work in your CD player, okay?"

And finally... this year's SACD gossip concerned Philips' position in the US market; word in the halls was that they are about the pull the plug. This probably has about as much credence as last year's rumour about Sony Music – it's becoming an annual event – who supposedly, were going to stop issuing Super Audio CDs. If you believe that, then forget buying beachfront real estate, I have a whole Eiffel Tower that needs scrapping...

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

# TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

CODING CONUNDRUMS



MP3, DAB, AAC, WMA and ATRAC all use 'coding' to reduce the amount of digital information required for the audio waveform.

Devilishly clever, though regarded by some as the Antichrist of audio, what do these systems do – and are they really damaging to fidelity?

16-bit pulse code modulation audio, as used in CD, creates over 700,000 bits of data per channel per second, with hi-res audio serving up at least three times that. Storing and transmitting bits costs money, so the logic of coding is to reduce the bits, at the expense of processing power at the recorder and player.

That number can be reduced to some extent without any loss of information, and Meridian Lossless Packing (MLP), used in DVD-A, does just that, as does the deliciously named 'Monkey's Audio' system on PCs. However, compression ratios are seldom better than 3:1, typically more like 2:1. 'Lossy coders' (or 'codecs', short for 'COder/DECoders') try to do something different. They attempt to create an output that is subjectively indistinguishable, to the human ear, from the input.

There are two different tricks involved here. First, to recreate a reasonably accurate impression of the input, various mathematical processes are combined with a degree of knowledge of typical audio signals to predict what the signal will do in the near future. Musical signals have a surprisingly unvarying nature, viewed on a millisecond scale, most of the time. Take speech, at about 150ms per syllable. Of that 150ms, perhaps 10-60ms will be taken up with consonants. Consonants are 'noise-like' and hence rather unpredictable, but vowels have a relatively static nature. For a male voice, the fundamental frequency of a vowel may be about 100Hz, which has a period of 10ms, so to a rough approximation we could say that the 100ms or so of vowels could be represented simply by repeating one 10ms-long cycle ten or so times. This would save anything up to 80-odd per cent of the original data.

The second trick is to compare the approximation with the original and ensure that the difference between them is essentially



**"The distortion is never truly inaudible, because coders are designed with 'typical' listeners in mind."**

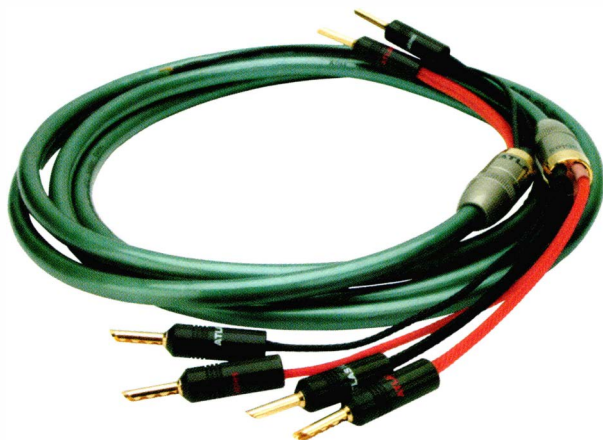
inaudible. That's done by making sure it is 'masked' – concealed from our hearing mechanism by 'correct' sound at nearby frequencies and higher levels. This requires knowledge of how we hear, plus prodigious computing power, and is the main area where coders continue to improve month by month. Luckily, the signals which are least amenable to approximation, and which thus produce the largest error, are exactly the ones where distortion is least audible. For this reason, it is possible to reduce data rates by a factor of ten or more without introducing grossly audible distortion. As a rule of thumb, good coders often achieve an accuracy of over 75 per cent, which isn't bad with only ten per cent of the data, the resulting 25 per cent distortion being 'nearly' inaudible. Often, a large part of that distortion consists simply of momentarily limiting the high frequency response, which takes up a lot of data bandwidth.

The distortion is never truly inaudible, of course, not least because coders are designed with 'typical' listeners in mind. Luckily, in the home, the decreasing cost of storage and the arrival of ever-faster broadband telecoms links will soon erode the argument for coding at all, while improving coder performance will continue to benefit mobile audio. In the meantime, treat coding with caution! **HFC**

*Richard Black*



## ESSENTIALS



### ATLAS ICHOR LOUDSPEAKER CABLE £675 (3M TERMINATED PAIR)

This bi-wire cable offers distinct conductors for treble and bass – the former solid-core of modest thickness, the latter larger and stranded. They are all screened, with a separate drain wire to connect to the amp. Construction includes Teflon insulation and cotton filler, while the conductors themselves are made of ‘Ohno Continuous Casting’ copper, which claims crystal lengths longer than the average cable set. Sound is distinctive: there’s a slight preference for the upper bass, which can be pleasant but could react badly with speakers that are already prominent in that area. The treble is extended, but not always as clear as with some, sounding a little muddled in complex music. However, stereo imaging is very good and ambient decay extremely natural.

☎ 01563 524320 🌐 www.hifi.org.uk

### QED QUNEX SIGNATURE 75 DIGITAL INTERCONNECT £80 (1M TERMINATED)

The claims for this digital interconnect are based on its high level of screening, and the transparent jacket makes it obvious that QED’s not kidding – that’s one of the densest braided screens we’ve seen, supplemented by a metallised plastic film too. Rhodium-plated plugs (with split centre pin for added grip) and top-quality insulation materials complete a most impressive bill of fare. DVD compatible? You could get a lot more data down it than that! Sound is excellent, with first rate balance and imaging. Short of going really mental with a top-range Kimber or the like, this is as good as it gets with digital cable.

☎ 01279 501111 🌐 www.qed.co.uk



### QED SILVER MICRO LOUDSPEAKER CABLE £3.50 (PRICE PER METRE - TERMINATION EXTRA)

In a sense, this basic figure-of-eight cable is nothing more than thick bell-wire, but its silver-plated copper conductors and polythene insulation (much lower loss than the PVC used on cheaper cables) are good high-end stuff. In its basic form it’s a fine performer offering a generally neutral balance with just a little less extension in the bass and treble than fancy cables can offer, and less of the silky-smooth integration that you’ll only get if you pay for it. Stereo imaging is excellent laterally; it lacks some depth in absolute terms, but is as good as you’ll find at this price. And crucially, its slim girth makes it a discreet low-cost option.

☎ 01279 501111 🌐 www.qed.co.uk



### DENSEN DVD MAGIC DEMAGNETISING DVD £20

Densen’s ‘De-Magic’ demagnetising CD isn’t the only one available, but it was among the first. Naturally enough, a DVD version has come along to achieve the same thing in surround sound. It produces much the same sounds (well, ghastly noises, actually) which emerge from your multiple speakers in Dolby Digital. The claim is the same: a reduction in the evil effects of magnetism in various bits of the system and restoration peak performance – improved clarity and resolution in just three minutes. Use is recommended weekly, though some folks reckon daily is even better. Now, there’s little if any hard evidence for any of this, but we’re not alone in finding positive subjective results. Well worth a spin.

☎ 0870 240 7228 🌐 www.choicebits.co.uk



## TIVOLI IPAL PORTABLE FM/ AM RADIO £130

☞ We've already reviewed the PAL and the iPAL is identical, just in a different colour. All the same, another opportunity to enjoy the world's finest portable radio was not unwelcome, and painting it in colours to match the world's best-selling portable audio player was admittedly a cunning ploy. Cunning enough to allow it to feature in Apple's prestige store in Central London. PAL and iPAL offer amazing FM reception, a far better internal amp and speaker than you've any right to expect, stereo output on cans, a line input to connect your iPod (iPAL also includes a suitable cable), plus an internal rechargeable Nickel Metal Hydride (NiMH) battery that's good for around eight hours, depending on volume. You can also connect other sources wirelessly with the tiny iTrip FM transmitter, but wired gives better quality. Truly an Essential.

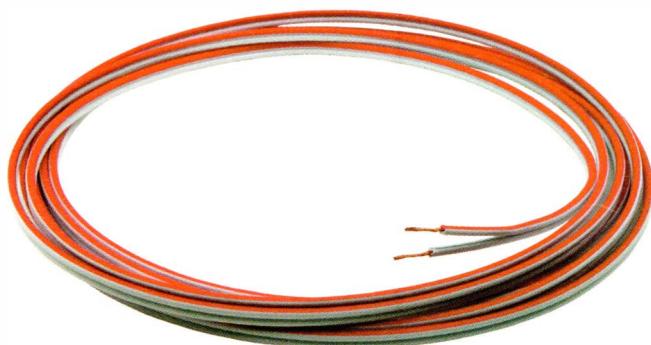
☎ 01702 601410 ☎ www.ruark.co.uk



## MICROPHONIC ORIGINAL LOUDSPEAKER CABLE £4 (PRICE PER METRE - TERMINATION EXTRA)

☞ The name may be unpromising (microphony in cable is not exactly a desirable attribute), but the product is sane enough – a simple figure-of-eight speaker cable with copper conductors insulated in polypropylene. Not many cables use this particular insulator, which may be for practical reasons as it is very hard and stiff, and tough to strip too. It does, however, have excellent electrical properties. The conductors are stranded and only of moderate thickness, so resistance is on the high side. Compared with familiar cables in the same ballpark, this one seems to offer a bass-light balance but good detail and excellent intelligibility.

☎ 01246 281643 ☎ www.microphonic-audio.com



## NIKKAI OPTICAL FIBRE SPLITTER TOSLINK DIGITAL SPLITTER £10

☞ It shouldn't work. Optical fibre (Toslink) connections are supposed to go direct from one piece of equipment to another with no intermediate adaptors or connectors. In practice, however, there is so much safety margin built into the system that you can get away with all kinds of jiggery-pokery, unless you're running tens of metres of cheap 'n' dirty fibre. In most practical situations then, this nifty little passive device will quite satisfactorily split a single Toslink output to two inputs, allowing you to record on two devices simultaneously, compare the properties of two external DACs, connect to a stereo DAC and a home cinema decoder, or whatever. Clever and useful.

☎ 0870 429 6000 ☎ www.maplin.co.uk



## CLEARLIGHT RDC COMBI BASE EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS £50 (SET OF FOUR)

☞ Clearlight's 'Resonance Damping Compound' turns up in various profiles of cone to support equipment. Now, it also appears in an add-on – the Combi Base – which combines with a cone (or 'conecup') to provide a small degree of decoupling thanks to a thin insert of Sorbothane. Because the Sorbothane is thin and of a relatively dense grade, it stiffens up considerably under load and the usual problem of wobbliness is avoided. Overall, results seem very satisfactory, depending slightly on what you're looking for. If you're a lover of 'speed' above all, you may find them underwhelming, but the improvement they can offer in terms of detail and subtlety to a surprising range of equipment is well worth the asking price. Particularly recommended for CD players.

☎ 0870 240 7228 ☎ www.choicebits.co.uk





Standby Mute

B-250

Proc. Status

## The New B-250 Preamp From Densen

The new reference preamplifier from Densen is perhaps the most advanced stereo preamp available. It is filled with advanced solutions, which all share the goal of giving you even more musicality. The volume is controlled by an extremely precise attenuator made of Vishay metalfilm resistors, which is switched by relays controlled by the microprocessor. This type of volume control is superior to any ordinary volume control. The attenuator contains no less than 200 steps!

Flexibility and upgradeability are keywords for the B-250. It contains socket for the SA Board for surround which expands this high end stereo pre amp to have a 7.1 input and a 7.1 output. Now you can connect a SACD player or surround processor directly. You can also expand with MM and MC stages and an external powersupply. The amplification stages are all completely new designs, based on advanced class A circuitry, which have been encapsulated on the board to avoid any kind of interference with the delicate signal. All this results in an unsurpassed precision, refinement and musicality which is truly outstanding by any standards.

### Technical features:

- Line inputs: 4 sets + 2 tape loops
- Preamp outputs: 4 sets
- Power supply size: 3 x 20 VA
- Storage capacity: 100.000 uF
- Output stage: 6 watt class A amp with zero feedback
- Upgradeable internal CPU unit
- Upgradeable to surround with add-on board
- Ready for Densen's DP-03 & DP-06 phono stages
- Ready for the Gizmo system remote
- Ready for multiroom
- Ready for intelligent communication via the DenLink cable
- Upgradeable with external power supply
- Available in black with gold or chrome buttons or albino silver chassis.
- Lifetime warranty

£ 3,000

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Ringwood  
Tel. 01425 461230

# Back in love

*Few bands squandered as much early promise as The House Of Love. The one-time indie darlings have now reformed and produced an album that should remind us what all the fuss was about*

**T**he House Of Love may be a long way from a household name, but there was a brief period in the late eighties when their spectral guitars, earnest image and tremulous atmospherics suggested they would be the next big thing – poised to be in position of indie influence as profound as The Smiths or Echo And The Bunnymen.

But, it wasn't to be, as the initial torrent of critical respect seeped away during the protracted birth of their second album (which actually had the same title as their eponymous debut, though it's generally referred to as 'Fontana', after their record label of the time). Recording of the album saw the relationship between singer/songwriter Guy Chadwick and guitar magician Terry Bickers come to a head, with Bickers leaving the band acrimoniously in 1989. The tunes have always



**“There’s a lot to be said for two-inch tape, real guitars and analogue production.”**

been Chadwick's, but responsibility for how they sounded rested largely with Bickers, whose multilayered guitar tracks struck a balance between prog pomposity and indie directness. More albums followed, but none approached the majesty of the Chadwick/Bickers alliance.

Fast forward nearly 20 years from their first collaboration and the boys are back with a new album but a distinctly familiar sound, reminiscent of the early days of the band. Guy Chadwick had suffered a family bereavement and was unavailable for interview as we went to press, but Terry Bickers took time to tell us about the 2005 House Of Love.

“Our agent called us all up and asked if we wanted to do it, and me, Guy and (bass player) Pete Evans all said yes. It was a surprise when we started recording again as a group to realise that we immediately had that sound again. We have a musical identity as a group that has stayed with us. You can hear elements of the old House Of Love in what we play now.

“Also, we got Pat Collier back, who did a lot of the engineering on the first album, and worked with most of the Creation bands at some time. It was really good to work with him again and the fact that he's so focused really helped.

“I still lay down a lot of guitar tracks, but this time I've probably been a bit more aware and a bit more careful about knowing when enough is enough. It's so easy to overcomplicate something, but the trick is to enjoy the space and let that work for you.

“I still like to create unusual sounds and experiment with new techniques – there are various guitar sounds that I've developed over the years that I brought back for this record. I didn't try to create any new sounds particularly; I already had plenty to choose from.

“There's a lot of hoo-ha about the quality of analogue versus digital and for me I think there's much to be said for two-inch tape, real guitars and analogue production generally. I think I'm with Neil Young and a few other people on that one. That said, this was the first time I'd recorded an album using ProTools software, which was really good. But, I miss the thrill of the destructive drop-in, where you're riding something and you know you've got to get it right and there's no second chance. When it works that's a fantastic feeling; but it didn't always work, of course. With ProTools you can always go back and do it again.” **HFC**

Dave Oliver

## Essential House Of Love

### 1. *The House Of Love (Creation, 1988)*

The foundation of the band's reputation laid out their stall with Chadwick's catchy tunes and wounded vocal style, abetted by Bickers' chiming guitar atmospherics. Echoes of everyone from the Velvets to The Smiths and even The Jesus And Mary Chain, but distinctively all their own. Highlights: *Christine, Salome, Love In A Car.*



### 2. *The House Of Love (Fontana, 1990)*

The album that broke the original HOL commercially is a fuller affair, with multi-guitar overdubs, some great tunes but less 'atmosphere'. The band trashed their original recording when it didn't meet their expectations. Four different producers eventually received credit. Highlights: a re-recorded *Shine On, I Don't Know Why I Love You, Beatles And The Stones.*



### 3. *Days Run Away (Art & Industry, 2005)*

The comeback album is a return to form, revisiting the sound of the first, iconic album. Highlights: *Gotta Be That Way, Days Run Away.*





## A SUPERB CYRUS CD8x CD PLAYER AND PSX-R POWER SUPPLY WORTH £1,400!

**T**he Cyrus CD8x was the clear winner in last month's CD player *Ultimate Group Test* (HFC 264), wiping the floor with the competition. Now, thanks to HFC and Cyrus, you've got the chance to win one – together with the performance-enhancing PSX-R power supply, making a CD playing package worth £1,400.

The CD8x is a masterpiece of shoe-horning – the engineers have managed to squeeze a custom-built circuit board, a new upgraded power

supply and two toroidal transformers into the metal-alloy coated, non-resonant chassis. Praise from our listening panel included strong bass, crisp detail and excellent imaging – in fact, our panel agreed that there was little to criticise at the price. What's more, with the addition of the off-board PSX-R, this diminutive Cyrus combo proved good enough to win a Gold Award in our recent *HFC Awards* issue. For your chance to win one, simply answer the question below. The winner will be drawn at random.

### QUESTION:

**What have the engineers managed to squeeze into the CD8x?**

- A:** Circuit board, power supply and transformers?
- B:** A busy badgers' sett, with size-appropriate black and white TV?
- C:** Twenty pints of Stella and a signed Andy 'The Viking' Fordham photo?

### TO ENTER:

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

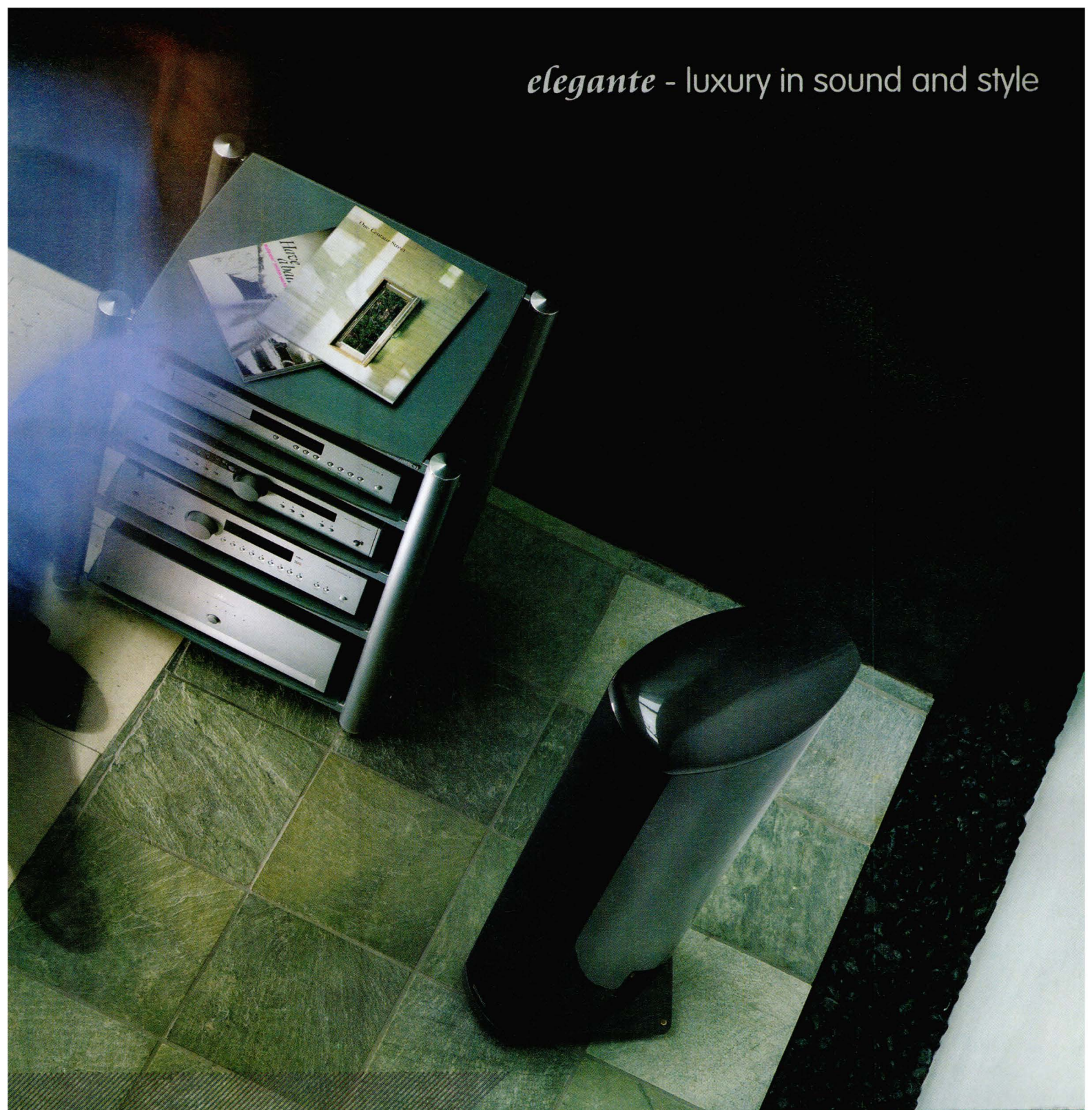
**By Text:** Send the text message **HFC COMP1** with the answer A, B or C to **83070**. For example, if you think the answer is B: A busy badgers' sett, with size-appropriate black and white TV, then text HFC COMP1 B to 83070.

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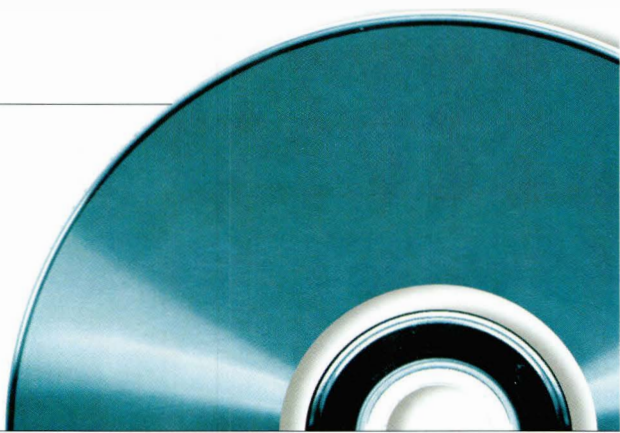
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# ChoiceCuts



This month's varied musical morsels

Reviews by Dan George, Alvin Gold, Jason Kennedy, Dave Oliver, Mark Prendergast, Phil Strongman and Nigel Williamson



## AUDIOPHILE VINYL

### GEORGIE FAME

**The Third Face Of Fame**

CBS/Pure Pleasure 180g vinyl

**Music:** Before finding, erm, fame as a singer, Georgie Fame backed keyboards with Billy Fury's backing band, the Blue Flames. He went on to have three number one singles, of which *Bonnie And Clyde* made the top ten in the US.

This 1968 album gathers an army of brass players listed on the back under trombones, trumpets and saxes, alongside five other musicians who are listed simply as 'Rhythm' (including future guitar hero John McLaughlin). The album includes covers of *When I'm Sixty Four* and *Mellow Yellow* alongside a comic, spoken word version of *Someone To Watch Over Me*. Essentially, the guy had a great voice with a lot of soul and this is what carries the album. ★★

**Sound:** Another great pressing from Pure Pleasure, this was clearly a top quality recording in its time – if you've got the best jazz musicians in the business in the studio, why skip elsewhere? Smooth, with enough edge to keep you in the groove. ★★★★★ JK

### RANDY WESTON'S MUSIC

**Little Niles**

United Artists/Pure Pleasure 180g vinyl

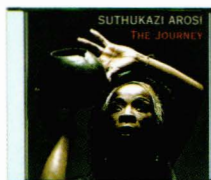
**Music:** This 1959 mono recording is by a piano player with a distinctive take on jazz. His early influences include Fats Waller, Thelonius Monk and Duke Ellington. Like Ellington, Weston toured Africa and this is the strongest force on this otherwise bop-driven album. He is backed by Johnny Griffin (tenor sax),

George Joyner (bass) and Charlie Persip (drums), alongside a brass section which includes trombonist and arranger Melba Liston. While Weston's playing is hard to pin down, if you like Abdullah Ibrahim, the chances are this will appeal. It's not an obvious choice but once you tune into his style it becomes clear why Pure Pleasure picked this one out. ★★★★★

**Sound:** A mono recording of this vintage is never going to break new quality ground, but instrumental timbre is well served despite limited bandwidth. The transfer and pressing cannot be faulted – at least not without an original for comparison! ★★ JK

These LPs are available from Vivante:  
☎ 01293 822186 • www.vivante.co.uk

## COMPACT DISC & VINYL



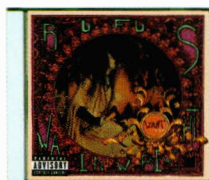
### SUTHUKAZI AROSI

**The Journey**

Sheer Sound

**Music:** For her fourth album, the South African singer, dancer, composer and lyricist has opted for a smoother, more sophisticated sound than 2001's *Ubuntu*. Based around African rhythms on electronic drums and the amazing guitar of Bheki Khoza, the traditional instruments have largely been left behind, and with them perhaps some of her edge. Her highly versatile voice remains though, metamorphosing in a heartbeat from strangulated gasps on *Soka Lami* to lilting jazz inflections on *Africa Unite*, overdubbed as a choir on *Gxum Ubhekele* and offering breathy, ethereal chants on *Mama Yo*. ★★★★★

**Sound:** The production sounds like modern R&B, with lush electronic backing tracks decorated with glittering splinters of guitar and, of course, that awesome voice. ★★★★★ DO



### RUFUS WAINWRIGHT

**Want Two**

Geffen

**Music:** The songs here were allegedly the 'misfits' that didn't find a place on Rufus Wainwright's brilliant 2003 release, *Want One*. Yet you'd never guess it, for there's a wonderful cohesion to these ten mini pop-operas. Sometimes witty, sometimes melancholy, but always swooning in melody, *Want Two* is a record for all those who love flamboyance and theatricality in their music. The songs somehow manage to sound intimate and personal, though. Like its predecessor, *Want One* proves again that Wainwright is one of the great unsung geniuses of our time. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Lush, romantic and melodramatic, from the soaring strings of *Memphis Skyline* (about the late Jeff Buckley) to the swelling piano chords of *The Art Teacher*. ★★★★★ NW



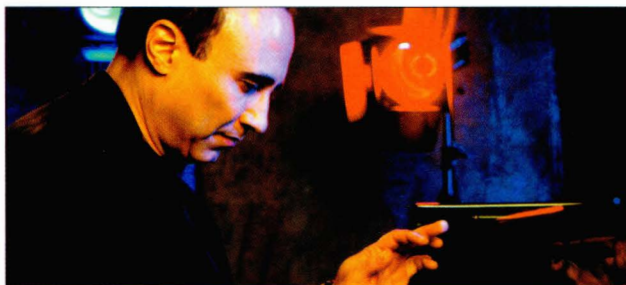
### HAROLD BUDD

**Avalon Sutra**

Samadhisound

**Music:** Sailing off into eternities of stillness, Budd's exquisite ambiances have been around since 1978 when he debuted with *The Pavilion Of Dreams*. His name is known courtesy of Brian Eno, the Cocteau Twins and Andy Partridge, and after years teaching and living in the Mojave desert, the quiet American has returned to his roots. Musically, Budd builds up lovely shimmers on keyboard and piano, which are discretely punctuated by saxophones, bass flute and string quartet. These are highly structured instrumentals with a strong undertow of humanity. Includes a single remix disc by Akira Rabelais. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Budd knows how to make his Yamaha Concert Grand and has enough sonic knowledge to perfectly balance the demands of that acoustic and his Roland keyboards. ★★★★★ MP



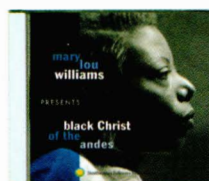
### MICHEL CAMILO

**Solo**

Telarc

**Music:** The Dominican Camillo is best-known as a composer and arranger, but here he is showcased as a pianist, without his usual trio. His style is reminiscent of Bill Evans, but with a distinct sense of the eclectic. This leads to an arresting mix, with jazz standards from Gershwin (*Our Love Is Here To Stay* is a standout) and Monk (his version of *'Round Midnight* actually adds something to this overpopulated genre), Brazilian tunes from Antonio Carlos Jobim and others, plus a few of his own dreamy compositions. It's a dazzling performance – deceptively smooth and enticing, with a cornucopia of delights just beneath the surface. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Recorded live in the studio without overdubs using DSD (Direct Stream Digital), Camillo's Hamburg Steinway fills the speakers, with exemplary range from his occasionally very low left-hand ruminations to the beautifully rendered melodies higher up the scale. ★★★★★ DO



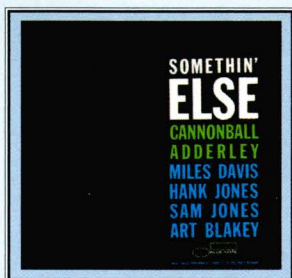
### MARY LOU WILLIAMS

**Black Christ Of The Andes**

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

**Music:** Mary Lou Williams was one of the very few female pianists and arrangers to make a solid contribution to jazz and this 1964 'concept album', dedicated to a Peruvian mixed race saint, was probably her finest hour. It's her own *A Love Supreme*, with effortless tinkling ivories, pulsing bass and choruses from the George Gordon and Ray Charles Singers. Modern, but with deft touches of Afro-Cuban, blues and gospel, this classy reissue comes with four top bonus tracks. When Ellington said, "Mary Lou Williams is like soul on soul", he wasn't wrong. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Cue and Nola Studios were New York regulars for jazz and both their engineers and Mary Lou knew how to get the mood down as clearly, or as darkly, as it needed to be. ★★★★★ PS



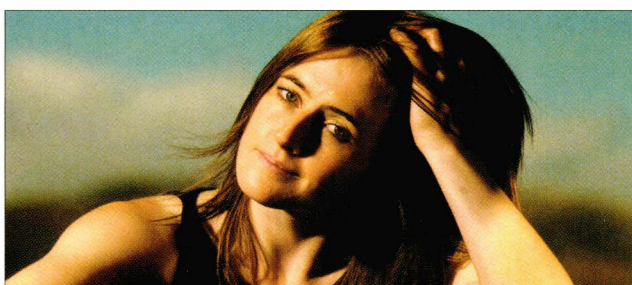
## THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "There's tone and dynamic, light and shade."

### CANNONBALL ADDERLEY Somethin' Else Blue Note

**Music:** Made in 1958, *Somethin' Else* features an all-star line-up of Adderley (alto sax), Miles Davis (trumpet), Hank Jones (piano), Sam Jones (bass) and Art Blakey (drums), all musicians at the peak of their powers. Davis made *Kind Of Blue* the following year, and you can hear as much in the long introduction to *Autumn Leaves*, probably the finest interpretation ever. This is a meeting of hard bop and cool jazz, a perfect moment in the evolution of the form and a

turning point too. The playing is superb throughout, with all three lead instrumentalists showing a quality of touch and feel that is very rare. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Thanks to its vintage this is not a true stereo album – it's more like dual mono with the rhythm section in one channel and the rest of the band in the other. You don't get imaging, but who cares? There's tone and dynamic, light and shade to die for. ★★★★★ JK

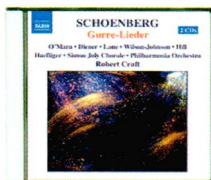


### KARINE POLWART Faultlines

Neon Productions

**Music:** You almost certainly won't have heard of Scottish singer-songwriter Karine Polwart. But you will. Released on a tiny label without fanfare a year ago, her debut album created sufficient word-of-mouth buzz to win her an unprecedented five nominations in the 2005 Radio 2 Folk Awards. Reissued with a bigger push to coincide with that event, *Faultlines* reveals the philosophy grad/ex-social worker to possess a voice and delivery not unlike Kate Rusby. Yet, despite her emergence as the new folk babe, Polwart is far more than that, for while she clearly has roots in traditional music, her material belongs in contemporary singer-songwriter territory. Think of a British Natalie Merchant. She really is that good. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Recorded on a limited budget with a Scottish Arts Council grant, producer Rab Noakes has nevertheless done a fine job blending acoustic and electric instruments with potent added splashes of brass. There are many recordings that cost a fortune that sound a lot worse. ★★★ NW



### SCHOENBERG

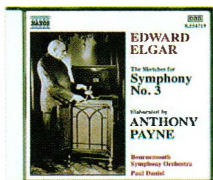
#### Gurre-Leider

Robert Craft (cond), Philharmonia Orchestra, Simon Joly Choral

Naxos 8.557518-19

**Music:** By a long way Schoenberg's biggest work, this is scored for speaker, four choirs, five solo singers and an augmented orchestra. It is not written in the atonal language of the mature Schoenberg, but in a style which is recognisable as a derivative of late romanticism. It's an approachable work that repays repeated listening, and tests the limits of your system. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Previously released on the Koch International Classics label, this 2001 recording was made at The Colosseum, Watford, with the sort of production values that would also be appropriate for a full-price issue. The sound is fully fleshed out, well staged and performed. A real bargain. ★★★★★ AG



### EDWARD ELGAR

#### The Sketches For Symphony No. 3

(Elaborated by Anthony Payne)

Paul Daniel (cond), Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Naxos 8.554719

**Music:** The *Third Symphony* was a BBC commission that Elgar did not live to fulfil; he fell victim to cancer early in the project, and left only fragmentary sketches, with short completed passages. It's inevitable that Elgar probably would never have written it exactly as heard here, but it is a very creditable attempt. ★★★★★

**Sound:** A Tony Faulkner recording made at The Guildhall, Southampton, this is a first-rate recording with concise imagery and an expansive overall image. This complements the fully committed orchestral playing. Naxos has pulled out all the stops, and this is undeniably one of their best yet. ★★★★★ AG

## DVD-AUDIO & SACD

### FRANK ZAPPA

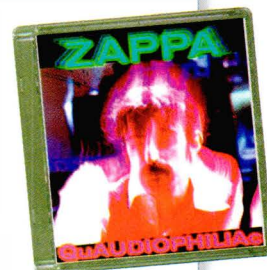
#### Quaudiophilic

DVD-Audio (DTS 96/24 multichannel, PCM stereo)

DTS Entertainment

**Music:** Renowned for pushing the boundaries of music, Zappa also liked to push the limits of recording technology, and this album is a sampler of the four-channel mixes that he made between 1970 and 1978. This is more about Zappa in surround than another tranche of rarities, but at least one of the new tunes – *Rollo* – is a good 'un. The highlight is *Chunga Basement*, pretty much *Chunga's Revenge*, but a different live take with more prominent drums that works a treat. Interesting rather than essential, this is hopefully a precursor to the release of more original Zappa Quad albums, such as *Apostrophe*, on DVD-A. ★★★

**Sound:** A good 24/96 DVD-A disc, the surround mixes put you in the midst of the band with guitar solos from the rear channels. Dweezil's *Drooling Midrange Accountants*... is the most interesting mix but *Wild Love* also works well. In all cases, the stereo mix far surpasses what you will hear from CD. ★★★★★ JK



### POPOV/SHOSTAKOVICH

#### Popov: Symphony No. 1, Op. 7, Shostakovich: Theme & Variations, Op. 3

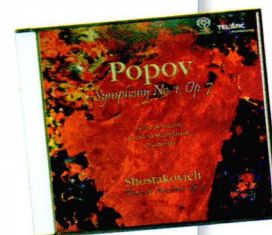
Leon Botstein (cond), London Symphono Orchestra

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Telarc 89408 06426

**Music:** As conductor, Leon Botstein notes in the accompanying booklet that Popov's *Symphony No. 1* "falls into the category of great music... that requires advocacy". It has all the brilliance of a Prokofiev or indeed Shostakovich, whose early *Theme & Variations* (a minor work) is included on the same disc. Like Shostakovich, Popov's neo-radical music failed to find favour with Stalin's prescriptive regime, and the work was banned on the grounds of reflecting "the ideology of classes hostile to us". The opening explosive orchestral gesture – a sneeze – sets the tone, and the music develops joyfully from there. ★★★★★

**Sound:** The LSO can be relied on to give a great performance, and they do. The Popov is a tumultuously bumpy ride musically, and the engineers have given it an appropriately rumbustious sound (recorded in Watford Town Hall) with plenty of presence, swagger and air. ★★★★★ AG



### ERIC CLAPTON

#### Slowhand

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Polydor

**Music:** This album is generally regarded as one of Clapton's best albums and who are we to argue? The balance of blues, country and rock 'n' roll is perfectly weighted and after the electric opener *Cocaine*, the musical procession is as balanced as a mountain goat. Even a washed-out version of John Martyn's *May You Never* doesn't disappoint, but merely acts as a tribute to this sublime folk tune. This is 1970s Eric at his best. His playing is tight and his voice fresh and virulent, with a track listing that includes such gems as *Lay Down Sally* and the globally famous *Wonderful Tonight*. *Slowhand's* arrival on SACD gives those who first heard it 30-odd years ago an opportunity to recapture some of the excitement of that first airing. ★★★★★

**Sound:** A sorted, no-nonsense mix of Eric and band, this preserves the integrity of the original without detracting from its professional production. High-resolution DSD processing adds a new dimension to Eric's voice and brings textures and layers to the forefront. Buy it. ★★★★★ DG



**"This amplifier can blow your house over but loses nothing from the music"**

Your Guide to Hi-Fi and Home Cinema, January 2004, Stan Curtis



**"Combining clarity with control is virtually a three word encapsulation of the KAV400xi"**

Hi Fi Choice, November 2003, Alvin Gold



KAV400xi

**"The new player not just delights with the still quite rare SACDs, it also knows how to please with CDs"**

Audio, Germany, September 2003

**"If I had to choose one SACD player, (regardless of price), I'd go for the Krell."**

Stereophile, December 2003, Michael Fremer

**"A unit capable of delivering performance at the very top in the reproduction of CD and SACD"**

Audio Review, Italy, November 2003, Franco Guida

**"The 'Standard' is a player with...guts"**

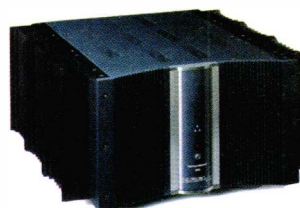
Diario de Noticias, Portugal, September 2003, JVH



SACD

## KRELL'S ANGELS THE NEXT CHAPTER

From its arrival with a single power amplifier in 1980, Krell's exclusive product range has evolved into a total system concept. Because it is now recognised as the premier high-end audio and home theatre brand, Krell has been compelled to create the ultimate in audio-only and audio-video systems from front to back. Its range of amplification devices have been augmented over the years by CD transports, digital converters and audio/video processors. In 2004, the concept reaches fruition with the ascendancy of both definitive source components – the SACD Standard and the DVD Standard – and a range of loudspeakers suitable for pure music or multi-channel cinematic pleasure.



Krell FPB 700cx

**"There's a timeless quality to all-round excellence, and the FPB 700cx has just that"**

Hi Fi News, June 2003, Martin Colloms

Krell has also expanded its catalogue vertically, with the KAV and Showcase ranges for entry-level and mid-level systems, and the rare and exotic Reference Series for systems without limit. Regardless of the model, however, a component must attain the highest standards of sonic performance, ergonomic excellence, superior build quality and long-term dependability before its front panel is graced with the Krell badge. Krell - a premier high-end company by excellence .

**KRELL**  
THE LEADER IN AUDIO ENGINEERING



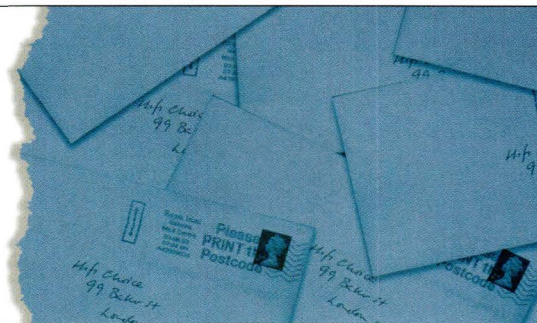
**absolutesounds Ltd.**

# ChoiceMail



The pick of this month's best letters

Write to: Hi-Fi Choice, Future Publishing Ltd, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP. Or email your letters to dan.george@futurenet.co.uk



## ★ LETTER OF THE MONTH

### BURNING ISSUE

How many of your readers, like myself, could make good use of the unique features of the Yamaha CDR-HD1300 MkII CD recorder/hard disk? It currently costs around £500. Contrast this with the wealth of cheap digital video gear out there, and the audio-only Yamaha would look expensive even at half the price.

Video and audio products share similar technology, but it seems hi-fi enthusiasts are forced to pay dearly for their more limited choice.

**Graham Smith** Essex

**HFC** There's even a shortage of CD recorders on the market, perhaps due to the price and availability of CD 'burners' for PC use, where prices start at just £20. In fact, you could build an entire PC system with CD burner and a massive 200GB hard disc for less than the Yamaha. As for a rival to its hi-fi talents, check out the Cambridge Azur 640H on p.11.



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: Cambridge Audio's DAB500 tuner

### FISHY TUNER FIX

With regard to Ray's letter in the February issue, *Fishy Tuner* (HFC 263), I live in a very bad area for FM radio reception, so I can relate to his problems in finding an internal FM aerial. Some years ago, I owned an obscure combination TV/radio receiver, the latter element of which was hopeless when used with the supplied ribbon aerial. I solved this by simply splitting the signal from my TV antenna and feeding it to both the TV and FM aerial sockets. I'm sure the experts would throw their hands up in horror, but I found it worked a treat!

**Roger Thomas** via email

**HFC** Let's hope that Ray's got a decent roof-mounted aerial by now...

### IS TODAY THE GOLDEN AGE?

New technologies are exciting and interesting, yet old technology still shines brightly – I believe we are living in a Golden Age of audio. All the wailing about the prevalence of downloads and MP3 audio with its lack of quality... I remember the 1960's, when hi-fi for the average man was rubbish. Singles were rubbish too. Even radio reception and quality was dire. AM or DAB? Give me DAB, anytime!

Still, we loved the music and it was a joy just to hear it. It changed and politicised the world. And through all this, hi-fi has flourished. As with the progression of all things, the worst gets better over time, as anyone over 35 will verify. MP3 is just today's disposable format, as it should be. Remember singles, 8-track, cassette and rumbling Garrard record decks? The average home audio system has never looked so good, performed so well or been so accessible. The future will be amazing, so let's keep some healthy perspective in our lives as we search for excellence.

**Chris Kyan** via email

### GREAT MINDS

Having just become re-interested in the electronics and software of hi-fi again, after an absence of a few

**“Hi-fi for the average man was rubbish. Even radio reception and quality was dire. Give me DAB, anytime!”**

years, I bought the February 2005 edition of *Hi-Fi Choice*. I've not been reading the magazines since the 1990s. Coincidentally, and before reading it, I bought a CD copy of Madonna's *Music* on the way home, as it's also been a while since I've bought any new albums. Imagine my surprise and delight when I noticed it was ranked at number eight in your *Top Ten UK Music Hall of Fame* albums snippet in the *AudioFile* section! It's well deserved too.

**Richard Bond** Powys

**HFC** Glad you liked it! The great British telly-watching public picked the artists, then we picked the albums to suit.

### PC WORLD

A friend of mine owns the most colossal stack of hi-fi you have ever seen. He has a turntable, CD, FM tuner, DAB tuner, DAT recorder... the list goes on. This mighty tower of kit is almost four feet tall, but now the whole lot is up for sale. Why? He now shares a wireless PC network with his housemates and has nearly a terabyte of data storage. This means he can store the entire household's CD collection (of several hundred discs) uncompressed and access it from any one of four PCs at any time. He still retains a decent amp and speakers to play the audio via his high-end soundcard. Can I tell he's playing back from hard disk? No. I do know he's expecting a tidy sum from the sale of his kit, however.

**V Loewe** via email



■ TWO AMPS TOO MANY

I've been buying your excellent magazine for a while now and enjoyed the review on the Marantz PM7200 amp (HFC 248) and the Marantz CD7300 CD player (HFC 250). I have a pair of Quad 11L speakers and intend to drive them with the Marantz kit. Would the Quad 11L and the Marantz kit suit best? My other option is the Rotel RA-1062 (HFC 251) with the Marantz CD7300 CD player?

**Shaiful Amdan** via email

**HFC** Glad you're enjoying the mag. You've short-listed a great CD player and two exceptional amplifiers. You don't mention your musical tastes or sonic preferences, but from our experience the Marantz is perhaps the smoother of the two, with the added bonus of Class A operation mode (albeit with less power available). Then again, it might be almost twice the price, but the Rotel RA-1062 will fend off much of the competition up to £1,000. Its strengths lie in dynamics, power and musicality – if you want more raw 'ooh' than refined 'ahh', then dive in. Both models will make sweet music with the 11L, but another new contender is the £500 Rotel RA-03. Turn to p46 for an in-depth review.

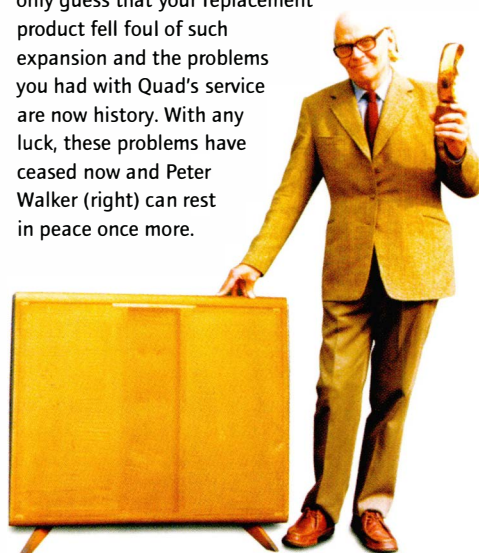
TIME WAS...

I have been a Quad enthusiast for 40 years. I use a 99 CD-P CD player, ESL57 electrostatic speakers and a 34 preamp and 306 power. I cannot fault it in any way. The downside, however, is the present atrocious service I have been experiencing from Quad. Peter Walker would spin in his grave if he knew what it is like. My current QC 24 preamp is only two years old and the paint is already beginning to wear off. It has taken three months to get a replacement from Quad. My old gear, by comparison, shows no sign of deterioration. What happened to that superb Quad service?

**RJ Smith** Sussex

**“The Rotel’s strengths lie in dynamics and musicality – if you want more ‘ooh’ than ‘ahh’ then dive in!”**

**HFC** It's a paradox that the companies with the least need for a service department (because the products are so well made) invariably have the best service departments. And, in the main, Quad still retains that hard-won reputation of old. IAG, Quad's current parent company, is undergoing a period of rapid expansion at the moment. We can only guess that your replacement product fell foul of such expansion and the problems you had with Quad's service are now history. With any luck, these problems have ceased now and Peter Walker (right) can rest in peace once more.



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 Fresh off the press, the Au. just issue of **HI-FI CHOICE** is packed full of exclusive in-depth tests of the latest high-performance kit, including:

- The world's most rigorous group test of pre-power amps, £800 to £2,000 – six crucial choices from Arcam, Esoteric, NAD, Primare, Quad and Rotel
- Digital versus analogue: leading players from Wadia (CD) and Clearaudio (vinyl) demonstrate the state of the record

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Mains cables – do they really improve the sound? Any recommendations?

**Dejan**

...I could only suggest you try it and see. It's the only way to personally answer your question. No one can answer for you as the subject really divides opinions.

**Adam**

...I'm know in advance that I'm going to incur the wrath of the cable non-believers, but I say if you haven't been convinced that mains cables do make a positive difference, then you haven't listened to a good mains lead doing it's stuff.

**Effem**

How can a de-magnetizing CD like Densen's Demagic or the similar Ayre disc help to enhance or improve sound? Is it just a gimmick?

**Primare**

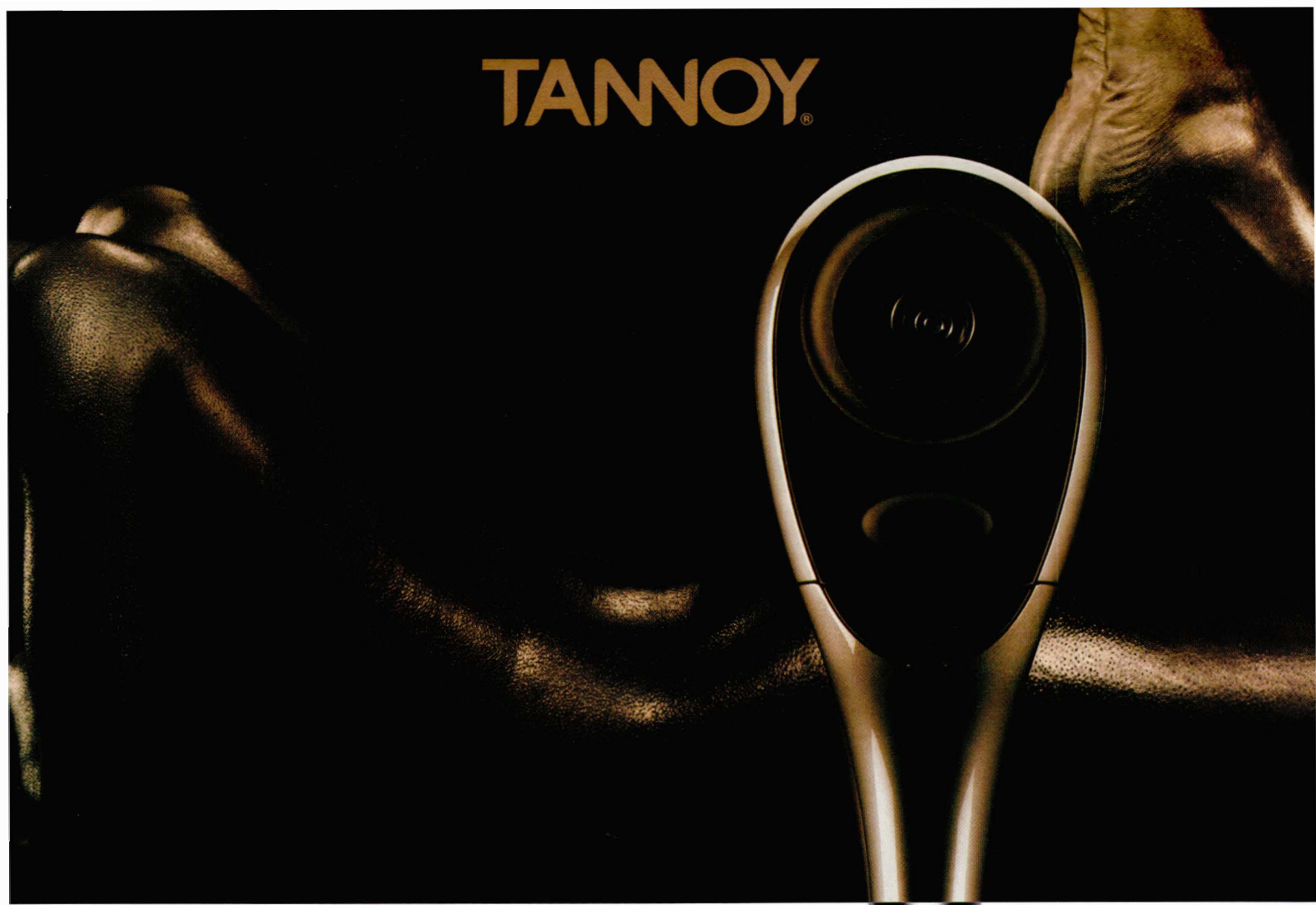
... I have one of these discs and found that it doesn't do anything to my system. I couldn't notice any difference to the sound at all. On the other hand, if you stay in the room while it plays, it does have an effect – I think the recorded algorithm actually has an effect on your hearing and not your system's performance!

**Kingsxfan**

Here's my suggestion for the *Sexy Hi-Fi* thread – it's the cutest black-box player that I know of, the Gryphon Mikado.

**Wolfgang**

# TANNOY®



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.

The satellite speakers feature a technology breakthrough from Tannoy. They bring together the company's renowned WideBand™ expertise into a brand new miniature (5") version of their world famous point source Dual Concentric™ drive unit. Arena's powerful 300 Watt active subwoofer delivers tremendously controlled low frequency acoustics and integrates impeccably to present an outstanding home theatre performance.

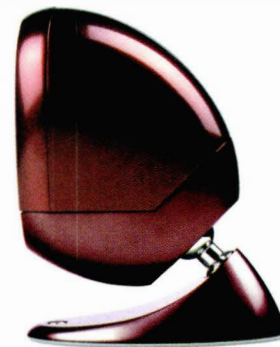
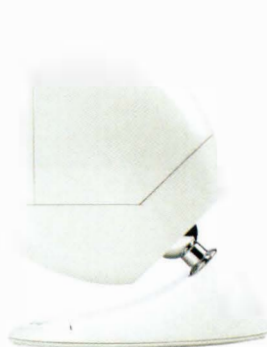
Versatile mounting platforms with carefully designed cable management enable complete integration with the surroundings in the way that you choose. Arena is lavishly finished in a choice of magnificent high gloss colours - bronze, silver, white or black.

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ROKSAN KANDY MKIII CD PLAYER | CYRUS 8VS AMPLIFIER | CYRUS PSX-R POWER SUPPLY  
DYNAUDIO AUDIENCE 52 LOUDSPEAKERS | £2,500



# Faking it?

*Sometimes, our Beautiful Systems cost as much as a brand new luxury car. But not this one...*

If you were thinking of taking out a second mortgage to buy a high-end system, you might like to read this first. Invest in a serious stereo, that's the mantra. Since you're reading this, chances are you already have. My guess is it changed your life. You watch less television, are kinder to the cat, don't spend so much time in the pub, do spend more time listening to live music and...um... just spend, spend, spend.

Because that's the fairly enormous catch, isn't it? Owning a serious stereo can put a fearsome edge on your hunger for music. On top of the urge to improve (and further improve) the quality of the equipment used to reproduce it at home, that is. The best things in life might be free, but the next best things are frequently crippling expensive. I admit it, when it comes to fanning the flames of desire with hedonistic abandon, *Beautiful Systems* is guilty as hell. Last month's ridiculously gorgeous system would have checked in at over £40,000 had we included the cost of the Nordost cables and the fancy support table. Same as a brand new BMW M3. Worth it? Well, I seem to remember remortgaging the house cropped up in the discussion.

The thing that genuinely shocks some people, even die-hard hi-fi buffs, is that mega-priced kit really can be worth every last penny. The high end is aptly named: it takes you higher sonically, aesthetically and emotionally. At best, it is capable of bringing an astounding dimension of believability to the reproduction of recorded music. Look forward to more systems that will make your bank manager faint in future issues. But not this month. This month, just for a change, we're taking the low road to the high end: slummin' it, bluffin' it,

employing a wily combination of cheek, guile, synergistic sorcery and specialist insider knowledge to bring you a system that, rather like a freakishly talented subject on the TV show *Faking It*, is good enough to withstand the scrutiny of experts come the crunch.

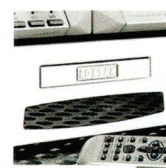
Be in no doubt, this is an ear-popping, nose-bleeding dive from the stratospheric flightpath scribed by the likes of Hovland and Burmester. The system you see before you – Roksan Kandy MkIII CD player, Cyrus 8vs integrated amp and PSX-R power supply, Dynaudio Audience 52 speakers – costs less in its entirety than a single Nordost Valkyrja interconnect used in last month's super-luxury combo. Over £1,000 less.

## AFFORDABLE HIGH END

Yes, some realignment. What's required to pull off the 'affordable high end' trick, of course, is a crack squad of super-skilled operators and, these days, you don't need to be Danny Ocean to assemble your team. In fact, it's never been easier. There are obvious ports of call. Our old favourite Cyrus, for instance. The world-renowned purveyors of the original 'singing shoe box' have been honing their reputation as deadly giant slayers after a recent management buyout from erstwhile parent NXT, celebrating the event with the launch of some souped-up amps with a 'vs' suffix.

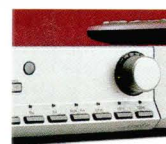
It stands for 'virtual servo', which somewhat enigmatically (Cyrus is reluctant to spill the whole can of beans) hints at a significant simplification of the circuit topology. The previous model's servo amplifier, necessary for output stability, has been replaced by a less intrusive 'virtual servo', a clever new circuit in which exotic components get replaced by close tolerance items. ▣

**“To pull off ‘affordable high end’ you need a crack squad of super-skilled operators, but you don't need to be Danny Ocean to assemble your team.”**



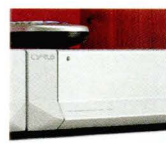
**Roksan Kandy MkIII CD player**  
£650

No, not the best CD player in the world, but one of the very best at the price. For this system, that'll do nicely.



**Cyrus 8vs integrated amplifier**  
£800

Breathed-on evolution of the already highly talented 8, the 'vs' range represents the very soul of 'affordable high end'.



**Cyrus PSX-R power supply**  
£400

The best-of-all-worlds option for the 8vs user, making the already good 70-watter sound as agile, pure and sweet as the less powerful 6vs.



**Dynaudio Audience 52**  
£650 per pair

As a speaker transparent to the abundant musical talent upstream, the Audience 52 fits the bill perfectly. It just lets the music flow like it should.



➤ Additionally, the coupling capacitors have been eliminated or replaced by much smaller value components.

As we reported back in *HFC 261*, the changes don't seem like much on paper, and aside from some re-labelling of the seven line inputs, you'll spot no changes to the 'if-Smirnoff-made-housebricks' design or non-ferrous magnesium alloy/polymer composite construction. But they do further lift a sonic talent that was pretty damn near intolerably wonderful for the price anyway, the less powerful 40-watt Cyrus 6vs benefiting to an even greater extent than the 70-watt 8vs. Ultimately, though, the 8vs wins because, unlike the 6, it can be up-graded by connecting it to the £400 external PSX-R power supply – with wonderful results.

The £1,200 8vs/PSX-R duo punches so far above its weight it's not even funny (or shouldn't be to makers of rival amps, anyway). A natural front-end for such stellar amplification would be Cyrus's own CD8x, a massively accomplished CD player, itself breathed on in the spirit of the 8vs amp by the off-the-leash backroom boys. But the CD8x costs £800 and Roksan's barely less gifted Kandy MkIIID silver disc spinner undercuts it by £150. And since we're aiming for maximum cost-effectiveness here, it gets the gig.



The latest MkIII 'D' version of Roksan's entry-level CD player is, like its predecessors, a substantially built beast with characterfully chunky styling and good ergonomics, both on the front panel and the remote handset. The new smooth-acting, front-loaded drawer mechanism is mechanically decoupled internally and, as with the digital processing and display electronics, has its own individual power supplies. All of this is supported by a new motherboard. Claimed improvements include superior handling of imperfect discs, CD-RW compatibility, better stop band rejection and a lower noise floor. D/A conversion is via a TD1305T BCC-DAC2 bitstream continuous calibration DAC with newly designed filters. Its all adds up to a thoroughly entertaining way to spend £650 – few CD players claim to pack in so much musical communication for so little financial outlay.

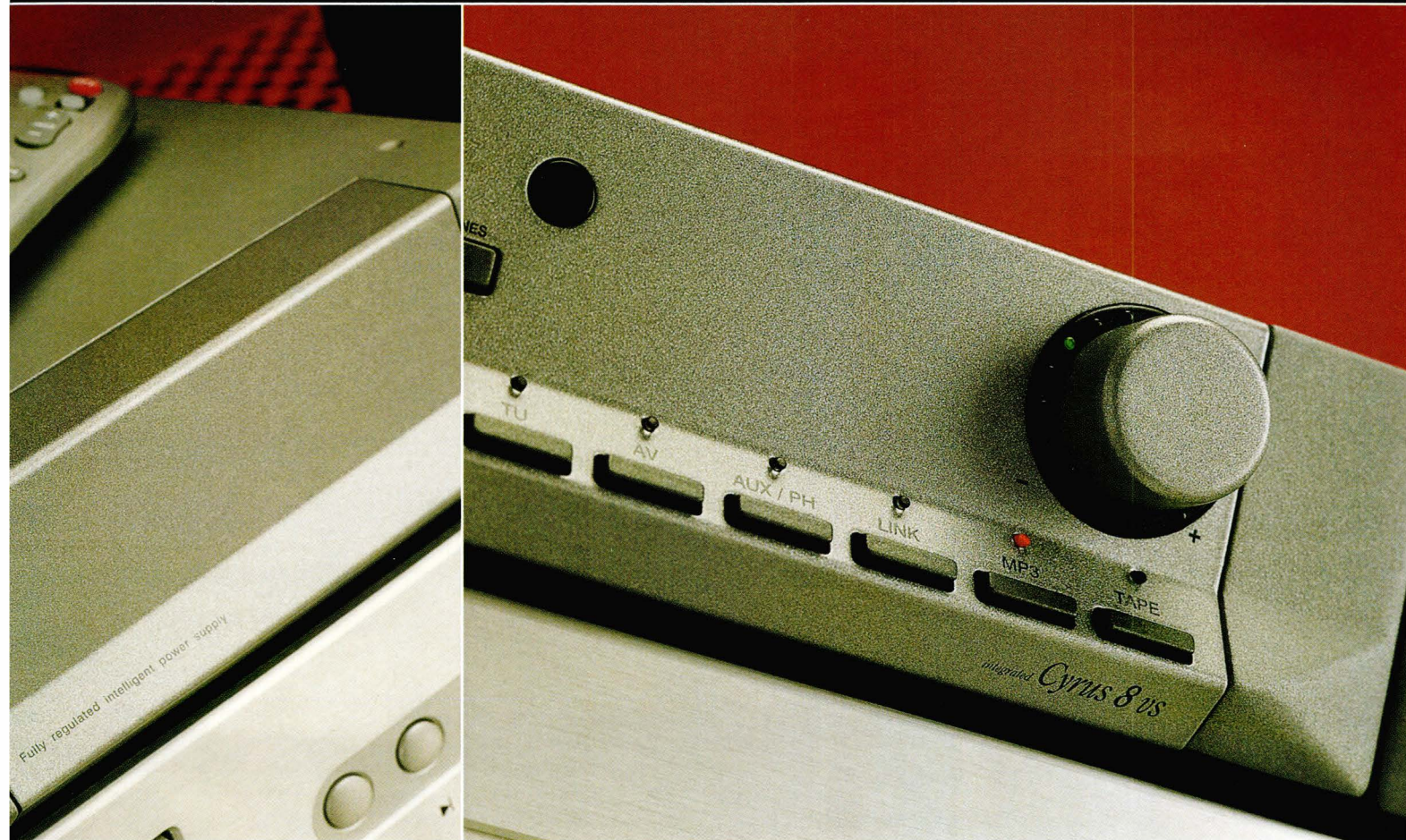
For the final link in the system, we turn to Denmark and Dynaudio's Audience 52 two-way, rear-ported standmounter, a compact speaker of impeccable pedigree, neutrality and – the bit I like best – sheer musical honesty. An evolution of the much-loved Audience 50, the 52 is a potent blend of top-quality drive units (the 28mm soft dome tweeter, in particular, is a honey) and an extremely

sturdy cabinet structure, the internal surfaces of which are lined with bitumen to minimise resonance and coloration. With a lowish 86dB sensitivity and four-ohm impedance rating, the 52 isn't an especially easy ride for the amp but nothing the Cyrus can't handle.

#### GOOD HI-FI

There are many interpretations of how a good hi-fi system should sound. For those whose musical tastes incline more towards the classical, the potted description could be 'poised, in control and pitch-accurate'. Others might lean towards a presentation they would call 'tuneful, musical and rhythmically compelling' – especially if they've been exposed to any Naim advertising over the past 20 years. Some want grunt and dynamics, others speed and detail, still more warmth and smoothness.

Genuine high-end kit seems to have a knack of transcending these 'either/or' distinctions, usually in one of two ways. One, they possess a lot of everything and can therefore please the crowd in every sense. Or two, they tread such an effortlessly natural and musical path that, whatever specific 'hi-fi' shortcomings there may be, no one notices them. This *Beautiful System*, inexpensive and unexceptional to look at



**“Although the Dynaudio’s repertoire falls short of prodigious bass weight, this tends to go unnoticed, so good is the drive, speed, articulation and tunefulness of the lower registers.”**

as it may be, possess much of the latter quality, and it’s one of hi-fi’s most priceless. It’s not that it doesn’t succeed technically as extremely capable ‘hi-fi’. Part of the sense of immediate musical connection is down to the transparency, the focus and the lovely, open, explicit midband it brings to every genre of music. And if the Dynaudio’s repertoire falls short of prodigious bass weight, it again tends to go unnoticed, so good is the drive, speed, articulation and tunefulness of the lower registers.

The bottom end is taut, articulate and, when the music demands, compellingly propulsive. Yet the abiding impression is of a sound that unforced and uncoloured, with a complete absence of grain or coarsened textures. The ear is never drawn towards detail – not because it isn’t there but because it isn’t brightly lit, being seamlessly integrated into the larger musical picture. The sense of assurance is relaxing; the music comes to you, it doesn’t require that you have to listen hard for it. It shouldn’t be that

simple. Finding a collection of components that can do quiet as well as it does loud, swing high and low with equanimity, provide a convincing sense of scale yet focus sharply, sound natural with acoustic instruments but appropriately ‘zingy’ and synthetic with those driven by electrons is notoriously difficult, even if you have a shedload of cash to spend. But this modestly-priced system is a shining example of how it should be done. In its lucid, undemonstrative, and wonderfully easy-breathing delivery, it has almost valve-like smoothness and a near-total absence of fatiguing effects.

That goes for the beguiling way it keeps everything in the correct proportion, too. Performances are consistently coherent and well resolved, with their timing and interest always left intact. So here’s something approaching the holy grail of hi-fi: high-end sound for a distinctly real-world price. It’s compact, sophisticated, stunningly neat, a dream to use and enthralling to listen to

whatever CD you choose to slip in the tray. The compact Dynaudios may not produce the weightiest sound around but they are stunningly deft at communicating the musical message.

If bass is really what you crave, I should tell you to look elsewhere. But I’m not going to. The bass that this system produces might not have much thump or extension but it is alluringly fast, taut and tuneful. And once you begin to appreciate its intelligibility, texture and shaping, it’s hard to go back to the thicker, lumpier variety.

Even better, though, is the wide open clarity and resolution of the midrange and treble – this brings benefits to all kinds of music but is especially seductive with female vocals, which are handled with tremendous finesse and refinement. In short, this is one of the most remarkable *Beautiful Systems* to date. That it’s also by far the least expensive is, I have no doubt, something to celebrate. **HFC**

David Vivian





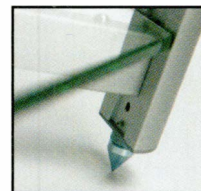
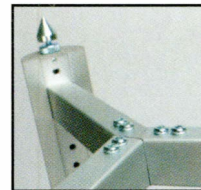
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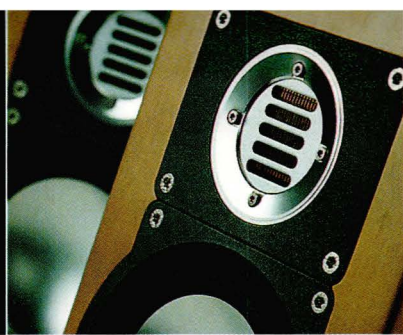


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# REVIEWS



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

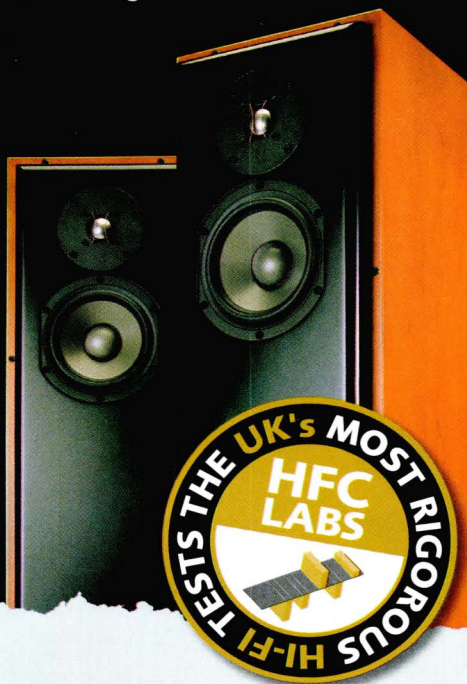
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## OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

Percentage ratings for various different criteria, like sound quality and value for money

Our overall conclusion after a livelier... through. The Siemens-equipped player has an snappier sound with better timing that es with dense material with remarkable fidence and ease. It even seems to be

You can find... revised players for the money. But few combine dynamics with fine timing skills as effectively as this. **HFC** Jason Kennedy

**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 83%**

**FEATURES >> 85%**

**BUILD >> 85%**

**VALUE >> 85%**

**CONCLUSION**

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 84%**

The things we like most about the product

The things we think could be better

The product's final score. All criteria are taken into account but the emphasis is on performance. Components scoring more than 85% may qualify for an HFC Award Badge

## OUR AWARD BADGES EXPLAINED



### Best Buy

A component receiving the coveted *Hi-Fi Choice* Best Buy Badge has been judged to deliver excellent performance at its price point, thereby offering outstanding value for money.



### 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.

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

# Stereo avenger

Are the days of two-channel sound numbered? Not a bit of it, as this new stereo SACD combo proves

**PRODUCT** Marantz SA-11S1 and PM-11S1

**TYPE** CD/SACD player and integrated stereo amplifier

**PRICE** (SA-11S1 player) £2,000, (PM-11S1 amp) £2,500

**KEY FEATURES** (SA-11S1) Size (WxHxD): 44x12x42cm  
⊕ Weight: 14kg ⊕ Stereo-only CD/SACD player ⊕ CD and SACD Text ⊕ Three anti-aliasing filters for each format ⊕ (PM-11S1) Size (WxHxD) 44x16x46cm  
⊕ Weight: 26kg ⊕ One balanced, five single-ended inputs ⊕ MM/MC phono input ⊕ Rated power: 100W per channel into eight ohms (200W into four ohms)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01753 680868 # www.marantz.com

These two products are part of a resurgence of interest in traditional stereo replay. Multichannel audio and home cinema have not entirely negated the attractions of two-channel stereo, despite the prophecies of doom from some quarters, and new high-end, high-resolution stereo products have appeared (or are set to appear) from producers like T+A, Classé, Denon, Sony and, of course, Marantz.

You'll notice that three of these five names are based in Japan. It is no accident that Japan turns out to be a prime mover of this tectonic activity. Japan is a country where high-quality stereo music has always been held in great esteem, and still is. It is also the Japanese home market that is driving a move to pitch SACD as a purist audiophile format, sometimes stereo only, and one step up the ladder from CD. As such, it is quite distinct from DVD-Audio, which is seen as part of the multimedia revolution and not necessarily of audiophile interest.

Whether there is a substantial market for high-end SACD players in the UK, especially

those not multichannel capable, remains to be seen. But, if there is, the Marantz SA-11S1 will be a prime contender. It's not the first stereo-only SACD player that Marantz has produced, and neither will it stand alone within the wider audiophile marketplace – other brands now marketing (or planning to market) a high-end stereo SACD player include Denon, which shares Marantz's parent company.

Another key part of the high-quality stereo disc playing requirement is an appropriate stereo amplifier, and this is where the PM-11S1 steps in – as the player and amp are designed to complement each other, we're reviewing both products here. And just to complete the story, Marantz has also launched a turntable, the TT-15S1, its first for many years, as part of the same enhanced Premium range.

The SA-11S1 is a dedicated stereo player for CD and SACD discs, and offers both single-ended and balanced analogue outputs, plus standard CD-capable optical and coaxial digital outputs. There are no high-tech digital outputs (i.Link for example) and the power supply arrangements follow the pattern of the amplifier (see later), which is a rare addition in a source component.

In addition to the usual selection of trick playback options, the SA-11S1 is equipped with three output filters for CD, and three for SACD using a custom-programmed Motorola DSP with 48-bit accuracy, which has allowed some subtlety in their construction (see later). The filter 'adds' to the datastream only interpolated

samples, retaining the original samples off disc intact. One of the filters included is a version of Marantz's Linear Music filter (first seen on the CD-7), which counters the frequency response modifications produced by the analogue filters, as well as eliminating phase distortion introduced from the same source. In addition, a switchable DC filter allows any DC component recorded in error to be stripped from the signal. Each of the options can be accessed in stop mode and is automatically memorised.

The matching PM-11S1 integrated amplifier behaves as an excellent current source, with an eight-ohm power rating of 100 watts per channel, which doubles to 200 watts per channel into four ohms. Part of the reason is the power supply, which features choke regulation and a 'Super Ring' transformer with split analogue and digital taps, which is said to outperform toroids in the areas of mechanical noise and radiated electromagnetic fields.

The amp makes extensive use of standard and enhanced versions of Marantz's proprietary HDAM discrete buffer circuit, deployed at each input/output buffer stage. The amplifier section itself is a current feedback type (driven by a voltage amplifier at its front end), making it essentially impervious to loudspeaker load characteristics. For the first time, even the phono (MM/MC) input employs current feedback.

The volume control feels like a multi-turn version of a conventional linear control, though in fact it is based on a Wolfson WM8816, a resistive ladder device with enhanced HDAM SA2 buffering. This offers an impressive 100dB range in click-free, 0.5dB steps.

Operating features include a balanced input and five single-ended inputs, two of which are tape circuits, plus switchable preamp and record outputs, bypassable tone controls (each channel can be controlled separately) and balance controls. Two pairs of speaker outputs are available, which can be linked for bi-wire applications. Indeed, the so-called floating control bus allows up to four SA-11S1s to be interconnected for enhanced bi-amplification and even for – gasp – multichannel operation.

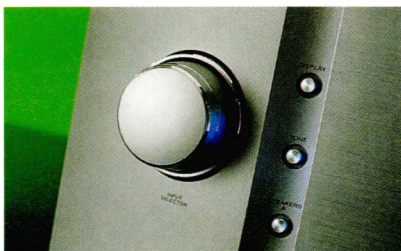
In common with previous Premium series products from the Marantz stable, build quality of amplifier and player alike are nothing less than outstanding, and the same applies to their fit and finish. Almost everything is copper plated to reduce eddy currents and enhance shielding, the chassis is substantial and the chassis panels are aluminium rather than ferrous metal, and are well damped. Extensive internal block shielding is also employed. ▶





**“The sound is transparent and detailed, and also easy on the ear – not because it smoothes over the traces, but because it sounds so natural, unprocessed and unfatiguing.”**





## Q & A

Ken Ishiwata, brand ambassador for Marantz, discusses some of the issues raised by the stereo-only SA-11S1 CD/SACD player and PM-11S1 amplifier



**HFC:** Please explain the use of current feedback in the amplifier.

**KI:** In last 10 years, one manufacturer of loudspeakers has come to near dominance in many of our markets, namely Bowers & Wilkins. They are not easy to drive. This forced us to start thinking about designing our amplifiers differently, and the changeover from conventional voltage to current feedback makes the amplifier less sensitive to the character of the load.

Another change we noted is that LPs are more popular than they were a few years ago. So we said: "Okay, here is a fantastic opportunity not just concentrate on today's music formats, but also on the one that got them started – vinyl records". What we have done is to design a sophisticated, high-quality phono stage, one that would cost over £1,000 if you were to buy a similar standard phono step-up separately.

Doesn't the fact that the disc player won't play multichannel SACDs make it a hard sell?

No, it has made it easier. In the audiophile market, we have found that the majority of people want high quality and are mainly interested in listening in stereo. These stereo-only components are already proving successful for us in Japan and across Asia, and also in Germany. We have other products that cater specifically to the multichannel market.

What are the internal highlights of the player?

We based the SA-11S1 on our CD7 CD player, using the same oversampling filters, but with eight times oversampling instead of four times, and with the addition of SACD to provide the highest quality currently possible. Internally, the player uses discrete circuitry as far as possible, and is very carefully laid out.

Why did you decide not to include a high-resolution digital link such as HDMI or i.Link between the player and the amplifier?

As yet, we don't regard the available links to be world-wide standards that are appropriate for the highest audio quality. Our only product with HDMI so far is a receiver, and is not of the same standard. I don't believe that bringing digital circuitry into amplifiers brings benefit to the listener.



## “Both Marantz products sound fluid and expressive, and incredibly detailed too.”

▣ The low noise LCD displays on both components can be switched off to further reduce noise, and control 'feel' is of the highest order, with a muted fusillade of relays firing to select or isolate individual circuits, instead of using more audibly intrusive transistor or similar switching. High grade components are used throughout, although the choice is determined by listening rather than their paper specs. All the socketry is well separated and signposted, while the speaker connections are from WBT. The remote handsets are metal faced and superbly designed and finished.

### SOUND QUALITY

The essence of these two components is their simplicity. This is not a reference to their internal circuit architecture, which is undeniably sophisticated, but to their basic blueprint. It is a moot point whether it would have been better to include a high-resolution digital interface between the two components, leaving all analogue processing to the amplifier, but this would have meant an amp with digital circuitry (other than internal display and control logic,

of course) and that would have threatened the purist appeal of the combination.

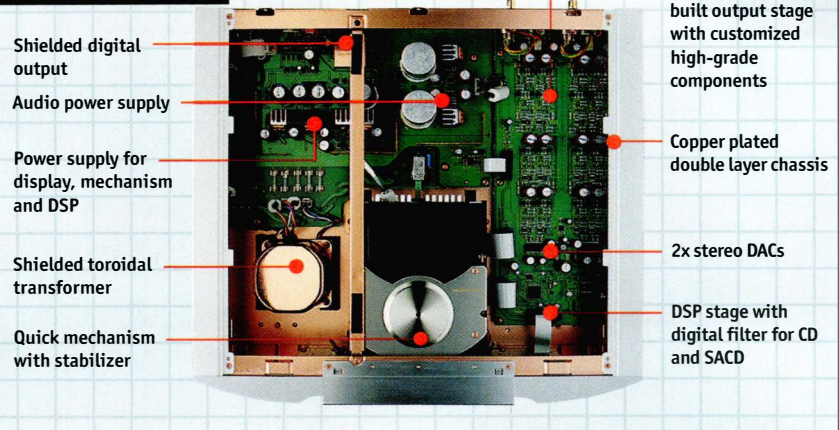
There can be few complaints about the resulting sound. We first heard the combination driving Mordaunt-Short's new magnum opus, the Performance 6, at last year's Heathrow hi-fi show, and have since used it when reviewing those same speakers for the last edition of *HFC*. Since then, the Marantz pair has been in charge of a pair of Revel F32s (see p48) and even the new B&W 800D diamond-tweetered speaker, neither of which is a pushover from the amplifier's point of view. In all cases, the features of the sound that impress most are always the same. Both products sound fluid and expressive, and incredibly detailed too.

We found listening to the Marantz pairing in various system combinations took much longer than required to complete this review. The sound is so lacking in stress, so open and so exquisitely subtle and expressive that the combination proved very difficult to gainsay. It was only the availability of some seriously expensive electronics from Denon (another similar combination, but much higher priced

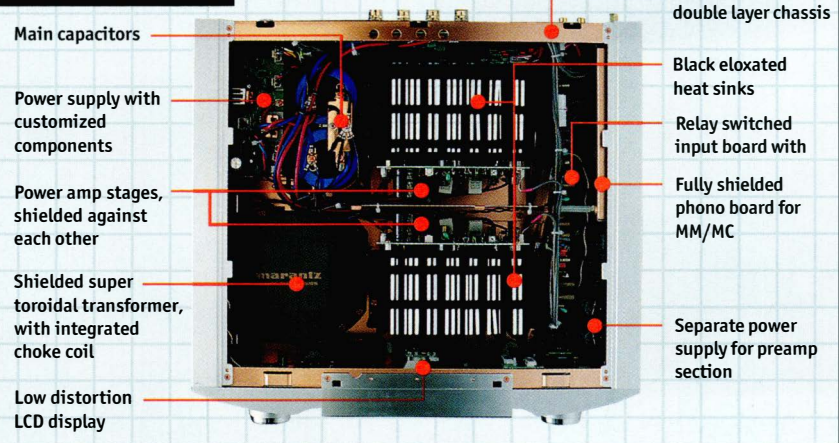


# Marantz SA-11S1 CD/SACD player and PM-11S1 amplifier [Review]

## Detail – SA-11S1



## Detail – PM-11S1



and not yet publicly launched) and also from Classé, which showed that ultimately the Marantz amplifier doesn't have quite the grip and authority of the 'real' high end. But it isn't priced at those rarefied heights, either.

The player's switchable noise shaper – part of the anti-aliasing filter and effective with CD only – affects the sound in subtle ways. On balance, leaving it switched on results in a sound of greater projection and power, and you may find this worthwhile.

The three CD and three SACD filters were also assessed for their effect using a small number of discs in a variety of genres – Jennifer Warnes' *The Well* (SACD/CD), Bach's *Oboe Works* (Caro Mitis – SACD only), Antonio Forcione and Sabina Sciubba's *Meet Me In London* (Naim – CD), and Schoenberg's *Gurre-Lieder* (Naxos – CD). In SACD mode, 'filter 1' was generally preferred, followed by 'filter 2' and then 'filter 3'. In general, 'filter 1' sounded a little clearer and more emphatic, and the background – the space between the notes – seemed a little darker and more 'contrasty'. By comparison, 'filter 3' sounded slightly blurred and 'filter 2' fell somewhere in-between.

With CD, it was 'filter 3' that sounded sharpest, on the whole. 'Filter 1' and 'filter 2' seemed somewhat smoother and more organic in the way they behaved – nylon strung guitar,

for example, sounded out with greater presence and contrast, and with a greater purity, but again the order 1, 2 and 3, for rather different reasons, was generally preferred, at least with the high-quality recordings chosen for our tests. In no case was the DC filter helpful, but this may not be the case with some older discs that were mastered at a time when engineering standards were less punctilious than now.

The various filter options don't make what might be described as a fundamental difference, but they do present ways to fine tune a system that is already well set up. In any case, the SA-11S1 is a superb CD player, and even better with SACD – and there are none of the compromises involved when adding video and all the other accoutrements of DVD.

This is one of the most listenable player/amp pairings we've heard in a long time. Its sound is transparent and detailed, and also easy on the ear – not because it smoothes over the traces, but because it sounds so natural, unprocessed and unfatiguing. It's not ultimately a reference standard pairing, if only because it doesn't have quite the power and grip necessary for the job, but there is little else to be said against a contribution from Marantz that shows (just in case you ever doubted it) that stereo is back, and that it is back with a vengeance! **HFC**

Alvin Gold



## VERDICT – SA-11S1

**SOUND >> 92%**

>> SUB RATINGS  
CD 90% SACD 93%

**FEATURES >> 86%**

**BUILD >> 92%**

**VALUE >> 88%**

### CONCLUSION

Delivering superb stereo sound from CD and SACD alike, this beautifully designed disc player is uncompromised by the video requirements of DVD, with considerable musical benefits.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
**>> 90%**

## VERDICT – PM-11S1

**SOUND >> 90%**

**FEATURES >> 84%**

**BUILD >> 92%**

**VALUE >> 84%**

### CONCLUSION

This is a subtle, refined and detailed amp that seems to go out of its way to make listening a pleasure where others eventually cause listening fatigue.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
**>> 87%**

# A grand design

The legendary Austrian piano maker introduces a radical take on loudspeaker design

**PRODUCT** Bösendorfer VC 7

**TYPE** Floorstanding loudspeaker

**PRICE** From £4,745 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 20x135x40cm

- Weight: 36.5kg
- Unconventional two-way, six-driver design
- Two 25mm fabric dome tweeters
- Four side-mounted bass/mid drivers with 95mm paper cones
- 'Acoustic sound boards' act as panel resonators
- Optional lacquered real-wood panels

**CONTACT** ☎ 0208 241 9826 🌐 [www.bosendorfer.com](http://www.bosendorfer.com)

No hi-fi manufacturer can claim a heritage that goes back 175 years, simply because hi-fi began in the 20th Century, not the 19th. As for celebrity endorsements, how about having thank-you letters from Franz Liszt and Johannes Brahms on your list of satisfied customers? Bösendorfer was into audio way back in the DIY days, when you made your own music, usually around the

family piano. And in the exclusive world of grand pianos, Bösendorfer is one of the top names that appear in the world's great concert halls and recording studios.

An Austrian company, Bösendorfer was based for most of its existence in that capital city of European musical culture, Vienna. Indeed, leading resident Franz Liszt did much to put Bösendorfer on the map, because he had a reputation for destroying pianos through the enthusiasm and power of his playing – a role model for Pete Townshend perhaps – and it was only when he found the Bösendorfer that he discovered a piano that could withstand his onslaughts.

That's by the by, of course. Considering the age of what is the oldest extant piano manufacturer in the world, Bösendorfer has actually had a very stable history. Its ownership has only changed three times, and it stayed in

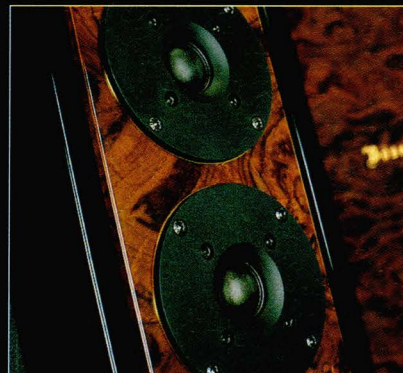
Vienna until the 1970s, before moving some 50km outside of the city. It still makes those legendary pianos for an enormous list of famous musicians, but has recently added a range of loudspeakers to its product portfolio, which is where *Hi-Fi Choice* gets involved.

Although the name and reputation will undoubtedly assist the marketing department, this is by no means a simple case of a company trying to cash in on its famous name. The company's loudspeakers are not 'me too' products, put together by sub-contractors and merely branded with the Bösendorfer name. Rather, they're notably unconventional, thoroughly original in a number of respects, and sufficiently different from the norm to prove quite controversial entrants on the British hi-fi scene.

Bösendorfer's speaker operation is just five years old. While the speakers are manufactured in the same Austrian factory that builds the pianos, the technical and design input comes from the very experienced Hans Deutsch, who has been designing and building loudspeakers for more than thirty years. His approach is unusual, radical, and was even somewhat prophetic when it first emerged.

Deutsch's Acoustic Active Principle rejects the use of conventional resonance control techniques, such as physical damping materials and complex, steep-slope crossover networks. The white paper includes – in bold, no less – the highly controversial statement, "Without resonances, there cannot be lifelike sound." The explanation continues: "The core of the AAP is to view the loudspeaker cabinet as a vibrating, resonant body, allowing the creation of a three-dimensional, transparent, true-to-life sound." Although crossover simplicity and the avoidance of damping materials are both techniques that have their adherents, deliberately adding resonances is totally at variance with normal loudspeaker design

**“The degree of midband coloration came as a shock. But coloration isn't the only thing that determines the quality of a speaker.”**



practice. It's therefore pretty inevitable that these Bösendorfer speakers are going to sound very different from the norm.

Not only is the enclosure proper left undamped, it's equipped with what are called 'acoustic sound boards'. There are two for each speaker; each is 132x16cm, and is spaced out from but attached by strategic fasteners to the sides of the enclosure. These 'panel resonators' are excited by the reflex ports that are also set into the sides. How well this works we'll come to later, but a sympathetic justification is that acoustic instruments don't create music by 'pumping air' with small speaker diaphragms; cellos, basses, pianos and so on work by generating microscopic movement in large panels. As we understand it, Hans Deutsch and Bösendorfer believe that realistic reproduction requires a similar approach. It's a view that certainly might have some validity, though it would also seem likely to add colorations.

This VC 7 is the largest of three stereo pairs in the range. All carry hefty price tags because the construction is quite complex. The starting price for the VC 7 is £4,745 per pair, but specifying the fanciest, prettiest veneers can take this up to a very extravagant £9,540. It's a tall (1.35m), deep speaker, but it's also very slim, so its visual impact isn't as dramatic as the dimensions might suggest. A proper plinth ensures good overall stability in all directions, with attractive gilded spikes.

The driver line-up is very unconventional. This is a simple two-way design, though it actually uses six drive units. The front panel features just a pair of tweeters, apparently identical devices with 25mm soft dome diaphragms in doped fabric. On each side are two small bass/mid drivers with 140mm cast frames, relatively stiff surrounds and 95mm diameter paper cones. Signal is fed via a single pair of terminals low down on the rear.

## SOUND QUALITY

Prior to trying out our pair of VC 7s, I'd had a few days experience of the smaller (three-driver, but otherwise similar) VC 2, and also found time for a pub lunch with Hans Deutsch, so I wasn't entirely surprised by the sound of the VC 7. That said, at first listen the degree of midband coloration that was obvious still came as something of a shock – in this respect at least, it seemed more extreme than the VC 2.

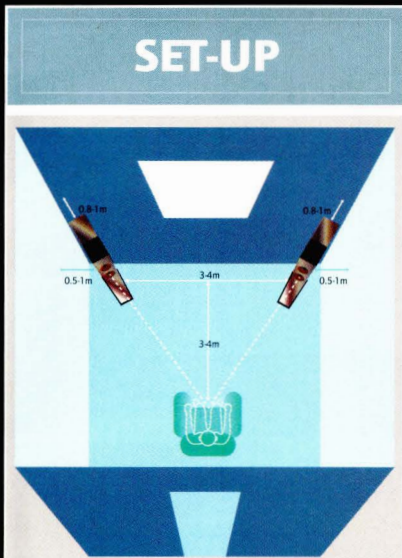
However, coloration isn't the only thing that determines the quality of a loudspeaker. It's an important characteristic, for sure, and also one of the easier ones to identify. But it's not the be-all and end-all of what music reproduction is about. Furthermore, the ear and brain can be quite accommodating to colorations, just as it's able to adjust to the sonic characters imposed by different rooms.

The VC 7 suffers from significant lower-mid coloration that no amount of tinkering with positioning and angling seemed able to ▶

EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine





**POSITIONING**

Despite extensive experimentation, finding the right position to deliver a smooth and well-balanced in-room frequency balance proved elusive. Best results in our room were obtained with the speakers set a little wider apart than usual and angled so that they were pointing directly towards the main listening seat. Even so, our in-room far-field measurements showed that there was still significant excess at around 50Hz – a consequence of an unfortunate coincidence between the frequency to which the ports are tuned, and a known reinforcement mode in our listening room. And there was also some rather uneven excess in the 200-500Hz zone, probably to do with those unusual 'acoustic sound boards'.

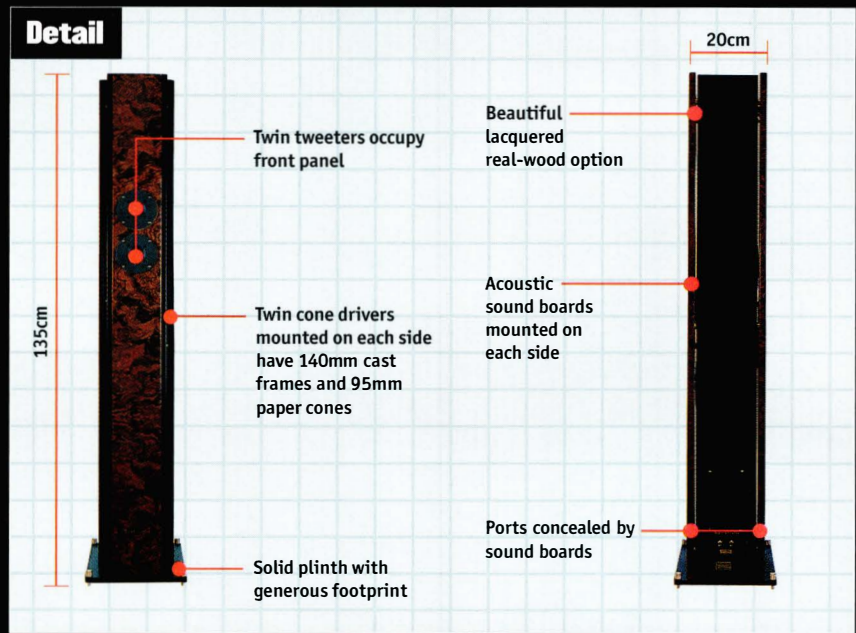
The best advice here must therefore be to experiment, whatever the characteristics of the room you're intending to use. Low frequency speaker/room interaction is a highly complex issue, even when the speakers in question are simple 'point source' devices – which this Bösendorfer certainly isn't. Every separate source of sound will interact with the room walls, floor and ceiling, as well as each other. As such, a speaker like this, with four widely spaced main drivers on each side of a large baffle plus the extra resonator, will always be somewhat unpredictable.

**SYSTEM MATCHING**

In the continental tradition, this is a four-ohm load, so its current demands will be on the heavy side. However, the simplicity of the two-way configuration is a plus, the load never drops below four ohms, and the trace looks fundamentally smooth, apart from some mild resonances in the lower midband.

Sensitivity is a pretty generous 90dB, so high-power amps are hardly necessary here, and valve amps are a realistic option (though not perhaps the lower power single-ended types). A minor caveat however is that some valve amps can sound a little loose and resonant in the bass, and this might interact badly with the speaker's strong 50Hz in-room output. Once again, the only way to find out is to try it and see.

Despite the twin tweeters, treble output is very restrained. While the sound nevertheless seems very natural with a neutral amplifier, it does mean that any brightness further up the chain is unlikely to prove a handicap.



remove. And while this is a bit of a handicap, especially with speech, in other respects, and on the right material, this speaker actually turned out to be hugely entertaining and involving, bringing a degree of sheer realism to classical material in particular that can be utterly captivating. It brought to mind the words of a famous (if now historical) beer advert which talked about "refreshing the parts other beers cannot reach".

Bösendorfer has designed the VC 7 with important upsides as well as downsides. It's not an accurate speaker in the monitoring sense of the word, but it is an intensely musical one that BBC Radio 3 listeners in particular are likely to find extremely seductive.

Presumably because of the unusual disposition of the drive units, and the relatively high ratio of reflected-to-direct sound this creates, precise positional information isn't really on the agenda here. But then much the same is normally true when you visit a concert hall. Precision stereo imaging might make it easier to analyse the content of a recording, but it doesn't necessarily improve the realism of the musical experience. And it's the ability to make you believe you're hearing real instruments in a real acoustic that makes this speaker so remarkable. Indeed, any speaker

that finds yours truly enjoying full scale operatic material has got to have a whole lot going for it. And its reproduction of piano music was – as you might expect – little short of miraculous.

In some respects, the Bösendorfer experience slightly resembles what one finds with large full-range horns. It's all to do with the exceptional dynamic realism that both bring to the party. It is usually assumed that a horn achieves this because of its exceptionally high efficiency, though it could equally be down to the large area of the sound source (the horn mouth area), and this is to some extent replicated, albeit approximately, by the Bösendorfer's 'acoustic sound boards'.

Whatever the explanation, for many listeners, especially those primarily into classical material, the VC 7's rare combination of righteous dynamics and agile coherence will more than make up for its peculiarities. Best of all perhaps, it offers a real alternative, albeit at a price, for those who find conventional speakers terminally unconvincing. **HFC**

*Paul Messenger*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>VERDICT</b>   |  |
| <b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 91%</b><br>[Progress bar]  | <b>PRO</b><br>Superior dynamics, agility and coherence. Delivers exceptionally realistic reproduction of acoustic instruments.                       |
| <b>EASE OF DRIVE &gt;&gt; 81%</b><br>[Progress bar]  | <b>CON</b><br>Colorations in the lower-midband hamper speech and can be distracting. Imaging is vague and imprecise. Deep bass is not on the agenda. |
| <b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 95%</b><br>[Progress bar]  |  |
| <b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 85%</b><br>[Progress bar]  |  |
| <b>CONCLUSION</b><br>A unique design concept that breaks many of the accepted rules of speaker design, offering a genuine and persuasive alternative to the conventional. Its superior dynamics are particularly effective with acoustic and classical material. |  |
| <b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 88%</b>   |  |

# Caspian M series Caspian M series

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# Relatively Rotel

*A new Rotel amp is always welcome, especially when its parents are so highly respected*

**PRODUCT** Rotel RA-03

**TYPE** Integrated stereo amplifier

**PRICE** £499

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 43.5x9.2x34.2cm  
● Weight: 8kg ● Rated power: 70W/channel (continuous into eight ohms) ● Five line inputs  
● Phono (MM) input ● Twin speaker outputs (independently switched) ● remote control

**CONTACT** ☎ 01903 221800 🌐 www.rotel.com

For 40 years, Rotel has managed to steer a course between the mass market and the specialist niche, in the process building an enviable reputation as a manufacturer of fine value audio electronics. No company of long history has ever had an unbroken run of successes, but Rotel's score of near misses is an unusually low one. New Rotel products don't come along every day, either, so we were more than usually keen to see this latest addition to the firm's catalogue.

You may have noticed an earlier amplifier, the RA-02, which we welcomed most warmly back in *HFC* 232. It bears a certain family resemblance to the RA-03 tested here. That's not coincidental, for the newcomer combines features both of that amp and of the RB-03 power amp – like the RA-03 a 70-watt model.

In essence, the RA-03 is the RB-03 with a preamp section added, or a RA-02 with a better power amp. Regardless, the RA-03 is nicely specified, with five line inputs and a phono stage (MM only), plus tone and balance controls. There's a remote control, a pair of 'pre out' sockets to allow for bi-amping or control of a remote power amp, plus additional sockets for various remote control and trigger connections.

Looks are smart enough, but the little knobs for tone and speaker switching are perfectly horrid to use, should you ever wish to. Inside, inputs are switched by an integrated circuit, which operates on fairly high voltages to ensure that source components of more than average output are not hideously distorted before they get to the volume control. A couple of integrated circuit op-amps buffer the signal, but the power amplifier part relies entirely on discrete transistors for operation. The transistor line-up includes doubled-up pairs of output devices (bipolar transistors) on a large heatsink, which should ensure that tough loads are driven confidently and reliably.

Power is derived initially from a large toroidal transformer. Interestingly, Rotel has adopted the 'slit foil' technology pioneered by British firm DNM for its power supply capacitors – a

technique that's claimed to improve the speed with which charge can enter and leave the capacitors. All this evidently is part of what Rotel calls its 'Balanced Design Concept': nothing to do with balanced audio signals, but a 'balance' between technology and subjective judgement in the design process. We'd like to think all manufacturers worked that way...

The volume control is a motorised potentiometer and all other switches are regular mechanical types, while two sets of speaker terminals are switched by relays. There is evidence of above-average expenditure on high quality components, with metal film resistors and professional capacitors throughout. It's not the chunkiest or highest-specified amplifier you can get for £500, but it is one of the most impressively built internally.

## SOUND QUALITY

With high expectations born equally of Rotel's track record and the current status quo with mid-price amps, we were not disappointed by our early acquaintance with this amplifier. The RA-03 offers a clear and unfussy musical presentation with plenty of gusto and no shortage of subtlety when required. It can fairly belt out the power on heavy stuff (aided by a

maximum sustained output that comfortably exceeds the rating – we got more like 90 watts out of it) and it's not afraid of pianissimo either.

It's not perfect, though. Okay, this is a statement of the obvious – Halcro, Bryston *et al* would look pretty silly if it were. But, its imperfections contrast with those of other amps in its category and ultimately they will decide its fate at the hands and ears of each listener.

A first hint came while playing a spot of orchestral music. We'd been enjoying some full-blooded climaxes, but as the scale reduced somewhat, there seemed to be a touch of coloration in evidence and even some veiling. This was most noticeable at moderate volumes with small to medium-size groups of instruments, a finding repeated in different musical styles. The coloration affected the upper midrange, making it a little 'quacky', while the veiling reduced the precision of stereo imaging and blurred the distinction between instruments.

It's unusual for effects like this to be confined to moderate levels – they tend to worsen at one dynamic extreme or the other. However, careful checking showed that, while music at full-level was still slightly veiled, the overall effect was more convincing. Perhaps the artefacts in question affect mid and high volumes but are considerably more exposed at mid levels due to the lower distortion of almost all loudspeakers under such conditions.

As far as we could tell, volume setting on the RA-03 had little effect on these artefacts. That points the finger at whatever happens to the signal before it reaches the volume control, in this case principally the integrated circuits that select the input and buffer the signal. A brief spell on the test bench appeared to confirm this, with a degree of distortion clearly independent of the power amplifier stage, rising sharply at high frequencies and high levels. Very high-level sources do in fact overload the amp, but that's seldom relevant since almost all of those are generated by esoteric sources such as the £9,500 dCS Elgar digital converter, and that's not the most obvious partner to a £500 amplifier.

Don't be put off by this, however. It's not devastating, and for many it may be a very small issue. At worst, it brings no shame on an amp at this price. So, let's return to the good things – bass for a start. You can really revel in bass with this amp. It has a melodic, firm and extended bottom end that certainly does rhythm when required but (what is rarer) never obscures the



**“It has a melodic, firm and extended bottom end that does rhythm when required but never obscures low instrument tuning.”**

tuning of low instruments. It doesn't seem bothered about the speakers it's driving either, making the most out of sealed box, bass reflex and panel speakers in turn, and it's not level-dependent. Perhaps it's not got the lowest distortion we've ever seen, particularly into low impedance loads, but a touch of low-order distortion never seemed to hurt bass much.

And then there's the treble. Just occasionally one might wish it to be a little less forthright – that well-loved classic *Kind of Blue*, for instance, showed up a very slight tendency to over-brightness on those close-up trumpet and sax solos. It's not quite as open, either, as the very best around, but there's a decent illusion of space around naturally ambient recordings.

We can't close without commending the phono stage. Given its apparent similarity (on brief inspection) to those tucked into the same corner of so many other integrated amps, it's a surprise to find that it significantly exceeds the performance of most of them. This could be due to the precision components used, could be the careful layout, or because of some intangible tweak Rotel applied – whatever, it's

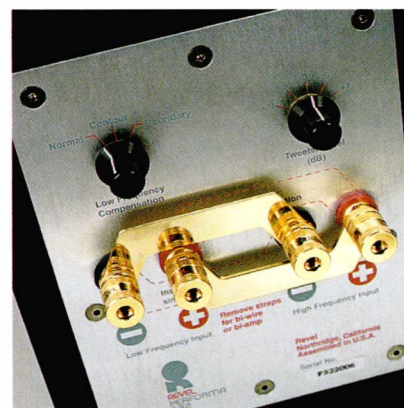
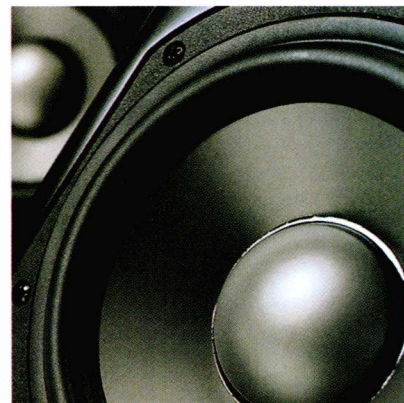
one of the cleanest-sounding integrated phono stages we've heard in a while. It's sensibly quiet too, albeit not breath-takingly so.

It's not exactly a no-brainer decision between this amp and its hottest rivals – we're thinking particularly of the Exposure 2010 S and Marantz PM7200 KI integrated models included in our recent *Ultimate Group Test* in HFC 262. You're unlikely to feel badly let down by any of them, but if you compare the three, you may find some small but decisive differences in matching your own tastes. **HFC**

Richard Black



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>VERDICT</b>   |   |
| <b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 85%</b><br>[Progress bar]  | <p><b>PRO</b><br/>Engaging presentation of large-scale music with both gusto and precision, no fear of dynamic extremes. Commendable phono stage.</p> <p><b>CON</b><br/>At middling levels, a little coloration makes itself felt, along with a slight blurring of stereo images.</p> |
| <b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 87%</b><br>[Progress bar]   |   |
| <b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 85%</b><br>[Progress bar]  |   |
| <b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 88%</b><br>[Progress bar]  |   |
| <p><b>CONCLUSION</b><br/>A fine hi-fi amp at a sensible price, with a slightly different set of compromises – all of them minor – from the competition. It's notably unfussy about partnering equipment and musical tastes, and offers a fine built-in MM phono stage to boot.</p> |   |
| <p><b>HI-FI CHOICE</b> &gt;&gt; <b>86%</b><br/>OVERALL SCORE</p>   |   |



# Revel with a cause

*The latest model from US brand Revel is a meticulous floorstander from the extensive Performa series*

**PRODUCT** Revel F32

**TYPE** Floorstanding loudspeaker

**PRICE** £3,200 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 22.2x105.4x38.7cm  
⦿ Weight: 31.7 kg ⦿ 25mm titanium dome tweeter  
⦿ 133mm midrange driver ⦿ Twin 165mm bass drivers  
⦿ Main driver cones made from Exclusive Organic Ceramic Compound ⦿ Switchable for boundary and free space use

**CONTACT** ☎ 01423 359054

🌐 www.revelspeakers.com

**R**evel might just be the most important loudspeaker brand you've (probably) never heard of. Well, potentially the most important. The brand was previously sold in the UK through a specialist high-end distributor using a very limited number of outlets, but for some months, it has not been available at all. New distribution arrangements have been set up through CSE, which will very likely be more proactive in waving the flag for the brand. In addition, CSE will be handling European distribution from a UK base, and this too can be expected to enhance Revels' visibility across Europe and the UK.

Revel is the prestige high-end speaker brand of the Harman Specialty Group (HSG). Based in Northridge, California, HSG itself is a

subsidiary of the Harman International empire, whose other speaker brands include Infinity and JBL, and which also includes Harman Kardon and Mark Levinson. And AKG, Becker and Audax. Oh, and Lexicon. So, this is no kitchen sink outfit.

Revel's speaker development is undertaken in a conservative and extremely meticulous environment, with great stress laid on controlled blind listening tests, and on fundamental engineering. This allows Revel to capitalise on extensive in-house design as well as manufacture of all the relevant components from magnetic circuits through to suspension design. Although Revel's own chief designer is Kevin Voeks, much of the thinking that informs the brand comes from the experience of Floyd Toole. Toole was involved in the Canadian NRC loudspeaker research project, which had such a seminal influence on many other brands. Revel is natural competitor for the likes of B&W and Focal-JMLab at the high end, but what you won't see from the brand is radical design. It is no accident that where Focal introduced beryllium, and B&W the use of diamond into their latest ranges, Revel sticks with more traditional materials. Revel would simply claim that it

would change if it the technology and materials already at hand were inadequate for the test.

It may sound like the name of a stealth fighter, but the F32 is simply the smaller of two floorstanding column loudspeakers in the new mid-range Performa series (one down from the Ultima series, but benefiting from some of the same technologies). The line-up also includes all the other models (centre, subwoofer, surround) necessary for multichannel operation. In fact, we've been experimenting with a system of this type for some time (see the *Making It Multichannel* box), but it is the stereo performance of the F32 alone that we are mostly interested in here.

The F32 is a three-way, four-driver design in a substantial rear-vented enclosure whose sides, unusually, slope in towards the rear. This means the two main internal reflecting surfaces are not parallel. The cabinet shape allows the use of a pair of 165mm bass drivers, alongside a 130mm midrange driver which is similar to the bass units apart from cone size. The driver complement is rounded off by a 25mm titanium dome tweeter. The motor designs employ compact double neodymium magnets housed inside the 50mm flat wire edge-wound voice




coils, which reduces air loading on the back of the cones, and also provides magnetic shielding. The larger units use organic ceramic composite cones, and high-order (18-24dB/octave) slopes are used at 190Hz and 2.7kHz. With a nominal impedance of 6.5 ohms (3.7 ohms minimum at 260Hz), and sensitivity at 86dB/watt at one metre, this is a relatively demanding and power hungry load. Frequency responses are remarkably tightly specified at  $\pm 1$  dB from 33Hz to 16kHz in room, and even the first reflections are specified as  $\pm 1$  dB from 33Hz to 15kHz. This is a clear legacy of the Canadian NRC findings concerning those properties that most influence auditioning quality. Consistency of each speaker with the manufacturer's own reference pair is equally tightly specified.

On the back panels are two pairs of high-quality 4mm binding posts, and two controls, one a boundary compensation switch with three settings, and a tweeter level control, with five settings in 0.5dB steps. The enclosures are made from 1mm MDF stock, and are extensively braced with smoothly rounded baffle edges for diffraction control. The speakers are supplied with spikes.

#### SOUND QUALITY

Perhaps more than most of its peers, this is a loudspeaker that does just what it is supposed to do, no more and no less. There is very little by way of obvious voicing to speak of. The Revel is very slightly on the lean side, which tends to spotlight musical detail. But, the operative word here is 'slightly', and there is nothing here that could be construed as contrived or characterful.

Neutrality of course is a double-edged sword. The F32 may not glamorise its musical subject matter, but it won't conceal the evidence either. Throughout the several-week-long test period, it never managed to make inadequate recordings sound anything other than what they were. Edgy, screaming string sound was just that, and messy muddled sounding recordings were – well, messy and muddled. But the analytical quality of the F32 bought many pleasures with the vast majority of discs. Given half a 



### MAKING IT MULTICHANNEL



Given that Revel is a stone's throw from Hollywood, and given the company's painstaking approach to the minutiae of loudspeaker design, it is no surprise to discover that the F32 can be made to function as part of a consistently voiced and well-matched multichannel system. The M22 surround speaker, which makes a natural multichannel partner, is literally a chip off the F32 block, but even the disarmingly compact C32 centre speaker is voiced to match impressively closely. This means sounds panned across the front, with the subwoofer adjusted optimally, barely change in tone or timbre as they do so. The B15, a big bruiser of a subwoofer, has been designed to integrate to a standard that few subwoofers even attempt – and some very big names have been known to come adrift in this respect. In part, this is due to a well implemented (but manually programmable) room matching computer programme which is used to set up an internal three-band parametric equaliser.



**POSITIONING**

It just so happens that the listening room used for these tests has a benign acoustic which tends to flatter, and setting up is rarely much of an issue. As Revel points out in its notes, listening room resonant modes dominate below about 400Hz, and in the test room most speakers work consistently at their best within a handspan or so from any of the others.

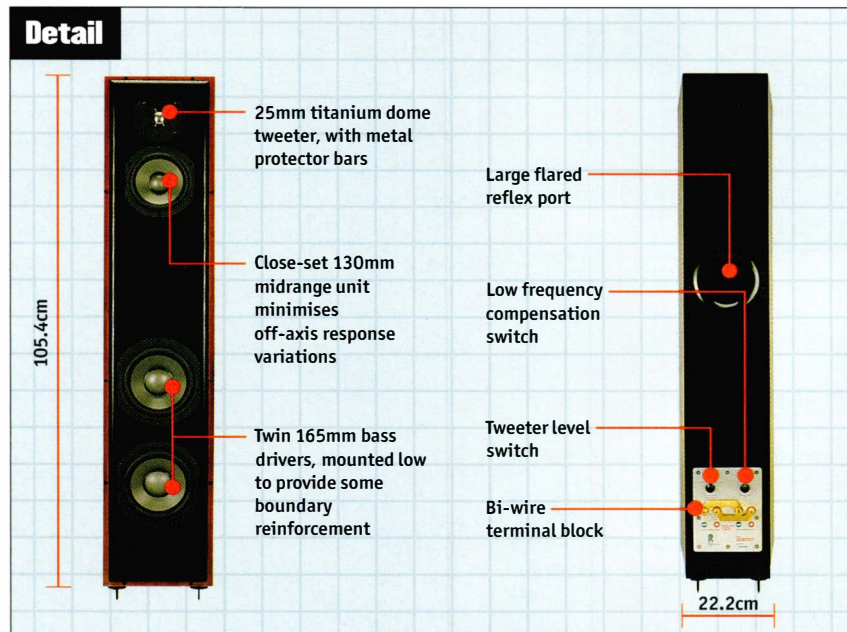
The F32 goes one step further thanks to its unusually well controlled off-axis behaviour, and the adjustments available on the back of the speaker will help fine tune for individual tastes. If you feel the tweeter is too 'toppy', you can reduce it's output by half a decibel using the switching, though we never felt the need to do so in practice. More usefully perhaps, the speakers can be effectively reconfigured for boundary or free-space use, or something in between using the appropriate compensation setting.

With most speakers, you play around with positioning to achieve the best results. In this case, you have more freedom, as long as left-right symmetry is preserved. Try orienting the speaker so that it fires more or less directly down the length of the room, if necessary boosting treble output with the rear panel switch, as a way of delivering a larger image scale and greater spaciousness.

Remember that, in common with most column speakers, the F32 is fairly top-heavy and can be knocked over by over enthusiastic kids, not least because there is no overhanging plinth to provide a wide footprint. If you're in any doubt, anchor them to the back wall.

**SYSTEM MATCHING**

Sonically, the F32 has no obvious traps for the unwary except that it is a high-resolution loudspeaker and deserves to be treated to appropriate quality peripheral equipment. But it is a relatively punishing load, and moreover a fairly insensitive one, and it was noticeable that it quickly ran through the capabilities of less powerful amplifiers, especially as there is a temptation to drive it quite hard at times. Think of a high-quality 100-watt amplifier that isn't fussy around slightly difficult loudspeakers as a good minimum amp standard – the Marantz PM-11S1 integrated amplifier reviewed this month is an excellent example.



**“There is a sense of balance and poise about the F32 in its own right, and also in the way it interacts with its listening environment.”**

chance, this is a clean, agile and detailed speaker, and what is more it has a ease and – yes – naturalness that allows music to speak with its own voice.

One thing the F32 does not do is favour particular musical genres. It is as easy and natural with Jennifer Warnes' beautifully recorded *The Well* as it was with Schoenberg's massive *Gurre-Leider* (reviewed in *Choice Cuts* this month), and ditto the dark but powerful sonorities of the first string quartet of Shostakovich recorded on DGG live at the Aspen Music Festival. In each case, the sense of acoustic – whether real or artificially generated – is reproduced realistically, but without swamping fine detail. The music breathes organically and free from obvious wooden or boxy colourations. Individual instruments and voices have a natural – there's that word again – harmonic structure, from the propulsive, tuneful bass through to the upper reaches of the audio frequency band.

There is something more at play here, though this is something I noticed more forcefully when I first heard the F32 in one of Revel's own large listening rooms. It works extremely well off-axis, and its imaging is unusually explicit, almost scintillating. This may have something to do with the thin wall construction typical of listening rooms in the US, especially on the comparatively balmy West Coast. However, the same sense of space and of sounding right was apparent in our (British) listening room, even when listening from well off the normal forward axis. There is a balance and poise about the F32 in its own

right, and also in the way it interacts with its listening environment, and the latter is almost certainly attributable in part to the very finely controlled off-axis behaviour.

The Revel F32 is a high-performance loudspeaker in which every important aspect has been thought through and addressed with proper methodology. It is not necessarily a loudspeaker you will warm to immediately; but over an extended listening period, you will probably find that it has an undeniable musical verity and as such does not favour certain types of music. It speaks with an unglamorised, unvarnished way, and this is not a loudspeaker anxious to tell a story in its own image. This alone makes it a superb tool for exploring a valued musical collection. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*

**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 92%**

**EASE OF DRIVE >> 58%**

**BUILD >> 90%**

**VALUE >> 83%**

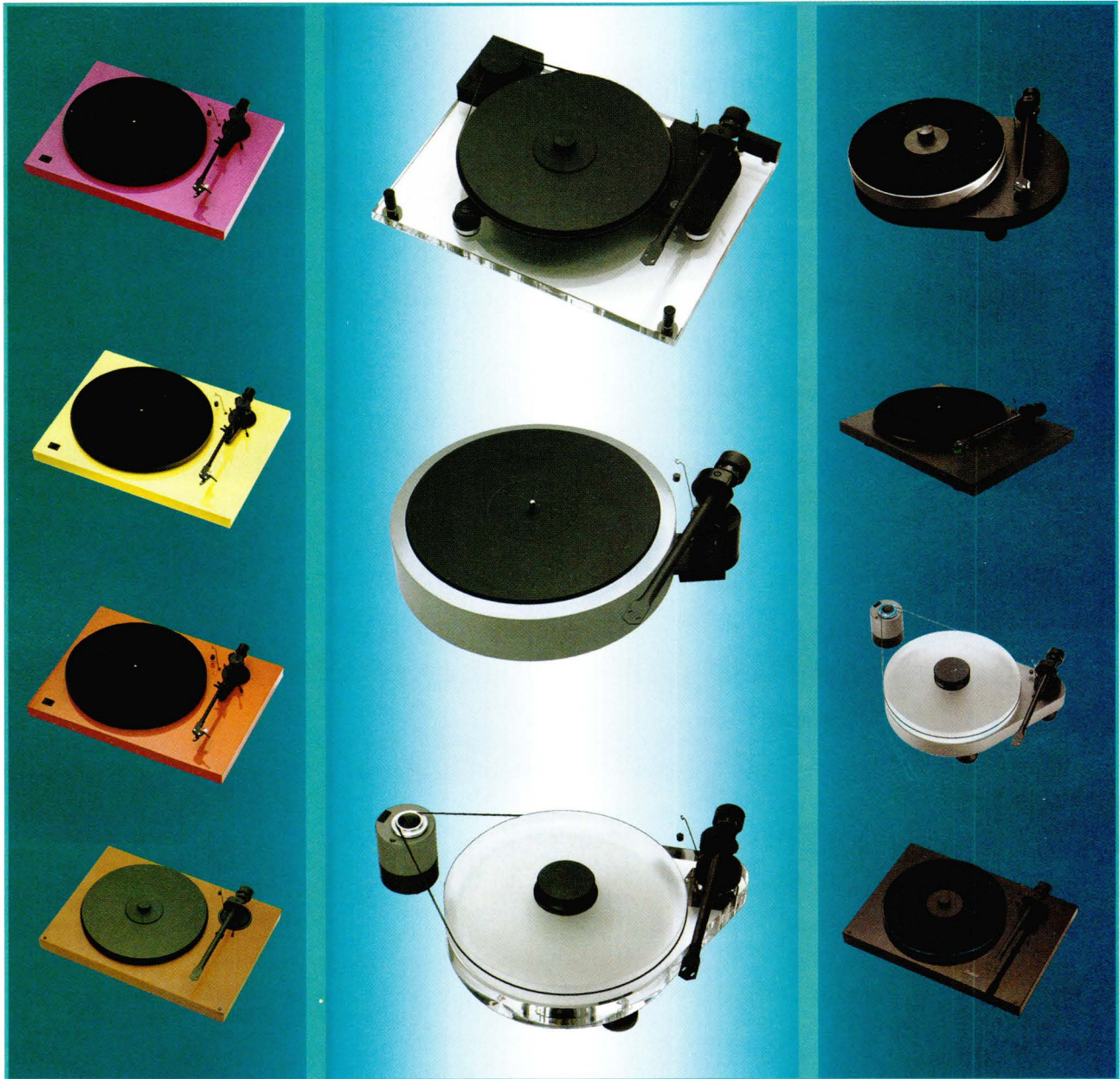
**PRO**  
Clean, agile sound which is just about as neutral as they come, the bass integration and the layered, expressive midband being especially impressive.

**CON**  
Doesn't set out to flatter, and it requires a plenty of good clean power from an amplifier that is not load sensitive.

**CONCLUSION**  
What gets fed in is just about exactly what you get out, for better or worse, but in the context of a good quality amplifier and source partnership, the F32 is a refreshingly open window. It manages to be revealing without brightness – a rare find.

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 88%**

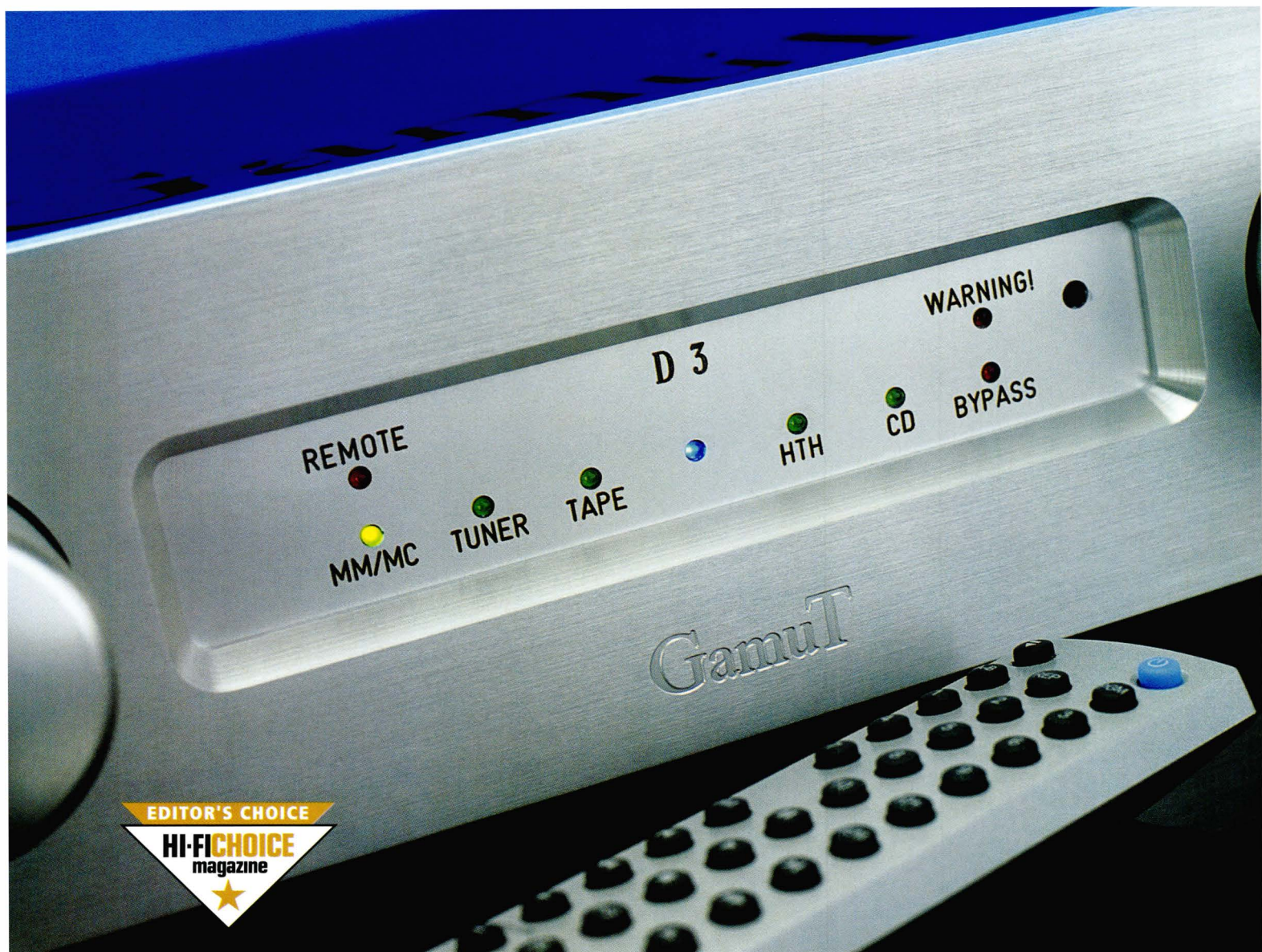
# Not for conservatives



The comprehensive range of turntables by **Pro-ject**, design is perhaps a little less conservative than the norm and yes, products are available in blue, and red, and yellow, and green.

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# Danish dimension

*Gamut's holographic-sounding preamp tops the range without breaking the bank*

**PRODUCT** Gamut D3

**TYPE** Stereo preamplifier

**PRICE** £3,430

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 43x10x39cm

⦿ Weight: 18kg ⦿ Line-level inputs: 4x RCA, 1x XLR  
 ⦿ Outputs: 1x RCA, 2x parallel balanced XLR ⦿ Optional remote control  
 ⦿ Bypass functions for a multichannel processor and a CD player with built-in volume control

**CONTACT** ☎ 01252 702705

🌐 www.gamutaudio.com

**G**amut is a Danish company that until recently specialised in electronics. This year, the firm has introduced two loudspeakers, but hasn't abandoned its electronics roots, as it has also launched a preamp designed to take on the best the high-fidelity world can offer. This might sound like a grand claim for a preamp that costs a fraction of the price of many high-end models, but

Gamut has form in this department – its D200 power amp is widely recognised as offering state-of-the-art sound at a realistic price.

The D3 does not replace an existing model, but improves upon the continuing C2R preamp. It has a similar mix of balanced and single-ended socketry and chunky, solidly made casework, the laser-cut name in the top plate being particularly nice, if not in a place where most rack users will appreciate it. Gamut has always been keen on balanced connections, because its origins lie in the professional audio world. This approach is favoured by pros for the robust nature of the plugs and sockets themselves and, more importantly still, the ability to cancel noise that might be picked up over long cable runs. Whether balanced interconnects offer a benefit over typical domestic lengths is debatable. There are some

who feel that balanced connection via XLR is actually not as good as standard single-ended operation through RCA phono sockets, given the right cable, but the two are very hard to compare properly.

Balanced inputs aside, the D3 has four RCA phono inputs marked MM/MC, tuner, tape and HTH. The latter is a home cinema bypass input, through which the front left/right signal from a multichannel processor may be passed. In theory, this should allow you to integrate stereo and multichannel systems without having to compromise your two-channel sound. The drawback is that when activated, this becomes an unattenuated input that sends a full-level signal out to the power amp. If you accidentally switch this bypass on when there's a line-level signal coming in, the results can be catastrophic for ears, speakers and quite possibly power

amps. Gamut has tried to make it difficult to do this accidentally by including a warning light on the front panel, but the less than clear labelling of the bypass switch on the rear means it's not idiot proof. Still, it's a useful function for those who want to combine high-quality stereo plus multichannel/home cinema functions in one system. The MM/MC input is only a line-level input, by the way – you have to buy an optional phono stage to use it with your turntable.

The last input is a balanced XLR socket marked 'CD'. This also offers a bypass function, for players with onboard volume controls. But as Gamut points out, most CD players won't have volume pots of the quality of those here. So, if a fixed output is available, use it.

Outputs include two pairs of balanced and one pair of phono sockets, with a tape out also via phono. Gamut points out that each output has its own buffer amplifier, so you can use them in parallel without compromising the common mode rejection ratio (noise cancelling ability) of the balanced output.

This is a remote controllable preamp, but only optionally – there are two Gamut remotes to choose from, plus the potential to use a Marantz multiroom handset. The base Gamut handset is a system-oriented device with only up and down arrows to select between horizontally arrayed

distortion. So, during our test period, Otis Spann and Fleetwood Mac sounded impressively relaxed, yet there was an edge to the guitar and piano that was entirely realistic. Likewise, played through the D3, the high notes on the later Mac's *Rumours* had a purity and body to them that's often obscured by a sonic 'frizz' – this can give the sensation of shine, but is in fact an artefact of the electronics. There's no such artefact when played via the D3.

This might make you think that the D3 has a rolled-off top end, but in fact its high frequencies are more natural than usual, a fact proven by the sense of transparency that grows with each familiar track you play. Its abilities at the other end of the band are impressive, too – the low notes of Adem's *Homesongs* truly rattled our listening chair for the first time. This and other albums could be played at high volume levels without discomfort, which is nearly always an indication of lower distortion. The fact that you can hear that much more with the D3 means you don't *have* to play loud, but if the rest of the system is up to it, then why not?

When it comes to stereo presentation, the D3 sounds distinctly '3D'. As a result, the trio of drums, double bass and piano on EST's *Strange Place For Snow* sounded remarkably



it. The piano also sounds very real, with a broad timbral range and excellent separation from the band.

This is a very subtle preamplifier. It doesn't shout out 'transparency', which usually means edginess in the long run. Nor does it make you pick out the rhythm specifically, which can suggest an emphasis that's not entirely natural. Instead, it gets on with getting out of the way. You hear more of the music – its charm, its intent and its energy. It works as well with third-party power amplification (ATC was a brand we tried during our test period) as it does with its own brethren (Gamut's D200 Mk1 was also used extensively). And it always makes a sound that's both enthralling and full width.

Plenty of preamps can produce a fine midrange, but all too many struggle at the frequency extremes. That's not the case here: the D3 shakes the floor where others barely excite it, and reaches highs in a natural yet extended way. In fact, it's hard to say how it might be greatly improved sonically – we've heard more transparent designs, but none close to this price point, which is very competitive for a first class preamp. Such things are rare at any price. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

## “This is a very subtle preamplifier... but it lets you hear more of the music – its charm, its intent and its energy.”

inputs on the fascia. It's not hard to get the input you want but harder to read the inscription on the preamp if you're more than a couple of metres away. Remote level control seems a little crude too, the lightest of touches on the button producing a significant jump in volume, either up or down. This would probably be less of a problem with a low-gain power amp (Gamut power amps can be adjusted in this respect) but is an ergonomic flaw otherwise.

### SOUND QUALITY

As ever with Gamut products, peccadilloes of usage are far outweighed by the sound that emerges, and the D3 maintains that reputation with great finesse. This is a genuinely wide-bandwidth, highly transparent preamp that responds precisely to the input signal in a clean, smooth fashion. It may initially sound a little warm, but the D3 is actually very low in

solid, real and in the room. The snappy brush strokes on the snare, the round resonant 'thunk' of the bass strings and the piano's higher, more eloquent notes were all full of life and vitality thanks to the persuasive shapeliness of the D3's sound. It's well served in terms of dynamics, too – you wouldn't get that sense of life without it. The timing is also entirely natural; you don't notice a particular sense of timing from the product at all, but when a group like EST is in action you appreciate that it is as sensitive to this aspect of the sound as it is elsewhere. This is all-round transparency, not merely detail resolution.

The D3 reveals more variety and depth of tone than you usually hear in vocals. Take Madeleine Peyroux's voice on her *Careless Love* album, for example. The D3 managed to retain her tremendous presence and ensured her voice sounded warm and silky, but husky with



|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>VERDICT</b>  |  |
| <b>SOUND &gt;&gt;&gt; 95%</b>   | <b>PRO</b><br>Genuinely transparent, ultra-refined, wide-bandwidth sound – a top-class preamplifier and excellent sonic value for money. |
| <b>FEATURES &gt;&gt;&gt; 70%</b>  |  |
| <b>BUILD &gt;&gt;&gt; 91%</b>   |  |
| <b>VALUE &gt;&gt;&gt; 90%</b>   |  |
| <b>CON</b><br>Limited selection of inputs, small input legends, crude volume steps with remote, higher than average gain.   |  |
| <b>CONCLUSION</b><br>This preamp has a very sophisticated high-end sound, without the five-figure price tag. It is creamy smooth, finely detailed, tonally rich, dynamically strong and three dimensional. If you want the best, don't overlook it just because it's a bargain. |  |
| <b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt;&gt; 93%</b>  |  |





# G stands for great

*You drooled over the G91 in last November's issue – now meet its cousin for 'non-Meridian' systems*

**PRODUCT** G98AH

**TYPE** DVD-Audio/Video player

**PRICE** £3,625

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 44x9x35cm

• Weight: 9kg • Plays DVD-Audio, DVD-Video, CD  
• Only G Series player with multichannel analogue audio outputs • HDMI (v1.0) digital AV output

**CONTACT** ☎ 01480 445678

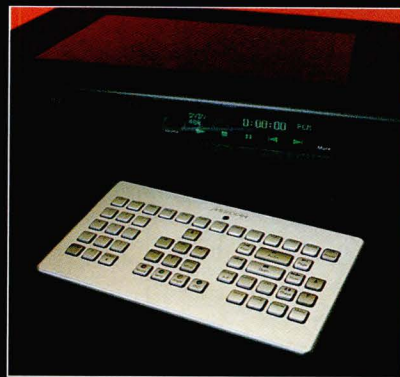
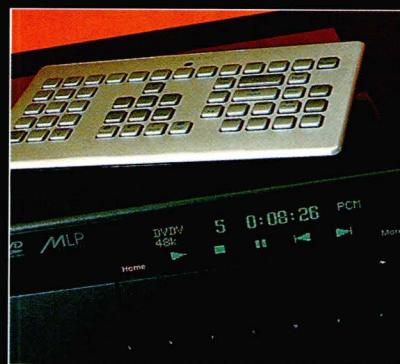
🌐 [www.meridian-audio.com](http://www.meridian-audio.com)

**M**eridian has not made it appear easy to pick a G Series DVD player. From the outsider's point of view, the three seemingly similar models in the range only serve to confound. But, in fact, it's easy. If you want a standalone player to hook to a non-Meridian amp or processor (and play multichannel DVD-Audio) there's only one option – this one, the £3,625 G98AH. It's a DVD-A/V player with all the usual six-channel, two-channel and digital audio sockets required to link it to the outside world. The other G Series players (including the G91 player/controller/tuner reviewed in *HFC 260*) are more geared toward a Meridian-centric outlook.

Describing a Meridian player isn't like dealing with normal devices. It may use 24-bit/192kHz

audio DACs in all channels, support everything except SACD replay and feature HDMI digital video output up to 1080i HDTV standard, but most of the normal wish list for DVD-Audio/Video players is downplayed in the specification sheet. Little wonder, too, since the G98AH practically defines what should go into such a player. It's of little use to know what kind of video DAC goes into the G98AH, for example – Meridian redraws the software so extensively, such information is of little practical use. Put simply, the Meridian is comprehensively specified for a DVD-A/V player and the need to talk specs should be considered as crass as asking the horsepower of a Rolls-Royce. "It's sufficient" is the only real answer you need.

Meridian has been building digital audio electronics since someone first put a zero and a one together and called it music. And this means the company has a great tradition in building digital audio electronics. But, where once this meant Meridian products were thorough but confusing, the G Series is a paragon of 'good' digital, both as a mechanical exercise and in terms of good ergonomics. Menu systems are cleverly thought out, graphics are clear and the execution is faultless.





**“This makes for a performance that is as natural and honest as it is crisp and clean.”**

Unlike most home disc players, Meridian uses a buffer memory. So, the disc spins at faster than normal speeds and loads into the G98's short-term memory, instead of playing directly from the disc. Buffer memory systems are not uncommon in digital cameras and CD personals – in the former, the memory allows the photographer to take new pictures while the camera is still saving recently-taken ones; in the latter, it affords the disc a greater degree of jog-protection. The G98AH uses the buffer concept to improve outright performance.

The idea is simple: one of the biggest problems with CD and DVD alike is getting information off the disc without introducing data jitter in the process. Another is the occurrence of read errors in trying to pull information from the polycarbonate. By loading this video and/or audio data into a buffer before playing it, jitter and read errors can be corrected before it's delivered onwards.

The general ergonomics of the player are typically Meridian. The dot-matrix graphics make the display readable from across a room, while the remote control is both solid and easier to use than ever before – and that's even before we even start to run through the on-screen display. In short, the interface has caught up with the design, making this one of the most attractive and immediately understandable products ever to sport a Meridian badge.

**SOUND QUALITY**

For once, there is no need to differentiate the performance of DVD-Audio, DVD-Video and CD; they all work exceptionally and deliver a similar level of top-class sound. Often, players that sound good with DVD then fail with CD, or vice versa. Here, the player is pretty much equally excellent whatever format you choose to play.

There is a strong sense of authority to the sound, yet this authority doesn't impinge upon the deft articulation and fine detailing. Instead, the player manages to sound like embodied musicians are in the room, well past the bounds of most speakers. Whether these instruments are in two channels or 5.1 is immaterial; they are locked solid in a physical

space and, unless the musician moves, the image stays in place.

Sound is dynamically focused, in both senses of the word 'dynamic'. Too often a DVD player can lose its grip over some kinds of musical instrument, making it waver in size or impressiveness, as well as flattening the dynamic range. Here, the G98AH delivers a static-sized, powerful performance that is just as happy with the compressed, small sound of a poorly recorded and very definitely lo-fi early White Stripes disc and the might of symphonic Rachmaninov at full audiophile tilt.

But, solid and dynamic sounds in a holographic soundstage might not be enough. Such a player has to have the best possible tonal accuracy, too. Once more, the Meridian doesn't disappoint, delivering a sound that's astonishingly precise and tonally rich for a DVD player. Combined with strong detail delivery, this makes for a performance that is as natural and honest as it is crisp and clean.

If there is a limit to the outright performance of the G98AH's sound, it's mild. The player is not the most rhythm-driven model in the shops (although there are few challengers when it comes to digging out the rhythm in a music DVD-Video recording) and there will be many who equate this to a lack of life and energy. They are ultimately wrong, though, and may expect their products to artificially inject such energy into recordings erroneously.

**VIDEO PERFORMANCE**

As with its sound, the Meridian's picture quality puts it right up there with the class leaders, clearly showing how much can be achieved with the standard DVD format. Pictures are perfectly natural, incredibly detailed and cinematically layered. There's a sense of hyper-sharpness to in-focus images and a well-rounded, honest interpretation of out of focus foregrounds and backgrounds. Digging detail out of the darker parts of the picture is another speciality, allowing the player to define potential torture discs with ease. Even the opening explosion of *Cold Mountain* is delivered without the usual blocky blur and grey-out. Flesh tones are also

brilliantly portrayed, with a sense of naturalness that makes them almost impossible to fault. Few players deliver the goods so competently.

And that's the big thing about the G98AH's performance, whether sonically or visually. It's about as good as one-box CD/DVD playback currently gets, certainly outside of the mega-bucks stakes – the next move is another step forward in technology. Sure, it's hardly cheap, and it lacks the SACD playback required to make a 'universal' disc solution, but if you're searching for a combined CD, DVD-Audio and DVD-Video player this Meridian (along with it's G91/G98DH brethren) represents the audio/video pinnacle at the price. It's marvellous with both music and movies, and while it may not be the most 'upbeat' sonically, its all-round performance is superb. **HFC**

*Alan Sircom*

| FORMAT COMPATIBILITY |   |               |   |
|----------------------|---|---------------|---|
| DVD-AUDIO            | ✓ | DVD+R         | ✓ |
| DVD-VIDEO            | ✓ | DVD-RAM       | ✗ |
| SACD                 | ✗ | MP3 AUDIO     | ✓ |
| CD                   | ✓ | WMA AUDIO     | ✗ |
| HD/CD                | ✗ | AAC AUDIO     | ✗ |
| CD R/RW              | ✓ | VIDEO CD      | ✓ |
| DVD R/RW             | ✓ | JPEG PICTURES | ✗ |



**VERDICT**

**SOUND >>> 90%**  
 >> SUB RATINGS  
 CD 87% DVD-A 93%

**VISION >>> 96%**

**FEATURES >>> 88%**

**VALUE >>> 87%**

**CONCLUSION**  
 A heavyweight player (in performance if not weight and size), the G98AH sets a high standard in music and video replay – even with CD, which is rare praise indeed. Even the slow initial start-up time is excused by the jitter-beating buffer. Wow!

**PRO**  
 Exceptionally good CD/DVD sound, with a video performance to match. Great design, strong build and a top-class user interface.

**CON**  
 No SACD replay, and not so rhythmically up-front as some players. Slow disc start time.

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >>> 90%**



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# First-class flyer

van den Hul works cartridge magic by turning a Frog into a Condor

**PRODUCT** van den Hul Condor XCM

**TYPE** Moving coil phono cartridge

**PRICE** £2,500

**CONTACT** ☎ 01235 511166

🌐 www.henleydesigns.co.uk

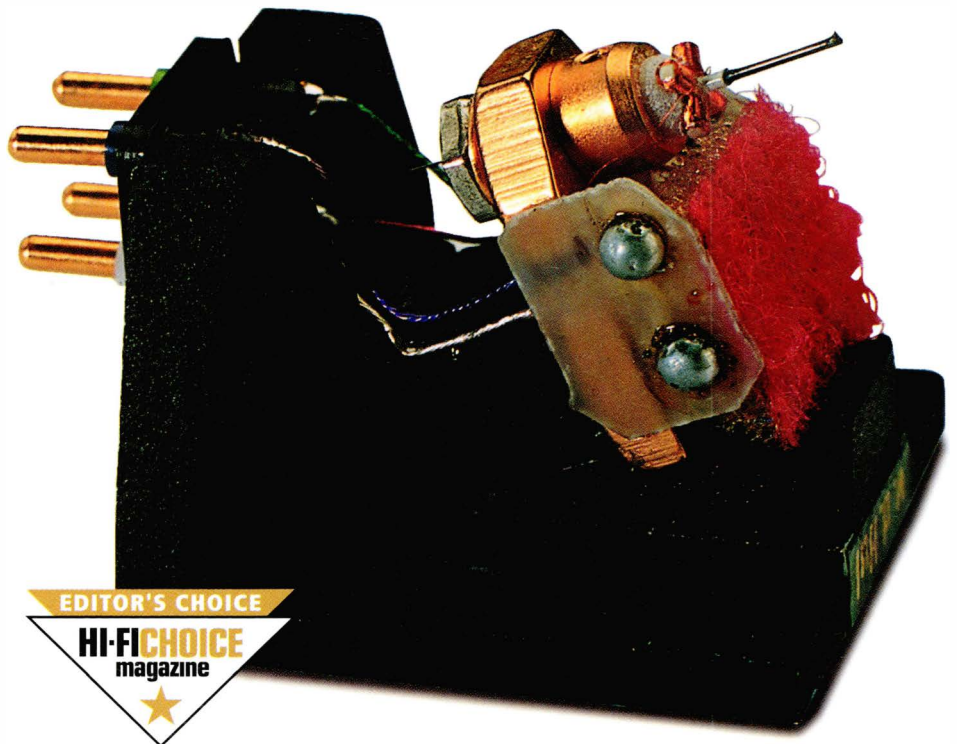
**V**an den Hul takes an unusual approach to building cartridges. While it offers a range of models, only the more affordable of them are 'off-the-peg' items and all the open-bodied designs can be tailor made to the customer's requirements. A variety of different parameters in the cartridge's construction can be varied so that it will match the end user's tonearm, phono stage and listening tastes. For example, vdH can make high or low compliance suspensions, though the former is preferable because it allows lower tracking weight and thus is more vinyl friendly. A typical tracking force range is 1.35 to 1.5grams, which is lighter than most moving coils, which run at around two grams.

You can also specify the type of coil wire, which can be had in copper, silver, gold and even platinum. This, combined with variations in the amount of turns on vdH's distinctive cross-shaped coil former, gives differing levels of output to suit specific phono stages. So when you listen to a Condor, you're really listening to a moving target; if you want a cartridge with a more spacious sound or one that delivers serious bottom end grunt, then a Condor can be built that way.

The Condor is the latest in a prestigious range of vulnerable looking, open-bodied designs from vdH that started with the legendary Grasshopper in the eighties. It is a hybrid of two current designs – the £1,200 Frog and the £2,800 Colibri. Like the latter, it has a single samarium cobalt magnet behind the coils, but it uses a Frog generator along with a vdH-I tip on a shorter boron cantilever, the whole moving mass being lower on the Condor. A little red patch of foam-backed velvet damps the cartridge and helps the Condor completely defeat needle talk – a very rare thing indeed.

## SOUND QUALITY

We used the Condor XCM in an SME Model 20A turntable with Series V tonearm and plugged its 0.55mV output into a Tom Evans Groove phono stage. Given this Condor's optimum load impedance of 1kohm, the Groove's 100ohm is not an ideal match, but the result was better than with adjustable phono stages of lesser quality. In fact, the result was superb.



This cartridge produces three-dimensional stereo in a way that very few source components can – the voices and instruments that it extracts from vinyl have a presence and realism that is uncanny. On test, this meant that Tom Waits' gravely tones on *Shore Leave* had more depth and shape to them, while the drumming had a power and transient attack that made for gripping entertainment. The Condor delivered electric guitar sounds that sliced into the void that was left when Waits himself fell silent, then the percussion joined in with a vivacity that beggared belief.

But *Swordfishtrombones* was not the only slab of vinyl that was invigorated so effectively; the shape of the notes from guitar and bass on Joni Mitchell's *Cotton Avenue* were likewise brought stunningly to life. Through the Condor they had a degree of articulation that is rare, yet without obstructing the great sense of timing. This is not a 'quick' (or for that matter 'slow') cartridge, but rather an evenly-paced one that appears to mirror the music precisely.

Denser material, such as live Mahavishnu Orchestra, benefits from the Condor's very decent underpinning in the bass department, along with its good dynamic contrast and excellent stage width. Factor in the high levels of detail retrieved and the Condor creates a rich sonic picture very effectively.

This XCM version of the Condor presents a good balance of spaciousness and dynamics, but if you'd prefer more of one than another, you can configure it that way. Then there are things like metal or plastic bodies to choose between, with plastic giving a generally softer sound than metal. But whichever flavour you prefer, this is a stunning cartridge that combines much of the Colibri's resolve with the Frog's energy. A potent force indeed for any vinyl fan. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

| VERDICT  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 96%</b><br>[Progress bar]  | <b>PRO</b><br>Outstanding stereo imaging combined with killer dynamics, custom building service, silent mechanicals and no needletalk.   |
| <b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 92%</b><br>[Progress bar]   | <b>CON</b><br>Highly vulnerable coil wires and cantilever. This much choice makes it hard to demonstrate effectively; your cartridge will reflect your taste, not your dealer's. |
| <b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 87%</b><br>[Progress bar]  |  |
| <b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 86%</b><br>[Progress bar]  |  |
| <b>CONCLUSION</b><br>A stunning cartridge with stereo imaging, dynamics and detail resolution to die for. The customisation element means it will be perfect for your system, too. If your vinyl is sounding lacklustre, a prolonged Condor moment is what you need. |  |
| <b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 91%</b>   |  |

# TacT's Next, Next-Gen System



We are proud to announce our latest formidable statement product, the TDA2200 (True Digital Amplifier), which further supports TacT's mission to build the world's highest performing, best-value intelligent digital amplifiers and room correction systems.

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# Puppy power

Naim has slashed the cost of running its Stageline phono stage with a new 'junior' power supply

**PRODUCT** Naim Stageline and i-Supply

**TYPE** Phono stage and power supply

**PRICE** (Stageline) £205, (i-Supply) £85

**CONTACT** ☎ 01722 332266

🌐 www.naim-audio.com

When last we reviewed this phono stage, the least expensive in Naim's range, it required one of the earlier style Nait amplifiers to act as a power supply. For the non-Naim user, the affordable Stageline became a less well-priced option, as it needed a £515 Flatcap 2 to supply the juice. Now that the latest Nait 5i no longer offers the potential to drive a Stageline, Naim clearly needed to do something to make this phono stage viable to both Naim users and the rest of the world alike – the i-Supply is just that solution. It brings the entry-level price of the pairing down to a real world £290 and allows Naim to compete, in price terms, with the likes of Trichord's Dino and Tom Evans' Microgroove.

The £85 i-Supply power supply comes in three varieties; 's' for the Stageline, 'h' for the Headline headphone amp and 'i' for the Apple iPod, the product that would seem to have inspired the name for the component in the first place. It's not white, however, and the iPod is battery driven, so this version of the i-Supply acts as charger as well as power supply. Whatever version is originally chosen, you can buy adaptors to power the other components.

The i-Supply is a low noise, regulated 24V supply and comes in a plastic case with cables issuing from either end – one for the mains and one with a plug to suit the component being powered. It may not be as fancy as Naim's full size supplies but that keeps the price down.

Naim's £205 Stageline phono stage has not changed since our last review. It is a fixed gain stage available in four variants: 'S' (100uV/



470ohm) for low output moving coil (MC) cartridges, 'K' (100uV/560ohm) for medium output MC, 'E' (400uV/400ohm) for high output MC and 'N' (2mV/47kohms) moving magnet (MM) cartridges. The model reviewed here is the 'S' variant for low output MC cartridges. It has RCA phono input sockets but only a four-pin DIN output; fortunately, however, brands such as The Chord Company make suitable interconnects for non-Naimers.

## SOUND QUALITY

Using the Stageline with a van den Hul Condor XGM moving coil cartridge (see p57), which has a preference for higher input impedances, proved a highly engaging and entertaining experience. This is a superb cartridge and many of its qualities are apparent with this relatively modest phono stage – a measure of the quality of the Stageline/i-Supply combination. In partnership, this set-up delivered instruments with a three-dimensional presence that placed them solidly in the room, allowing Joni Mitchell's voice to retain all of its range and realism when singing alongside bassist Jaco Pastorius on the *Mingus* album, for example. Although the reviewing process requires one to audition plenty of varying material, it proved difficult to stop listening and find something else.

As ever with Naim kit, the rhythmic qualities of the material are immediately apparent – the foot starts tapping involuntarily and before you know it, you're enjoying the music and forgetting to analyse the sound. Which is no way to get ahead in the reviewing world... after all, this is supposed to be work!

Naim's famed musicality lies partly in its tendency to emphasise the midrange, a trick that has long been the key to the success of valve amplification and one which makes life easy for the ear. It's not exactly neutrality and rival phono stages like the Trichord Dino offer an improvement in high-frequency resolve that brings extra detail and space in its wake.

Getting back to the Stageline, though, we tried swapping the i-Supply for a Flatcap 2 to see what benefits it brought to the picnic and found it easy to appreciate the extra sense of calm and bass grunt on offer. It's not a startling upgrade, but clearly a worthwhile one.

The i-Supply/Stageline combo does what it *should* say on the box – it brings Naim's rhythm and musicality to a wider audience. It still has a DIN plug output rather than the more universal RCA type, but it's a very interesting option for anyone seeking a little bit of Naim magic. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



| VERDICT  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 81%</b><br>[Progress bar]  | <b>PRO</b><br>Stageline has rhythm, pace, musicality, plus good build and an easy upgrade path. The i-Supply is easily adapted to power a Headline or an iPod.<br><br><b>CON</b><br>Rolled-off high frequency response, DIN output socket, fixed gain and impedance. The i-Supply's potential for improving products like the iPod is untested as yet. |
| <b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 63%</b><br>[Progress bar]   |  |
| <b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 85%</b><br>[Progress bar]  |  |
| <b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 85%</b><br>[Progress bar]  |  |
| <b>CONCLUSION</b><br>Even with this modest power supply, the Stageline is a highly engaging and entertaining phono stage. It's not without its quirks, but it has a knack for getting to the nub of the music. The i-Supply is a flexible addition to the Naim portfolio, too. |  |
| <b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 83%</b>   |  |

GROUP TEST & LAB REPORTS: PAUL MESSENGER

# LOUDSPEAKERS

*There's some splendid variety and fine value for money in this latest mid-price crop*

**O**ur group of six loudspeakers are all mid-priced models that fall between £448 and £750 per pair. Within that relatively narrow spread, four of the models show a surprising consensus, proposing that the two-way standmount, with 150-165mm bass/mid drivers is the right way to go. The Epos, Quad, Triangle and Elac all fall within a £150 spread – indeed just £50 separates the first three – and although there's roughly a two-to-one size ratio between the largest (Triangle) and smallest (Elac), all four have compact port-loaded enclosures.

The main differences are seen in the standards and variations of the surface finishes, and in the drive unit diaphragms and technologies they employ. The Elac, for example, is both the smallest and the most costly of the standmounts, but it does have something rather unusual and special – nay, unique – in the tweeter it uses. However, each of these speakers has classy drivers of one type or another, and the fact that there are significant differences between very similar designs

only makes the group test context that much more interesting.

Among the four main driver diaphragms here, we find metal on the Elac, moulded plastic for Epos, paper for Triangle and a fabric/plastic matrix for the Quad. As far as overall box finish is concerned, the lacquered Quad and beautifully-veneered Epos certainly have the edge over the more prosaic-looking Elac and Triangle.

The other two models are floorstanders, and represent both the least and the most expensive models in the group. Rega's new R3 might be small as floorstanders go, but it's bigger than the standmounts, has an extra bass driver, and is very well appointed, too. It also has good quality veneer, a proper plinth and fashionably slim appearance. It's also actually made in Britain!

At £750 a pair, the Acoustic Energy Aelite Three is an altogether different animal from the others assembled here. Yes, it's more costly, but it's also much bigger and heavier, has four drive units and an attractive real-wood curved sides and a narrow-back enclosure. This last

not only looks good but is also acoustically and structurally functional. A good, solid plinth completes the ensemble. **HFC**

## EQUIPMENT USED

- ⊕ Naim CDS 3 CD player
- ⊕ Burmester 001 CD player
- ⊕ Linn Sondek LP12 turntable
- ⊕ Rega RB1000 tonearm
- ⊕ Linn Akiva cartridge
- ⊕ Magnum Dynalab MD 102 tuner
- ⊕ Naim NAC 552 preamp
- ⊕ Naim NAP 500 power amp
- ⊕ Yamaha MX-D1 power amp
- ⊕ Vertex AQ, Chord Company and Naim cables

## MUSIC USED

- ⊕ Alabama 3 *Exile On Coldharbour Lane*
- ⊕ Massive Attack *Danny The Dog*
- ⊕ Fat Boy Slim *Palookaville*
- ⊕ Joni Mitchell *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter*
- ⊕ Mr Scruff *Keeping It Unreal*
- ⊕ Robbie Robertson *Robbie Robertson*
- ⊕ LSO Rostropovich *Shostakovich: Symphony No. 11*
- ⊕ BBC Radios 3 and 4 were also used

## ON TEST



Acoustic Energy Aelite Three  
£750

Elac BS 203.2  
£599

Epos M12.2  
£449

Quad 12L  
£500

Rega R3  
£448

Triangle Comete ES  
£495

## LISTENING TESTS

Loudspeaker listening tests pose more complex problems than those involved in assessing other components. Speakers vary greatly, and interact strongly and often unpredictably with the room. The difficulty facing sequential unsighted loudspeaker presentations is the tendency to judge each according to how its balance differs from the previous model. Accordingly, extended hands-on listening sessions were adopted for this group, giving scope to adjust to the changes in balance and to experiment with the positioning.

## LAB TESTS

The speakers were tested under in-room conditions, to best represent real-world conditions. The test equipment used included a Neutrik Audiograph analogue signal generator with synchronised pen recorder, used to plot the far-field in-room averaged response traces and impedance plots. Pair-matching was also checked at one metre.

**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 speakers compare across quantitative and qualitative measures. Individual parameters are assessed and shown as better or worse than the group average.

**1] Sensitivity:** Sensitivity measures how loud a speaker will go for a given voltage from the amp. It's scaled to 2.83V at 1m (one watt for an eight-ohm load). This figure can be misleading, as sensitivity varies significantly and as lower-impedance speakers extract more current and hence power from an amp than higher-impedance ones.

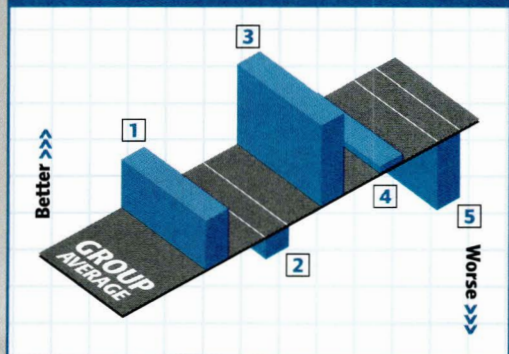
**2] Bass extension:** A speaker's bass is heavily modified by the room. To replicate 'real world' conditions, our figure represents the averaged bass roll-off frequency at -6dB with reference to the broad midband, measured across the far field for a stereo pair in a 4.3x2.6x5.5m room.

**3] Ease of drive:** The lower the impedance, the more current it extracts from the driving amp for a given volume. Lower impedance designs have higher sensitivities, reducing voltage requirement for given loudness levels.

**4] Overall frequency balance:** Overall broad frequency response trends do much to define the character of a speaker, although true neutrality is the obvious goal.

**5] Response smoothness:** The small scale smoothness of a speaker has much to do with the delicacy of the sound, and its ability to deliver subtle harmonic shading.

## OUR BAR GRAPHS: AN EXAMPLE



£750 per pair ☎ 01285 654432 🌐 www.acoustic-energy.co.uk

# ACOUSTIC ENERGY AELITE 3

*AE's hefty new mid-ranger features attractively curved cabinets*

**A**coustic Energy first emerged in the late 1980s with a tiny but costly speaker called the AE1, whose metal diaphragm drivers and mineral-loaded enclosure effectively redefined mini-monitors. The company has been through its fair share of changes since then, and is now owned by Far Eastern interests. What's more, while design remains UK-based, many of the less costly products, including this new Aelite range, are now made in Malaysia.

The last AEs that *Hi-Fi Choice* reviewed were the upmarket Reference Series models, including the latest evolution of that AE1 (the impressive AE1 MkIII – see *HFC* 251). Prior to that we looked at some of the budget Aegis models. The mid-price slot in-between used to be filled by an Aesprit range, but this has recently been replaced by these new and attractively curvaceous Aelites.

According to the label on the back and the accompanying instruction leaflet, this is an Aelite Three, though the specification on the website refers to a AE603. Whatever the formal title, it's a solidly built and reassuringly hefty three-way floorstander that sells for

£750 per pair. This seems more than reasonable in view of the four good quality drive units, 18kg total weight, curved sides and real wood veneer.

Curved sides are fashionable right now, at least in part because they look good. But it's not just a style thing – they're functional too, helping disperse internal reflections and standing waves, and stiffening the 15mm enclosure sides. The curves are used in such a way that the enclosure is much narrower at the back than the front, and the finish comes in a choice of black ash, birch or cherry veneers. There's additional internal horizontal bracing too, and the Aelite Three comes with a suitably solid plinth that ensures good floor coupling and stability.

Metal cone drivers are the rule here. The Aelite Three uses two bass units with 165mm cast frames and 118mm cones, plus a smaller midrange driver with a 140mm frame and 95mm cone. The tweeter, in contrast, has a 28mm soft fabric dome. There are no fewer than three ports on the back panel, plus two pairs of terminals, and a bunged cavity for adding extra mass loading if desired.

## SOUND QUALITY

It was no surprise to find that the multi-driver Aelite Three sounded very different from the others assembled for this group test, and no surprise either to discover that it was the only one to deliver full, deep and impressively powerful bass. It needed no assistance from wall proximity, either. Movie fans will be well impressed, no doubt, but some might find the bass a little too strong with music programming, in which case it would be worth experimenting with port blocking.

The sound here is essentially well-balanced, erring on the heavy and weighty side of neutral. It's basically clean with little audible distortion or coloration, but it could have been more agile and transparent. The top end also sounds fractionally opaque and lacking in delicacy, possibly because the overall top to bottom coherence isn't as tight or together as simpler, smaller designs.

However, there's a powerful solidity here, giving stable and precise stereo imaging with plenty of scale, and no evidence of boxiness. At the same time, there's a tendency to thump, and while the bass end has ample weight, it was less convincing at reproducing texture, with some evidence of thickening. An impressive package in many respects, in the final analysis the Aelite Three doesn't quite swing. **HFC**

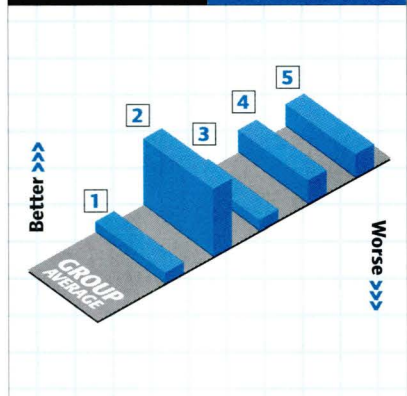


## LAB REPORT

The Aelite Three's sensitivity registers exactly as claimed at 89dB, a figure that is just a shade above average. The impedance trace is quite complex (as expected for a three-way), but stays above a comfortable six ohms across most of the band. With ports tuned to around 38Hz, the -6dB bass extension is around 25Hz (far-field in-room conditions). Output through the broad bass region (30-150Hz) is notably strong and impressively smooth, even with the speakers sited well clear of any walls. Note that there's good scope for tuning the bass to taste by blocking up one or more of the speakers' ports.

Elsewhere, the response trend is a lean 200-600Hz. This shows a broad-but-shallow presence dip at 1.5-3.5kHz, and then a mild peak around 4.5kHz. Although the trend is therefore a bit 'up and down', the transitions throughout look impressively smooth, and the whole trace is held within modest overall limits.

## HOW IT COMPARES



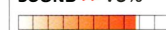
- 1] Sensitivity >> +10%
- 2] Bass extension >> +60%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +10%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >>> +20%
- 5] Response smoothness >> +20%

## SPECIFICATIONS

| Measurement                     | Rated    | Actual     |
|---------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V          | 89dB     | 89dB       |
| Impedance (nominal/minimum)     | 8/- ohms | 8/5.5 ohms |
| Estimated bass extension (-6dB) | 34Hz     | 25Hz       |

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 78%**



**PRACTICALITY >> 79%**



**BUILD >> 89%**



**VALUE >> 83%**



This generously equipped and proportioned three-way floorstander is essentially neutral and well-balanced. Its abundant bass will gladden any movie fan's heart, but there's some lack of agility and coherence.

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 81%**



£599 per pair ☎ 0800 652 5002 🌐 www.elac.com

# ELAC BS 203.2

This tiny speaker's special drivers include a pleated ribbon tweeter

**W**ith roots that go right back to 1926, Elac is a loudspeaker company that's distributed in Britain by headphone specialist and fellow German brand Sennheiser UK. Elac is a relatively up-market operation that designs and manufactures all the drive units used in its loudspeakers, and the uniqueness of these key components is a major justification for the £600 price tag on this near-miniature standmount.

Key in this respect is the latest version of Elac's rather special JET tweeter, which adds a substantial chunk to the price. Beneath the visible slotted metal front of this tweeter unit is a zig-zag folded ribbon that has ten times the area of the typical 25mm dome, and moves so that air molecules are 'squeezed out' from the folds. It's based on the Heil 'air motion transformer' principle, which has been considerably refined by Elac. When reviewing Elac's JET 205 in 2002, we compared its price with a similar size/type Elac equipped with a conventional dome tweeter, and found that the JET premium was more than £200 for the pair. This is more understandable when you realise that these hand-made devices apparently each take forty minutes of skilled labour to build.

The small 150mm cast-frame bass/mid driver is interesting too. It sports what looks like a dish-shaped metal diaphragm, 94mm in diameter and actually of a sandwich construction, the metal skin covering a paper cone substrate.

The shiny, squared-off trim and neat flush-mounting makes the front panel look very smart and appropriately 'tech'. The cabinet

edges are neatly rounded, and the surface finish is first class, but on our samples the veneer itself was rather plain and understated. Veneer options include cherry and beech, while matt black and a high gloss 'silver shadow' are also available, the latter at extra cost. The 11-litre enclosure is loaded by a rear port, with bungs supplied to block this if desired, and the speaker is fed from twin terminal pairs, permitting bi-wiring or bi-amping.

## SOUND QUALITY

Despite its small size, this speaker packs a decent enough thump, delivering ample mid-bass output even when sited well clear of walls. The port-blocking bungs are therefore unlikely to be needed unless the speakers have to be placed close to a wall. However, that is probably better avoided because, with such a small speaker, close-to-wall reflections will inevitably increase midband coloration. But it's no real surprise to find that the bottom end is not this diminutive speaker's greatest strength. It might pack a decent wallop, but it doesn't supply any great authority or warmth, and could do with a little more deep bass grunt.

Things steadily improve as one moves up towards higher frequencies. The midband is impressively smooth and even, with inherently low coloration and a good dynamic range. But the *pièce de résistance* here has to be the top end, which is airy, open and detailed, with superior headroom – a class act, no question. Presence detail is very well projected, though

on one country music track, the pedal steel guitar seemed to excite a degree of resonance that was a shade uncomfortable when the volume was high.

The main advantages of very small speakers are that cabinet coloration is low, because the box surface area is also low, and stereophony is spacious and precise. The Elac did very well on these counts, especially the imaging, perhaps reflecting good phase integrity. And although this speaker doesn't exactly belie its modest dimensions, it does show a willing heart alongside more than a touch of real class. **HFC**



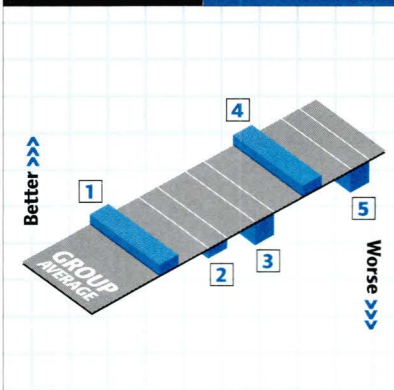
## LAB REPORT

The Elac registers a sensitivity of 89dB – generous for such a small speaker, and 1dB above the manufacturer's claim – although this is partly down to a fairly demanding impedance trace that dips below four ohms in the lower midband. Port blocking would only seem appropriate if the speakers are placed very close to a wall.

Interestingly, there's some evidence of equalisation around the crossover zone here (1.5-4kHz), plus a minor glitch at 200Hz.

The 55Hz port tuning ensures ample in-room output at this point even with the speakers well clear of walls, though the next two octaves could be described as being a little too lean. The broad midband, 250Hz-1kHz is very well ordered, if a little uneven, while the usual presence dip (measured under our far-field in-room regime) extends from 1.2kHz to 2.5kHz here. A little uneven through the lower treble, things become very smooth above 5kHz.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> +10%
- 2] Bass extension >> -10%
- 3] Ease of drive >> -20%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> +10%
- 5] Response smoothness >> -20%

## SPECIFICATIONS

| Measurement                     | Rated      | Actual     |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V          | 88dB       | 89dB       |
| Impedance (nominal/minimum)     | 4/3.3 ohms | 4/3.3 ohms |
| Estimated bass extension (-6dB) | 40Hz       | 42Hz       |

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 82%**

**PRACTICALITY >> 82%**

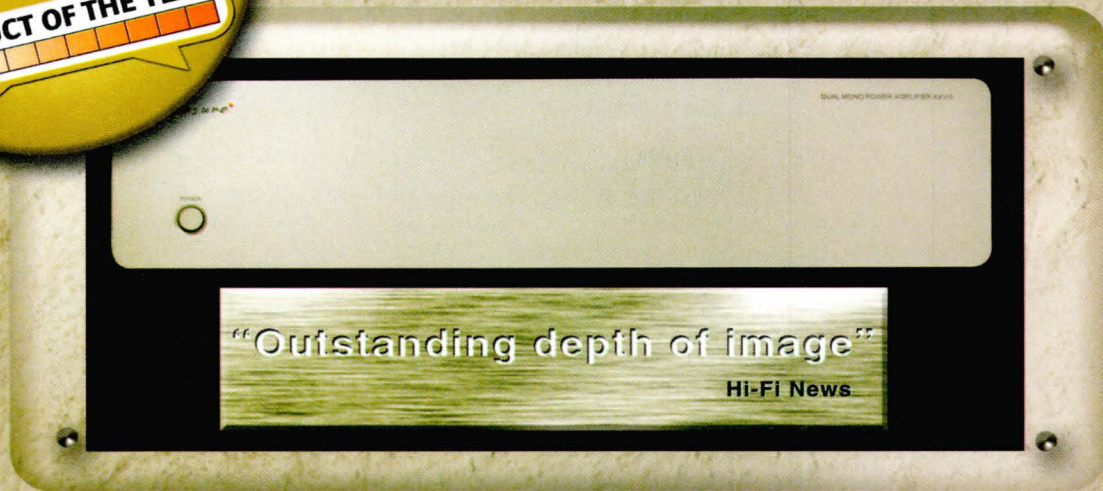
**BUILD >> 87%**

**VALUE >> 81%**

This classy little speaker with its high-class Jet tweeter has more muscle than you'd expect. But it's still a tiny speaker at heart, and could therefore do with more weight to compete with the big boys.

**HI-FI CHOICE** **82%**  
OVERALL SCORE

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## EPOS M12.2

*This latest version of a classic standmount is still a class act*

**A**fter two decades in which it has become a firm favourite with the audiophile community, for producing speakers which place quality ahead of fashion, Epos recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Originally founded by Robin Marshall (now working with Harman), it spent a number of years as the premium brand alongside Mordaunt-Short, when both were part of the TGI Group. When TGI moved out of audio, it was purchased by amp and source component specialist Creek Audio, which has revamped the model range and introduced more competitive pricing.

This M12.2 is successor to the M12 that we reviewed way back in 2001. It also has much in common with the M15.2, which was given the *Ultimate Group Test* treatment much more recently in *HFC* 253. The two share the same drive units, but whereas the floorstanding M15.2 costs a substantial £700, this M12.2 standmount is a rather more reasonable £450 per pair. And you don't need to spend £250 to get a very decent pair of stands; the matching Epos ST12 is considered a natural and empathic companion, at £130.

A two-way design, with extra bass supplied by a rear-mounted reflex port, the M12.2 has a 150mm bass/midrange driver with a 115mm flared, moulded plastic cone, and a central phase plug. The moulded chassis/baffle used by its predecessor has now been replaced by a cast alloy basket in this Mk2 model, so that the very visible front can be prettied up with wood

veneer. The tweeter has a 25mm aluminium dome diaphragm with its own protective grille.

The very classy and solidly built cabinet has a classically traditional appearance. Available in a choice of light cherry, dark cherry or black, it's finished on all sides in a notably high quality real wood veneer, and the front edges are nicely rounded, softening the lines and improving edge diffraction effects. The simplest possible crossover network is used here, with just a single capacitor feeding the tweeter. Twin terminal pairs allow bi-wiring, and a perforated metal grille is supplied, though its use is not encouraged.

### SOUND QUALITY

Placed on 600mm stands well clear of walls, the M12.2 packs a decent thump, sufficient to indicate that wall reinforcement is quite unnecessary. That said, it's no real surprise to find a lack of serious bass weight and authority here. This is a virtually inevitable trade-off when dealing with speakers as small as this. But, while it might not provide the low bass we heard from its larger floorstanding M15.2 stablemate, it's significantly better balanced across the broad midband.

The 12.2 might not delve all that deep then, but elsewhere it's a beautifully neutral and well-balanced loudspeaker. There are no obvious vices, apart perhaps from some lack of upper bass warmth. It's also a bit of a control freak, and has a character that's different from

that shown by the speakers in this group with paper cone main drivers. It somehow sounds less 'busy', yet still conveys the full detail of a musical performance, albeit in a rather more restrained way, thanks to very fine all-round coherence and timing.

Some might find it too restrained, but others will welcome the relaxed and easy way this loudspeaker goes about its music making. Box colorations are certainly low, thanks presumably to the notably solid construction, and the whole makes a case for the high-quality standmount that's just as strong as that made by its predecessors going back to the early

1990s. **HFC**

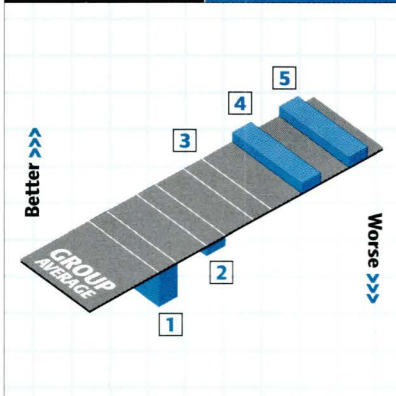


### LAB REPORT

Our sensitivity rating of 87dB agrees with the figure quoted by the manufacturer. Although it's a shade below the group average, it should be seen in the context of a very easy amplifier load, which only dips below six ohms above 10kHz. There is a minor resonance glitch around 800Hz though, probably a cone/surround effect.

The port here is tuned to a highish 55Hz, which inevitably tends to limit the absolute bass extension, and indicates that free space siting is advisable – try blocking the ports if you want to place these speakers close to a wall. Output is rather shy through two octaves in the upper bass and lower midband region (60-240Hz), though much less so than with the floorstanding M15.2 for example. Above the room-sensitive zone, it comes across as very well controlled indeed, with just a hint of 1kHz forwardness and slight restraint at 2.5-4kHz – overall, it's much flatter than the M15.2.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> -30%
- 2] Bass extension >> -10%
- 3] Ease of drive >> 0%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> +10%
- 5] Response smoothness >> +10%

### SPECIFICATIONS

| Measurement                     | Rated    | Actual     |
|---------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Sensitivity @ 1m / 2.83V        | 87dB     | 87dB       |
| Impedance (nominal/minimum)     | 8/- ohms | 8/5.5 ohms |
| Estimated bass extension (-6dB) | 60Hz     | 40Hz       |

### VERDICT

**SOUND >> 84%**



**PRACTICALITY >> 82%**



**BUILD >> 89%**



**VALUE >> 89%**



This latest version of a true classic continues to show its all-round class, with lovely presentation and a fine sonic balance. Good control, superior coherence and low coloration contribute to a strong musical package.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
OVERALL SCORE **87%**



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# QUAD 12L

*A lovely lacquered finish at a surprisingly low price*

**A** famous British brand which can trace its origins back to the 1930s, Quad is now owned by Chinese interests, and forms part of the International Audio Group (IAG, alongside Wharfedale and TAG McLaren Audio). Although originally known for its amplifiers and other electronics, Quad is also famous for introducing a revolutionary full-range electrostatic loudspeaker way back in the 1950s. It still makes evolved versions of that legendary device today.

However, full-range electrostatics are unavoidably bulky, and costly to make and sell, so IAG has recently added some very attractive and much less expensive box loudspeakers to its product portfolio. While such speakers can never possess the exclusivity of the electrostatics, they have come up with an alternative exclusive, in the form of a lovely high-gloss lacquer finish at a surprisingly affordable price, thanks to Quad's Chinese manufacturing connections.

We've already reviewed the two floorstanders in the range, the 21L (HFC 263) and the 22L (HFC 257), with the smaller two-way 21L proving the outstanding model of the two. Now it's time to check out the 12L, which packages the same drivers as the 21L in a smaller stand-mount enclosure (which could well have an internal volume of around 12 litres).

The 18mm MDF enclosure is covered in a choice of black or three real wood veneers – rosewood in the case of our samples, plus maple or birds-eye maple alternatives – all of which are covered in a high-gloss finish created

by six separate layers of lacquer. The net effect looks very pretty indeed.

The tweeter uses a 25mm soft fabric dome diaphragm, and the main driver has a woven 120mm Kevlar cone mounted in a 165mm cast alloy chassis. A simple crossover network has audiophile-type components, including air-cored chokes and polypropylene capacitors, fed from twin terminal pairs that permit bi-wiring or bi-amping.

## SOUND QUALITY

Given that they share the same driver line-up, one would expect to find similarities between this standmount 12L and Quad's floorstanding 21L, and that did indeed prove to be the case. At the same time, the differences at the bass end are quite marked too, and these turn out to have significant implications for the overall balance.

Although deep bass weight and extension are not on the agenda here, the 12L does have sufficient bass to be placed on stands clear of walls. In fact, close-to-wall siting does result in almost too much mid-bass thump. However, some experimentation will be worthwhile here, as the free-space condition may well be too dry for some tastes.

Furthermore, put that restrained bass end alongside a treble that's impressively smooth, but also a little lacking in sparkle and air, and the consequence is a distinct tendency to emphasise the broad midband, somewhat at the expense of the frequency extremes.

The midband strength is certainly appealing, initially at least, and serves to highlight very decent dynamic vocal expression. But it also reveals a degree of boxy coloration which is less palatable. This adds something of a thickening texture and tonality through the lower midband region.

On the plus side, the presence band is beautifully coherent, giving a seamless and open transition from mid to treble alongside sufficient restraint to avoid any aggressive tendencies. In the final analysis, the 12L is a great-looking speaker with plenty of sonic charm too. Voice reproduction is its particular strength, but a little more bass muscle and weight would have been welcome. **HFC**

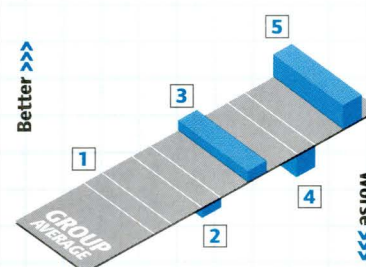


## LAB REPORT

Our sensitivity rating of 88dB is the same as the figure claimed by the manufacturer, and it's no surprise to find the whole measurement set showing close correspondence with those for Quad's floorstanding 21L. This is because the two share the same drivers – even down to a minor impedance glitch at 650Hz. The main difference lies in the port tuning – 55Hz for this standmount against 36Hz for the 21L. This certainly explains why the 12L rolls off rapidly below 50Hz, and might well be the reason why its output is rather too strong in the lower midband (120-300Hz), which in turn probably accounts for the boxy coloration that may be heard.

Above 300Hz, the frequency balance looks rather impressive – smoother than most and entirely seamless through the presence/crossover region. Another unusual characteristic is a gently falling treble output above 2kHz, rather than the high frequency recovery that's usually found.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> 0%
- 2] Bass extension >> -10%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +10%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> -20%
- 5] Response smoothness >> +20%

## SPECIFICATIONS

| Measurement                     | Rated    | Actual   |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V          | 88dB     | 88dB     |
| Impedance (nominal/minimum)     | 6/- ohms | 6/4 ohms |
| Estimated bass extension (-6dB) | 45Hz     | 40Hz     |

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 77%**

**PRACTICALITY >> 82%**

**BUILD >> 90%**

**VALUE >> 82%**

This beautifully finished standmount has good dynamic expression and fine voice-band coherence. But it also tends to emphasise the midband, lacks real bass weight and has some boxy coloration.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
OVERALL SCORE **80%**



£448 per pair ☎ 01702 333071 🌐 www.rega.com

## REGA R3

This British-made baby floorstander offers superb value for money

Essex-based Rega is one of Britain's most successful and long established hi-fi companies. Known first and foremost for vinyl turntables, it managed the transition to CD and steadily expanded its range of activities to encompass a full line of electronics products and an extensive range of loudspeakers, all of which are manufactured in its Southend factories.

Back last summer (in *HFC* 256), we reviewed the company's new flagship loudspeaker called the R9, which employed a new and innovative bass driver technology. This technique was so effective that Rega quickly adapted it to suit smaller and less expensive models in its range, including this entry-level R3. Considering it's a three-driver floorstander with a proper plinth, good-quality real wood finish and, of course, no need to purchase additional stands, the price of £448 per pair looks a very reasonable prospect indeed.

It's one of the smallest floorstanders *Hi-Fi Choice* has ever encountered, standing just

75cm tall and looking notably slim when viewed from the front, so it appears just about as discreet as any speaker can be. A possible downside is that the drive units will be placed somewhat below seated ear height.

Both the open-frame drivers are small units with 125mm frames and 90mm paper cones, each loaded by part of the total enclosure. The front-mounted bass/mid driver is a type R125, similar to that used in a number of other Rega models, and this is placed above the 19mm soft dome tweeter, and loaded by a small sealed chamber. The bass-only driver is mounted on the side here, and is unusual in featuring a multi-layer voice coil, whose inherently high inductance provides an automatic low-pass roll-off, without the need for additional crossover network components. This bass driver is loaded by most of the enclosure, and a large front port close to the floor. The whole thing sits on a solid, spiked MDF plinth, which ensures good physical stability, and is fed via a single terminal pair.

### SOUND QUALITY

Some time was spent experimenting with positioning. Obviously rather bass light when sited well clear of walls, it became a little too heavy and bassy when moved up close. Best balance in our room was found with the speakers around 15-25cm from the nearest rearward wall, so the R3 should be easily adapted to a good range of room sizes and types. As ever, one should experiment *in situ*.

The R3 has an engagingly 'busy' sound, generating and transmitting to listeners a considerable amount of musical information and detail. Essentially neutral and even-handed right across the band, with unusually good all-round coherence, it remains a somewhat lightweight affair in tonal balance and dynamic terms. The sound could be warmer and 'fuller' in the bass region too, but is also clean, lively and notably agile. It has an impressive ability to sort out complex bass interplay and distinguish between different instrumental textures, for example in Mari Boine's remarkable live album *Eallin'*.

The treble might be stronger than average, but it's also very clean and smooth, avoiding any harshness or harshness even when the volume is turned up high. This has the added bonus that fine detail is well maintained even at very low listening levels. As a speaker that's discreet, involving and also very cost effective, the R3 will take some beating – a very fine package with music at its core. **HFC**

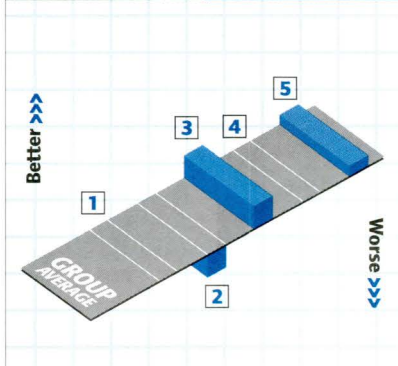


### LAB REPORT

The R3 registered a sensitivity of 88dB on our measure, which is as near as dammit to the "approx 89dB" that Rega claims. This average value is not too seriously compromised by an impedance characteristic that stays comfortably above four ohms throughout. Free space sited found the bass distinctly lacking, but this became a slight excess if the speakers were close up top the wall - best results were obtained with a 10 to 25cm gap.

The overall frequency balance is impressively well-ordered right across the band, and smoother than average too for the most part. However, it does display some obvious individual characteristics, and this particularly tends to emphasise the top end of the frequency band. Although there's an isolated peak at around 200Hz, more significant is a forward plateau 1.5-3kHz, and a rising trend thereafter to a further plateau 8-14kHz.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> 0%
- 2] Bass extension >> -20%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +20%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> 0%
- 5] Response smoothness >> +10%

### SPECIFICATIONS

| Measurement                     | Rated    | Actual     |
|---------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V          | 89dB     | 88dB       |
| Impedance (nominal/minimum)     | 6/- ohms | 6/4.5 ohms |
| Estimated bass extension (-6dB) | -        | 42Hz       |

### VERDICT

SOUND >> 86%



PRACTICALITY >> 88%



BUILD >> 86%



VALUE >> 94%



This discreet little floorstander offers fine material value for money. The sound is lightweight but also beautifully balanced and open, delivering bags of musical detail with fine poise and great agility.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
OVERALL SCORE **90%**



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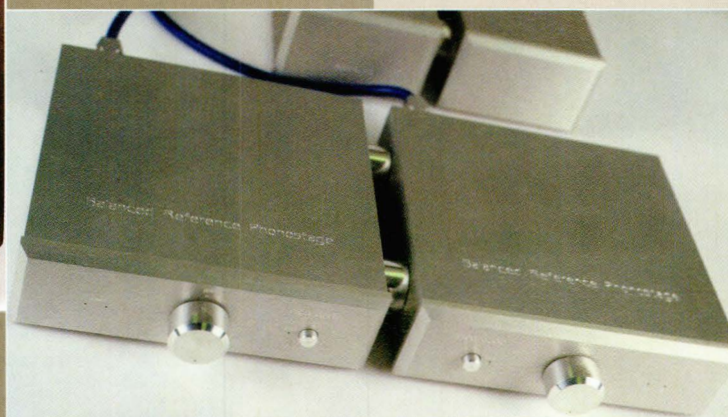


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# CONCLUSIONS

*Unusually, standmounts outnumber floorstanders here, but the laurels are shared*

In the past, standmount 'bookshelf' speakers of very high quality were common, but the floorstander eclipsed the bookshelf some years back. As such, this is an unusual group today, because there are more standmounts than floorstanders. In the end, though, the honours are split evenly between the two types.

The Epos and Quad standmounts are very closely related to floorstanders we've reviewed previously. Indeed, each brand uses the same drive units for both its models, the only substantial

differences being in the size and port-tuning of the enclosures.

The interesting bit is that in both cases the drivers worked significantly better in one configuration than the other. Quad's floorstanding 21L clearly had better balance and lower coloration than the 12L standmount reviewed here, which means less of a 'family sound' than we expected. That said, Epos' compact M12.2 has an altogether superior overall balance to its M15.2 floorstander. Both 12L and M12.2 are beautifully finished, but in strongly contrasting styles.

Rega's new R3 is a particularly clever and effective package, essentially a scaled-down 'budget' variation on the theme set by the R9 flagship last summer. It might not have all the authority of its larger stablemate, but it does have similar agility, and is a cute-looking speaker at a very sharp price.

If the Rega is bright and lively, so too is Triangle's Comete ES. This bulky vinyl-clad standmount won't win any prizes for style, but it does deliver a vividly dynamic musical performance that's always entertaining and involving.

Being tiny is considered a major virtue by many speaker buyers, and Elac's BS203.2 certainly fits that bill. It's a little costly (thanks to that tweeter), but has a beguiling sweetness, good headroom, and sounds punchier and more muscular than it has any right to.

Acoustic Energy's substantial Aelite Three is a total contrast. A lot of speaker for the money, it delivers the sort of massive bass that movie and hip-hop fans will love, and has notably impressive imaging, but could be more delicate and coherent for the audiophile listener. **HFC**

## TRY THEM WITH THESE

### AMPLIFIERS

**EXPOSURE 2010 S £599**  
Unassuming and understated styling but a very capable amp with a passion for music.

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### CD PLAYERS

**ROKSAN KANDY MKIIID £650**  
A clean, tidy and expressive player that improves on its predecessors.

### ARCAM DIVA CD73T £400

Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic, a well-balanced player for mid-priced systems.

## HINTS AND TIPS

»» Floor-coupling spikes should have tight lock-nuts, but don't over-tighten these or you'll strip the socket threads.

»» Finding the right place to put the loudspeakers acoustically is very important. Do take time and trouble experimenting with the placement until the speakers sound their best.

»» Moving a speaker from a free space location until it's close to a wall will substantially boost the mid-bass.

Sometimes port-filling foam bungs help. »» Expect speakers to improve steadily over the first 100 hours or so. »» Use decent speaker cable, if you want your system to perform at its best.

## LOUDSPEAKERS AT A GLANCE



| MAKE  | ACOUSTIC ENERGY  | ELAC  | EPOS  | QUAD   | REGA   | TRIANGLE   |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| MODEL   | AELITE THREE   | BS 203.2  | M12.2   | 12L  | R3   | COMETE ES  |
| PRICE   | £750   | £599  | £449  | £500   | £448   | £495   |
| SOUND   |  |   |   |  |  |  |
| PRACTICALITY  |  |   |   |  |  |  |
| BUILD   |  |   |   |  |  |  |
| VALUE   |  |   |   |  |  |  |
| OVERALL   |  |   |   |  |  |  |
| CONCLUSION  | This good-looking floorstander is well balanced and has abundant bass, but lacks some agility. | A tiny speaker with a classy tweeter that has more muscle than expected, plus a silky top end, too. | Good control, superior coherence and low coloration come together to deliver an engrossing musical performance. | Lovely lacquer finish, good dynamics and fine voicing, but emphasises the midband and has some boxiness. | Sounds a little bright, but delivers bags of musical detail with fine poise and great agility. | On the bright side and not pretty, but the Comete ES delivers fine coherence and vivid dynamics. |
| KEY FEATURES  |  |   |   |  |  |  |
| SIZE (WxHxD)  | 23x92x30cm   | 17x28.5x23cm  | 20x37.5x25cm  | 20.5x35.5x25cm   | 18x75x27.5cm   | 20x42x34cm   |
| DRIVER CONFIG   | 3-way  | 2-way   | 2-way   | 2-way  | 2.5-way  | 2-way  |
| MAIN DRIVER SIZE(S)   | 1x140mm, 2x165mm   | 1x150mm   | 1x150mm   | 1x165mm  | 2x125mm  | 1x165mm  |
| STAND/ FLOOR?   | Floor  | Stand   | Stand   | Stand  | Floor  | Stand  |
| CABINET FINISH  | Real wood  | Real wood   | Real wood   | Lacquered real wood  | Real wood  | Vinyl woodprint  |
| BI-WIRE?  | Y  | Y   | Y   | Y  | N  | Y  |
| LAB CONCLUSIONS E = EXCELLENT • G = GOOD • A = AVERAGE • P = POOR |  |   |   |  |  |  |
| SENSITIVITY   | 89dB <b>G</b>  | 89dB <b>G</b>   | 87dB <b>A</b>   | 88dB <b>A</b>  | 88dB <b>A</b>  | 89dB <b>G</b>  |
| EST. BASS EXTENSION   | 25Hz <b>G</b>  | 40Hz <b>A</b>   | 40Hz <b>A</b>   | 40Hz <b>A</b>  | 42Hz <b>A</b>  | 40Hz <b>A</b>  |
| IMPEDANCE (NOM/ MIN)  | 8/5.5 ohms <b>G</b>  | 4/3.3 ohms <b>P</b>   | 8/5.5 ohms <b>G</b>   | 6/4 ohms <b>A</b>  | 6/4.5 ohms <b>A</b>  | 4/3.3 ohms <b>P</b>  |
| OVERALL FREQ. BALANCE   | +20% <b>G</b>  | +10% <b>A</b>   | +10% <b>A</b>   | -20% <b>P</b>  | 0% <b>A</b>  | -20% <b>P</b>  |
| RESPONSE SMOOTHNESS   | +10% <b>A</b>  | -20% <b>P</b>   | +10% <b>A</b>   | -20% <b>P</b>  | +10% <b>A</b>  | -30% <b>P</b>  |

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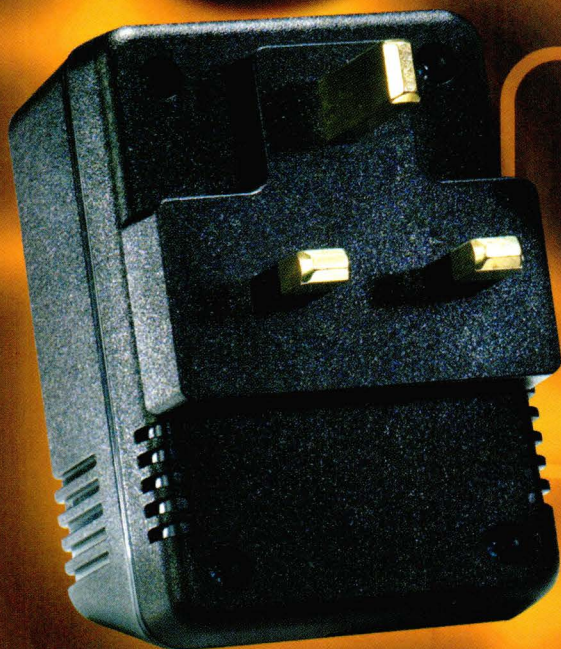


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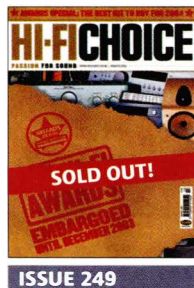
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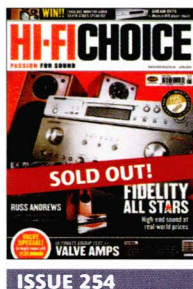
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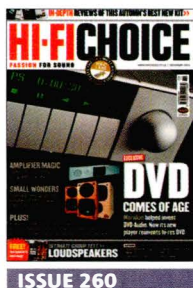
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# HI-FI CHOICE BUYER'S BIBLE



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.

#### Reviews you can trust

Our test results are the most reliable in the business. We employ the most experienced reviewers and use the most thorough techniques to ensure our ratings are the ones you can trust. All the equipment we rate most highly is contained within these pages, from CD and vinyl to the latest multichannel disc players. Whether hi-fi stereo or high performance surround and vision, these components will take you a step closer to reality.

#### 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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# 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 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 digital-to-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 so-called 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 44.1 kHz to 192kHz.

### CAN I PLAY SACDS ON A NORMAL 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.



**Cyrus CD8x £1,000**

The latest diminutive CD spinner from Cyrus is an absolute stunner. Highly detailed and supremely musical, it's more than a match for many more outwardly exotic machines.

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE CD PLAYERS

### Audio-only CD and SACD players

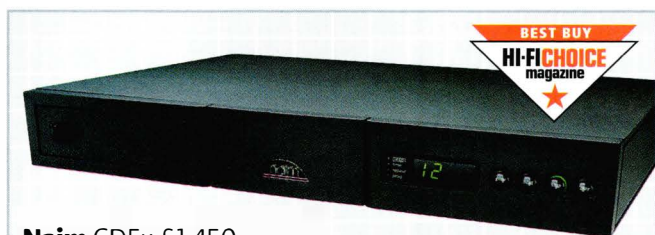
| BADGE?                                      | PRODUCT                              | £     | COMMENTS   | SPECIFICATIONS  |                 |                |                  |         |                  |                  | ISSUE NUMBER |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------|--|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|---------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
|   |                                      |       |  | SACD COMPATIBLE | ELEC DIG OUTPUT | OPT DIG OUTPUT | CD-RW COMPATIBLE | CD TEXT | BAL ANALOGUE OUT | HEADPHONE SOCKET |              |
| <b>UP TO £1,000</b>                         |                                      |       |  |                 |                 |                |                  |         |                  |                  |              |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">BB</span> | Arcam DIVA CD73T                     | 400   | Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic – a finely judged balance for budget to mid-price systems               | ●               | ●               | ●              | ●                | ●       |                  |                  | 247          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">BB</span> | Arcam DIVA CD192                     | 850   | Beautifully built, well featured player with clear, open and involving sound                                       | ●               | ●               | ●              | ●                | ●       |                  |                  | 264          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">BB</span> | 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   | ●               | ●               | ●              | ●                |         |                  |                  | 249          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">BB</span> | Cyrus CD8x                           | 1000  | Impressive mix of detail, musicality, analysis and appearance. Even better with the PSX-R power supply (£400)      | ●               | ●               | ●              | ●                |         |                  |                  | 264          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">BB</span> | Exposure 2010 S                      | 599   | Highly communicative sounds with good bass, though not always the most analytical                                  | ●               | ●               | ●              | ●                |         |                  |                  | 264          |
|   | Marantz CD5400 OSE                   | 200   | Nicely thought out player with useful features and good sound, though some mechanical noise                        | ●               | ●               | ●              | ●                | ●       | ●                |                  | 256          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">BB</span> | Marantz CD7300                       | 350   | Astonishingly capable sub-£500 player with effortless bass, detailed mid and treble and vast soundstages           | ●               | ●               | ●              | ●                | ●       | ●                |                  | 250          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">BB</span> | Musical Fidelity X-Ray <sup>v3</sup> | 900   | Think of this as an A3.2 CD player in a smaller, cheaper box. Great, earthy CD sound for the money                 | ●               | ●               | ●              | ●                |         |                  |                  | 255          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">BB</span> | 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          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">BB</span> | Roksan Kandy MkIID                   | 650   | Clean, tidy and expressive player – a more than worthwhile improvement on previous versions                        |                 | ●               | ●              | ●                |         | ●                |                  | 259          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">BB</span> | Sony SCD-XA3000ES                    | 800   | A revised and refined version of the SCD-XA333ES that provides an almost holographic sound                         | ●               | ●               | ●              | ●                | ●       | ●                |                  | 248          |
| <b>ABOVE £1,000</b>                         |                                      |       |  |                 |                 |                |                  |         |                  |                  |              |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">BB</span> | Audio Analogue Maestro               | 1,650 | The new Maestro 192/24 delivers a sound that's slightly rosy yet always musical and thoroughly enjoyable           | ●               |                 | ●              |                  | ●       |                  |                  | 257          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | 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          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | 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          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | 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               |                 |                 | ●              | ●                | ●       |                  |                  | 238          |
|   | Hegel CDP2A                          | 1,200 | A technically proficient and masterly-sounding player built by people who clearly know what they are doing         |                 | ●               |                | ●                |         | ●                |                  | 252          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | Krell SACD Standard                  | 4,244 | A landmark SACD player and an excellent CD player at what by Krell standards is a relatively affordable price      | ●               | ●               | ●              | ●                |         | ●                |                  | 251          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | Lindemann 820                        | 6,999 | Stereo SACD player with sumptuous build and sound, onboard analogue volume control and multiple digital inputs     | ●               | ●               |                |                  | ●       |                  | ●                | 262          |
|   | Meridian G07                         | 1,595 | Immaculately conceived and executed player with a softly-spoken voice. Needs careful system matching               |                 | ●               | ●              | ●                |         | ●                |                  | 259          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | Meridian 808i Signature              | 8,250 | Stunning CD player with added preamp functions. Versatile and quite delightful                                     |                 | ●               | ●              | ●                | ●       | ●                | ●                | 263          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista           | 4,000 | Limited edition stereo-only SACD/CD player that is simply the best player MF has ever made                         | ●               | ●               | ●              | ●                | ●       |                  |                  | 237          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">BB</span> | Naim CD5x                            | 1,450 | A genuinely engaging CD player with remarkable musical grip and coherence  |                 |                 |                | ●                |         |                  |                  | 264          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | 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       |                 | ●               | ●              | ●                |         |                  |                  | 259          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | Resolution Audio Opus 21             | 2,850 | Dynamic, well timed and 3D performance with an analogue volume control and digital input for a second source       |                 |                 |                | ●                |         | ●                | ●                | 244          |
|   | Roksan Caspian M Series              | 1,100 | An enjoyably dynamic-sounding player featuring a positively unique choice of digital components                    |                 | ●               |                | ●                |         |                  |                  | 252          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | Sony SCD-XA9000ES                    | 2,400 | State-of-the-art CD and SACD player with full SACD bass management and i.Link-encrypted digital output             | ●               | ●               |                | ●                | ●       | ●                | ●                | 253          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | Wadia 302                            | 3,999 | A dynamic and gripping player, with bass to die for and resolution to change your listening habits                 |                 | ●               | ●              | ●                |         | ●                | ●                | 253          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | Wadia 861se                          | 9,999 | Stunning player with a full digital preamp and an all-revealing sound that'll keep you up all night                |                 | ●               | ●              | ●                |         | ●                | ●                | 256          |

**SPECS KEY** **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.



**Naim CD5x £1,450**

Next model up from Naim's excellent entry-level CD5i, the 'x' variant adds Naim's traditional power supply upgradeability and even more musical grip and coherence.



**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.

# 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.

## 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.

## DVD-AUDIO

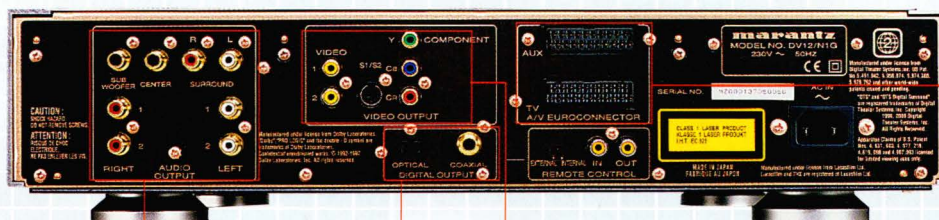
DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player.

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.



## CONNECTIONS



**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 good-quality option for video, especially ones that output RGB.

## Our favourite DVD PLAYERS

**BB** BEST BUY **EC** EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Audio/Video disc players

| BADGE?              | PRODUCT                   | £      | COMMENTS  | DVD-A COMPATIBLE | SACD COMPATIBLE | ELEC DIG OUTPUT | OPT DIG OUTPUT | HEADPHONE SOCKET | ISSUE NUMBER |
|---------------------|---------------------------|--------|---|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|
| <b>UP TO £1,000</b> |                           |        |   |                  |                 |                 |                |                  |              |
| <b>BB</b>           | 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          |
| <b>BB</b>           | 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          |
| <b>BB</b>           | Denon DVD-3910            | 900    | Exceptionally well-specified universal player with a performance to match. A true class-leader                                | ●                | ●               | ●               | ●              |                  | 260          |
| <b>BB</b>           | 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 | ●                | ●               | ●               | ●              |                  | 261          |
| <b>BB</b>           | Pioneer DV-668AV          | 600    | HDMI-equipped universal player without i.Link audio output, but still absurdly well equipped and highly capable for the price | ●                | ●               | ●               | ●              |                  | 252          |
| <b>BB</b>           | 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         | ●                | ●               | ●               | ●              |                  | 252          |
| <b>ABOVE £1,000</b> |                           |        |   |                  |                 |                 |                |                  |              |
| <b>EC</b>           | Advantage S12.3           | 9,350  | Adaptable ultra-high grade player with built-in preamp functionality that can be extended further. Unusually strong with CD   | ●                | ●               | ●               | ●              |                  | 264          |
| <b>BB</b>           | 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                        |                  |                 | ●               | ●              |                  | 263          |
|                     | Cyrus DVD8                | 1,200  | An impressive step up from the DVD7+, which includes component video outputs  |                  |                 | ●               | ●              |                  | 238          |
| <b>EC</b>           | Linn Unidisk SC           | 2,995  | Groundbreaking universal player with built-in preamplifier, with excellent picture for home cinema and sound for hi-fi        | ●                | ●               | ●               | ●              |                  | 259          |
| <b>EC</b>           | Marantz DV-12S2           | 2,000  | A universal player for audiophiles, with top-notch video playback too. Sonically refined and enjoyably understated            | ●                | ●               | ●               | ●              |                  | 255          |
| <b>EC</b>           | Meridian G91              | 3,895  | A DVD-AV player, preamp/processor and tuner combined – great as a two-channel player, or in a complete Meridian rig           | ●                | ●               | ●               | ●              |                  | 260          |
| <b>EC</b>           | Meridian 800              | 10,805 | The ultimate in DVD replay, modular construction, buffered ROM drive, upsampling and high-res digital outputs                 | ●                | ●               | ●               | ●              |                  | 230          |
| <b>EC</b>           | 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          |
| <b>EC</b>           | Primare DVD30             | 2,000  | A universal player for audiophiles – no wideband digital outputs but masterful with music and a good picture too              | ●                | ●               | ●               | ●              |                  | 253          |
| <b>EC</b>           | 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. **SACD COMPATIBLE** Plays high-resolution SACD 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



**Pioneer DV-575A £150**  
DVD-Audio and SACD playback at an astonishing price – and very decent DVD-Video too!



**Denon DVD-3910 £900**  
New-generation Denon is currently the most complete universal player below £1,000.



**Arcam FMJ DV29 £1,600**  
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.

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✓ External Earth Stud

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✓ UK Plug - 10A Fuse Fitted

✓ Colour Black

✓ Specials to order

| TYPE NO. | NO. OF SOCKETS | OVERALL LENGTH | PRICE  |
|----------|----------------|----------------|--------|
| HF 4     | 4              | 446mm          | £83.72 |
| HF 6     | 6              | 557mm          | £92.47 |
| HF 8     | 8              | 670mm          | £98.70 |

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# 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.



## TURNTABLE SET-UP

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.

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.

## TOP BUYS



### Pro-Ject 1 Xpression £210

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



### Rega 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.



## Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

# TURNTABLES

### Record players

| BADGE?          | PRODUCT                     | £      | COMMENTS   | SPECIFICATIONS |                 |                         |                   | ISSUE NUMBER |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------|--|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
|                 |                             |        |  | SPEEDS         | SUSP SUBCHASSIS | SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE | SUPPLIED WITH ARM |              |
| <span>BB</span> | Audio Note TT1/ARM1         | 728    | Simple and unpretentious, it delivers a real taste of true high-end performance at an affordable price                 | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 203          |
| <span>BB</span> | Avid Diva                   | 1,100  | A solid and powerful sounding deck with fine build, requires a smooth, relaxed cartridge for best results              | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 247          |
| <span>EC</span> | 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          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 229          |
| <span>EC</span> | 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          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 194          |
| <span>EC</span> | 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          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 256          |
| <span>BB</span> | Goldring GR1/RB250          | 140    | The best value 'Rega' yet and a new benchmark for budget turntables. Vinyl nirvana on a shoestring                     | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 252          |
| <span>BB</span> | Michell Gyro SE             | 1,058  | New DC motor-equipped Gyro offers great looks and even better sound. Price includes RB300 arm                          | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 239          |
| <span>EC</span> | 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          |
| <span>BB</span> | 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          |
| <span>BB</span> | Pro-Ject Debut III          | 120    | Superb budget deck offering fine build and performance   | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 261          |
| <span>BB</span> | Pro-Ject 1 Xpression        | 210    | Well designed and executed budget deck with an entertaining and revealing sound  | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 248          |
| <span>BB</span> | Rega P2                     | 198    | Updated Planar 2: just as much fun as ever and now even better value as the competition falls away                     | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 214          |
| <span>BB</span> | Rega P3/RB300               | 298    | Updated Planar 3, building on the strengths of the P2 with added subtlety and detail                                   | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 214          |
| <span>BB</span> | 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          | ●               | ●                       | opt               | 257          |
| <span>BB</span> | 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          | ●               | ●                       | opt               | 257          |
| <span>EC</span> | Rega P9/RB1000              | 2,498  | Exceptionally elegant hi-tech player with complex outboard supply, ceramic platter and wonderful RB1000 tonearm        | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 228          |
| <span>BB</span> | Roksan Radius 5/Nima        | 850    | Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation (acrylic version tested)    | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 248          |
| <span>EC</span> | Roksan TMS2/Artemiz         | 7,500  | Typical Roksan sound, but better: pitch-accurate, lean, detailed and controlled, without the 'bloat' of lesser designs | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 246          |
| <span>EC</span> | SME Model 10A               | 3,411  | Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V/309 hybrid arm   | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 195          |
| <span>EC</span> | SME Model 20.2A             | 5,274  | Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm                            | 33/45/78       | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 186          |
| <span>EC</span> | T+A G10R/PH-G10MC           | 2,550  | Style meets substance in a highly credible complete package, with integral phono step-up                               | 33/45          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 261          |
| <span>EC</span> | 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          | ●               | ●                       | ●                 | 259          |

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

# PHONO CARTRIDGES

### MM and MC cartridges

| BADGE?          | PRODUCT                     | £     | COMMENTS  | SPECIFICATIONS |    |                    | ISSUE NUMBER |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------|---|----------------|----|--------------------|--------------|
|                 |                             |       |   | MM             | MC | REPLACEABLE STYLUS |              |
|                 | Goldring Elite              | 250   | A remarkably subtle and persuasive design that should tempt anyone  | ●              | ●  | ●                  | 235          |
|                 | Grado Prestige Black        | 40    | Offers admirable detail and treble extension, with good bass and ambience too   | ●              | ●  | ●                  | 214          |
| <span>BB</span> | Grado Prestige Gold         | 110   | Produces rich, open and expansive music with the minimum of fuss  | ●              | ●  | ●                  | 235          |
| <span>EC</span> | Linn Akiva                  | 1,800 | With fine dynamic expression and a wide bandwidth, what you hear sounds very close to master tape                       | ●              | ●  | ●                  | 242          |
| <span>EC</span> | Lyra Hellikon               | 1,095 | Highly capable and highly neutral, this is a cartridge for all seasons, albeit fussy about vinyl quality                | ●              | ●  | ●                  | 215          |
| <span>BB</span> | Sumiko Blue Point Special   | 250   | A no-nonsense performer with engaging musical properties – one of the best around for less than £300                    | ●              | ●  | ●                  | 192          |
| <span>BB</span> | 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                   | ●              | ●  | ●                  | 235          |
| <span>EC</span> | 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 | ●              | ●  | ●                  | 244          |
| <span>EC</span> | 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            | ●              | ●  | ●                  | 253          |

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

# PHONO STAGES

### Phono stages

| BADGE?          | PRODUCT                             | £     | COMMENTS  | SPECIFICATIONS  |                 |         |              | ISSUE NUMBER |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|-------|---|-----------------|-----------------|---------|--------------|--------------|
|                 |                                     |       |   | MM PHONO INPUTS | MC PHONO INPUTS | AU/GAIN | AU/IMPEDANCE |              |
|                 | Musical Fidelity X-LPS <sup>3</sup> | 249   | Simple, well turned out valve-driven phono stage lacks adjustability, but sounds sweet, open and well-behaved                 | ●               | ●               | ●       | ●            | 248          |
| <span>BB</span> | 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           | ●               | ●               | ●       | ●            | 245          |
| <span>BB</span> | 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          |
| <span>EC</span> | 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 | ●               | ●               | ●       | ●            | 201          |
| <span>BB</span> | Trichord Dino/Dino+                 | 498   | Relaxed yet resolute with very good image depth and natural balance, not to mention great flexibility                         | ●               | ●               | ●       | ●            | 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

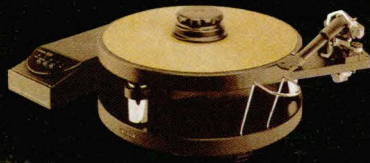
**CARTRIDGE SPECS KEY** **MM** Moving magnet cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type. **MC** Moving coil cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type

**REPLACEABLE STYLUS** Some cartridges have separate styli for ease of replacement, but it compromises sound quality

# SME

*The way to play vinyl...*

Model 10



Model 20/2



Model 30/2



Series M2



Series 300



Series IV



Series V



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## PINEWOOD MUSIC of Winchester and Taunton

### SONUS FABER STRADIVARI

Winner of two richly merited awards in the UK, the Sonus faber Stradivari Homage is without doubt one of the finest and most beautiful loudspeakers in the world. It has an immediacy and spirituality about its performance that is matchless - and it does not require monster amplification. Serious inquiries are invited from serious listeners.

### JADIS ORCHESTRA REFERENCE

Is there an integrated amplifier that sounds better than this at £2000? Not that we've heard. Not one that has such boundless energy, such a rich tonal palette, such a direct hotline to the heart. A sculpture in gold and stainless steel, the Orchestra Reference, like all Jadis creations, is solidly built and very reliable.

### AUDIO RESEARCH VSi55

Here's a little valve integrated amp that has a subtle yet bombastic performance. 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.

### PATHOS LOGOS

So try this one with your Sonus fabers: a match made in heaven? Many 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

Taunton: 01460 54322

Winchester: 01962 776808

Mobile: 07860 351113

e-mail: [brianriv@mac.com](mailto:brianriv@mac.com)

# 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?

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 muddled 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](http://www.bbc.co.uk/digitalradio) for details.

### TOP BUYS



#### 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 Dynalab MD 90T £1,195

FM tuner with valves – 'affordable' for an MD, but still streets ahead of most radios.

## Our favourite TUNERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### FM & DAB HI-FI SEPARATES

| BADGE?            | PRODUCT                | £     | COMMENTS   | WAVEBANDS | PRESETS | RDS | REMOTE CONTROL | SIG. STRENGTH METER | ROT. TUNING KNOB | ISSUE NUMBER |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------|--|-----------|---------|-----|----------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------|
| <b>FM TUNERS</b>  |                        |       |  |           |         |     |                |                     |                  |              |
|                   | Creek T50              | 499   | Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics                    | FM,M,L    | 128     | ●   | ●              | ●                   | ●                | 251          |
|                   | 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      | ●   |                |                     | ●                | 193          |
|                   | 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            | ●                   | ●                | 257          |
|                   | Magnum Dynalab MD 102  | 2,200 | Superb remote control analogue FM tuner delivers a superbly transparent sound that makes radio fun       | FM        | 5       |     | ●              | ●                   | ●                | 241          |
|                   | NAD C422               | 180   | Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity                 | FM,M      | 30      | ●   |                |                     | ●                | 250          |
|                   | NAD S400               | 600   | One of the best around – bass and treble are both well extended and detail is excellent                  | FM        | 30      | ●   | ●              | ●                   |                  | 230          |
|                   | Primare T21            | 600   | Identical to NAD S400 and likewise a very fine tuner   | FM        | 30      | ●   |                | ●                   |                  | 230          |
|                   | 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      | ●   | ●              | ●                   |                  | 242          |
| <b>DAB TUNERS</b> |                        |       |  |           |         |     |                |                     |                  |              |
|                   | Arcam DIVA DT81        | 650   | A very smart and polished DAB performer  | DAB       | 16      |     | ●              | ●                   | ●                | 221          |
|                   | Cambridge Audio DAB500 | 150   | Very good sound, plus optional response tweaks, and slickest operation yet                               | DAB       | 10      |     | ●              | ●                   | ●                | 248          |
|                   | Cambridge Azur 640T    | 200   | Slightly ahead of the pack in DAB performance, though FM is never better than decent                     | DAB,FM    | 60      | ●   | ●              | ●                   |                  | 260          |
|                   | Pure Digital DRX-701ES | 250   | An excellent introduction to DAB, fine value, simple to use and feature loaded                           | DAB       | 99      |     | ●              | ●                   | ●                | 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      | ●   | ●              | ●                   | ●                | 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      | ●   | ●              |                     | ●                | 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 re-order 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 re-record 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.

TOP BUYS



BEST BUY  
HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

Philips CDR802 £300

Multidisc recorder that's slick and capable, albeit with a slightly flaky build.

---



BEST BUY  
HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

Marantz DR6000 £400

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

---



BEST BUY  
HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

Yamaha CDR-HD1300 £600

Combining hard disk with CD-R makes CD recording a whole lot more flexible.

---



BEST BUY  
HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

Imerge S2000 £1,599

Impressively flexible hard disk music server for multiroom applications.

Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

## DIGITAL RECORDERS

CD-R/RW, MD and HDD recorders

| BADGE?                   | PRODUCT           | £     | COMMENTS   | DECKS | HD CAPACITY (GB) | OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS | ELEC IN/OUTPUTS | ISSUE NUMBER |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-------|--|-------|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <b>CD-R/RW RECORDERS</b> |                   |       |  |       |                  |                    |                 |              |
|                          | Denon CDR-1000    | 400   | A respectable player and recorder, though some midband congestion was noted when recording                                       | 1     |                  | ● ●                | ● ●             | 218          |
| ■                        | Marantz DR6000    | 400   | No frills, but in its fundamentals this is one of the finest CD recorders on the market  | 1     |                  | ● ●                | ● ●             | 233          |
|                          | NAD C660          | 500   | Audiophile twin deck offering high-speed copying, HDCD replay and notably fine recording from analogue                           | 2     |                  | ● ●                | ● ●             | 243          |
| ■                        | 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     |                  | ● ●                | ● ●             | 233          |
| ■                        | Philips CDR951    | 380   | An improvement on previous models, it delivers the musical goods in some style   | 1     |                  | ● ●                | ● ●             | 205          |
| ■                        | Pioneer PDR-609   | 270   | Classic CD recorder with outstandingly good sound for the money on both record and replay  | 1     |                  | ● ●                | ● ●             | 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     |                  | ● ●                | ● ●             | 218          |
| <b>MD RECORDERS</b>      |                   |       |  |       |                  |                    |                 |              |
|                          | Pioneer MJ-D508   | 200   | Well equipped, but musically sleep-inducing player that receives its Recommendation owing to the price                           | 1     |                  | ● ●                | ● ●             | 205          |
|                          | Sony MDS-JE480    | 130   | Straightforward and effective, but the three real killer features are price, price and price                                     | 1     |                  | ● ●                | ● ●             | 233          |
| <b>HDD RECORDERS</b>     |                   |       |  |       |                  |                    |                 |              |
|                          | Imerge S2000      | 1,599 | Intended as the centrepiece of a multi-room installation, this three-output server combines flexibility with good sound          | 2     | 80               | ● ●                | ● ●             | 243          |
| ■                        | Yamaha CDR-HD1300 | 600   | Superb combination of high-speed CD-RW drive and hard disk, adding editing flexibility to CD recording                           | 2     | 80               | ● ●                | ● ●             | 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.

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## 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.



24 THE GREEN  
EALING  
020 8579 8777



## 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 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

FINISHES 26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2005

"A perfect combination of early Arcam refinement and subtlety, combined with new-found vitality and freshness." DIVA CD192

**Arcam DiVA  
CD192 CD Player £849.95  
A90 Amplifier £849.95**

WHAT HI-FI? **Nov 04**  
★★★★★

HI-FI SEPARATES

**Pro-ject  
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."

WHAT HI-FI? **AWARDS 2004**  
BEST TURNTABLE UNDER £250  
Pro-ject Debut III

WHAT HI-FI? **AWARDS 2004**  
BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £800-£1400  
Cyrus 8vs

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

Cyrus has been developing high performance hi-fi 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."

"The added 'x' factor brings a level of CD playback previously unheard at this price." CD8 X

WHAT HI-FI? **Oct 04**  
★★★★★

WHAT HI-FI? **Nov 04**  
★★★★★



**Cyrus 6vs Amplifier £599.95**

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

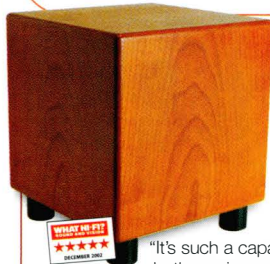
WHAT HI-FI? **Oct 04**  
★★★★★

**Mission m31i  
Speakers  
£119.95**

"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."



WHAT HI-FI? **★★★★★**  
EXCELLENT 2004



**REL Quake  
Subwoofer  
£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."



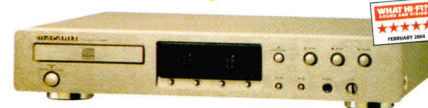
**Roksan Kandy  
CD Player £649.95  
Amplifier £649.95**

"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

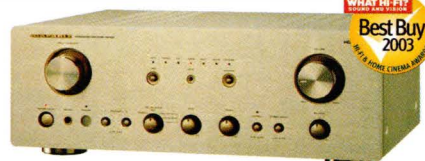
WHAT HI-FI? **AWARDS 2004**  
BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £500-£800  
Roksan Kandy MkIII

**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."

WHAT HI-FI? **★★★★★**  
EXCELLENT 2004

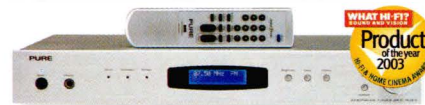


**PM7200 Amplifier £239.95**

"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."

WHAT HI-FI? **Best Buy 2003**  
BEST BUY 2003  
HI-FI SOUND EXCELLENCE AWARDS

**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."

WHAT HI-FI? **Product of the year 2003**  
BEST BUY 2003  
HI-FI SOUND EXCELLENCE AWARDS



**Harman Kardon TU970  
Digital/Analogue Tuner £249.95**

With Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) capability, this high-quality tuner delivers more stations and offers pure, distortion-free, 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.

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\*PERCENTAGE APPLIES TO ACTUAL SPEND ON BRANDS SHOWN ABOVE. NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION.  
PLEASE NOTE - 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.



KEF Q COMPACT



**NEW**

**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 information and a demonstration.

**X-SERIES**  
**X-80 Amplifier . . . . . £ SALE**  
**X-150 Amplifier . . . . . £ SALE**  
**X-Ray<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>3</sup>** CD player, replacement for the legendary X-Ray, uses the same DAC and upsampling principles as the acclaimed Tri-Vista SACD player.



**Roksan Caspian M Series**  
**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**

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



**Preamplifier/2 x Monoblocs £3449.95**

"This Roksan is an excellent buy that puts most of the opposition to shame when it comes to sonic ability... If you want the most honest-sounding amp you can get for your money, this combo can't be ignored."

**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."



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
BEST NEW SPEAKER  
★★★★  
NOVEMBER 2004

**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."



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
BEST NEW SPEAKER  
★★★★  
NOVEMBER 2004



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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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Spread the cost of buying. 0% finance option is available on the majority of products we stock.

\*Written details on request. Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subject to status.

**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 26/02/05, E&OE.**

FINISHES 26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2005



## 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 cabinets 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."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★  
Sept 04



## 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-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."



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2004  
BEST STEREO SPEAKERS  
OVER £2000  
Acoustic Energy AE1 MkIII

## 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."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★  
OCTOBER 2002



### 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? SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★  
MARCH 2003



### 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."



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
Best Buy  
2003  
BEST BUY MICRO SYSTEM OVER £150  
Denon D-M31

## B&W 704 Speakers £1399.95

The 704 speakers are part of B&W's new 700 series. These floorstanding, two-and-a-half-way, 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? SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★  
Mar 04



## 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."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2004  
BEST HI-FI MICRO SYSTEM OVER £150  
Denon D-M31



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 26/02/05, E&OE.

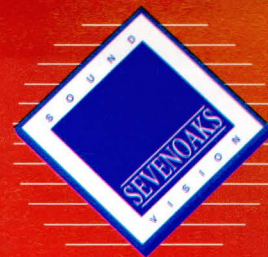


**CLAIM** UP TO  
**25%**  
**ACCESSORIES FREE**

When you purchase any product from the following brands:-  
**ARCAM • B&W • CYRUS • ROKSAN • REL • ROTEL**  
Choose Accessories From **QED • GRADO • SOUNDSTYLE** etc

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**CLAIM 15%\*** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **£500**  
**CLAIM 20%\*** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **£1000**  
**CLAIM 25%\*** WHEN YOU SPEND OVER **£2000**

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



## 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

**£649.95** SAVE **£££s**

PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

HI-FI SYSTEM 1 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

1  
Hi-Fi  
SYSTEM

## 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.



### QED CABLES

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

### GRADO HEADPHONES

Range includes the Award-winning SR60 and highly-acclaimed RS1 plus the world-famous 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



**Arcam**  
CD73T CD Player  
A80 Amplifier  
**KEF**  
Q4 Speakers

**£1149.95** SAVE **£££s**

PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES

HI-FI SYSTEM 2 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

2  
Hi-Fi  
SYSTEM



**Roksan**  
Kandy KD1 MKIII CD Player  
Kandy KA1 MKIII Amplifier  
**Monitor Audio**  
Silver S6 Speakers

**£1499.95** SAVE **£££s**

PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES

HI-FI SYSTEM 3 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

3  
Hi-Fi  
SYSTEM



**Musical Fidelity**  
X-Ray<sup>v3</sup> CD Player  
X-150 Amplifier  
**Monitor Audio**  
Gold Reference 10 Speakers

**£1999.95** SAVE **£££s**

PRICE EXCLUDES CABLES & STANDS

HI-FI SYSTEM 4 - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

4  
Hi-Fi  
SYSTEM

## PRICING POLICY

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.

# Sevensoaks SOUND & VISION

# WINTER SALE

FINISHES 26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2005

## TURNTABLES

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

|                                    |         |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| <b>Goldring</b> GR1                | £129.95 |
| <b>Michell</b> Gyro SE/RB300       | £ SALE  |
| <b>Michell</b> TechnoDec (Ex Arm)  | £ SALE  |
| <b>Project</b> Debut Phono SB      | £ SALE  |
| <b>Project</b> Debut III (Black)   | £ SALE  |
| <b>Project</b> Debut III (Colours) | £ SALE  |
| <b>Project</b> 1 Xpression         | £189.95 |
| <b>Roksan</b> Radius 5 (Wood)      | £749.95 |

## TUNERS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

|                                      |         |
|--------------------------------------|---------|
| <b>Arcam</b> DIVA T61                | £229.95 |
| <b>Cyrus</b> FM X                    | £499.95 |
| <b>Denon</b> TU260L MKII             | £99.95  |
| <b>Harman Kardon</b> TU970 DAB/AM/FM | £249.95 |
| <b>Marantz</b> ST4000                | £99.95  |
| <b>Pure</b> DRX-701ES DAB            | £189.95 |
| <b>Pure</b> DRX-702ES Analogue/DAB   | £269.95 |
| <b>Roksan</b> Kandy KT1 MKIII        | £549.95 |

## CD PLAYERS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Arcam</b> DIVA CD73T                   | £399.95  |
| <b>Arcam</b> DIVA CD192                   | £849.95  |
| <b>Arcam</b> FMJ CD33T                    | £1349.95 |
| <b>Cyrus</b> CD6                          | £599.95  |
| <b>Cyrus</b> CD8 X                        | £999.95  |
| <b>Cyrus</b> DAC X                        | £1099.95 |
| <b>Denon</b> DCD485                       | £119.95  |
| <b>Linn</b> Genki                         | £ SALE   |
| <b>Linn</b> Ikemi                         | £ SALE   |
| <b>Marantz</b> CD5400                     | £119.95  |
| <b>Marantz</b> SA11 S1                    | £ SALE   |
| <b>Musical Fidelity</b> X-Ray 10          | £ SALE   |
| <b>Musical Fidelity</b> A3.2              | £699.95  |
| <b>Musical Fidelity</b> A5                | £ SALE   |
| <b>Musical Fidelity</b> A308 <sup>8</sup> | £1399.95 |
| <b>Quad</b> 99 CD-P                       | £ SALE   |
| <b>Roksan</b> Kandy KD1 MKIII             | £649.95  |
| <b>Roksan</b> Caspian M                   | £1099.95 |
| <b>Rotel</b> RCD02                        | £379.95  |
| <b>Rotel</b> RCD1072                      | £594.95  |

## CD RECORDERS

|                             |         |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| <b>Pioneer</b> PDR609 CD-RW | £199.95 |
| <b>Yamaha</b> CDR-HD1300II  | £479.95 |

## AMPLIFIERS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| <b>Arcam</b> DIVA A65 Plus             | £389.95         |
| <b>Arcam</b> DIVA A80                  | £599.95         |
| <b>Arcam</b> DIVA A90                  | £849.95         |
| <b>Arcam</b> FMJ A32                   | £1199.95        |
| <b>Cyrus</b> 6vs                       | £599.95         |
| <b>Cyrus</b> 8vs                       | £799.95         |
| <b>Cyrus</b> Pre X vs Pre              | £1099.95        |
| <b>Cyrus</b> Mono X Power              | (Each) £1199.95 |
| <b>Denon</b> PMA355                    | £169.95         |
| <b>Linn</b> Koektor Pre                | £ SALE          |
| <b>Linn</b> UK85 Power                 | £ SALE          |
| <b>Marantz</b> PM4400                  | £139.95         |
| <b>Marantz</b> PM7200                  | £239.95         |
| <b>Marantz</b> PM11 S1                 | £ SALE          |
| <b>Musical Fidelity</b> X-80           | £ SALE          |
| <b>Musical Fidelity</b> X-150          | £ SALE          |
| <b>Musical Fidelity</b> A3.2 Pre       | £699.95         |
| <b>Musical Fidelity</b> A3.2 Power     | £699.95         |
| <b>Musical Fidelity</b> A5             | £ SALE          |
| <b>Musical Fidelity</b> A308           | £1399.95        |
| <b>Quad</b> 99 Power                   | £ SALE          |
| <b>Quad</b> 909 Power                  | £ SALE          |
| <b>Roksan</b> Kandy KA1 MKIII          | £649.95         |
| <b>Roksan</b> Caspian M                | £999.95         |
| <b>Roksan</b> Caspian M Pre            | £1249.95        |
| <b>Roksan</b> Caspian M Stereo Power   | £749.95         |
| <b>Roksan</b> Caspian M Monobloc Power | (Each) £1099.95 |
| <b>Rotel</b> RA-01                     | £249.95         |
| <b>Rotel</b> RA-02                     | £349.95         |
| <b>Rotel</b> RA-1062                   | £594.95         |

## SPEAKERS

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|  |         |
|--|---------|
| <b>Acoustic Energy</b> Aegis Evo One   | £129.95 |
| <b>Acoustic Energy</b> Aegis Evo Three | £249.95 |

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Acoustic Energy</b> Aelite Two      | £ SALE   |
| <b>Acoustic Energy</b> Aelite Three    | £ SALE   |
| <b>Acoustic Energy</b> AE1 MKIII       | £ SALE   |
| <b>AVI</b> Neutron IV                  | £ SALE   |
| <b>B&amp;W</b> DM601 S3                | £249.95  |
| <b>B&amp;W</b> DM602 S3                | £299.95  |
| <b>B&amp;W</b> 704                     | £1399.95 |
| <b>B&amp;W</b> 705                     | £899.95  |
| <b>KEF</b> Q Compact                   | £ SALE   |
| <b>KEF</b> Q4                          | £ SALE   |
| <b>KEF</b> XQ1                         | £ SALE   |
| <b>Linn</b> Katan                      | £ SALE   |
| <b>Mission</b> m311                    | £119.95  |
| <b>Mission</b> m341                    | £279.95  |
| <b>Mission</b> 780SE                   | £ SALE   |
| <b>Mission</b> 782SE                   | £ SALE   |
| <b>Monitor Audio</b> Bronze B2         | £179.95  |
| <b>Monitor Audio</b> Silver S1         | £299.95  |
| <b>Monitor Audio</b> Silver S6         | £499.95  |
| <b>Monitor Audio</b> Silver S8         | £799.95  |
| <b>Monitor Audio</b> Gold Reference 10 | £699.95  |
| <b>Monitor Audio</b> Gold Reference 60 | £1999.95 |
| <b>Quad</b> 11L                        | £ SALE   |
| <b>Quad</b> 12L                        | £ SALE   |
| <b>Quad</b> 22L                        | £ SALE   |
| <b>Ruark</b> Epilogue II               | £ SALE   |
| <b>Ruark</b> Talisman III              | £ SALE   |
| <b>Ruark</b> Sabre III                 | £ SALE   |
| <b>Wharfedale</b> Diamond 9.1          | £ SALE   |
| <b>Wharfedale</b> Pacific Evolution 30 | £ SALE   |

## HI-FI SYSTEMS

|                                       |         |
|---------------------------------------|---------|
| <b>Denon</b> 201 Ex Speakers          | £479.95 |
| <b>Denon</b> DF101 Ex Speakers        | £299.95 |
| <b>Denon</b> DM31 Ex Speakers         | £189.95 |
| <b>Linn</b> Classic Music Ex Speakers | £ SALE  |
| <b>Teac</b> Legacy 600 Ex Speakers    | £199.95 |

## DVD SYSTEMS

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| <b>Denon</b> ADV-M71 Inc SC-M51 Speakers       | £449.95 |
| <b>Denon</b> DHT-500SD Inc 5.1 Speaker Package | £429.95 |
| <b>Denon</b> DHT-550SD Inc 5.1 Speaker Package | £ SALE  |
| <b>Jamo</b> DVR50/A305PDD Inc Speakers         | £ SALE  |
| <b>Jamo</b> DVR60/A355PDD Inc Speakers         | £ SALE  |
| <b>KEF</b> KIT100 Inc Speakers                 | £ SALE  |
| <b>Teac</b> Legacy 700/ALS-L800 Inc Speakers   | £799.95 |

## MULTI-ROOM AUDIO

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

|                                  |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Cyrus</b> Linkserver 160      | £2999.95 |
| <b>Cyrus</b> Linkserver 250      | £3499.95 |
| <b>Cyrus</b> Linkport            | £649.95  |
| <b>Cyrus</b> Linkwand            | £199.95  |
| <b>Yamaha MusicCast</b> MCX A10  | £599.95  |
| <b>Yamaha MusicCast</b> MCX 1000 | £1799.95 |

## DVD PLAYERS

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|                                  |          |              |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| <b>MAKE &amp; MODEL</b>          | REGION 2 | MULTI REGION |
| <b>Arcam</b> DIVA DV78           | £699.95  |              |
| <b>Arcam</b> DIVA DV79           | £999.95  | £999.95      |
| <b>Arcam</b> FMJ DV29            | £1599.95 | £1599.95     |
| <b>Cyrus</b> DVD8                | £1199.95 | £1199.95     |
| <b>Denon</b> DVD-1710            | £ SALE   | £ SALE       |
| <b>Denon</b> DVD-1910            | £ SALE   | £ SALE       |
| <b>Denon</b> DVD-2200 Universal  | £339.95  | £349.95      |
| <b>Denon</b> DVD-2900 Universal  | £489.95  | £499.95      |
| <b>Denon</b> DVD-2910 Universal  | £ SALE   | £ SALE       |
| <b>Denon</b> DVD-3910 Universal  | £ SALE   | £ SALE       |
| <b>Denon</b> DVD-A11             | £ SALE   | £ SALE       |
| <b>Harman Kardon</b> DVD22       | £199.95  | £199.95      |
| <b>Harman Kardon</b> DVD31       | £ SALE   | £ SALE       |
| <b>Marantz</b> DV4500            | £ SALE   | £ SALE       |
| <b>Meridian</b> G98              | £ SALE   | £ SALE       |
| <b>Pioneer</b> DV370             | £69.95   | £79.95       |
| <b>Pioneer</b> DV575A Universal  | £119.95  | £129.95      |
| <b>Pioneer</b> DV668Av Universal | £ SALE   | £ SALE       |
| <b>Pioneer</b> DV668Av Universal | £ SALE   | £ SALE       |
| <b>Toshiba</b> SD240E            | £59.95   | £69.95       |
| <b>Toshiba</b> SD340E            | £69.95   | £79.95       |
| <b>Yamaha</b> DVD-S550           | £119.95  | £119.95      |
| <b>Yamaha</b> DVD-S1500          | £ SALE   | £ SALE       |

## DVD RECORDERS

|                                  |          |              |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| <b>MAKE &amp; MODEL</b>          | REGION 2 | MULTI REGION |
| <b>Panasonic</b> DMR-E55 DVD-RAM | £199.95  | £219.95      |
| <b>Panasonic</b> DMR-E65 DVD-RAM | £ SALE   | £ SALE       |

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

## A/V AMPLIFIERS

### RECEIVERS & PROCESSORS

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|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Arcam</b> AVR250 AV Receiver            | £999.95  |
| <b>Arcam</b> AVR300 AV Receiver            | £1299.95 |
| <b>Arcam</b> AV8/P7 AV Pre/Processor/Power | £5749.95 |
| <b>Cyrus</b> AV8 AV Processor              | £1099.95 |
| <b>Denon</b> AVC-A1SRA AV Amplifier        | £ SALE   |
| <b>Denon</b> AVC-A1XV AV Amplifier         | £ SALE   |
| <b>Denon</b> AVR1705 AV Receiver           | £199.95  |
| <b>Denon</b> AVR1905 AV Receiver           | £ SALE   |
| <b>Denon</b> AVR2105 AV Receiver           | £ SALE   |
| <b>Denon</b> AVR2805 AV Receiver           | £ SALE   |
| <b>Denon</b> AVR3805 AV Receiver           | £799.95  |
| <b>Harman Kardon</b> AVR330 AV Receiver    | £ SALE   |
| <b>Harman Kardon</b> AVR630 AV Receiver    | £ SALE   |
| <b>Harman Kardon</b> DPR2005 AV Receiver   | £ SALE   |
| <b>Marantz</b> SR4500 AV Receiver          | £299.95  |
| <b>Marantz</b> SR5500 AV Receiver          | £ SALE   |
| <b>Pioneer</b> VSX-D814 AV Receiver        | £249.95  |
| <b>Pioneer</b> VSX-A03 AV Receiver         | £ SALE   |
| <b>Pioneer</b> VSX-2014i AV Receiver       | £ SALE   |
| <b>Pioneer</b> VSX-AX5i AV Receiver        | £799.95  |
| <b>Pioneer</b> VSX-AX6i AV Receiver        | £999.95  |
| <b>Pioneer</b> VSA-A10Ai AV Amplifier      | £ SALE   |
| <b>Rotel</b> RSX1056 AV Receiver           | £1199.95 |
| <b>Rotel</b> RSX1067 AV Receiver           | £1799.95 |
| <b>Rotel</b> RSP1066/RMB1075 AV Pre/Power  | £1799.95 |
| <b>Rotel</b> RSP1098 AV Processor          | £2294.95 |
| <b>Yamaha</b> DSP-AX750SE AV Amplifier     | £ SALE   |
| <b>Yamaha</b> DSP-29 AV Amplifier          | £ SALE   |
| <b>Yamaha</b> RX-V550 AV Receiver          | £299.95  |
| <b>Yamaha</b> RX-V650 AV Receiver          | £369.95  |
| <b>Yamaha</b> RX-V1400RDS AV Receiver      | £629.95  |
| <b>Yamaha</b> RX-V1500RDS AV Receiver      | £ SALE   |
| <b>Yamaha</b> RX-V2400RDS AV Receiver      | £679.95  |
| <b>Yamaha</b> RX-V2500RDS AV Receiver      | £ SALE   |

## A/V SPEAKERS & PACKAGES

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|   |         |
|---|---------|
| <b>Acoustic Energy</b> Evo 3B           | £679.95 |
| <b>Acoustic Energy</b> Aego P5/II       | £429.95 |
| <b>Acoustic Energy</b> Aelite 5.1       | £ SALE  |
| <b>Artcooustic</b> Diablo               | £ SALE  |
| <b>B&amp;W</b> VM1/AS1                  | £849.95 |
| <b>B&amp;W</b> DM300 AV                 | £899.95 |
| <b>KEF</b> KHT1005                      | £299.95 |
| <b>KEF</b> KHT2005.2                    | £ SALE  |
| <b>KEF</b> KHT5005                      | £ SALE  |
| <b>KEF</b> Q7 AV                        | £ SALE  |
| <b>M&amp;K</b> K5                       | £ SALE  |
| <b>M&amp;K</b> K3                       | £ SALE  |
| <b>M&amp;K</b> Xenon 25                 | £ SALE  |
| <b>M&amp;K</b> 850/CS35/V850            | £ SALE  |
| <b>Mission</b> M30 AV Pack              | £399.95 |
| <b>Mission</b> Elegante e82 7.1 Package | £ SALE  |
| <b>Monitor Audio</b> Bronze B2 AV       | £799.95 |
| <b>Monitor Audio</b> Bronze B4 AV       | £949.95 |
| <b>Monitor Audio</b> Radius 270         | £499.95 |
| <b>Monitor Audio</b> Radius 5.1         | £999.95 |
| <b>Mordaunt Short</b> Genie             | £ SALE  |
| <b>Quad</b> L-Series                    | £ SALE  |
| <b>Wharfedale</b> Diamond 9 HCP         | £ SALE  |

## SUBWOOFERS

SEE OFFER AT THE TOP OF THE PAGE

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| <b>B&amp;W</b> PV1                     | £949.95 |
| <b>MJ Acoustics</b> Pro 50 (Black)     | £ SALE  |
| <b>MJ Acoustics</b> Pro 100 (Black)    | £ SALE  |
| <b>MJ Acoustics</b> Ref 100 (Black)    | £ SALE  |
| <b>MJ Acoustics</b> Ref 200 (Black)    | £ SALE  |
| <b>MJ Acoustics</b> Ref 1 MkII (Black) | £ SALE  |
| <b>Quad</b> L-Series                   | £ SALE  |
| <b>REL</b> Q150E MkII (Brittex Black)  | £499.95 |
| <b>REL</b> Q201E (Brittex Black)       | £724.95 |

|                                     |         |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| <b>REL</b> Q400E (Brittex Black)    | £999.95 |
| <b>REL</b> Quake (Brittex Black)    | £349.95 |
| <b>REL</b> Stampede (Black)         | £549.95 |
| <b>REL</b> Strata 5 (Brittex Black) | £699.95 |
| <b>Wharfedale</b> Diamond SW150     | £ SALE  |

## PLASMA

|                                |        |
|--------------------------------|--------|
| <b>Fujitsu</b> P42HH430 42"    | £ SALE |
| <b>Fujitsu</b> P50XH430 50"    | £ SALE |
| <b>Hitachi</b> 42PD5200 42"    | £ SALE |
| <b>Hitachi</b> 42PD5200 42"    | £ SALE |
| <b>Hitachi</b> 55PMA550TE 55"  | £ SALE |
| <b>Panasonic</b> TH37PW7B 37"  | £ SALE |
| <b>Panasonic</b> TH42PW7B 42"  | £ SALE |
| <b>Panasonic</b> TH37PE30B 37" | £ SALE |
| <b>Panasonic</b> TH42PE30B 42" | £ SALE |
| <b>Panasonic</b> TH50PV30B 50" | £ SALE |
| <b>Pioneer</b> PDP435XDE 43"   | £ SALE |
| <b>Pioneer</b> PDP435FDE 43"   | £ SALE |
| <b>Pioneer</b> PDP505XDE 50"   | £ SALE |
| <b>Yamaha</b> PDM4210 42"      | £ SALE |

## LCD TV

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| <b>Hiachi</b> 28LD5200 28"              | £ SALE |
| <b>Panasonic</b> TX22LX2 22"            | £ SALE |
| <b>Panasonic</b> TX26LDX1 26"           | £ SALE |
| <b>Panasonic</b> TX32LDX1 32"           | £ SALE |
| <b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-20S1E 20"         | £ SALE |
| <b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-26GA3/GA4/GA5 26" | £ SALE |
| <b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-32GA3/GA4/GA5 32" | £ SALE |
| <b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-32GD1 32"         | £ SALE |
| <b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-37GD1 37"         | £ SALE |
| <b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-37GA3/GA4/GA5 37" | £ SALE |
| <b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-45GD1 45"         | £ SALE |

## PROJECTORS

FREE SCREEN WITH SELECTED PROJECTORS

|                                   |        |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| <b>Marantz</b> VP-12S3 DLP        | £ SALE |
| <b>Screenplay</b> SP4805 DLP      | £ SALE |
| <b>Screenplay</b> SP5700 DLP      | £ SALE |
| <b>Screenplay</b> SP7205 DLP      | £ SALE |
| <b>Sharp</b> XV-Z91E DLP          | £ SALE |
| <b>Sharp</b> XV-Z200 DLP          | £ SALE |
| <b>Sharp</b> XV-Z201 DLP          | £ SALE |
| <b>Sharp</b> XV-Z2000 DLP         | £ SALE |
| <b>Sharp</b> XV-Z12000 DLP        | £ SALE |
| <b>Sim 2</b> Domino 18 DLP        | £ SALE |
| <b>Sim 2</b> Domino 20 DLP        | £ SALE |
| <b>Sim 2</b> Domino 20-H HDMI DLP | £ SALE |
| <b>Sim 2</b> Domino 30-H HDMI DLP | £ SALE |
| <b>Sim 2</b> HT300 Xtra HDMI DLP  | £ SALE |

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 • 020 8290 1988

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**EXETER** 28 COWICK STREET  
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**SOUTHGATE** 79-81 CHASE SIDE  
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### 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.

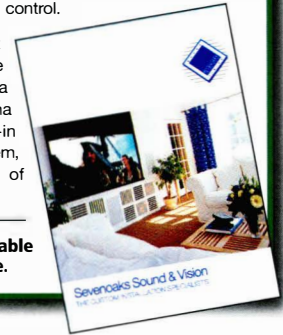


### CUSTOM INSTALLATION

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

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# 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 your 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.



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 three-dimensional 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.

## 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

tend to be better at reproducing music as they don't have the (electrical) noise-inducing digital processing of AV amps. AV amps cost three to four times as much as stereo models of a similar quality.

## Q&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. Bi-amping 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 SO LITTLE 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.

## TOP BUYS



### Marantz 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.



### Naim 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.



### Primare 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.

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO AMPLIFIERS

### Integrated amplifiers

| BADGE?                                      | PRODUCT                   | £     | COMMENTS   | SPECIFICATIONS |             |                |                  |                  |              |
|---|---------------------------|-------|--|----------------|-------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
|   |                           |       |  | LINE INPUTS    | PHONO INPUT | REMOTE CONTROL | HEADPHONE SOCKET | POWER OUTPUT (W) | ISSUE NUMBER |
| <b>UP TO £1,000</b>                         |                           |       |  |                |             |                |                  |                  |              |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Arcam DIVA A65 Plus       | 370   | Highly articulate and fluent, offers unusual insight for its price   | 5              | ●           | ●              | ●                | 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          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | 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         | ●              | ●                | 90               | 250          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | 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          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Cambridge Audio Azur 540A | 200   | A well built and fully featured amplifier that costs this little should not sound this revealing                                 | 6              | opt         | ●              | ●                | 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         | ●              | ●                | 65               | 250          |
|   | Cyrus 6vs                 | 600   | Best seen in a Cyrus rack but capable of sweet sounds elsewhere too. Impressively clean and agile but lacking musical grunt      | 7              |             | ●              | ●                | 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              |             | ●              | ●                | 70               | 261          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Electrocompaniet EC13     | 999   | Large and fairly powerful, with individual looks and very refined sound  | 6              |             | ●              | ●                | 70               | 262          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Exposure 2010 S           | 599   | Beneath the unassuming exterior lurks a very capable performer that's passionate about music                                     | 6              | opt         | ●              | ●                | 75               | 262          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Marantz PM4400 OSE        | 250   | Highly competent and well specified – a lively performer that makes great music  | 5              | ●           |                | ●                | 50               | 256          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Marantz PM7200            | 330   | High power, plenty of features and remarkably clear and informative sound with lots of impact                                    | 6              | ●           | ●              | ●                | 105              | 248          |
|   | Marantz PM7200 KI         | 500   | Smart and fully-featured, with sound that's full-bodied and confident at high levels   | 6              | ●           | ●              | ●                | 85               | 262          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Musical Fidelity X-80     | 600   | The entry-level to Musical Fidelity's amplifier range sounds both powerful and refined   | 4              |             | ●              | ●                | 55               | 255          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | NAD C352                  | 350   | Dynamic and musical sounding update on what was already a star product   | 7              |             | ●              | ●                | 80               | 253          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | 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          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Primare I20               | 750   | An amplifier with attitude: punchy fast and secure sounding, with excellent build quality for the money                          | 4              |             | ●              | ●                | 70               | 239          |
|   | Rega Mira 3               | 598   | Lively sound with good timing and frequency extension, if not quite as detailed as some  | 5              | ●           | ●              | ●                | 60               | 262          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | 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              |             | ●              | ●                | 85               | 248          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Rotel RA-02               | 349   | Agile and capable slimline design with an engaging sound that draws you into the music   | 4              | ●           | ●              | ●                | 40               | 232          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | 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              | ●           | ●              | ●                | 95               | 251          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Sugden A21a               | 899   | This single-ended, Class A transistor amp has exquisite resolving ability and presence – an authentic classic                    | 5              |             |                |                  | 25               | 224          |
| <b>ABOVE £1,000</b>                         |                           |       |  |                |             |                |                  |                  |              |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Arcam FMJ A32             | 1,150 | Remarkably flexible and well-featured, with excellent sound quality for the price  | 7              | ●           | ●              | ●                | 100              | 228          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Audio Note Oto Line SE    | 1,599 | Single-ended valve amp lacks power but sounds remarkably delicate and coherent   | 5              | opt         |                |                  | 10               | 254          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Audio Analogue Maestro S. | 1,750 | The beautifully made Maestro Settanta sounds fast, deep and very smooth, though perhaps not the most dynamic                     | 5              | ●           | ●              | ●                | 70               | 257          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Audio Research VS155      | 2,895 | Superb all-rounder provides the delights of valve amplification without sacrificing convenience                                  | 5              |             | ●              | ●                | 50               | 254          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | AVI Laboratory Series     | 1,399 | Terrific power, control and resolution – effortlessly musical and fine value   | 6              | opt         | ●              | ●                | 200              | 241          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Copland CSA29             | 1,900 | A hybrid valve/solid state amplifier that gets close to offering the best of both worlds   | 6              | opt         | ●              | ●                | 85               | 255          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | Karan KA-i180             | 3,900 | Lean, sharp and articulate, this impressively constructed heavyweight is almost up there with the audiophile pre/power elite     | 4              |             | ●              | ●                | 180              | 236          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | Krell KAV-400xi           | 2,698 | The best integrated Krell yet is quick, agile, solid and finely detailed   | 5              |             | ●              | ●                | 200              | 247          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Myryad MX12080            | 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          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | 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 EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO AMPLIFIERS

### Pre/power amplifiers

| BADGE?                                      | PRODUCT                          | £     | COMMENTS   | SPECIFICATIONS |                 |             |             |                |                  |              |
|---|----------------------------------|-------|--|----------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|
|   |                                  |       |  | PRE-AMPLIFIER  | POWER AMPLIFIER | LINE INPUTS | PHONO INPUT | REMOTE CONTROL | POWER OUTPUT (W) | ISSUE NUMBER |
| <b>UP TO £2,000</b>                         |                                  |       |  |                |                 |             |             |                |                  |              |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Arcam FMJ A32/P35                | 1,980 | One of the few correctly matched integrated/power combinations, the sound has real gravitas and sophistication | ●              | ●               | 7           | ●           | ●              | 100              | 227          |
|   | Densen Beat 200/300              | 1,985 | Classy jet black cast boxes pack plenty of punch with good total musical coherence (remote £300 extra)         | ●              | ●               | 6           | opt         | opt            | 100              | 216          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Exposure 2010 S Integrated/Power | 1,098 | Bi-amping with the additional power amp increases the musical communication of an already fine integrated      | ●              | ●               | 6           |             | ●              | 75               | 264          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Naim NAC 112x/NAP 150x           | 1,475 | Upgraded entry-level Naim pre/power is a master of musical communication                                       | ●              | ●               | 6           |             | ●              | 50               | 262          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">MM</span> | Quad 99/909                      | 1,650 | Well thought out and well executed, with good strong sound and just a little veiling                           | ●              | ●               | 5           | ●           | ●              | 136              | 256          |
| <b>ABOVE £2,000</b>                         |                                  |       |  |                |                 |             |             |                |                  |              |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | Border Patrol P20                | 6,750 | Muscular 300B P-P design with fluidity and dynamics to match the best  | ●              | ●               |             |             |                | 20               | 231          |
|   | Bryston BP25/4BSST               | 4,000 | Extremely transparent, high-power combo, you'll listen louder and longer because you can                       | ●              | ●               | 8           | opt         | ●              | 300              | 241          |
| <span style="font-size: x-small;">EC</span> | Chapter Preface/II+              | 9,800 | Among the finest amps available, the resolution of this preamp and power amp challenges the best at any price  | ●              | ●               | 6           |             | ●              | 300              | 249          |

**SPECS KEY** **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.

Our favourite **STEREO AMPLIFIERS** continued

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Pre/power amplifiers

| BADGE? | PRODUCT                        | £      | COMMENTS   | SPECIFICATIONS |                 |             |             |                |                  |
|--------|--------------------------------|--------|--|----------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------------|
|        |                                |        |  | PRE-AMPLIFIER  | POWER AMPLIFIER | LINE INPUTS | PHONO INPUT | REMOTE CONTROL | POWER OUTPUT (W) |
| EC     | Conrad-Johnson ACT2/Prem 350SA | 20,000 | Valve preamp and solid-state power deliver some of the most transparent and naturally dynamic sounds around          | ●              | ●               | 5           | ●           | 350            | 264              |
|        | EAR 864/534                    | 4,156  | Valve combo delivers fine measured and subjective performance and inspires great confidence                          | ●              | ●               | 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                   | ●              | ●               | 6           | opt         | 70             | 241              |
| EC     | Gamut D200 Mk3                 | 3,950  | A great power amp that's now even better – one of the best regardless of price                                       |                | ●               |             |             | 200            | 247              |
| EC     | Halcro dm10/dm68               | 25,550 | Extravagant, extreme and massive amp combo will probably polarise opinions, but delivers stunning midrange clarity   | ●              | ●               | 5           | ●           | 225            | 243              |
| EC     | Hovland HP-100/RADIA           | 12,745 | Uncommonly musical valve/transistor hybrid transcends stereotypes, one of the genuine high achievers                 | ●              | ●               | 9           | opt         | 125            | 250              |
|        | Krell FPB 700cx                | 14,998 | Reference class amplifier may represent overkill in many systems, but when no compromise is called for, this is it   |                | ●               |             |             | 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                        | ●              | ●               | 8           | ●           | 70             | 241              |
| EC     | Naim NAP 500                   | 11,875 | Wonderful neutrality, bandwidth and dynamic range, plus Naim's traditional leading-edge definition                   |                | ●               |             |             | 140            | 208              |
| EC     | Naim NAC 552                   | 12,100 | Extremely expensive preamp, but still solid value. Magnificent sound with fine flexibility and convenience           | ●              |                 | 6           | ●           |                | 233              |
| BB     | Primare PRE30/A30.2            | 2,400  | Smart kit that lives up to the visual promise with gorgeous sound – a really musical performer                       | ●              | ●               | 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      | ●              | ●               | 6           | ●           | 78             | 256              |
| 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           | ●              | ●               | 7           | ●           | 35             | 246              |

# AV AMPLIFIERS

Surround sound amps for music and movies



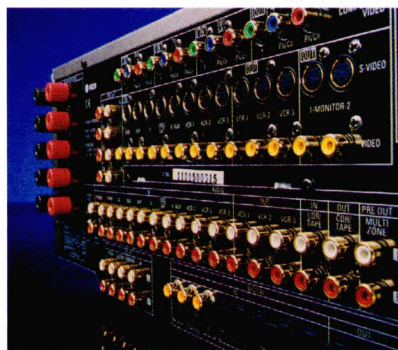
The multichannel, surround sound or AV amplifier is a popular option, thanks to the success of the DVD

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.

## Q&A

### 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 high-quality 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.

## TOP BUYS



**Sony**  
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.



**Denon**  
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.



**Pioneer**  
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.



**Arcam**  
AV8/P7 £5,750  
A fantastic achievement from this respected UK brand – a top-ranking AV processor and seven-channel power amp.

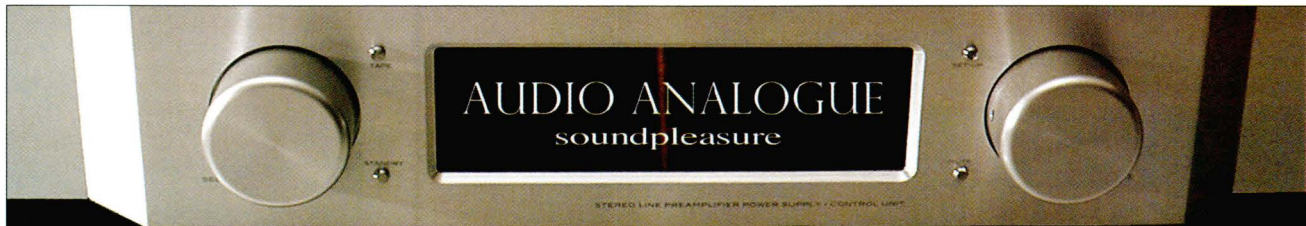
## Our favourite AV AMPLIFIERS

**BB** BEST BUY **EC** EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Multichannel amplifiers

| BADGE?  | PRODUCT                  | £     | COMMENTS  | RECEIVER | LINE INPUTS | 7.1 COMPATIBLE | 5-CHANNEL POWER (W) | ISSUE NUMBER |
|---|--------------------------|-------|---|----------|-------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------|
| <b>MULTICHANNEL INTEGRATED AMPS</b>                   |                          |       |   |          |             |                |                     |              |
|   | 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                  | 229          |
| <b>BB</b>   | Arcam AVR300             | 1,300 | Cracking all-round music and movie ability sets the Arcam apart from the AV crowd   | ●        | 8           | ●              | 100                 | 257          |
|   | Denon AVR-2803           | 650   | Merely 'average' sound but it's impossible to argue against the flexibility and value of its engineering                          | ●        | 9           | ●              | 130                 | 251          |
| <b>BB</b>   | Denon AVR-3805           | 1,000 | Upgraded sound, new processing algorithms and a great remote control make this a superb mid-market multichannel buy               | ●        |             | ●              | 120                 | 256          |
| <b>EC</b>   | 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           | ●              | 170                 | 232          |
|   | Marantz SR9300           | 2,000 | Not a high flyer, just a thoroughly enjoyable, warm and attractive sounding receiver with music and film soundtracks alike        | ●        | 8           | ●              | 105                 | 252          |
|   | Marantz SR-12S1          | 3,000 | A multichannel amp that can be taken seriously in stereo too. Resources are in the engineering rather than the gimmicky           | ●        | 3           | ●              | 160                 | 255          |
| <b>BB</b>   | Pioneer VSA-AX5i         | 1,200 | Standard setter in its price category, with i.Link digital interface and MCACC auto set-up  | ●        | 11          | ●              | 100                 | 248          |
| <b>EC</b>   | Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai       | 3,200 | State of the art one-box amplifier with enhanced sound quality, auto set-up and other enhancements                                |          | 10          | ●              | 150                 | 260          |
| <b>BB</b>   | Sony STR-DB795           | 300   | A superb value little amplifier, well appointed technically and successfully tuned for UK ears                                    | ●        | 7           | ●              | 100                 | 260          |
| <b>EC</b>   | Sony TA-DA9000ES         | 2,600 | Arguably the first convincing fully digital amplifier, an excellent match for players with i.Link encrypted outputs               | ●        | 10          | ●              | 200                 | 253          |
| <b>MULTICHANNEL PREAMPS/PROCESSORS AND POWER AMPS</b> |                          |       |   |          |             |                |                     |              |
| <b>BB</b>   | 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           | ●              | 90                  | 250          |
| <b>EC</b>   | 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           | ●              | 180                 | 235          |
| <b>EC</b>   | 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                 | 236          |
|   | Cyrus AV8/3x Smartpower  | 2,900 | Classic Cyrus sound translated to a multichannel arena, limited features and power, but civilised sound                           |          | 3           |                | 105                 | 238          |
| <b>EC</b>   | 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           | ●              |                     | 242          |
|   | Linn Exotik              | 1,750 | Is hi-fi ready to make the jump to multichannel music? Linn think so with this musical preamplifier                               |          | 4           |                |                     | 260          |
| <b>BB</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                  | 238          |
| <b>EC</b>   | Meridian 861             | 9,833 | Powerful surround processor with flexible modular construction, marvellous versatility to drive any speaker configuration         |          | 6           | ●              |                     | 230          |
|   | 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                  | 238          |
| <b>EC</b>   | Parasound Halo C1/A51    | 8,500 | Powerful and flexible processor/power amp combo with impressive sound. Excellent value – processor includes onboard screen        |          | 11          | ●              | 250                 | 243          |
| <b>BB</b>   | 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                 | 238          |

**SPECS KEY** **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.



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# 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.

“...too many people today know the price of everything and the value of nothing.”

Oscar Wilde

### 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.

### What 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







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

#### VALUE FOR MONEY

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

#### SERVICE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

#### FACILITIES

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

#### VERDICT

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## 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

#### RAYLEIGH 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



# 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

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.

## POWER

Though some speakers have a power rating, this isn't as informative as a rating for how difficult they are to drive, nor does it indicate wattage extremes for the partnering amp. In practice, an amplifier cannot be too powerful. Our listings quote ease of drive to indicate how much power

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 I 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.

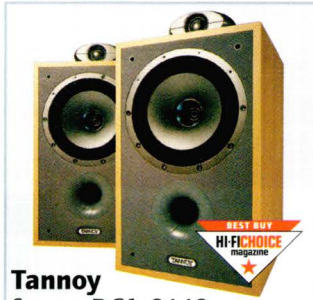
### WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR BIG ROOMS?

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.

## TOP BUYS



**Tannoy**  
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.



**PMC**  
GB1 £995  
An attractively compact floorstander with a beautifully articulate sound and remarkable freedom from boxiness. A great buy if you've just under a grand to spend.



**B&W**  
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.



**Mordaunt-Short**  
Performance 6 £3,500  
This extraordinary speaker stands at the pinnacle of Mordaunt-Short's current range. State of the art resolution and imaging are among its many attributes.

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO SPEAKERS

### Stereo speakers

| BADGE?              | PRODUCT                    | £     | COMMENTS  | SPECIFICATIONS    |              |               |                |            |               |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-------|---|-------------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|------------|---------------|
|                     |                            |       |   | SIZE (WxHxD) (CM) | FLOORSTANDER | EASE OF DRIVE | BASS FROM (Hz) | FREE SPACE | CLOSE TO WALL |
| <b>UP TO £1,000</b> |                            |       |   |                   |              |               |                |            |               |
|                     | AcousticEnergy 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        |               |
|                     | ATC SCM12                  | 999   | Magnificent main driver confers great authority, grip and smoothness, though upper bass a little lean               | 22,39,26          | A-           | 55            | ●              | 253        |               |
|                     | 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        |               |
|                     | 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            | ●              | 226        |               |
|                     | 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            | ●              | 234        |               |
|                     | 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          | ●            | A-            | 25             | ●          | 231           |
|                     | B&W 705                    | 900   | Deft, delicate and delightful, if a little bass light, with clever enclosure and driver engineering                 | 22,42,29          | A            | 35            | ●              | 253        |               |
|                     | 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            | ●              | 260        |               |
|                     | 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          | ●            | A+            | 30             | ●          | 237           |
|                     | Castle Harlech S2          | 1,000 | Improved Harlech is slightly aggressive, but lots of fun, and very good-looking too                                 | 20,96,33          | ●            | A             | 50             | ●          | 219           |
|                     | Dynaudio Audience 42       | 400   | An aristocrat of the vinyl-covered miniature breed. A terrific small speaker for the price                          | 17,29,24          | A            | 40            | ●              | 215        |               |
|                     | Dynaudio Audience 52       | 557   | Brilliant neutrality, though a little understated dynamically (wood veneered version, as tested - £647)             | 20,33,26          | A-           | 30            | ●              | 250        |               |
|                     | Dynaudio Audience 62       | 729   | Pricy but cute vinyl floorstander that is a class act sonically - lightweight, but clean and dextrous               | 20,86,26          | ●            | A             | 30             | ●          | 231           |
|                     | Epos ELS3                  | 200   | Few affordable speakers sound as clean and convincing while taking up so little real estate                         | 18,27,19          | A-           | 60            | ●              | 241        |               |
|                     | 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          | A            | 25            | ●              | 251        |               |
|                     | Focal-JMLab Chorus 716 S   | 550   | Not the smoothest around, but combines coherent voicing with fine dynamic expression and real authority             | 22,95,30          | ●            | A             | 20             | ●          | 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           |
|                     | 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          | ●            | A-            | 25             | ●          | 242           |
|                     | Harbeth NRG2               | 650   | Strikingly styled standmount 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            | ●              | 260        |               |
|                     | KEF Q1                     | 250   | Stylish if slightly small-sounding stand-mount with fine midband coherence; works well close to a wall              | 22,35,30          | A            | 30            | ●              | 234        |               |
|                     | KEF Q4                     | 400   | Beautiful, bijou three-way floorstander lacks some bass weight but has a lovely midband with low coloration         | 18,82,25          | ●            | A             | 38             | ●          | 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            | ●              | 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         | ●            | A             | 23             | ●          | 255           |
|                     | Monitor Audio Bronze B2    | 200   | A lively and entertaining speaker with tight, controlled bass and a pronounced midband                              | 19,35,25          | A            | 42            | ●              | 238        |               |
|                     | Monitor Audio Bronze B4    | 350   | A beautifully balanced loudspeaker with fine overall dynamic range and good imaging                                 | 19,85,26          | ●            | A             | 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          | ●            | A             | 20             | ●          | 237           |
|                     | Mordaunt-Short Avant 906   | 350   | Capable and engaging, this neat design will complement the majority of sub-£500-per-component systems               | 18,85,27          | ●            | A             | 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          | A            | 30            | ●              | 211        |               |
|                     | PMC DB1+                   | 625   | Now with sweeter treble, this fun-size tiny lacks some weight and authority, but is beautifully balanced            | 16,29,24          | A            | 50            | ●              | 261        |               |
|                     | PMC TB2+                   | 795   | This fine allrounder has a lovely laid-back neutrality, fine transparency, low coloration and a sweet treble        | 20,41,31          | A            | 30            | ●              | 261        |               |
|                     | PMC GB1                    | 995   | Ultra-compact floorstander is beautifully clean, articulate and free from boxiness, with a notably delicate top end | 16,92,24          | ●            | A+            | 30             | ●          | 257           |

**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 **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).

# Resolution Loudspeakers

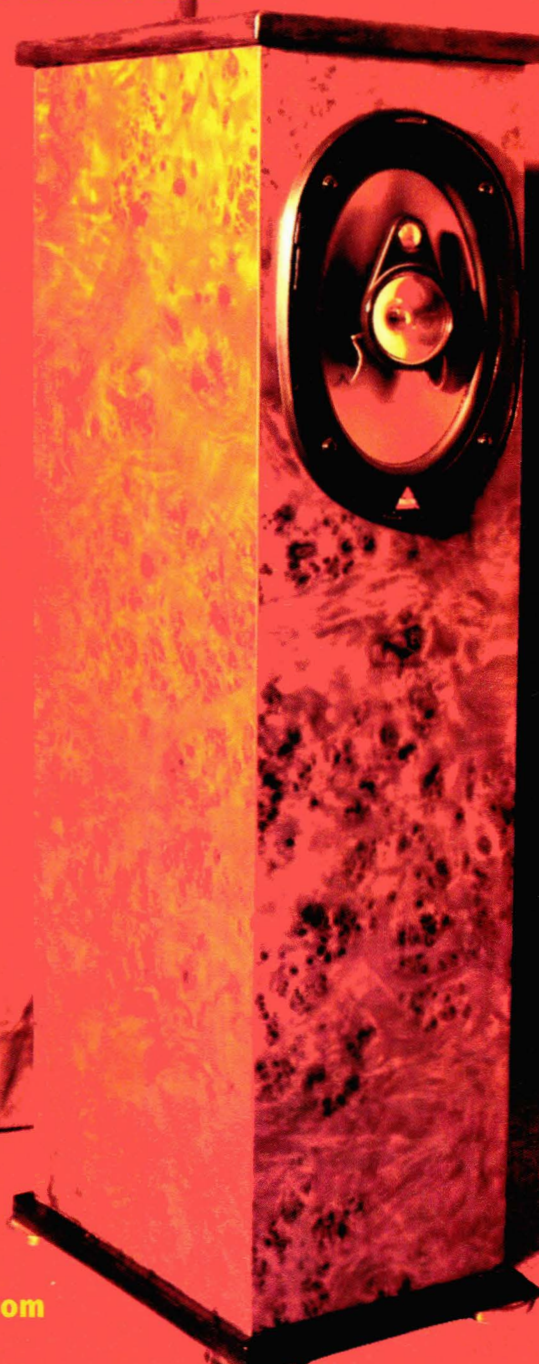
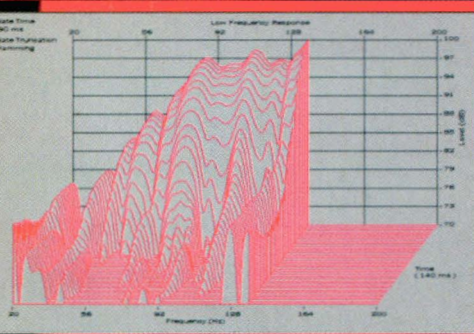
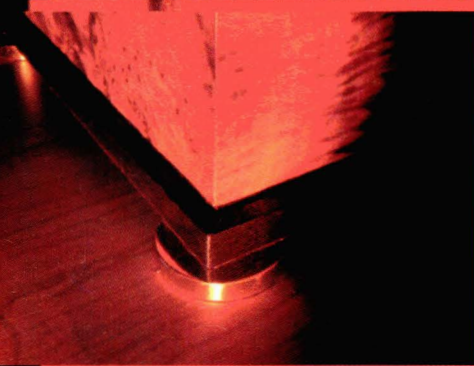
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## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO SPEAKERS continued

### Stereo speakers

| BADGE?              | PRODUCT                     | £      | COMMENTS  | SPECIFICATIONS  |              |               |                |            |               |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|--------|---|-----------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|------------|---------------|
|                     |                             |        |   | SIZE W/H/D (CM) | FLOORSTANDER | EDGE OF DRIVE | BASS FROM (HZ) | FREE SPACE | CLOSE TO WALL |
|                     | Quad 21L                    | 695    | Elegant lacquer finish floorstander has a smooth, well balanced sound, even bass and good detail projection           | 21,80,26        | ●            | A+            | 25             | ●          | 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        | ●            | A             | 25             | ●          | 257           |
|                     | Rega Ela                    | 749    | Might have more grunt, but few can match its impressive agility, delicacy, and superior musical communication         | 23,89,30        | ●            | A             | 28             | ●          | 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             | ●          | 240           |
|                     | 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        | ●            | A             | 20             | ●          | 255           |
|                     | Tannoy Sensys DC1           | 449    | Modest sensitivity but beautifully balanced with fine authority at a very realistic price                             | 21,41,29        | ●            | A             | 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        | ●            | A             | 20             | ●          | 250           |
|                     | Tannoy Eyris 2              | 999    | This super-slim and cutely different-looking floorstander is very communicative, despite weak treble                  | 17,91,26        | ●            | A             | 20             | ●          | 231           |
|                     | Triangle Antal ES           | 975    | Neither pretty nor smooth but a very exuberant and involving communicator, with plenty of scale and expression        | 20,108,34       | ●            | A             | 20             | ●          | 263           |
| <b>ABOVE £1,000</b> |                             |        |   |                 |              |               |                |            |               |
|                     | 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 MkII    | 4,490  | A beautifully neutral speaker with very wide dynamic range and superior imaging, plus lovely Art Deco styling         | 19,99,29        | ●            | A             | 20             | ●          | 251           |
|                     | Anthony Gallo Nucleus Ref   | 2,400  | Occasionally raw, but engaging and capable beyond its physical stature  | 20,89,41        | ●            | A             | 34             | ●          | 257           |
|                     | ATC Active 10               | 1,269  | Stylish, active powerhouses with plenty of subtlety when required (balanced connection only)                          | 23,39,31        | ●            | act           | 45             | ●          | 221           |
|                     | 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             | ●          | 250           |
|                     | 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             | ●          | 256           |
|                     | Audiovector Mi 3 Signature  | 2,320  | Smooth and beautifully balanced with superb neutrality, wide dynamic range and a warm, sweet character                | 20,100,29       | ●            | A-            | 24             | ●          | 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        | ●            | A             | 28             | ●          | 263           |
|                     | B&W 704                     | 1,400  | Cleverly tapered enclosure and external tweeter delivers superior bass and treble, with a laid-back midband           | 22,96,32        | ●            | A             | 20             | ●          | 257           |
|                     | 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           |
|                     | 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        | ●            | A             | 24             | ●          | 260           |
|                     | Dali Helicon 400            | 3,300  | Advanced drivers and enclosure give a generous sound with wide dynamic range and no boxiness                          | 22,103,46       | ●            | A             | 20             | ●          | 264           |
|                     | Dynaudio Audience 82        | 1,460  | Bulky, with vinyl finish, but offers exceptional neutrality, bass extension, power handling and loudness potential    | 22,106,36       | ●            | A             | 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             | ●          | 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           |
|                     | 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      | ●            | A             | 50             | ●          | 245           |
|                     | Focal-JMLab Diva Utopia Be  | 7,599  | Lovely slimline speaker combines remarkable transparency with fine dynamics and gorgeous bass                         | 25,110,53       | ●            | A+            | 30             | ●          | 255           |
|                     | 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             | ●          | 248           |
|                     | Harbeth Super HL5           | 1,699  | Looks old-fashioned, but classic monitor combines authority and transparency with good neutrality                     | 33,64,31        | ●            | A             | 30             | ●          | 233           |
|                     | KEF Reference 207           | 7,000  | A true statement speaker with a majestic, transparent sound to match the build  | 40,129,69       | ●            | A             | 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           |
|                     | Living Voice Avatar         | 2,700  | Dynamic and highly resolved, yet physically discreet design with a relaxed balance                                    | 22,104,27       | ●            | A+            | 40             | ●          | 218           |
|                     | 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           |
|                     | MartinLogan Clarity         | 2,498  | Relatively affordable and easy to live with electrostatic hybrid with class-leading resolving power                   | 26,135,31       | ●            | A-            | 46             | ●          | 245           |
|                     | Mission Elegante e83        | 1,990  | Uncommonly clean, agile and refined floorstander, and as elegant as the name  | 33,111,36       | ●            | A-            | 44             | ●          | 257           |



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**STEREO SPEAKERS** continued

Stereo speakers

| BADGE?          | PRODUCT                    | £      | COMMENTS   | SPECIFICATIONS        |              |               |               |            |               |
|-----------------|----------------------------|--------|--|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|------------|---------------|
|                 |                            |        |  | SIZE (W x H x D) (CM) | FLOORSTANDER | EASE OF DRIVE | BASS FROM HFZ | FREE SPACE | CLOSE TO WALL |
| <span>EC</span> | Mordaunt-Short Perf 6      | 3,500  | Revolutionary enclosure design and aspirated tweeter make for a fast, hi-res ride                                    | 24,121,37             | ●            | A-            | 35            | ●          | 264           |
|                 | 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              | ●            | A             | 25            | ●          | 259           |
| <span>EC</span> | Naim SL-2                  | 4,995  | Delivers magnificent musical analysis and communication skills in a notably discrete physical package                | 28,103,33             | ●            | A-            | 20            | ●          | 232           |
| <span>EC</span> | Neat Ultimatum MFS         | 2,995  | Wonderful five-driver standmount sounds bigger than it looks. Very spacious and informative                          | 22,38,37              |              | A+            | 25            | ●          | 241           |
| <span>EC</span> | Neat Ultimatum MF9         | 8,500  | Superb musical communicator with splendidly deep and agile bass and fine open neutrality                             | 22,150,40             | ●            | A-            | 20            | ●          | 226           |
| <span>HB</span> | PMC FB1+                   | 1,625  | Nicely proportioned floorstander has a sweet top and a beautifully natural, open and restrained midband              | 20,100,30             | ●            | A             | 20            | ●          | 260           |
|                 | PMC OB1                    | 2,450  | Genuinely deep bass and lovely overall neutrality, though mid could have more tension and bass more punch            | 20,103,33             | ●            | A             | 20            | ●          | 243           |
| <span>EC</span> | 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           |
| <span>EC</span> | 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            | ●          | 254           |
| <span>HB</span> | 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           |
| <span>HB</span> | Ruark Talisman III         | 1,499  | No bass demon, but a sophisticated and agile speaker epitomising Ruark's design ideals                               | 22,84,31              | ●            | A             | 22            | ●          | 259           |
| <span>EC</span> | 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              |              | A             | 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             | ●            | A+            | 40            | ●          | 256           |
| <span>EC</span> | 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            | ●          | 240           |
| <span>EC</span> | Tannoy Dimension TD10      | 5,000  | Extremely competent and rhythmic speaker, a futureproof supertweeter and detail to die for                           | 35,101,37             | ●            | A-            | 38            | ●          | 215           |
| <span>EC</span> | 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           |
| <span>EC</span> | 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           |
| <span>HB</span> | Totem Forest               | 2,390  | Low sensitivity but wonderfully open neutrality, at heart a beautifully communicative and musical loudspeaker        | 20,90,27              | ●            | A             | 25            | ●          | 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            | ●          | 247           |
| <span>EC</span> | Triangle Magellan Concerto | 9,995  | Scintillating midrange and treble, with tuneful, well-timed bass - a thoroughly engaging musical ride                | 28,149,34             | ●            | A             | 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           |
| <span>EC</span> | Vivid Audio B1             | 6,590  | Impressive cabinet design combined with hi-tech drivers to make truly world class speaker                            | 27,110,38             | ●            | A-            | 40            | ●          | 261           |
| <span>EC</span> | Waterfall Victoria TWN     | 2,000  | Stunning transparent glass enclosure and a sonic treat too, with great dynamic expression                            | 22,100,22             | ●            | A             | 28            | ●          | 262           |
| <span>EC</span> | 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              | ●            | A             | 28            | ●          | 254           |
| <span>EC</span> | 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           |
| <span>EC</span> | Wilson Benesch ACT         | 8,400  | Superb enclosure gives uncanny freedom from 'boxiness'. Well balanced, but top end might be sweeter                  | 23,108,37             | ●            | A             | 20            | ●          | 252           |
| <span>EC</span> | 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             | ●            | A-            | 20            | ●          | 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

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.

### 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.

### 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.

## 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.



**KEF**  
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.



**Linn**  
Akurate package £13,750  
Linn has worked wonders with its new multichannel speaker system – it's not cheap, but its performance is breathtaking.

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE AV SPEAKER PACKAGES

### Multichannel speakers

| BADGE?          | PRODUCT                          | £      | COMMENTS  | SPECIFICATIONS |                    |                |            |               |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|--------|---|----------------|--------------------|----------------|------------|---------------|
|                 |                                  |        |   | EASE-OF-DRIVE  | NUMBER OF SPEAKERS | BASS FROM (HZ) | FREE SPACE | CLOSE TO WALL |
| <span>BB</span> | ATC Concept 3                    | 4,877  | Extremely engaging, revealing and musical multichannel system providing 360 degrees of full-on entertainment          | A-             | 6                  | 12             | ● opt      | 255           |
|                 | B&W 300 package                  | 900    | An excellent compromise between the requirements of music and those of home cinema (inc. subwoofer)                   | A              | 6                  | 27             | ●          | 241           |
| <span>BB</span> | B&W 600 S3 (602/601/LCR 600)     | 900    | Unquestionably delivers the sonic goods. High-quality drivers in standmount enclosures                                | A              | 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                    | A              | 5                  | 28             | ●          | 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             | ●          | 241           |
|                 | Final Sound Electrostatic system | 4,875  | Slim, attractive, electrostatic panels have clever connections, limited loudness but a breathtaking transparency      | A-             | 6                  | 20             | ●          | 251           |
|                 | Focal-JMLab Electra package      | 3,017  | Bold, solid system, tremendous consistency and easy to expand with an added subwoofer                                 | A              | 5                  | 50             | ●          | 232           |
| <span>BB</span> | KEF Q AV7                        | 1,300  | With latest Uni-Q refinements, this system is astonishingly accomplished and amazing value                            | A+             | 5                  | 35             | ●          | 232           |
| <span>EC</span> | 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             | ●          | 253           |
|                 | Mirage Omni 2                    | 2,650  | Dark tonality, but superb imagery makes this an excellent all-round choice  | A              | 5                  | 30             | ●          | 232           |
| <span>BB</span> | 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            | A              | 6                  | 28             | ●          | 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             | ●          | 262           |
|                 | Mordaunt-Short Declaration 500   | 1,600  | Good value vinyl THX Select package with Power Towers. Good authority, but must be 5.1-connected                      | A              | 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                            | A              | 5                  | 25             | ●          | 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 BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE SUBWOOFERS

### Bass speakers

| BADGE?          | PRODUCT              | £     | COMMENTS  | SPECIFICATIONS  |           |                |              |
|-----------------|----------------------|-------|---|-----------------|-----------|----------------|--------------|
|                 |                      |       |   | SIZE WxHxD (CM) | POWER (W) | BASS FROM (HZ) | ISSUE NUMBER |
|                 | B&W PV1              | 950   | Gorgeously styled sub shakes the air but not the floor, delivering a very clean sound with negligible coloration                | 29,34,35        | 500       | 20             | 259          |
| <span>EC</span> | 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          |
| <span>BB</span> | REL Q150E            | 500   | Great value compact 'cube' sub adds genuine weight and drive thanks to superior filtering                                       | 29,32,33        | 150       | 20             | 239          |
| <span>BB</span> | 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          |
| <span>BB</span> | 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          |
| <span>EC</span> | 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.

# HEAR! HERE!



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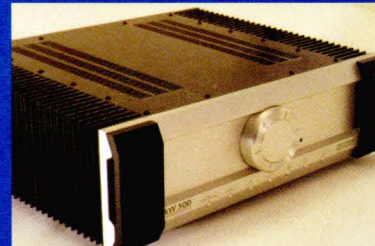
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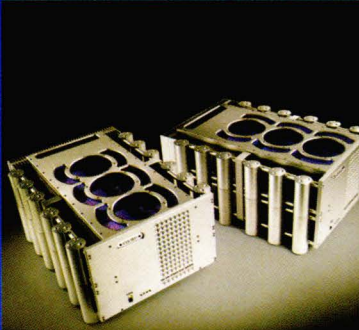
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# HEADPHONES

*For your ears only*



Headphones come in several varieties and some are designed for particular usage. The majority of 'cans' use dynamic cone and coil-type 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

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.

## Our favourite HEADPHONES

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Stereo headphones

| BADGE? | PRODUCT                     | £   | COMMENTS  | SPECIFICATIONS |             |             |           |             |            |                    |              |
|--------|-----------------------------|-----|---|----------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------|--------------------|--------------|
|        |                             |     |   | ELECTROSTATIC  | SUPRA-AURAL | CIRCUMAURAL | OPEN BACK | CLOSED BACK | WEIGHT (g) | 3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR | ISSUE NUMBER |
|        | AKG K44                     | 20  | Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed: a bargain  |                |             | ●           |           | ●           | 190        | ●                  | 219          |
|        | AKG K270 Studio             | 129 | Pro oriented design which is very transparent and great with acoustic material                            |                |             | ●           |           | ●           | 270        | ●                  | 230          |
|        | 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                                  |                |             | ●           |           | ●           | 250        |                    | 194          |
|        | Beyerdynamic DT990          | 160 | Impeccable balance, very extended bass and treble, and bags of detail place this model ahead of the pack  |                |             | ●           | ●         |             | 250        | ●                  | 245          |
|        | Grado SR-60                 | 90  | For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste          |                | ●           |             |           | ●           | 200        | ●                  | 194          |
|        | Grado SR-80                 | 110 | Not perhaps as neutral as some but they communicate well and that's the point of the exercise             |                | ●           |             |           | ●           | 200        | ●                  | 230          |
|        | Philips HP890               | 70  | A remarkably sophisticated and very comfortable headphone   |                |             | ●           | ●         |             | 330        | ●                  | 219          |
|        | Sennheiser HD590            | 160 | Assured and confident headphone with very low coloration and great comfort                                |                |             | ●           | ●         |             | 270        | ●                  | 205          |
|        | Sennheiser HD650            | 300 | Astonishing resolution and hardly less impressive tonal balance make this a true hi-fi experience         |                |             | ●           | ●         |             | 260        | ●                  | 252          |
|        | Sony MDR-CD480              | 40  | Generally neutral and nicely detailed – comfortable too   |                |             | ●           | ●         |             | 250        | ●                  | 219          |
|        | Stax SRS-2020 Basic Sys. II | 349 | Luxury option at its price, but the sound delivery is five-star quality all the way                       | ●              |             |             |           |             | 295        | ●                  | 205          |

**SPECS KEY** **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

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# 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.

## Our favourite CABLES

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Interconnects and speaker cables

| BADGE?                                | PRODUCT                    | £   | COMMENTS   | SPECIFICATIONS |            |        |        | ISSUE NUMBER |                    |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----|--|----------------|------------|--------|--------|--------------|--------------------|
|                                       |                            |     |  | STRANDED       | SOLID CORE | COPPER | SILVER |              | DIGITAL CABLE TYPE |
| <b>ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS</b>         |                            |     |  |                |            |        |        |              |                    |
| EC                                    | Avid Black Reference SCT   | 700 | Rich, slightly dark sound that is beguiling and highly informative   |                | ●          |        |        |              | 256                |
|                                       | Black Rhodium Illusion     | 77  | An upfront, lively, exciting cable which still manages subtlety when needed. Slight coloration though                            |                | ●          | ●      |        |              | 248                |
| BB                                    | Black Rhodium Opera        | 297 | Very open, clear and detailed sound, with excellent extension at frequency extremes  |                | ●          |        | ●      |              | 260                |
|                                       | Chord Company Signature    | 499 | Silver plated, triple screened. Some granularity but great resolving ability, a good match for Chord Signature loudspeaker cable |                | ●          | ●      |        |              | 255                |
| BB                                    | Chord Company Chorus       | 200 | Very even-handed balance with notably extended bass  | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 259                |
| BB                                    | Ecosse The Composer        | 30  | A high degree of realism and delicacy, and a fantastic price (0.8m)  | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 211                |
|                                       | Ecosse The Diva            | 100 | Very good performance in all areas, with particularly fine, tuneful, bass (0.8m)   | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 224                |
|                                       | Kimber Silver Streak       | 242 | Not the cheapest around, but more than justifies itself with terrific poise and balance of virtues                               | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 241                |
| BB                                    | Kimber Timbre              | 83  | Typical Kimber construction with ditto sound – clean, extended and detailed  | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 248                |
| BB                                    | Monster Interlink 400 Mk2  | 70  | Really lively and enjoyable sound at a sensible price  | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 224                |
| BB                                    | Townshend DCT100           | 100 | Unusual construction with copper strip conductors, giving very detailed sound, but just an occasional hint of hardness           |                | ●          | ●      |        |              | 241                |
| EC                                    | Townshend Isolda DCT       | 300 | Unusual construction and cryogenically treated too: whatever the reason, a remarkably capable wire                               |                | ●          | ●      |        |              | 234                |
| BB                                    | van den Hul The Bay C5     | 45  | Terrific detail, nice balance – a great cable  | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 224                |
| BB                                    | van den Hul The Well       | 85  | Hybrid cable with carbon-fibre conductors added. Very slight bass coloration does little to detract from fine performance        | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 241                |
| BB                                    | van den Hul D102 Mk III    | 79  | Hybrid conductors (carbon and copper) and intelligent construction give strong bass and excellent detail                         | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 234                |
| BB                                    | 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         | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 259                |
| <b>DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS</b>          |                            |     |  |                |            |        |        |              |                    |
| EC                                    | Kimber Select KS2020       | 629 | Provides a subtle but rewarding lift in musicality with any DAC, justifying the price  |                | ●          | ●      |        | E            | 260                |
| BB                                    | QED Qunex P75              | 25  | A superbly capable interconnect that's highly detailed and well balanced   |                |            | ●      |        | E            | 207                |
| BB                                    | QED Qunex SR75             | 50  | Lots of bass and good clear midrange and treble at a sensible price  | ●              |            | ●      |        | E            | 234                |
| BB                                    | Supra ZAC                  | 32  | High grade fibre and quality plugs add up to a noticeable improvement over giveaway optical leads                                |                |            |        |        | O            | 259                |
| BB                                    | van den Hul Optocoupler II | 49  | Noticeably has the edge over other optical leads, but still second best to electrical types                                      |                |            |        |        | O            | 234                |
| <b>SPEAKER CABLES PRICE PER METRE</b> |                            |     |  |                |            |        |        |              |                    |
|                                       | Black Rhodium S300         | 18  | Tight, precise and extended bass makes this a great cable for rock 'n' roll  | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 241                |
|                                       | Chord Company Signature    | 117 | Dynamic, solid sounding cable, but it's bulky and not very tractable   | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 255                |
|                                       | Ecosse Reference MS2.3     | 23  | Favours excitement over refinement: can be slightly bass-shy, but plenty of life   | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 227                |
| EC                                    | Electrofluidics 20/20      | 45  | Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere – one of the best all-round cables available                        | ●              | ●          | ●      |        |              | 241                |
| BB                                    | Kimber 4PR                 | 5   | Considering the price, this cable's very slight dryness is forgivable when everything else is so right                           | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 192                |
| BB                                    | Kimber 8VS                 | 18  | Beautifully full, open and transparent sound right across the board  | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 227                |
|                                       | Kimber 8PR                 | 21  | Bass very full, just occasionally a touch flabby, but detailed and sweet upper frequencies make this a good value cable          | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 241                |
| BB                                    | Kimber 8TC                 | 39  | Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass. Price for 5m terminated pair                         | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 203                |
| BB                                    | QED Silver Anniversary     | 5   | A few minor flaws, but overall performance is very assured for this price  | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 192                |
| BB                                    | QED X-Tube XT300           | 10  | A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems  |                | ●          | ●      |        |              | 234                |
| EC                                    | Townshend Isolda DCT       | 50  | Cryogenically treated 'impedance matched' cable with stabilising components added: great sound all-round                         |                | ●          | ●      |        |              | 241                |
| BB                                    | Wireworld Terra 5          | 5   | Deep powerful bass, clear treble and very solid imaging add up to above-class performance  | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 261                |
| BB                                    | Wireworld Solstice 5       | 20  | Unfriendly to handle, but makes up for it with very assured sound – heaps of bass and great insight                              | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 248                |
| BB                                    | Wireworld Oasis 5 Biwire   | 38  | Full-bodied and precise sound across the board – an excellent performer in bi-wire or single-wire mode                           | ●              |            | ●      |        |              | 262                |

**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, O – optical. Cables are one metre length unless otherwise stated

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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** ,

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# 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.

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE **EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS**

### Equipment supports

| BADGE?          | PRODUCT                     | £     | COMMENTS  | SPECIFICATIONS |                     |        |                   |            |              |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|-------|---|----------------|---------------------|--------|-------------------|------------|--------------|
|                 |                             |       |   | HEIGHT         | TOP PLATE SIZE (CM) | WELDED | NUMBER OF SHELVES | SHELF TYPE | ISSUE NUMBER |
|                 | 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          |
| <span>BB</span> | 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          |
| <span>BB</span> | 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                  | ●      | 4                 | Glass      | 206          |
| <span>EC</span> | 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          |
| <span>BB</span> | 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          |
| <span>EC</span> | Naim Fraim                  | 1,825 | Pricey but very classy looking and sounding, with modular flexibility   | 96             | 45,34               |        | 5                 | Glass      | 232          |
|                 | Isobue '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          |
| <span>BB</span> | Sound Organisation Z560     | 195   | Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!   | 92             | 50,40               |        | 5                 | Glass      | 217          |
| <span>EC</span> | 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 BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE **SPEAKER STANDS**

### Speaker stands

| BADGE?          | PRODUCT                   | £   | COMMENTS  | SPECIFICATIONS |                     |          |        |                |              |
|-----------------|---------------------------|-----|---|----------------|---------------------|----------|--------|----------------|--------------|
|                 |                           |     |   | HEIGHT         | TOP PLATE SIZE (CM) | FILLABLE | WELDED | NUMBER OF LEGS | ISSUE NUMBER |
| <span>BB</span> | 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               |          |        | 1              | 220          |
| <span>BB</span> | Kudos S50                 | 159 | Formidable bass with real authority, and a wide dynamic range across a broad bandwidth                              | 61             | 15,20               | ●        |        | 1              | 220          |
|                 | Partington Ansa 60        | 90  | Elegant flat-packer 'disappears' sonically; restrained but neutral and coherent                                     | 62             | 18,15               | ●        |        | 4              | 232          |
| <span>BB</span> | Partington Dreadnought    | 100 | Fully welded high-class engineering gives a very clean, open sound at a sharp price                                 | 61             | 17,15               | ●        | ●      | 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.

## Billy Vee

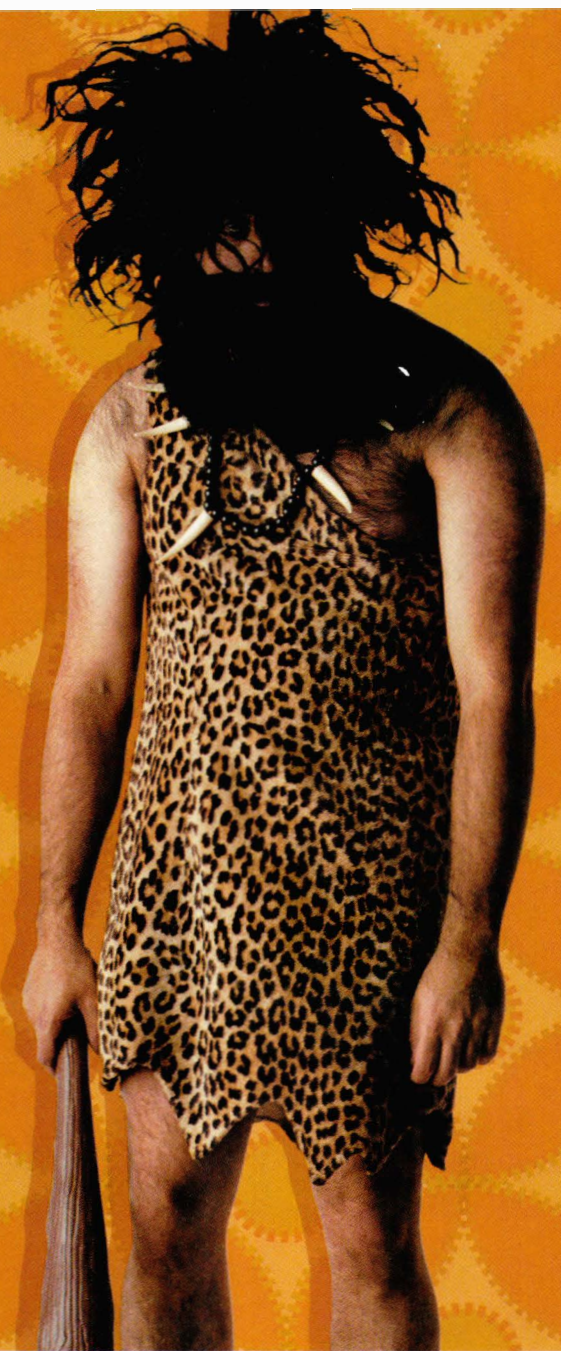
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# GLOSSARY

## TECHNICAL TERMS

**5.1-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 L/R, centre and mono surround channels via an analogue matrix.

**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 4:1 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 quality.

**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 flows 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), measured 1m from the speaker.

**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.

**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 equipment.

**DRY** A sound that is devoid of 'juice', which usually comes across as fine-grained 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 sound.

**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.

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### SHOWCASE

#### Okki Nokki Record Cleaner

Vacuum Suction Record Cleaner

#### Key Features

- High quality vacuum suction record cleaner
- Compact profile for easy storage
- Cost-effective record care solution
- High-quality fit and finish



#### Cadence Okki Nokki Record Cleaning Machine

Okki Nokki has been billed as 'the record cleaning machine for the people'. So, at just £199 the Okki Nokki is far more affordable than most vacuum machines on the market and

the results are certainly comparable to those more expensive units.

Okki Nokki measures just 35x21x35cm (WxHxD) but its powerful suction and low-torque platter make for highly effective record cleaning. Although fluid is applied manually, this does not compromise performance – we therefore feel the Okki Nokki would offer tremendous value for money at several times the price. The fact that it's just £199 is an added bonus!

**Okki Nokki £199**

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| Clearaudio Stroboscopic Light          | £69.95 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Clearaudio Deluxe Bubble Level         | £21.95 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Clearaudio Clever Record Clamp         | £12.95 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Clearaudio Quadra Record Clamp         | £69.95 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| KAB Strobe Disc & Light                | £79.95 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Michell Engineering Record Clamp       | £22.95 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Michell Universal Dust Cover           | £44.95 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ortofon T Force Tracking Force Gauge   | £7.95  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| Polaris Plus Stylus Alignment Gauge    | £5.95  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pro-Ject Bubble Level                  | £14.95 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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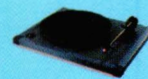
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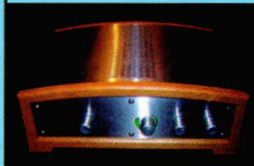
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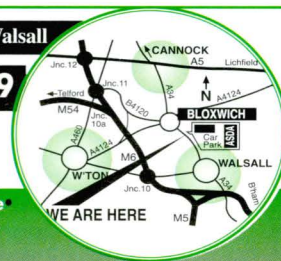
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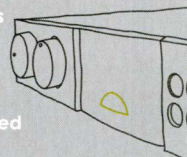
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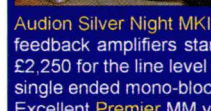


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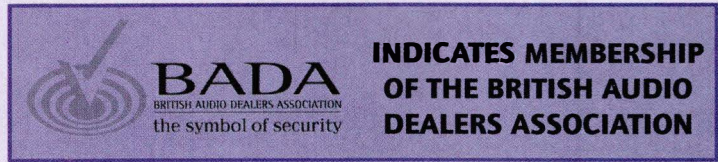
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# A-Z GUIDE TO SECOND-HAND KIT

## #07 DENON

**T**hese days, Denon is best known for its extensive home cinema and style system ranges, but it hasn't always been so.

In 1983 Hayden Labs (ironically now called Denon UK) took over the UK distribution of Denon and, among other things, introduced the British public to some of the finest cassette decks available. You can still buy Denon tape decks new, but it's the older 'super decks' of the late 1980s/early 1990s that we'll look at here. Superb build quality and reliability makes pretty much any of these Denon cassette decks a good second-hand purchase.

In order of appearance, the DMR-44HX, DMR-800 and DMR-810 are probably the pick of the bunch. Although the oldest examples will be nearly 20 years old now, the DMR-44HX cost a whopping £400 back in its day. Out of 72 decks rated by *Hi-Fi Choice* in 1989, the DMR44HX is one of only four to score 'excellent' in terms of both 'lab' and 'sound'. The other three, incidentally, were a £500 Sony and the legendary Nakamichi

Dragon and CR-7E. Unlike the Nakamichis, though, a good DRM-44HX can be picked up today for around £125 or less. Condition is vital as, though most parts are available, they are quite expensive. Denon will provide free service quotes, but they do warn that the cost of a full overhaul could make refurbishment uneconomical. So, either buy very cheap, or with great care.

Where you're unlikely to go wrong is with one of Denon's great budget tuners or amps. The TU-260L is something of a budget legend and, with only one upgrade, still in production today. Made between 1990 and 1999, the original TU-260L was one of the longest running hi-fi components ever made (Denon's DL-103 cartridge pips it, though; that is celebrating its 42nd year in production this year). The tuner's neutral sound quality made it

then just walk away, as a new board will cost more than the unit is worth.

Denon's PMA-250 amplifier was another stalwart of the budget domain. For 20 years, it has gone through four upgrades until finally, in 2000, becoming the PMA-255. Other than the PMA-255, the best model to have is the PMA-250SE of the late 1990s. Like the current model, this is a sweet sounding amp that sounds remarkably open and coherent for the money. As with the tuners, very little should go wrong with the amps, although we have come across some input-switching problems with the optional remote controls. If your speakers are on the inefficient side, then you might like to consider the larger PMA-350/PMA-355. It loses a little of the PMA-250/PMA-255's sweetness, but compensates with plenty of grunt. Car boot, 20-year-old PMA-250s start

**“Denon introduced the British public to some of the finest cassette decks available.”**

an award winner, year after year. In 1999, the unit was finally upgraded with RDS-EON and a slightly revised tuner stage. These days, tatty MK1s can be had for as little £18 with the best, nearly new, the RDS-equipped Mk2s fetching £50-£70. Really nothing goes wrong with them, so if the one you're looking at doesn't work the chances are it's either just a fuse, or the unit has been dropped and the circuit board broken. If the latter is the case,

from a tenner, with recent PMA255s fetching £55-£85. Add about an extra £25 to secure the more powerful PMA-350/PMA-355.

These Denons all make great second-hand purchases because they manage that rare combination of both sounding good and lasting well. For a cassette deck, a decent budget amp or a fine radio tuner, you won't go far wrong. **HFC**

Dominic Todd



Above: Denon PMA250SE amplifier

## DIY CORNER SPEAKERS

Part 7 Crossover networks – the final frontier

**L**ast issue, we looked at how high-pass capacitors and low-pass inductors could be combined to create filter networks of various slope rates. Classically, components are selected so they form a tuned circuit with a well defined roll-off or roll-on. But it's also possible to manipulate the filters to add a measure of equalisation that changes the shape to compensate for unwanted behaviour in the drive units.

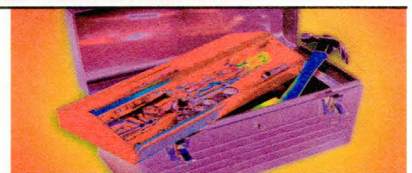
There's also the important role of the resistor to consider. Unlike capacitors and inductors, the resistor is an 'all-pass' or 'band-pass' device. The resistor's most common role is to reduce the relative level of the signal feeding the

tweeter, as this usually has an inherently higher sensitivity than the bass/mid driver.

In the simplest case, a resistor is merely placed in series with the tweeter. This raises the impedance/resistance (the two terms are substantially interchangeable) of the pair, which will reduce the current that flows through the tweeter and hence the power for a given voltage. In other words, this reduces its output. Raising the impedance will affect the frequency at which the preceding high-pass network operates. This can be avoided, while still achieving attenuation, by adding a second resistor after the first and across the tweeter. Resistors can adversely affect sound quality,

and some prefer to use an autochoke (a form of transformer) instead. It's an interesting option, often reckoned to sound better, but is rarely encountered in practice. **HFC**

Paul Messenger



### DIY CONTACTS

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**NEXT MONTH:** Cabling types... and cautions!



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## Sale of part exchanged and ex-dem items

|  | Sale   | New    |
|--|--------|--------|
| Musical Fidelity Tri Vista SACD player. 12 months. Boxed, shiny.   | £3000  | £4000  |
| 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 certified 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   | £400   | £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  |
| <b>Canary Audio Stock Clearance - High End bargain time</b>  |        |        |
| CA309 - 45 watt 300B monos. Fantastic sound and build. Illustrious giants with champagne facia. Boxed, almost new  | £4000  | £10000 |
| CA303 - 22 watt 300B monos. Beautiful sounding amp. 100 hours use at one Hi-Fi show. Boxed. Bargain.   | £3500  | £7250  |
| CA301 - 22 watt stereo power amp. Huge performance for giveaway price  | £2500  | £5450  |
| CA801 - Two box dual mono line pre-amp. Very serious state of affairs  | £2250  | £4500  |

## LIVING VOICE



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# HICAM

|  | WAS   | NOW   |   | WAS       | NOW  |
|--|-------|-------|---|-----------|------|
| PATHOS LOGOS INTEGRATED AMP 110 WPC                  | 800   | 450   | MICHELL GYROSE/RB300ARM                             |           | 1128 |
| AUDIO ANALOGUE PAGANINI 24/96 CD PLAYER              | 1195  | 995   | MICHELL ORBESME/BOARDNEW                            |           | 2413 |
| UNISONRESEARCH UNICO CD PLAYER                       | 60    | 30    | CLEARAUDIO BLUEMOTION TURNTABLE 3 YEARS WARRANTY    |           | 695  |
| ALPHASONAKROS 2 SPEAKER STANDS BOXEDMINT             | 625   | 425   | CLEARAUDIO DEMOTION TURNTABLE 3 YEARS WARRANTY      |           | 655  |
| AUDIO ANALOGUE BELLINI PRE AMP MM/MC REMOTE          | 895   | 595   | MICHELLTECNODECWITH RB 300 ARMNEW                   |           | 700  |
| ACCUSTICS ARTSPOWER 1 INTEGRATED AMP130WPC           | 2500  | 1600  | MICHELLISO /HERA MC PHONO STAGEUSED                 | 600       | 295  |
| MONRIODASY CD PLAYER 24/96                           | 1150  | 675   | CABASSE PIANO5A SPEAKERSCHERRY FINISHNEW            |           | 450  |
| DENSEN B400HDCD CD PLAYER                            | 2350  | 1500  | TRANS FIGURATION ARIA MCCAARTRIDGED 36 MV           |           | 690  |
| AUDIO ANALOGUE DONZETTI MONOBLOCKS                   | 425   | 1500  | CABASSE X05 5 WAYSPEAKERSYSTEM INCSUB NEW           | 895       | 695  |
| ACCUSTICS ARTS/RE AMP 1 INC REMOTECONTROL            | 2300  | 1500  | STELLO QP200 AMP/MR/CA/BALANCED                     |           | 1195 |
| AUDIO ANALOGUE PRIMOSETTANTA INT AMP70 WPC           | 2100  | 1500  | STELLO AQ20 INTEGRATEDAMP                           |           | 1085 |
| GRAAF VENIQUINQUENT AMP                              | 1899  | 1899  | STELLO DP 200 DAC/PRE AMP/PC/BALANCED               |           | 1495 |
| AUDIO VALVE EKUSPE PRE AMP BALANCED                  |       |       | STELLO S200 STEREO POWER AMP 200WPC                 |           | 1495 |
| AUDIOVALVE ASSASINT 20S INTEGRATEDAMP                |       |       | GRAAF GM 50 INTEGRATED AMP 50WPC                    |           | 3950 |
| AUDIONOTE OTOPHONO INT AMP NEW                       |       |       | VIRTUAL DYNAMICS POWER 3 CABLE 6 FT LONG            |           | 125  |
| AUDIONOTE P2 PP POWER AMP AS NEW                     |       |       | VIRTUAL DYN AMICS DAVIDRCA 1 MTR PR                 |           | 380  |
| AUDIO VALVE AVALON MONO POWER AMPS                   | 2450  | 2450  | AUDIOANALOGUE ARIA MM/MC PHONO/STAGE                |           | 495  |
| CLEARAUDIO SYMPHONO PHONO/STAGE/MC                   | 770   | 770   | OPERACALLAS SPEAKERS                                | 1695      | 1295 |
| ACCUSTICS ARTS/DAC 1 32084KHZ DIA CONVERTER          | 2900  | 2900  | ORLELECA100SP100 PRE POWER NEW                      | 1998      | 1904 |
| EXIMUS S1 POWER AMP 200WPC RCA/KLR INPUT             | 2531  | 2531  | PATHOS CLASSIC ONE INTEGRATED AMP70WPC              |           | 1325 |
| ACCUSTICSARTS PLAYER 1 24/96                         | 2895  | 2895  | ORELLE 100 EVO CD PLAYER EX DEM                     | 1499      | 1199 |
| AVI LAB SERIES NEW POWER AMP 200WPC                  | 1299  | 1299  | ORELLESA 100EVO INT AMP 80WPC P/ON NEW              | 1199      | 1199 |
| AUDIUSAEUPEN POWER CABLES FULLRANGE                  | 1499  | 1499  | ORIGINLIVEAURORAHGOLD TURNTABLE NEW                 | 1470      | 1470 |
| AVI LAB SERIES/PRE AMP OPTIONAL PHONO/DAC            | 1469  | 1469  | ORIGINLIVE ENCOUNTER TONE ARMNEW                    | 970       | 970  |
| AVI LABSERIES/CD PLAYERS/PEER NEW                    | 1469  | 1469  | ORIGINLIVE ILLUSTRIOUS TONEARMNEW                   | 1570      | 1570 |
| AURUMCANTOS/LEISURE 3 SE STAND/MONO SPKS             | 1200  | 795   | ORIGINLIVE RESOLUTION TURNTABLE NEW                 | 1970      | 1970 |
| AVI LAB SERIES INTEGRATED AMP 200WPC NEW STUNNING    | 1499  | 1499  | UNISONRESEARCH SMART845 MONOBLOCKS                  |           | 3750 |
| BLUENOTE/BALDINOTTI MCCAARTRIDGE                     | 1400  | 999   | PLINIUSP8 POWER AMP 200WPC/80HMS                    |           | 2250 |
| BLUENOTE/BORROMED TONEARM                            | 999   | 1800  | PLINIUS M8PRE AMP/INC REMOTECONTROL                 |           | 2250 |
| BLUENOTE/DUCALE REFERENCE/QUALITY BOOKSHELF SPEAKERS | 1800  | 1900  | PRIMARE A10 INT AMP EXCELLENT CONDITION/BOXED       |           | 275  |
| BLUENOTE/BELLAVISTASIGNATURE TURNTABLE               | 1900  | 95    | PSBALPHA 6 ACTIVE SUBWOOFER AS NEW                  | 500       | 225  |
| BLACK RHODIUM SYMPHONY 1 MTR PR INTERCONNECTS        | 95    | 70    | RUARK PROLOGUE ONE/SPK R/W FINISH BOXED/USED        | 995       | 450  |
| BLACKRHODIUM/MONOCENTRO 1 MTR PAIR NEW               | 135   | 95    | RUARK VITA 100 5.1 SPK SYSTEM INC/RUARKACTIVESUB    | 1695      | 750  |
| BLACKRHODIUM SYMPHONY 2MTR PAIR                      | 150   | 135   | RUARKVITA 120 5.1 SYSTEMNEW                         | 1695      | 1500 |
| BLACK RHODIUM HARMONY 1 MTR PAIR NEW                 | 60    | 45    | RUARK PRELUDE 11 NEW                                | 900       | 800  |
| MONRIOD P2 POWER AMP 135 WPC                         | 1095  | 795   | PROAC DIS VARIOUS FINISHES NEW FROM                 |           | 1790 |
| BLACK RHODIUM ORATORIO 1 METRE PAIR NEW              | 597   | 375   | QED FULL RANGE                                      |           | 1250 |
| CROFT VITA PRE AMP NEW                               | 990   | 990   | RUARK PROLOGUE 11 LOUDSPEAKERS NEW                  |           | 1250 |
| CROFT THIN STAR POWER AMPS NEW FROM                  | 1500  | 1500  | RUARK VITA 120 5.1 SPEAKER SYSTEM NEW               |           | 1250 |
| CROFT DAKSHINI ALL VALVE POWER AMP/NEW               | 3600  | 1250  | RUARK VITA 120 5.1 SYSTEM NEW                       |           | 1400 |
| CROFT GQI INTEGRATED AMP/40W/NEW                     | 1250  | 1250  | SEMHESER RS85WIRELESS/HEADPHONESNEW                 |           | 159  |
| BLACK RHODIUM REQUIRE 1 1 METRE PAIR NEW             | 1247  | 800   | SME MODEL 10 TURNTABLE NEW                          |           | 2643 |
| DENSON D30 POWER AMP 200WPC/4 OHMS STUNNING          | 1500  | 595   | SME SERIES IV ARM BOXED/USED                        | 1126      | 1000 |
| BLACK RHODIUM ORATORIO 1 METRE DIGITAL NEW           | 297   | 297   | SME SERIES V ARM NEVER USED/MINT                    | 1615      | 1400 |
| CLEARAUDIO CHAMPION TURNTABLE                        | 810   | 810   | SME 20/24TURNTABLE/INC SERIES V ARM                 |           | 5273 |
| PROACRESPONSEONE SC 15 STAND MOUNTSPEAKERSNEW        | 1199  | 995   | SME V ARM EXCELLENT CONDITION BOXED                 |           | 995  |
| CLEARAUDIO/MICRO BASIC PHONO STAGE/MM/MC             | 230   | 230   | WIREWORLD ECLIPSE REFERENCE INT 1 MTR NEW           |           | 499  |
| EAR 324 TRANSICTOR PREAMP NEW                        | 2400  | 1395  | WIREWORLD ALANTIS 5 1 MTR INTERCONNECTS NEW         |           | 149  |
| UNISON RESEARCH UNICO DUAL MONO POWER AMP            | 2000  | 1495  | SOUND ORGANISATION FULLRANGE                        |           | 109  |
| EAR 834 INT AMP BOXED NEW                            | 2000  | 699   | WIREWORLD EQUINOX 5 FOR NAIM OWNERS D/IN/D/IN       |           | 109  |
| PROAC TABLETTE REFERENCE 8 SPEAKERS                  | 699   | 715   | STAXSR 007-SP/M007 EAR/SPEAKERS NEW                 |           | 2495 |
| EAR834MM/MC PHONO/STAGE NEW                          | 715   | 3075  | STAX SRS2020M/K2 EAR/SPEAKERS NEW                   |           | 349  |
| EAR890 POWER AMP 70WPC CLASS A NEW                   | 3075  | 3250  | STAX SRS 4040S SYSTEMS/IGNITURE/2 NEW               |           | 995  |
| EAR 899 INT/PRE AMP 70WPC CLASS A NEW                | 3250  | 2690  | SUMIKO/BLACKHORO MC CARTRIDGE NEW                   |           | 599  |
| EAR 816 INT/REGATED/PRE/MAIN AMP NEW                 | 2690  | 2275  | SUMIKO PEARLMM CARTRIDGE NEW                        |           | 65   |
| EAR HEADPHONE AMP/HP4 NEW                            | 2275  | 1850  | SUMIKO BLUE POINT SPECIAL MC NEW                    |           | 239  |
| EAR864 PRE AMP NEW                                   | 1850  | 799   | T-A24/192 CD PLAYER AMAZING NEW                     |           | 69   |
| ELAC 310 2 JETSPEAKERS NEW                           | 799   | 799   | SUMIKO BLUE POINT SPECIAL EVO 111 MC NEW            |           | 239  |
| ELAC 203 ESP ACTIVE SUBWOOFER NEW                    | 799   | 2499  | TALK/ELECTRONIC/HUNDER 1 COPLAYER                   |           | 69   |
| UNISONRESEARCH UNICO DUAL MONO POWER AMP             | 599   | 195   | WIREWORLD SOLSTICE 5 1 MTR INTERCONNECT NEW         |           | 69   |
| ELAC 330 JET INC STANDS NEW                          | 2499  | 499   | WIREWORLD FULLRANGE OF AWARD WINNING/CABLES         |           | 199  |
| GAMUT 1 MTR TEL/DON COATED INTERCONNECTS RCA/XLR     | 195   | 3430  | WIREWORLD STARLIGHT 5 HDMI 1 MTR CABLE              |           | 475  |
| ELAC F20 CINEMA SPEAKERS FREESTANDING/GLASS BASE     | 499   | 3990  | TRICHORD 1000 POWER/BLACK NEW                       |           | 1270 |
| GAMUT D3 PREAMP BALANCED IN/OUT                      | 3430  | 750   | TRICHORDELPHIN/M/K2/NEVER CONNECTED PSU NEW         |           | 299  |
| GAMUT D200 MK3 POWER AMP NEW 200WPC                  | 3990  | 9480  | TRICHORD D/IN/PSU NEW                               |           | 995  |
| GAMUT M200 MONOBLOCKS 200WPC                         | 6100  | 13550 | TRICHORD ORCARP/LARGE PSUMINT                       | VALUE!    | 315  |
| GRADORS 1 HEADPHONES NEW                             | 750   | 5100  | TRICHORD RESEARCH 500 POWER/BLACK NEW               | 315       | 285  |
| HALCRO DM8 PRE AMP/RC/BALANCED                       | 9480  | 795   | TRICHORDRESEARCH/DELPHIN/M/K2 PHONO + LARGE/PSU NEW | 995       | 900  |
| HALCRO DM 38 STEREO AMP 180WPC                       | 13550 | 1145  | VOH PBS 8 MTR INTERCONNECT NEW                      | 35        | 20   |
| HALCRO/MCA70 7 CHANNEL POWER AMP                     | 5100  | 1249  | VDTHE SOURCE HB 0 8 METRE NEW                       | 65        | 35   |
| LYRA ARGOMC CARTRIDGE NEW                            | 795   | 495   | VIVANADO DX400 HEADPHONES NEW                       | 29        | 20   |
| LYRAHELKON MC CARTRIDGE NEW                          | 1145  | 315   | WIREWORLD SOLSTICE 5 SPK CABLE AWARD WINNER         | FROM £132 | 219  |
| LYRAHELKON SLMC CARTRIDGE NEW                        | 1249  | 2531  | WIREWORLD/DELPHIN 5 INTERCONNECT 1 MTR PR           |           | 219  |
| LYRA/ORDIAN MCCAARTRIDGE NEW                         | 495   |       | WIREWORLD/RAND/5 INTERCONNECT                       |           | 149  |
| MICHELL HR PS/DAC MOTOR/NEW                          | 315   |       |   |           |      |
| EXIMUS OP1 DAC/PRE 24/192 BALANCED CLASS A           | 2531  |       |   |           |      |

## AGENTS FOR

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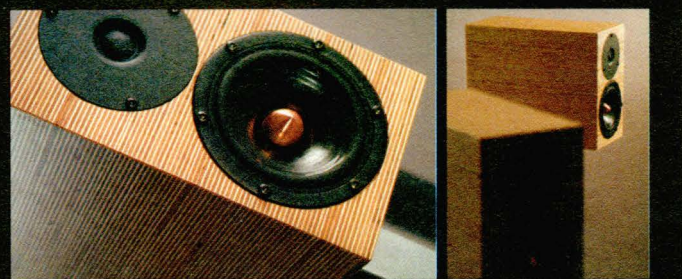
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## DEMONSTRATOR AND USED ITEMS

|  | Was   | Now  |
|--|-------|------|
| Densen Beat400+ ex-demo  | 1295  | 979  |
| Accuphase DP77V CD/SACD player S/H                                 | 7600  | 4999 |
| dCS Delius 24/192 DAC Non Firewire S/H                             | 5999  | 2995 |
| Meridian G08CD S/H   | N/A   | 1899 |
| Naim CD3 Compact Disc Player S/H                                   | 1098  | 495  |
| Primare V10 CD/DVD Player ex-demo                                  | 795   | 499  |
| Theta Generation V Balanced S/H                                    | 6290  | 2299 |
| Theta Pro Basic II DAC with Oscom/Balanced S/H                     | 2990  | 1195 |
| Clearaudio Unify Unipivot Tonearm New and Boxed                    | 795   | 599  |
| Clearaudio Accurate MC ex-demo                                     | 2800  | 1699 |
| Clearaudio Victory MC New and Boxed                                | 1030  | 699  |
| Heed Quazar 2 box MC/MM Phono stage new                            | 550   | 395  |
| Kuzma Stabi/Stogi 5 Turntable New and Boxed                        | N/A   | 1399 |
| Linn LP12/Syrinx PU2 Valhalla S/H                                  | N/A   | 399  |
| Linn LP12 Cirrus/Black Ash S/H                                     | 1075  | 499  |
| Linn Lingbo PSU S/H  | 650   | 399  |
| Linn L7/L7i Tonearm S/H  | N/A   | 479  |
| Linn Clyde MC Cartridge S/H  | 500   | 249  |
| Linn Black VTX Tonearm S/H   | N/A   | 75   |
| Lehmann Audio Black Cube SE New and Boxed                          | 650   | 449  |
| Musical Fidelity XLPs MM/MC phono stage S/H                        | 225   | 149  |
| Naim Aro Tonearm S/H   | 1400  | 950  |
| Trichord Research Delphini 4 box phono stage S/H                   | 1999  | 1399 |
| Triplaner Series VI Tonearm S/H                                    | 3500  | 1999 |
| SME20/2 turntable without arm 6 months old S/H                     | 3840  | 2799 |
| Systemdeck X II900 / RB250 / Denon 103                             | N/A   | 250  |
| Audio Analogue Bellini Remote Preamplifiers ex-demo                | 625   | 499  |
| Hovland HP100MC Preamplifier S/H                                   | 5495  | 2999 |
| Naim NAC102/K Preamplifier S/H                                     | 1089  | 599  |
| Primare PRE30 ex-demo  | 1200  | 799  |
| Spectral DMC12 Preamplifier S/H                                    | 4200  | 2499 |
| Rega Cursa Preamplifier Black ex-demo                              | 598   | 429  |
| Audio Analogue Corelli Stereo Power Amplifier ex-demo              | 695   | 479  |
| Audio Analogue Donzetti Mono Power Amplifiers ex-demo              | 1050  | 729  |
| Audio Research D100.2 Solid State Power Amplifier S/H              | 3995  | 1799 |
| Audio Research VTA200 MkII Valve Power Amplifier S/H               | 9998  | 6999 |
| Gryphon Callisto 2100 S/H  | 3500  | 1899 |
| Krell FPB 700x Class A stereo Power Amplifier S/H                  | 14989 | 8995 |
| Naim NAP180 S/H  | 1189  | 599  |
| Primare A30.2 Poweramplifier ex-demo                               | 1200  | 879  |
| Primare A30.1 Integrated ex-demo                                   | 1500  | 995  |
| Primare SPA20 Multi channel ex-demo                                | 2000  | 1299 |
| Red Rose Spirit Integrated ex-demo                                 | 1000  | 649  |
| Rega Mira 3 Silver ex-demo   | 598   | 429  |
| Rega Maia Power amplifier Black ex-demo                            | 548   | 399  |
| ATC Active 10 SL ex-demo   | 2650  | 1999 |
| ATC Active 20 SL ex-demo   | 3250  | 2399 |
| ATC SCM7 Cherry ex-demo  | 499   | 375  |
| JM Lab Micro Utopia Anigre with Stands S/H                         | 3999  | 1699 |
| Mordant Short 902 S/H  | 249   | 99   |
| Martin Logan CSLII Anniversary Electrostatics 7 months old S/H     | 6700  | 4295 |
| Naim Audio Intro Black Ash S/H                                     | 875   | 499  |
| Peak Consult Incognito Rosewood ex-demo                            | 7500  | 5799 |
| Rega ELA Cherry ex-demo  | 749   | 579  |
| Roksan Ojan 3X Rosewood S/H  | 1299  | 449  |
| Verity Fidelios Black Lacquer ex-demo                              | 8000  | 4499 |
| Cardas Neutral Reference 1m RCA-BNC S/H                            | 550   | 375  |
| BCD 1000 3 tier stand S/H  | 1299  | 699  |
| BCD Amplifier Stand S/H  | 599   | 375  |
| Irem Isopower 6 way distribution Black S/H                         | 425   | 199  |
| Madrigal MDC 2 1m Fatboy Digital cable new and boxed               | 319   | 159  |
| Mission Isoplat S/H  | N/A   | 29   |
| Siltech SQ58G3 2x4m Balanced Interconnect ex-demo                  | 2370  | 1499 |
| Siltech Signature G5 1m AES/EBU 110 ohm Digital S/H                | 625   | 449  |
| Siltech SPX10 0.5m mains cable New/Boxed                           | 105   | 55   |
| Spectral MH-330 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA ex-demo                  | 800   | 499  |
| Spectral MH-750 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA ex-demo                  | 1400  | 799  |
| Spectral MH-350 20ft Speaker cable expdemo                         | 2100  | 1199 |
| Soundstyle 5 tier table Black glass/Glass S/H                      | N/A   | 179  |
| Sicomim Platform 50cm x 50cm Carbon Fibre S/H                      | N/A   | 119  |
| Transparent Music Link Super 1m RCA S/H                            | 599   | 299  |
| Magnum Dynalab FT-R Remote Switcher for FT101A/Edube new and boxed | 450   | 279  |
| Tandberg TD20A Reel to Reel (just serviced) S/H                    | N/A   | 250  |
| Rega radio 3 Silver ex-demo  | 398   | 279  |

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# turntableworld!

Like to audition a number of different decks in one place?  
Love to compare a modified tonearm with the original on the same deck?

Want to hear a new cartridge for yourself before you buy?  
Never found anywhere interested enough to do it for you?

For some time now its been nigh on impossible to make informed choices about analogue products because while reviews are a great start point, no reviewer has your individual listening preferences - let alone your very own personal ears.

We are here to offer every customer the chance to decide for themselves what they like, by offering genuine choice and service in what we call 'turntableworld'

From January 2005, our dedicated dem room will be available and filled with selected products from the manufacturers you have come to know and love.

Whether it's time to spend scary money or just the hundred quid starter deck you're after, you'll still be talking to someone who is genuinely interested.

turntableworld! has selected items from:

- Audio Technica
- Clearaudio
- Dynavector
- Goldring
- Grado
- Graham Slee Projects
- G F C Hadcock
- Lyra
- Michell Engineering
- Moth
- Nottingham Analogue
- Origin Live
- Ortofon
- Project
- SME
- Sumiko
- Transfiguration
- Trichord Research
- Wilson Benesch
- ...all on dem right now!

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.

Here's a selection of current stock..

|                  |  |      |
|------------------|--|------|
| Alchemist        | Bragi phono stage and Forsell pls - vgc, superb flexible stage | 399  |
| Alphason         | Sonata/Alcaeus power supply - ex, black ash                    | 599  |
| Alphason         | Sonata - good, light ash                                       | 299  |
| Audiolab         | 8000PPA phono stage - vgc, flexible stage, rare                | 449  |
| Audion           | Sterling - ex, valve phono stage                               | 299  |
| EAR              | 834P - fair, mm/mc switchable version                          | 549  |
| Chord            | Phono stage - ex, stunning                                     | 999  |
| Creek            | OBH8 - ex, mm stage  | 79   |
| Garrard          | 301/SME 3009 - ex, black sandwich plinth                       | 699  |
| Garrard          | 401 - vgc/motor unit   | 179  |
| Linn             | Troika - vgc, boxed  | 279  |
| Linn             | LP12/Lingo/Ittok/VIII/Asaka - nr mint, rosenut, boxed          | 1199 |
| Linn             | LP12/Armageddon/Aro - nr mint, black, boxed                    | 1599 |
| Linn             | LP12/Vahalla/LVX - vgc, black                                  | 479  |
| Linn             | LP12/Armageddon/RB300 - vgc, black                             | 979  |
| Linn             | Basik, LVX - vgc, black  | 199  |
| Linn             | Axis, Basik plus - vgc, black                                  | 249  |
| Linn             | Ittok 12" - ex, black, apparently one of only 20 made          | 999  |
| Logic            | DM101/Datum - ex, bargain LP12 challenger                      | 249  |
| Michell          | (Transcriptors) Reference hydraulic - ex, fluid arm            | 649  |
| Michell          | Gyrodec/QC - ex, boxed, armless                                | 899  |
| Michell          | Gyrodec/RB300 - ex, brand new arm                              | 799  |
| Michell          | Orbe/RB300 - ex/ex, boxed                                      | 1399 |
| Michell          | Orbe/Wilson Benesch Act 2 - ex, smoked                         | 1949 |
| Michell          | Focus One/Focus arm - ex,                                      | 399  |
| Michell          | Tecnoarm - nr mint original version                            | 229  |
| Michell          | QC power supply - nr mint, boxed                               | 269  |
| Monrio           | AND-N - mm/mc phonostage                                       | 179  |
| Mission          | 774 - ex, fab 80s tonearm                                      | 159  |
| Musical Fidelity | XLP - nr mint  | 99   |
| Musical Fidelity | XLPS - nr mint   | 119  |
| MTM              | The Source - ex, mahogany                                      | 599  |
| NAD              | 533/OEMRB250 - ex, with Goldring cart                          | 129  |
| Ongin Live       | RB300 - ex, early black stub and weight, full wiring mod       | 199  |
| Odyssey          | RPI-XG - ex, the prettiest arm ever?                           | 499  |
| Pink Triangle    | PT1 original - vgc, boxed                                      | 349  |
| Pink Triangle    | LPT/RB250/Reson-ex/ex,   | 379  |
| Project          | Classic - vgc, cherywood plinth, bargain                       | 199  |
| Rega             | Planar 2/RB250 - ex/ex   | 149  |
| Rega             | Planar 3/RB300 - vgc/ex  | 179  |
| Rega             | Planar 7/RB250/Mono Cart - ex/ex                               | 175  |
| Rotel            | RQ970 - ex, phono stage  | 79   |
| Roksan           | Xerxes/Tabriz Zi - ex, black                                   | 449  |
| Thorens          | TD160s - ex, cw Mission 774                                    | 249  |
| Townshend        | Elite Rock Mk2/Excalibur - ex, no optional extras              | 579  |
| Transcriptors    | Skeleton/Vestigal - ex/ex                                      | 799  |
| Wilson Benesch   | Act/Act 2 - the best ever? Rare as...                          | 2499 |

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| CD72 - nr mint, silver, remote                             |   | 249  |
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| 8000 Transport and DAC                                     |   | 779  |
| 1.1x DAC - ex, boxed                                       |   | 399  |
| S2000Reference - ex, superb                                |   | 599  |
| Discmag/Dacmag - ex, nice combo for peanuts                |   | 429  |
| DAD3Q24 - nr mint, boxed, remote                           |   | 199  |
| Renaissance - due in                                       |   | Call |
| DP1100 - ex, v, underrated                                 |   | 89   |
| CD-DSP - ex, clear and smoked lids, remote, stunning       |   | 1499 |
| CD80 - ex, boxed fantastic 80s heavyweight                 |   | 199  |
| CD60 - ex, remote  |   | 99   |
| CD46 - ex, remote  |   | 49   |
| CD63 Ki Sig - nr mint, remote, certificate, bargain!       |   | 199  |
| DVA100 CSSE - nr mint, remote, boxed                       |   | 129  |
| 200 transport and matching dac - ex, superb combination    |   | 449  |
| 208 - ex, withbuilt in preamp and209 remote                |   | 349  |
| 200 transport - ex, Trichord mod, excellent                |   | 399  |
| Stage 1 - ex, smooth sound, under a budget                 |   | 179  |
| Stage 5 - ex, sweet sounding player from top French firm   |   | 249  |
| T-drive and T-dac - vgc, remote, superb sound, E1000s new  |   | 1449 |
| Tro - ex, the ultimate Micromega                           |   | 149  |
| Optic - nr mint, budget intro to the delights of Micromega |   | 129  |
| X Act - nr mntboxed  |   | 119  |
| X 100 - nr mint, boxed                                     |   | 119  |
| T20 - black, nr mint, boxed, remote, bargain!              |   | 249  |
| CD5 - nr mint boxed, remote                                |   | 699  |
| CDI - nr mint, boxed bargain intro to Nam CD players       |   | 379  |
| NVA  | The Transparent Statement - vgc, crated, ultimate NVA         | 1749 |
| POS703 - nr mint, stable platters/machine                  |   | 149  |
| D20 - nr mint, remote stunning (amp available too)         |   | 399  |
| 77 - ex, remote  |   | 329  |
| 67 - ex, sweet sounding player, much better than 66        |   | 499  |
| Planet - ex, black, well reviewed                          |   | 199  |
| Caspian M series - ex dem, save £35!!!                     |   | 749  |
| MDP8500 - nr mint, laserdisc, VCD, CD, PAL, N.OSTC         |   | 149  |
| CDPX3000ES - nr mint, boxed well reviewed toploader        |   | 299  |
| Amplifiers   |   |      |
| GTP500iPreTuner and GFS50iPower - bargain!                 |   | 399  |
| 2445 - ex, well reviewed weighty poweramp                  |   | 199  |
| P75 - ex display, remote, silver                           |   | 199  |
| PucciniSE - nr mint, well reviewed integrated              |   | 379  |
| 8000C - ex, black  |   | 229  |
| 8000Q - nr mint, boxed, remote                             |   | 379  |
| 8000S - nr mint  |   | 329  |
| 8000M6 - nr mint monoblocks                                |   | 1199 |
| Silver Knights - Stunning boxed valve monoblocks           |   | 999  |
| S2000MP/S2000MMs - vgc, better than current integrated     |   | 999  |
| Creek  | 4330 - ex, was Stereophile 'Budget component of the Year'     | 279  |
| Cmsomson   | 510S20 - ex, boxed, battery, lovely combo                     | 379  |
| Cyrus  | 7 - ex, black, boxed  | 429  |
| Exposure   | X integrated - nr mint, boxed, black                          | 199  |
| Citation 17 and 19 - vgc, boxed                            |   | 399  |
| PM555 - nr mint, variable capacitance phono stage          |   | 119  |
| C2 and P2 PrePower combo - ex, boxed                       |   | 349  |
| Harman Kardon  | LK1/Drak - nr mint, black, mm/mc exceptional vfm              | 199  |
| Heybrook   | LK100 - nr mint, boxed  | 299  |
| Linn   | MP300M F125 x2 - ex, pna and monoblocks                       | 599  |
| Magnum   | 605e - ex, boxed pair monoblocks                              | 799  |
| Meridian   | 505e - ex, boxed pair monoblocks                              | 899  |
| Meridian   | 205e - ex, pair monoblocks                                    | 599  |
| Meridian   | 501 - ex, boxed with phono stage                              | 349  |
| Meridian   | 555 - ex  | 349  |
| Meridian   | 501/505 x2 - combination as above                             | 1179 |
| Michell  | Alecco - ex, Monoblocks                                       | 899  |
| Mission  | Cyrus One - from  | 70   |
| Mission  | Cyrus Two and PSX - gvc, nextel finish                        | 229  |
| Musical Fidelity   | X A2 - nr mint, boxed/integrated                              | 299  |
| Musical Fidelity   | X A1 - nr mint, groovy integrated                             | 199  |
| NAD  | 352 - ex display, boxed, titanium                             | 249  |
| NAM  | Nait 3 - ex, boxed  | 299  |
| Onix   | AC215 - ex, great 60s integrated                              | 179  |
| Primare  | A20 - nr mint integrated                                      | 379  |
| Quad   | 4052 - good, brown  | 225  |
| Quad   | 333/303/443 - nr mint   | 249  |
| Quad   | 34/306 - nr mint, grey, boxed, you won't find better          | 429  |
| Quad   | 500 - good, pair monoblocks                                   | 249  |
| Rega   | Luna - nr mint, black, boxed, better than a Bro or Mira       | 179  |
| Rotel  | RB03 power - ex display, boxed silver                         | 249  |
| Rotel  | RC955 - nr mint remotepre                                     | 249  |
| Rotel  | RB981 - ex, black powerhouse 2 available for monoblocking etc | 225  |
| Shearpe  | Phase 2 - nr mint, boxed, blue marble styling                 | 279  |
| Shema  | Phase 2 Reference - as above, with phono stage etc            | 299  |
| Sony   | STR-DB940 av amp - vgc, DTS 5.1 etc                           | 199  |
| Sugden   | AU41 pre/power - ex, black                                    | 499  |
| Speakers   |   |      |
| Acoustic Energy  | AE1 - ex, black/grixx   | 395  |
| Acoustic Energy  | AE2 - ex, piano black cw fluted stands                        | 999  |
| Acoustic Energy  | AEZ - ex, piano black cw fluted stands                        | 999  |
| AVI  | Nu Neutron - vgc, amazing baby                                | 299  |
| Celestion  | 5000 - vgc/ribbon standmount                                  | 249  |
| Dynaudio   | Audience 50 - nr mint, black, boxed/cw dedicatedstands        | 299  |
| Epos   | M45 - nr mint, light cherry, boxed                            | 449  |
| Epos   | ES14 - nr mint, boxed 80s classic cw dedicatedstands          | 325  |
| Heybrook   | H8100 - vgc, superb vfm                                       | 79   |
| Heybrook   | Quartet - cw matching opaline stands, due in                  | Call |
| Impulse  | H6 - fair, bulgaretsound                                      | 299  |
| Impulse  | H2 - ex, very efficient horn loaded monsters                  | 199  |
| Linn   | Keildn - fair, black, late model, (lake em away)              | 799  |
| Lumley   | LM2.5 - ex, 4 driver design with famous Audax gold tweeter    | 199  |
| Mission  | 70 centre - ex display, boxed                                 | 69   |
| Mission  | 77a - ex display, boxed                                       | 99   |
| Mission/Cyrus  | 780 - ex, black larger bookshelf                              | 99   |
| Mission/Cyrus  | 781 - ex, black larger bookshelf                              | 99   |
| Monitor Audio  | Studio Centre - ex display, boxed                             | 299  |
| Monitor Audio  | R700MD - nr mint, black                                       | 149  |
| Monitor Audio  | Bronze 62 - nr mint, cherry, boxed                            | 199  |
| Monitor Audio  | Silver S2 - nr mint mahogany, boxed                           | 199  |
| Monitor Audio  | Gold Reference 10 - ring for details                          | 379  |
| Mordant/Short  | 912 - ex display, boxed                                       | 149  |
| Mordant/Short  | 914 - ex display, boxed                                       | 199  |
| QED  | Ana - ex display, boxed mins surrounds                        | 39   |
| Quad   | ESL63 - due in  | Call |
| Rega   | Ayla - ex, boxed, pretty little cherry floorstander           | 199  |
| REL  | Q50 - ex, black   | 199  |
| Rogers   | Studio Monitor - Original vgc, with stands - suit valve amps  | 199  |
| Spendor  | SP1 - ex, cw foundation stands                                | 299  |
| Stands Unique  | Snequa AV1 - nr mint, boxed                                   | 179  |
| Tandberg   | Studio Monitor - Ex, large standmount                         | 399  |
| TDL  | Studio 1 - vgc, wood finish transmission line                 | 249  |
| RTL2 - ex, black   |   | 119  |
| Wharfedale   | Pacific P30 - nr mint, boxed, light cherry, excellent         | 299  |
| Tuners and Tape  |   |      |
| Audiolab   | 8000T - nr mint   | 379  |
| Cyrus  | FM7.5 - nr mint, silver, digital, presets, boxed              | 279  |
| Cyrus  | Original Mission Tuner - vgc                                  | 99   |
| Nakamichi  | CR4E - vgc, black   | 425  |
| Quad   | FM2 - ex  | 149  |
| Quad   | FM3 - ex  | 79   |
| Quad   | FM4 - nr mint, grey, boxed                                    | 299  |
| Rotel  | RT02 - ex display, boxed, silver                              | 199  |
| Sugden   | DTFM - gc, rare, matches A48mk3 etc                           | 179  |
| Systems, cables and miscellaneous                          |   |      |
| AVI  | 2000 series - full CD, MP pre and pair MM monoblocks          | 1499 |
| B&O  | 2200 system - ex, turntable, tape and tuner, inc speakers     | 199  |
| Beyer  | DT231 galactic - new  | 30   |
| Ixos   | 1014 - new tm interconnect                                    | 150  |
| Ixos   | 1014 - new sm interconnect                                    | 25   |
| Mission  | Stance - ex display, silver                                   | 49   |
| Pure   | Evoko - ex display  | 69   |
| Quad   | 34/306/FM4 - all nr mint, boxed, with matching rack           | 699  |
| Senhesh  | IS380 - new, Infrared   | 40   |

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# READER CLASSIFIED

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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).

**ARCAM A90** integrated amp (£850), Arcam Div2 phono board (£110) all boxed. Three months old but must sell. Accept offers around £850. 07795 180474 (London)

**AVI BIGGATRON RED SPOT** loud speakers in cherry, mint, boxed, £320. 01903 247779 (Sussex).

**AUDIOQUEST** interconnects. 2x Lapis (two pairs) 0.5m, £60 each. Python (one pair) 0.75m, £150. Hardly used, can be boxed, ex condition. Raymond 01900 606650 (Cumbria).

**AVI S2000** preamp, £975, AVI S2000 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 only please. Steve 07973 334623 (Solihull)

**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 DM601S3** loudspeakers, black ash, as new, boxed, £150. Atacama Nexus 6 stands £40. QED original bi-wire cable, 2x5m, terminated, £25 or £200 for the lot. 07810 850118 (Wigan).

**B&W NAUTILUS 801**, black ash. Mint condition, boxes available. Will demonstrate, £4,700 ono. Contact Donovan anytime 07930 396086 (London)

**B&W SNT** rear surround speakers, black ash veneer, bi-wire, 120w, 8 ohms, metal dome tweeter, bass/midrange Kevlar, as new, boxed (£700) £350 four years warranty. 01782 256087 (Staffs).

**CHORD DAC64** (latest model), mint, one year old, boxed with manual and cables (optical and Stereovox HDVX) £1,500. Bob, after 6pm please 01245 252015 (Chelmsford, Essex).

**COINCIDENT SPEAKER** Technology TRS-1 speaker cables. Three metre single pair. Good condition with original box. True reference class cable, Recommended Component 2004 by [www.high-endaudio.com](http://www.high-endaudio.com), (US\$ 1,495) £390 07815 819318 or email [saifulkassim@hotmail.com](mailto:saifulkassim@hotmail.com).

**CYRUS 781** bookshelf loudspeakers, rosewood, boxed, lovely condition and sound, £100. 01751 430911 (York)

**DALI EUPHONIA** Sub, centre and rears very good condition, in flight cases, in Alpi dark wood veneer (£7,500) £3,000. What a bargain. 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 BARGAINS** Special 25 (new) in masser birch, £2,000. Dynaudio1.4s (new), £1,000.

Audience 82 (second user), £650. Also, new Audience 42s, £250 and 52s, £400. Please call anytime 01732 741883 (Kent).

**ELECTROCOMPANET** 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).

**EXPOSURE XXV RC** amplifier, £430. Castle Avon speakers (mahogany), includes Audioquest bi-wire and plugs, £250. Both excellent condition with original packaging (Can be demonstrated) Beverley, after 6pm 01482 887409 (Hull). ▶

## WANTED

**A&R T21** tuner and A&R P60 power amp, must both be in good condition. 01873 856499 (Gwent).

**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).

**ROTEL RC5000** preamp and RB5000 power amp. 01942 720220 (Cheshire).

**ROYD MINSTREL** loudspeakers, any finish, but must be in perfect working order. Alternatively, a pair of new main driver units would be ideal. John 0161 439 5122 (Stockport).

## 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!



Below: Arcam A90

**FOR SALE**

☐ **GALE 401s** mint, rebuilt, £400 ono. Pioneer C90 and M90 pre/power reference amps £400. 01942 720220 (Wigan).

**HI-FI CHOICE No 171 (1997)** to date plus a choice of other mags (*Hi-Fi News*, *Hi-Fi World*) – the lot free if you collect. Or otherwise buy individually, £2 each plus p&p per copy, quantity discounts phone for more details. Evenings and Saturdays only please 01704 57832 (Southport).

**HD650/ 600** headphone cable upgrade for Sennheiser cans. Russ Andrews two metre HC01 cable and three metre extension. Excludes postage costs (£265) £150. Stuart 01384 394441 (West Midlands).

**JA MITCHELL REFERENCE** hydraulic transcription turntable, circa 1979. Serial number K798933 with SME 3009 series 11 arm. Beautiful, original box, £525 ovno. 01305 889664 (Dorset).

**KEF Q3** loudspeakers, boxed and in great condition. £150 plus postage. 07976 054660 (Reading).

**KEF Q35**, Q95c and 60s speakers. Good condition, boxed, sell as set, £350. Rel Q50 £150. Rotel RA-972 (£550) £200. Alan 07841 715340 (Staffs)

**KEF 104/ 2** Reference speakers complete with Kube (£2,300) bargain at £465 or near offer. 01992 572098 (Epping).

**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 email thmpsnc@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)

**MISSION 78C and 78DS** centre and rear speakers, (£700) both for £250. Boxed, were only used on three occasions. Amit 07957 567141 (London)

**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 X-RAY V3** CD player (£900) £600. Terry 020 8482 0363 (Enfield).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY NUVISTA** SACD player. 20th Anniversary edition. Made November 2002, mint, all original packaging and ancillaries. One careful owner, (£4,000) £2,900. Evenings 01525 635909 (Beds)

**MUSICAL FIDELITY X-LP** phono, £50. X-50 monoblocks, £250. X-Pre, £75. All boxes, manuals, very good condition. Evenings 028 417 64088 (N Ireland)

**NAD 3225 PE** amp, NAD 4225 tuner, Philips CD 610 with remote, Wharfedale Delta 30 loudspeakers 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).

**PHILIPS DVD963 SACD** player (£400). *Hi-Fi World* says, "Creamy CD sound allied to super SACD and DVD". Brand new, boxed £275. 020 8951 3178 (Middx)

**PROAC RESPONSE 1** speakers (£1,000) and Target stands £375. Rel Stadium subwoofer £400. Cyrus pre/power £400 (MC). All one owner little used. 01977 732562 (W Yorks)

**QUAD 44/ 405** £250. Celestion SL6 £50 01732 741883 (Kent)

**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, beautiful, £650, 18 months old. Great condition for age, fantastic sound. Please call 07941 174804 (Berks).

**SONY CDP101** original flagship player complete with remote and handbook. Excellent condition, £70. 01278 782622 (Somerset).

**SPEAKER CABLES** and interconnects for sale. Chord QED, Ixos, Cable Talk. All mint, bargain prices. 01491 612883 (Oxford).

**VPI TNT V** £4,200 ono. High end silver cables, offers around £900. Koetsu – offers. Janette 07788 881184 (7pm – 8pm Mon-Fri) (Clacton).

**WADIA KAI 84** stereo power amps £125 each. Velleman K8011 monoblocks £130 each. Circuit/Maplin Mosfet monoblocks £90 each. 01344 454504 (Bracknell).



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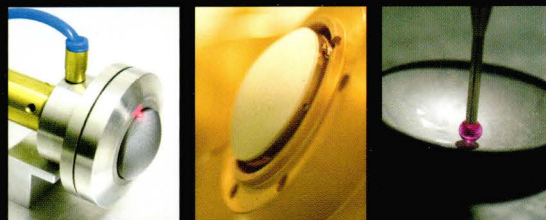
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