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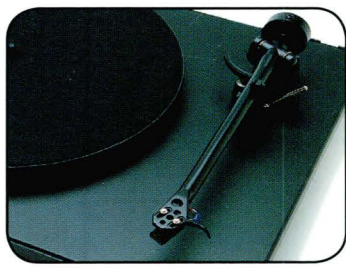


IN-DEPTH REVIEWS



DIGITAL DEMON
New hi-res combo is devilishly talented

BUDGET BELTER
Goldring's latest is a vinyl-spinner's dream



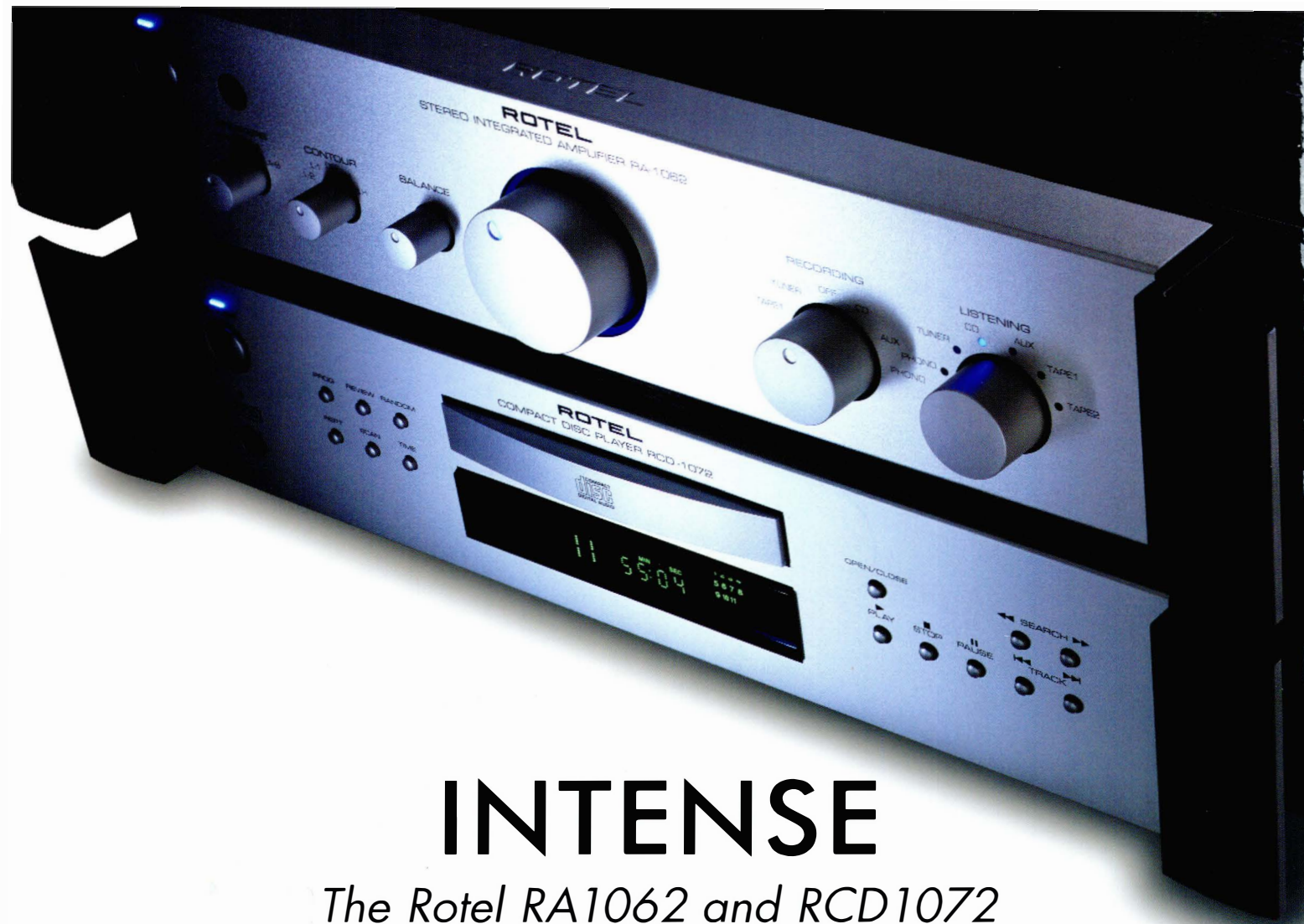
WORLD'S FIRST TEST!
The Cyrus DAC XP—so good it will change your hi-fi life

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ULTIMATE GROUP TEST >>>
AMPLIFIERS

- FEATURING**
- > Arcam FMJ A32
 - > Myryad MXI2080
 - > Cyrus 8vs/PSX-R
 - > Orelle SA100evo 2
 - > Moon i-3
 - > Roksan Caspian M

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INTENSE

The Rotel RA1062 and RCD1072

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

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HI-FI CHOICE

MAY 2005 ISSUE 266

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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 Bower, 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.



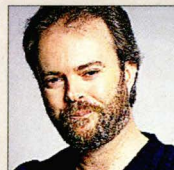
DAN GEORGE

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 top integrated amplifiers priced from £1,000 to £1,600, are put before the *Hi-Fi Choice* inquisition. Bring on the comfy chair

XPRESSIVE CONVERTER

The fabulously neat Cyrus XP DAC/preamp takes the high-end CD world by storm

B&W BRILLIANCE

It may look familiar on the outside, but B&W's 805S is all new... and wonderful, too

DENON DOUBLE ACT

Top-end universal player and multichannel amp with all the latest hi-res links

AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...

The next issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* is on sale 7 April. Don't miss a thing – see p72 for our latest great subscription offer



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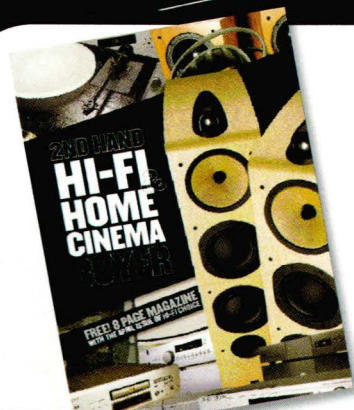
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Inside your free 2nd-hand hi-fi mini-mag...

2 Guide to 2nd-hand kit – this issue, Epos Acoustics, plus DIY tips

3 Trading Pages

7 Reader Classified



OUTPUTS

CH 2

CH 3

CH 5

PRO

COPLAND

Copland Audio Products:

Scandinavian Cool.

PREV

NEXT

ST

CVA 306

POWER



CDA823 - High resolution CD player



CTA305 - High Performance valve preamplifier



CTA520 - Power amplifier (stereo or mono)



CVA306 - Multi Channel Valve preamplifier



CVA535 - 5 channel Audio Video amplifier

Copland's design team believes that its greatest challenge is to use a scientific approach to create a product which conveys art. Although music has its basis in mathematics, its raison d'etre is to communicate emotion.. Soul. Spirit.

To achieve this end, Copland has chosen to blend the best of proven technologies - the valve - with the most sophisticated of modern methodologies. Because of this, you will find a compact disc player in a range which also reverses the vinyl LP. You will find stereo playback, which has served pure music for a half-century, alongside multi-channel amplification, designed to recreate the cinematic event in the home.

All of this reaches you, the music lover and cineaste, through components which reflect the most striking of Scandinavian virtues: minimalism, simplicity, clarity.



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ARCAM SOLO STEREO CD RECEIVER

▶ Arcam's Solo is designed to deliver audiophile-grade sound from a one-box solution. Along with the likes of Linn's Classik system, Solo will bid for the affections of the wider audio buying world. It also reflects a more business-savvy Arcam, following the recent management buyout.

Solo contains a CD section derived from the DIVA CD73 standalone player (complete with Wolfson DAC and jitter-busting Colpitts crystal clock), a DAB/FM radio section, plus a 50-watt stereo amplifier. It's a fully

functional preamp too, with five line-level inputs and digital outs for home recording.

We also like the second room output, with independent volume control and adjustable bass EQ, and there's also a front panel mini-jack input for connecting portable music devices like the iPod. Arcam can also provide Solo customers with a matching pair of loudspeakers (if required) for a complete music-ready solution.

To find out more, see our in-depth review in the July issue of Hi-Fi Choice

PRODUCT Arcam Solo

TYPE One-box CD player/tuner/amp

PRICE £1,000 (plus speakers)

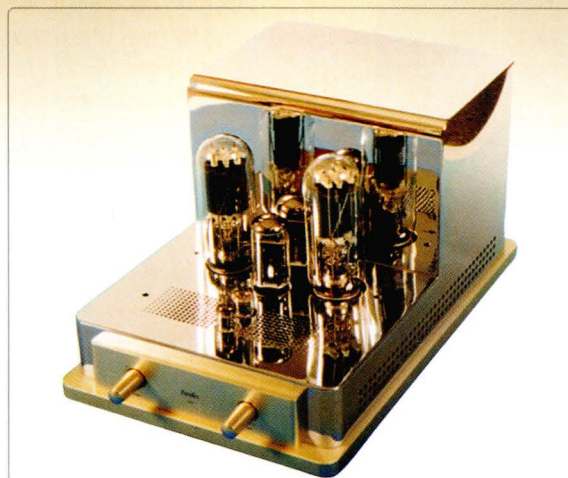
KEY FEATURES 'Audiophile' CD performance
24-Bit Wolfson DAC ▶ Built-in DAB radio tuner
▶ 50-watt amplifier ▶ Five line inputs, preamp out

CONTACT ☎ 01223 203200
🌐 www.arcam.co.uk

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B&W 802D LOUDSPEAKER

▶ Few loudspeakers are as instantly recognisable as the B&W 802. It's more than just a mere speaker, too. The 802 is also a beautiful piece of furniture that can be lusted after once more, thanks to the latest incarnation, the 802D.

The 'D' suffix stands for 'diamond' and refers to the new diamond tweeter that defines the upper reaches of the new 800 Series (for more information, read our 805S review beginning on p38 of this issue).

The 802D looks much like its predecessor, with the tweeter and Kevlar-coned midrange driver housed in their own separate 'pods', aided by two 200mm bass drivers. Yet despite the similarity, B&W has made many revisions beneath the skin – not least that diamond tweeter. If this new model is just the slightest bit better than the original, expect an influx of grandmothers up for sale on eBay.

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

PRODUCT B&W 802D

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £8,000 per pair

KEY FEATURES New diamond tweeter ▶ Tweeter and Kevlar-coned midrange driver housed in separate 'pods' ▶ 90dB sensitivity (claimed) ▶ 'Matrix' cabinet ▶ 'Flowport' bass reflex system

CONTACT ▶ 01903 221500
 @ www.bwspeakers.com

NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS



DENON DCD-SA1

Denon is returning to the high-end audiophile market with a bang. The DCD-SA1 is a serious statement of intent, a purist two-channel CD/SACD player with a price tag that weighs in above the brand's most expensive all-singing, all-dancing multichannel home cinema amplifier.

While Denon's UK focus has largely settled on the home cinema market in recent years, the brand has kept up with its high-end hi-fi heritage in Japan with its renowned 'S' series of components. This player, together with its matching PMA-S1 amplifier, looks set to re-introduce the brand to the British high-end audio fraternity, although more affordable two-channel products (like the PMA-1500R MkII amp – see *HFC* 263) are also promised.

Price £5,000 **Due** April

☎ 01234 741 200 🌐 www.denon.co.uk



HEGEL P4A

Norwegian stereo specialist Hegel is launching its P4A preamplifier in the UK. External design has been kept as simple as possible to fit in with the rest of Hegel's range, with only three controls: one to turn it on, one to select a source from the six possible inputs, and a third to adjust the system's volume. The P4A uses balanced internal amplifying stages and offers both balanced and single-ended inputs and outputs. It is designed to be partnered with the H4A power amplifier, which offers two channels of 300 watts each into eight ohms and features a similar style, to make it look as minimalist as it's possible to make a 21 cm tall amplifier appear.

Price P4A: £2,300, H4A: £4,100 **Due** now

☎ 01785 711 232 🌐 www.hegel.com

PSB B25

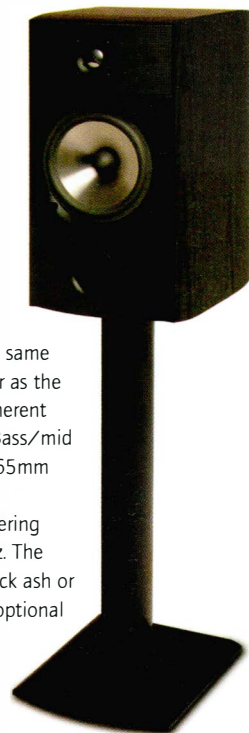
Canadian manufacturer PSB has added a second 'bookshelf' model to its burgeoning Image series of loudspeakers. The new B25 is slightly larger than the current B15, and is designed either to be used in a stereo pair for music or as a rear speaker in a multichannel system.

The standmount B25 uses the same 25mm aluminium dome tweeter as the rest of the range, ensuring a coherent performance across the range. Bass/mid frequencies are provided by a 165mm injection 'Moulded Metalized Polypropylene Cone' woofer, offering extension down to around 40Hz. The speaker is available in either black ash or maple veneers and has its own optional stand (pictured).

Price £300 per pair **Due** now

☎ 01908 319360

🌐 www.psbSpeakers.com



KEF REFERENCE SERIES MODEL 203

KEF has upgraded its successful Reference Series with a new balance adjustment system for setting the speakers up to take better account of room acoustics. The three-position bass-level adjustment, boundary compensation device on previous models has been replaced by a new version. It allows two settings for bass level, and four for tweeter/super-tweeter level. This offers the user more flexibility in setting up the speakers to sound their best, by allowing for more precise adjustment in tonal balance. KEF has also taken the opportunity to improve bass performance across the Model 205, Model 203 and Model 201 speakers. At the other end of the price scale, KEF has announced a new, affordable subwoofer called the PSW 3500, which has a built-in 300-watt amplifier and costs £600.

Price £3,000 per pair **Due** now

☎ 01622 672261 🌐 www.kef.com



MARANTZ DV7600

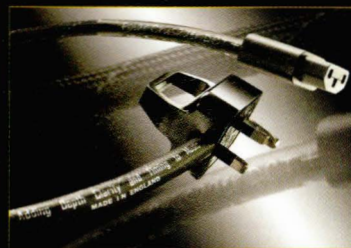
➤ Marantz has launched a more affordable universal disc player to sit below its new flagship DV9500 machine (see *AudioFile*, HFC 264). The £700 DV7600 shares many features with its high-end sibling, but it manages to come in at less than half the price. It still plays an almost endless array of disc formats including DVD-Audio, SACD and CD-RW discs full of MP3 tracks, and has a top-notch selection of features including video up-conversion via the HDMI output, which offers both PAL and NTSC Progressive Scan.

Differences between this player and the DV9500 include the use of a 12-bit/216MHz video DAC instead of the 14-bit version, and the more expensive player also has a propriety disc mechanism. Both players boast Analogue Devices' noise shaping video technology and 24-bit/192kHz audio DACs across all six channels.

Price £700 **Due** spring 2005

☎ 01753 680868 🌐 www.marantz.com

Soundbites



BLACK RHODIUM has improved on its own Polar Warrior mains cable, tested in HFC 264. At £375 for 1.25m, Polar Crusader (DCT), that cools the cable down to -190°C, bringing it to room temperature over a period of three days. This optimises the molecular structure of the metal therefore enhancing the sound quality of the cable. ☎ 01332 755766

BOSTON ACOUSTICS' outdoor audio Voyager range now includes a single speaker that will play stereo and a new subwoofer. The latter features a 300mm driver and boasts a UV resistant covering, while the Metro stereo speaker has two 25mm Kortec tweeters and a 165mm bass/mid driver. Prices start at £150. ☎ 01285 650814

VAN DEN HUL has announced The Compolink component video cable, suitable for medium and long distances. It's made-up of three separate high-quality, low-loss coaxial 75-ohm video lines to transport the split brightness information and two colour difference signals used in the component video standard. Prices start at £80 for a 1m length and rise to £170 for 5m. ☎ 01235 511166

AKAI has unveiled a new dual format DVD recorder. The ADR-5800Di lets you record onto the two most popular recordable DVD formats – DVD-R/RW and DVD+R/RW. It allows a maximum of eight hours recording on one disc, and has progressive scan compatible component video output. However, the really good news is that it will sell for £200. ☎ 020 7887 7780

B&W's new 601 DPM speaker may be hard to find, for two reasons. First, it's a limited edition, available only from the DPM store in London. Second, the DPM suffix stands for Disruptive Pattern Material, better known as camouflage. The 601 DPM, complete with camouflage finish, costs £275 per pair and is available now. 🌐 www.dpmhi.com



NAIM FLATCAP 2X

➤ Naim's ongoing mission to improve its components has finally got round to its famous power supplies, and the FlatCap 2x is the first fruit of this labour. It replaces the FlatCap 2, and improves on its predecessor by offering a re-designed transformer with a higher VA (voltage multiplied by current) rating, lower impedance and higher peak current ability. Capable of powering two Naim components, it has a thicker, Fraim-friendly chassis and significantly larger heatsinks. Naim Audio claims that it leads to improved sound quality, with better dynamics, clearer bass and a reduced system noise floor.

Price £515 **Due** now

☎ 01722 332266 🌐 www.naim-audio.com



ARCAM DIVA DT91

➤ Digital radio pioneer Arcam is at it again with the Diva DT91. The British company was the first to market with a domestic DAB radio, and it has used all its expertise with this new tuner. The DT91 is a dual DAB and FM unit, and is set in the traditional Diva casework. Under the bonnet, Arcam has paid special attention to the performance-dependant components, all of which are mounted on a four-layer high-grade PCB and include Wolfson 24-bit/192kHz audio DACs. It has both optical and coaxial digital outputs, as well as analogue.

Price £450 **Due** now

☎ 01223 203 200 🌐 www.arcam.co.uk



ELAC FS 607 X-JET

➤ The FS 607 X-Jet is the first speaker to feature Elac's revolutionary new X-Jet tweeter/midrange driver. The X-Jet comprises one of Elac's renowned Jet III ribbon tweeters, surrounded by an aluminium honeycomb midrange diaphragm. This midrange driver works in the frequency range between 500Hz and 4kHz, while its folded foil ribbon tweeter has ten times the surface area of a 25mm dome tweeter. This is capable of reaching right up to 50kHz.

The FS 607 also features two of Elac's own TT180AS woofers, which deliver bass down to 28Hz. The cabinet is constructed from extruded aluminium, aluminium casting and MDF.

Price £4,000 **Due** now

☎ 0800 652 5002 🌐 www.elac.com

The Insider

THIS MONTH HFC TALKS TO...

STEVE HARRIS

Job Title: **Chairman**

Company: **British Federation of Audio (BFA)**



What's the future of hi-fi?

It looks as if it is going to be very expensive, if current trends continue. Hopefully we can all start to put more effort back into making great affordable hi-fi. Then all we need is a few more retailers that can communicate the difference to more than their existing customers.

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

Can I mention four albums? I've been buying more vinyl and CDs recently: EST's *Viaticum* – a slight flavour of Keith Jarrett and draws one into the music in a similar way. Rickie Lee Jones' *Live at Red Rocks* – can sound rough but it reminds me of seeing RLJ live. Ray Lamontagne's *Trouble* – this is a real grower, play it two or three times and you'll love it. Madeleine Peyroux's *Careless Love* – needs a system that can time, or it sounds like muzak.

Is the universal disc player the future of CD playback?

I doubt it. It would be nice to find a stunning CD player that can also play DVDs though, if only to reduce the boxes and mains leads.

CD or vinyl – and why?

Both. Vinyl has the edge for ultimate enjoyment, but it requires dedication. CD is practical and my new Naim CD player gets closer than I have had before...

Hi-Fi Diary

APRIL

14-17 **The Smart Home Show**
NEC, Birmingham
www.smarthomeshow.co.uk
Intelligent AV installation extravaganza

MAY

5-8 **High End 2005**
Munich, Germany
Glisovic@highendsociety.de
Indulge your audiophile senses

JUNE

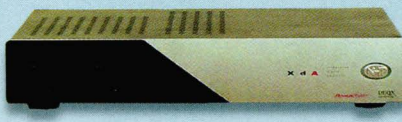
27-30 **Cedia Expo 2005**
ICC, Birmingham
www.cedia.co.uk
Annual custom installation showcase

Speaker know-how

American speaker company NHT has teamed up with DEQX and PowerPhysics to produce an active speaker system using digital crossovers. The NHT Xd is a subwoofer and satellite speaker system (pictured right) with a DSP-driven crossover using very steep filters to offer extremely accurate phase and frequency response. The digital crossover and four PowerPhysics OneCycle Sound Class D amplifiers (150-watt per driver, bi-amp style) are all housed in the 'brain' of the system (pictured below). In 2.1 form, the NHT Xd will cost £4,995.



In further loudspeaker-related news, Mirage has announced a 'three-in-one' speaker design, which combines the three front channels into a single enclosure. The UNI-Theater has an extruded aluminium enclosure, each channel housing one active and two passive drive units. The left and right channels have 'omniguide' modules that claim omnipolar dispersion characteristics designed to broaden the soundstage to a claimed 360 degrees.



Standard set

Denon Link 3 is the first hi-res digital audio interface to receive Sony and Philips' approval for the upcoming SACD 2.0 specification. This will replace the existing SACD 1.3 spec and will be implemented in players and amplifiers within the next two years. Denon Link has already been approved by the DVD Forum for digital transmission of DVD-A signals.



Elsewhere, Meridian, Lexicon and Mark Levinson have announced compatibility with DualDisc (the dual-sided DVD/CD hybrid) in all available players. This follows a flurry of announcements by manufacturers concerned that DualDiscs might jam in transport mechanisms. Sony is warning owners of PS2 machines not to use DualDiscs as they could damage both disc and player.

Hard cash for soft ware

If you've got \$700 to spare, German audiophile record label Hodie Music is offering you the chance to own a master tape quality DVD-R of any title from its classical catalogue. Hodie has created its own format called SA-DVD (Super Audiophile DVD), which offers either uncompressed 24-bit/96kHz 5.1-channel or 24-bit/192kHz stereo disks recorded directly from the master tape onto DVD-R. The company eschews MLP lossless compression which is found on the DVD-Audio discs that are ostensibly similar and offers 70 minute discs for \$700 and 140 minute discs for \$900.

Sevenoaks keeps it real

Hi-fi retail chain Sevenoaks Sound & Vision has laid it on the line for manufacturers with the statement: "support the high-street retailer against distance sellers... or suffer the consequences". Sevenoaks managing director Paul Lee-Kemp thinks that manufacturers who sell to online retailers "can no longer have their cake and eat it", depending both on bricks and mortar retailers to demonstrate products and discount websites for high sales volumes. He puts it thus: "supplying internet-only retailers at the same prices... as high street retailers is a recipe for long-term commercial disaster".





Magnetic turntable

⊕ Valve amp specialist EAR Yoshino is building its first turntable. It incorporates striking new technology into the drive system – rather than employing a flat rubber belt, it uses a toothed affair to drive the sub-platter, which is magnetically decoupled from the platter. There is a 3mm gap between the two components, to eliminate the speed fluctuation and rumble problems associated with flat belts. The toothed belt also allows the turntable to start and stop in one revolution, even though it features a substantial Corian platter. The platter and tonearm sit on a subchassis that has limited suspension using coil springs. It will play at 33, 45 and 78rpm, with the ability to adjust pitch for the latter. Seen in early prototype form at the Heathrow hi-fi show last autumn, the EAR Yoshino turntable is expected to be available in April.

JIMMY'S TWEAKS #31

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



Dewobble your equipment stands

If you're using dedicated equipment stands, particularly those made from metal and glass with adjustable spiked support points, it's important to avoid wobble. Trouble is, this can be disguised by a certain amount of 'give' in the materials used – the sheer weight of a big amplifier can bend the support so

that it appears solid and free from wobble, when it isn't. It's vital to check the firmness of each individual section of a support stand. With multi-tier stands, check each section for solidity before going on to the next. The stand or support needs to be firm and free from wobble with no equipment in place. Only then will you get best results. And, use a good spirit level to check that each section is flat and level.

TOP 10 BRIT AWARD WINNERS WITH HI-FI TEST CRED

- 1 Brothers in Arms** Dire Straits (British Album, 1987)
- 2 Nothing Like the Sun** Sting (British Album, 1988)
- 3 Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band** The Beatles (British Album, 1977)
- 4 So** Peter Gabriel (British Producer, 1993)
- 5 Bridge Over Troubled Water** Simon & Garfunkel (International Album, 1977)
- 6 Titanic (OST)** (Best Soundtrack, 1999)
- 7 Listen Without Prejudice Vol 1** George Michael (British Album, 1991)
- 8 Diamond Life** Sade (British Album, 1985)
- 9 Connected** Stereo MCs (British Album, 1994)
- 10 Seal** Seal (British Album, 1992)

⊕ New Music

IN THE STUDIO

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



NEW ORDER

Title: *Waiting For The Siren's Call*
Release date: summer 2005

The follow-up to 2001's *Get Ready* is an album of two halves, according to New Order's Bernard Sumner. "The last album was guitar-heavy because we felt that was what people wanted to hear," he says. "But when we played live, we found people got off on the dance and synth stuff, so this album really is split into two."

JAMIE CULLUM

Title: *tbc*
Release date: *tbc*

Details are still sketchy on the follow-up to jazz sensation Cullum's million-selling debut *Twentysomething* but he's clearly looking to expand his range with a raft of extraordinary collaborators.

Those lending a hand include singer-songwriters Ryan Adams and Ed Harcourt, former Robbie Williams collaborator Guy Chambers and N*E*R*D's Pharrell Williams, whose composition *Frontin'* has been a recent highlight of Cullum's live shows.

THE FLAMING LIPS

Title: *At War With The Mystics*
Release date: Autumn 2005

Frontman Wayne Coyne hopes to recruit singer Cat Power to guest on the follow-up to 2002's *Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots*. "She seems willing to do a big range of things, and I'm always looking for elements that let us explore new territory," he says.

GARBAGE

Title: *Bleed Like Me*
Release date: 11 April

The fourth album from Scotland's Shirley Manson and her all-American band is produced by Tony Hoffer (Beck/Air/The Thrills/Turin Brakes). Titles include *Metal*



Heart, Sex Is Not The Enemy and *Bad Boyfriend*, which features a guest appearance from Nirvana/Foo Fighters drummer Dave Grohl.

ROBERT PLANT

Title: *The Great Rearranger*
Release date: 25 April

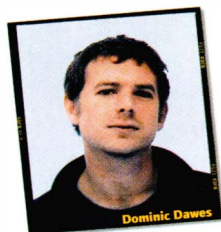
After several years of deliberately low-key projects, Robert Plant returns with 11 new and highly personal compositions. Jimmy Page is replaced by two guitarists (Justin Adams and Skin), while the songs cover Plant's musical interests, from heavy rock to acoustic ballads, via 1960s west coast and world music influences.

ALSO COMING SOON JAZZ/ CLASSICAL

Billy Cobham *Colours* (Apr); **Joey DeFrancesco and Jimmy Smith** *Legacy* (Apr); **Jin Wang** *Bach: Solo Suites For Cello* (Apr); **Lang Lang** *Rachmaninov Piano Concerto 2* (Apr); **Valery Gergiev** *Tchaikovsky Symphonies 4-6* (Apr)

SACD/ DVD-AUDIO

Duran Duran *Astronaut* (DualDisc, Mar); **St. Louis Symphony Orchestra** (**Slatkin**) *Gershwin: An American In Paris* (SACD, Mar); **Beck** *Guero* (DVD-A, Mar); **Genesis** *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway* (SACD, Apr)



Dominic Dawes

Back to basics

A loaf of bread, a jug of wine... and a good LP

With all the new home technologies emerging these days – home cinema systems, hard disk music servers, PC media centres and the global fashion frenzy that is the iPod – I still like nothing more than to switch the phone off, settle in for the night and enjoy my music with a good old-fashioned, top-quality stereo hi-fi system.

There's nothing like it. While the world seems bent on compromising quality for convenience, I insist on flying the flag for the kind of design that produces music perfectly and produces shivers-up-the-spine consistently.

Which has led me, at times, to mutter some rather disparaging things about the current trend for DVD-based multimedia, multichannel, multieverything systems that appear to relegate music playback to little more than an afterthought.

It's not just me. I've heard a fair amount of snobbery towards home cinema from the

“I'll be sitting back with a glass of wine and my good old stereo hi-fi – and my vinyl.”

audiophile community at regular intervals. Often, the logic behind the snobbery is faultless. The average contemporary home cinema receiver packs in more channels of amplification than you can shake a stick at into a single box – not to mention a gazillion decoders, DSP modes and other functions – and that would seem to betray the very values that have produced the finest-sounding stereo amps in hi-fi's rich history.

Besides, the attempts to blend audiophile enthusiasm and the latest trends in home entertainment have been rather a damp squib so far – current sales of multichannel music formats seem to indicate that the general public couldn't give a monkey's about 'surround music'. Meanwhile, the most passionate hi-fi-literate music lovers still insist (rightly) that for the most sublime musical experience you need to listen to high-quality, two-channel products designed for sonic transparency above all else. Preferably using good old-fashioned vinyl.

But I've been thinking. Perhaps this stereo snobbery isn't the whole story. In fact, there are some ways in which the evolution of home cinema is actually benefiting music

reproduction. Take subwoofers for example. Before the development of the 5.1 standard made subwoofers an essential component of a home cinema system, I was always sceptical about them. I remember listening to a particularly well-recorded live concert album on a system using a sub and thinking that it sounded fine, apart from the fact that the bass sounded like it was being played in a separate venue. Actually, it sounded like it was being played on another continent.

But the popularity of subwoofers has resulted in a new generation of subs that perform to a much higher standard, producing subtlety as well as slam, precision as well as power. Which means they're far better at reproducing genuinely musical bass.

This kind of improvement can only be a good thing. Absolute audio perfection may be unattainable – especially in the multifunction systems that dominate the market nowadays – but if manufacturers continue to improve performance this way, there's every reason to believe that the next generation of surround sound, universally disc-compatible systems will soon be making audiophile ears like mine a lot happier. In the meantime, though, I'll still be

turning the phone off tonight, and sitting back with a glass of wine and my good old stereo hi-fi – and my vinyl collection.

Dominic Dawes is a freelance writer and musician with a deep love of music and a corresponding passion for hi-fi



Art Dudley

It's fingerpickin' good

The Colonels' special bluegrass recipe

Audiophiles are as likely as anyone else to enjoy music, the only obstacle being their tendency toward one-upmanship: "You mean you don't own the original pink-label pressing of Bidet's *The Fountain*? Then you've never heard the music properly!" But, here's something to break the pattern – a seminal pop album has re-appeared on the market after an absence of almost a decade, and the people responsible for the CD re-mastering are true audio perfectionists. Yes, the Kentucky Colonels' *Appalachian Swing* can now be enjoyed at its best by anyone with \$12 to spare.

The story begins in 1964, when the group landed a contract with World Pacific Records. Built around the formidable mandolin/guitar duo of Roland and Clarence White – the latter of whom would later find fame as a member of the Byrds – the group arrived at the studio to discover the company wanted an instrumental album. They took it in stride, and in one marathon live-in-the-studio session, the Colonels recorded a twelve-song collection that to this day is regarded by bluegrass fans as towering classic of the genre – and by audio enthusiasts for its remarkably natural sound.

The Kentucky Colonels' live act was fraught with tight – but faceless – harmony singing. So by dispensing with the vocals and aiming the spotlight on their masterful playing, producer Richard Bock took the group to an altogether better place, especially in bringing the White brothers' talent for instrumental dialogue to the fore. With alternating mandolin and guitar breaks replacing the vocals, the gospel number *I Am a Pilgrim* gained greater depth, and the same interplay brought new texture to standards like *Billy In the Low Ground* and the American folk chestnut *John Henry*. ▶

BP

RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

DEFINITIVE TECHNOLOGY
BP2000



Launched around a decade ago, the BP2000 loudspeaker quickly put Definitive Technology on the map. It was a large, free-standing tower loudspeaker with a black piano gloss top and a black body stocking covering the rest of the enclosure. This is a simple and elegant way of reducing the cost of finishing an enclosure and keeping prices in check, even if the idea was not entirely new. The old Jim Rogers JR149 cylindrical speaker had an all-round reticulated foam wrap in the 1970s, along with a variety of variously decorated top plates to produce some individuality. KEF and Vandersteen also had models that looked similar to Definitive Technology's design at the time, and it was probably one of these models that provided the inspiration for the BP2000.

Acoustically, however, the BP2000 was beholden to no one. Along with the Canadian Mirage company, Definitive Technology was a very early exponent of the bipole concept, something still rare today. The basic idea was that an array of drivers was fitted to the front of the speaker (a 160mm midrange unit and a 25mm metal come teeter) in phase with a similar array on the back. This produced an output with a roughly omnidirectional dispersion pattern. The character of the sound reflected around the room boundaries from such speakers is a lot more in keeping with the directly radiated sound.

It is true that Mirage's best efforts of the period were even closer to the ideal as the mid/treble enclosure was a lot shallower, which was possible because the company's front facing midrange unit backed onto the smaller rear facing tweeter and vice versa. But the BP2000 was simpler to build – there was no need for a large bass enclosure for example – and the cabinet form factor was another factor in the equation that lead to a relatively attractive selling price. And, if the result wasn't in the Mirage league, the BP2000 did much the same thing for much less money. It provided an airy and spacious, if slightly diffuse sound that retained consistency in balance over a large area. It didn't root the listener to one position in the listening room.



“The BP2000 provided an airy and spacious, if slightly diffuse, sound that retained consistency.”

The other unusual – perhaps unique – feature of the BP2000 was that the bass section was internally powered. In a design that has been widely copied since (and often without much success, it should be said), the side firing 38cm bass driver was powered by its own internal 300-watt amplifier, with controls on the back. These adjusted the crossover frequency, bass level and the ability to take its signal from the passive unit, or from a separate full-range, line-level input (low pass filtering was performed internally). Essentially, this was an early and technically highly successful example of a loudspeaker with a built in subwoofer. But, each loudspeaker also needed at least two wired inputs, signal and mains.

The BP2000 spawned a host of other models, some essentially scaling exercises which were either bigger or smaller than the BP2000, and some later iterations designed to keep the framework of the design abreast of developments in the marketplace. But, in the UK, the BP2000 family fell victim to what can only be called structural changes in the market. In other words large, space consuming speakers that cannot be placed close to walls fell out of fashion, disproportionately affecting smaller brands. More than a pity for one of the all time bargains of the high-end. **HFC**

Alvin Gold



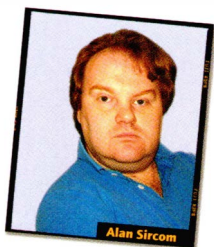
“Elvis may have the 1,000th Number One, but it was the lowest-selling chart-topper ever.”

☑ The folk music label Rounder gained the rights for a CD reissue in 1993, but theirs was mastered from a DAT dub rather than the original three-track tape. So, it was good news indeed when DCC Records veterans Steve Hoffman and Sam Passamano, Jr. selected *Appalachian Swing* for reissue by their newish company S&P. Hoffman and Passamano uncovered the original master tape – and their reissue does sound marginally cleaner on some numbers, especially the rollicking *Nine Pound Hammer*. They’ve also chosen to reverse the left and right channels in their remastering, at least as compared with the Rounder release. Although I have yet to be sold on the rightness of one version over the other, it doesn’t affect the performance. And it’s easily adjusted...

If bluegrass music is merely something you associate with homemade liquor, *Deliverance* and questionable standards of familial interaction, here’s a good reason to give it one more chance. Clarence White in particular, who died in 1973, was one of the most accomplished and inventive guitarists of any genre, and *Appalachian Swing* has him in peak form. That the album sounds so good is merely

icing on the cake. This is more than simply country music with added in-breeding.

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



The Lost Boys

Is this the last generation of single buyers?

The market for singles has dwindled away. The physical sliver of polycarbonate has been replaced almost entirely by insubstantial sales of downloaded music. Elvis may have landed the 1,000th Number One single in January this year, but it also set the record for

the lowest-selling chart-topper ever. *One Night* needed around 21,000 copies sold to vault to the top of the charts. Meanwhile, downloaded music shows a very different trend; according to the British Phonographic Industry data, in the final week of 2004, there were 312,000 downloads sold against 282,000 ‘real’ singles.

But these bad-news stats for the single hide a dramatic shift for sales of physical lumps of plastic. Sales of seven-inch vinyl were at a five year high in 2004, which makes the slump in CD single sales all the more marked. And, while we are discussing trends in music carriers, spare a thought for the cassette single. According to those who count these things, cassette singles accounted for no sales whatsoever. Okay, so sales of cassette albums are still occasionally happening, and will as long as petrol stations continue to stock naff collections for weary sales reps to play in their Mondeos. But ultimately, the cassette is going the way of the 8-Track and the cassette single is officially, er, deader than Elvis.

Why should the wavering trends in single sales concern us? Surely hi-fi is about albums, not singles? The problem could be that if they don’t buy singles – or more importantly, don’t play singles on their hi-fi – are they going to buy CD albums? Despite a boost in seven-inch single sales, if people are migrating from hi-fi to computer for their music, the need for a dedicated and separate hi-fi system is lessened. Some companies are attempting to address this, by including some degree of networked audio capability into hi-fi products. Sound servers are an obvious point of contact between the downloaded world and the realm of the CD. Other devices, like the Imerge, Cyrus and Onkyo client boxes can act as both ‘hi-fi’ system and downloaded music output device. But this is not the standard way of playing downloaded singles; they move from filesharing or download management software to MP3 player to trash can or wastebasket. Branching off down the hi-fi line is an unlikely pathway. Instead, I think the network audio client/server system is designed for multiroom on the cheap, not for aspiring downloaders coming to hi-fi for a first time.

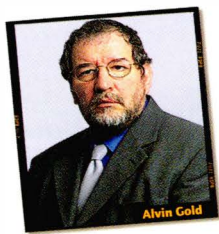
A generation of music buyers are just reaching puberty, a time when they become active consumers of music. Many may view CD carriers as unnecessary, and the generation that follow will be even less disposed to consider using CD. Teenage music buyers occasionally become twentysomething audiophiles, but if they consider their music to be entirely internet based, the chances of purchasing a hi-fi system is remote.

It needn’t be totally bleak for the hi-fi industry, though. The Windows Media Centre

XP concept is a potentially exciting option to get the lost generation back to hi-fi. A central media hub, that deals with everything from television to handling audio and video files, this is arguably the best crossover between the PC and domestic appliances.

Of course it's early days, and people still run scared of using a PC as the home nerve centre. We still imagine that the PC will prevent you watching *EastEnders* because it thinks Alfie Moon is a virus or a box that crashes during *Newsnight*, causing you to be forced to listen to the greatest hits of Bob the Builder while it reboots. But these are just teething troubles. Maybe, those lost to CD will find their way back, thanks to bolting a hi-fi system to a Media Centre PC.

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



The demise of SACD?

Does next-generation audio have a future?

The CES consumer electronics showcase in Las Vegas this year was notable for the strengths of the rumours circulating concerning the future or otherwise of SACD (see *HFC* 265). Among them, I learned that in the US Sony Music had "pulled all funding for SACD" and that "the entire staff was let go", with a similar story about Telarc. Others had cut their SACD plans, and DualDisc is the "hot product" in the US. On the hardware side, I was told that Sony Japan had dispersed its SACD development team, all future R&D had been stopped, and that it was to pull out of the SACD market.

There are indeed worries for the future of SACD. One is the very limited range of SACD compliant mechanisms, now that Linn Products has taken over OEM supply. The lack of DSD compliance in the HDMI roadmap is also of concern, though i.Link/IEEE1394 provides a viable alternative.

It's easy to be cynical about SACD, but any such move by Sony would be catastrophic for the development of high-fidelity generally, with ramifications that would spread far beyond the community of SACD users. By the way, SACD/DSD has not been mandated for the new Blu-Ray AV disc format, despite what I wrote last month, though it is "being studied".

MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

PRIMAL SCREAM
SCREAMADELICA



If *The Stone Roses* threw down the gauntlet for rave/rock, then *Screamadelica* was its crowning glory – a synergy of two

disparate cultures that for one glowing moment in the early 1990s fused into ecstasy. Bolted together at sixty-five minutes from sessions all over the place, *Screamadelica* is basically a collection of mixes with six singles preceding it.

It all started when Primal Scream's Andrew Innes met producer Andrew Weatherall at Spectrum in London in 1989. The Scream were a struggling group of Scots rockers with a love for the MC5, Love, New York Dolls, Big Star and Neil Young. Weatherall loved the ballad *I'm Losing More Than I'll Ever Have* from their second album and begged to remix it. A drum loop from an Italian bootleg disc, Felt's Martin Duffy on piano, a bit of Peter Fonda biker movie stuff and Bobby Gillespie singing Robert Johnson was all it took to make *Loaded*. It cost £500 and was recorded in a garage in Walthamstow, east London, but it coincided with the Primals' discovery of ecstasy and all-night partying. Now Coltrane, Sun Ra and funk started to infiltrate their minds.

Jam Studios in Finsbury Park was the site of the next recording, *Come Together*, which saw the band taking so many drugs they all collapsed during recording. Gurgling effects, Nastassja Kinski, The Reverend Jesse Jackson and an Elvis guitar riff were mixed by Weatherall into another ecstasy gospel anthem. Broke and living on bad speed and hashish in a damp concrete bunker in Hackney in late 1990, the band scraped together enough money for a cheap sampler. For it they wrote *Higher Than The Sun*, the rocker *Movin' On Up*, the lullaby *Shine Like Stars* and the Stonesy ballad *Damaged*. Then they gave *Higher Than The Sun* to The Orb, a group who specialised in killer drum/bass riffs and sheets of ambient sound. The results were astonishing: 6mins 43secs of hallucinogenic bliss and the central theme of the album. Part *Strawberry Fields Forever*, part *Younger Than Yesterday*, Gillespie thought its June 1991 single release was the most important event in the UK since *Anarchy In The UK*!



"Gillespie thought its release was the most important event in the UK since *Anarchy In The UK*!"

Weatherall brought in veteran bassist Jah Wobble for the extended *Higher* mix as a 'dub symphony', a session at Jam fuelled by brandy and hash. Perhaps Weatherall's finest moment on *Screamadelica* is the nervy electric rave anthem *Don't Fight It Feel It*, initially a tune by dance combo Hypnotone with a fabulous soul vocal from singer Denise Johnson, who at that point joined Primal Scream. Now a multi-ethnic rock/dance combo, the skittering, infectious song (made more so by Martin Duffy's glittering Chicago house-style keyboards) was released in August 1991 to club euphoria.

Now on a roll, the band took LSD to finish the album at Jam with Weatherall, producer Hugo Nicholson and The Orb in tow. Yet Weatherall was reluctant to touch rockier numbers like *Movin' On Up* and *Damaged* and Creation Records supreme Alan McGee was desperate for an album. In a fit of pure optimism Andrew Innes took the songs to America for the attention of legendary Rolling Stones/Traffic producer Jimmy Miller.

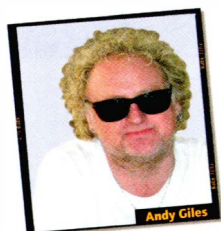
With a simple aacid-friendly sleeve, *Screamadelica* came out in September 1991 and charted immediately, reaching number eight. It was a troubled birth, but the group had delivered undoubtedly their best album and quite probably the important LP of the ecstasy generation. **HFC**

Mark Prendergast

☞ I spent some of my time in Las Vegas tracking down the sources and the veracity of these rumours. It turns out that one of the major rumour sources is a prestigious high-end manufacturer apparently drawing on information from a contact within Sony; another being a prominent record producer working in the DVD-Audio arena. From my contacts with Sony, I got a flat denial that it was pulling the plug. Sony Japan has indeed shut down the SACD development team because their job has been done, and the project has been handed over to the hi-fi division. Product development continues apace, with significant new products that we will hear about shortly. SACD version 2 is being mooted, for which Denon's Digital Link has already received approval. There are plenty of important SACD titles in the works from Telarc and Sony too, though Sony Music has always been ambivalent about SACD, perhaps to mark its independence.

The bottom line is that neither SACD nor DVD-Audio has been an outstanding success so far, but from what I can see, there's no need to worry about the future of these formats yet.

Alvin Gold began writing about hi-fi more than 20 years ago and has since become one of the UK's most internationally renowned audio and AV reviewers

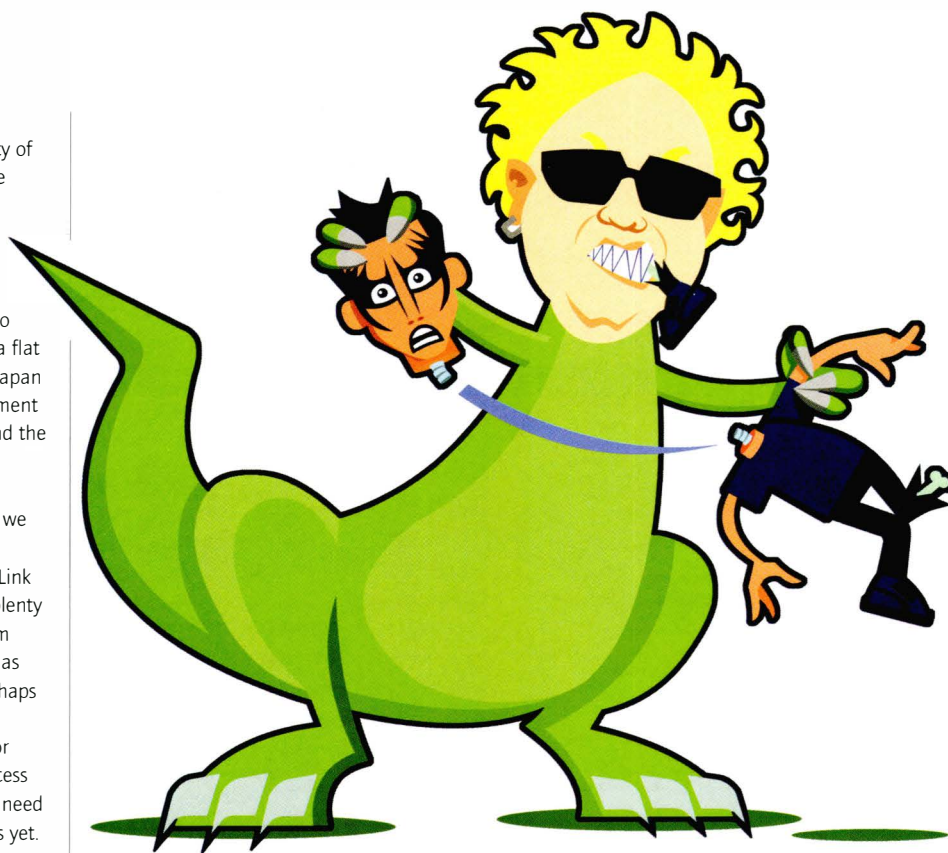


There's only one...

Who needs a multichannel Robbie Williams?

I was sitting with Paul Barton, an esteemed audio engineer and loudspeaker designer, and Paul Messenger, a brilliant audio journalist and commentator, at a hi-fi show last year. It was the Heathrow one and a good show it was too – I can't remember what the hotel's called now; once upon a time, it was the Penta. Paul Messenger, bless him, might not remember this, but the two sages sat and talked hi-fi.

It was interesting to listen to the pair of Pauls; not a word of pretence was uttered by either of them. And, what's more, they were talking about music. Endearing, not to say, refreshing, I mused. I needed some respite of this kind, too... for earlier, in one of the rooms at the show, some clown had been playing me that ghastly Robbie Williams thing, you know, the one where he 'sings' with Frank Sinatra. It's



“I don't want to be accused of dinosaur-like propositions regarding where hi-fi is today.”

on DVD, I gather, and it was being shown on widescreen TV and played through about 20 speakers. Awful.

Back to Paul and Paul. Naturally, the subject of multichannel came up – and before I continue, remember they were talking about hi-fi, that's high fidelity. I stress this because – as you read on and get the thrust of my thoughts – I don't want to be accused of any dinosaur-like propositions regarding where hi-fi is today. Of course, you need a multichannel, multispeaker set-up to accurately enjoy the films of today. They sound superb, exciting and inspiring. Get as many as you want, for you need centre channels, rears and subwoofers for the real experience of audio-visual. But, as the two Pauls suddenly agreed, you only really need one loudspeaker to hear music. They were being fanciful, of course. Stereo, by its very name requires two of the chaps. But, for pure audio, no more – please!

Despite what some might tell you, it actually does only take two channels to arouse the emotion, passion, excitement and soul derived from listening to music. Okay, so the trend, we're told constantly, has turned in favour of AV products – and few can deny that. Nor can anyone deny the fun of a good home cinema system, for playing exciting and entertaining movie soundtracks. But also

nobody should overlook the joy of listening to two-channel stereo. Serious, music-loving brands have always been very strong players in two-channel stereo and, although in recent years some credible former two-channel champion companies have made the transition to being globally recognised AV brands, they have continued to produce first class stereo products, too. This latter factor has brought about tremendous interest for those gallant companies still persevering with two-channel stereo. For them there has been a mini resurgence in two-channel sales.

AV products have been almost reduced to commodity status and while the public at large expectantly awaits striking evolutionary changes, some bright souls are returning to decent quality two-channel music systems. Not only that, there is evidence to suggest that discerning consumers are being constantly disappointed by the poor audio quality and failure of the run-of-the-mill AV products to effectively deliver rated specifications.

The two Pauls had it right. For music, there's only one solution – two-channel stereo. Unless, of course, you like Robbie Williams. Then, that's your bleedin' problem.

Andy Giles is one of British hi-fi's biggest personalities. A former journalist, he has strong industry ties and a long-standing PR business



Multichannel medals

The Grammy Awards are now surrounded

Imagine the pressure; you have to deliver the sound for the Grammy Awards, with a live audience of around thirty million people in the USA alone and an auditorium filled with the most talented engineers and artists in the business. All you have to do is create a Dolby Digital broadcast mix – in real time – that will wow all of the above. Oh, and produce an instantaneously downloadable single entitled *Across the Universe* which will raise funds for the tsunami relief charities at the same time.

Hidden away at the end of hundreds of miles of wire at the back of L.A.'s Staples Center (which is normally used as a sports venue) in Effanel's L7 state-of-the-art mobile recording facility, you'll find the men charged with this daunting task: Jay Vicari and John Harris.

The opening sequence this year featured The Black Eyed Peas, Gwen Stefani, Los Lonely Boys, Maroon 5 and Franz Ferdinand, all on stage at the same time. This meant five different surround mixes, all running simultaneously and converging at various points. While the concept itself sounds next to impossible, the end result sounded amazing.

The surround tour de force that is the Grammy Awards telecast is largely down to the producing skills of the Hank Neuberger and legendary producer Phil Ramone.

This year the Recording Academy introduced a Grammy specifically for a music title presented in surround. Who better to pick up the award than Phil Ramone himself, for *Genius Loves Company*, an SACD from Concord Records by Ray Charles, which fended off competition from five other high-resolution titles, including Roxy Music's *Avalon* (SACD) and *Nick of Time* by Bonnie Raitt (DVD-Audio). Al Schmitt, another multichannel music stalwart and co-master of ceremonies at the Surround Music awards was responsible for the mix itself, another highly deserving winner. *Genius Loves Company* also carried off the prestigious Album of the Year, Best Engineered Album and Best Pop Vocal Album awards, putting stereo well and truly in its place!

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

TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

STEREO IMAGING

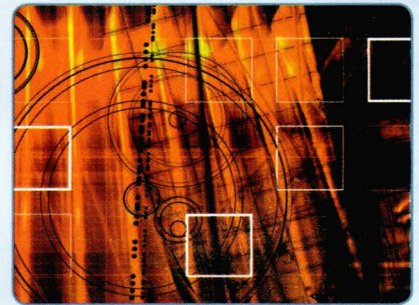


The ability of two loudspeakers to recreate a believable image in width and depth, is remarkable and fortunate. It's intuitively obvious that if you play a sound through two speakers, equally spaced from a centre line in front of you, the sound will appear to be coming from between the speakers. In detail, though, the matter is quite subtle.

We hear positioning mostly by temporal (timing) cues. This is relatively easy to establish in outline by using headphones, where each ear has its own dedicated sound source. I've just now tried this using a couple of words of female speech, recorded in mono. Roughly, a 6dB channel imbalance between the channels in replay (that's one channel twice the level of the other) is equivalent to a time delay of 0.1 ms (about the time it takes sound to travel one inch) in terms of how much off-centre it pulls the image.

When considering loudspeaker reproduction, one must remember that we have two ears and they both hear both speakers. Imagine an 'ideal' stereo set-up in which speakers and listener make a symmetric triangle. A sound is played through both speakers at the same instant. Since the distance from left speaker to left ear is exactly the same as that from right speaker to right ear, each ear hears the sound at the same moment. A fraction of a second later, the signal from the left speaker reaches the right ear and vice versa, but since this is still symmetric it makes no difference. The sound is perceived as arriving at both ears simultaneously and we interpret that as being directly in front of us.

But, suppose the sound is a little louder in the left speaker. Now the situation gets easier to analyse if we remember that all real sounds can be represented as some sum of various sinewaves. By doing some school-level trigonometry (go on, you remember all that stuff) it is possible to prove that what we actually hear is much the same signal in each ear but phase-shifted at the left one so that, effectively, the left ear can be said to hear it first. We naturally interpret that as meaning that the sound came from left of centre.



“If you play a sound through two speakers, it will appear to be coming from between them.”

At very high frequencies, the head itself 'shades' the left ear from the right speaker etc. and amplitude differences start to dominate. The time difference effect, however, dominates below a few kHz. Oddly, time differences between the speakers are rather less important, because each ear hears each speaker.

Now, we're very sensitive to stereo positioning shifts, able to detect as little as five microsecond delays between one ear and the other. That converts in amplitude terms to around 0.25dB. Pretty tight tolerances, and we haven't even got on to image depth yet. In fact, that's rather less scientific, based a lot on our expectations of direct versus reverberant sound, but at least as subtle. And here's the real killer: just as intermodulation distortion can occur between two sinewave tones, it can just as well occur between two sound sources, each with its own position in space. This creates a 'phantom' sound source.

There are lots of other ramifications of stereo imaging, not least what happens in a real listening room full of resonators, obstructions and so on. We lack the space to investigate further this time around, but we hope by now you'll have started to understand why this wonderful but fragile phenomenon is so easily affected by even the smallest imperfection in the audio chain! **HFC**

Richard Black

SENNHEISER HD595 HEADPHONES £150

➤ This open-backed headphone claims to employ some of the key technologies of the top HD650 model, which we greatly enjoyed a few issues back. At half the price, the HD595 feels more plasticky, but this is still a well-made headphone. Importantly, it sits comfortably on the head and has enough room within the cups for the largest pair of ears.

The sound definitely justifies the claimed relation to the HD650. For a start, it is extremely well-balanced tonally, with none of the spittiness that mars too many budget, and even some mid-price, headphones. Bass is really solid and while, of course, it can't really kick you in the stomach the way good speakers do, it goes a long way to making you think that it can. Meanwhile, detail is very good indeed, giving new insights into familiar recordings left, right and centre. One of the best under £300.

☎ 01494 551551 # www.sennheiser.co.uk



SONIFEX RB-DAC1 DIGITAL-TO-ANALOGUE CONVERTER £425

⚡ Several features about this unit positively scream 'pro', from the presence of an AES/EBU digital input to the lack of feet. It could make a great add-on for a computer-based 'sound server' (or audio editor come to that), or it could function as an upgrade for a digital TV set-top box with a digital output. The headphone output (which alone responds to the volume control) increases the attraction for either of those roles.

To be brutally frank, sound is not outstanding. It is tonally neutral and noise is low, but it is far from the clearest-sounding DAC we've come across. It gets too easily bewildered by complex music and tends to cause images to collapse somewhat, especially in the depth dimension. Still, with next to no competition it has a place for the aspiring semi-pro.

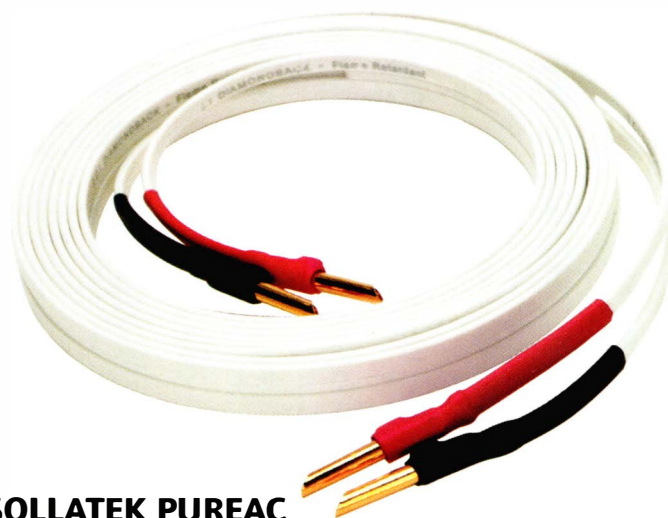
☎ 01933 650700 # www.sonifex.co.uk



TCI DIAMONDBACK SPEAKER CABLE £7.99 (PRICE PER METRE - TERMINATION EXTRA)

➤ An unpretentious, spaced-twin cable, thin enough to disappear under a thickish carpet and soft and flexible enough to stay there. Construction is stranded and of moderate resistance, while capacitance is low. Sound is slightly on the bright side tonally but not without decent bass extension and control. Stereo imaging is for the most part good, slightly less so in the depth direction than in width, however. The acoustic decay of transients is well preserved, but watch out for dryness to the sound, especially in music with a lot of treble energy. Decent value.

☎ 07710 196949 # www.true-colours.com



SOLLATEK PUREAC MAINS FILTER £52

⚡ Sollatek makes a range of mains clean-up devices, primarily aimed at the computer market. This little unit builds in a comprehensive filter that reduces ultrasonic noise on the mains (the effect within the audio band is limited), plus spike absorbers, and even indicates when the spike absorbers are getting worn out through repeated 'zapping'. Clever... but we have to report that, while it does seem to clean up intrusive clicks to a noticeable extent, it also slightly softens the sound of various source and amplification components tried with it. This seems to be a common enough finding with non-audio-specific filters, but its modest price commends it for click-ridden systems nonetheless.

☎ 01753 688300 # www.sollatek.com



ETÓN MINI 300 PE PORTABLE RADIO £25

Though it's not strictly hi-fi, this little gem provides music on the move with such panache, we can imagine it appealing to those who value good sound. Of course, there's no bass whatsoever, but the midrange is surprisingly clear and intelligible. Coverage of FM, MW and seven shortwave bands makes it a real traveller's toy, and control is simple with analogue tuning (digital readout) and volume, plus alarm and sleep functions. There's one silly function: FM switches to stereo when headphones are plugged in, which makes for poor reception. In mono, though, it's great.

☎ 023 9 231 3090 🌐 www.nevada-radios.co.uk



QED QUNEX 3 INTERCONNECT CABLE £40 (1M PAIR)

This smart-looking interconnect certainly ticks all the right boxes. Pseudo-balanced construction, low-loss dielectric, foil and braid screening, silver-plated copper – it's all there, plus QED's own phono plugs. These are some of the best around as they grip the socket to just the right extent, and are easy to grab and pull.

Sound is very good – clear and detailed, with excellent extension both upwards and downwards. Resolution of detail is good too, while imaging is clear and stable, if on occasion a little compressed. Tonally there seems to be a very mild treble shyness which subtly smoothes the sound – no bad thing, in many situations! Fine value.

☎ 01279 501111 🌐 www.qed.co.uk



WIREWORLD ECLIPSE INTERCONNECT CABLE £500 (1M PAIR)

Wireworld's 'Reference' level interconnect is clearly a quality item, with exceptionally chunky plugs (silver-plated copper, apparently) and, for a high-end cable, friendly handling qualities. It uses Wireworld's 'Symmetricoax' design, which would account for the highish capacitance, while high-quality materials ensure that losses are low at all frequencies.

There's no doubting that the sound from this cable is very good indeed, with masses of detail, superb imaging, peerless extension and neutral tonality, notwithstanding a very slightly 'dark' quality. But is it five times as good as the best cables at £100? Is it, in fact, better than them? Only just, we'd suggest. Buy it and enjoy it, if you're feeling too flush, but several cheaper cables (including Wireworld's own) offer better value.

☎ 020 8991 9200 🌐 www.wireworldaudio.co.uk



SOUND ORGANISATION Z5 EQUIPMENT SUPPORT £219

This steel-and-glass stand uses a very rigid rear support with cantilever arms for the shelves, topped with glass that looks worryingly thin but seems strong enough. Indeed, maximum load per shelf is rated at 50kg, which is more than anything we can think of that would actually fit on them. The four-shelf version offers more space, but neither version is adjustable. Assembly is easy enough, though the instructions could be better. Spikes are standard, castors an option.

Like pretty much all metal and glass stands, this one has its own signature, but it's not particularly obtrusive, mainly limited to warming the midrange and smearing detail slightly. It provides essentially no isolation from the environment, and as such is not well suited to microphonic components (turntables), but it is stable, smart and well designed and we're happy to recommend it.

☎ 01279 501111 🌐 www.soundorganisation.net





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Ware's house

These days, former eighties electro-pop maestro Martyn Ware is immersed in the multi-speakered world of surround sound. If he has his way, 5.1 won't be the future of music – it'll be 16.4...

Martyn Ware may not be a household name these days, but the chances are you will have heard – if not owned – at least one of his albums. These include the first two Human League records and the classic Heaven 17 *Penthouse And Pavement* album with Ian Craig Marsh. Since those heady days, Ware has been producing music for other artists, including Tina Turner's comeback hit *Let's Stay Together*, which was originally released on Ware's B.E.F. (British Electric Foundation) covers album. Ware also produced the phenomenally successful *The Hardline According To Terence Trent D'Arby*, which sold nine million copies.

Nowadays, Ware has become immersed in the world of multichannel music; not 5.1 surround sound but 16.4, in the case of the Brixton studio where he mixes his work, and often more channels in the live events he produces as the Illustrious Company alongside Vince Clarke of Erasure. In his octagonal studio at Paul Gilliearon Acoustic Design, Ware has eight B&W 602 speakers mounted at around two metres high and another eight at floor level, with four B&W subs around the room.

Ware uses a dedicated computer system called Lake Huron that he designed to render music in three dimensions. By using a graphic interface and a joystick, Ware can put each instrument anywhere in the room, and have it move around the room as the music plays. The system can be used to render as many channels as you like – just tell it where those speakers are in the room and it 'convolves' a three-dimensional sound image.

Despite the apparent complexity of the system, Ware maintains it actually makes mixing easier. "It's much, much more complex mixing in stereo," he says. "You've got less space; you've got to slice it together, compress everything and make it all sit on different



"I approve of a higher fidelity medium, but I have a problem with the cost of SACD."

frequency ranges. The beauty of a set-up like this 3D system is that you can leave everything pristine and pure, and you don't have to EQ it to make it work or squeeze it toothpaste tube-like through two speakers.

"I approve of the idea of a higher fidelity medium, but I have a problem with the cost of SACD players. It's all very well in an ideal world where you used to have eighties style budgets for producing an album, but I'm designing things as a pop producer for the mass market I'm not designing for audiophiles. In a nutshell I would be in favour of a commercial medium that is of a higher spec.

"We always work at 16-bit/44.1kHz. The chain of getting it to the public is always going to be degraded to 16/44.1 (CD) anyway. You've got to be realistic about these things. That's if

you get it in CD quality. Unless it's SACD and that's a different matter, that's great."

At present, all his work is used for specific events and there is only one multichannel recording (DTS 6.1) available, which is featured on B&W's *A Sound Experience* DVD (available free via www.bw800.com)

But, will this sort of technology become commonplace in the home at some point in the future? "Yeah, why not?" says Ware. "This technology is ready; if DTS or Dolby said we want this as a new audio standard and we're going to pay for the marketing they could have it now. It could get off the ground very quickly. That's why working with people like B&W is great – it's a world brand and it's another part of the lobby." **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

Essential Martyn Ware

1. Heaven 17 – *Penthouse and Pavement* (1981)

Ware, Ian Craig-Marsh and Glen Gregory put electro-pop on the map with their debut – not as commercially successful as the Human League, but it had more credibility. (*We Don't Need This*) *Fascist Groove Thing* is a true classic.



2. B.E.F. – *Music of Quality and Distinction, Vol. 1* (1982)

Ware and Ian Craig-Marsh's unusual combination of artists and songs. It goes from the sublime *Ball of Confusion* sung by Tina Turner to the slightly ridiculous *These Boots Are Made for Walking* by Paula Yates.



3. Heaven 17 – *Bigger than America* (1996)

The comeback album proved that H17 has lost none of its power. While you can hear the early eighties style that made the band's name, this is a fresh take on a classic theme, delivered with considerable finesse.





WIN! A SUPERB NAIM CD5X CD PLAYER WORTH £1,450!

For anyone looking for audiophile sound at real world prices, Naim's CD5x is a sure bet. Launched late last year, this highly-accomplished CD player is one of just a handful of Naim x-series products designed to sit above the marque's entry-level range. The new CD5x player is based on the excellent CD5i, with a number of crucial modifications to suit even the most demanding listener. There's now a dedicated circuit board for the Philips transport mechanism and a new toroidal mains transformer that provides a stiffer power supply, alongside 24-bit Burr-Brown DACs of the sort found in Naim's high-end CDX2 and CDS3 players.

The result of all this meddling is nothing short of spectacular – music sounds as close to the real thing as you can imagine for the money. We awarded the CD5x a Best Buy badge in the March issue (*HFC 264*) for its exceptional musicality and strong reflection of the music being played and for your chance to win one, simply answer the question below. The lucky winner will be drawn at random.



CONGRATULATIONS...
 to our last winner, Kevin Emm
 of Wrexham. He receives a gorgeous
 Electrocompaniet ECI 3
 integrated stereo amp!

QUESTION:

What is the result of all Naim's meddling with the CD5x?

- A:** Nothing short of spectacular
- B:** Nothing shorter than TV's Ronnie Corbett
- C:** Nothing shorter than one of Willy Wonka's Oompa-Loompas

TO ENTER:

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

By Text: Send the message **HFC COMP1** with the answer A, B, or C to **83070**. For example, if you think the answer is C: Nothing shorter than one of Willy Wonka's Oompa-Loompas, then text HFC COMP1 C to 83070

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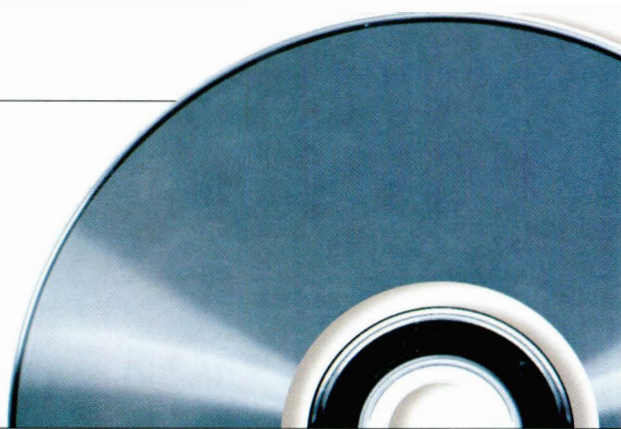
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ChoiceCuts



This month's varied musical morsels

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



AUDIOPHILE VINYL

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART AND THE MAGIC BAND

Clear Spot

Reprise/Rhino Records 180g vinyl

Music: Beefheart's 1972 follow up to *Mirror Man* is his most effective and tightly honed album. *Trout Mask Replica* might cover all the bases but *Clear Spot* is tight in all respects: focus, playing, singing and songwriting. This is played by a bunch of superb musicians who, if the stories are true, had a harder time of it than James Brown's JB's thanks to their leader's quest for perfection. The style ranges from elastic blues on *Big Eyed Beans From Venus* to the soft ballads such as *Her Eyes Are A Blue Million Miles*. It's more accessible than *Trout Mask Replica*, yet pulsating with Beefheart's idiosyncratic style. ★★★★★
Sound: The unlikely choice of Ted Templeman (Doobie Brothers, Van Halen) at the production helm works a treat and delivers a dynamic and colourful sound that complements the musicianship. ★★★★★ JK



THE BOX TOPS

Soul Deep – The Best Of The Box Tops

BMG/Simply Vinyl 180g vinyl

Music: The Box Tops put blue-eyed soul singer Alex Chilton on the musical map back in 1967 when he was just 16. This Memphis-based group had several top ten hits in the late sixties including a number one, *The Letter*. It's an unusual combination of raw vocals and Memphis horns. The Box Tops owed their success to songwriter Dan Penn, who was highly selective about which members of the band got to record the songs. He helped them produce four albums in three years but ultimately Chilton tired of the lack of artistic freedom and went off to form the hugely influential Big Star. *Soul Deep* is a nugget worth biting into. ★★
Sound: Short on dynamic contrast and genuine bandwidth, this is very much the sound of its time and the quality of the voice shines through with little effort. ★★ JK



These LPs are available from Vivante: ☎ 01293 822186 @ www.vivante.co.uk and Simply Vinyl: ☎ 020 8545 8580 @ www.simplyvinyl.com

COMPACT DISC & VINYL

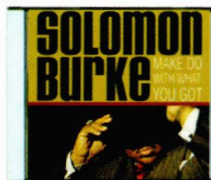


KING CRIMSON

In The Court Of The Crimson King (Original Master Edition)

Island

Music: From Barry Godber's incredible cover painting to the awesome drumming, Mellotron synthesiser and guitar sounds, King Crimson's debut album burst on the UK music scene in 1969. Robert Fripp, Pete Sinfield, Michael Giles, Ian McDonald and Greg Lake had the nous to ditch normal rock structures and work within jazz, avant-garde and the classics of Dvorak and Stravinsky. If *Moonchild* is a bit on the twiddly side, *Epitaph*, *Schizoid Man* and the title track all resound with a particular grandeur. ★★★★★
Sound: A first-time transfer of the master, this HDCD has huge dynamic range which supports the music's thunderous drums and Mellotron effects. By far the best-sounding *Court* ever released. ★★★★★ MP

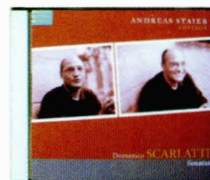


SOLOMON BURKE

Make Do With What You Got

Sony BMG

Music: One of the great sixties soul survivors, King Solomon continues the remarkable renaissance begun by 2002's Grammy-winning comeback *Don't Give Up On Me* with another fine batch of songs. The prevailing mood is one of warm, after-hours funk, on mature interpretations of compositions by Bob Dylan, Van Morrison and Hank Williams. But the ferocious *I Need Your Love In My Life* shows that even at 64 he can still rip it up. Dr John contributes an instant classic in the title track and Burke digs deep into the emotional well for a blistering take on the Stones' *I Got The Blues*. Magnificent. ★★★★★
Sound: All you really need is the voice, but producer Don Was brilliantly coaxes a sixties Memphis sound from the backing band. It's like soul's golden era never went away. ★★★★★ NW



DOMENICO SCARLATTI

Sonatas

Andreas Staier (harpisichord)

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 82876 67375 2

Music: Scarlatti was a contemporary of Bach and Handel who left a vast legacy of sonatas. The music was structurally modernistic, although harmonically it broke no new ground. This two CD set is tackled by Andreas Staier, one of the world's leading harpsichord specialists, with passion and gusto. The music is surprisingly varied – as the cover notes remark, there isn't really a typical Scarlatti sonata. ★★★★★
Sound: Not much information was provided about the recordings, except that they were made in the early 1990s on a harpsichord modelled on German instruments of around 1740. The recordings are clean-limbed and atmospheric, but the main emphasis is on clarity of line. A rewarding and thoroughly enjoyable set. ★★★★★ AG

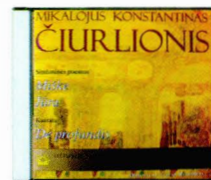
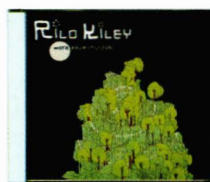


RILO KILEY

More Adventurous

Brute/Warner

Music: Want a new name to drop? Look no further than LA quartet Rilo Kiley, whose odd moniker is surely going to be on everybody's lips before the end of 2005. Their third album (and first to get major label distribution) is full of smart hooks and seductive arrangements and represents a subtle shift into the mainstream after the studied indie cool of their earlier efforts. But it's frontwoman Jenny Lewis (a former child actress in *The Golden Girls*) who is the star attraction. She writes the songs and also emerges here as a singer with the effortless sexuality of a young Debbie Harry or Chrissie Hynde. ★★★★★
Sound: It's not quite Fleetwood Mac, and their new success hasn't meant the album reaches audiophile standards, but a dreamy West Coast sheen has been added to their spikier instincts that should guarantee their major-league breakthrough. ★★★★★ NW

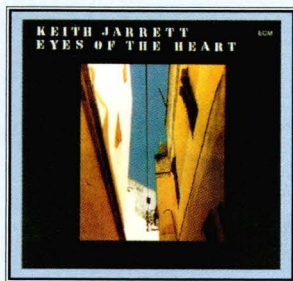


MIKALOJUS KONSTANTINAS ČIURLIONIS

Symphonic Poems: In The Forest, The Sea; Cantata: De Profundis

Juozas Domarkas (conductor), Lithuanian SO, Kaunas State Choir MSCXD-007

Music: Painter and composer MK Čiurlionis is the unofficial national composer of Lithuania. *The Sea* (contemporaneous with Debussy's namesake) and *In the Forest* are his best known orchestral works. The music is in Mahler territory, though concentrated in feel. The cantata *De Profundis* is a major choral work, the only one of its kind from Čiurlionis. ★★★★★
Sound: Apart from some rough choral ensemble, this is a well-recorded disc. It has an honest quality, perhaps lacking in sophistication, but somehow this seems to enhance the idiomatic feel of the performances. ★★★★★ AG



THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "Jarrett covers the full emotional gamut."

KEITH JARRETT Eyes Of The Heart ECM

Music: Jarrett is indisputably the king of contemporary jazz improvisation and this fact could not be any clearer than at this 1976 performance in Bregenz, Austria. Accompanied by Paul Motian on drums, Dewey Redman on sax and Charlie Haden on bass, Jarrett's piano covers the full emotional gamut. He has a degree of connection with his fellow musicians that is uncanny; it's not just a case of them following his unpredictable yet rhythmically coherent

path, they are alongside him feeling the direction that the music takes them. There is a solo piano section on *Part Two* that finds Jarrett at his most subtle – the audience is mesmerised, and you will feel that way too. ★★★★★
Sound: A piano with a strong, full-bodied sound and a band that can whip up real energy and power. In all, a superb analogue recording and – being one of ECM's finest – a disc to cherish. ★★★★★ JK



JOANNA NEWSOM THE MILK-EYED MENDER

Drag City

Music: Her music has been described as 'Appalachian-meets-avant-garde folk', and as such Joanna Newsom is certainly something very different. But, for once, the quirky description fits perfectly. For one thing, she's a classically-trained harpist, and for another she sings in a voice like none you've ever heard. Perhaps this is why Newsom has played alongside the likes of Bonny 'Prince' Billy so successfully. The elfin 22 year old San Francisco-based musician generally plays solo, using her harp as lyrical accompaniment to the songs she sings in a slightly arch, childlike wail that can take a bit of getting used to. Persevere, however, and this is a music of much beauty: touching, tender, alive with possibilities and with a fairy tale-like quality of wide-eyed wonder. ★★★★★

Sound: Largely recorded at home with just a couple of microphones for harp and voice (with occasional keyboards) this is an intimate sounding record that invites you in and holds you there. ★★★ DO

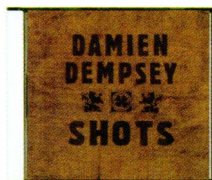


TORI AMOS The Beekeeper

Sony BMG

Music: Cornwall's immigrant returns with her first original album since 2002's *Scarlet's Walk*. Style-wise she's again back in the zone of her early successes, but with a few more soulful colours to her confessional and emotionally charged songs. Of the 19 tracks crammed onto the album, *The Power Of Orange Knickers*, a surprisingly powerful duet with singer-songwriter Damien Rice is a high point, as is the sensual strut of *Sweet The Sting* and the soaring multitracked vocals of single *Sleeps With Butterflies*. ★★★★★

Sound: Recorded and self-produced in her state-of-the-art Cornwall studio, the sound is rich and sumptuous, warm and intimate, and perhaps a trifle too cosy on occasion to do these very personal songs full justice. ★★★★★ DO



DAMIEN DEMPSEY Shots

IRL

Music: Damien Dempsey regularly sells out 1,000 seater venues in Dublin, and it's easy to see why with this latest album – acoustic but full, purely sung but with songs that deal in realism. Throughout it all his voice maintains an edge that commands attention, yet his tunes are as pretty as the songs are, often, bleak. Dempsey doesn't mind the cracks showing either. But there's something grand and life-affirming about it all too – no matter how stoned or skint or desperate are Damien Dempsey's anti-heroes, they haven't given up. In an age of processed pap, this, similarly, shines out. ★★★★★

Sound: Starkly intimate, with just the right amount of air and 'strum' on the guitars. It draws you in and warms you up nicely. ★★★★★ PS

DVD-AUDIO & SACD

WINDMINISTER

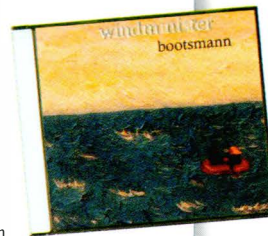
Bootsman

SACD (stereo SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Harp

Music: Windminister are two German acoustic guitar players, Olaf Wegener and Eberhard Klunker. *Bootsman*, their first recording, is a direct to DSD recording made in purist audiophile style with no EQ, compression or artificial reverb. All eight tracks are said to be first takes with no overdubs – and there is an infectious enthusiasm to the playing throughout. The all-original compositions are occasionally a bit hectic and the highpoints are the occasions such as on *Mr Hope* and *Monk 4*, when the players calm their enthusiasm and play relatively quietly. Stylistically their influences would appear to be a mix of Michael Hedges, Paco de Lucia and Leo Kottke but the word 'influence' is key here; Windminister have a very distinctive sound of their own. ★★

Sound: Recorded direct to DSD using little more than a microphone preamp this is a very natural recording, an approach that gives you the full acoustic of the venue and the harmonically rich textures of the instruments in full. ★★★★★ JK



JOHN TAVENER

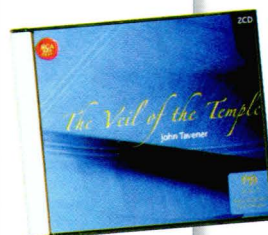
The Veil Of The Temple

Stephen Layton (cond), Patricia Rozario (soprano), Simon Wall, Nathan Vale (tenor), Thomas Guthrie, Andrew Rupp (baritone), Adrian Peacock, Jeremy Birchall (bass), various instrumentalists

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

RCA Red Seal 82876661542

Music: This is a shortened version of the seven-hour *Full Night Vigil*, and was (re)constructed from a live performance of the full work on this two-disc set. The music is suffused with spirituality and mysticism, with plainsong and chant set against a background of exotic instrumentation and sometimes austere choral work. Much of it has a forbidding quality due to long stretches of background set in a monotone. This is a very distinctive and powerful work. ★★★★★
Sound: This recording was made at the inaugural performance given at the Temple Church London, for which it was commissioned. It is, by any standards, a superb recording that uses the space available to highlight the polyphonic elements of the work, and which perfectly expresses the rapture and ecstasy of the music. ★★★★★ AG



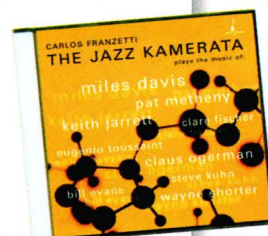
CARLOS FRANZETTI

The Jazz Kamerata

SACD (multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Chesky

Music: Carlos Franzetti is a pianist and composer who has worked in the jazz, classical and pop fields. Here he and saxophonist Lawrence Feldman cover tunes by jazz giants such as Miles Davis (*Circle*), Wayne Shorter (*Nefertiti*) and Bill Evans (*Very Early*). The drums have been replaced by a string quartet, and augmented with flute and clarinet to offer a different take on the modern jazz canon. Uniquely, Franzetti combines jazz and classical music without compromising either. So the jazz players don't attempt to play like an orchestra and the ensemble players don't attempt to 'swing'. The result is a gently flowing selection of late night jazz standards with additional texture and tone added by the strings. The mood is relaxed but never drifts into easy listening. ★★★★★
Sound: Good use is made of the surround format which goes a long way to disseminate the two distinct approaches on this album, while the additional bandwidth comfortably encompasses the wide harmonic range of the wind and strings. ★★★★★ DO





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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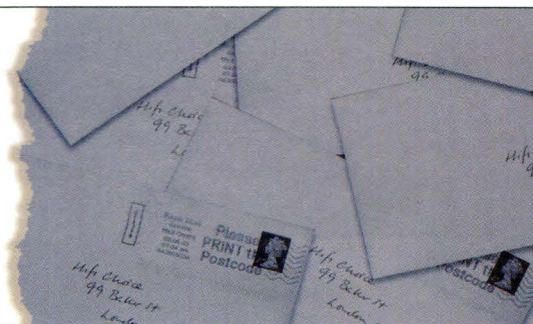
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ChoiceMail



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

WIRES WITH FLARE

Looking at the new cables featured in *Essentials* takes me back to the early 1970s. I remember the cable drum of bell-wire, which was supplied with even the most expensive systems. Also, the connecting leads supplied with early Japanese hi-fi components were generally better quality than the available aftermarket types.

A few of us experimented with making up our own cables and appreciated that there was a difference. This was not an expensive undertaking. Now we are able to buy a complete audio system for less than the cost of a high-end mains lead.

Julian Ashbourne via email

HFC The late 1970s saw the start of the hi-fi cable industry, thanks to pioneers like Jean Hiraga. And, in general, hi-fi sounds better with custom cables than it does without it.



WIN KIMBER TIMBRE INTERCONNECTS!

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



Above: The Cyrus CD8x CD player

BRITS ABROAD

Is it possible for you to state the country of origin of the products that you review? I have had a few nasty experiences with well-known UK products that turned out to be made in China. The company that I work for (not hi-fi related) has also transferred manufacture to China and Poland, and I know only too well what build quality to expect. I don't mind paying a higher price for UK-built product, but do object to paying that same price, then finding the product was made in the Far East.

Alan via email

HFC Easier said than done Alan. We sympathize with your own findings, but it would be almost impossible to publish country of origin for every bit of kit. Moreover, there need not be a problem with foreign build. Many of these companies still design in the UK and building abroad is the only way such a company can remain in business today. Also, foreign build does not necessarily mean a drop in build quality. Ultimately, would you really pay £1,000 for a £400 product, just to have it made in the UK?

NEW FOR OLD

I read with interest your reviews of new equipment, but would like to suggest you do an 'old for new' feature. We know that the Cyrus CD8x or Naim CD5i are two of the best CD players under £1,000 today, but do we really need to upgrade our old gear? How about an article on various key components at different price ranges covering the last 10 years or so? This would be especially important for CD players, as they seem to have improved greatly recently. I'd love to know how my Marantz CD63 MkII KI Signature CD player compares to a similar priced player of today.

Mark Sanderson via email

“We know that the Cyrus CD8x is one of the best players under £1,000, but do we really need to upgrade?”

HFC This is a very popular request although, as you can imagine, it would be hard to make controlled comparisons with a spread of old gear that may not be in optimum condition. The concept, however, is extremely valid, so if we can find a way to make it work, we will. Until then, put faith in your own listening abilities and go listen.

SYSTEM ADDICT

I discovered your magazine just two months ago, and I especially like the systematic way you seem to test audio gear. I am very interested in what would be the more objective and credible way to test audio components. Would it be possible to know more about the evaluation processes *Hi-Fi Choice* magazine uses? I would like more details about your three-stage process – for example, which listening evaluation system you use, how you do the blind listening tests in practice, which piece of music you choose for the tests and why, what objective and subjective tests you use, and so on?

Abdel Babel Canada

HFC At *Hi-Fi Choice* we're very proud of our rigorous test programme, which is the most comprehensive in the business. Our reviewers each have their own reference systems and a regular, controlled music programme that spans the media formats and music genres. Our blind listening ▶

panel comprises various industry luminaries and experts who listen to precisely level-matched components. Thus they have no visual indication whatsoever of what they are listening to, in an effort to eliminate listener bias, conscious or otherwise. The notes from the panel combine with our expert testers' isolated listening and conclusions are then drawn. This exhaustive process sets us apart from the competition.

OLD HAT

I visited an old mate recently after a gap of some years and he's caught the hi-fi bug. It doesn't stop with audio – he now has a large 16:9 screen, 5.1 amp and speakers and a large subwoofer. He was explaining to me how he objects to the obsolescence that's built-in to today's electronics, particularly AV receivers (like the one he had recently bought). And he's right – it sucks. Hi-fi is almost as bad now that digital technology is increasingly implemented into sources, radios and some amplifiers. What can we all do? Well, if we're finding that because of technological development our kit is quickly becoming obsolete, isn't it obvious that we should buy the most easily upgradeable equipment – a music-based PC for example? The PC is to become the entertainment system in the home anyway, so the fall in hi-fi sales will soon be more of a plummet. Perhaps manufacturers should think more about shelf life.

Nick Slaughter via email

HFC There is planned obsolescence in almost any product these days, but hi-fi fares better than many branches of consumer goodies. Although there are new formats, they are all compatible with CD, which is now more than two decades old. Many listeners still rely on vinyl too, even though the format as it stands dates back to the late 1950s. There is also a healthy trade in second-hand hi-fi, most of which can work perfectly with the latest equipment. Even home cinema is maturing and the features of last year's amp closely match those of this year's model, with a few tiny steps forward. There is a move toward digital audio throughout, but such changes don't mean you have to upgrade annually. Like buying a PC, it's often best to skip a generation or three between upgrades.

ACTIVE ACTIVIST

What an excellent article by Richard Black on the mysteries of bi-amping (*Techno*, HFC 264). Particularly interesting to me was the final sentence, "Amazing there are so few (active systems) around really!" Amazing indeed, given their typically much-increased sense of order, focus, speed and dynamics compared to broadly equivalent passive systems. I first fell under the spell 20 years ago, and it has transformed my enjoyment of music.

But why so few active systems? I suspect the answer to that question lies, in significant part, with you, *Hi-Fi Choice*. You need constants in your systems that



Above: ATC's Active 10 active loudspeaker

"But why so few active systems? I suspect the answer lies, in significant part, with you, *Hi-Fi Choice*."

allow you to insert individual review products to make comparisons. Active systems don't work well to that end, as they tie up both the amplifier and speaker constants. So you don't use them and tend not to review them, so we don't tend to hear about them, so we don't buy them. Which is a real shame, given what they can do. Perhaps you could think a bit harder in this area about the inclusion of active systems in reviews? You'd do the music-loving community a real service.

Rod Thorogood via email

HFC We're big fans of active speakers and have reviewed a number of them over the years, including running a complete active speaker group test in HFC 214. The simple reason that so few appear in *Hi-Fi Choice* is due to both the lack of domestic models on the market and demand from our readers. Active speakers, while often superior in terms of sonics, are generally prohibitively expensive. They also require many additional pieces of electronics in the chain and their comparative incompatibility makes them less than ideal for many audiophiles, who consider choosing electronics to work with passive boxes as part of the fun. But if an interesting active model comes our way, we'll review it!

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@ ONLINE FORUM

A few choice comments plucked from our online forum. Join in the fun at www.hifichoice.co.uk

You walk into HMV and there is toe-tapping music on all the time – good bass, treble and all. And what have they got? Mission bookshelf speakers stuck high up on the wall at ceiling level and bog-standard Denon stuff driving them. How do they do it?

Manhar

I am thinking of adding a tuner to my system and I was looking at the Pure Digital DRX-701 ES or the Cambridge Audio DAB300 for a bit of digital. I have no idea what FM tuners will sound good in that sort of price range, although I wouldn't want to pay more than £100 for something that is going to become obsolete eventually. DAB or FM?

Paul Birkett

...Try and get the best DAB tuner you can afford. A cheap, nasty DAB tuner will sound awful and then you'll be blaming DAB for being compressed. Get it right and DAB can sound very good.

Mark67


Interconnect non-believers, can I ask this of all who say they don't believe better interconnects make a difference? Are you using the standard cables that came out of the box? If not, why?

Icehockeyboy

...For the non-believers out there, I challenge you to listen to my £300+ monocrystal silver interconnect and not be impressed. Maybe with better kit, the differences are more apparent? I used to have a Marantz CD52 and interconnect cables made little difference but my more demanding and expensive Copland player responds well to the changes.

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Hi-Fi News, Jan 02

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Sci-fi system

If you haven't felt your scalp shiver with pleasure recently, this could be the system you've been waiting for

Tingle factor... Not my invention. A colleague coined the phrase many years ago to distinguish between the merely excellent and, well, something a bit sexier. We've touched on it before in these pages, possibly in mutated form as 'that goose-bump thing'. Hardly surprising: hardware that stimulates the parts other systems can't reach is *Beautiful Systems'* stock in trade.

The phenomenon shouldn't be confused with 'X factor', though. X factor is a 'hard-to-define something'. Tingle factor isn't nearly so mysterious. It's that hand-touches-Ferrari-door handle moment, that one-in-a-million leaping off a bus and cannoning into a film star incident (that really happened to my dad; he knocked over Ingrid Bergman). And, just occasionally, if you're lucky, a combination of hi-fi and music that makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end.

At least, the tingle factor was an occasional event until this system arrived. The tingling sensation began as I was unpacking it and has continued pretty much ever since, getting a boost every time (and that's every time) I play something on it. The back of my neck must look like a corn field in a stiff breeze. I've been trying to work it out. Far more expensive kit has passed through *Beautiful Systems* and failed to generate half the excitement. I think a short but frank, point-by-point description of what we have in front of us might help. Here goes.

One, a hi-fi system so dramatically 'retro-future' in design, not only isn't it remotely like any other you can buy, it

wouldn't have looked out of place as the skyline in Fritz Lang's seminal sci-fi movie *Metropolis*. Two, an already frighteningly talented, high-value Chinese CD/SACD player and monoblock amplifier combo modified in the UK to deliver simply awesome, mickey-taking performance per pound. And three, a pair of two-box speakers finished in gorgeous black piano lacquer that look remarkably like those five-figure American icons with the cute baby-dog name, cost but a fraction of the price and sound, uh, astonishing. Tingling yet?

All right, this system isn't the result of any system-matching alchemy on my part. It all comes from Real Hi-Fi (www.realhifi.com), distributors of Shanling electronics, Hyperion speakers and the Music First Audio passive magnetic preamp among others. Perhaps most excitingly of all, Real Hi-Fi is home of avowed tingle factor merchants 3D Sonics. 3D Sonics styles itself as a new, independent UK manufacturer that, as well as producing its own designs, breathes on the Shanling products from China to create "state of the art CD/SACD players and amplifiers". Although, that isn't solid-state of the art; we are in a distinct hollow-state technology world, where valves remain king.

SOUPED-UP SHANLING

It's more than just tweaking. Once 3D Sonics have done their stuff, the Shanlings aren't really themselves, featuring completely redesigned insides with 240V transformers and 240V rated components throughout, simplified

"A Chinese SACD/CD player and monoblock amplifier combo modified in the UK to deliver simply awesome, mickey-taking performance."



3D Sonics SCD-T200C Splendor valve CD/SACD player

£2,150

Shanling provides the 'out there' styling, 3D Sonics the souped-up bits. The result is sonically and aesthetically jaw-dropping.



Music First Audio passive preamp

£1,500

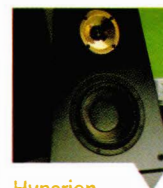
Not much to it, but less is more. This uses one custom made transformer on a nickel permalloy core per channel cleverly wired to an Elma switch.



3D Sonics Foundation valve monoblocks

£3,000 per pair

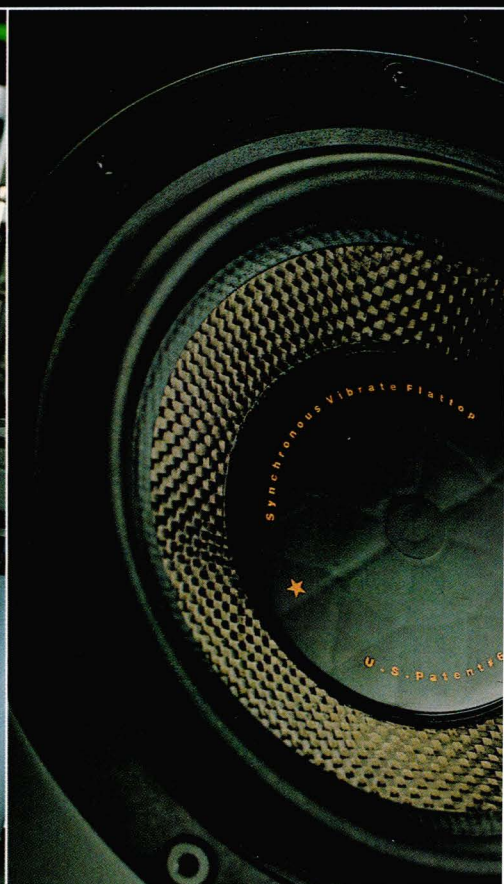
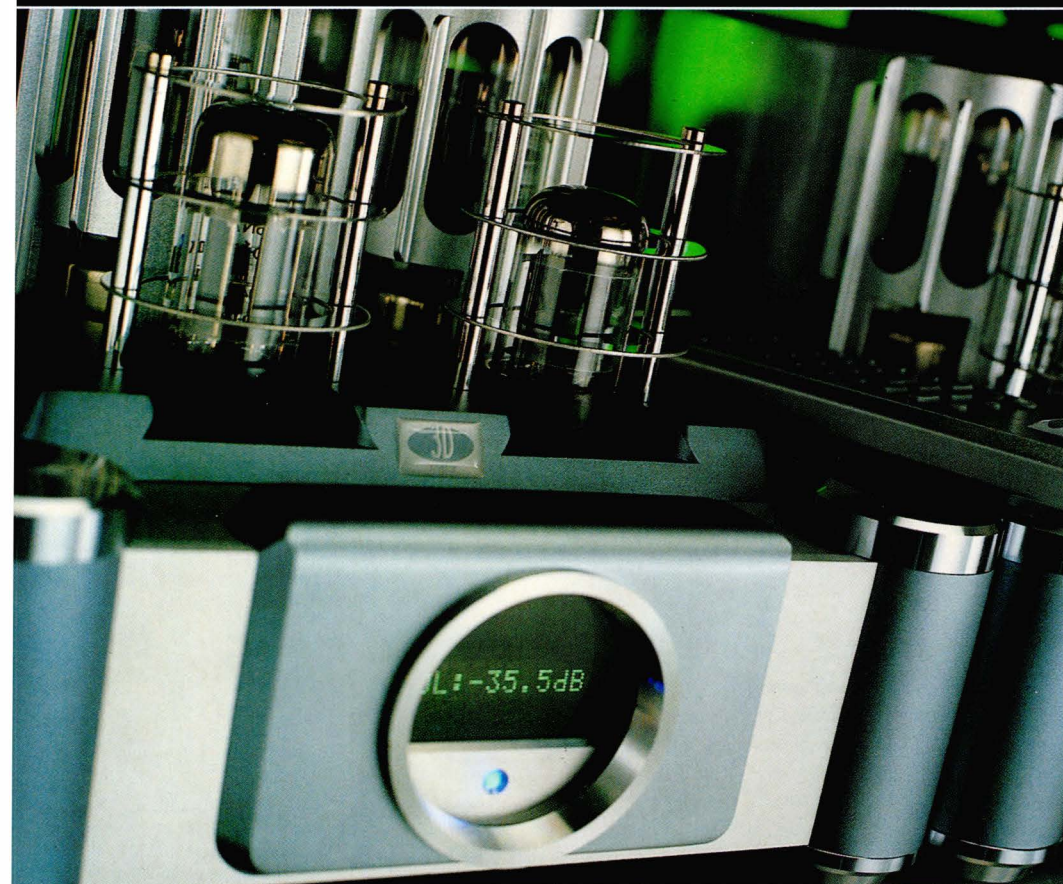
The Shanling power amps they're based on are so modified, it's little wonder 3D re-named them. They anchor this system with a rare alliance of grace and power.



Hyperion HPS-938 loudspeaker

£3,500 per pair

This Wilson lookalike is a deceptively valve-friendly speaker that comes as close to being all things to all audiophiles as virtually anything at the price.



circuitry and upgraded power supplies. The top loading SCD-T200C valve SACD player that fronts this system, for instance, becomes a pure valve design with no operational amplifier chips after the DAC and upgraded power supply rectifiers and regulators. There's more than a smattering of top grade specialist audio components, too, such as Audio Note copper-foil coupling capacitors, Audio Note Tantalum resistors, Silver/Mica bypass capacitors and Black Gate as well as Sanyo Organic Semiconductor electrolytic capacitors.

The standard player is no slouch on the spec front combining a top-loading, heavy-duty, aluminium-housed drive mechanism and magnetic puck system with Sony's KHM-280AAA bare-head laser assembly in a custom aluminium housing. Sony's CXD2753R chip takes care of SACD decoding and Burr-Brown's custom PCM1738 24-bit/96kHz SACD chipset handles the digital-to-analogue conversion. For the 3D Sonics version, the analogue circuitry uses a super totem pole valve stage. Round the back, there are two sets of RCA output sockets, one for the standard line output, the other utilising the valve stage – Shanling promising a 'sonic treat' for anyone who uses the latter. The SCD-T200C (re-named Splendor when given the 3D Sonics treatment) comes with remote control and demo SACD and even has

an electronic volume control which enables you to connect the SCD-T200C directly to a power amplifier or active speakers, bypassing the need for a conventional preamplifier.

PASSIVE MAGNETIC

As with all digital volume controls, even high-quality ones, resolution suffers at low volumes. So, Real Hi-Fi recommends adding Music First Audio's passive magnetic preamp, a passive unit with the option of balanced outputs. Modestly functional it may be, but all internal connections use 0.6mm silver coated, solid copper wire with PTFE insulation, while the Swiss made Elma switches are silver plated and the mu-metal shielding provides protection from magnetic fields. In short, it's a gem of a unit.

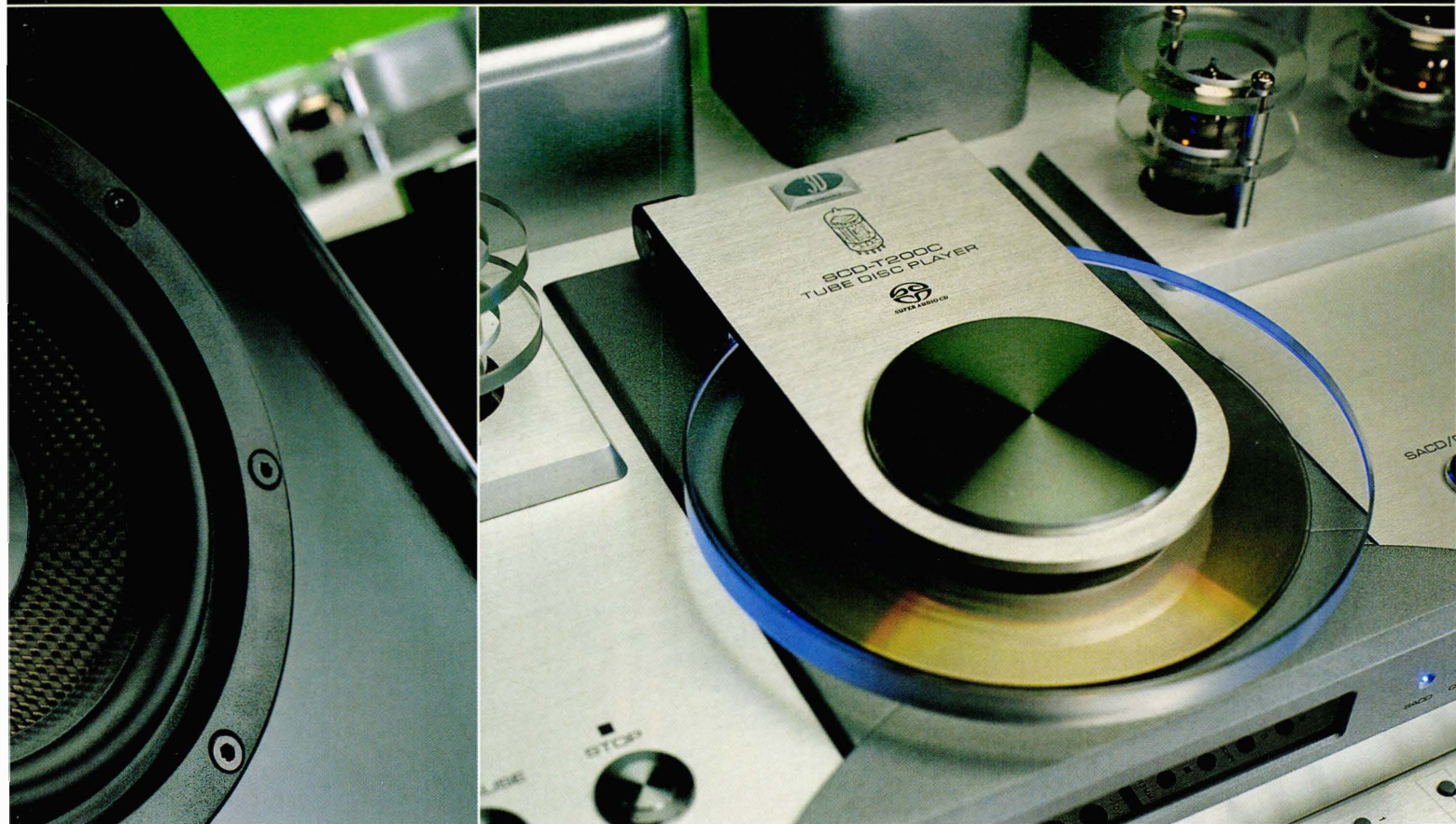
For connection to the 3D Sonics Foundation valve monoblocks we've used balanced cables, as recommended by Real Hi-Fi. Based on the Shanling SP-80C UK chassis, the Foundation is extensively modified and something of a tour de force for the 3D Sonics philosophy, toting a super-differential amplifier circuit with a direct-coupled driver circuit, copper-foil coupling capacitors to the output stage and differential output stage biasing technology. The amps are capable of accommodating EL34, 6550, KT88 or KT90 output valves and offer three

operation modes – triode, ultra-linear and pentode – that allow a trade off between power output, load tolerance, bandwidth, soft clipping behaviour and general sonic quality in order to best match the amplifier to a given speaker system. Potentially, triode should give the best sound quality but limits power to around 20 to 25 watts, depending on the exact output valves fitted and bias current chosen.

Using the ultra-linear operation raises the output power to between 30 and 40 watts, again depending upon the exact output valve and biasing condition used. The downside is said to be a somewhat rougher sound with perhaps a little less refinement, but subjectively more power. Switching to pentode operation raises the power even further to 45 to 60 watts from a single pair of valves. But you can expect a further notable reduction in tolerance to the kind of wild impedance swings certain dynamic speakers are well known for.

But Hyperion's HPS-938 is much better behaved than that, with an average impedance of six ohms dropping to an entirely reasonable 3.8-ohm low. Sensitivity is healthy, too, at 90 dB. The substantial (and extremely heavy) duo-cabinet design so reminiscent of the Wilson WATT/Puppy assigns a dedicated slot-ported cabinet for the bass, housing two 200mm graphite SVF drivers. The





“The way the Hyperions marry the openness, resolution, speed and transparency more usually associated with a panel to the weight, extension and dynamics of a top-class box borders on the uncanny.”

separate upper cabinet with its sloping, time-aligned baffle sports a 165mm carbon fibre SVF midrange driver with magnetic fluid damping and a semi-horn loaded 25mm silk dome tweeter. Claimed frequency response is 30Hz to 22kHz, with the crossover set at 230Hz and 3kHz, and three sets of terminals are provided for tri-wiring/amping.

SONIC IDENTITY

Experimenting with the 'sonic identity' switch located between the speaker terminals at the back of each monoblock is fascinating. As predicted, the single-ended triode mode possesses a delightful lucidity and effortless sense of flow that isn't readily apparent with ultra-linear and pentode alternatives. Despite the modest 25 watts per channel rating, this is where the amps sound fastest and most transparent. They do the maximum information retrieval thing but with superbly natural tonal texture and balance.

Moreover, the stereo imaging is to die for with a soundstage so broad, deep and convincingly proportioned, I can't

think of a solid-state amp that even comes close. Having said that, I finally settled on a system configuration that paired the standard line output from the SACD/CD player (the valve stage option made things just a little too lush) with the ultra-linear settings on the amps, a combination that retains much of the sweetness and spacious imaging of the triode mode but involves you with the music in a more physical and emotional way. It offers better low frequency control, too, with greater definition and shaping, especially at basement level.

In particular, the way the Hyperions manage to marry the openness, resolution, speed and transparency more usually associated with a panel to the weight, extension and dynamics of a top-class box borders on the uncanny. Bass guitar sounds astonishing through these speakers, not just the remarkable transient definition but the realistic weight and note shaping.

Treble is a bit tasty, too – not just for its obvious extension and smoothness but also its ability to resolve rich tonal colours and harmonics – never more

obvious than on the shimmering massed string arrangement of Michael McDonald's latest outing *Motown Two*. Frosty soundscapes are a rarity on this system; there's no getting away from the fact it has an alluringly warm tonal balance. Its never overbearing, though. Presentation is essentially honest, explicit and open, especially through the midrange, and stereo perspectives are strikingly believable.

So, the tingle factor, as generated by this *Beautiful System*, is made up of many things: breathtakingly natural textures and limpid transparency; speakers that are faithful to the tempo of the music yet sound big, uncompressed and dynamic; previously unnoticed recorded details, subtly yet emphatically unearthed. It's hi-fi that images in 3D, goes loud without sounding forced and creates an almost tangible presence of real musicians in the room. But, most of all, hi-fi that prickles your scalp every time it catches your eye and every time you hit 'play'. Fancy some of that? **HFC**

David Vivian





Rockers



“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.

REVIEWS

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

EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

- 38 B&W 805S loudspeaker
- 42 Cyrus DAC XP DAC/preamp
- 46 Lumley Lampros 300 Series 2 loudspeaker
- 48 Denon DVD-A1XV universal disc player and AVC-A1XV multichannel amplifier
- 52 HI Audio turntable components (Hadcock, Cartridge Man, Graham Slee)
- 54 PSB Platinum M2 loudspeaker
- 57 Nordost Thor mains distribution box
- 59 Goldring GR2 turntable, tonearm and cartridge



ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS £1,000-£1,600

- 62 Arcam FMJ A32
- 63 Cyrus 8vs/PSX-R
- 65 Moon i-3
- 66 Myryad MXI2080
- 67 Orelle SA100evo 2
- 69 Roksan Caspian M Series



OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

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

Our overall conclusion

...nor an... we liked... point here is... to the job of... recommend you... pare this with Marantz's £800 player, the 17 MKII M, which has excellent build and a very good impression in HFC 243. At same price there's also the Cyrus 7, a ring all-rounder in a compact case. After trying the Heart with the standard's we switched over to the Siemens grade, a comparison somewhat muddled by the fact that it was a cold for hot swap – the player had been on for several days with the after a livelier w tubes shone 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 more civilised 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...



Bijou baby

The most affordable and diminutive model in B&W's new 800 Series sports a host of improvements

PRODUCT B&W 805S

TYPE Standmount loudspeaker

PRICE £1,600 per pair

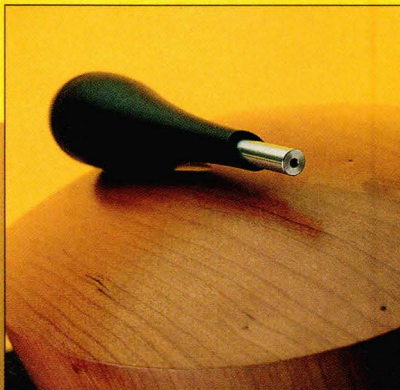
KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 24x42x35cm

- Weight: 11.5kg
- Bass/midrange driver: 120mm Kevlar cone with 165mm cast chassis
- Tube-loaded 25mm metal tweeter in decoupled external pod
- Front 'Flowport' has shaping and stippling to aid airflow
- Enclosure back is formed into a single elegant curve
- Sensitivity/impedance: 89dB/5 ohms (minimum)

CONTACT ☎ 01903 221500 🌐 www.bwspeakers.com

This speaker might look very familiar. From across the room, you'd be hard pushed to tell the difference between this new B&W 805S and its Nautilus 805 predecessor. There are minor visible changes – in the grille treatment, the top surface, the location of the tweeter and the centre of the main drive unit cone – but they're only really detectable by carefully scrutinising the old and the new side by side.

It's a commercially brave move to come up with a new range of models that look virtually the same as their predecessors, especially as it's a full seven years since those earlier Nautilus 800 models first appeared. Most brands use a range change as an opportunity to restyle products, attracting attention to the new models and keeping abreast of fashion trends. B&W's decision to make the new 800s look just like the old Nautilus 800s is perhaps



“Nearly all the changes are well hidden and specifically oriented towards improving the performance and sound quality.”

a risky stratagem, but also speaks of the company's self-confidence in its designs, which essentially hold to a form-follows-function agenda. Good design doesn't age.

Despite the very similar appearance, B&W reckons that roughly 90 per cent of the components in the new 800 Series models, which began to hit the shops at the start of 2005, are different from those used in the old Nautilus 800 range. It's just that nearly all the changes are well hidden, and specifically oriented towards improving the performance and sound quality.

Furthermore, halfway between the launch of the previous Nautilus 800 range and the appearance of these new 800s, B&W added three interim models to the line-up – two new 'flagships', plus a Signature 805. The latter was based closely on the Nautilus 805, but featured a number of engineering improvements, including a 'Balanced Drive' motor, as well as a very classy figured veneer with multi-layer, high-gloss lacquering, the combination of superior performance and appearance resulting in a hefty £2,500 price tag. Not only have the engineering improvements incorporated in the Signature 805 been applied to this 805S, but further development work has apparently taken the

performance up several notches higher still. The promise is that the 805S will not only outperform the Nautilus 805, but also the Signature 805, albeit without the latter's fancy cabinetwork and price tag.

This new 805S costs £1,600 per pair, which is £200 more than its predecessor – but a 15 per cent increase after a seven year gap doesn't seem unreasonable, especially if significant performance improvements come as part of the package.

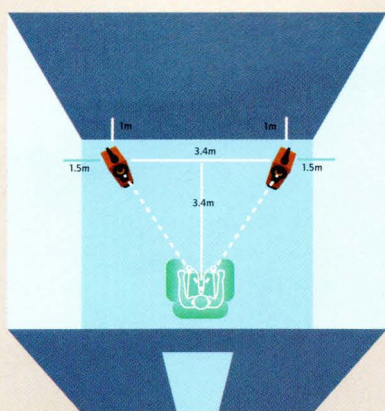
The new 800 Series is an extensive range, comprising seven stereo pairs priced from £1,600 up to £13,000 per pair, alongside nine home cinema models (including three subwoofers). Among the stereo pairs there are three less expensive S-suffixed models, plus four more costly D-suffixed examples, the distinction referring to the type of material used for the tweeter diaphragms. The S-type model reviewed here uses a traditional aluminium alloy dome, while the D-types have a dome fabricated (with great difficulty and at great cost) from vapour-deposited synthetic diamond, which has much greater stiffness and therefore a much higher break-up point (74kHz, compared to 29kHz for the ally).

This 805S is the smallest and least costly of the new 800s. It's also the only two-way and

the only standmount. If the strikingly curvaceous styling is no longer novel, it's still undeniably attractive and likely to remain a major selling point. The curved cabinetwork avoids the parallel sides found with many conventional loudspeakers and consequently avoids the frequency-specific internal box modes that a rectilinear shape tends to generate. The front panel, housing the main driver and port, is flat, but the sides and back are made up by a single, carefully bent piece of veneered plywood laminate. This is already inherently very stiff, and is reinforced by an internal 'honeycomb' matrix that further braces the box in many places and every direction. Even the top surface is gently domed, to the benefit of both styling and performance.

It's a classic compact two-way standmount in outline, with an estimated enclosure volume of around 11 litres, port-loaded at the front by B&W's proprietary flared and stippled Flowport to minimise turbulence. Because this is a two-way design, the main driver here combines midrange duties with the requirement to cover the cone excursion needed to deliver the bass octaves, so there's no opportunity here to use the 'surroundless' FST midrange driver found in the three-way models. Instead, B&W is using a considerably refined version of its familiar ▶

SET-UP



POSITIONING

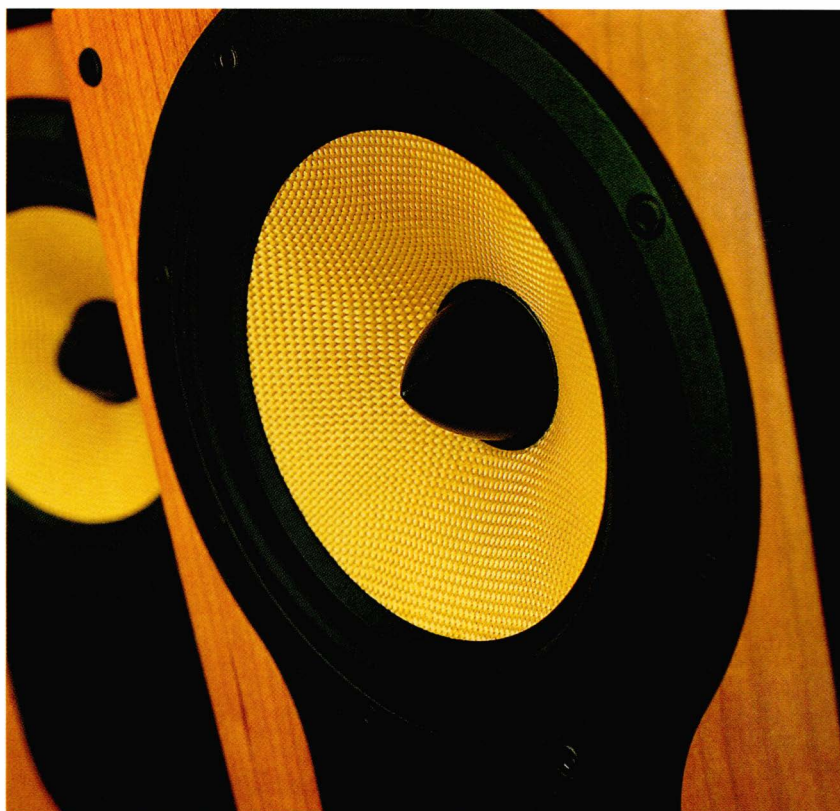
The Signature 805 we tested in *HFC 232* proved extremely tricky to position in order to achieve the best overall balance through the bass octaves. The dilemma was that the speaker seemed to need the extra bass assistance that is invariably supplied by wall proximity, but that in turn had the disadvantage of increasing the level of midband coloration, making free space more attractive.

The 805S seems to have avoided that difficulty by opting for a different bass alignment. By re-tuning the port to 50Hz rather than 42Hz, the 805S sacrifices a little in terms of ultimate extension in exchange for rather more mid-bass output, and as a consequence this new model proved altogether better aligned for free space siting, well clear of walls.

This was confirmed by the in-room measurements. With the speakers mounted on 600mm stands, a number of traces were made at various distances out from the wall, and best results were found with the front baffles about 1m out from the wall. Under such circumstances, the overall balance (under far-field in-room conditions) was a little mid-forward (200-800Hz), gently rolling off below 200Hz but comfortable maintaining acceptable bass output down to 40Hz. The top end above 800Hz also rolled off very gently and quite smoothly, albeit with a slight presence notch centred on 3kHz, around the crossover point. Foam bungs were supplied, and these are likely to be useful in situations where the speaker has to be placed close to a wall, though listening comparisons showed that this was better avoided. Although the overall balance is not strictly neutral, it is very well controlled.

SYSTEM MATCHING

One of the virtues of a simple two-way design is that the crossover network required is equally simple. Because there's little overlap between the drivers, the impedance stays at a respectable figure throughout. The average value recorded here is above eight ohms, with minima of around five ohms occurring at 50Hz, 200Hz and 20kHz. The current demands made on the driving amplifier should be reasonably modest, especially as the sensitivity is a healthy enough 88-89dB. This means the speaker will go decently loud without in any way stressing the amp.



■ 165mm cast frame main driver, equipped with a 120mm woven Kevlar/polymer cone. The magnetic motor features the latest 'Balanced Drive' metalwork to minimise distortion, and a larger magnet than before, while magnetic shielding is no longer used here. A bullet-shaped phase-compensating dust dome covers the voice coil, and is now part of the cone rather than the pole piece, increasing the radiating area and avoiding chuffing sounds.

The 25mm aluminium alloy dome tweeter is mounted externally on top of the enclosure proper, to provide the smallest possible source and hence the widest radiating 'window'. The tapered tube shape acts as a transmission line to absorb (rather than reflect) the rearward output radiated behind the tweeter dome. Although the current tweeter and pod look very like their predecessors, a number of changes have taken place. Most significantly, the dome's surround has been changed, from a foam to a polymer roll. This lowers its fundamental resonance, which in turn allows for a much gentler, simpler crossover filter. Other factors include relocating the tube to take account of the new crossover network, and increasing the degree of lossy decoupling from the main enclosure.

The crossover change is regarded as sonically highly significant. Somewhat belatedly, B&W has recognised the virtue of keeping crossover networks as simple as possible, and all the new 800 Series models feature ultra-simple first-order tweeter feeds. The 805S, like the rest of the new range, has just a single capacitor providing a 6dB/octave roll-on, plus a resistor

to set the relative level. Very great care went into sourcing this capacitor, which is a costly item from German company Mundorf. Finally, twin terminal pairs permit bi-wire or bi-amp operation if desired.

SOUND QUALITY

Both the Nautilus 805 and Signature 805 have performed very well in past *Hi-Fi Choice* reviews, so it was hardly a surprise to find that the 805S also delivers very fine sound quality. Rather than simply describing the sound of this new model in isolation, however, it seemed much more useful to get hold of those earlier models to provide a proper context for the review, and establish just how the various 805 models have evolved, sonically speaking.

The 805S is the direct replacement for 1997's Nautilus 805, and does indeed represent a major step forward. Though the Nautilus 805 remains a decent enough speaker, it also sounds a little 'small' and 'ordinary'. It's somewhat constrained, even constipated in comparison, lacking genuine freedom of dynamic expression, and not really possessing the sweetness and delicacy that the later versions supplied.

The Signature version of the 805 sounds altogether more special than its Nautilus predecessor. Its performance is more coherent, with a tautness, pace and expression that had simply eluded the base model, and a sweeter top end too. Musically-speaking, the net result is simply more enjoyable and communicative.

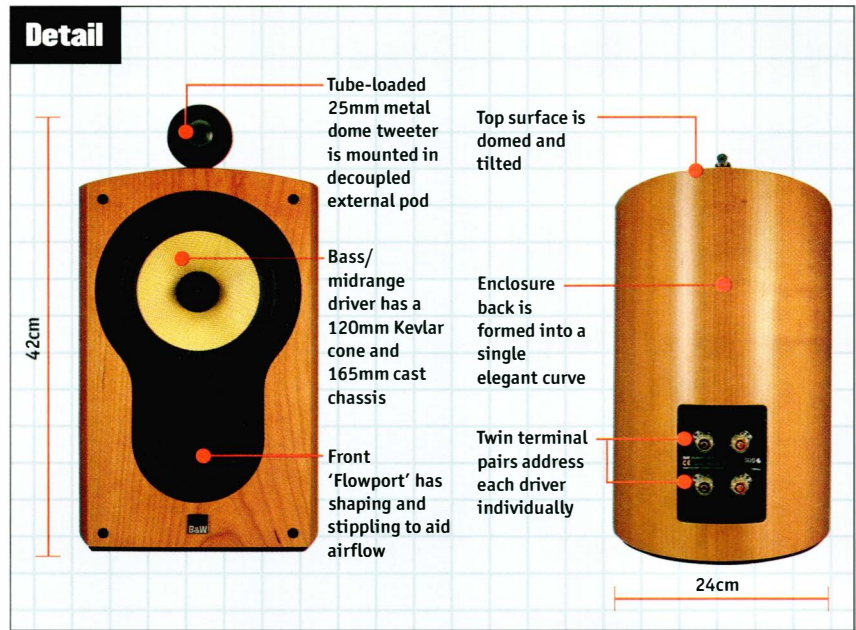
First impressions of the new 805S were that it was certainly as good as the Signature, and different from that model too, but not

necessarily significantly superior. Overall coherence seemed even better, and the bass end was firmer and more purposeful too, but midband dynamic expression seemed a little weaker. However, the 805S had had very little running-in time when the comparison was first made. After a couple of days hard use, the exercise was repeated, and the superiority of the new model was now apparent.

Indeed, the 805S seemed to have blossomed through this running-in period, and although the Signature model was still very enjoyable, it also sounded a little crude and coloured by comparison. The 805S still sounded more restrained, dynamically speaking, but it was also altogether smoother, sweeter, more neutral, and ultimately more natural than the Signature in its reproduction of all manner of music and speech.

The latter, in fact, clinched the matter. One of each speaker was placed side by side on identical 600mm Kudos S100 stands. Using Vertex AQ speaker cables from a Naim NAP 500 power amp, one was connected to the left channel, the other to the right. The Magnum Dynalab MD 102 was set to Radio 4; where Laurie Taylor was introducing *Thinking Aloud*. The Naim NAC 552 pre-amplifier was set to mono mode and the two speakers were compared by simply swinging the balance control between extreme left and right settings, probably the nearest thing to an audiophile switching box you can get.

Mono comparison is actually a very powerful tool for analysing differences in midband and treble performance, probably because it removes the distraction of stereo imaging (it shouldn't be used to assess bass balance, however, because of the way the output of two well-spaced speakers adds up to rather more than either when played singly). High-quality



“Back in stereo mode, the B&W’s superior delicacy and freedom from boxiness continued to impress mightily.”

speech is also very revealing when drawing comparisons, presumably because we are so familiar with the real thing in everyday life.

Careful measurements confirmed that the Signature 805 and 805S had almost identical frequency balances above 100Hz, with just a minor discrepancy in bass alignments. But, on this stringent speech test, the differences between the two models were obvious. Better still, they were entirely in favour of the new 805S. The new model sounded clearer and more coherent with better total integration, less boxiness and shouty coloration, and a significantly sweeter top end. Although the overall sound errs a little on the side of

laid-back restraint, it also seemed clearer and more open than earlier B&Ws when playing at low listening levels.

Back in stereo mode, the B&W’s superior delicacy and freedom from boxiness continued to impress mightily. Massive, powerful bass drive isn’t on the agenda here, of course, but neither is it all that essential much of the time and on much day to day material. Extra bass authority would be handy on some occasions, for sure, but the capabilities of a top class stand-mount such as this, with its delightful freedom from any heaviness and thickening effects, is not to be underestimated. This

speaker’s spacious imaging and lightness of touch is utterly delightful, and the sound is notably free from unwanted nasties.

Perhaps the most telling reaction to this speaker was my partner’s behaviour. I was spinning an old favourite – Lowell George’s solo album *Thanks I’ll Eat it Here*, only to find this extra voice joining in. She also showed an alarming tendency to start dancing on entering the room whilst the 805S was playing. This doesn’t normally happen!

The upshot is that B&W has managed to advance the art of music reproduction from this high-class standmount by several notches, without seeming to change very much at all on the surface. Sneaky stuff – and sonically very impressive too. **HFC**

Paul Messenger



VERDICT	
SOUND >> 92% 	PRO B&W’s latest 805S goes several steps beyond its Nautilus predecessor. This delightful little speaker makes you want to tap your feet and sing along.
EASE OF DRIVE >> 85% 	CON A bit more grunt and scale would be an advantage, as the sound lacks a little warmth and richness. Don’t damage the tweeter domes.
BUILD >> 93% 	
VALUE >> 89% 	
CONCLUSION Numerous changes under the skin have substantially improved this upmarket stand-mount. The result is a communicative and entertaining speaker, with great subtlety and delicacy, despite some lack of bass weight, authority and tonal richness.	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 91%	

Top DAC and tails

Cyrus is branching out with a new high-end range of components, starting with this DAC/preamp

PRODUCT Cyrus DAC XP

TYPE Digital-to-analogue converter/preamplifier

PRICE £2,200

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 21.5x7.5x36.5cm

• Weight: 6.5kg • 24bit/192kHz-capable D-to-A conversion • Assignable input labels • Digital inputs: four coaxial, two optical • Analogue inputs: two RCA phono • Analogue outputs: two RCA phono, two balanced XLR • Optical digital output • Compact non-magnetic die-cast chassis

CONTACT ☎ 01480 435577 🌐 www.cyrusaudio.com

Since achieving independence from NXT last year, Cyrus appears to have been spreading its wings with some notably ambitious components. Not content with simply improving the standard integrated CD and amp ranges, the company has also started to produce more specialised components with a distinctly high-end flavour. The first products to hit this

new top-level 'X' range are a phono stage – the Phono X – and the component tested here, the DAC XP. This is a £2,200 combined DAC and preamp in a compact die-cast case, the look of which is typically Cyrus even if the price tag isn't (a DAC-only version called simply the DAC X is also available, priced at £1,100).

Both the DAC X and DAC XP sport Burr-Brown 24-bit/192kHz D-to-A converters, while the XP adds both digital and analogue inputs and balanced and single-ended outputs, plus source switching and a volume control, to form a fully functioning preamplifier. With a total of six digital and two analogue inputs, it offers plenty of connectivity options for most systems in the digital age. It's also far better equipped than many high-end CD players that have a preamp function, because they never have analogue inputs and rarely more than one digital input.

As well as functioning as a preamp in the traditional sense, the advantage a 'digital preamp' like this offers over its analogue counterparts is the ability to theoretically upgrade all your digital sources. So, if for example you have a DAB tuner, a DVD player and a CD player in your system, the sound from all three would be improved at a stroke. The XP's onboard converter can cope with sample rates of up to 192kHz, so theoretically you can hook up a DVD-Audio player and send it a 96kHz bitstream if the player is able. Unfortunately, there is no interface for 192kHz signals on the DAC and very few DVD-Audio players have the requisite output capability.

The signal entering the analogue inputs only passes through the volume control, unlike other digital preamps where the signal is converted A-to-D and then D-to-A at the

EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE
magazine



output. So, the DAC XP is effectively a passive preamp for the analogue inputs, albeit a dual mono balanced one. On the digital side, it uses dual differential converters for each channel and runs in fully balanced mode throughout.

Naturally, the DAC XP is extremely flexible. It offers the ability to name each of the eight inputs from a list of options instead of keying in text directly, but given the rigmarole that's usually involved in the latter, the Cyrus approach looks quite sensible. There are 29 names to choose from including PC, LaserDisc and Jukebox alongside some more modern or familiar options. Analogue inputs can be level trimmed so they match the digital ones and the display has three modes – one that emphasises level in dB, another pointing out input and a third that combines the above with the sample rate. There is also bar graph indication of level on all three.

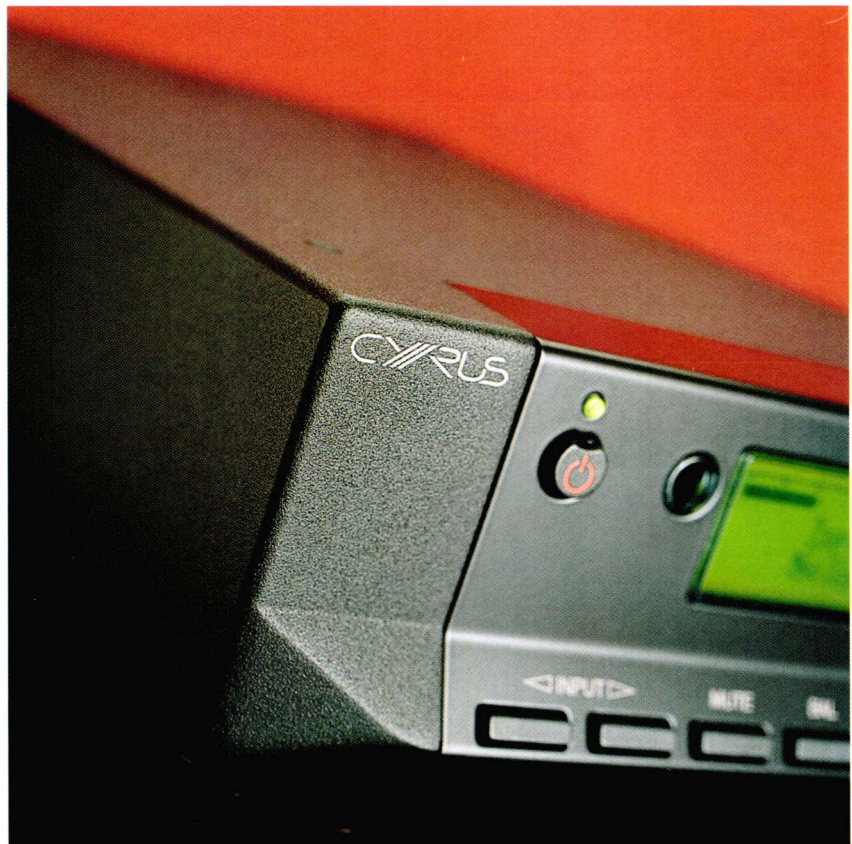
Other variables include phase and digital filter, both only accessible from the front panel set-up button. There is also a set-up button on the remote, but it doesn't operate the DAC XP – presumably, it's for the Cyrus AV processor. The digital filter can be set to fast or slow roll-off, which approximately equates to a steeper or gentler slope filter at the highest frequencies. This is like a subtle tone control.

SOUND QUALITY

At the time of its arrival, we didn't have a Cyrus CD player to use as a transport with the DAC XP. Instead, we used the Townshend TA 565 Evo 2 – a universal DVD player but one which its maker says makes a great transport. Hooked up with a length of Chord Signature digital interconnect, the pairing kicked proverbial butt right from the off, an effect clearly revealed by a pair of ATC SCM150 active speakers connected via the DAC XP's balanced outputs.

My initial reaction to putting Missy Elliott's *Da Real World* on was to wonder whether this disc had been given an airing through the SCM150s before; they are pretty revealing speakers and though they've been in situ for six months or more, there are still plenty of unplayed discs on the shelf. But I had played the disc in that time, so the extra information was coming from the DAC XP, and a great deal there was of it too. It's a bit like removing a barrier from between the speakers – suddenly there is depth information that just wasn't clear before. When there is depth to the sound, more detail of the acoustic emerges, and it is basically the third dimension that makes stereo in the full sense of the word. A great many digital audio components are relatively weak at producing solidity of three dimensional sound, so when one comes along that does it extremely well it's genuinely impressive.

A more familiar disc proved further that it wasn't just the speakers, as I'd suspected. EST's oddly distorted *Seven Days of Falling* revealed the same strong sense of three dimensionality, the texture, tone and shape of each note



“It is a bit like removing a barrier from between the speakers – suddenly there is depth information that wasn't clear before.”

inhabiting the specific acoustic space that it was recorded in. Whether that acoustic is real or artificial, the reverberant character is apparent and the difference between the real and the enhanced becomes clear. This still isn't the greatest recording around, but it combines better than average fidelity with music that has strong appeal to this reviewer, so it's about as good as it gets. Through this system, it makes you wonder whether CD is such a 'compromised' medium after all... especially if it can provide results that are this good. It is quite surprising that after nearly twenty five years it is still possible to come up with a product that doesn't cost a fortune (in the

grand scheme of things) yet gets so much more from a digitally 'antique' medium.

Copland's CDA 283 CD player was also up and running at the time (see next issue for the review), so we gave it a spin through the DAC XP. Comparing the player's analogue output via a Bryston BP25 preamp against its digital output through the Cyrus, the latter has a warmer, more 'analogue' feel overall. The bass is not as articulate, but it does seem more natural. We also compared the XP with a Resolution Audio Opus 21 CD player, an HFC favourite that can be used in a similar digital converter/preamp manner. Again, the Cyrus managed to make a more relaxed and solid



Q & A

We spoke to Stuart McGregor, director of R&D at Cyrus, about the genesis of the DAC XP



HFC: How do you avoid the problems inherent with external DACs, such as jitter?

SM: In common with all Cyrus CD players, there is considerable digital engineering in place before the raw incoming signals are passed to the DACs. This is specifically to de-jitter the digital signal and minimise any influence that time-related distortion of the source signal could have on the sound. With such a wide range of sample rates accepted by the DAC XP, there are, of necessity, three separate high-stability master clock references, which are selected automatically depending on the incoming sample rate.

Can you explain what fast and slow digital filtering does?

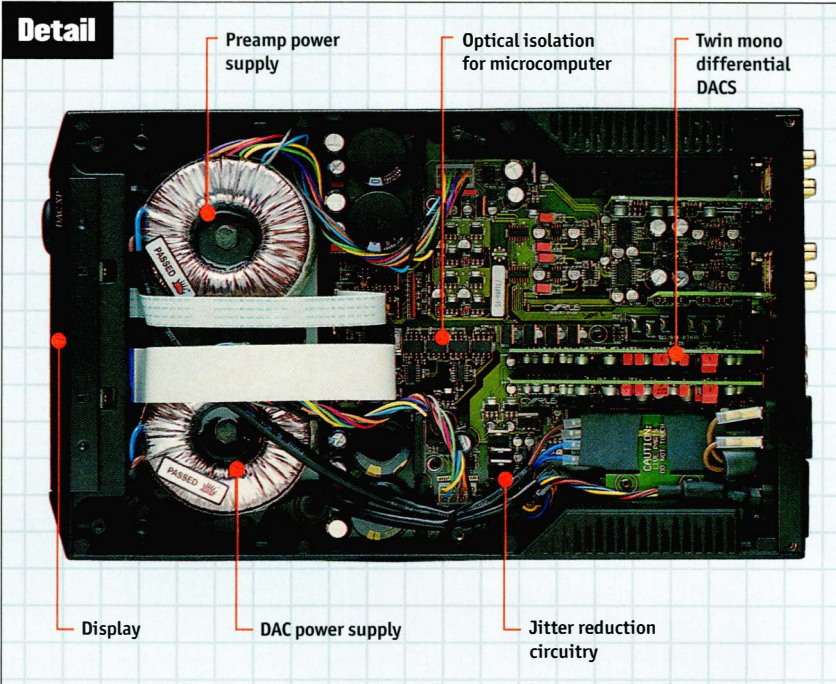
The fast and slow selectable responses offer a subtle change of slope to the rejection response of the digital filter, applied within the digital domain. We recommend the required setting is chosen under audition to best match a particular system.

As a digital preamp, does the XP have a bit-reduction volume control?

Our description of the DAC XP as a 'digital preamplifier' is perhaps a little misleading, although quite correct. The preamplifier is purely analogue, with the term 'digital preamplifier' describing the presence of two discrete, separately powered DAC and preamplifier modules within the chassis. The DAC XP volume control is not therefore in the digital domain, but within the balanced analogue preamplifier section.

Can you briefly explain the signal path for incoming digital signals – what stages does it go through on its way to the output stage?

The incoming digital signals pass through a six-way digital input selector, which also enables detection of sample rate to set the correct master clock mode for frequency and precision. All signals are then re-sampled up to 192kHz and de-jittered before arriving at the DACs. The DACs are twin differential 24-bit mono cards running at 192kHz, each with balanced analogue outputs. The analogue feeds from the DACs are then routed through an internal balanced connection to the analogue preamplifier, an entirely separate module within the chassis that also adds a further two analogue inputs. The preamplifier module is fully balanced through all stages from the DAC input to the bi-amp XLR outputs.



sound, although the Opus 21 did reveal more high frequency detail, albeit sounding more 'digital' in the process.

It's easy to overlook the high-frequency performance of the XP and be distracted by the sense of palpability, but that sense would not be half as strong if the high notes were lacking. It has well extended but remarkably solid and natural highs, and when you put something on with some real shine and genuine 'air' in the treble, the result is clear and pure.

Out of interest, we pitted the XP's analogue section against the Bryston BP25, a dedicated preamp costing £1,825. This was a close call, the Bryston having the edge in transparency but the Cyrus showing a smoothness that makes for more comfortable high-level listening.

Bringing in Cyrus's own CD8x player and PSX-R power supply to take over the CD transport duties produced a slightly less natural but more hard-hitting sound. Tori Amos' piano seemed to have more energy and power, while the percussion on Massive Attack's *Protection* appeared that much more obvious. The bass was completely different, making a much more rounded sound than that from the Townshend TA 565/DAC XP pairing, but this dearer (nearly twice the price) transport shows just how revealing the XP is. Oddly enough, adding

the PSX-R to the XP didn't bring a significant improvement, certainly nothing like the change it brings about with the CD8x.

We were truly blown away by this hi-fi component – it combines a seriously good preamp with an awesome D-to-A converter in a box that costs less than most decent preamps. That it can better the analogue output of the stunning Townshend TA 565 Evo 2 is even more impressive, given that the two are linked by a metre of cable and two pairs of plugs and sockets (not even 75ohm connections at that). This is one of the most exciting and revealing components we've heard in a long while; if you have a taste for the best, don't be put off by the prosaic shoebox case. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



VERDICT

SOUND >> 95%



FEATURES >> 90%



BUILD >> 85%



VALUE >> 92%



PRO
Stereo solidity such as is rarely achieved with CD, natural smoothness to make valve heads turn and detail resolution to die for.

CON
No genuine 75ohm input connections (BNC). You pay for what's in the box rather than the box itself – so it ain't that shiny, compared to the high-end competition.

CONCLUSION
Cyrus takes its first steps toward the stratospheric high-end with this serious DAC/preamp. This is one of the best digital products money can buy right now and delivers the sort of solidity and naturalness of sound that few can match.

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 93%

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design **integrity**, copious hours of listening and refinement, **intelligent** application of
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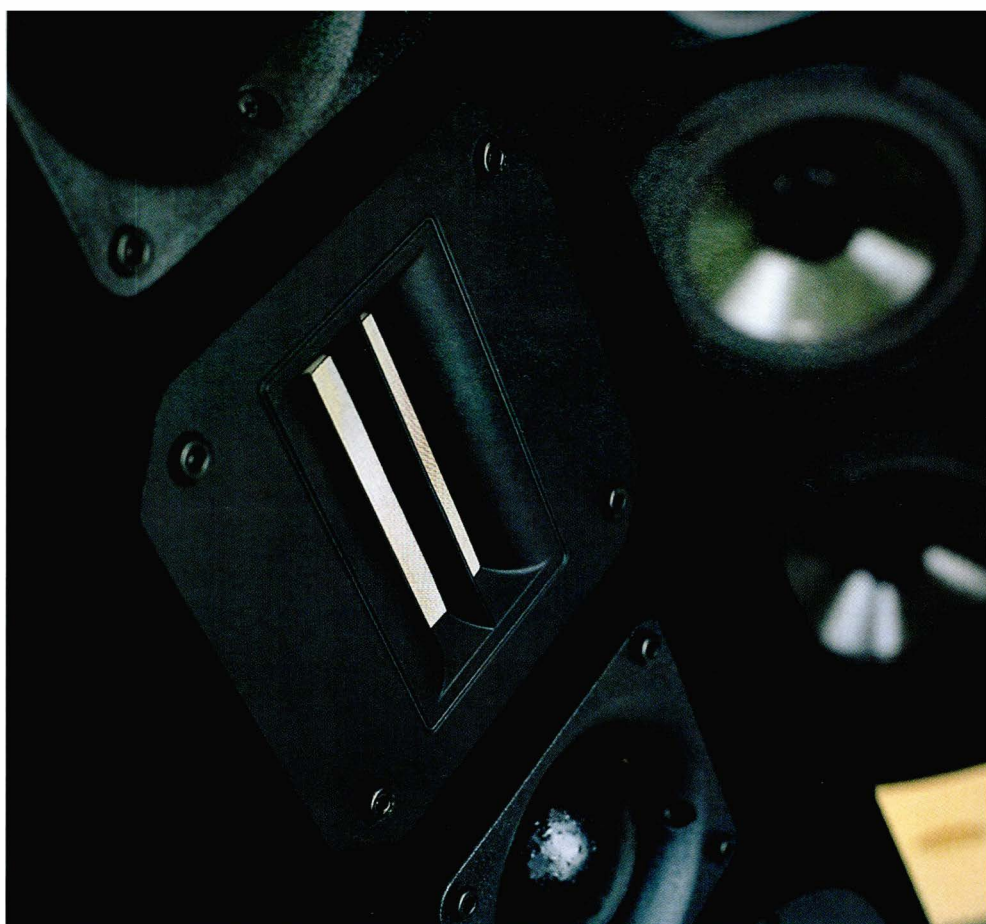
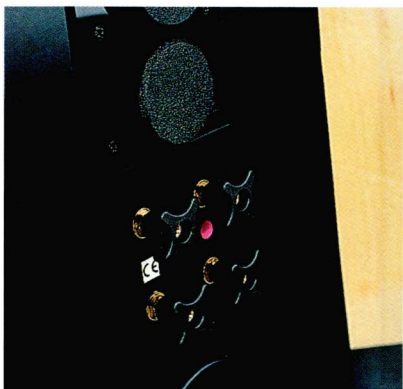


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Rose tinted heaven

Lumley presents a highly inventive take on the fine art of high-end loudspeaker design

PRODUCT Lumley Lampros 300 Series 2

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £5,000 per pair

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 35x108x50cm

• Weight: 36kg each • Horn-loaded compression tweeter • Main drivers: two midrange domes, two bass cones, plus rear-firing bass cone • Sensitivity/Impedance: 88dB/4 ohms (nominal)

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🌐 www.metropolis-music.co.uk

Even a cursory examination of the Lumley Lampros 300 S2 suggests that it is a truly unusual design. At its core is a D'Appolito array featuring a Visaton Magnetostat tweeter – an isodynamic unit with a metallised diaphragm track applied to a planer polymer substrate, which is suspended between rare earth (neodymium boron) magnets. This unit is flanked by two 60mm coated fabric dome midrange units from Morel. Below them are two Eton bass drivers, the cones of which are made from a honeycomb Nomex polymer core sandwiched between Kevlar skins (Hexacone in Eton-speak). The crossover points are set at 650Hz and 5.6kHz. Turn around to side two and you'll find a rear-firing Audax carbon fibre bass/mid driver,

though in some parts of the Lumley literature it is described as full range. It isn't, but it is not mediated by a crossover either, and it has, let's say, a broad remit.

It's worth noting that the forward-facing drivers are far from being the usual suspects. They're high tech and comparatively costly designs, and this is matched by the quality of the (branded) crossover components.

Then there's the box – and what a box! While conforming to the broad pattern of a short, upended coffin, the only flat panels are the base and (of necessity) the baffle, which is tilted gently back. The top is curved, and the sides too are bowed outwards, giving the 300 a rather dumpy, broad-in-the-beam appearance. The back panel is formed into an S-shape in profile. Clearly the idea is to avoid parallel internal surfaces, so that internal reflections are not tuned to specific frequencies, and also to address panel resonances – curved panels are very effective at moving the fundamental panel modes up the frequency band. Equally clearly, a cabinet like this must be extremely hard to make, especially for a relatively small manufacturer like Lumley, whose speakers by the way are UK designed and built.

The result is a heavy, well damped and clearly relatively non-resonant enclosure. An earlier sample had a veneered finish that was not quite up to professional furniture standards, but a later sample, which had also received a couple of minor running component changes, was much better, and fully up to the level of the opposition. The 300 S2 is supplied with a neat baffle cover that's attached using magnets, but it's easily removed to reveal the baffle, which is dressed in a soft, silky felt to reduce secondary radiation.

Lumley's Lampros 300 S2 also includes three back panel controls. One is a continuously variable level pot to adjust the rear driver output, the others allow +/-2dB variation (in 1dB steps) in midrange and treble output. In addition, the rear-facing ports can be plugged with foam bungs, to further control port behaviour according to circumstances or taste. The port is tuned to 32Hz.

SOUND QUALITY

When all's said and done, what we have here is a three-way floorstander. Off-axis cancellation due to path length differences in the D'Appolito array reduce ceiling and floor reflections, but lateral imaging is not impeded,

which makes the arrangement inherently room and multi-user friendly if done right – and it has been. Musically, the rear output (which can be turned off, so this is easily confirmed) adds a three-dimensional feel and presence similar to what you would experience in a good concert hall. It is also fully fleshed out in the depth plane, rather than giving the over-etched stereo encountered with traditional speakers. The rear-facing driver also helps produce clean off-axis reflections, without the frequency response and phase aberrations endemic with off-axis reflections from multi-driver systems. The mid and treble adjustments are too subtle to influence frequency response, so they don't really qualify as tone controls, but they remain a useful belt and braces way of fine tuning to different rooms and listening tastes.

The foam bungs for the reflex ports have a more fundamental influence. As it stands, the 300 S2 bass is slightly underdamped and boomy. There's a trace of overhang, and this can be addressed with the foam, which tautens the bass nicely. The rear-facing speaker was set to 3pm on the control – fairly high – but this was with the speaker some distance from the rear wall, and the optimum setting will vary.

The bass is a little soft, and there is a hint of the same in the mid and treble. This isn't the most hard hitting loudspeaker you can buy, though it does have natural organic dynamism and 'bounce' that appears to spring unforced from within the music itself.

This was a very appealing speaker, not just to the author, but to a number of visitors, including one famously Naim-centric and notoriously critical listener (and ex-designer) whose idea of a good loudspeaker is almost exclusively a matter of dynamics and timing. Why? Because it is just so damned communicative and enjoyable. The physical complication is not directly mirrored in its audio output – the system sounds stubbornly consistent across the frequency and dynamic envelopes, but in the final analysis this is a rather feline loudspeaker. It doesn't bang you over the head in an obvious way, but insinuates itself into the head, almost by



“It has organic dynamism and ‘bounce’ that springs unforced from within the music.”

stealth. It is a speaker that does subtlety very, very well, and in its way it can be tactile, especially when reproducing string instruments in general (harp and piano in particular). However, the likes of Tom Waits are probably best served by something a little more muscular in its presentation. It is almost tempting to describe the 300 S2 as a classical/acoustic music speaker, but that would be to oversimplify, and the Lumley is nothing like that narrow in its compass. Indeed, the bass is full and deep enough for

just about any reasonable eventuality, and within reason there are no obvious constraints as the volume is turned up.

Here is a speaker with heart and personality. It is a detailed and subtle transducer, which images well and also works effectively for those sitting off-axis (but less so when standing or laying on the floor), and which has enough sufficient adjustability to work comfortably in most surroundings. A genuinely surprising loudspeaker. **HFC**

Alvin Gold

VERDICT	
SOUND >> 89% [Progress bar]	PRO Subtle, engaging and wide ranging loudspeaker, tonally as well as dynamically, with excellent soundstage presence. Something genuinely original, too.
EASE OF DRIVE >> 60% [Progress bar]	CON Aesthetically this speaker is going to polarise opinion, though finish quality is generally good. Setting up can be a lengthy process.
BUILD >> 84% [Progress bar]	
VALUE >> 72% [Progress bar]	
CONCLUSION The most improbable hit of the last twelve months, by a mile. This is a sweet tempered loudspeaker which imbues music with a warmth and grace that flatters without deceit. It is also consistently enjoyable and offers something different.	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 80%	

High tech high end

Denon's huge new top-end multiformat player and amp weigh in with the latest hi-res digital links

PRODUCT Denon DVD-A1XV and AVC-A1XV

TYPE Universal disc player and multichannel amplifier

PRICE (DVD-A1XV) £2,500, (AVC-A1XV) £4,000

KEY FEATURES (DVD-A1XV) Size (WxHxD): 43.4x17x43.2cm • Weight: 19kg • Realta QHV video processing • Advanced AL24 audio processing • DVI-D, HDMI, i.Link, Denon Link (3rd edition) connections • (AVC-A1XV) Size (WxHxD): 43.4x28x50.5cm • Weight: 44kg • 16-channel processing, 10 power amps • 170W per channel (8 Ohms) • DVI-D, HDMI, i.Link, Denon Link (3rd edition) connections

CONTACT ☎ 01234 741200 # www.denon.co.uk

Nobody could say home cinema is uncompetitive, especially at the high end. In fact, the innovation on offer from the front runners appears almost out of proportion to the size and value of the market. Denon is currently the most aggressive producer of them all, eclipsing even Pioneer in the rate it is rolling out high-end models. This is especially true of its DVD players.

The two products tested here are the company's new high-end universal disc player and multichannel amplifier. The DVD-A1XV player is the easier to categorise: it is an extensively enhanced version of Denon's existing DVD-A1, a DVD player that also plays both DVD-Audio and SACD using a mechanism largely of Denon's own design. The new player is notable for its physical construction, in particular the multilayer anti-resonance base, the solid cabinet work and the well-endowed power supplies, all of which contribute to its unusual 19kg weight.

The main features of technical interest, however, lie elsewhere. The video subsection is equipped with some uniquely powerful processing in the form of a chipset developed by Denon in partnership with Silicon Optix and called HQV (Hollywood Quality Video). This uses technology that has previously only been available in TV and film production studios. It can, for example, look for random noise by examining each pixel and all adjacent pixels on each frame in real time, before applying noise reduction and detail enhancement. The player also includes unusually strong progressive scan deinterlacing.

The audio subsection is no less elaborate, if slightly less high tech, but includes Denon's proprietary advanced AL24 curve-smoothing algorithm. The other surprise this player springs in is the thoroughly impressive range of digital outputs, which includes i.Link/IEEE1394 (PCM and DSD audio), DVI-D (digital video), HDMI v1.1 (digital video and full-bandwidth multichannel PCM audio) and

Denon Link, a proprietary high performance link for PCM audio, but not SACD/DSD datastreams as yet (see *AudioFile*, p12).

The AVC-A1XV amplifier is an extraordinary device, partly because of its back-breaking weight (44kg) and matching bulk. It can process up to 18 channels and has ten 170 watt power amplifiers on board, enough for two completely independent 5.1 channel systems in different zones. In other configurations, it can be made to work in up to four zones. Alternatively, up to five channels can be bi-amplified, or separate direct radiating and



“It even provides a form of spatial averaging to help optimise the system for a number of listeners and listening positions.”

dipolar rears can be set up in a main system, which are selected according to the type of material being reproduced. There is even the possibility of automatic switchover for speakers whose radiation pattern can be triggered in this way. A Revel 7.1-channel speaker system with just this ability was on hand during our test.

The amp is the latest multichannel model with an automatic set-up feature. This one is different though – it's called MultEQ and has been licensed from Audyssey Labs. MultEQ can be used to set up a system with up to three subwoofers in a nine-channel configuration. It even provides a form of spatial averaging to help optimise the system – not just for a single hotseat, but for a number of listeners and listening positions. Judging by our experience, Audyssey MultEQ is consistent in its operation and appears to be very effective.

SOUND QUALITY

There are so many ways to link the two Denon components, it is hard to know where to start. For example, PCM (CD/DVD) audio can be sent in analogue form, or using any of five different digital pathways between player and amplifier. By contrast, analogue is a variable quality route, where performance depends partly on the interconnect used, and on whether the available video bypasses have been selected. At its best, it is not far off the all-digital method – a little softer, perhaps sweeter, not quite as cleanly articulated, but in some ways more integrated. The difference between HDMI and i.Link was just too close to call with the test pairing, but there is some benefit from using the Denon

Link, which just sounds more open and dynamic, whether used for stereo or multichannel. The difference wasn't big, but it was there, and we look forward to hearing SACD 2.0 via Denon Link when it is finally released – it should be awesome.

Backing this up was an amplifier with an ability to reproduce what the player was capable of giving, without squashing dynamics, muddying detail or doing anything to overly manipulate the impressively airy and spacious imagery. SACD over the digital bus gives the most impressive sound of any of the multiplicity of formats and connections available. In fairness, however, the more immediate but also more mechanical sound of DVD-Audio may be a function of the dearth of quality DVD-A material. SACD, on the other hand, benefits from a respectable catalogue, especially with classical material. Some of the results from the Denon pairing, and also from the Denon player with other amplifiers, were stunning in the density of sound produced, and the passion and authority with which it was expressed. ▶

FORMAT COMPATIBILITY

DVD-AUDIO	✓	DVD+R	✓
DVD-VIDEO	✓	DVD-RAM	✗
SACD	✓	MP3 AUDIO	✓
CD	✓	WMA AUDIO	✓
HDCD	✓	AAC AUDIO	✗
CD-R/ RW	✓	VIDEO CD	✓
DVD-R/ RW	✓	JPEG PICTURES	✓

Q & A

Roger Batchelor, Denon UK's marketing and training officer, discusses what went into making two of the best multichannel products ever



HFC: Tell us about the amplifier's design highlights

RB: Denon plays a lot of attention to the sound quality of its amplifiers and this means special care over the design of the power supplies. The designers have upped the ante with the AVC-A1XV, which uses six transformers, including a large screened high current toroidal driving a massive capacitor bank for the power amplifiers, and separate high capacity frame transformers for the video and preamplifier functions. There are 12 regulated supplies in total.

What are the key distinguishing features of the DVD-A1XV universal player?

Our thinking here is that the DVD-A1XV should be able to do justice to existing libraries of high definition audio and CDs – and also DVDs. We've pulled out all the stops with audio disc playback, thanks in part to the advanced AL24 curve smoothing algorithm, which in its current form will work on 192kHz data – from DVD-Audio, for example. Then there's the Realta processor, which can improve standard format DVD playback to the point where it almost rivals high definition, as anyone who attended the public demonstrations we have given will know. Right now, we're not using the full capabilities of the processor, which can and will be upgraded in due course.

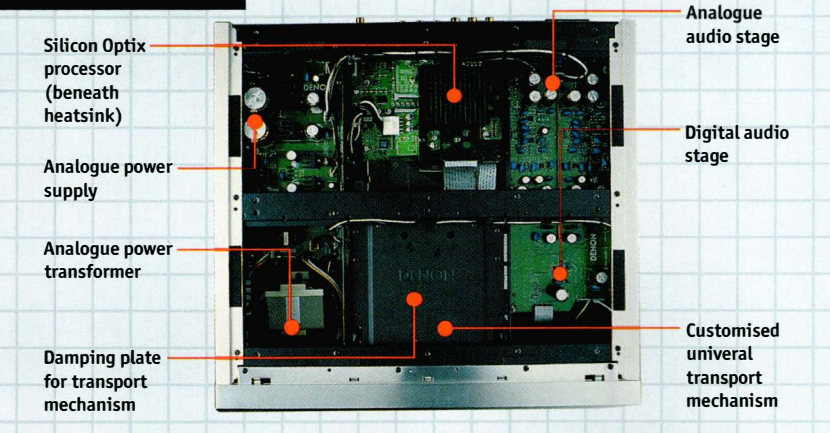
What measures have been taken to enhance flexibility in both products?

We have addressed this in a number of ways, for example by making the amp a powerhouse that can cope with quite complex multiroom installations. You can run two full home cinema systems with full multi-source capability in different rooms, or bi-amplify a single multichannel system. We have really gone to town with the digital and analogue connectivity options, which go beyond anything we have done before, and as far as possible we have engineered the amp to be upgradeable – for example, if there are any developments that affect the HDMI or the Denon Link interfaces.

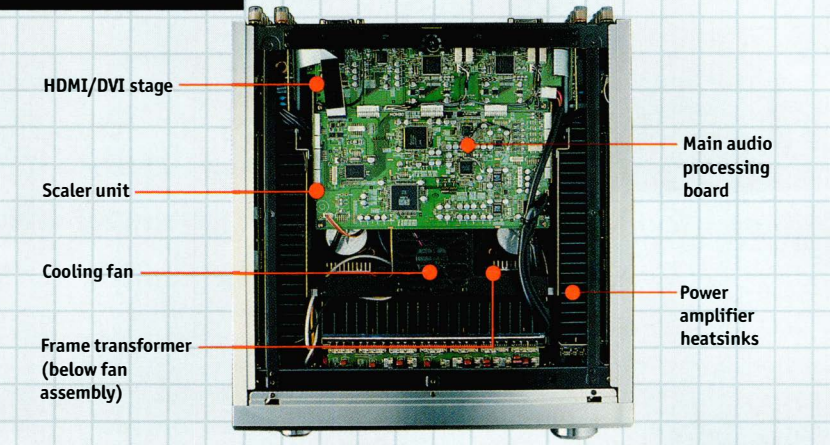
The Ethernet sockets on the back make it possible to stream internet radio through the amp, which is an application we were demonstrating at at this year's CES show in Las Vegas. And it's now possible to up and down-convert video from component video to single-wire standard without tears. This will be useful for a component video source, which is to be viewed in a second zone wired with composite or S-Video.



Detail – DVD-A1XV



Detail – AVC-A1XV



❑ The DVD-A1XV is also a first rate CD player. 'First rate' in this context means roughly comparable to a component CD player in high three-figure or low four-figure territory, but there is the same bottom line, which is that it all depends on how it is used. Again the preferred method was to use the Denon Link, which delays the D/A conversion stage as late as possible, and minimises the amount of analogue processing, but using the player via its analogue outputs yielded results not far short of some very impressive and more costly players. Used this way, the Denon has a strong, articulate bass and midband, and a treble with just a hint of glare, which used via the digital output was really not noticeable at all.

VIDEO PERFORMANCE

The high power video processing has some surprising consequences, the most impressive being the way it improves the performance of standard DVD-Video. With very little setup, the HQV chip is capable of almost artefact-free image enhancement, radically reducing picture noise (look for this in large areas of uniform colour), while retaining high levels of detail, and a natural, filmic appearance. By any standards this is an impressive player. Overall, the Denon DVD-A1XV is a fine audio disc player which integrates well with

the AVC-A1XV. But when the player's video performance is added to its talents, it's clear that the DVD-A1XV is the real star of the show. This is an exceptional player with excellent sound quality, plus essentially state of the art picture performance thanks to the magic of the powerful Realta HQV processor. **HFC**

Alvin Gold

VERDICT – DVD-A1XV

SOUND >> 87%
 >> SUB RATINGS
 CD 84% SACD 90% DVD-A 87%

VISION >> 95%

FEATURES >> 94%

VALUE >> 90%

CONCLUSION
 Cutting edge universal player is well equipped all round, but impresses in particular for its excellent SACD sound quality, and its extraordinary video capabilities, which push DVD to keep up with HDTV pictures.

HI-FI CHOICE
 >> **91%**

VERDICT – AVC-A1XV

SOUND >> 84%
 >> SUB RATINGS
 STEREO 80% MULTICHANNEL 88%

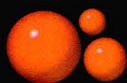
FEATURES >> 98%

BUILD >> 89%

VALUE >> 87%

CONCLUSION
 Powerful Audyssey set-up and a flexible ten-channel power amp section mark out this amplifier, but perhaps inevitably its inelegant and bulky form factor will win it few friends.

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

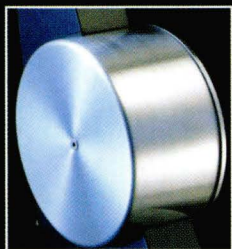
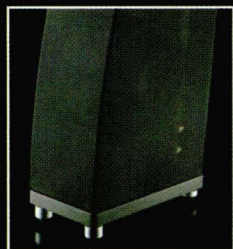


ANTHONY GALLO
ACOUSTICS

The new Reference 3 with CDT II™ Tweeter Technology

Anthony Gallo isn't one to follow the crowd, a characteristic he shares with the people who buy his loudspeakers.

His latest speaker design, the Reference 3, is rewriting the price versus performance equation. So much so in fact that influential U.S. publication *The Absolute Sound* have bestowed on it their ultimate honour - product of the year.



"Gallo's Reference 3's are rewriting the book on value in high-end loudspeakers, making accessible a level of performance that might previously have been far beyond the reach of most of us."
The Absolute Sound

For further information or to locate your nearest dealer, please visit our website

www.anthonygallo.co.uk

tel. 0870 350 1348

nonconformist

adj. an individual who does not comply with conventional norms or socially approved patterns of behavior or thought

Reference 3 - Stainless Steel
suggested price £2400 per pair



An alternative approach

Three top-notch turntable components from HI Audio – including, unusually, a high-end MM cartridge

PRODUCT Hadcock 242 Integra, Cartridge Man Music Maker III, Graham Slee Era Gold V

TYPE Turntable tonearm, MM cartridge, phono stage

PRICE £700, £625, £460 (respectively)

KEY FEATURES (242 Integra arm) Length: 304.8mm
◉ Pivot to stylus point: 243.8mm ◉ Cartridge mass: 3-12g ◉ (Music Maker III cartridge) Weight: 6.2g
◉ Output voltage: 4mV ◉ 47k ohm load ◉ Tracking force: 1.58g ◉ (Era Gold V phono stage) Size (WxHxD): 11.6x4.9x17.5cm ◉ Input sensitivity: 4mV ◉ Input range: 2mV-10mV ◉ Impedance: 47k ohm/100pF

CONTACT ☎ 01443 231458 🌐 www.hiaudio.co.uk

HI Audio is a relatively new distributor of British kit to the UK market. Proprietor Hugh Unsworth has taken it upon himself to broaden the market for a range of brands that have all established a niche, but which – he feels – deserve wider recognition. HI Audio supplied us with an arm, cartridge and phono stage, all of which are claimed to combine to produce a result that is of a very high quality for the price being asked.

In many respects, when you are trying to promote moving magnet (MM) cartridges as high-end transducers, you virtually *have* to offer a tonearm and phono stage solution with the cartridge. The dominance of the moving coil (MC) is so complete that high-quality, low-mass arms designed for high compliance cartridges are very scarce, and the same goes for dedicated MM phono stages. Most of those we can think of are expensive valve devices or MC stages with an MM option.

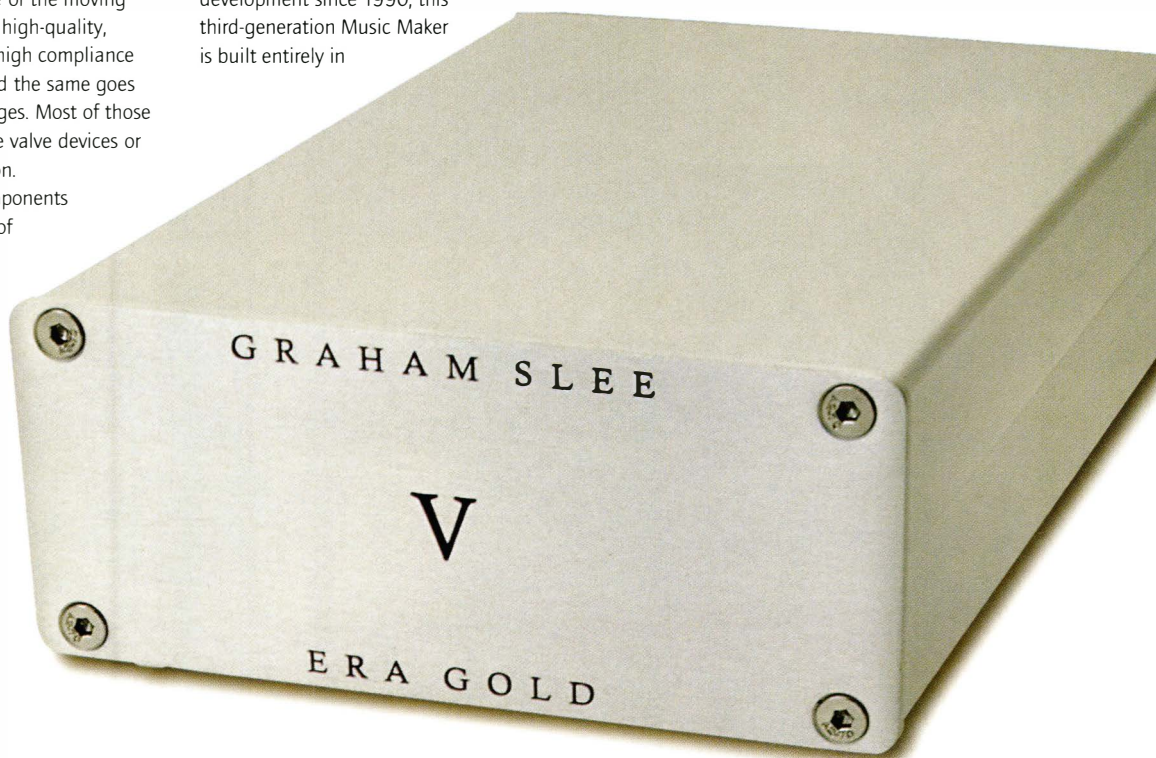
HI Audio's selection of components can be used on the majority of turntables – decks as diverse as Pro-Ject's RPM 9, the Linn LP12 and Garrard's 301/401 are suitable. Nottingham Analogue makes special mounts for the Hadcock arm and Avid used to optionally supply these arms with its turntables. So, our choice of the SME 20A is not radical.

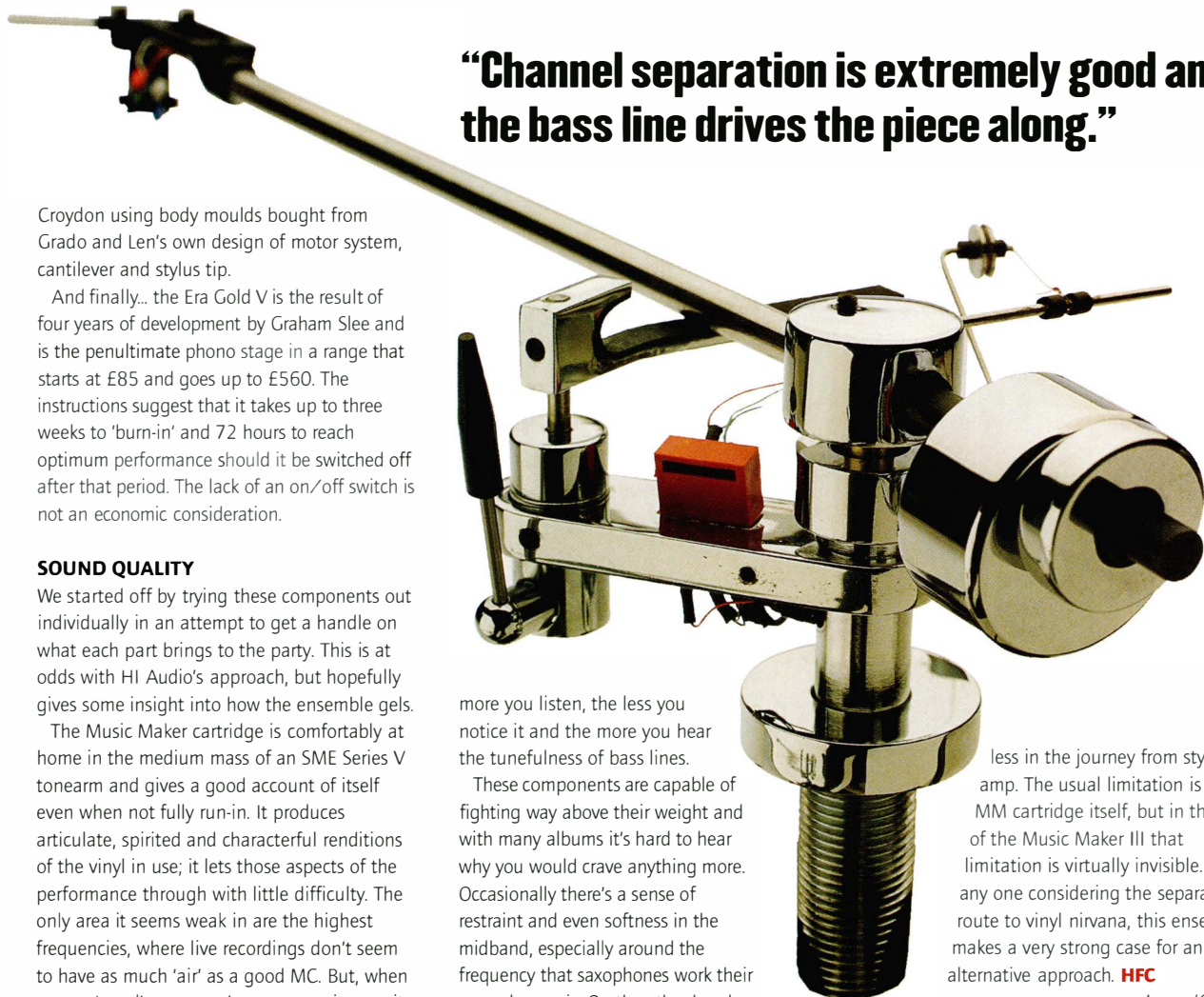
Taking this selection from the top, the Hadcock 242 Integra is the latest evolution of a design that has been in production since the 1970s. This is a low

mass, uni-pivot bearing tonearm, with four captive ball bearings, sitting on a spike in the base supporting the main beam. If it weren't for the arm wire and anti-skate weight, you could pick the tonearm right up off the turntable. Its slim tube makes it look longer than usual, but the 242 in the name indicates the length in millimetres – and it's no longer than a Rega.

Everything about this arm is adjustable, which means it's more tricky to set up than usual, but if you like tweaking it's hours of fun. Cartridge alignment, for instance, is achieved by moving the headshell on the arm tube; there are no slots in the headshell, just threaded holes. The latter mitigates against the use of cartridges that also have threaded holes, but they're easily drilled out. The 242 Integra uses Incognito cable; other options include Export and Export Super versions, with high purity copper, and the 242 VDH Silver, which features silver plated copper cable from van Den Hul.

The Music Maker III phono cartridge is made by Len Gregory, the self-styled Cartridge Man, and is based on the moving iron design that was originally produced by Joe Grado. In development since 1990, this third-generation Music Maker is built entirely in





“Channel separation is extremely good and the bass line drives the piece along.”

Croydon using body moulds bought from Grado and Len's own design of motor system, cantilever and stylus tip.

And finally... the Era Gold V is the result of four years of development by Graham Slee and is the penultimate phono stage in a range that starts at £85 and goes up to £560. The instructions suggest that it takes up to three weeks to 'burn-in' and 72 hours to reach optimum performance should it be switched off after that period. The lack of an on/off switch is not an economic consideration.

SOUND QUALITY

We started off by trying these components out individually in an attempt to get a handle on what each part brings to the party. This is at odds with HI Audio's approach, but hopefully gives some insight into how the ensemble gels.

The Music Maker cartridge is comfortably at home in the medium mass of an SME Series V tonearm and gives a good account of itself even when not fully run-in. It produces articulate, spirited and characterful renditions of the vinyl in use; it lets those aspects of the performance through with little difficulty. The only area it seems weak in are the highest frequencies, where live recordings don't seem to have as much 'air' as a good MC. But, when we say 'good' we mean 'more expensive... quite a lot more expensive'. It clearly lets you hear the sense of timing and all the colour and depth of tone on the record. Lyrics sound particularly clear, delighting during our test period with Deep Purple's *Never Before* and Suzanne Vega's slightly overblown (in production terms) eponymous first album.

The Era Gold V phono stage is also extremely capable, with a clean and fluid sound that allowed Tom Waits' voice ham it up to great effect on *Frank's Wild Years*. Comparing this stage with the similarly priced Trichord Dino proved a close run thing; the latter doesn't have quite the low frequency welly of the Gold V but its lighter balance suits voices like that of Tracey Thorn on Massive Attack's *Protection*. The Gold V is more relaxed though, which is a good sign, and both phono stages gave a more expansive rendition than you tend to get from CD.

The biggest difference we encountered with this gradual changeover was swapping in the Hadcock for the SME arm – these are similar in that they are both pivoting arms, but that's pretty well where the similarity ends. The lower friction of the unipivot brings a very welcome sense of ease to everything you play, but this doesn't mean the music sounds laid back, just less mechanical. Alongside this is a warmth to the bass that affects voices like Joni Mitchell's, but not in an intrusive manner. In fact, the

more you listen, the less you notice it and the more you hear the tunefulness of bass lines.

These components are capable of fighting way above their weight and with many albums it's hard to hear why you would crave anything more. Occasionally there's a sense of restraint and even softness in the midband, especially around the frequency that saxophones work their squawky magic. On the other hand, this is probably why the combination sounds relaxed, and the fact that you can hear so much detail at both high and low levels suggests that it's doing things properly. Put on Billy Cobham's powerful *Quadrant* track from *Spectrum* and you can turn it up all the way without any sign of aggression. Channel separation is superb and the bass line drives the piece along in no uncertain terms.

Moving through our test programme, we played Keith Jarrett's *Eyes of the Heart* and the sound transformed into an open, clean and even hard-edged thing. This set up really shows the differences between recordings, which is the ultimate purpose of high-fidelity equipment – the results are both musical and well resolved. Lambchop's excellent recording *Is A Woman* sounded unusually real and 'in the room', the low thumping of feet on studio floor combining with the ethereal noodling of more musicians that necessary to produce an entrancing soundscape. Why can't more recordings sound this good?

You can't buy many serious moving coil cartridges for the price of all three of these components. And yet without a comparison on hand, you'll find it hard to hear why you need to pay more. The high output of the moving magnet is one reason for this – it makes the phono stage's job easier and the signal suffers

less in the journey from stylus to amp. The usual limitation is the MM cartridge itself, but in the case of the Music Maker III that limitation is virtually invisible. For any one considering the separates route to vinyl nirvana, this ensemble makes a very strong case for an alternative approach. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

VERDICT – Hadcock 242

SOUND >> 92%



FEATURES >> 85%



BUILD >> 78%



VALUE >> 90%



CONCLUSION

The low friction uni-pivot arm has a lot to offer any vinyl enthusiast; it's tricky to set up but well worth the effort if you appreciate a relaxed vinyl sound.

HI-FI CHOICE
>> **91%**

VERDICT – Music Maker III

SOUND >> 90%



FEATURES >> 80%



BUILD >> 75%



VALUE >> 90%



CONCLUSION

Anyone that thinks serious cartridges need to be MCs will be shocked. This produces detail, space and energy and has great resolve for the price.

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

VERDICT – Era Gold V

SOUND >> 86%



FEATURES >> 76%



BUILD >> 88%



VALUE >> 88%



CONCLUSION

This cartridge proves that a good moving magnet model can take on the big boys if enough attention is paid to amplification. A pity there aren't more serious MMs.

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



Platinum alloy

This chunky standmount's enclosure is a mixture of large cast alloy sections and real wood veneer

PRODUCT PSB Platinum M2

TYPE Standmount loudspeaker

PRICE £1,600 per pair

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 24x39x33cm

• Weight: 13.6kg • 25mm metal tweeter • Bass/mid driver: cast frame with 120mm woven glassfibre cone

• Cast aluminium alloy top, base and baffle frame
Sensitivity/impedance: 88dB/4 ohms (minimum)

CONTACT ☎ 01908 319360 🌐 www.psbSpeakers.com

PSB might well be an unfamiliar name to most readers, who will no doubt be surprised to hear that the Canadian firm is currently celebrating 30 years in the speaker business. In spite of this, the Platinum M2 is the first PSB speaker to be reviewed by *Hi-Fi Choice*.

Canada has long been a major source of high quality hi-fi speakers, for at least two good reasons. In the first place, a government funded body called the National Research Council (NRC) has long actively provided

backup in the form of research and development assistance and resources. Secondly, there are acres of forest waiting to be turned into speaker boxes, not to mention lumberjacks looking for gainful employment.

Although Canada's population of 30 million is hardly large enough to support the country's substantial speaker manufacturing capacity, the huge US market with ten times the number of consumers is readily accessible just south of the border. Which in turn explains why PSB is much better known on the other side of the Atlantic than it is here in Britain.

The PSB name refers to the initials of founder and designer Paul S. Barton, who was involved in the earliest days of the NRC. We met him at the Heathrow hi-fi show in the autumn of 2004. It was obvious that he has considerable know-how and enormous experience, all of which have gone into this prestige Platinum

series of models, which incorporate very unusual cast alloy enclosure sections.

It's a comprehensive range, covering both hi-fi and home cinema models, and includes three stereo pairs – the M2 Monitor plus T8 and T6 Towers. This M2 is a large, chunky standmount, and a costly one too at £1,600 per pair. The styling and finish are certainly unusual, and it's difficult to say whether the silver-grey metallic front (with or without the grilles in place) will appeal to British tastes. It's certainly different from the wood-veneered face that UK speakers tend to present to the world, but it would look right at home either side of the silver-grey finish on today's video displays and equipment. In fact, the enclosure is a mixture, with real wood veneer (in cherry or black) covering the sides and back, while the aluminium finish is restricted to the speaker's front, top and base.

The whole thing gives an impression of great solidity, thanks in part to its total weight of more than 13kg, but also to the domed slabs of cast alloy that form the top and base here. These clearly add considerable structural stiffness and integrity to the whole. They're linked together by alloy strips that form the baffled edge, while the large slot port is another hefty alloy casting and the front is trimmed by a shiny aluminium sheet.

This is essentially a classic two-way design, albeit an inverted one, with a 165mm main driver loaded by a ported enclosure with a generous internal volume of 16.4 litres. Said main driver has a cast frame and a cone/dust-cap that's 120mm in diameter and made from woven fibreglass in a plastic matrix. This unit is mounted above a 25mm aluminium dome tweeter that is equipped with a little phase-compensating protector. Twin terminals on the rear provide a bi-wire/bi-amp option.

Our measurements bespeak of a speaker with great promise. The far-field in-room averaged responses show a fine overall balance, with a bass extension that goes surprisingly deep for a standmount design: ref the midband datum, the -6dB point under in-room conditions is a relatively low 26Hz, aided by a port tuned to around 39Hz.

The broad midband from 90Hz right up to 5kHz holds within +/-3dB under in-room conditions, which is very impressive. However, there is mild unevenness above 800Hz: output is a little lacking 900Hz-3kHz – or alternatively a little strong 3-5kHz. A small peak around 10-11 kHz is also visible. Sensitivity is a respectable 88dB, right on spec, while the impedance averages around seven ohms and never falls below four ohms, so the speaker won't be unduly difficult to drive.

SOUND QUALITY

For auditioning, the speakers were placed on 600mm Kudos S100 stands, and positioned so that their front baffles were roughly one metre out from the wall. The speakers were driven from a Naim NAP500 power amp using Vertex AQ cables, the signals coming from a hybrid Linn/Rega vinyl spinner, Naim CDS3 and Burmester 001 CD players, and a Naim NAC552 preamplifier.

As befits the hefty pricetag, the sound quality of these speakers is a little bit special. The first thing one notices – and goes on noticing for as long as the PSB is playing – is the remarkably low cabinet signature and overhang. By comparison, most other speakers sound relatively woody and thickened. With the M2, you hear the drive units (and to some extent the crossover network) but not the box.

As a generalisation, standmount speakers tend to sound cleaner and crisper through the bass region than equivalent floorstanding designs. To a large extent this is because they have much less enclosure surface area, but it's also due to the sound-waves having space to



“The first thing one notices – and goes on noticing for as long as the PSB is playing – is the remarkably low cabinet signature.”

disperse underneath as well around and above the enclosure. This PSB not only has the advantages of a standmount design, but its exceptionally inert and stable enclosure seems – at a rough estimate – to double the effect, leading to its extraordinarily clean and well-controlled bass reproduction.

Indeed, some may find the bass too restrained. It's certainly exceptionally clean, and delves surprisingly deep for such a compact speaker, but it's not particularly punchy or authoritative – 'gentle' is a word that springs to mind here – and the overall effect turns out to be a little on the cool side of neutral.

The midband voicing and balance is very even-handed and neutral, though some mild nasal congestion is audible on speech in particular. The top end is decent enough, though it can be a shade obvious at times, adding a touch of 'spitch' to speech and a little too much zip on bright recordings. Poor quality recordings, where the top end is inherently rather ragged and untidy, are not treated too kindly here, though clean material is much better served.

The wide baffle and inverted driver layout are presumably key factors responsible for the M2's quite exceptional stereo image focus. This is to do with the dispersion of the speaker, which determines the ratio of direct to room-reflected sound reaching the listener, and which in the M2's case clearly favours direct sound, hence its superior focus.

The enclosure of this chunky standmount model is particularly unusual – indeed probably unique – in using large and massive cast alloy sections as part of its enclosure. There's no denying these are exceptionally effective in virtually eliminating the unwanted woody character that is found in the vast majority of box loudspeakers. The result is unusual clarity and freedom from texture thickening right down to the lowest frequencies. Add two

high-class drivers and finely judged overall voicing and you have the exciting recipe of a top-quality standmount. The only obvious question mark hangs over the unorthodox styling, which might be a little too different to appeal to British tastes. **HFC**

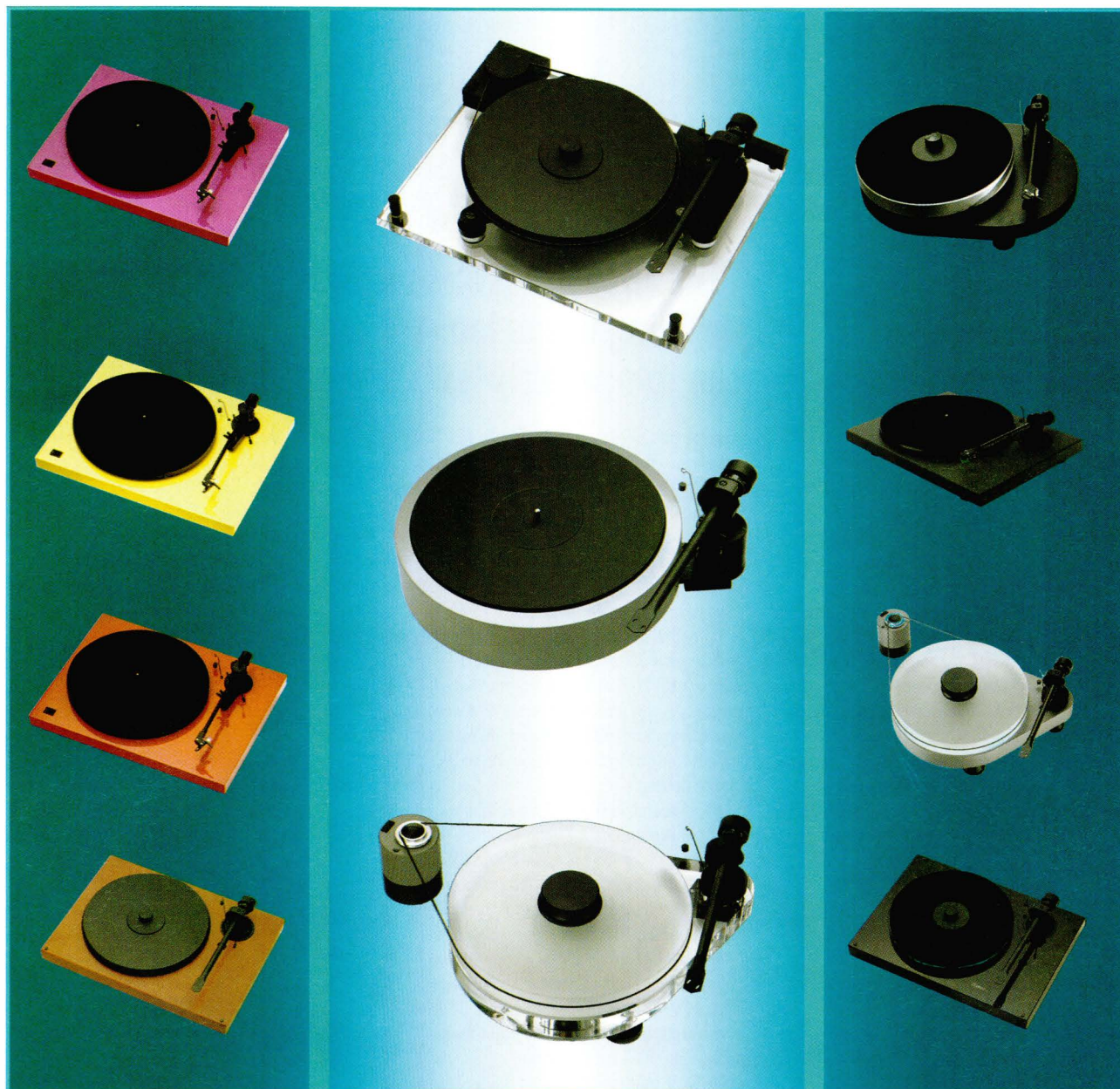
Paul Messenger



VERDICT

SOUND >> 88%	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<p>PRO Hefty cast alloy enclosure sections contribute to vanishingly low box coloration. Overall balance is beautifully judged, too.</p> <p>CON Styling is unorthodox by UK standards. Midband has slight nasal congestion and treble might be sweeter. Overall sound is a little cool.</p>
EASE OF DRIVE >> 80%	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
BUILD >> 92%	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
VALUE >> 82%	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>CONCLUSION This unusual looking standmount uses radical cast alloy cabinetwork to create bass of exceptional cleanliness and clarity. There is some midband nasality, and the top end could be smoother and sweeter, but overall it's impressively neutral.</p>		
<p>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 85%</p>		

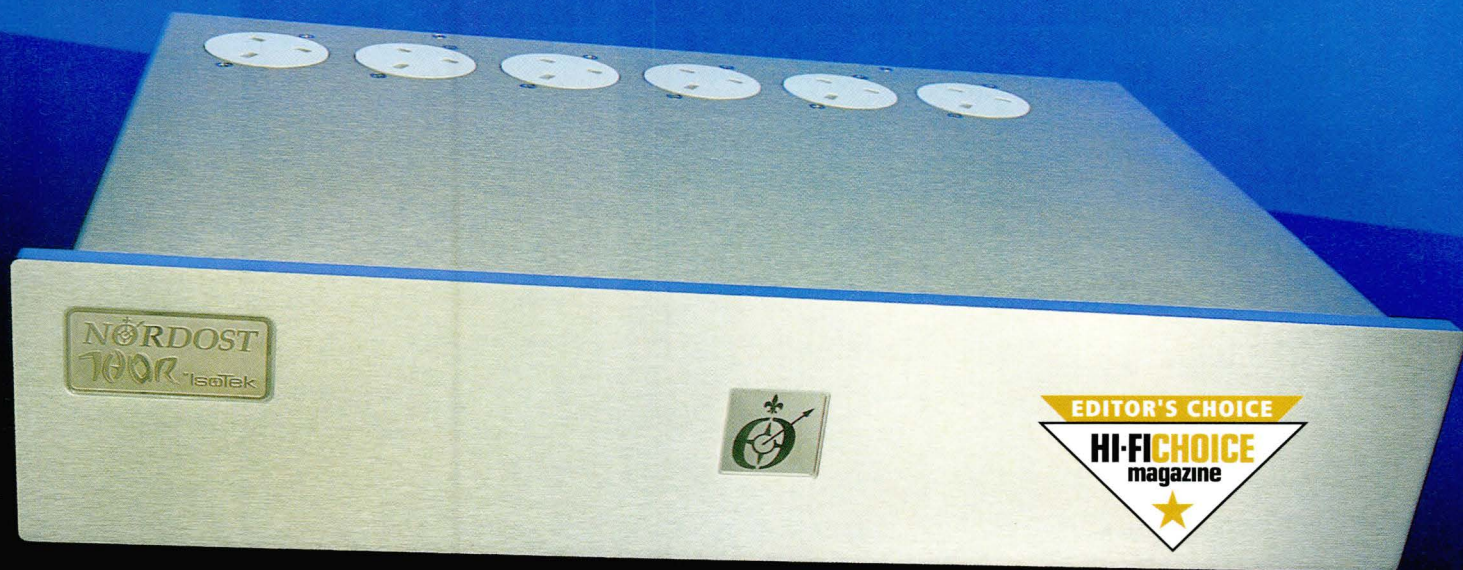
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It's hammer time

Nordost uses Thor's hammer to declare war on the mains supply

PRODUCT Nordost Thor
TYPE Mains distribution box
PRICE £1,600
CONTACT ☎ 01352 730251 🌐 www.nordostuk.com

A £1,600 box with an IEC mains socket and an earth post on the back, plus six mains sockets on top? It's a mains distribution block, but not as you know it.

First, the Thor is not a mains conditioner, because there is nothing in series with the current flow. There are no filters, no regeneration of the AC mains supply and no fan to make a noise. But there are active parallel circuits housed on two internal PCBs, the principal aims of which are to lower the noise floor of the system. The casework is made from stainless steel, except the fascia which is a thick slab of extruded aluminium.

One part of the internal gubbins is a circuit called Polaris X, sourced from Isotek Systems (the box is essentially a reworking of Isotek's MiniSub). This is designed to shunt mains-borne noise to earth, and to isolate each of the six output circuits from one another. The circuits are star wired on earth, positive and negative arms, and are wired using Valhalla main cables. The other key circuit is called QRT (Quantum Resonance Technology), which is licensed from Quantum Products and is not used in the Isotek MiniSub. This produces an electromagnetic field which suffuses the area around the Thor – influencing components whether they are plugged through the Thor or not, says Nordost.

The field 'aligns' charged particles associated with EMF frequencies. The result, according to Quantum, is that "the resulting coherent field enhances the signal path allowing greater audio/video fidelity". Don't be put off by the association with quantum physics by the way; mirrors and transistors both work by quantum physical rules. Indeed, all physical processes do so at some level.

SOUND QUALITY

Whatever the explanation, it works. The Thor doesn't come with its own power cable, so several Valhalla mains leads were acquired for this review – one to connect the Thor to the mains, the others for the many and various hi-fi components used over the test period (a brace of Valhallas makes even the Thor seem cheap). The test consisted of using the system connected directly to the mains or via the Thor. The latter, fitted with Nordost Pulsar Points resonance control devices (or 'feet' if you prefer), was placed on an equipment rack.

In stark contrast to the usual findings with mains conditioners, the sound with Thor in place becomes more dynamic; noise levels are subjectively lower and imagery is improved. And the sound becomes more detailed – it snaps into focus, in fact. It does these things to different degrees depending on the system, but it appears to work with amps, players, even video gear. It did so every time, and in each case it improved on the performance of the system when using the same Valhalla mains cables – in

other words, the Thor and its own mains lead were the only changes to the system.

We can't comment on whether Thor improves the sound when it is not supplying power to components in the vicinity, since this was suggested only after the review was put to bed. The whole proposition is one you'll have to hear for yourself; this review is only intended to argue the case for a trial at your dealer. Thor is punishingly expensive, especially once the mains cables (which fortunately don't have to be Valhallas) are taken into account. But based on what we've heard, it outperforms any of Nordost's solus cables, pound for pound, expensive as it is. **HFC**

Alvin Gold

VERDICT	
SOUND >> 95% 	PRO Improbable mains distribution box that delivers the goods in the form of enhanced dynamic range, imagery and superb levels of musical coherence.
FEATURES >> 65% 	CON Improbably expensive, especially with appropriate mains cables, and takes up a lot of room by distribution box standards.
BUILD >> 93% 	
VALUE >> 80% 	
CONCLUSION You need to set aside normal considerations, here. If you think of this in terms of improvement to your system's sound, not as an 'accessory', it more than justifies its price. Only audition the Thor if you can afford it... it's that good!	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 88%	



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Leicester: Cymbiosis, 0116 262 3754

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Take 2



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PRODUCT Goldring GR2

TYPE Turntable, arm and cartridge

PRICE £265

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Last year, we saw the re-emergence of turntables from the Goldring brand, with first the GR1 and latterly the GR1.2. The new GR2 is based around the same plinth as the GR1.2, but the new deck has a full Rega RB250-type arm. This has a rather more solid fixing using a large nut on a metal arm base, instead of three screws through a plastic base. The MDF platter sits on an 18mm outside diameter bearing, which is 50 per cent bigger than that on the GR1.2. The platter itself is of a higher density than the one on the entry-level Goldring model and is mass-loaded by a metal ring to increase its inertia and thus smooth out speed variations.

But the change that makes the biggest tonal difference between the GR1.2 and GR2 is the pre-packaged provision of a Goldring 1012GX moving magnet cartridge instead of a Goldring Elektra. This represents a £70 increase in retail cost on the needle front alone. The 1012GX is the base model in Goldring's Pocan bodied, Cyger stylus equipped MM cartridge line-up. This range has earned itself a lot of respect since its introduction in the late 1980s.

Like the GR1.2, this deck has Rega origins and bears many similarities to that brand's P2 model – in fact, so many similarities that it would take a close comparison to find the

differences. Presumably, however, there are some beyond the fact that the Rega deck is not supplied with a cartridge unless specified.

SOUND QUALITY

Setting up this deck is simplified by the fact that the cartridge is properly aligned and only requires the user to set downforce. But this isn't as easy as it might be, as you need to figure out where 7/8ths of a turn of the (uncalibrated) counterweight might fall.

The GR2 is a more refined turntable than its entry-level sibling, the quality of its arm and cartridge resulting in higher levels of detail. Also, the heavier platter effectively removes the slight sense of flutter that is perceptible with the GR1.2. It is clearly sensitive to variations in recording quality, giving a good account of the rounded bass lines on Bob Marley's *Exodus* album and delivering plenty of space and image depth. Bass occasionally sounds a bit lightweight, but there's no danger of sloppiness or undue emphasis. What's more, when something genuinely heavy comes along, you get the picture.

Keith Jarrett's solo piano proved a little hard going during our test, being quite a hard sound tonally, but more luxurious recordings like Richard Thompson's *Old Kit Bag* sounded enjoyably engaging. Thompson's voice stands out very well, with more shape and depth than you might get from a CD player at twice the price. A more expensive CD player still is likely to produce a more relaxed and extended sound,

but may still give something away to the GR2 in terms of a sense of space and energy.

The deck is more effective at delivering midrange detail than it is at the frequency extremes. High frequencies are a little rolled off and while there's no lack of treble energy, you'll not find a sense of 'air' to match that produced more costly turntables. But compared to its price point peers, the Goldring holds its own. Next to Pro-Ject's excellent £210 1 Xpression package, for example, the GR2's energy may win the day, though some might find the Pro-Ject a smoother customer. Ultimately, though, the GR2 is a convenient and effective vinyl playing package that deserves to win many friends. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

VERDICT

SOUND >> 82%



FEATURES >> 72%



BUILD >> 85%



VALUE >> 92%



CONCLUSION

This is a welcome addition to Goldring's range, with an upgraded cartridge that helps set it apart from much of the competition. It is a consistent and revealing performer, which brings vinyl magic within the grasp of the hi-fi newcomer.

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

GROUP TEST AND LAB REPORTS: RICHARD BLACK

AMPLIFIERS

Once upon a time, spending more than a grand on an amplifier almost guaranteed a pre/power design. Not any more, as these no-compromise integrations ably show



Not so long ago, we would have been hard-pressed to make up a group of six integrated amplifiers costing more than a thousand pounds. The reason why we can do so now has relatively little to do with inflation and far more to do with shifting perceptions of what an integrated amp can reasonably be expected to do.

When all hi-fi systems included an LP player, all amps had to include a phono stage. Given how damnably sensitive phono stages are to the hum fields generated by the large mains transformers in power amplifiers, a separate preamp looking after the delicate stuff seemed wise, especially for higher-end models.

On the other hand, experience taught designers and manufacturers how to make integrated amps that manage to look svelte even while packing a punch of 100 watts or so. Even the Cyrus 8vs in this group test, admittedly the least powerful if only by a small margin, would look small were it merely a preamp. But its innards are filled to a large extent with a humungous mains transformer, and the circuits occupy what would have been an unfeasibly small space in the days before surface-mount components. Even the biggest amp here, the generous 100-watt Arcam A32 is more like the size of yesteryear's 50-watt power amps with their discrete components – and the Arcam's a well-featured model too.

It seems inevitable that the integrated amp should advance ever further into pre/power territory, and there's no reason why it should stop here. On top of that, the growth of bi-amping gives a potential new lease of life to most upper-range integrations – just add another power amp and off you go!

As integrated amps have gone up in social aspirations, they've almost universally acquired another feature – remote control. Some regard this as a

mixed blessing, bringing as it often does such irritations as volume control in slightly-too-large steps and only via fiddly buttons, be they on the remote or the front panel. Still, amps like the Roksan and Orelle retain a traditional, if motorised, volume control, and electronic input switching. When performed by high quality relays, this method has real advantages over mechanical switches in terms of reliability and short signal paths.

And the sound you can expect? They perform as well as cheaper integrated amps, only more refined, more detailed and less inclined to sympathise in partisan manner with only certain musical styles. Probably not much louder, though – you get few extra watts for your money these days. We really enjoyed our time with these six models – we hope you will too! **HFC**

EQUIPMENT USED

- Ⓢ Pioneer PDR-609 CD recorder/player
- Ⓢ dCS Elgar DAC
- Ⓢ Pink Triangle PT TOO turntable with SME309 tonearm and Highphonic MC-A3 phono cartridge
- Ⓢ ATC SCM20 loudspeakers
- Ⓢ Kimber, Furukawa and Bespoke Audio hi-fi cables

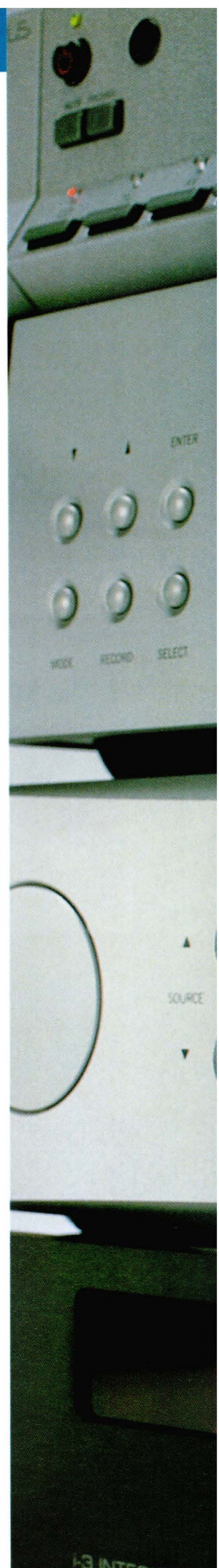
MUSIC USED

- Ⓢ Michael Jackson *Thriller*
- Ⓢ Dvorak *Carnival Overture*
- Ⓢ Guzmán *Ambrosio*
- Ⓢ Miles Davis *Kind of Blue*
- Ⓢ Little Feat *Feats Don't Fail Me Now*

MUSIC USED

Once again, we are profoundly indebted to the selfless souls who donated their time and listening acuity at the service of our blind listening tests – on this occasion, thanks to:

- Ⓢ David Denyer (David Denyer Public Relations)
- Ⓢ James Meredith (Cyrus)
- Ⓢ Ed Selley (Cambridge Audio)





LISTENING TESTS

In classic *HFC* fashion, the centrepiece of the listening was a 'blind' presentation of each amp to a panel of expert listeners, in an attempt to remain free of prejudices and preconceptions. Listening levels were matched and the same programme of music was played through each amp with minimal distractions. In addition, each amp was auditioned more informally, at different listening levels to suit the particular character of each amp under test.

LAB TESTS

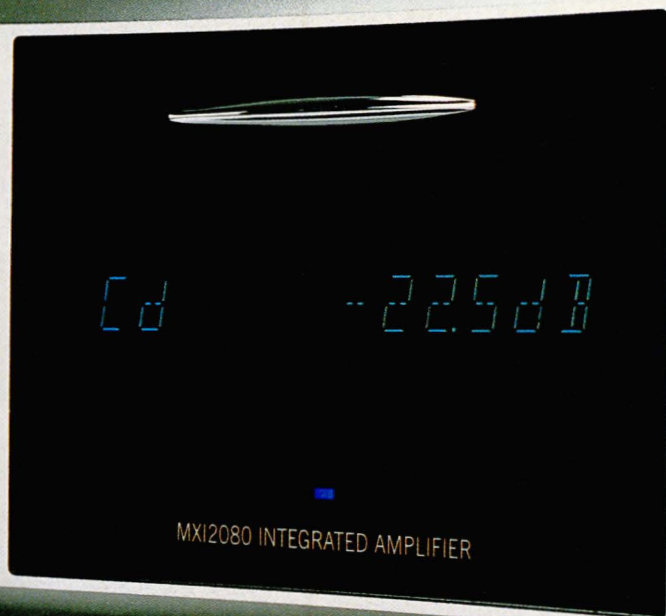
The amplifiers were measured with a variety of equipment, including a Hameg distortion measuring set and also items of audio equipment (ADCs and DACs) adapted to lab duty and reporting data for analysis to Cool Edit and Mathcad on a PC. This approach enabled us to build up a picture of the amplifiers performance under different conditions of frequency, level and load. This allows truly accurate assessment of published amplifier specifications and precisely determines the amplifier's characteristics under real-world conditions.

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

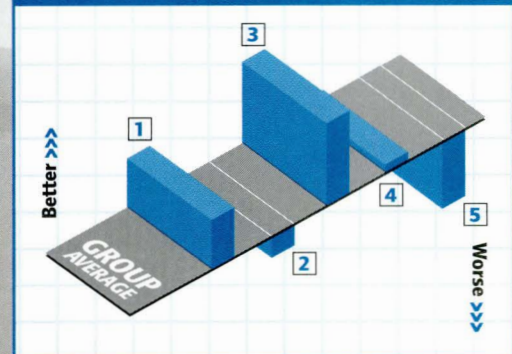
LAB REPORTS: THE BAR GRAPH

Our 3D bar graphs are a simple way of showing how the products compare across five technical parameters. In each case, a percentage is given that falls above or below the group average. In this test, the five parameters are:

- 1] Dynamic power:** This reflects an aggregate of continuous and peak (instantaneous) power into both eight and four ohm loads, giving an indication of total power available under realistic conditions.
- 2] Frequency response:** This is a measure of precisely how smooth and linear the frequency response is within the audio band, and what the upper frequency response (-3dB point) limit is.
- 3] Dynamic range:** An indication of the background hiss level of the amplifier, as compared to its maximum power output.
- 4] Distortion:** In a slight change from some previous issues, this is now taken as an aggregate figure of measurements at different frequencies and levels, to better approximate real life performance.
- 5] Output impedance:** A measurement of how tight a grip the amplifier has upon the loudspeaker cones.



OUR BAR GRAPHS: AN EXAMPLE





£1,200 ☎ 01223 203200 🌐 www.arcam.co.uk

ARCAM FMJ A32

Arcam's flagship integrated stereo amp is packed with good ideas

This chunky box is equal biggest in the group, externally, but under the lid it has more circuitry than any of the others, by quite a margin. There's a phono stage, for a start, and no half-hearted afterthought either – it's a dedicated board, switchable for MM or MC operation. There's sophistication aplenty in the line-level preamp stage too, plus a moderately complex power amp and a particularly large toroidal transformer.

Have corners been cut somewhere? Not that we can see. Even the case is made for the task, and relatively non-resonant which is a good thing. Instead, we're probably looking principally at economies of scale. You see, however many units this model sells annually, they are joined by sales of a number of other Arcam amplifiers (including pre and power separates) which share important structural and electronic subsystems.

It's also out in front in the features stakes. It offers tone controls (adjustable per channel or globally), sensitivity trim for each input, adjustable size of volume step (it's an electronic volume control), six line-level inputs, two record outputs, two switchable speaker outputs, separable pre and power sections, headphone output... and more. The display is unusually informative and customisable, it's very nice to use and, all in all, it's got the pride of ownership thing rather efficiently covered.

SOUND QUALITY

With few reservations, our listeners thought the sound similarly well-engineered. It may perhaps not be first choice for listeners who value timing above all other virtues, but even there the criticisms were extremely mild, merely pointing out that the A32 was not quite the best in group in this respect, but certainly not the worst. One of the most revealing comments mentioned its way of making plain the "musical sense" of the composition and its performance, which seems to sum up its strengths. Most of all, this is a music-lover's amplifier.



In terms of the specifics, the A32 was found to be tonally very well balanced, with good dynamic range that did not attempt to overemphasise contrasts between loud and soft. It was also felt to be particularly good at making the most of the 'greys' between the extremes of dynamics. On the imaging front, listeners commented on its fine separation of different sections within an orchestra or band, and its lifelike rendering of the physical size of instruments and voices. With very bright recordings (or speakers) its tonal honesty can make it seem a bit fatiguing, but one should not blame the messenger: neutral partnering equipment and well-balanced recordings sound most inviting.

Even the phono stage is good. It is a low noise, low hum affair, and it possesses a relaxed manner that never once loses its grip.

In summary, the Arcam A32 is a remarkably honest performer that resolutely refuses to impose its own character on the music. It tells things just as they are, without exaggeration or sweetening, and as a result achieves very fine results with a wide range of musical styles. The high feature count and fine build quality are definite bonuses, and its output power is sufficiently high to drive even relatively inefficient speakers with aplomb. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >> 90% ██████████	An integrated amp with almost everything – finely detailed and neutral sound, effortless extension, excellent control, very well ordered measurements.
FEATURES >> 90% ██████████	Also, loads of features, with little or no adverse impact.
BUILD >> 90% ██████████	
VALUE >> 90% ██████████	HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 90%



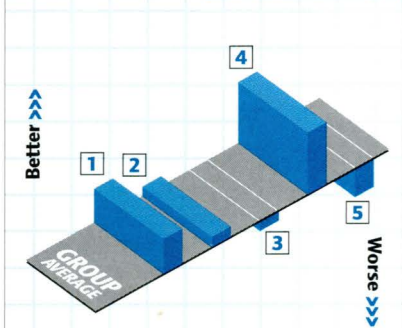
LAB REPORT

Among a group where high technical standards are very much the norm, this amp stood out as particularly fine. Its output power meets the 100W specification quite comfortably, with low distortion until very close to clip.

Distortion, at somewhere round 0.003% at moderate power, is getting hard to measure and falls even further at low power, at any frequency. It's highly assured into low impedance loads too, with distortion barely increasing at all into four ohms. Bandwidth is wide, extending to 60kHz (-1dB) and effectively to DC. Noise is slightly higher than with some amps here, but still essentially inaudible under any likely conditions.

Output impedance sticks around the 40mohm mark over most of the band. Ironically, the large transformer gives it a relatively low dynamic headroom, since there is less 'sag' under continuous high-power conditions.

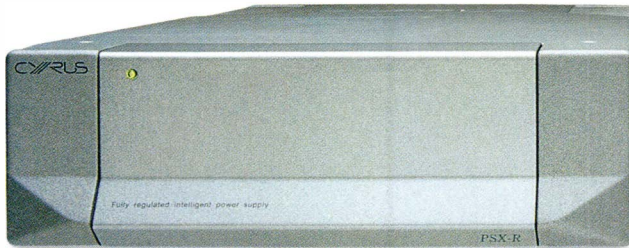
HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Dynamic power >> +30%
- 2] Frequency response >> +10%
- 3] Dynamic range >> -10%
- 4] Distortion >> +55%
- 5] Output impedance >> -25%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Power output (8 ohms)	100W	106W
Distortion (1kHz/8 ohms)	0.02%	0.003%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	-	±0.2dB



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CYRUS 8VS/PSX-R

The 'singing shoebox' returns, complete with optional power supply

Not just one, but two of Cyrus's neat die-cast boxes here. It's not quite what one might expect, because although the optional PSX-R (£400) is an external power supply upgrade, it doesn't actually take over from the supply already inside the 8vs integrated amp (£800). Instead, it supplements it by providing a separate, regulated supply for the pre-stages within the 8vs. Indeed, the transformers in the two boxes are roughly equal sizes. Cyrus has made this a completely trouble-free upgrade, and all one has to do is switch off, plug in the PSX-R (via its short captive lead) and switch both units back on.

Cyrus doesn't waste a square centimetre anywhere. Seven line inputs, tape and pre out, headphone output, PSX-R socket, two sets of speaker terminals (using the almost-extinct BFA connectors) and remote control bus connectors jostle for space but hey, you only have to connect it up once or twice, let's face it. The overall gain in neatness makes a little congestion a small price to pay!

The electronic volume control also adjusts balance, but that's about as far as it goes. Cyrus's indication of volume setting, using a ring of LEDs round the multiturn knob, is neat and practical and volume steps are suitably fine. Construction throughout is solid, though the print on the front is a bit of a squint to read in dim light.

SOUND QUALITY

Plenty of positive comments greeted this amp, with just a few minor reservations concerning its performance in the bass. On a couple of tracks, there seemed to be a consensus that bass was very slightly reticent, while one listener found bass presentation a little muddled, most obviously in the Miles Davis track. Midband and treble, however, were very well liked, with praise for the tonal balance, detail and resolution. The opera track drew a couple of comments about forward presentation, but with the rider that the sound was still detailed and highly listenable.



It seems that the 8vs is particularly fond of voices. Several comments referring to the two vocal tracks suggested that voices are particularly clear and easy to follow, possibly at the expense of instrumental accompaniment to some extent. Nevertheless, purely instrumental tracks benefited from the amp's open and detailed sound and were on the whole very well balanced, both tonally and spatially. The 8vs/PSX-R combination is also extremely insightful, in part due to the communicative vocal articulation. All told, the panel found this a natural-sounding performer.

Without the additional power supply, the sound lost some of its incisiveness and became softer and more laid-back, but it retained much of its fine detail and front-to-back imaging.

It's clear that this amp is a capable performer that can give a great deal of insight into good recordings and a high degree of musical pleasure. For all-Cyrus or mixed-brand systems equally, a highly recommendable product. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >>> 88%	An unusually good-looking amplifier that sounds more than decent, with or without the add-on power supply. More grunt than you might expect, plus a real musical performance in all circumstances.
FEATURES >>> 84%	
BUILD >>> 86%	
VALUE >>> 87%	



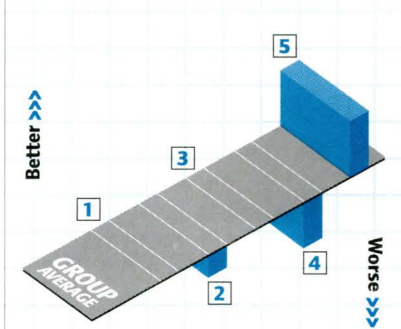
LAB REPORT

This was not the lowest-distortion amp in the group, although whether about 0.03% of predominantly third-order harmonic distortion is in any sense worrying is a moot point. Given that the ear is a surprisingly poor distortion detector, it's unlikely anyone will hear such low levels in reality.

Bizarrely, however, distortion figures rose by about 10dB (factor of three) with the PSX-R added, which does bring the distortion into the realms of possible audibility. That's at high power, at least; at low power (10W or so and below), with or without PSX-R, distortion drops to below 0.01% at any frequency. In another odd result, distortion actually drops into four ohm loads, so 'difficult' speakers should be a breeze.

There's plenty of current available, too. Noise is low, frequency response flat within a whisker over the audio band and at least an octave extra each end, and output power just exceeds the 70W rating.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Dynamic power >>> 0%
- 2] Frequency response >>> -20%
- 3] Dynamic range >>> 0%
- 4] Distortion >>> -40%
- 5] Output impedance >>> +50%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Power output (8 ohms)	70W	76W
Distortion (1 kHz/8 ohms)	0.003%	0.03%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	-	±0.25dB

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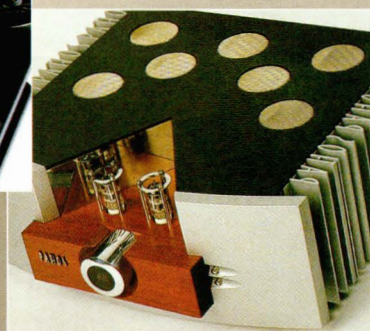
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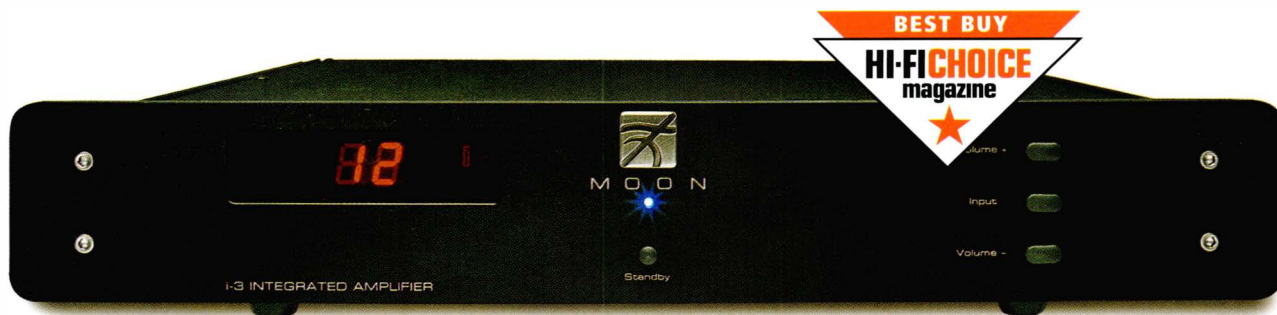
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MOON I-3

Those who crave a big, lively sound will go loony for Moon

Moon products – both amps and CD players – are made by the Canadian company Simaudio, which has been in business since 1980. The range has recently been introduced to the UK by Redline Distribution, and this model is pretty much the baby – there’s a 1kW monoblock power amp at the top of the food chain!

Features are pretty much the basic integrated amplifier set. You get six line-level inputs, tape and preamp out, single speaker terminals (particularly nice ones) and, of course, a remote handset that operates the electronic volume control and solid-state input switch. The volume control is a standard part, connected in a slightly non-standard configuration that is claimed to reduce the sonic signature. This also has the effect of giving rather large and uneven volume steps, which we found ourselves wishing could be smaller. Volume is displayed in arbitrary numbers from 0 to 50, and there’s rather too much visible through the display window in the way of internal components.

That apart, fit and finish are good and the unit is certainly very solidly made. Moon makes great claims for its circuit designs, including a configuration which “eliminates feedback”. Regardless, twinned pairs of output transistors give plenty of safety factor for high power.

SOUND QUALITY

For a couple of our listeners, this was the star of the show, the third placing it about halfway down the order. It was felt by all to be a lively and upbeat performer, which (in common with all the amps in this group) had the basics well and truly in place but, inasmuch as it had its own character, seemed distinctly cheerful and zippy. But that’s not to imply any loss of finesse or skimping on details. Indeed, one listener felt it had, by some margin, the best separation between sounds of any amp here, with each instrument given plenty of chance to ‘sing’.

There were a few slight reservations about stereo imaging, with a view of proceedings



somewhat at odds with the other amps, particularly in the opera track (which is unusually well recorded from that point of view). But, in the same track, there was praise for the way the voices seemed very immediate and less glossed over than with some other amps. Disagreement arose over timing, one listener finding it excellent while another thought the orchestral track in particular sounded rushed. There was almost no mention of tonal balance as such, but the frequent references to natural sound and lack of harshness suggest this is well judged.

We spent a long time auditioning this amplifier sighted, as its ‘blind’ test results seemed in some ways to be contradictory. Bass for instance: sometimes it seemed admirably strong and sometimes a little reticent. Stereo imaging could be excellent but occasionally a touch wayward, placing instruments where they haven’t been before. In fact, it seems that this amp is happier with large ensembles than small ones, an unusual state of affairs. On the other hand, we did manage to ascertain that tonality is particularly neutral across midrange and treble, and there’s no denying that it has a fine knack of extracting plenty of detail from recordings. Overall, then, it seems a safe enough recommendation, for an agreeable range of sonic virtues. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >>> 89%



Some mixed results over imaging and timing can’t detract from this amp’s lively, and at the same time highly informative, way of presenting music.

FEATURES >>> 74%



BUILD >>> 88%

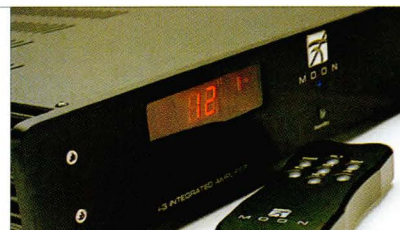


VALUE >>> 85%



Particularly at home with big-scale tracks.

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 87%

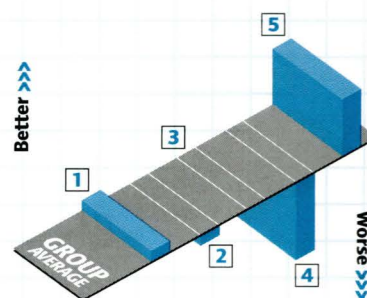


LAB REPORT

We obtained a maximum output before clip of a fraction less than the rating, 93W on both channels. Driving just one channel, this climbs to 100W and there’s a goodly current delivery available for low impedance loads. However, distortion is the highest in the group by some margin. It’s still not very high, at a worst-case figure of about 0.15% (high frequency), though it rises a little into four ohms. What’s possibly slightly more significant is that a fair bit of this distortion seems to be due to the input stages and therefore persists even when the volume is turned down.

Everything else seems perfectly fine (noise, bandwidth, offset) but the extent of distortion is, experience suggests, just on the sort of level where it has an effect on the amp’s sonic presentation and this almost certainly explains the slightly mixed results we obtained. Pretty subtle, though, and arguably a matter of taste.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Dynamic power >>> +10%
- 2] Frequency response >>> -10%
- 3] Dynamic range >>> 0%
- 4] Distortion >>> -70%
- 5] Output impedance >>> +50%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Power output (8 ohms)	100W	93W
Distortion (1kHz/8 ohms)	0.15%	0.06%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	–	±0.3dB



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MYRYAD MXI2080

Myriad redefines the 'kit' concept with its modular amplifier

We first looked at this smart unit in a solo review in *HFC* 260, where we revealed that as a box it's rather a kit-form affair which can be ordered loaded with varying numbers of modules for stereo integrated, or stereo/multichannel power, amplifier duty. Clever, but we should take this earliest opportunity to dispel any suspicion that 'kit-form' has any connotations for build quality. In fact, this is a particularly smart unit, its bulk somewhat lessened in effect by some well-judged chamfering on the front panel, the flush front lighting up with a nicely informative display when the little metal line above the display is touched to bring the amp out of standby. With practice, one learns not to brush the hand over that at inopportune moments...

Although the features list is short in terms of what the amp will do with a signal (amplify it!), it offers the highest input count of any model here, plus two tape outputs, bi-amp outputs and separate preamp out and power amp in per channel, which must be linked externally with a supplied short lead. There's also a pair of 'My-link' sockets for remote control connection. Inside the robust steel case, a pair of power amp modules and a separate preamp board do the business, aided by no less than three mains transformers – one each for power amp, preamp and control sections. Operation is simple and pleasant enough, though one can get a little bored adjusting volume over a wide range – the 0.5dB steps mean that ten turns of the knob are required from full volume to silence.

SOUND QUALITY

This amp was not the greatest hit of the day with our unsighted panel, even though such criticisms as they had were for the most part quite mild. The word "boring" only cropped up once, but other comments also suggest that it was not found the most involving of the group. We'll have to suspend judgement over dynamics, though, after one listener found them "compressed" and another "excellent", in



one and the same track – an illustration of how hard it can be select between amps that all offer an essentially strong performance from a sound quality viewpoint.

There was a definite sense that tonality is on the bright side, while in the bass there is excellent extension and control. Presumably associated with the brightness is a slightly harsh quality on some sounds (like trumpet) which are already bright. Voices in our opera excerpt were felt to be not quite as well defined and separated from each other as with some amps, but the placing of instruments within a large symphony orchestra was picked out for praise. Again and again, though, there were favourable comments about the bass, with bottom-line instruments possessing unusually good scale, weight and tunefulness.

Sighted listening definitely concurred on the bass front, but was more inclined to be forgiving in the treble. All the same, when heard alongside the best in the group there is indeed a little less of the 'keep-listening' quality to the amp, less of that beguiling sound that draws you into the music. Once again, the basics are present and correct and there's much to admire in this amp's performance, but it seems it is not the last word in listener involvement – at least when compared to this group's sonic stars. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >>> 84%



FEATURES >>> 86%



BUILD >>> 90%



VALUE >>> 86%



Treble can sometimes be a little uninvolved but bass is rich, deep and tuneful, and there's a good sense of scale to the proceedings. An accomplished amp in many respects, if not quite an outright star.

HI-FI CHOICE 85%
OVERALL SCORE

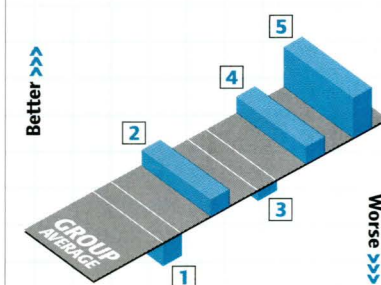


LAB REPORT

With worst-case distortion figures (across the range of frequency and power levels) struggling to exceed 0.01%, and typical results less than a third of that, it's hard to point the finger of blame where that perceived loss of involvement is concerned, unless our ears can really detect (and enjoy) a near-vanishing smidgin of distortion now and then. Even into four-ohm loads, distortion barely increases and, what's more, consists predominantly of second-order components which are generally considered the least audible.

Nothing else looks very worrying, either, with bandwidth well in excess of audio and noise down where it should be (notionally one of the 'worst' in the group, but it's all relative). Output impedance is low and consistent across the frequency range, and output power comfortably exceeds the 80W rating. In short, this is a well designed amplifier in all practical considerations.

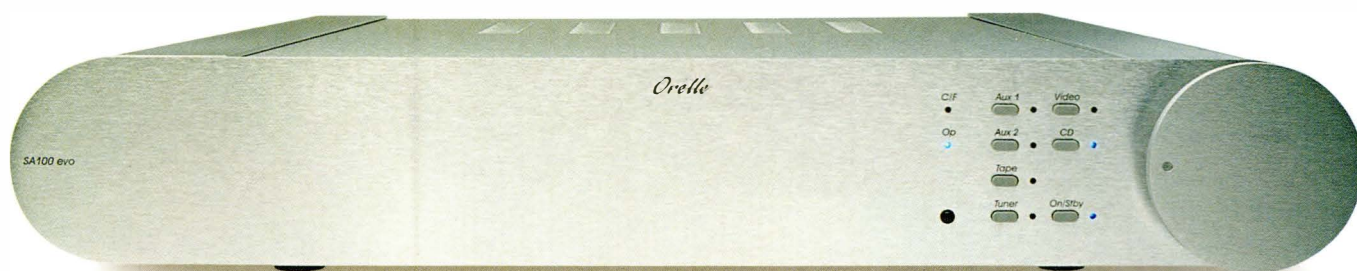
HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Dynamic power >>> -20%
- 2] Frequency response >>> +15%
- 3] Dynamic range >>> -10%
- 4] Distortion >>> +15%
- 5] Output impedance >>> +35%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Power output (8 ohms)	80W	91W
Distortion (1kHz/8 ohms)	0.02%	0.006%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	±0.2dB	±0.15dB



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ORELLE SA100EVO 2

Charles Darwin would be proud of Orelle's improvements

Orelle's amps have been quietly making a name for themselves for a while, and this 'evolution' of the original SA100 comes from a well-respected heritage. The most obvious change is in the case, which was previously painted but is now anodized aluminium, and a very smart thing it is too. But surface finishes take second place to the unusual and striking shape, with nicely radiused side pieces making the unit very distinctive. Even nicer, the volume control adopts the same diameter as the side and so almost vanishes. Good to look at and practical to operate, too.

The labelling on the front panel buttons could perhaps be a little larger (a fine line between keeping things minimalist and being legible to purchasers over 50!) but there's no denying that this is a very smart unit. It offers six line-level inputs (a phono stage is an option), 80 watts of power per channel and, apart from the remote control, is very much a classic line-level integrated in every way.

The circuit board inside has just enough components to do the job without unnecessary complication, and with a traditional motorised mechanical volume control there is no option of balance control – still less tone controls. The heatsink is internal and Orelle has used a substantial solid copper bracket to get the heat to it from the output transistors. Socketry runs to six line inputs, tape and preamp out, and twinned speaker terminals. We couldn't help noticing that the top cover is a bit inclined to rattle and might benefit from something being put on top of it to shut it up.

SOUND QUALITY

Our panellists liked this amplifier, yet on the whole declined to use many superlatives on it. In the end, the picture that emerges is of an amp with little of its own character, which gets on with the job in a trouble-free manner and doesn't draw attention to itself – and that's all to the good. There was the odd specific

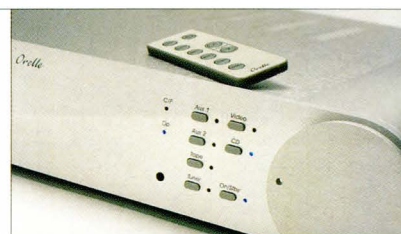


criticism: for example, it didn't give as much of a feeling of space in the orchestral track as some of the other amps, and opinion was unanimous in finding its bass a little tuneless in the Miles Davis track.

On the credit side though, it was found to be essentially neutral, with an even presentation and – apart from that one example quoted – pleasingly rich bass. Dynamics seemed good, among the best in the group, with vocals particularly well served, clear and precise. Within the stereo image, separation of instruments was not felt to be perfectly preserved but the image itself was still spacious and credible, throughout the musical extracts. In particular, its timing was praised on several occasions.

Subsequent sighted listening confirmed the suspicion that this is a great 'fit 'n' forget' amplifier. It has a happy knack of making one unaware of its presence the vast majority of the time, and while the lover of thrills and spills may find it lacklustre, if you just want to enjoy your favourite discs it will not disappoint. It's true that the bass is just occasionally a little dull, but the excellent detail, unfussy delivery of power and very good tonal balance make for a delightful combination of new insights and low stress levels. **HFC**

VERDICT	
SOUND >>> 87%	It doesn't heap detail upon the listener, nor does it make great play of imaging or spotlighting tricks, but it makes very musical sounds in just the right way to put the emphasis where it belongs – on the music!
FEATURES >>> 73%	
BUILD >>> 84%	
VALUE >>> 84%	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 85%	

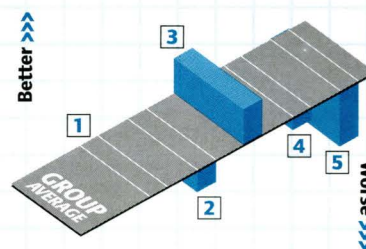


LAB REPORT

Output power of 86W exceeds the specification by a comfortable margin, while output into four ohms is a little less clear-cut as distortion starts to creep up before actual clip is reached. In fact, while maximum peak output current is par for the course, this unit seems a little less assured than some in delivering practical high current.

Short of that, though, distortion is low, hovering below the 0.01% level at high power over most of the frequency band and vanishing into noise below a couple of watts output. Bandwidth is a little more curtailed than some but still fine (-1dB at 45kHz) and output impedance a little above average at about a quarter of an ohm, which is in theory just enough to give a barely-detectable response shift into really awkward speakers – not much of a problem in reality. Noise is low but compromised by spiky hum, admittedly around the -95dB level, where its audibility is at worst marginal.

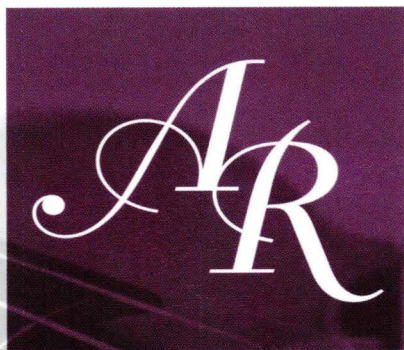
HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Dynamic power >>> 0%
- 2] Frequency response >>> -20%
- 3] Dynamic range >>> +30%
- 4] Distortion >>> -10%
- 5] Output impedance >>> -50%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Power output (8 ohms)	80W	86W
Distortion (1kHz/8 ohms)	0.1%	0.007%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	-	±0.30dB



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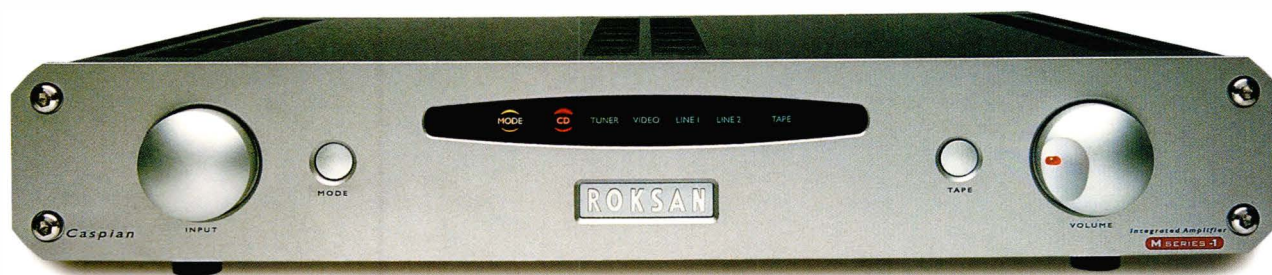
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ROKSAN CASPIAN M SERIES

A traditional integrated amp offering traditional Roksan benefits

Another classic integrated in many ways, this one preserves the time-honoured front panel array of two knobs, one each for source selection and volume. Volume uses a regular (motorised) potentiometer, while source selection is via relays to facilitate remote control. There's also a 'mode' button for putting the unit into and out of standby, although it takes a few goes to get used to the idea that the associated indicator is green in standby and red for normal operation. The same button can put the amp into an unusual mute mode where volume is merely cut back by 20dB rather than cut off completely, useful when answering the phone and so on.

Six line inputs are joined by a tape output (with a proper tape monitor function, for once) and two preamp outputs, making bi-amping and tri-amping a breeze. Output is through a single pair of speaker terminals. Internally, the standard of construction is excellent and the unit has a high level of finish.

SOUND QUALITY

In the very first track, one blind-listening panellist practically wrote off this amp's treble accuracy in a single sweeping statement. However, his opinions clearly mellowed as the music wore on, and minutes later he was writing lots of nice things about natural, free-breathing vocals. A lesson, perhaps, in whether to trust snap judgements? But perhaps they are not entirely misleading, because it did seem to be the treble that attracted most criticism. Another listener complained of a slight lack of naturalness on orchestral violins, and later Miles Davis' trumpet, while the third couldn't quite put a finger on the treble's behaviour, but found percussion synthetic. And, in a relatively rare display of complete unanimity, the harpsichord in the opera excerpt was thought slightly recessed at the expense of strings.

That paints a relatively uninspiring picture, but the bass perks things up – its weight was praised, as was the way in which the it propels



the music along and holds it all together. Timing divided opinion, with some criticism of seemingly over-fast tempi in the orchestral and jazz extracts but also some definite praise in the Michael Jackson track. Piano was felt to be full-bodied but perhaps bright, while vocals were widely felt to be very clear.

In an effort to get to the bottom of this rather mixed reception, we spent some time alone with the Roksan directly after the panel sessions and came to the conclusion that there is something about snappy transients and treble-rich sounds that bother it. As a result, its sound depends unusually strongly on the music it is being asked to reproduce. Mellow or full-sounding music does just fine, but close-miked violin and small percussion instruments, for instance, are not so well served. That is, if the finer details of natural reproduction are your desire; it has to be said that for sheer excitement, this amp probably leads the group.

This is where it all starts to make sense – the excellent timing in the Jackson song, good bass, very slight brightness, not to mention Roksan's reputation (of course, the panel didn't know it was a Roksan)... we're looking at an 'energy first' audio product. It just had the bad luck to fall in with a group of 'neutrality first' types. What can we say? Recommended on its own terms! **HFC**

VERDICT

<p>SOUND >> 84% </p> <p>FEATURES >> 75% </p> <p>BUILD >> 85% </p> <p>VALUE >> 84% </p>	<p>Though something of an HFC office favourite, the Caspian M is perhaps not the amp of choice if it's neutrality you're after. But its engaging liveliness will win it many friends, with rock/pop fans in particular.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 84%</p>
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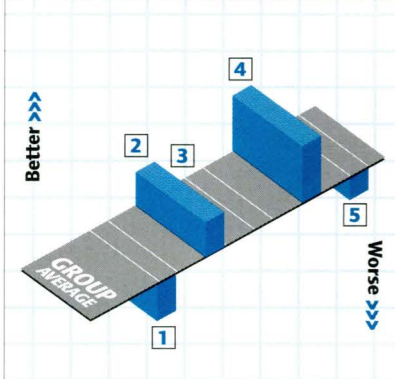
LAB REPORT

This is a really tricky one, because our listening results would tend to make one suspect some mild fiddling with accuracy to achieve the ends. But all we could find is some of the best measurements around.

Distortion, typically around 0.003% or lower, vies with Arcam for best on test and barely increases into four ohms. Frequency response is virtually ruler-flat to well beyond 20kHz and output impedance is similar in value to most of the others. Noise is about average for the group and in the end the only figure we could identify that's substantially worse than the others is output offset – 20mV on one channel, 50mV on the other. But that's hardly vast, and the ATC speakers used are particularly insensitive to offset problems anyway.

No, on this occasion we must allow Roksan some trade secrets and can only commend the company on an exemplary measured performance by most conventional parameters.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Dynamic power >> -30%
- 2] Frequency response >> +30%
- 3] Dynamic range >> 0%
- 4] Distortion >> +40%
- 5] Output impedance >> -20%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Power output (8 ohms)	85W	78W
Distortion (1 kHz/8 ohms)	0.0025%	0.003%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	-	±0.1dB

CONCLUSIONS

This sextet of amps shows just how good integrated stereo amplification has become

Evolution is a wonderful thing. It's true that at times we miss some of the faintly bonkers off-the-wall hi-fi components of the mid-1980s, but if we reviewers are going to have to put hand on heart and recommend something, we'd ultimately rather it should be a proper, grown-up, fully-designed and all-round competent model – like the six amps in this group.

The downside, though, is that it can get fantastically hard to choose between models because, make no mistake about it, they're all good. Put 'em side by side and

you'll hear differences, just as our 'blind' listeners did with this group of amplifiers, but in isolation you might have some trouble identifying real flaws with any of them. And, while measurements are certainly not everything, the fact that several of these amps measure better than any high-end power amp of the early 1990s (and the rest aren't alarmingly worse) must count for something.

None of which should dissuade you from having a listen at your own leisure in your local dealer's showroom or indeed, if you can

wangle it, your own home.

Sometimes very small failings can really niggle and it's nice to be sure. But as far as we can see, the story goes like this.

None of these amps obviously walked it on sound alone. The Arcam and Moon models may be ahead by a nose, but Cyrus and Orelle are very close behind and Myryad and Roksan hard on their heels in turn. Still, there's always character to consider and on that basis you may decide to plump for the refined and respectable Arcam over the more feisty Roksan, or vice

versa. The Cyrus, of course, has its own place in an all-Cyrus system, but elsewhere there's much to commend it, while the Orelle specialises in disappearing sonically and the Myryad will convince some folks with its bass performance alone.

In the end, we gave the highest score to the Arcam simply because to arguably-best sound it adds easily-best features. But if the minimalist approach suits you, don't overlook any of the others – this is one of the starriest groups we've seen! **HFC**

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CYRUS CDBX £1,000

This player showed an impressive range of strengths in our recent group test.

HINTS AND TIPS

» Don't stack equipment on an amplifier – you could end up causing overheating problems.

» Use decent cables in and out, and make sure that speaker cables are not frayed or contacting the chassis at any point. Tighten screw-down speaker terminals from time to time.

» If an amp has a standby function, use that in preference to the mains switch unless it will be off for a couple of days at least.

» Amps are seldom microphonic, but the case can resonate in response to the speakers. A few strategically-placed damping devices work wonders.

AMPLIFIERS AT A GLANCE



MAKE MODEL	Arcam FMJ A32	Cyrus 8vs/PSX-R	Moon i-3	Myryad MXI2080	Orelle SA100evo 2	Roksan Caspian M Series
PRICE	£1,200	£1,200	£1,595	£1,100	£1,200	£1,000
SOUND						
FEATURES						
BUILD						
VALUE						
OVERALL						
CONCLUSION	Ultra-civilised but highly revealing and enjoyably musical. Great feature set too.	A smart little amp, tested here with the PSX-R power supply upgrade. Packs a punch and loves detail.	Lively presentation is particularly suited to big-scale music. Excellent in the right context.	Rich bass underpins a full-bodied performance, though the treble is occasionally uninvolved.	A modest amp that likes to give precedence to the music. Stylish and sonically unassuming.	Rather more of a party animal – lively and danceable. Supplies music with engaging energy.
KEY FEATURES						
LINE INPUTS	5	7	6	8	6	6
TAPE OUTPUTS	2	1	1	1	1	1
PHONO INPUT	Yes (MM/MC)	No	No	No	No	No
SIZE (W X H X D)	43 x 10 x 23cm	21.5 x 7.5 x 36.5cm	43 x 7.5 x 39cm	44 x 9.5 x 35.5cm	44 x 7 x 36cm	43.5 x 8 x 33cm
WEIGHT	12kg	5.6kg (8vs)	10kg	11kg	8.5kg	10kg
REMOTE CONTROL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
BALANCED INPUT	No	No	No	No	No	No
LAB CONCLUSIONS E = EXCELLENT • G = GOOD • A = AVERAGE • P = POOR						
CLIP POINT (8 OHM)	29.2V G	24.8V A	27.3V G	27V G	26.3V A	25V A
FREQUENCY RESPONSE	±0.2dB G	±0.25dB G	±0.3dB G	±0.15dB E	±0.3dB G	±0.1dB E
DYNAMIC RANGE	97dB A	99dB G	99dB G	98dB A	104dB E	99dB G
DISTORTION	0.003% E	0.03% G	0.06% A	0.006% E	0.007% E	0.003% E
OUTPUT IMPEDANCE	0.13 ohm A	0.11 ohm A	0.06 ohm G	0.08 ohm G	0.25 ohm A	0.14 ohm A

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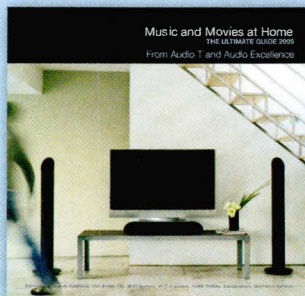
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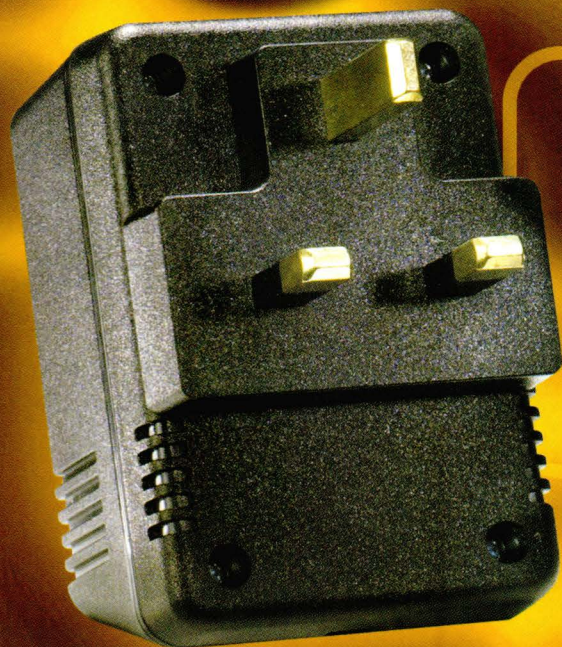
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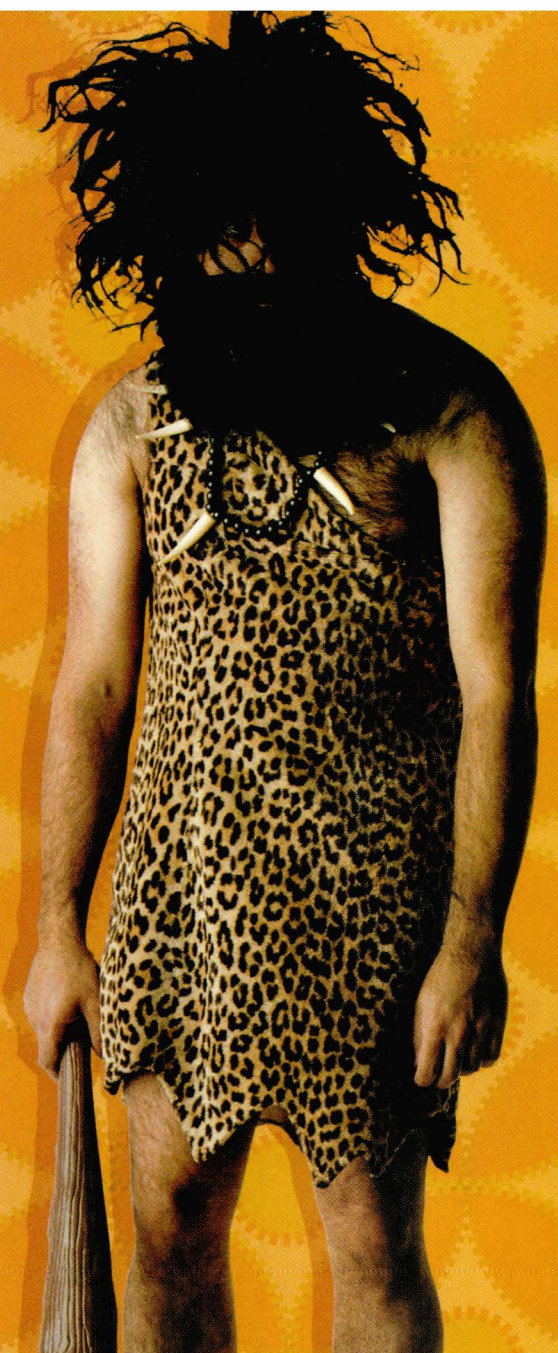
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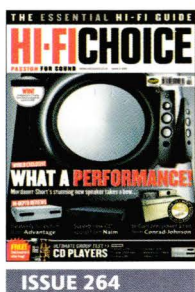
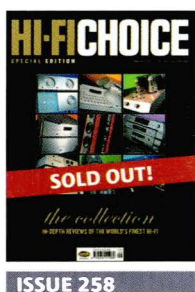
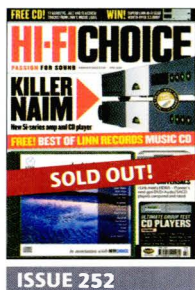
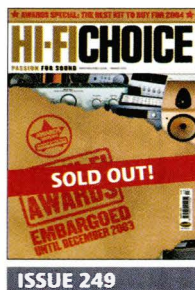


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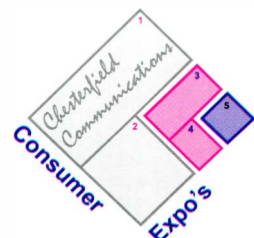
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HI-FI CHOICE BUYER'S BIBLE



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 44.1kHz 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.

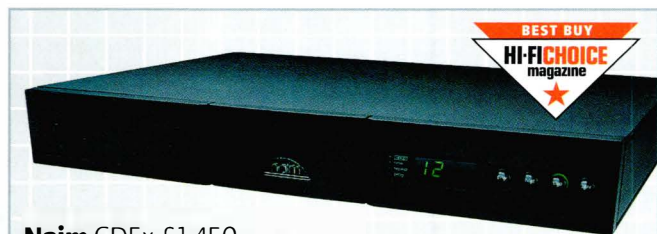
Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

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	
UP TO £1,000											
BB	Arcam DIVA CD73T	400	Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic – a finely judged balance for budget to mid-price systems	●	●	●	●				247
BB	Arcam DIVA CD192	850	Beautifully built, well featured player with clear, open and involving sound	●	●	●	●				264
BB	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
BB	Cyrus CD8x	1,000	Impressive mix of detail, musicality, analysis and appearance. Even better with the PSX-R power supply (£400)	●	●	●					264
BB	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
BB	Marantz CD7300	350	Astonishingly capable sub-£500 player with effortless bass, detailed mid and treble and vast soundstages	●	●	●	●	●			250
BB	Musical Fidelity X-Ray ³	900	Think of this as an A3.2 CD player in a smaller, cheaper box. Great, earthy CD sound for the money	●	●	●					255
BB	Naim CD5i	825	As idiosyncratic as ever, but sonically the CD5i is the definitive player at the price				●				259
	Quad 99 CD-P	1,000	Good but not outstanding player that also doubles as a preamp, with digital inputs and volume controls		●	●					259
BB	Roksan Kandy MkIIID	650	Clean, tidy and expressive player – a more than worthwhile improvement on previous versions	●	●	●		●			259
BB	Sony SCD-XA3000ES	800	A revised and refined version of the SCD-XA333ES that provides an almost holographic sound	●	●	●	●	●			248
ABOVE £1,000											
BB	Audio Analogue Maestro	1,650	The new Maestro 192/24 delivers a sound that's slightly rosy yet always musical and thoroughly enjoyable	●	●	●		●			257
EC	Audionet ART V2	2,300	Built to last forever, this CD has a dark natural sound with excellent bass and would be cheap at twice the price!	●		●					231
EC	Ayre CX-7 CD Player	2,950	Superbly built and natural sounding player that will win you over with its range of capabilities and transparency	●		●		●			251
EC	BAT VK-D5SE CD Player	5,495	Superb valve CD player that is smooth and refined but with real guts that doesn't conform to valve stereotypes	●	●	●		●			251
	Exposure XXII	1,395	Natural sounding player, great with voices and acoustic instruments and makes for engaging listening	●	●	●					238
	Hegel CDP2A	1,500	A technically proficient and masterly-sounding player built by people who clearly know what they are doing	●	●	●		●			252
EC	Krell SACD Standard	4,244	A landmark SACD player and an excellent CD player at what by Krell standards is a relatively affordable price	●	●	●	●	●			251
EC	Lindemann 820	6,999	Stereo SACD player with sumptuous build and sound, onboard analogue volume control and multiple digital inputs	●	●	●		●		●	262
BB	Marantz SA-11S1	2,000	A stereo player for audiophiles – lack of DVD and multichannel SACD lead to subtle, highly focussed sound	●	●	●	●	●			265
	Meridian G07	1,595	Immaculately conceived and executed player with a softly-spoken voice. Needs careful system matching	●	●	●		●			259
EC	Meridian 808i Signature	8,250	Stunning CD player with added preamp functions. Versatile and quite delightful	●	●	●	●	●		●	263
BB	Naim CD5x	1,450	A genuinely engaging CD player with remarkable musical grip and coherence				●				264
EC	Naim CDX2	2,700	Fine quality one-box CD player, but its best feature is upgradeability via outboard XPS supply				●				238
	Orelle CD100evo2	1,299	Relaxed, but strong on refinement and detail. An intelligent choice, particularly strong with acoustic music	●	●	●					259
EC	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
EC	Sony SCD-XA9000ES	2,400	State-of-the-art CD and SACD player with full SACD bass management and i.Link-encrypted digital output	●	●		●	●		●	253
EC	Wadia 302	3,999	A dynamic and gripping player, with bass to die for and resolution to change your listening habits	●	●	●		●		●	253
EC	Wadia 861se	9,999	Stunning player with a full digital preamp and an all-revealing sound that'll keep you up all night	●	●	●		●		●	256

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 multifunction 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

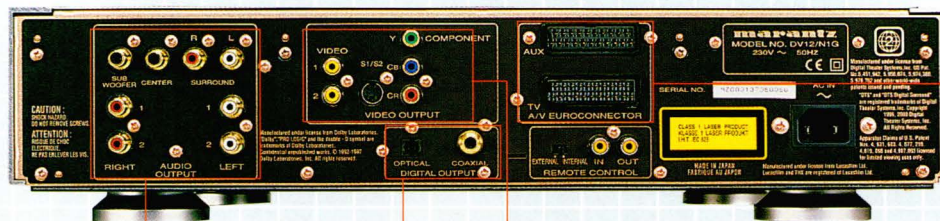
DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player.

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



SCART

CONNECTIONS: These are a good-quality option for video, especially ones that output RGB.

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.

Our favourite DVD PLAYERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Audio/Video disc players

BADGE	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				DVD-A COMPATIBLE	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC. DIG. OUTPUT	OPT. DIG. OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000									
	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
	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
	Denon DVD-3910	900	Exceptionally well-specified universal player with a performance to match. A true class-leader						260
	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
	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
	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
ABOVE £1,000									
	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
	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
	Linn Unidisk SC	2,995	Groundbreaking universal player with built-in preamplifier, with excellent picture for home cinema and sound for hi-fi						259
	Meridian G91	3,895	A DVD-A/V player, preamp/processor and tuner combined – great as a two-channel player, or in a complete Meridian rig						260
	Meridian G98	3,625	Meridian's most widely compatible G-Series DVD player – groundbreaking DVD-Audio replay and a fine CD player too						265
	Meridian 800	10,805	The ultimate in DVD replay, modular construction, buffered ROM drive, upsampling and high-res digital outputs						230
	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
	Primare DVD30	2,000	A universal player for audiophiles – no wideband digital outputs but masterful with music and a good picture too						253
	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.

Sound Fantastic

Olsons new *Sound Fantastic* range of units are specifically designed for both the home and professional hi-fi audio markets.

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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				
				SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	ISSUE NUMBER
BB	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
BB	Avid Diva	1,100	A solid and powerful sounding deck with fine build, requires a smooth, relaxed cartridge for best results	33/45	●	●		247
EC	Avid Volvere Sequel	3,500	Heavyweight turntable that will deliver more of what's in a vinyl groove than most of the competition	33/45	●	●		229
EC	Avid Acutus	6,000	Extremely capable design with no apparent shortcomings. Don't sell your vinyl 'til you've heard it on this!	33/45	●	●		194
EC	Clearaudio Master Reference	12,610	Revealing and exciting turntable that revels in the fine details (reviewed with Master TQ-I arm/Accurate cartridge)	33/45		●	●	256
BB	Michell Gyro SE	1,058	New DC motor-equipped Gyro offers great looks and even better sound. Price includes RB300 arm	33/45	●		●	239
EC	Michell Orbe SE	2,015	A superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price. Now features new DC motor	33/45	●			235
BB	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
BB	Pro-Ject Debut III	120	Superb budget deck offering fine build and performance	33/45			●	261
BB	Pro-Ject 1 Xpression	210	Well designed and executed budget deck with an entertaining and revealing sound	33/45			●	248
BB	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
	Rega P3/RB300	298	Updated Planar 3, building on the strengths of the P2 with added subtlety and detail	33/45			●	214
BB	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
BB	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
EC	Rega P9/RB1000	2,498	Exceptionally elegant hi-tech player with complex outboard supply, ceramic platter and wonderful RB1000 tonearm	33/45		●	●	228
BB	Roksan Radius 5/Nima	850	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation (acrylic version tested)	33/45	●		●	248
EC	Roksan TMS2/Artemiz	7,500	Typical Roksan sound, but better: pitch-accurate, lean, detailed and controlled, without the 'bloat' of lesser designs	33/45	●	●		246
EC	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V/309 hybrid arm	33/45	●	●	●	195
EC	SME Model 20.2A	5,274	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	33/45/78	●	●	●	186
EC	T+A G10R/PH-G10MC	2,550	Style meets substance in a highly credible complete package, with integral phono step-up	33/45		●	●	261
EC	Townshend Rock Anniversary	8,000	If you want to get to the meat and bones of the music this is a great tool for the job (price inc. Excalibur arm)	33/45	●		●	259

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

PHONO CARTRIDGES

MM and MC cartridges

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	ISSUE NUMBER
	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
BB	Grado Prestige Gold	110	Produces rich, open and expansive music with the minimum of fuss	●		●	235
EC	Linn Akiva	1,800	With fine dynamic expression and a wide bandwidth, what you hear sounds very close to master tape		●	●	242
EC	Lyra Helikon	1,095	Highly capable and highly neutral, this is a cartridge for all seasons, albeit fussy about vinyl quality	●			215
BB	Sumiko Blue Point Special	250	A no-nonsense performer with engaging musical properties – one of the best around for less than £300			●	192
BB	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
EC	van den Hul Colibri XGP	2,699	Phenomenal resolution, custom building to suit hard and software, but needs 500 ohm loading and is vulnerable to damage			●	244
EC	van den Hul Condor XCM	2,400	A stunning cartridge with stereo imaging, dynamics and detail resolution to die for			●	265
EC	Wilson Benesch Naked Analog	1,450	With its smooth clean highs, transparent midband and nimble bass, this is a lot of performance for the money			●	253

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

PHONO STAGES

Phono stages

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				
				MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	AOL GAIN	AOL IMPEDANCE	ISSUE NUMBER
	Musical Fidelity X-LPS ³	249	Simple, well turned out valve-driven phono stage lacks adjustability, but sounds sweet, open and well-behaved	●	●			248
BB	NAD PP2 phono stage	50	A fine buy for turntable users on a tight budget – open tonality and clarity is distinctly impressive for the money	●	●			245
BB	Tom Evans Microgroove	400	For dynamics and real bass extension with good tonal colour this is the one to beat. The Plus version (£700) is even better!		●			234
EC	Tom Evans The Groove	1,800	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for maximum information retrieval off any LP		●			201
BB	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

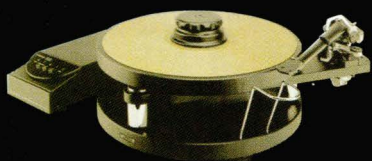
CARTRIDGE SPECS KEY **MM** Moving magnet cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type. **MC** Moving coil cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type

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

SME

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Model 10



Model 20/2



Model 30/2



Series M2



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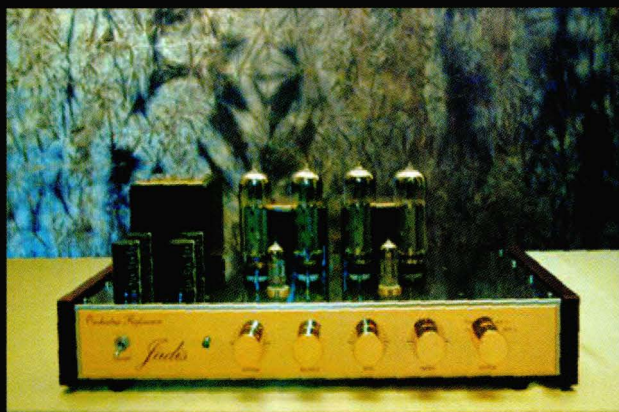
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RADIO TUNERS

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 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	SPECIFICATIONS						
				WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER
	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
DAB TUNERS										
	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



Philips CDR802 £300

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



Marantz DR6000 £400

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



Yamaha CDR-HD1300 £600

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



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	SPECIFICATIONS				
				DECKS	HD CAPACITY (GB)	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS	ISSUE NUMBER
CD-R/RW RECORDERS								
	Denon CDR-1000	400	A respectable player and recorder, though some midband congestion was noted when recording	1		●	●	218
BEST	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
BEST	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
BEST	Philips CDR951	380	An improvement on previous models, it delivers the musical goods in some style	1		●	●	205
BEST	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
MD RECORDERS								
	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
HDD RECORDERS								
	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
BEST	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.

SEVENOAKS

SOUND & VISION

NEW STORES

ABERDEEN

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SWINDON 8-9 COMMERCIAL ROAD 01793 610992

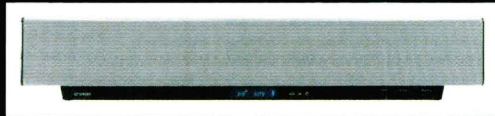
The Swindon store has reopened after a short break with an improved range of the best in hi-fi and home cinema. The excellent facilities and quality of service remain the same. The store is close to the town centre with parking nearby.

NEW



YAMAHA introduces a revolutionary home cinema system, the YSP-1 Digital Sound Projector.

Featuring an array of 40 drivers and two woofers driven by digital amplifiers with steering logic, the slim, wall-mountable YSP-1 delivers high-quality surround sound, making it an ideal match for flat panel displays in home cinema installations.



YAMAHA
YSP-1 £799.95

NEW ARCAM SOLO ALL-IN-ONE MUSIC SYSTEM

SOLO represents the best of Arcam music technology housed in one sleek, easy-to-operate system. Featuring an audiophile CD player, a 50 WPC amplifier combined with a DAB digital radio and a high quality FM tuner, the SOLO music system will captivate all who listen.



ARCAM SOLO £999.95

With over 30 years experience, **SEVENOAKS** Sound & Vision is one of the largest and most respected Audio/Visual 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 recorders, widescreen plasma televisions and projection systems.

Our fully trained installation experts can neatly and seamlessly integrate a home cinema or hi-fi system into your home. All electronics can be hidden away, speakers discreetly mounted either in the wall or ceiling and the complete system operated via remote control.

Whatever your requirements, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision has a diverse range of products and the expertise to advise, demonstrate and guide you through the home entertainment jungle.

- THE BEST PERFORMANCE
- THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY
- THE WIDEST RANGE
- ... AND TOTAL PEACE OF MIND

ABERDEEN (NEW)

BEDFORD

BIRMINGHAM

BRIGHTON

BRISTOL

BROMLEY

CAMBRIDGE

CARDIFF

CHELSEA

CHELTHAM

CRAWLEY

CROYDON

EALING

EDINBURGH

EPSOM

EXETER

GLASGOW

GUILDFORD

HOLBORN

HULL

IPSWICH

KINGSTON

LEICESTER

LEEDS

LINCOLN

MAIDSTONE

MANCHESTER

NEWCASTLE

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SHEFFIELD

SOLIHULL

SOUTHAMPTON

SOUTHGATE

STAINES

SWINDON (NEW)

SWISS COTTAGE

TUNBRIDGE WELLS

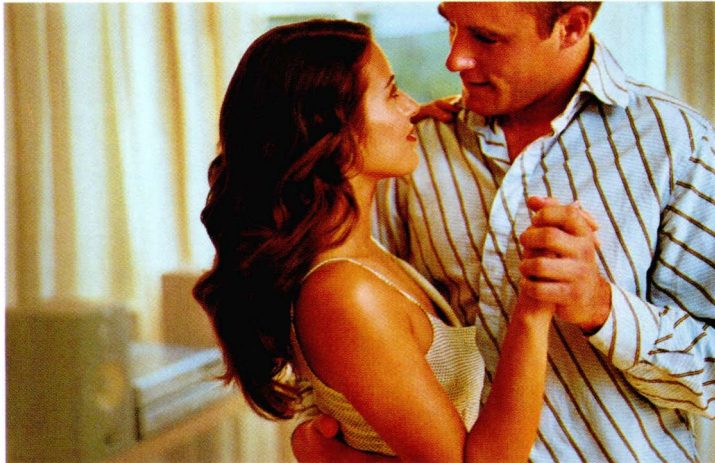
WATFORD

WEYBRIDGE

WILMSLOW (OPENING SOON)

WITHAM (ESSEX)

WOLVERHAMPTON



Arcam

Arcam has spent more than a generation building some of the finest high-fidelity products the world has ever seen. Whether you're interested in two-channel or a complete multi-channel AV system, the Arcam DIVA series offers the music and movie lover the most complete range of high-performance home entertainment solutions from any specialist manufacturer.



DIVA SERIES INCLUDES
A65 PLUS AMPLIFIER
A80 AMPLIFIER
A90 AMPLIFIER
CD73T CD PLAYER
CD192 CD PLAYER
T61 TUNER
DT91 DAB TUNER
DV78 DVD PLAYER
DV79 DVD PLAYER
AVR250 AV RECEIVER
AVR300 AV RECEIVER



Cyrus

If you've enjoyed listening to music before, try listening to it through a Cyrus system. With every product tuned by ear, Cyrus represents a quality of sound, which is rare at any price. Invest in a Cyrus system and you'll be rewarded with a wealth of sound you wouldn't have thought possible.

RANGE INCLUDES
CD6 CD PLAYER
CD8X CD PLAYER
6VS AMPLIFIER
8VS AMPLIFIER
PRE X VS PREAMPLIFIER
FM X TUNER

Specialist hi-fi

Contemporary hi-fi is constantly setting new standards in sound reproduction and design. Whatever you listen to, be it Robbie Williams or Rachmaninov, Sevenoaks can recommend separate components that will bring your music collection to life and complement your home. We're enthusiasts and experts, passionate about helping you build (or upgrade) a system that will delight for years to come.



Rotel

Rotel is truly unique: a family-owned, specialist Japanese company whose passionate interest in music led them to manufacture audio components of uncompromised quality.

The **02 Series** is Rotel's entry-level range. The RCD-02 CD player combined with either the RA-01 or RA-02 integrated amplifier represent true audiophile performance at an affordable price. For increased high-end performance, the RC-03/RB-3 pre/power amplifiers are available. The RT-02 tuner completes the range.

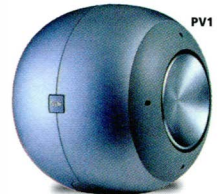
02 SERIES
RA-01 AMPLIFIER
RA-02 AMPLIFIER
RA-03 AMPLIFIER
RCD-02 CD PLAYER
RT-02 TUNER
10 SERIES
RA-1062 AMPLIFIER
RCD-1072 CD PLAYER



B&W

Since the outset, the focus of Bowers and Wilkins Loudspeakers has always been to offer the best possible musical experience. With a combination of the latest R&D techniques and a passion for music, B&W produces a diverse range of products befitting the largest audio manufacturer in the UK.

600 SERIES INCLUDES
DM601 S3 SPEAKERS
DM602 S3 SPEAKERS
700 SERIES INCLUDES
705 SPEAKERS
703 SPEAKERS
FPM SERIES INCLUDES
PV1 SUBWOOFER



Project

Project is currently one of the world's leading suppliers of turntables, with a range of models designed to satisfy all levels of expectation and budget. The range is simple to use, maintenance free and will function for a lifetime.

DEBUT III TURNTABLE WITH OM5E CARTRIDGE
DEBUT PHONO SB TURNTABLE WITH OM5E CARTRIDGE
1 XPRESSION TURNTABLE WITH OM10E CARTRIDGE



£ 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.

ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES

The right accessories can make or break your system. Our carefully selected range, including QED, Soundstyle and Grado, will ensure you get the very best performance from your system.

0% FINANCE OPTION*

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/brands are not available at all stores. Please call to confirm or visit our website before travelling.

*Added Value Offers - From range available in-store. Not in conjunction with any other offer. ADVERT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 07/04/2005, E&OE.



Roksan

Roksan designs and manufactures some of the most acclaimed hi-fi equipment currently available. All Roksan products are carefully evaluated by experienced engineers at every stage of the design process with the emphasis on performance and build quality.

Kandy

KA1 MKIII AMPLIFIER
KD1 MKIII CD PLAYER

Caspian M SERIES

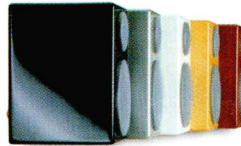
CD PLAYER
AMPLIFIER
PREAMPLIFIER
STEREO POWER
MONOBLOC POWER



Monitor Audio

Since 1972 Monitor Audio has been developing and perfecting the implementation of metal drivers, innovative crossovers, and exemplary speaker cabinet construction and finish to further the ideal of achieving sound which is to the original "as close as it gets"

The range includes - Gold, Silver, Bronze and new Radius, a seriously compact system bringing true hi-fi performance to both music and movies at home.



<< RADIUS



MODELS INCLUDE
BRONZE B2, B2 AV, B4 AV
SILVER S1, S6, S8
GOLD REFERENCE 10 & 60



SILVER S6

<< BRONZE B2

"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."

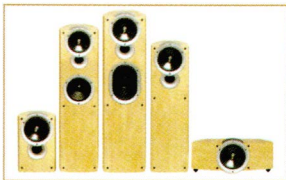


KEF Q Series

The Latest evolution of the acclaimed Q Series demonstrates how the benefits of KEF technology cascade down from the Reference Series to more affordable ranges. New Q features all the inherent advantages of KEF UNI-Q® technology and are available in a variety of Finishes.

Q SERIES INCLUDES

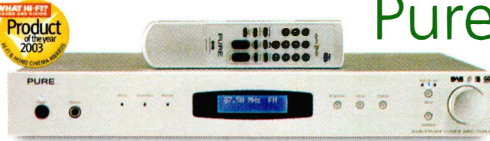
Q COMPACT BOOKSHELF SPEAKER
Q4 FLOORSTANDING SPEAKER
Q7 AV SPEAKER PACKAGE



Digital Radio Harman Kardon

UT970 DAB/ANALOGUE TUNER

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.



Pure

DRX702ES DAB/ANALOGUE TUNER

Wharfedale

DIAMOND 9.1 SPEAKERS

"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." digital technologies from one of the oldest hi-fi names.



Essential Accessories

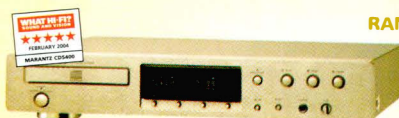
The right accessories can make or break your system. Our carefully selected range, including QED, SOUNDSTYLE and GRADO, will ensure you get the very best performance from your system.

Interconnect & Speaker Cables
Speaker Stands
Headphones
Equipment Supports



Marantz

The Marantz 'Range Series' offers flexible system building options for every lifestyle.



CD5400 "This is a remarkable CD player for the money, with superb sound, looks and feel - A very solid buy and a lot of fun."

RANGE SERIES INCLUDES

CD5400 CD PLAYER
PM4400 AMPLIFIER
PM7200 AMPLIFIER
ST4000 TUNER
SR4500 AV RECEIVER
SR5500 AV RECEIVER
DV4500 DVD PLAYER

Acoustic Energy



Established in 1987, Acoustic Energy is one of Britain's premier loudspeaker manufacturers offering one of the most targeted range of hi-fi and home cinema loudspeaker systems on the market today.

<< AE1 MKIII

AELITE THREE >>



Denon

D-M31 CD RECEIVER

"Even better than the Award-winning DM30, making it phenomenal value for money."



Musical Fidelity A5 Series

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."

A5 SERIES A5 AMPLIFIER & CD PLAYER
X SERIES X-80 AMPLIFIER
X-150 AMPLIFIER
X-RAY³ CD PLAYER





Specialist home cinema

The recent growth of DVD has led to a huge rise in demand for home cinema equipment. The prices of DVD players, AV receivers, projectors and plasma screens continue to fall but, with so many options, it's not easy to know which ones will suit your needs. Indeed, in the face of this quickly evolving and often bemusing array of products, we aim to assist you in assembling a home cinema system to be proud of – one that achieves outstanding picture and sound quality.



Pioneer

MODELS INCLUDE

A/V AMPLIFIER VSA-AX10Ai
A/V RECEIVERS VSX-D814 • VSX-2014i • VSX-AX5Ai
UNIVERSAL DVD PLAYERS DV668Av • DV868Avi



DV-575A "For outstanding all-round ability there are few players that can match Pioneer's DV-575A."



VSX-AX5Ai Tweaked version of the Award-winning VSX-AX5i with additional sound-processing modes.

Yamaha

Recognised as a world leader in the fields of musical instruments and audio equipment, and in more recent years, home cinema. Yamaha brings you, through CINEMA DSP for audio, Natural Black for video and other innovative technologies, a truly extraordinary home entertainment experience.

MODELS INCLUDE

A/V AMPLIFIERS DSP-AX750SE • DSP-Z9
A/V RECEIVERS RX-V1500RDS • RX-V2500RDS
DVD PLAYERS DVD-S550 • DVD-S1500



Denon

Denon, Japan's oldest audio company, has established an enviable reputation for the performance of both its hi-fi and home cinema products, winning numerous awards and accolades over the years. Its stylish systems have succeeded in becoming the benchmark by which all other are judged.

MODELS INCLUDE

A/V RECEIVERS
 AVR-1905 • AVR-2105 • AVR-2805 • AVR-3805

A/V AMPLIFIER AVC-A1XV

DVD PLAYERS DVD-1710 • DVD-1910

UNIVERSAL DVD PLAYERS
 DVD-2910 • DVD-3910 • DVD-A11 • DVD-A1XV

DVD SYSTEMS
 DHT-500SD • DHT-550SD



AVR-2805 "Last year's Award-winning AVR-2803 finally meets its match in the shape of this storming successor from Denon."

DHT-500SD

"The Denon DHT-500SD is the best home cinema system you can find in one box. If you're not confident that separates are the answer for you - too complex or too expensive - then the Denon provides the ideal solution."



Arcam

Whether you're interested in two-channel or a complete multi-channel AV system, Arcam offers the music and movie lover the most complete range of high-performance home entertainment solutions from any specialist manufacturer.

DVD PLAYERS

DIVA DV78
 DIVA DV79
 FMJ DV29

A/V RECEIVERS

DIVA AVR250
 DIVA AVR300

A/V PRE/PROCESSOR

DiVA AV8

MULTICHANNEL POWER

DIVA P7

PRICING POLICY

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ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES

The right accessories can make or break your system. Our carefully selected range, including QED, Soundstyle and Grado, will ensure you get the very best performance from your system.

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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/brands are not available at all stores. Please call to confirm or visit our website before travelling.

*Added Value Offers - From range available in-store. Not in conjunction with any other offer.

ADVERT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 07/04/2005, E&OE.

DVD Recorders

Although making digital recordings of TV broadcasts isn't new, the choice, versatility and quality of recorders keep getting better. Our product selection includes both DVD only recorders and hybrid DVD/hard-disk models.

Panasonic

DVD RECORDERS (DVD-RAM/DVD-R)
DMR-E55 • DMR-E65

HARD-DISK MODELS (HDD/DVD-RAM-R)
DMR-E85 80GB • DMR-E95 160GB • DMR-E500 400GB



"In all, the Pioneer DVR-720H is a fine machine with some nifty features and superb performance... Superb."
WHAT VIDEO AND WIDESCREEN TV • AUGUST 2004



Pioneer

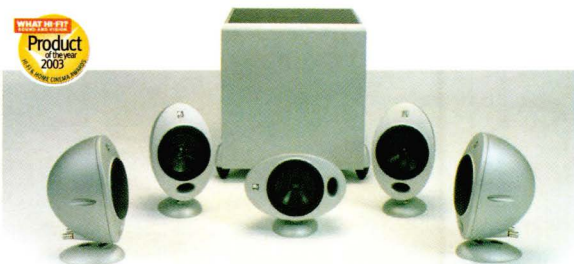
DVD RECORDERS (DVD-RW)
DVR-220 • DVD-320

HARD-DISK MODELS (HDD/DVD-RW)
DVR-420H 80GB • DVR-520H 80GB
DVR-720H 160GB • DVR-920H 250GB

What Video
Widescreen TV
BEST BUY



WHAT HI-FI
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
2003



KHT2005.2 "KEF has done it. This is the new best system in its class... The KHT2005.2 is the new top surround dog. KEF should be very proud."

KEF KHT

The Kef Home Theatre (KHT) series brings audiophile sound quality to affordable home entertainment – it's been breaking new ground ever since it was first introduced. As its many awards and 5-star ratings prove, the original outperformed every conventional system in its class.

MODELS INCLUDE

KHT1005 • KHT2005.2
KHT5005 • KHT9000ACE

WHAT HI-FI
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
2004



KEF KIT100 Home Cinema System

"Why take five speakers into the living room when you can use just two? Creating a virtual surround sound experience has never been simpler or more effective, thanks to this two speakers plus subwoofer concoction from KEF."

Mordaunt Short Genie

"Distinctive looks, practical to use, first-class sonics from the sats and the sub - it adds up to a winning cinema set-up... For seamless integration of sound, impressive integrity of build and all-round covetability, the Mordaunt-Short Genie package is hard to beat - and it looks rather splendid, too."



WHAT HI-FI
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
2004



WHAT HI-FI
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
2004

Mission Elegante e82

"Performance with style - if you're looking for a speaker package without sonic sacrifices, then look no further than the Elegantes."

Colour Options Available

REL Subwoofers

In a market packed with subwoofers claiming to deliver the ultimate bass experience, only one brand of sub-bass system can prove its supremacy. With a record of review success stretching back over a decade and featuring no fewer than nine of the coveted What Hi-Fi? Awards, REL is acknowledged as the leading provider of deep, clean bass frequencies.



WHAT HI-FI
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
2004

Q400E

WHAT HI-FI
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
2003

"A flawless performance from the REL Stampede leaves little room for criticism."

Q SERIES
Quake • Q150E • Q201E • Q400E
ST SERIES
Stampede • Strata 5 • Storm V



Acoustic Energy

Established in 1987, Acoustic Energy is one of Britain's premier loudspeaker manufacturers offering arguably the most targeted range of hi-fi and home cinema loudspeaker systems on the market today.

The multi-award winning AEGIS EVO Series is a budget separates range for hi-fi and home cinema enthusiasts alike, offering exquisite transparency, detail and clarity, coupled with awesome bass and dynamics.

AEGIS EVO SERIES INCLUDES
EVO One • EVO Three • EVO Centre & Sub
AELITE SERIES INCLUDES
Aelite Two • Aelite Three • Aelite Centre & Sub



Product Selection

Some products/brands are not available at all stores. Please call to confirm or visit www.sevenoakssoundandvision before travelling.

TURNTABLES

Goldring GR1	£139.95
Linn RANGE	£ CALL
Micell Gyro SE/RB300	£1049.95
Project Debut Phono SB	£169.95
Project Debut III (Black)	£129.95
Project 1 Xpression	£209.95
Roksan Radius 5 (Wood)	£749.95

TUNERS

Arcam DIVA T61	£229.95
Arcam DIVA DT91 DAB/FM	£449.95
Cyrus FM X	£499.95
Denon TU260L MKII	£99.95
Harman Kardon TU970 DAB/AM/FM	£249.95
Marantz ST4000	£99.95
Pure DRX-701ES DAB	£189.95
Pure DRX-702ES DAB/FM	£269.95

CD PLAYERS

Arcam DIVA CD73T	£399.95
Arcam DIVA CD192	£849.95
Arcam FMJ CD331T	£1349.95
Cyrus CD6	£599.95
Cyrus CD8 X	£999.95
Cyrus DAC X	£1099.95
Denon DCD485	£119.95
Linn RANGE	£ CALL
Marantz CD5400	£119.95
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL
Musical Fidelity X-Ray 19	£899.95
Musical Fidelity A5	£1499.95
Quad 99 CD-P	£999.95
Roksan Kandy KD1 MKIII	£649.95
Roksan Caspian M	£1099.95
Rotel RCD02	£379.95
Rotel RCD1072	£594.95

CD RECORDERS

Pioneer PDR609 CD-RW	£199.95
Yamaha CDR-HD1300AI	£479.95

AMPLIFIERS

Arcam DIVA A65 Plus	£389.95
Arcam DIVA A80	£599.95
Arcam DIVA A90	£849.95
Arcam FMJ A32	£1199.95
Cyrus 6vs	£599.95
Cyrus 8vs	£799.95
Cyrus Pre X vs Pre	£1099.95
Cyrus Mono X Power (Each)	£1199.95
Denon PMA355	£169.95
Linn RANGE	£ CALL
Marantz PM4400	£139.95

Marantz PM7200	£239.95
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL
Musical Fidelity X-80	£399.95
Musical Fidelity X-150	£799.95
Musical Fidelity A5	£1499.95
Quad 99 Power	£549.95
Quad 909 Power	£899.95
Roksan Kandy KA1 MKIII	£649.95
Roksan Caspian M	£999.95
Roksan Caspian M Pre/Stereo Power	£1999.95
Rotel RA-01	£249.95
Rotel RA-02	£349.95
Rotel RA-03	£499.95
Rotel RA-1062	£594.95

SPEAKERS

Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo One	£129.95
Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo Three	£249.95
Acoustic Energy Aelite Two	£449.95
Acoustic Energy Aelite Three	£749.95
Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII	FROM £1699.95
AVI Neutron IV	£499.95
B&W DM601 S3	£249.95
B&W DM602 S3	£299.95
B&W 705	£899.95
B&W 703	£1999.95
KEF Q RANGE	£ CALL
KEF XQ RANGE	£ CALL
Linn RANGE	£ CALL
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL
Mission m31i	£129.95
Mission m34i	£299.95
Monitor Audio Bronze B2	£199.95
Monitor Audio Silver S1	£299.95
Monitor Audio Silver S6	£599.95
Monitor Audio Silver S8	£799.95
Monitor Audio Gold Reference 10	£799.95
Monitor Audio Gold Reference 60	£1999.95
Quad 11L	£379.95
Quad 12L	£499.95
Quad 22L	£894.95
Ruark RANGE	£ CALL
Wharfedale Diamond 9.1	£179.95

HI-FI SYSTEMS

Arcam Solo Ex Speakers	£999.95
Denon 201 Ex Speakers	£479.95
Denon DF101 Ex Speakers	£299.95
Denon DM31 Ex Speakers	£189.95
Linn Classik Music Ex Speakers	£ CALL

DVD SYSTEMS

Denon DHT-500SD Inc 5.1 Speaker Package	£ CALL
Denon DHT-550SD Inc 5.1 Speaker Package	£ CALL
KEF KIT100 Inc Speakers	£ CALL

MULTI-ROOM AUDIO

Cyrus Link RANGE	£ CALL
Living Control RANGE	£ CALL
Yamaha MusicCast RANGE	£ CALL

DVD PLAYERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Arcam DIVA DV78	£699.95	£699.95
Arcam DIVA DV79	£999.95	£999.95
Arcam FMJ DV29	£1599.95	£1599.95
Cyrus DVD8	£1199.95	£1199.95
Denon DVD-1710	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-1910	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-2910 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-3910 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-A11	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-A1xv	£ CALL	£ CALL
Harman Kardon DVD22	£ CALL	£ CALL
Harman Kardon DVD31	£ CALL	£ CALL
Marantz DV4500	£ CALL	£ CALL
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV370	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV575A Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV668Av Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV868Av Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Yamaha DVD-S550	£ CALL	£ CALL
Yamaha DVD-S1500	£ CALL	£ CALL

DVD RECORDERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Panasonic DMR-E55	£199.95	£219.95
Panasonic DMR-E65	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E85	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E95	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E500	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-220	£199.95	£219.95
Pioneer DVR-320	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-420H	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-520H	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-720H	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-920H	£ CALL	£ CALL

A/V AMPLIFIERS RECEIVERS & PROCESSORS

Arcam AVR250 AV Receiver	£999.95
Arcam AVR300 AV Receiver	£1299.95
Arcam AVP700/P1000 AV Processor/Power	£ TBA
Arcam AV8/P7 AV Processor/Power	£5749.95
Cyrus AV8 AV Processor	£1099.95
Denon AVC-A1XV AV Amplifier	£ CALL
Denon AVR1705 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Denon AVR1905 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Denon AVR2105 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Denon AVR2805 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Denon AVR3805 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Harman Kardon AVR330 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Harman Kardon AVR630 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Harman Kardon DPR2005 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Lexicon RANGE	£ CALL
Marantz SR4500 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Marantz SR5500 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-D814 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-2014i AV Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-AX5Ai AV Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai AV Amplifier	£ CALL
Rotel RSX1056 AV Receiver	£1199.95
Rotel RSX1067 AV Receiver	£1799.95
Rotel RSP1098 AV Processor	£2294.95
Yamaha DSP-AX750SE AV Amplifier	£ CALL
Yamaha DSP-29 AV Amplifier	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V550 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V650 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V1500RDS AV Receiver	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V2500RDS AV Receiver	£ CALL

A/V SPEAKERS & PACKAGES

Acoustic Energy Evo 3B	£679.95
Acoustic Energy Aego P5/II	£449.95
Acoustic Energy Aelite 5.1	£1894.95
Artocoustic RANGE	£ CALL

B&W VM1/AS1	£849.95
KEF KHT1005	£299.95
KEF KHT2005.2	£ CALL
KEF KHT5005	£ CALL
KEF Q7 AV	£ CALL
M&K RANGE	£ CALL
Mission M30 AV Package	£ CALL
Mission M3i AV Package	£ CALL
Mission M Cube AV Package (ex stands)	£ CALL
Mission Elegante e82 7.1 Package	£ CALL
Monitor Audio Bronze B2 AV	£799.95
Monitor Audio Bronze B4 AV	£949.95
Monitor Audio Radius	£ CALL
Mordaunt Short Genie	£ CALL
Quad L-Series	£1899.95
Wharfedale Diamond 9 HCP	£499.95
Yamaha YSP-1 Sound Projector	£799.95

SUBWOOFERS

B&W PV1	£949.95
MJ Acoustics RANGE	£ CALL
M&K RANGE	£ CALL
Quad L Series	£ CALL
REL Q150E MKII (Brittix Black)	£499.95
REL Q201E (Brittix Black)	£724.95
REL Q400E (Brittix Black)	£999.95
REL Quake (Brittix Black)	£349.95
REL Stampede (Black)	£549.95
REL Strata 5 (Brittix Black)	£699.95
REL Storm 5 (Wood Finishes)	£999.95
Wharfedale Diamond SW150	£249.95

PLASMA

Fujitsu RANGE	£ CALL
Hitachi 32PD5200 32"	£ CALL
Hitachi 42PD5200 42"	£ CALL
Hitachi 55PMA550TE 55"	£ CALL
Panasonic TH37PW7B 37"	£ CALL
Panasonic TH42PW7B 42"	£ CALL
Panasonic TH37PE30B 37"	£ CALL
Panasonic TH42PE30B 42"	£ CALL
Panasonic TH50P30B 50"	£ CALL
Pioneer PDP435FDE 43"	£ CALL
Pioneer PDP435XDE 43"	£ CALL
Pioneer PDP505XDE 50"	£ CALL
Toshiba 42WP46 42"	£ CALL

LCD TV

Hitachi 28LD5200 28"	£ CALL
Panasonic TX22LX2 22"	£ CALL
Panasonic TX26LXD1 26"	£ CALL
Panasonic TX32LXD1 32"	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos LC-26GA5 26"	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos LC-32GA5 32"	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos LC-32GD1 32"	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos LC-37GD1 37"	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos LC-37GA5 37"	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos LC-45GD1 45"	£ CALL
Toshiba RANGE	£ CALL

PROJECTORS

Screenplay SP4805 DLP	£ CALL
Screenplay SP5700 DLP	£ CALL
Screenplay SP7205 DLP	£ CALL
Screenplay SP777 DLP	£ CALL
Sharp XV-291E DLP	£ CALL
Sharp XV-2200/201 DLP	£ CALL
Sharp XV-22000 DLP	£ CALL
Sim 2 Domino 18 DLP	£ CALL
Sim 2 Domino 20-H HDMI DLP	£ CALL
Sim 2 Domino 30-H HDMI DLP	£ CALL
Sim 2 HT300E DLP	£ CALL
Sim 2 HT500 Link DLP	£ CALL
ThemeScene H30A Cinema DLP	£ CALL
ThemeScene H57 Cinema DLP	£ CALL
ThemeScene H77 Cinema DLP	£ CALL

REMOTE CONTROLS

Marantz RC5400	£399.95
Marantz RC9500	£799.95
Philips i-Pronto RU1000	£1399.95

The Magnificent Seven

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• 57 CROWN STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

BEDFORD 01234 272779
• 29-31 ST PETERS STREET

BIRMINGHAM 0121 233 2977
• ARCH 12, LIVERY STREET

BRIGHTON 01273 733338
• 57 WESTERN ROAD, HOVE

BRISTOL 0117 974 3727
• 92B WHITELADIES ROAD, CLIFTON

BROMLEY 020 8290 1988
• 39A EAST STREET

CAMBRIDGE 01223 304770
• 17 BURLEIGH STREET

CARDIFF 029 2047 2899
• 104-106 ALBANY ROAD

CHELSEA 020 7352 9466
• 403 KINGS ROAD

CHELTENHAM 01242 241171
• 14 PITTVILLE STREET

CRAWLEY 01293 510777
• 32 THE BOULEVARD *OPEN SUNDAY*

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

EALING 020 8579 8777
• 24 THE GREEN *OPEN SUNDAY*

EDINBURGH 0131 229 7267
• 5 THE GRASSMARKET

EPSOM 01372 720720
• 12 UPPER HIGH STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

EXETER 01392 218895
• 28 COWICK STREET

GLASGOW 0141 332 9655
• 88 GREAT WESTERN ROAD *OPEN SUNDAY*

GUILDFORD 01483 536666
• 73B NORTH STREET

HOLBORN 020 7837 7540
• 144-148 GRAYS INN ROAD

HULL 01482 587171
• 1 SAVILE ROW, SAVILE STREET

IPSWICH 01473 286977
• 12-14 DOGS HEAD STREET

KINGSTON 020 8547 0717
• 43 FIFE ROAD *OPEN SUNDAY*

LEEDS 0113 245 2775
• 62 NORTH STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

LEICESTER 0116 253 6567
• 10 LOSEBY LANE

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

MAIDSTONE 01622 686366
• 96 WEEK STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

MANCHESTER 0161 831 7969
• 69 HIGH ST, CITY CENTRE *OPEN SUNDAY*

NEWCASTLE 0191 221 2320
• 19 NEWGATE STREET

NORWICH 01603 767605
• 29-29A ST GILES STREET

NOTTINGHAM 0115 911 2121
• 597-599 MANSFIELD ROAD

OXFORD 01865 241773
• 41 ST CLEMENTS STREET

PETERBOROUGH 01733 897697
• 36-38 PARK ROAD *OPEN SUNDAY*

PLYMOUTH 01752 226011
• 107 CORNWALL STREET

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

PRESTON 01772 825777
• 40-41 LUNE STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

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

SEVENOAKS 01732 459555
• 109-113 LONDON ROAD

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

SOLIHULL 0121 733 3727
• 149-151 STRATFORD ROAD

SOUTHAMPTON 023 8033 7770
• 33 LONDON ROAD

SOUTHGATE 020 8886 2777
• 79-81 CHASE SIDE

STAINES 01784 460777
• 4 THAMES STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

SWINDON 01793 610992 **NEW**
• 8-9 COMMERCIAL ROAD

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

TUNBRIDGE WELLS 01892 531543
• 28-30 ST JOHNS ROAD

WATFORD 01923 213533
• 478 ST ALBANS ROAD *OPEN SUNDAY*

WEYBRIDGE 01932 828525
• 43 CHURCH STREET, THE QUADRANT *OPEN SUNDAY*

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

WITHAM (ESSEX) 01376 501733
• 1 THE GROVE CENTRE

WOLVERHAMPTON 01902 312225
• 29-30 CLEVELAND STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

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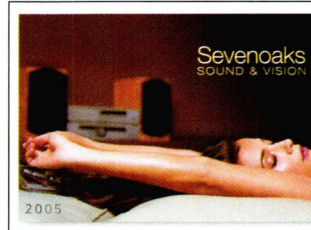
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Established as Sevenoaks Hi-Fi in 1972, we have grown steadily onto one of the leading independent home entertainment specialists in the UK, earning a reputation for outstanding service, choice and value for money. In 1995, reflecting our commitment to the emergent new technologies in home cinema, our name was changed to Sevenoaks Sound & Vision. We now have 49 stores across the land stocking a broad range of exceptional equipment and accessories.

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When it comes to making big decisions about what to buy, there's no substitute for actually road-testing your prospective purchases - seeing, hearing and experiencing the products in action, with the benefit of our expert knowledge and guidance to help you choose. To get the most from your Sevenoaks Sound & Vision experience, simply follow this checklist:

- **ESTABLISH YOUR AIMS** - Are you tweaking an existing system to improve sound or picture quality, or are you looking for a more fundamental and comprehensive upgrade?
- **BRING YOUR FAVOURITE DISCS WITH YOU** - To ensure you get the most from the music and movies in your collection, it pays to test equipment using those very same discs or records. That way you can readily compare levels of performance. However, if you prefer, we can supply a selection of demo discs - current mainstream entertainment that serves to highlight the capabilities of the equipment.
- **JUST ASK** - If you are unsure of any aspect of the products or technologies available, or would like more information about installation options, simply let us know and our staff will be happy to help you out.
- **TAKE YOUR TIME** - We want you to be as happy as possible with your choices, so please take as much time as you need to determine which products are right for you.



Hi-Fi & Home Cinema Guide - 2005 Edition

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www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk

STEREO AMPLIFIERS

Integrated and pre/power amps



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

Amplifiers use two basic technologies: transistors or valves. Transistors are popular because of their practical and technical advantages, but valves – aka tubes – live on owing to aspects of sound quality that trannies can't replicate. If you want to play 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 BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

STEREO AMPLIFIERS

Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000									
BB	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
BB	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
BB	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
BB	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
BB	Electrocompaniet ECI3	999	Large and fairly powerful, with individual looks and very refined sound	6		●		70	262
BB	Exposure 2010 S	599	Beneath the unassuming exterior lurks a very capable performer that's passionate about music	6	opt	●		75	262
BB	Marantz PM4400 OSE	250	Highly competent and well specified – a lively performer that makes great music	5	●		●	50	256
BB	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
BB	Musical Fidelity X-80	600	The entry-level to Musical Fidelity's amplifier range sounds both powerful and refined	4		●		55	255
BB	NAD C352	350	Dynamic and musical sounding update on what was already a star product	7		●	●	80	253
BB	Naim Nait 5i	699	A trade-off of more power and better connectivity against less inputs works surprisingly well in a grumpy, musical manner	4		●		50	252
	Rega Mira 3	598	Lively sound with good timing and frequency extension, if not quite as detailed as some	5	●	●	●	60	262
BB	Rotel RA-02	349	Agile and capable slimline design with an engaging sound that draws you into the music	4	●	●	●	40	232
BB	Rotel RA-03	499	Gutsy amp that's equally happy belting out anthems and whispering romantic secrets. Good phono stage too	5	●	●		70	265
BB	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
BB	Sugden A21a	899	This single-ended, Class A transistor amp has exquisite resolving ability and presence – an authentic classic	5				25	224
ABOVE £1,000									
BB	Arcam FMJ A32	1,150	Remarkably flexible and well-featured, with excellent sound quality for the price	7	●	●	●	100	228
BB	Audio Note Oto Line SE	1,599	Single-ended valve amp lacks power but sounds remarkably delicate and coherent	5	opt			10	254
BB	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
BB	Audio Research VS155	2,895	Superb all-rounder provides the delights of valve amplification without sacrificing convenience	5		●		50	254
BB	AVI Laboratory Series	1,399	Terrific power, control and resolution – effortlessly musical and fine value	6	opt	●		200	241
BB	Copland CSA29	1,900	A hybrid valve/solid state amplifier that gets close to offering the best of both worlds	6	opt	●		85	255
EC	Karan KA-i180	3,900	Lean, sharp and articulate, this impressively constructed heavyweight is almost up there with the audiophile pre/power elite	4		●		180	236
EC	Krell KAV-400xi	2,698	The best integrated Krell yet is quick, agile, solid and finely detailed	5		●		200	247
BB	Marantz PM-11S1	2,500	A good-looking, well-endowed, high-quality amp that's a great match for the impressive SA-11S1 stereo CD/SACD player	6	●	●	●	100	265
EC	T+A V10	4,000	Complex but well engineered, stylish and genuinely innovative high power integrated valve amp	5		●		80	261

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

STEREO AMPLIFIERS

Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				PREAMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £2,000										
BB	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
	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
BB	Naim NAC 112x/NAP 150x	1,475	Up-rated entry-level Naim pre/power is a master of musical communication	●	●	6		●	50	262
BB	Quad 99/909	1,650	Well thought out and well executed, with good strong sound and just a little veiling	●	●	5	●	●	136	256
ABOVE £2,000										
EC	Border Patrol P20	6,750	Muscular 300B push-pull 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
EC	Chapter Preface/II+	9,800	Among the finest amps available, the resolution of this preamp and power amp challenges the best at any price	●	●	6		●	300	249
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

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

STEREO AMPLIFIERS *continued*

Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)
	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 D3	3,430	creamy smooth, yet lets you hear all the fine detail that goes to making a tonally rich, dynamically strong sound	●	●	5	opt	265	265
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
EC	Krell FPB 700cx	14,998	Reference class amplifier may represent overkill in many systems, but when no compromise is called for, this is it		●			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	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	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)	SCALE NUMBER
MULTICHANNEL INTEGRATED AMPS								
	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	
BB	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	
BB	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	
EC	Denon AVC-A1SRA	3,000	An AV amp with genuine high-res hi-fi credentials. Feature set now upgraded to the AVC-A1SRA'		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 gimmickry	●	3	160	255	
BB	Pioneer VSA-AX5i	1,200	Standard setter in its price category, with i.Link digital interface and MCACC auto set-up	●	11	100	248	
EC	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	
BB	Sony STR-DB795	300	A superb value little amplifier, well appointed technically and successfully tuned for UK ears	●	7	100	260	
EC	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	
MULTICHANNEL PREAMPS/PROCESSORS AND POWER AMPS								
BB	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 superb purist 5.1		8	90	250	
EC	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	
EC	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	
EC	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		
BB	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	
EC	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	
EC	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	
BB	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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AUDIO ANALOGUE

soundpleasure

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.

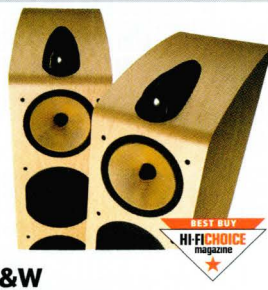
TOP BUYS



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 STEREO SPEAKERS

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE (WxHxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000										
BB	Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo 1	180	An unusually classy and sophisticated performer for the price; laid-back sound and good looks too	19,36,24	A	30	●	●	226	
BB	ATC SCM12	999	Magnificent main driver confers great authority, grip and smoothness, though upper bass a little lean	22,39,26	A-	55	●	●	253	
BB	AVI Neutron IV	499	A great example of what can be done with a genuinely small speaker, but the warts-and-all balance won't suit all	15,27,21	A-	65	●	●	260	
BB	B&W DM303	180	Chunky looking and lively sounding, with deep bass, a fine midband and a restrained top end	20,33,23	A	23	●	●	226	
BB	B&W DM602 S3	300	Old-fashioned size/shape, but this timeless design has a rare combination of grip, authority and headroom	24,49,29	A	25	●	●	234	
BB	B&W DM603 S3	600	Excellent all-rounder, smooth for its price with fine bass and mid, though top might be more refined	20,91,29	●	A-	25	●	231	
BB	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	
BB	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	
BB	Castle Conway 3	930	Lovely real wood finish and a beautifully balanced sound, fine dynamics and transients, but might have more 'air'	22,91,27	●	A+	30	●	237	
BB	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	
BB	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	Pricey but cute vinyl floorstander that is a class act sonically - lightweight, but clean and dextrous	20,86,26	●	A	30	●	231	
BB	Epos ELS3	200	Few affordable speakers sound as clean and convincing while taking up so little real estate	18,27,19	A-	60	●	●	241	
BB	Epos M12.2	450	A true classic stand-mount with lovely presentation, fine sound balance, superior coherence and low coloration	20,37,25	A-	40	●	●	265	
BB	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	
BB	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	
BB	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	
BB	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	19,34,29	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	
	Monitor Audio Bronze B2	200	A lively and entertaining speaker with tight, controlled bass and a pronounced midband	19,35,25	A	42	●	●	238	
BB	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	
BB	Mordaunt-Short Avant 906	350	Capable and engaging, this neat design will complement the majority of sub-£500-per-component systems	18,85,27	●	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	
BB	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	
BB	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).

Unique Sound & Vision

hi-fi world VERDICT

An outstanding, willfully quirky and charismatic audiophile product.



Shanling SCD-T200c

The world's first valve SACD player. The T200c brings digital sound even closer to the original. Feel the warmth of analogue sound with no trace of the metallic quality often associated with digital sources.

T+A

Voted as the number 1 integrated valve amplifier in Europe!



T+A V10

"A Certifiable Masterpiece. This is to debut amplifiers what LED Zeppelin I was to debut LP's."
Ken Kessler, *Hifi News*, February 2004

T+A

T+A Reference G10 Turntable with SME arm
Experience your vinyls like never before...



"Worth mentioning is the G 10's quietness, with even disc surface noise and vinyl 'roar' pushed down to near-inaudibility", "...topping any consumer digital format in pure musical quality."

Hifi News - August 2003

T+A

T+A TCI 1RE high end speakers

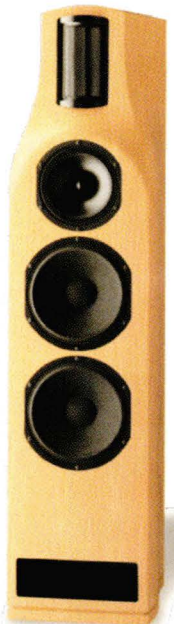
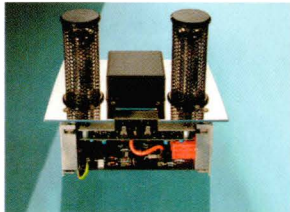
Floor standing speakers with unique active electrostatic tweeter. Designed without compromise for those with real passion for sound.

The response is immaculate throughout the frequency range. Spine-tingling bass extension. Vocals to die for. Even to the most jaded audiophile these are very special speakers indeed.

A mouth watering sight for any audiophile listener.

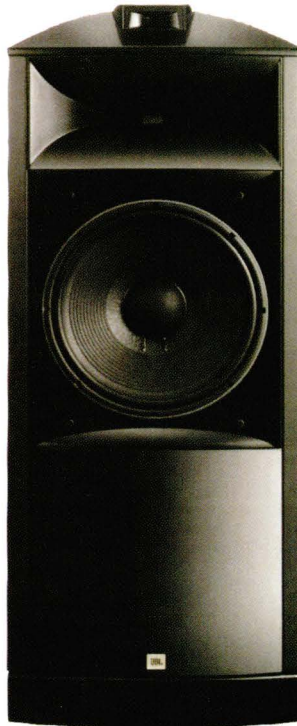
This is the newly developed valve based output stage which drives the electrostatic unit in the TCI 1RE.

Inside view of valve amplifier



JBL Project K29800

Pure beryllium compression drivers for outstanding mid-high frequency clarity. 15-inch bass unit with alnico magnet for powerful fast low frequencies. The best of both worlds! There's no doubt about it... 90kg



Mission Pilastra

Mission's first hi-end speaker. The simplicity of sound perfection. The result is a speaker that effortlessly fills a room with supreme sound. Pilastra has been designed to achieve and astonishing sensitivity of 95dB of acoustic output for 1 watt of amplifier power. Phenomenal bass 155kg



PERFECT FOR YOU

ELAC Spirit of Music MKII

Inspiration and professionalism. The key for perfect sound.

The special feature of these speakers is the omni directional ribbon tweeter, that turns every living room into a concert hall!

Thanks to the omni directional ribbon tweeter, the sound propagation exceeds the area of the stereo triangle by using the reflections of the room environment.

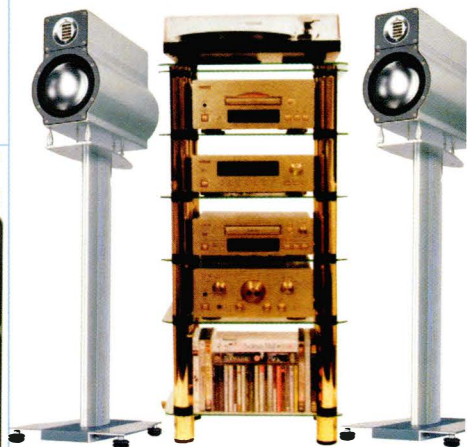


PERFECT FOR YOU



ELAC 310-2 JET

Two way hi-end speaker with aluminium cabinet, ribbon tweeters, produces smooth vocals and acoustic bass.

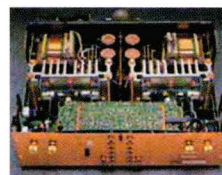


TEAC Reference 300MKII-500/ELAC 330.2 JET Stereo Amplifier, CD Player, DAB Tuner, reverse cassette deck, Optimum stand GSP + TT. A Two way hi-end loudspeaker with aluminium cabinet, ribbon tweeters. An astonishing all-rounder.



JVC AX-SD1

JVC super digifine AX-SD1. Serious class A integrated amplifier. If you love the analogue sound of the 70's, the AX-SD1 GD offers a clean, warm sweet sound like you've never heard before. (Ten years warranty.)



hi-fi world VERDICT Highly open, transparent and musical sound makes this one of the surprises of the year. Thoroughly recommended.



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Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

STEREO SPEAKERS continued

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (WxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE-OF-DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rega R3	448	Discreet, pretty and fine value. A little lightweight but impressively open, it delivers music with great agility	20,76,28	●	A	40	●	265
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tannoy Sensys DC1	449	Modest sensitivity but beautifully balanced with fine authority at a very realistic price	21,41,29		A	40	●	245
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tannoy Eyris 1	600	Pricy but very cute standmount miniature; oddball, but has marvellous midband subtlety and delicacy	17,35,26		A+		●	227
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tannoy Eyris 2	999	This super-slim and cutely different-looking floorstander is very communicative, despite weak treble	17,91,26	●	A	20	●	231
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Triangle Comete ES	500	Bulky standmount lacks style but delivers engrossing musical coherence and vivid dynamics	20,42,34		A	40	●	265
ABOVE £1,000									
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Acoustic Energy AE1 MkII	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Anthony Gallo Nucleus Ref	2,400	Occasionally raw, but engaging and capable beyond its physical stature	20,89,41	●	A	34	●	257
<input type="checkbox"/>	ATC Active 10	1,269	Stylish, active powerhouses with plenty of subtlety when required (balanced connection only)	23,39,31		act	45	●	221
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bosendorfer VC 7	4,745	Unique design delivers superior dynamics that sound particularly convincing with acoustic and classical music	19,5,135,40	●	A	37	●	265
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Harbeth Super HL5	1,699	Looks old-fashioned, but classic monitor combines authority and transparency with good neutrality	33,64,31		A	30	●	233
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Living Voice Avatar	2,700	Dynamic and highly resolved, yet physically discreet design with a relaxed balance	22,104,27	●	A+	40	●	218
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	MartinLogan Mosaic	1,799	Curious hybrid construction marries many panel speaker-like attributes with moving coil simplicity	24,102,30	●	A-	46	●	257
<input type="checkbox"/>	MartinLogan Clarity	2,498	Relatively affordable and easy to live with electrostatic hybrid with class-leading resolving power	26,135,31	●	A-	46	●	245
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mission Elegante e83	1,990	Uncommonly clean, agile and refined floorstander, and as elegant as the name	33,111,36	●	A-	44	●	257
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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

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2004: 2004 What Hi-Fi? IsoTek Gemini 6-Way

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE
STEREO SPEAKERS continued

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE W/H/D (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE-OF-DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
	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
EC	Naim SL-2	4,995	Delivers magnificent musical analysis and communication skills in a notably discrete physical package	28,103,33	●	A-	20	●	232
EC	Neat Ultimatum MFS	2,995	Wonderful five-driver standmount sounds bigger than it looks. Very spacious and informative	22,38,37		A+	25	●	241
EC	Neat Ultimatum MF9	8,500	Superb musical communicator with splendidly deep and agile bass and fine open neutrality	22,150,40	●	A-	20	●	226
BB	PMC FB1+	1,625	Nicely proportioned floorstander has a sweet top and a beautifully natural, open and restrained midband	20,100,30	●	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
EC	PMC IB2	6,150	Stunning in an understated way, this speaker creeps up on you and hooks you with its transparency and power	33,74,47		A-	25	●	237
EC	ProAc Response D25	2,995	The traditional ProAc high-end detail mixed with greater efficiency and more pace - a splendid speaker	22,107,25	●	A+	20	●	254
BB	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
EC	Revel F32	3,200	Meticulously balanced, tonally neutral design makes for a taut, well disciplined sound	22,105,39	●	B	30	●	265
BB	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
BB	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
EC	Tannoy Dimension TD8	4,000	This stylish speaker is a splendid all-rounder, with fine dynamics, precise imaging and minimal coloration	31,86,30	●	A-	25	●	240
EC	Tannoy Dimension TD10	5,000	Extremely competent and rhythmic speaker, a futureproof supertweeter and detail to die for	35,101,37	●	A-	38	●	215
EC	Tannoy Dimension TD12	6,500	Art Deco-inspired style, plus magnificent headroom and genuine monitoring neutrality - a tour de force	42,126,41	●	A-	23	●	225
EC	Tannoy Yorkminster	9,000	Deliciously delicate and expressive at low listening levels, it still has massive headroom when your in the mood	62,102,45	●	A+	20	●	255
BB	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
EC	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
EC	Vivid Audio B1	6,590	Impressive cabinet design combined with hi-tech drivers to make truly world class speaker	27,110,38	●	A-	40	●	261
EC	Waterfall Victoria TWN	2,000	Stunning transparent glass enclosure and a sonic treat too, with great dynamic expression	22,100,22	●	A	28	●	262
EC	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,000	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package	23,91,37	●	A	28	●	254
EC	Wilson Benesch Discovery	5,500	Innovative three-way with built-in stand, combines great subtlety with weight and headroom	23,47,38	●	A-	45	●	212
EC	Wilson Benesch ACT	8,400	Superb enclosure gives uncanny freedom from 'boxiness'. Well balanced, but top end might be sweeter	23,108,37	●	A	20	●	252
EC	Wilson Benesch Chimera	15,000	Elegant with lovely sonic delicacy and plenty of weight too. Works best at low levels, but a difficult load to drive	24,145,55	●	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 🏆 BEST BUY 👑 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	ISSUE NUMBER
🏆	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
🏆	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
🏆	KEF Q AV7	1,300	With latest Uni-Q refinements, this system is astonishingly accomplished and amazing value	A+	5	35	●		232
👑	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
🏆	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 🏆 BEST BUY 👑 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
👑	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
🏆	REL Q150E	500	Great value compact 'cube' sub adds genuine weight and drive thanks to superior filtering	29,32,33	150	20	239
🏆	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
🏆	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
👑	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.

Do you want to choose your hifi or home cinema system, in a comfortable and relaxing environment...?

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Do you want to buy your system based on what you hear, and see, and not what somebody tells you...?

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Nobody else in these areas carries all the following major hifi brands:

Apollo, Arcam(Diva/FMJ), Ash Design, Atacama, **Atlas** (spkr cables & interconnects) B&W, **Chord Company**, **Creek**, **Cyrus**, Denon, Epos, **Exposure**, **Genelec**, **Anthony Gallo Acoustics**, Harman Kardon, Infinity, Iso Tek, KEF (including **Reference**), Linn Products(including Knekt), **MJ Acoustics**, Meridian, Michell, **Mirage**, Mission, Musical Fidelity, NAD, **Naim**, Ortofon, Pioneer, **PMC**, **Primare**, **Proac**, Project, Pure, QED(including Systemline), Quad, Quadraspire, REL, Rotel, Sennheiser, Soundstyle, **Spendor**, Stands Unique, **Tag McLaren**, Wharfedale, Yamaha.

Nobody else in these areas carries all the following major Home Cinema products:

DVD players: Arcam & **FMJ**, **Cyrus**, Denon, Harman Kardon, Meridian, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**, Yamaha,

Processors: **Arcam FMJ AV8**, **Cyrus**, **Lexicon**, Linn, Meridian, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**.

Amplifiers: Arcam/**FMJ**, **Bryston**, **Cyrus**, Denon, Harman Kardon, **Lexicon**, **Naim**, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**, Yamaha.

Display devices: Plasma screens from Loewe, Panasonic, Pioneer and **Yamaha**. Televisions/LCD: Loewe.

Projectors: **Barco(CRT/DLP)**, **Sim (DLP)**, **Yamaha(DLP/LCD)** Screens: **Stewart/Draper/Vutec** ,

Video Processing: **Faroudja**, **I-Scan**, **Key Digital**, **Lumagen**, **Tag**. Control systems: **Crestron**, Lutron lighting.

Specialist set up services: **ISF Display Calibration**.

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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
 	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

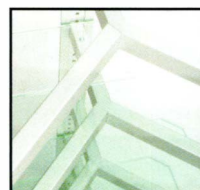
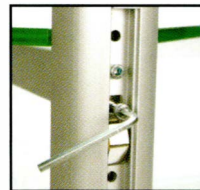
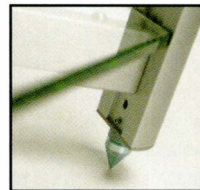
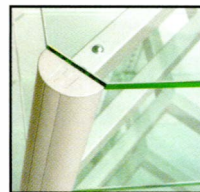
SPECS KEY **ELECTROSTATIC** Uses electrostatic film instead of more common cone or dome dynamics. **SUPRA-AURAL** Earpads sit on ear rather than around it. **CIRCUMAURAL** Earpads rest on the head around the ears. **OPEN BACK** Vented capsules let sound in and out. **CLOSED BACK** Sealed capsules. **WEIGHT** In grams. **3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR** Allows connection to personal stereos, computers etc.

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Arcam AVR 200 AV Receiver S/H (1Yr G/tee)(799.00)	£395.00	Naim CDX CD Player S/H (1Yr G/tee)(2470.00)	£1395.00
Arcam P90 Power Amp Blk S/H (1Yr G/tee)(549.00)	£349.00	Naim NAC 82 Preamplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee)(2500.00)	£1995.00
B&W 705 Speakers - Maple (2Yr/Gtee)(900.00)	£675.00	Naim NAC 82 Preamplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee)(2500.00)	£1575.00
B&W 703 Speakers - Cherry (2Yr/Gtee)(2000.00)	£1399.00	Naim NAC 112 Preamplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee)(675.00)	£350.00
B&W Nautilus Signature 805 - Tigers Eye (2Yr/Gtee)(2500.00)	£1675.00	Naim 250 Power Amplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee)(1910.00)	£895.00
B&W Nautilus 804 Speakers - Cherry (2Yr/Gtee)(2500.00)	£1695.00	Naim 135 Power Amps - Pair S/H (1Y G/tee)(5020.00)	£1590.00
Denon AVR 2803 AV Amplifier (1Yr G/tee)(649.00)	£399.00	Naim XPS Power Supply - New casework(2100.00)	£1575.00
Linn Ikemi CD Player - Blk S/H (1Yr/Gtee)(2200.00)	£1495.00	Naim NBL Speakers - Beech (2Yr G/tee)(7700.00)	£3795.00
Linn Majik Phono Amplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee)(945.00)	£625.00	ProAc Studio 125 Speakers Maple (2Yr G/tee)(999.00)	£699.00
Linn Kairn Pro Line Preamp S/H (1Yr G/tee)(1400.00)	£599.00	Pioneer DVR3100* DVD Recorder/Player (1Yr/Gtee) (349.00)	£219.00
Linn Trikan Centre Spkr - maple (2Yr G/tee)(549.00)	£299.00	Vibe Zeta Subwoofer (2Yr G/tee)(600.00)	£399.00

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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				SPECIFICATIONS					
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIGITAL CABLE TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS									
	Black Rhodium Illusion	77	An upfront, lively, exciting cable which still manages subtlety when needed. Slight coloration though						248
EC	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
DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS									
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
EC	QED Qunex Signature 75	80	First-rate balance and imaging – ever so nearly as good as it gets at any price						E 265
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
SPEAKER CABLES PRICE PER METRE									
	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.

AUDUSA

AUDUSA EUPEN CSA 2.5 AUDIO AC POWER CORD

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AUDUSA - OOM Silverlink OCC balanced speaker cable stranded, silver on OFHC plus three strands of OCC for improved bass performance. Mylar infill and with designed in protection against RF and EMI.

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£48 for 1.0m, £58 for 1.5m, £68 for 2.0m.

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Small Royal, 60cm aluminium platter, topped with a 6mm acrylic platter and leather mat. Nylon thread belt - weight 25kg, rrp £1280 without tone-arm. (TT shown with Type Two Stand)

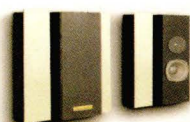
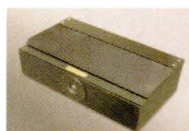
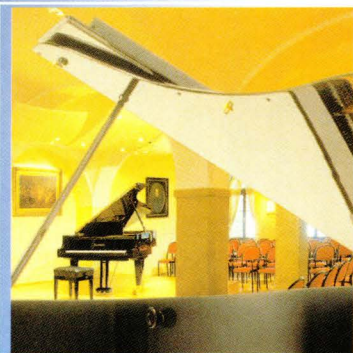
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STANDS AND SUPPORTS

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 EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	Naim Fraim	1,825	Pricey but very classy looking and sounding, with modular flexibility	96	45,34		5	Glass	232
	Isoblu '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
	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!	92	50,40		5	Glass	217
	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 SPEAKER STANDS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Speaker stands

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF LEGS	ISSUE NUMBER
	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
	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
	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.

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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 follows that all inputs labelled 'CD', 'tuner', 'aux' or 'tape' are designed for this input level and are thus interchangeable.

LOSSLESS COMPRESSION A method of reducing the number of data bits (density) without corrupting the original description of the musical signal.

LOSSY COMPRESSION Reduction in data density by recourse to a complex 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. The latest THX Ultra 2 standard 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.

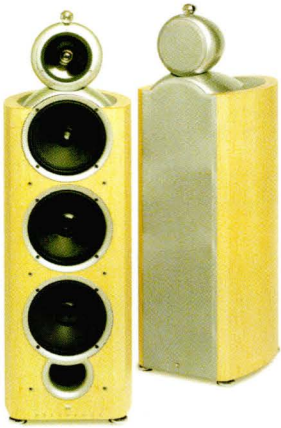
TWEAKER Someone who enjoys this process.

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.

HEAR! HERE!



KEF



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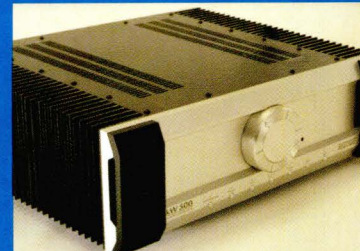
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Clearaudio Deluxe Bubble Level	£21.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Ortofon T Force Tracking Force Gauge	£7.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pebbles 'The Weight' Rega Modification	£67.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
Polaris Plus Stylus Alignment Gauge	£5.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
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A-Z CD Clips	£7.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
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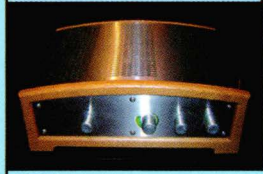
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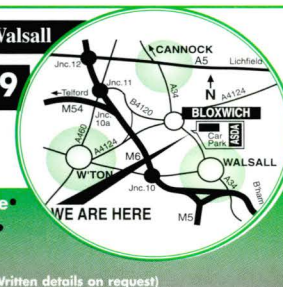
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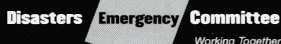
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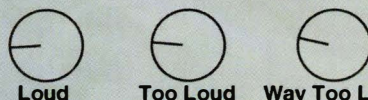
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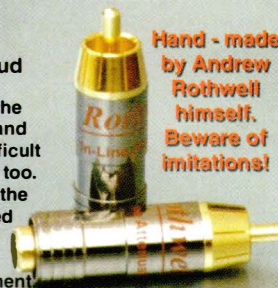
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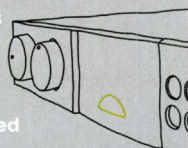
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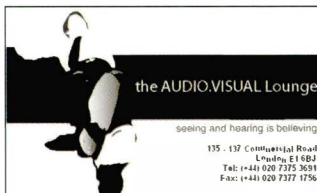
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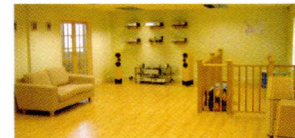
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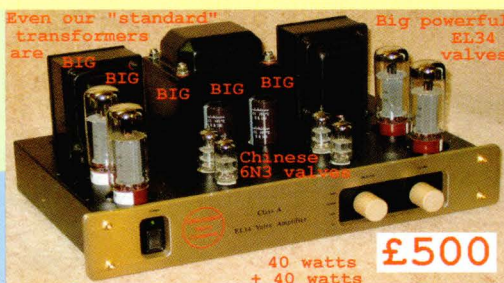
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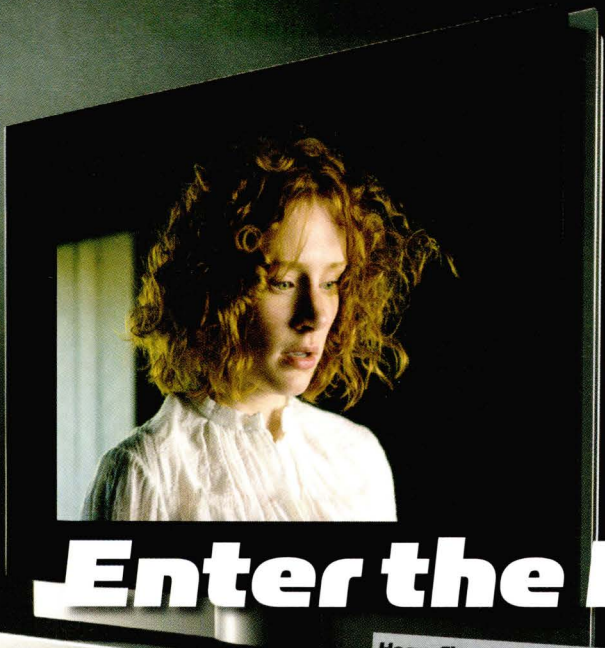
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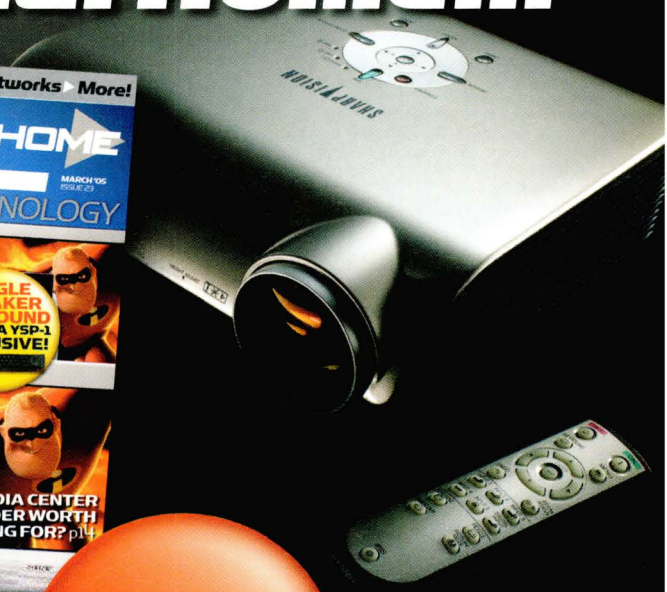
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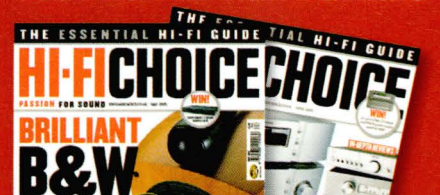
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A-Z GUIDE TO SECOND-HAND KIT #08 EPOS ACOUSTICS

Think Epos and the seminal ES14 springs to mind. Launched in the mid-1980s, Robin Marshall's classic ES14 was well ahead of its time with groundbreaking features such as a metal dome tweeter and a minimalist crossover. By current standards, the ES14 may be lacking at the frequency extremes, but it remains a musical design that, even after having been out of production for 10 years, still has a strong cult following today. Prices reflect this, with £200 being asked for tatty examples and up to a ridiculous £500 for the best (although, at this price, the dedicated open-frame stands are usually included).

It's worth bearing in mind the spares situation. Because Creek (the current owners of the Epos name) didn't manufacture the speaker in the first place, spares for the ES14 are almost non-existent. They'll sell you a pair of grills for around £45, but other than that you're on your own. If you do fall for the charms of the ES14, then do check the condition of the woofer. They are usually quite a hardy speaker, but after about 15-20 years the woofer's rubber surround often perishes.

Almost, but not quite, as famous was the ES11. Launched a good five years after the ES14, this model had most of its bigger brother's characteristics, but in a smaller cabinet. Like the ES14, spares are a problem, although the comparative newness of the design means that few should be falling apart. Prices for the ES11 are strong and typically range from £200 to £300.

If you can live without owning a legend, but still fancy something with the Epos signature, there are a number of models that represent great value. The ES12, ES22, ES25 and ES30 are all super speakers, and available at very reasonable prices. On the second-hand market, we found a pair of ES30s selling for just £500. Considering that these floorstanders cost £2,400 in 1997, and had generally excellent reviews, they have to be the bargains of the range. Spares are available for all the above models, but only in limited quantities. Epos also informed us that some of the drive units are cross compatible so that, for example,

woofers from the newer M12 (at £75 each) will fit the ES12 and ES15. If you plan to do this, though, it's important that both drive units are changed to ensure a balanced sound. Despite strong customer demand, Epos has yet to find a suitable driver replacement for the ES14.

Since Creek's takeover of the company, an 'M' rather than 'ES' has designated new models. Buying an 'M' model will guarantee you a full range of spares and, usually, first rate sound quality, too. The model to look out for that we'd particularly recommend is the M12. Launched at the tail end of 2000, this compact speaker had many of the qualities found in the

“It remains a musical design that still has a strong cult following today.”



Above: Epos ES14 loudspeaker

earlier ES11 and ES14 designs. They cost just over £400 back then, but can be had now for less than a pair of ES11s. Expect to pay between £150-£250 for a pair of these delightful bookshelf models.

Epos proves that the even the most famous of products often fail to make the best buys, as the 'classic' status gets in the way. As good as both the ES11 and ES14 are, and they are, they are often over-priced. Instead, it would be either the ES30 or M12 that gets our vote as the best buy on the second-hand market. **HFC**

Dominic Todd

Next month: Exposure

DIY CORNER SPEAKERS

Part 8 Crossovers – putting them together

In many two-way designs, a relatively simple crossover network is soldered to tags connected on the inside of the input terminals, with the components themselves glued into slots moulded into terminal block.

The problem is that the characteristics of different drive units are never entirely identical, and the network's complexity is determined by those characteristics. Furthermore, there are many ways of constructing the components used in the crossover. Inevitably, the best sounding examples tend to be the most costly.

More elaborate networks, such as those used in three-way designs, tend to be built onto printed circuit boards that are typically fixed to

the base or rear panel of the enclosure. However, PCBs are not practical for 'one-offs', and are not considered sonically particularly desirable, so the best DIY solution is usually to mount the components on a wooden board, using point-to-point hardwiring.

While a crossover is primarily designed to operate as an electrical filter network, other factors do play their part in the sound quality. For example, when current passes through a choke (inductor), a magnetic field is induced, and this can induce low-level parasitic signals in nearby wires and components. Vibration levels inside loudspeaker enclosures tend to be very high, and components shaking, especially

within magnetic fields, are another source of distortion. The best solution is to fit the crossover network in a separate external box, well away from magnets and vibration. **HFC**

Paul Messenger



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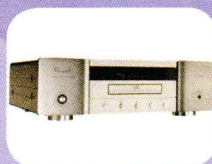
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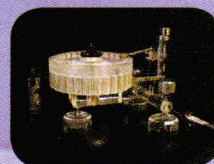
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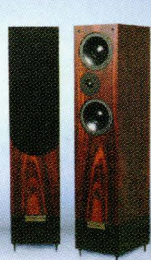
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Nagra PLP pre-amplifier. Looks good.	£4000	£7500
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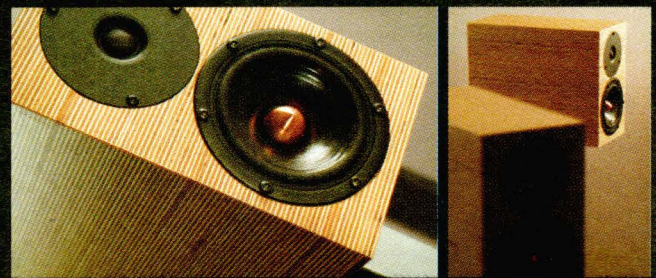


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Celestion SL600 Brown S/H	N/A	299
Quad ESL 63 Brown just serviced with stands S/H	N/A	1499
JM Lab Micro Utopia Anigre with Stands S/H	3999	1699
Mordant Short 902 S/H	249	99
Martin Logan CL5II Anniversary Electrostatics 7 months old S/H	6700	4295
Naim Audio Intro Black Ash S/H	875	499
Peak Consult Incoognito Rosewood ex-demo	7500	5799
Rega ELA Cherry ex-demo	749	579
BCD Amplifier Stand S/H	599	375
BCD Mains cable 1.5m S/H	144	75
Cardas Neutral Reference 1m RCA-BNC S/H	550	375
Elemental Audio Speaker Stands Special Edition 21ft S/H	1599	549
Foundation 21ft Stands S/H	N/A	99
Madrigal MDC 2 1m Fatboy Digital cable new and boxed	319	159
Madrigal MDC 1 1m AES/EBU 110ohm Digital cable new and boxed	420	199
Nordost SPM 2x2m Biwired S/H	2199	950
Sennheiser HD600 S/H	249	99
Siltech SQ58G3 2x4m Balanced Interconnect ex-demo	2370	1499
Spectral MI-330 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA ex-demo	800	499
Spectral MI-330 3ft Interconnect RCA-RCA S/H	625	399
Spectral MI-750 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA ex-demo	1400	799
Transparent Balanced Music Link Ultra 20ft S/H	2499	995
Transparent Music Link Super 1m RCA S/H	599	299
TUNERS		
TAPES		
RWR S/DIPS		
Magnum Dynalab FT-R Remote Switcher for FT101A/Etude	450	279
Magnum Dynalab MD-106T 4 months old	3600	2999
Nakamichi BX300E 3 head cassette deck S/H	N/A	299
Quad FM4 Tuner Brown S/H	N/A	249
Rega radio 3 Silver ex-demo	398	279
Sound Organisation 4 Tier Table Glass S/H	N/A	99

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Alchemist	Bragi phono stage and Forseti p/s - vgc, superb flexible stage	399
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Alphason	Xenon - ex, Immred down HR100	199
Audiolab	8000PPA phono stage - vgc, flexible stage, rare	449
Audion	Sterling - ex, valve phono stage	299
EAR	834P - fat, mm/mmc switchable version	549
Chord	Phono stage - ex, stunning	999
Garrard	401SME 3009 - ex, plinth and cover	449
Garrard	401/SME 3009 - ex, in gorgeous Aphelion plinth	599
Heybrook	TT2/BaskiLVV - ex, boxed	199
Linn	Troika - vgc, boxed	279
Linn	LP12/Lungo/lltko/VIII/Asaka - nr mint, boxed	1199
Linn	LP12/Armageddon/ARO - nr mint, black, boxed	1599
Linn	LP12/Lungo/Ekos - ex, black, boxed	1499
Linn	LP12/Valhalla/Akito - ex, afrosoma, boxed	649
Linn	LP12/Valhalla/Black LVII - ex, boxed, very rare combo	879
Linn	LP12/Armageddon/RB300 - vgc, black	999
Linn	Baski LVX - vgc, black	199
Linn	Axis Baski plus - vgc, black	249
Linn	lltko 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/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
Monio	AND-N - mm/mmc phono stage	179
Mission	774 - ex, fab 80s tonearm	159
MTM	The Source - ex, mahogany	599
Ongin Live	RB300 - ex, early black stub and weight, full wiring mod	199
Odyssey	RP1-XG - ex, the prettiest arm ever?	499
Pink Triangle	LPT/RB250/Reson - ex/ex,	379
Project	Classic - vgc, cherrywood plinth, bargain	199
Rega	Planar 2/RB250 - ex/ex	149
Rega	Planar 3/RB300 - vgc/ex	179
Rega	Planar 7B/RB250 Mono Cart - ex/ex	175
Rotel	RC970 - ex, phono stage	749
Roksan	Xerxes/Tabriz Zi - ex, black	499
Roksan	Xerxes/RB300 - ex, black	399
SME	309 - ex, boxed	499
Systemdek	liX/RB250 - ex, in cherry	199
Thorens	TD160b - ex, cw Mission 774	249
Thorens	TD160b/RB250 - ex, black	199
Townshend	Elite Rock Mk2/Excalibur - ex, no optional extras	579
Transcriptors	Skeleton/Vestigal - ex/ex	799
Voyd	Valdi/Helius Scorpio - vgc, black, off board p/s	629
Wilson Benesch	Act/Act 2 - the best ever? Rare as...	2499

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Audiolab	8000DAC - ex, boxed	299
Audiolab	8000 Transport and DAC	779
Audionote	1 x DAC - ex, boxed	399
AVI	S2000Reference - ex, boxed	499
Cambridge Audio	Discmag/Dacmag - ex, nice combo for peanuts	199
DPA	Renaissance - nr mint, boxed	299
Kenwood	DP1100 - ex, v under rated	89
Krell	CD-DSP - ex, clear and smoked lids, remote, stunning	100
Marantz	CD60 - ex, boxed, fantastic, like heavyweight	199
Marantz	CD60 - ex, remote	69
Marantz	CD46 - ex, remote	49
Marantz	CD63 Ki Sig - nr mint, remote, certificate bargain!	159
Meridian	DV4100 OSE - nr mint, remote, boxed	129
Meridian	200 transport and matching dac - ex, superb combination	449
Meridian	208 - ex, with built in preamp stage and 209remote	379
Meridian	200 transport - ex, Trichord mod, ex, excellent	349
Micromega	Stage 1 - ex, smooth sound on a bud get	179
Micromega	Stage 5 - ex, sweet sounding player from top French firm	249
Micromega	T-drive and T-dac - vgc, remote, superb sound, £1000s new	799
Micromega	Tro - ex, the ultimate Micromega	1449
Micromega	Optic - nr mint, budget intro to the delights of Micromega	119
Musical Fidelity	X Act - nr mint, boxed	249
Naim	T20 - black, nr mint, boxed, remote, bargain!	129
NAD	C541 - nr mint, boxed with remote	199
Naim	CD5 - nr mint, boxed, remote	699
Naim	CDI - nr mint, boxed bargain into to Naim CD players	379
NVA	The Transparent Statement - vgc, crated, - ultimate NVA	1749
Pioneer	PD3703 - nr mint, stable platter machine	149
Primare	CD20 - nr mint, remote, stunning (amp available too)	399
Quad	77 - ex, remote	429
Quad	67 - ex, sweet sounding player, much better than 66	399
Quad	98C DP - nr mint, boxed, remote	799
Rega	Planet - ex, black well reviewed	199
Roksan	Caspan M series - ex, dem, save £350!	749
Roksan	RDD980RDP980 - nr mint, transport and dac, very rare with remote	449
SAT	CDFix - nr mint, boxed, dedicated remote, superb	699
Sony	MP8500 - nr mint, laserdisc, VCD, CD, PAL, N/STC	149
Sony	CDPA3000ES - nr mint, boxed, well reviewed top loader	299
Adcom	GT5500i/PreTuner and GF4545ii/Power - bargain!	399
AMC	2445 - ex, well reviewed, weighty poweramp	199
Arcam	PT6 - ex display, remote, silver	199
Audio Analogue	Puccini SE - nr mint, well reviewed integrated	379
Audiolab	8000C - ex, black	229
Audiolab	8000Q - nr mint, boxed, remote	379
Audiolab	8000S - nr mint	329
Audiolab	8000Ms - nr mint monoblo ocks	899
Audiolab	8000P - vgc, grey	299
Audiolab	8000A - ex, boxed, grey mm/mc	199
Audion	Silver Knights - Stunning boxed val ve monoblo ocks	1199
Creek	4330 - ex, was Stereophile 'Budget component of the Year'	199
Crimson	510B500 - ex, boxed, better pre, lovely combo	279
Cyrus	7 - ex, black boxed	499
Denon	POA4400 - nr mint monoblo ocks, rare and superb	299
Esposure	X integrated - nr mint, boxed, black	199
Harman Kardon	Citation 17 and 19 - vgc, boxed	399
Harman Kardon	PM655 - nr mint, variable capacitance phono stage	119
Heybrook	C2 and P2/Preflowers combo - ex, boxed	349
Linn	LK1/Dirak - ex, black, mm/mc exceptional v/lm	199
Linn	LK100 - nr mint, boxed	299
Magnum	MP300M F125 x2 - ex, pre and monoblo ocks	599
Marantz	PMRSE Ki Sig - nr mint, boxed, champagne	179
Meridian	PM6010OSE - nr mint, boxed, champagne	179
Meridian	605s - ex, boxed, pair monoblocks	799
Meridian	505s - ex, boxed, pair monoblo ocks	899
Meridian	205s - ex, pair monoblo ocks	599
Meridian	501 - ex, boxed with phono stage	349
Meridian	55s - ex	349
Meridian	501/505 x2 - combination as above	1179
Michell	Alecto - ex, Monoblo ocks	899
Mission	Cyrus One - nr om	70
Mission	Cyrus Two and P51 - ex, nested finish	229
Musical Fidelity	X-A2 - nr mint, boxed/integrated	299
Musical Fidelity	X-A1 - nr mint, gv covy integrated	199
NAD	352 - ex display, boxed, titanium	249
Naim	Nait 3 - ex, boxed	299
Onix	AC215 - ex, great 80s integrated	179
Primare	A20 - nr mint, integrated	379
Quad	405 - ex	229
Quad	405/2 - good, brown	179
Quad	33003 - nr mint	199
Quad	34/306 - nr mint, grey, box, you wont find better	429
Quad	500 - good, pair monoblocks	249
Quad	909 - nr mint, boxed	699
Rega	Luna - nr mint, black, boxed, better than original Brior Mira	179
Rega	Mira 2000 - nr mint, boxed	299
Roksan	Caspan M Series - ex, dem, superb integrated save loads	799
Roksan	Caspan M Series - ex, dem, pair monoblo ocks - stunning	349
Roksan	Caspan - ex, black, power amp	499
Rotel	RB03 power - ex display, boxed silver	299
Rotel	RC995 - nr mint, remote, pre	149
Rotel	RB981 - ex, black powerhouse 2 available for monoblocking it c	225
Rotel	RB970BX - ex, black, stacks of grnt	119
Rotel	RB960BX - ex, black, rock n roll	99
Rotel	RC970BX - ex, black, quality pre	79
Shear ne	Phase 2 - nr mint, boxed, blue marble styling	279
Shear ne	Phase 2 Reference - as above, with phono stage etc	329
Sony	STR-DB940 av amp - vgc, DTS 5.1 etc, red, used to just	149
Sugden	AL41 pre/power - ex, black	499
Acoustic Energy	AE1 - ex, black/ntttx	399
Acoustic Energy	AE1 mk2 - ex, black, ash	449
AVI	Nu Neutron - vgc, amazing baby	299
B&W	60153 - nr mint, black boxed	249
Celestion	5000 - vgc, ribbon standmount	199
Dynaudio	Audience 50 - nr mint, black boxed, cw dedicated stands	299
Epos	M15 - nr mint, light cherry boxed	449
Heybrook	HB100 - vgc, superb v/lm	79
Heybrook	Quar let - cw, matching openframe stands, due in	229
Impulse	H6 - fat, but great sound	299
JPW	200 - new, baby bookshelf, save	79
JPW	204 - new, great for stander, save, prowebal, shedload	299
Mission	70 centre - ex display, boxed	69
Mission	77c - ex display, boxed	99
Mission Cyrus	790 - ex, black larger bookshelf	99
Mission Cyrus	781 - ex, black larger bookshelf	99
Monitor Audio	St duo Centre - ex display, boxed	299
Monitor Audio	Silver S2 - nr mint, mahogany, boxed	199
Monitor Audio	Col d Reference 10 - nr mgtr details	379
Mordaunt Short	912 - ex display, boxed	149
Mordaunt Short	914 - ex display, boxed	199
QED	Aria - ex display, boxed, mini, ear rounds	39
QUAD	ESL63 - due in	Call
QUAD	11L - nr mint, boxed, birds eye maple	299
Rega	Ayla - ex, boxed, pretty little cherry floor stander	199
Rega	Jura - ex, cherry	249
REL	Q50 - ex, black	199
Rogers	Studio Monitor - Original vgc, with stands - sat val ve amps	199
Spendor	SP1 - ex, cw, foundation stand s	299
Spendor	Prelude - ex, boxed	129
Tandberg	Studio Monitor - Ex, large standmount	399
TDL	Studio 1 - vgc, wood finish, transmission line	249
TDL	RTL2 - ex, black	119
Wharfedale	Pacific P130 - nr mint, boxed, light cherry, excellent	299
Audiolab	8000T - nr mint	379
Cyrus	FM7 5 - nr mint, silver, digital, presets, boxed	279
Cyrus	Original Mission/liner - vgc	99
Nakamichi	1 5 - vgc, black	125
Nakamichi	CR4E - vgc, black	425
Quad	FM2 - ex, just back from QUAD	249
Quad	FM4 - nr mint, grey	249
Rotel	RT02 - ex display, boxed, silver	199
Sony	MDS JE480 - ex, mnd, sc, with remote	79
Sugden	DTFM - vgc, rare, matches Adcom's etc	179
B&O	2200 system - ex, turntable, tape and ltrac inc speakers	199
Ikos	1014 - new, 1m interconnect	15
Ikos	1014 - new 5m interconnect	25
JPW	204/2002008 - 5.1 Speaker package new bargain, save over £200!	399
Pure	Evolve - ex, display, boxed	89
Stax	Basic System 2 - nr mint, boxed	149

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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, (US\$1,495) £390

07815 819318 or email 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. Dynaudio 1.4s (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 (West 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: Marantz CD63 Mk II KI



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 MICHELL REFERENCE hydraulic transcription turntable, circa 1979. Serial number K798933 with SME 3009 series 11 arm. Beautiful, original box, £525 own. 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 (South 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 thmpsnric@aol.com (Newcastle).

LINN UNIDISK 1.1 black, 18 months old, £5,500. Kisto system controller silver, £6,995. 020 8529 2261 (East London).

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. (North 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 loudspeakers. with adjustable woodeb stands, beautiful, £650. 18 months old. Great condition for their 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 K80II monoblocks, £130 each. Cirkit/Maplin Mosfet monoblocks, £90 each. 01344 454504 (Bracknell).



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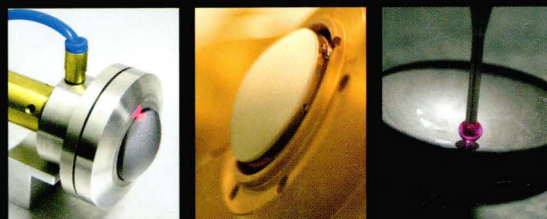
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