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- > BC Acoustique ACT
- > Canton Vento 809
- > Dynaudio Audience 72SE
- > Neat Elite SE
- > Ruark Talisman III

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**Acoustica**  
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[geoff.coleman@acoustica.co.uk](mailto:geoff.coleman@acoustica.co.uk)

**Robert Taussig**  
+44 (0) 20 7487 3455  
[sales@roberttaussig.co.uk](mailto:sales@roberttaussig.co.uk)

**Cloney Audio**  
+353 (0) 1288 9449  
[sales@cloneyaudio.com](mailto:sales@cloneyaudio.com)

# CLASSE



# HI-FI CHOICE

JUNE 2005 ISSUE 267

Future Publishing Ltd, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6PP  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7317 2600 Fax +44 (0)20 7317 2686

## EDITORIAL

Tim Bower **editor**  
tim.bower@futurenet.co.uk  
Dan George **reviews editor**  
dan.george@futurenet.co.uk

## CONTRIBUTORS

Richard Black, Anna Burton, Art Dudley,  
Colette Fahy, Alvin Gold, Stuart Harrison,  
Jason Kennedy, Paul Messenger, Dave Oliver,  
Mark Prendergast, Stuart M Robinson,  
Chris Rowe, Alan Sircorn, Phil Strongman,  
Dominic Todd, David Vivian, Nigel Williamson

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Adrian Lyon

## ADVERTISING

Michelle Blackwell **senior advertising manager**  
020 7317 2602 michelle.blackwell@futurenet.co.uk  
Fiona Beech **advertising manager**  
020 7317 2693 fiona.beech@futurenet.co.uk  
Brad Francis **senior sales executive**  
020 7317 2415 brad.francis@futurenet.co.uk  
Mark Cowan **sales executive**  
020 7317 2684 mark.cowan@futurenet.co.uk  
Bevan Walsh **classified sales executive**  
01225 442244 bevan.walsh@futurenet.co.uk

## HFC ONLINE

www.hifichoice.co.uk  
Mike Cooper **online editor**  
mike.cooper@futurenet.co.uk

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

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## MARKETING & LICENSING

Philippa Montgomery **marketing manager**  
philippa.montgomery@futurenet.co.uk  
Simon Wear **licensing director**  
simon.wear@futurenet.co.uk

## PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION

Paul Burden **circulation manager**  
Clare Tovey **production manager**  
Katty Pigott **production controller**  
Helen Ramjuttan **ad coordinator**

## PUBLISHING & MANAGEMENT

Simon Maxwell **publisher**  
simon.maxwell@futurenet.co.uk  
Aubrey Ganguly **group senior editor**  
David Fernando **advertising director**  
Dom Beaven **publishing director**  
Robert Price **managing director**

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Greg Ingham **chief executive**  
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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*.



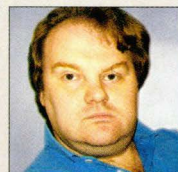
### ART DUDLEY

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 SIRCORN

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 floorstanding speakers priced from £1,500 to £1,900 are put before the *HFC* inquisition. Bring on the soft cushions

### THE VIKING INVASION

Scandinavian hi-fi goes from strength to strength with Copland and Primare

### SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

Why we love ProAc's tiny Tablette Reference Eight loudspeaker and its Signature brother

### LEXICON OF LOVE

Multichannel marries stereo with a new integrated receiver from the US masters

### AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...

The next issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* is on sale 5 May. Don't miss a thing – see p74 for our latest great subscription offer





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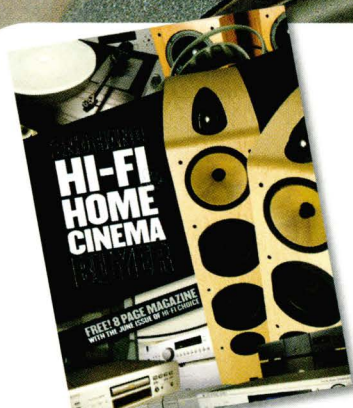
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# Vivid Loudspeakers



2004 Annual Award

These new high-end loudspeaker systems from South Africa feature innovative drivers built entirely in-house. Designed by UK-based audio research engineer Laurence Dickie, these all-metal units are partnered with smoothly contoured cast composite enclosures to deliver an exceptional transparency of reproduction. Since their launch last year, Vivid Audio loudspeakers have received critical acclaim from a range of qualified sources including a recent award for new product of the year.

Available as standard in the following colours: Oyster Grey, Graphite, Metallic White, Sahara Beige and Copper.

Custom finishes available, it's your choice.....



**B1**  
**£7,750**



**K1**  
**£10,750**



VIVID audio

UK Authorised Distributor:

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[www.vividspeakers.com](http://www.vividspeakers.com)





## SUGDEN A21SE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

Someone at Sugden has clearly been on a design refresher course – just look at this classy new souped-up amp from the famous Yorkshiremen. It's the new A21SE, a fine example of purist Class A design that's been conceived, developed and manufactured right here in the UK.

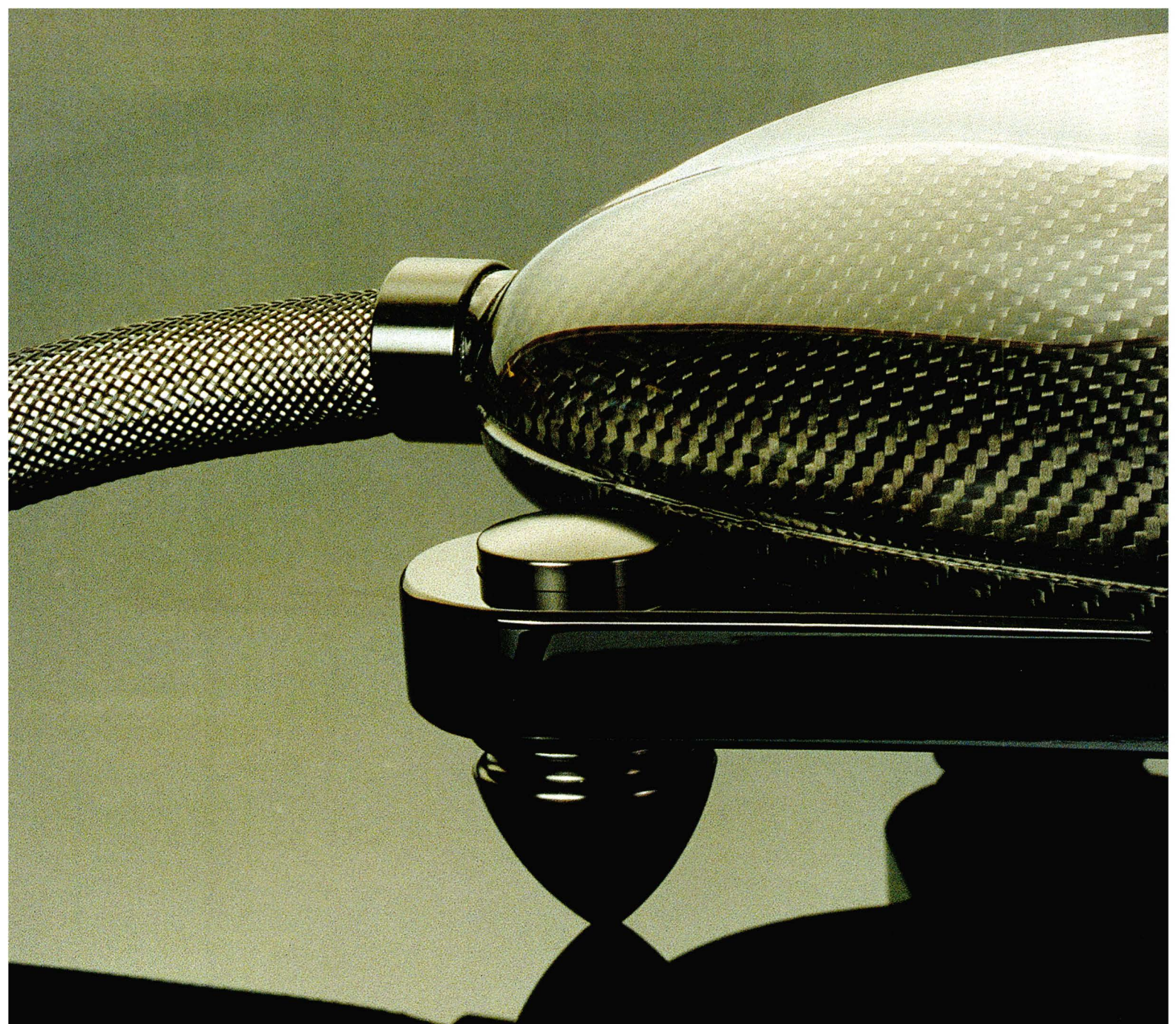
While the amp may have evolved from the original A21, it looks strikingly different, with its titanium-finish faceplate and chunky new heatsinks. It packs more punch too – power

is doubled to 30 watts (in pure Class A) which is consistent with Sugden's ethos of quality over quantity. It uses a completely new dual-mono line stage with separate current shunt power supplies, plus a new remote volume control. It's not just the power that's doubled – the price has too, but we expect to be able to hear where every pound has been spent.

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

<b>PRODUCT</b> Sugden A21SE
<b>TYPE</b> Integrated stereo amplifier
<b>PRICE</b> £1,995
<b>KEY FEATURES</b> Class A topology • New line stage • Rated power output: 30 watts per channel
<b>CONTACT</b> ☎ 01924 406016 🌐 <a href="http://www.sugdenaudio.com">www.sugdenaudio.com</a>





# totally transparent

Transparent Cables are created through a unique process combining the best of laboratory technology and critical listening tests by music lovers. Hand-assembled by Maine craftspeople with years of specialized training, Transparent Cables are the only in the world to have their networks optimized for each length of cable. With every increase in performance level, the selection, physical placement and electrical matching of the cable components becomes more critical. It is these touches and attention to detail that make Transparent Cables rise above the competition, producing a sound unrivalled by others.

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## CLASSÉ CDP-100 AND CAP-2100 CD PLAYER AND INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

Ⓞ This is the sensational new CD and amplifier combo from the Canadian brand Classé, which we're sure you'll agree is among the most visually stunning kit on the market today. The CDP-100 CD player has been built as a monument to Classé's "war on jitter" – the chassis, power supplies, signal paths and transport mechanism have all been scrutinised and optimised to rid the player of what Classé considers to be CD's greatest enemy.

The equally lovely looking CAP-2100 stereo amp is also rather special. It combines Classé's pre and power amp circuits from other models into one integrated unit, bringing the benefits of an individually optimised pre/power configuration under one lid. But the crowning glory for both player and amp is a special TFT touch-screen interface that delivers unique control flexibility, not to mention style.

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

**PRODUCT** Classé CDP-100 and CAP-2100

**TYPE** CD player and integrated stereo amplifier

**PRICE** £2,950 each

**KEY FEATURES** (CDP-100) Jitter-reducing design

Ⓞ TFT touch screen interface Ⓞ (CAP-2100) Rated power output: 100 watts per channel Ⓞ Five line-level inputs Ⓞ TFT touch screen interface

**CONTACT** ☎ 01903 221500

🌐 www.classeaudio.com



## NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS



### MOON ANDROMEDA

Moon's forthcoming Andromeda reference CD player is a fully-balanced differential design with the digital and analogue power supplies housed in a separate box. At its heart lie four Burr-Brown chipsets with 24-bit/705.6kHz upsampling and 16 times oversampling. Moon uses a Philips CD-Pro transport plus a custom toroidal transformer, which is said to aid superior pace and dynamics.

**Price** £7,000 (approx) **Due** May

☎ 0131 555 3922 🌐 www.simaudio.com

### LUMLEY CONCERT GRAND MIDI

New from Lumley at the top end of the Lampros range is the Concert Grand Midi – a colossal speaker bedecked with no less than 13 drive units. Designed to reproduce the full scale and dynamism of live music, its complement of drivers includes rear-firing bass units, plus tilting ribbon tweeters and super-tweeters.

**Price** £20,000 per pair **Due** now

☎ 01892 539245 🌐 www.metropolis-music.co.uk



### B&W M-1 NAIM N-SYSTEM

Both B&W and Naim have launched new high-quality compact speaker systems. B&W's latest sub/sat packages are based around its new M-1 satellite (above), which sports a die-cast aluminium cabinet, Nautilus-style tweeter tube and first-order crossovers. Naim's n-System, meanwhile, combines its freshly-designed n-Sat standmount speaker with a subwoofer for stereo or multichannel duties. Both systems are reviewed exclusively next issue.

**Price** B&W M-1 £250 (pair); Naim n-Sat £695 (pair) **Due** now

☎ B&W 01903 221500 🌐 www.bwspeakers.com

☎ Naim Audio 01722 332266 🌐 www.naim-audio.com

### ACCUPHON AUDIO MODEL 88

Retro styling and advanced engineering combine in newcomer Accuphon Audio's specialist range of hi-fi equipment. The Kent-based manufacturer has unveiled a solid state preamp and power amp, based on a metal chassis encased in wood. The Model 88 preamp (below) has seven inputs and both balanced and single-ended outputs, while the matching Model 80 power amp operates in Class A mode and is rated at 25 watts into six ohms.

Accuphon is also intending to release an integrated amp, universal disc player and digital amplifier later this year and offers home auditions by appointment.

**Price** Model 88 £995; Model 80 £1,995

**Due** now ☎ 01233 662599

🌐 www.accuphon.co.uk





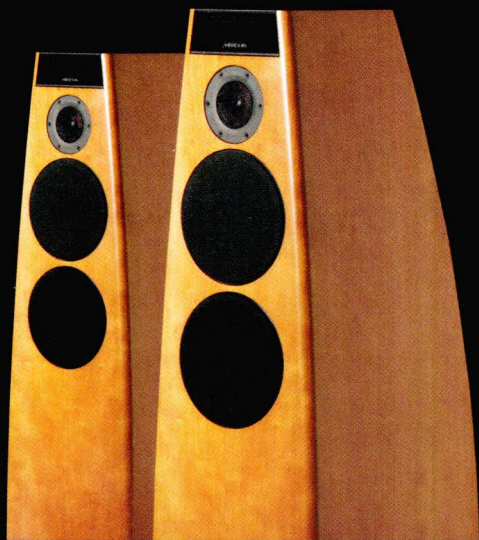


## BRYSTON C SERIES

Hot on the heels of the new Bryston B-100C integrated amp announced in *HFC 265*, comes the official launch of the entire Bryston C Series amplifier range. The new line comprises four different preamp configurations (to include DAC and MM/MC versions), five stereo power amps and two multichannel amps, plus the B-100C stereo integrated. Bryston claims all aspects of signal flow have been improved in its new preamps, while the new power amps are faster and more linear, with doubled filter capacitance for better-controlled bass.

**Price** preamps from £2,600 to £3,600; power amps from £1,950 to £5,850 **Due** now

☎ 0870 444 1044 🌐 www.bryston.ca

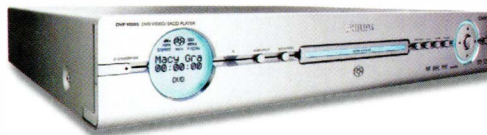


## MERIDIAN DSP5200

Meridian's latest DSP5200 loudspeaker is said to offer much of the technology from the flagship DSP8000 in a smaller and more affordable package. At less than one metre tall, the two-and-a-half-way active floorstander features three custom drivers, three power amplifiers, integral multi-bit DACs and digital crossovers. Users are given full remote control over bass, treble tilt/tweeter axis and time-correct balance. The custom digital signal processors even allow correction of the frequency response to optimise the speaker in the room. Meridian uses a curved, multi-layer resin cabinet that provides solid support for the 160mm composite bass drivers.

**Price** £6,150 per pair **Due** now

☎ 01480 445678 🌐 www.meridian-audio.com



## PHILIPS DVP9000S

The new DVP9000S is Philips' most advanced DVD/SACD/CD spinner to date. The player is said to deliver high-definition standard picture quality via its HDMI digital link, with on-board Faroudja DCDi processing. It's also claimed to feature an advanced bass management system, alongside CD upsampling technology with conversion to SACD's DSD coding format. The DVP9000S is compatible with virtually every current optical disc format, except DVD-Audio.

**Price** £400 **Due** now

☎ 0870 900 9070 🌐 www.philips.co.uk

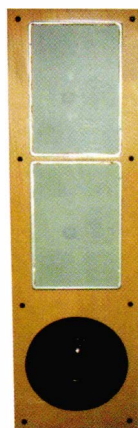
## ARCAYDIS ICARUS

Arcaydis claims to have completed the first truly successful attempt to harness NXT 'flat' speaker technology in a high-end audiophile design. The Icarus will be the brand's flagship and has been developed in conjunction with an acoustics firm based in Yorkshire. Its cabinet stands 110cm tall and incorporates a 260mm paper-coned bass driver along with two NXT panels. The crossover frequency is set at 400Hz to best integrate the bass driver and sensitivity is claimed to be in the region of 92dB.

**Price** £2,800 per pair **Due** now

☎ 01562 865788

🌐 www.arcaydis.co.uk



## Soundbites



**LEXICON** has a new AV controller called the MC4 which is based upon its MC12 processor. Boasting 5.1 analogue inputs for SACD and DVD-Audio sources, the £3,500 MC4 also offers the full gamut of decoding software and audio is further enhanced by eight D-to-A converters providing 24-bit resolution from 44.1kHz to 192kHz inputs. A-to-D conversion is also performed at 24-bit resolution to maintain sound quality.

☎ 01423 359054

**TITAN** loudspeakers of Essex has a new £500 standmount speaker. The new T2/r features Titan's double aluminium ribbon technology in the tweeter and a 200mm piston aluminium bass/mid driver in a pyramid enclosure. Titan claims the speaker delivers "crystal clear sound and amazing attack".

☎ 01702 206870

**SONY** has released details of a new Hi-MD MiniDisc Walkman with a built-in camera and support for a new photo standard it calls Hi-MD Photo. The new MZ-DH10P boasts a 1.3 megapixel camera, 1.5in LCD screen and support for MP3 audio (previous generations of Sony MD portables only supported the ATRAC codec). Audio quality in Hi-MD mode is said to have been improved by Sony's HD digital amp technology.

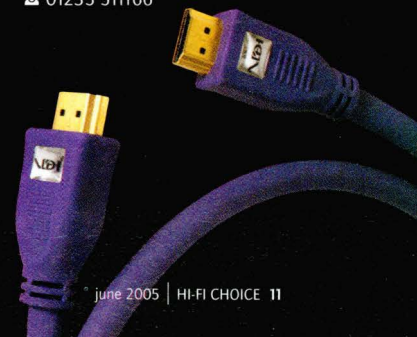
☎ 08705 111999

**TRIANGLE'S** new Odyssey slim line loudspeaker range is now available. The speakers have been designed to "integrate into any domestic environment". The range comprises a floorstander, one stand or wall mount model, and an active subwoofer. As always, the models feature Triangle's proprietary drivers and all are available in two enticing finishes: Cognac or Bordeaux. Prices start at £275 per pair for the smaller Odyssey Minor standmount.

☎ 01753 652669

**VAN DEN HUL** has launched a new HDMI digital cable, imaginatively called The HDMI. It's designed to promote a low-jitter performance with both audio and video data and uses high-purity oxygen-free copper, which is double shielded with aluminium foil and a metal braid. Prices start at £50 for a one-metre cable.

☎ 01235 511166





### The Insider

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

**ANDY GILES**  
**Job Title:** Hi-Fi PR Guru  
**Company:** KEF, Meridian,  
 NAD, TEAC, Tivoli and more



#### DVD-Audio or SACD – and why?

DVD-Audio just seems more logical to me. It will offer more, too, as things progress. I can't say too much more on this subject – for professional reasons – but all I will say is I don't own one SACD disc!

#### Name one really great album that you've heard recently...

There's never just one, is there? I'm really impressed with the Bloc Party album, *Silent Alarm*. Also, Kings of Leon continue to impress, don't they? *Aha Shake Heartbreak* is the business. I can't wait for the new Strokes album, too – I reckon it'll be their best.

#### Is the universal disc player the future of CD playback?

Gawd – I hope not! It's a handy concept – but for whom?

#### CD or vinyl – and why?

Vinyl... and it would take too long to explain... suffice to say that I was a Linn Sondek man from the 1970s – and still have one (my original, actually). Led Zeppelin never sounded better! You have to be sober or straight (I don't mean sexually) to be able to successfully plonk that cartridge in the revolving groove without carving up the LP – but it's worth it. Believe me. And I'm invariably neither...

### Hi-Fi Diary

#### MAY

2 **National Vintage Communications fair**  
 Hall 11, NEC, Birmingham  
 07947 460161  
*A fascinating mélange of ancient tech*

#### JUNE

5-8 **High End 2005**  
 Munich, Germany  
 Glisovic@HighEndSociety.de  
*Europe's premier high-end showcase*

#### SEPTEMBER

27-30 **The Hi-Fi & Home Entertainment Show**  
 The Renaissance and Park Inn hotels,  
 Heathrow, London  
 020 8515 2151  
*London's best-established hi-fi show*

## Show report – Bristol 'Sound & Vision' Show 2005

*Paul Messenger braves the elements to bring you the best of the wild west*

**Place:** The Marriott Hotel, Bristol, England

**Time:** 25-27 February, 2005

**Event:** Sound & Vision 2005, aka The Bristol Show – arguably the UK's biggest and best-loved hi-fi expo.

Despite biting weather, the 2005 Bristol Show saw visitors queuing round the block for admission. And, if the home cinema rooms were doing brisk business, traditional stereo hi-fi was more than holding its own.

A handful of brands continued to promote the SACD and DVD-Audio 'high-band' digital formats, but at least as many were parading new vinyl replay gear. **Cyrus**, for example, showed its high-quality Phono X phono stage, among several new components. **Cyrus** has been doing notably well of late, and while there's nothing new about its cute half-width cast alloy casework, perhaps the times have finally caught up. Assisted by component integration and miniaturisation, style and compactness seemed to be key show themes.

Style-wise, the Choral range from **Chord Electronics** looked like the cute 'n' compact high-end equivalent to **Cyrus**. Codenamed **ONE** and expected to sell for £3,000, **Chord's** new single-box CD player was seen for the first time. The company also showed its range can now be decked out in a delicious Brilliant high-gloss chrome finish, at a 15 per cent premium.

Still on the compact and stylish theme, a number of hi-fi specialists are now touting convenient, multi-functional one-box components. **Arcam** has joined their ranks with the rather smart Solo – a single unit incorporating a CD player, DAB/FM (or AM/FM) radio tuner and 75-watt stereo amplification. A partnering pair of speakers called **Alto** is sourced from and looks similar to **Audiovector's** K1. Along the same lines is **Meridian's** G91 (reviewed in *HFC* 260 and featured in *Beautiful Systems* on p32 of this issue). It packs a DVD-Audio/Video player, tuner and preamp into a single chassis and was shown in multichannel mode, feeding a set of new DSP5200 active speakers.

More conventional new electronics included a trio of **Creek** components that feature a particularly attractive



and logical button layout, while **Talk Electronics** is introducing a new **Saxon** sub-brand. This is unusual in being manufactured in the UK, starting with the 700-series at c£1,000 per unit, but extending down through the 500s to the c£400 300-series, available later this year. Our DVD-based world has made it well nigh impossible to obtain dedicated CD disc drives, so **Exposure** has created its own – with the help of its Malaysian parent – for the 2010S CD player.

## “Many brands were demonstrating new vinyl replay equipment.”

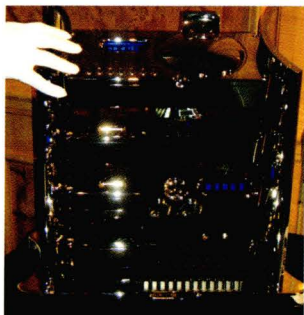


**Right:** Neat Acoustics Motive 1

**Linn's** radical new **Chakra** monolithic/bi-polar amplification was driving the active **Artikulat** and the passive **Akurat** loudspeakers, both of which feature the company's unique '3-K' cast alloy three-way mid/treble driver array. Bravely, the **Akurat** dem used the company's own recordings and components in a three-way vinyl/CD/SACD comparison.

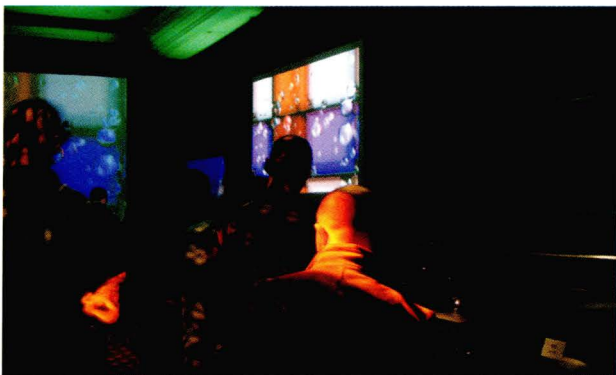
**Neat Acoustics** has developed its own inverted titanium dome tweeter, for an all-new slimline two-and-a-half-way prototype floorstander called **Motive 1**. **Monitor Audio** has undertaken a complete revamp of its mid-price **Silver** series, with very stylish results, while **Harman-owned Revel** has sacrificed the classy cosmetics (yet, seemingly, little of the sound quality) of its upmarket models for the high-value **Concerta** range. **ProAc** showed two smart new **Studio 130** and **140** models, the latter unusual in using twin main drivers in a two-way configuration.





**LEFT:** The bling's the thing – Chord Electronics' striking new Brilliant high-gloss finish on the Choral range. The luxuriant looks require a pair of cotton gloves to keep fingermarks at bay!

**BELOW:** Tripping the light fantastic – Naim Audio went all multimedia with their psychedelic chill-out room. A perfect way to show off the company's new surround sound system.



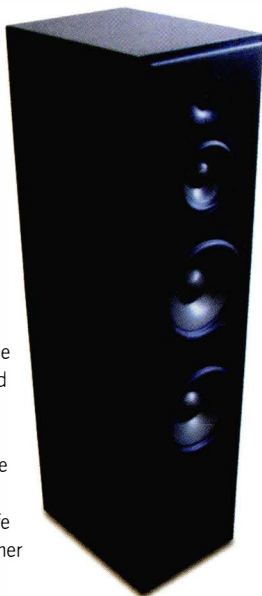
One of the most interesting speaker systems was the NHT Xd, probably the most costly three-box (sub/sat) combo yet devised, incorporating active drive and digital room equalisation as well as tasty styling and compact dimensions.

Some of the most creative speaker designs are found in the AV sector. Yamaha's £800 YSP-1 digital sound projector is a single box surround sound system, based on 'sound steering' technology. KEF's new KHT6000 uses ACE (activated carbon) technology to improve bass extension from a tiny enclosure. And Ruark has a clever hang-on-the-wall Symphony speaker, that looks capable of combining good sound with visual discretion.

Among the plethora of accessories, it was good to find Pink Triangle co-founder Arthur Khoubessarian returning with his new Funk brand and a number of turntable-related clever ideas, including the foamed-PVC Achromat and Achroplat. And Quadraspire's new acrylic equipment tables clearly sounded superior to its wooden predecessors, thanks in part to the massive Hot Tubes JD1 valve amp.

Bristol confirmed there's still plenty of life left in traditional hi-fi. Hopefully the weather will be less hostile next year! **HFC**

**Below:** Revel's new Concerta F12 speaker



## New Music

### IN THE STUDIO

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



#### PEARL JAM

**Title:** *tbc*

**Release date:** autumn 2005

Pearl Jam are at work on their eighth studio album in their homebase of Seattle. "We're recording but not really putting any pressure on," says frontman Eddie Vedder. "You get together as a band and you want to push yourselves harder or get some place you've never been before, and there's work to get there." The album, the band's first since 2002's *Riot Act*, will appear on BMG after they left longtime label Epic last year.



#### BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

**Title:** *Devils And Dust*

**Release date:** 2 May

The Boss has been recording in LA with producer Brendan O'Brien, who worked on 2002's *The Rising*, Springsteen's last 9/11 themed album. His 19th studio collection will feature a dozen new songs and the title track was written at the time of the Iraq war. "It's about people working through their confusions, sometimes well and sometimes tragically," he says.

#### LAURYN HILL

**Title:** *tbc*

**Release date:** autumn 2005

Ex-Fugees singer Lauryn Hill unveiled two songs at Bob Marley's 60th birthday concert in Ethiopia in February. The songs, with the working titles *Walk* and *Politician's Spirit*, will both appear on her long-awaited follow-up to 1998's *The Miseducation Of...* which won five Grammys. The new album also finds her collaborating on several tracks with rapper Kanye West.

#### RYAN ADAMS

**Title:** *Cold Roses/ Jacksonville/ 29*

**Release date:** throughout 2005

Adams is due to release the double CD *Cold Roses*, released under the name Ryan and

The Cardinals in late April – but that's just the start. The maverick singer-songwriter has announced two solo albums before 2005 is out – *Jacksonville*, produced by Thomas Schick and *29*, produced by Ethan Johns, who has helmed much of Adams' best work since his Whiskeytown days.

#### PORTISHEAD

**Title:** *tbc*

**Release date:** autumn 2005

Geoff Barrow of Bristol trip-hoppers Portishead says the band are close to finishing their first studio album in eight years. "We haven't played for years, but we still see each other and write." Their debut *Dummy* won 1995's Mercury Music Prize.

#### ALSO COMING SOON

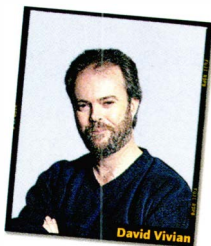
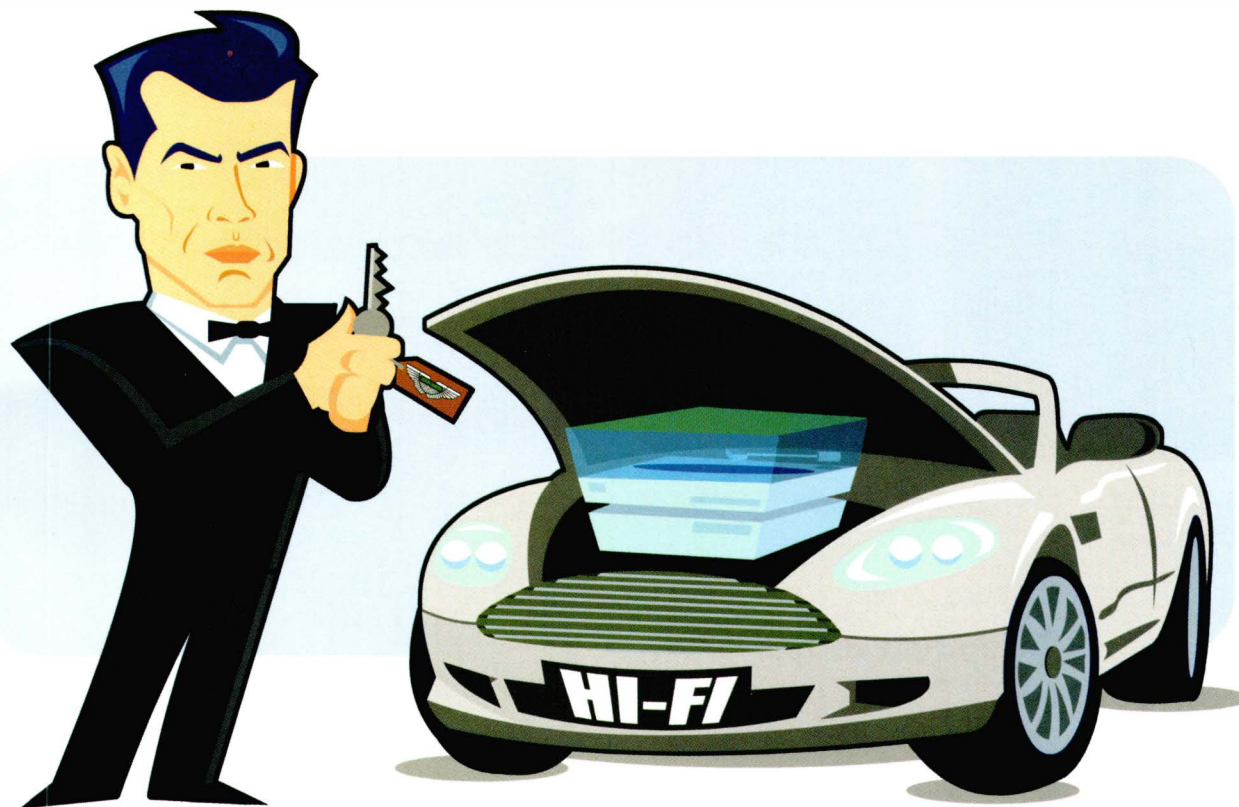
##### JAZZ/ CLASSICAL

**Pletnev** Tchaikovsky: 18 Pieces (Apr); **Jessye Norman** Collection (Apr); **Jian Wang** Bach: Six Suites For Cello (Apr); **The HoneyRiders** The HoneyRiders (Apr)

##### SACD/ DVD-A

**Amon Tobin** Chaos Theory: Splinter Cell 3 (DVD-Audio, Mar); **Bryan Ferry** Girls And Boys (SACD, Apr); **Blue Öyster Cult** A Long Day's Night (DualDisc DVD-A, Apr); **Jac van Steen** Martin: Violin Concertos (SACD, Apr); **Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band** XXL (DualDisc DVD-A, Apr)





David Vivian

## Engine vs hi-fi

*No Mistah Bond, it's Linn-Car Entertainment*

Which would you rather listen to, a high-end hi-fi or the engine of a supercar? It's a question that is hardly ever asked because, until a few years ago, it was a choice no one had to make. There were plenty of supercars with stupendous engines to choose from, of course. Some even had quite decent on board ICE. But none had an honest-to-God high-end hi-fi tucked away behind the dash.

Until, that is, Aston Martin and Linn got together and gave us the Vanquish, the car with what some believed was 'the best engine note in the world' and a custom-designed stereo system many were inclined to call 'the best line-fit ICE in the world'. At last, the battle of the sexiness could commence. And the smart money was on the Vanquish.

The honeyed howl of its V12 engine in turn charmed the birds from the trees and had

**“When I heard that snarl from the Aston’s engine, I thought there was maybe not a lot of point in having a good hi-fi.”**

people running for cover. It made the rival V12s from Ferrari and Lamborghini sound strangely muted, uninteresting and harmonically impoverished. No, it would have been more appropriate to wheel on a New Orleans gospel choir as a truer benchmark for the Aston's seductive way with decibels.

Even Linn's boss, Ivor Tiefenbrun, wasn't sure which would win: "I must admit that when I first heard that snarl from the Aston's engine, I thought there was maybe not a lot of point in having a good hi-fi. I remained sceptical when we made the first test rig. I listened to the sound and was impressed. But, at that point, I couldn't drive it about.

"But when we eventually did, it was a revelatory experience. We drove out of the factory to a village on the other side of the Eaglesham moor on a nice windy, miserable Scottish day and turned on the hi-fi. And it was just extraordinary. I said to Brian (Brian Morris, company PR) 'this is better than an orgasm'. It was a complete feeling of satisfaction and fulfilment, better than any drug. It was just fantastic. The combination of the sound and

the car was so complimentary and extraordinarily well-suited. Your whole being was smiling."

Ivor, maybe not for the first time, had hit the nail on the head. The bit we tend to forget – understandably given the amount of kerbside sonic pollution we're subjected to from the presumably now mostly deaf *Max Power* Vauxhall Corsa-wielding generation – is that true, full spectrum high-end audio has a rather magical and unexpected trait.

As most of us know from living with our domestic hi-fi systems, the acid test is to whack it up to a level most would describe as 'loud' and then see if you can easily conduct a conversation. If it really is the business, conversing won't be a problem; the system won't even sound that loud – just large, full-bodied and 'real'. But a system that starts to distort and compress dynamics, even subtly, will create a sort of auditory fog. This is when a system seems 'loud'. Not only won't you be able to hear yourself speak, you'll have trouble thinking, too. Just like all those *Max Power* reading Vauxhall Corsa owners.



So there you are. You don't have to sacrifice the sound of your motor for the sound of Mozart. If you've got enough cylinders and a sufficiently brilliant hi-fi, the ensemble thing really can take you higher.

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



## More sound, less quality

*Does DualDisc spell the end of DVD-Audio?*

DualDisc has now come to Europe, with the format being officially launched at an event held at Dolby Laboratories in London.

Unlike DVD-Audio and SACD, DualDisc doesn't really need any special hardware. CD and DVD players are now commonplace, so the only untapped area where manufacturers could make any money is by equipping their machines with DVD-Audio capabilities, and we know how that's been going to date... it's probably easier to sell ice to the Inuit.

Unfortunately, the past few years have demonstrated that high-resolution audio is sadly of little interest to the man in the street, most of whom think 128kbps MP3 is the last word in fidelity. To add insult to injury, the latest news is that that DTS, despite doing such great work to further the cause of music in surround, is phasing-out DVD-Audio, apparently because "most people are only interested in the DTS track." Perhaps those who buy DTS discs are simply confused; not surprising, as the company describes their mid-fi 48kHz lossy format as 'Master Quality', even when a loss-less DVD-Audio track can be found elsewhere on the same disc.

If it's not the hardware manufacturers, just who is backing DualDisc? Primarily the Recording Industry Association of America, with the investment coming from the RIAA's members – record company giants such as EMI, Sony/BMG, Universal and Warner. If anyone needs reminding, the RIAA is the greatly loathed industry body responsible for making an example of file-sharing students (and a previously deceased woman from Virginia) by suing them up to \$5,000 apiece as a penalty for their illegal music sharing activities. ▣

# R

## RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

### WHARFEDALE DIAMOND LOUDSPEAKER



It is hard to believe that this unprepossessing, even dumpy little speaker was single-handedly responsible (by some accounts)

for rescuing Wharfedale during one of its periodic dips in fortune. I was at the launch event in 1981, when several new models were introduced to us muttering rosters, including the MkI Diamond, which lasted just one year before the MkII appeared. At that time, Dr Peter Fry (more recently at B&W), famous for his laser interferometers constructed from chicken wire and ex-military scrapyard waste, was head of R&D. He delivered startling results about cone and enclosure behaviour, and hi-tech loudspeakers to address the issues he uncovered. The other models launched at the press event were all larger, more ambitious and technically more interesting than the Diamond; and all were completely forgotten soon after.

At that press event, the Diamond was introduced as a tailpiece to the presentation, with little song and dance. As I recall, the pitch went something like this: "And now, just before you go, here's something we cooked up this morning that we thought might be interesting for students in digs or for very small rooms, that will give a taste of what we're all about without dominating the room, or costing much money". Or words to that effect. And that pretty much was it.

Never was a loudspeaker less aptly named than the Diamond, which never was much of a looker. It wasn't even fashionably tiny in the way the various Bose models went on to become. But it certainly delivered the goods. Much of the detail of the early versions of the speaker – versions 2 through 6 – are no longer available as Wharfedale has changed hands, and staff turnover means those involved with early Diamonds are not with Wharfedale today.

The Diamond was just big enough, and clever enough not to require a subwoofer (a product category that really didn't exist at the time), or a Bose-style bass speaker to work properly. It could be used quite happily on its own, its rather dark tonal balance and a combination of rear venting and boundary



**“Never was a speaker less aptly named than the Diamond, which was never much of a looker.”**

reinforcement helping to deliver a fuller and more muscular sound than many of its closest rivals. The Audax 19mm tweeter, which was cheap but not always very nice, sounded okay in the Diamond due to the tonal balance adopted (it was padded down by a resistor), and the main 120mm polypropylene bass driver was a sophisticated unit for its day, even when used in a rather scrappy chipboard box with 12mm wall thickness. Sensitivity was high enough to cope in moderate size rooms with popular amplifiers of the day – the NAD 3020 for example. The same drive units, by the way, were first used as tweeter and midrange drivers in a larger, but short lived, three-way design called the TSR102, which was the technical basis for the Diamond.

Now on its ninth major iteration, the Diamond has effectively vacated its original slot, as it has grown in scale, build quality and pricing – though ironically the later versions were not always better sounding. The current Diamond is a long way from the ultra-simple stripped down 5.2 litre miniature that it once was. Taking all versions together, the Diamond has sold over a million pairs worldwide – 1.3 million by some accounts – where its popularity is probably only rivalled by the ubiquitous matchbox speakers from the previously mentioned Bose. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*



ALAS, POOR WEBSITE, I VAGUELY REMEMBER WHAT YOU WERE GOING ON ABOUT...

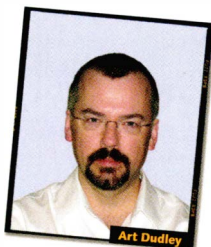


**“The internet has not produced a single audio writer or audio point of view that anyone is likely to remember in even two years.”**

❏ The RIAA seems only interested in rekindling the dying physical media market, not pushing the boundaries of high-resolution sound. A quick glance at the mandatory content of a DualDisc gives the game away. Provided the DVD side contains the entire album and offers greater fidelity than that of the CD side, the RIAA is happy. That's not hard to achieve; the DVD-Video specification calls for a minimum sample rate of 48kHz, which is superior to CD's 44.1 kHz but is a far cry from the 24-bit/192kHz performance found on current DVD-Audio.

It is expected that standard DVD-based DVD-Audio titles with their copious 7.95GB DVD-9 storage capabilities will be completely phased out in favour of DualDiscs with the more restrictive 4.37GB DVD-5 standard, so while it is true that most DualDiscs (with the exception of those from Sony/BMG) have so far included some DVD-Audio content, the format's lax mandatory requirements (in conjunction with the reduced disc storage space) do little to help high-resolution listeners sleep at night. There is a potential nightmare scenario: it's only a matter of time before their precious MLP tracks are replaced on a record company executive's whim by nothing better than 16-bit/48kHz PCM (as is the case with Sony's releases), Dolby Digital or 'Master Quality' DTS.

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



## World Wide Worthless

*High-quality online journalism is an oxymoron*

As far as I can tell, the relationship between hi-fi enthusiasts and the hi-fi press has always been a rich one. The names of the best journalists in the field – judged so because they're more scholarly, or more visionary, or simply more entertaining than the rest – are known to the majority of serious hobbyists. And I don't think there's another field in which consumer products have been influenced more by the people who write about them; If you clean your LPs on a wet-wash machine, it's because a writer named Percy Wilson dreamed up such a thing. If the spatial effects in the first stereo classical recordings account for a large portion of your listening pleasure, thank Harry Pearson for bringing those old RCAs and Mercurys to our attention in the pages of the magazine he founded, *The Absolute Sound*. And yes, on the other side of the coin, if you ever got

stuck with bad sounding mass-market amp or CD player, I suppose you can 'thank' Julian Hirsch for propounding the notion that measurements are all-important (okay, so Quad's 'all good amplifiers should sound identical' and Philips' 'Perfect Sound Forever' may have helped, too).

But that doesn't tell the whole story – of how we waited by the mailbox for every issue of the short-lived *Sound Practices*, delighted to the dialogue between Messrs. Howard, Hughes, and

Gold in *Hi-Fi Answers*, and read and re-read every page of *The Absolute Sound*, *Hi-Fi Choice*, *Hi-Fi News* and *Stereophile* until the bindings fell apart. In a sometimes lonely hobby, the best magazines have been our best friends.

Now the edgier mags have mostly gone away, and it seems unlikely that any others will take their place. Instead, we have the internet – which some people believe is the future of publishing. All right, then; words are words, just like bits are bits and watts are watts, and I suppose it shouldn't matter where we read them. But, I can't help wondering why none of the audio e-zines have the power to excite me the way the best of the paper-and-ink mags have done countless times over the years?

As an audio writer myself, I turn to the internet often – chiefly as a research tool, for looking up specifications, retail prices, and those sorts of things. But when I do so, I just go straight to the manufacturers themselves. The internet is a convenient and affordable substitute for a brochure, or perhaps a telephone conversation. Which is something I seldom enjoy, anyway.

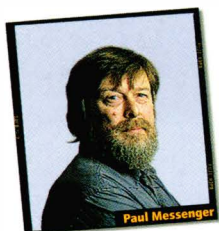
But the fact is, the internet has not produced one single audio writer or audio point of view that either I, or anyone I know, are likely to remember in twenty, ten, or even two years. If *Hi-Fi Choice* or *Stereophile* ceased publishing tomorrow, the response would be one of genuine sadness and loss. But if one of the audio e-zines went belly-up tomorrow, useful though they may be on some level, would anyone really care?

I'll wait for the format to mature, and I'll carry in mind the perils that await anyone whose taste for progress has been dulled by comfort. The internet has unarguably created a market for itself, and in that sense it's here to stay. But as a vehicle for high-quality journalism – not to



mention as literature – it hardly blows up a storm. In fact, a good strong breeze would blow it off the table.

*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*



## Is size important?

*Are your speaker cones really that big?*

One of the tasks involved in HFC's current loudspeaker *Ultimate Group Test* format requires unearthing and quoting the manufacturer's claims for the main drive unit sizes used in the various models. This is, I have discovered, something of a can of worms, as the quoted sizes frequently bear little resemblance to the size of the diaphragm that is actually doing the sound reproduction business. For example, BC Acoustique – whose ACT A2 is reviewed in this month's group – quotes one of the larger bass and midrange driver sizes (180mm), yet the tape measure revealed that the actual diameter of the cones themselves, at 115mm, was one of the smallest in the group.

I don't believe that there's any deliberate attempt to deceive here, as driver sizes have always been based on the frame diameters. The problem arises because the size of the frame often bears only a tenuous relationship to the size of the cone, depending on how the frame is measured, and how the area within the frame is divided between the cone itself and the flexible surround that links the cone to the frame.

The B&W 802D review on p42 illustrates this perfectly. The company's special FST midrange driver has an unusually slim surround, so it uses a modest 150mm frame to house a cone that is 140mm in diameter. The twin bass drivers used in the same speaker are 200mm units, yet their Rohacell sandwich cones are just a fraction over 150mm in diameter.

Exaggerating drive unit sizes has a long history, and some slightly surprising roots. In the early 1970s, large speakers were among the items that lost out in the change from Purchase Tax to Value Added Tax, because VAT was applied to all loudspeakers. Prior to VAT, large speaker systems with 12in (we weren't metric back then) bass drivers were deemed 'professional' rather than 'domestic', and were thus immune from Purchase Tax. ▶

# MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

THE WAILERS  
BURNIN'



Though the Wailers' third album, *Catch A Fire*, may be the one that's best known to collectors, largely because of its distinctive sleeve (it was shaped like a Zippo lighter, and opened the same way), it's their second that is the more musically important. Despite being hugely popular in Jamaica, in the early 1970s reggae had yet to be exported to the world at large. In the vocal trio of Peter McIntosh (Peter Tosh), Neville Livingston (Bunny Wailer) and Bob Marley, aka the Wailers, Island Records boss Chris Blackwell saw an opportunity to take the music to an international audience. But for their first album on Island, he insisted on overdubbing rock musicians to try to make the music more palatable to US and UK ears. It worked – *Catch A Fire* was a moderate success, but listening to it today, it's very much a tarnished gem.

*Burnin'*, on the other hand, is the real deal. For the recording in Kingston, JA in 1973, the Wailers' vocals and guitars upsized to a full band, bringing in the rhythm section of bass player Aston (Family Man) Barrett and his drummer brother Carlton (Carly) Barrett, along with keyboardist Earl (Way) Lindo. The new group of seasoned pros locked into a steady groove from the off, and held it tight through an album that would provide the template for the next few years of reggae's development – arguably its most successful period.

In the wake of his subsequent success, it's easy to overlook that Bob Marley may not even have had the best voice in the Wailers (Bunny's powerful tenor would probably qualify for that honour), though his plaintive tones were certainly the most distinctive. And, while easily the most prolific, Marley was not the only writer in the Wailers. There are two compositions credited to Bunny and one to Peter on *Burnin'*. Ghetto anthem *Get Up, Stand Up* was actually co-written by Marley and Tosh and combines what would become Marley trademarks – consciousness-raising lyrics, a driving reggae beat, the Rastafari religion and an insistently catchy tune. Also here is *Small Axe*, another Marley call to arms against the oppressor and rude boy saga *I Shot The Sheriff*,



**“*Burnin'* put the band on a tour treadmill that would lead to the demise of the original triumvirate.”**

which Eric Clapton, still referred to by some as 'God', took a bit of a shine to, taking it to a US number one the following year.

The recently released *Deluxe Edition* of the album offers additional songs from the *Burnin'* sessions that didn't make it onto the original vinyl, including Bunny's *Reincarnated Souls*, which was at one time touted as the title track – its omission perhaps highlighting the shifting power within the band at this time.

*Burnin'* put the band on a tour treadmill that would lead to the demise of the original triumvirate. It was the last album that the original Wailers, who by that time had been together for over a decade, would record together. Peter and Bunny slipped away, unwilling to join Bob in his dream of global one-love. Afterwards it would be Bob Marley and the Wailers, and perhaps Bob lost something special with the harmonies (though these would later be replaced by the I-Threes female vocal trio, which included his wife, Rita, further pushing Bob's voice to the fore).

Marley's subsequent megastardom would lead to a life of almost constant globetrotting until his untimely death from cancer in 1981 at the age of 36. Reggae is now part of the fabric of popular music around the world, but *Burnin'* is where the world first caught the beat from Jamaica. **HFC**

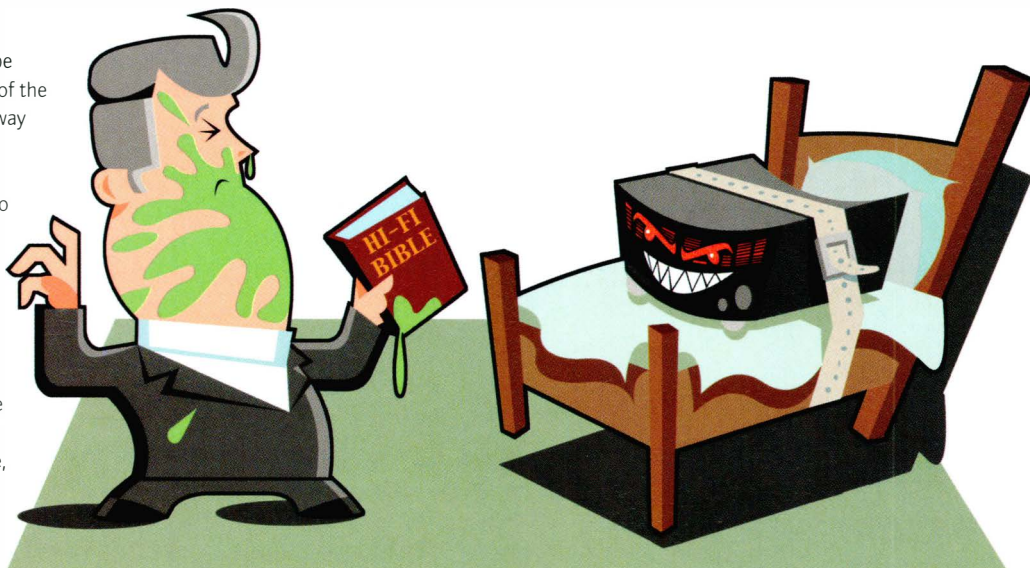
*Dave Oliver*



❏ This may sound crazy, but it can be argued that the subsequent success of the 200mm and 150mm drivers in two-way designs, which have dominated the market since the 1970s, can be put down to the change from Purchase to Value Added Tax regimes.

How one should actually quote the size of a drive unit remains a matter of debate. Some quote the diameter as the distance between the fixing screw holes, but that will naturally depend on the width of the flange. Measuring across the inside edge of the frame makes some sense, and an even stronger case can be made for adding half the surround width to the diameter of the diaphragm. But I still think that the actual diaphragm diameter, which is a figure I quote in *HFC* reviews, is the most meaningful in real terms. However, it'll never catch on; it's also the figure with the least marketing appeal.

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



**“I once bought a hi-fi salesman to the point of explosive apoplexy by daring to ask if his store had a graphic equaliser.”**

That's all well and good for many recordings. But there are some – thousands in fact – that would benefit from EQ adjustment. Human beings, sadly, make mistakes. That's why most of us prefer to live as far as possible from nuclear power stations – and why many recordings need a subtle tweak or two. *LAMF* by Johnny Thunders and The Heartbreakers is a perfect example. By the late 1970s, Thunders, and most of the various ex-New York Dolls who made up the original Heartbreakers, had been punky junkies for nearly half a decade. They weren't interested in quality... they just wanted something that wouldn't interfere with them nodding out. Hence, *LAMF* is the most muffled album of the Seventies. On a £25,000 system – played at pain-threshold volume – it's just about bearable. On anything else 'hi-fi' – forget it. Yet, on a cheap system turned up to distortion levels, it's great fun.

The bootleg CD version of the Northern Soul classic *Night Owl* is another case in point (the legit version still hadn't been re-released the last time I looked). Bobby Paris' ageing gem is cacophony on all but the most expensive rigs – or the cheapest, control-flecked mini-boxes.

And this isn't just a carp at the music industry – as people get older their hearing starts to get impaired. A boost at the high end might be just what the (hi-fi) doctor ordered, if everything is beginning to sound like it's being played through a pyramid of wet socks. Of course, any high-quality amp with controls would have to have a decent by-pass switch, as well as the best possible signal path.

Even in this hi-tech age of 24/96 recordings and SACD, this is surely possible. Musicians and studio bureaucrats – and Mother Nature – all make the odd error. It'd be nice to sometimes have the option of trying to correct these. It doesn't seem logical that we have to live with them *ad infinitum*. And, with a respectful nod to this magazine's title, isn't choice nearly always a good thing?

*Phil Strongman was co-author of the classic punk book Pretty Vacant and has been writing features for Hi-Fi Choice for the past decade*



**EQ, but not free**

*Are tone controls really such a bad thing?*

There are some things that are just not said. No one asks the Pope what religion he is, no one, any longer, asks if the world is flat and no one in hi-fi talks about EQ controls.

I once bought a hi-fi salesman to the point of explosive apoplexy by daring to ask if his store had a graphic EQ unit. I was after one with balanced inputs but even that veneer of studio professionalism didn't save me from a rant. He questioned my sanity, my motives and stopped just short of questioning my legitimacy.

There is, of course, a logical reason for all this – the purity of the audio signal path. A recording is carefully engineered, produced, mixed, mastered and then transferred to disc. To keep as close to the intentions of both the artist and producer, it's traditionally thought best not to clutter the amp with unnecessary controls – bass, treble, mid and complex graphic EQs all sully the signal and add noise... as well as tempting visitors to play DJ with them.



**Blu-Ray blues**

*Don't worry about the future until it's here*

As if CD vs SACD vs DVD-Audio wasn't enough of a battle, there's more to come. In the future, Blu-Ray and HD-DVD will be vying for our attentions. But, there's no point in worrying now; in the format feud of the future, the key word is 'future'.

One day, these two new formats will be competing for the preferred choice of digit-carriage. In a couple of years time, the



quality of high-definition television may make DVD-Video look a bit tired and fuzzy. Also, by then digital photographers will be using gigapixel cameras, HDTV-chummy video cameras will eat up data capacity, and video games will need terabytes of data storage to deliver more and more realistic action. Blu-Ray and HD-DVD formats strive to cover all these bases, with upwards of 100GB on tap on a single (dual-side, dual-layer) disc.

Both formats have been seen at shows, most notably Sony's Blu-Ray demonstrations at hi-fi and home cinema expos around the globe. This is fantastic stuff, but akin to concept cars at the Motor Show. In a way, it's disingenuous to show these early working samples, as people just ask when the product will be available and how much it will cost. This is because we don't have a history of demonstrating 'blue sky' projects at hi-fi shows.

Given the evidence thus far, you might think the requirements of the audiophile don't register with Blu-Ray or HD-DVD. Actually, this is not necessarily true; a massive data carrier holds the potential to deliver sensational master-tape like DSD recordings, making today's formats look underwhelming. Also, with the web-linking capacities of these forthcoming formats, open-ended content is a possibility, with the web delivering tour dates, other material, remixes, forthcoming releases and more.

But none of this matters right now. Just as in most cases the best player for CD remains a CD player and not a CD/DVD/SACD-compatible 'universal' device, the chances are that when Blu-Ray or HD-DVD players appear, the best machine to spin a CD will probably still be a dedicated CD player.

There has been a move, albeit mostly from home cinema types, to play down the need for a decent player today, because the new formats will be 'launched this year' or are 'right around the corner'. This is nonsense on stilts, for two reasons. First, the initial batch of 'new tech' players is unlikely to arrive until mid-2006 at the earliest. More important still, waiting for a better player has never been a good plan.

If you need a new car today, you don't wait for the better car of tomorrow. If you need a camera, you buy a camera, rather than waiting for the next big innovation. And so it goes on. Highly innovative products cost a fortune when they first emerge – you're buying the cachet of new technology. This means it's unlikely that Blu-Ray will reach practical, real-world prices until something like 2008. And it still may not out-perform a decent CD player with good ol' compact disc.

*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*

# TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

THE MYSTERIES OF MAINS



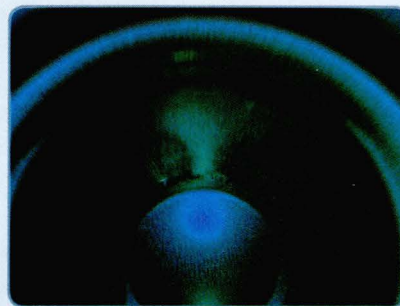
Recent correspondence on the *Hi-Fi Choice* website forum on the subject of mains cables ran to over 1,000 submissions. Evidently there's plenty of feeling on the subject, but is there any science in it?

The UK mains supply is nominally 240V at a frequency of 50Hz. The former can vary by a little, the latter by a very little, but neither of those makes a vast difference to most hi-fi. In practice, however, there's more in them than wires than just 50Hz. For a start, there's distortion. Figures vary, but around a couple of percent is pretty typical, with third harmonic dominating. The spectrum of harmonics goes on practically indefinitely, certainly to above 20kHz (that's the 400th harmonic!), but by the time you get that high, the level is well below -100dB, round about 1 mV.

Meanwhile, the mains inlet of your amplifier goes, via things like switch, fuse and a few bits of wire, to the transformer and then the rectifier diodes and reservoir capacitors. Because of the way the diodes switch on for only part of the cycle, this is a complicated circuit to analyse but the fact is that any high frequencies that make it past the rectifiers get very effectively absorbed by the capacitors. It's hard to see how HF noise between live and neutral can be a big problem.

There are usually three wires, though, including ground. Noise that exists between live and neutral on the one side, and ground on the other, can get into an amplifier and couple capacitively from the transformer all around, in theory. Again, there's not much evidence of this happening. If it did, and if mains cables made a difference to it, one would expect the noise floor of an amplifier to change depending on the cable that is used to connect it to the mains. We've yet to see any such effect.

The mains transformer, rectifier and capacitors between them draw a non-linear current from the mains, and behave as a complex inductive load. That could resonate with the capacitance of the mains wiring in some way, and changing even part of the mains wiring would change the resonant



**“Many people swear that mains cable upgrades are among the most significant they've made.”**

frequency. But why would this matter anyway? As with harmonics, high frequencies in general get swallowed up in the capacitors.

Conventional unscreened mains cables radiate a small amount of stray electric field, which can be picked up by interconnects and even speaker cables. Many specialist audio mains cables are screened. However, tests we've done show very low hum pickup levels even in exaggerated cases – for instance, when an interconnect is deliberately run next to a mains cable – and screened cables seem to make very little difference.

Despite all this, many people swear that mains cable upgrades are among the most significant that they've made. Either they're all deluding themselves or science is (not for the first time) lagging observation. The trouble is that in the absence of any very convincing theory of how mains cables could affect audio equipment performance, it's very hard to measure anything sensible. The tests we've done so far raise more questions than answers. The obvious tests seem to reveal nothing, but absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. What's needed is more measurement on systems with and without specialist mains cables and filters. Such tests are hideously time-consuming, but if something dramatic happens, you'll read it here first! **HFC**

*Richard Black*

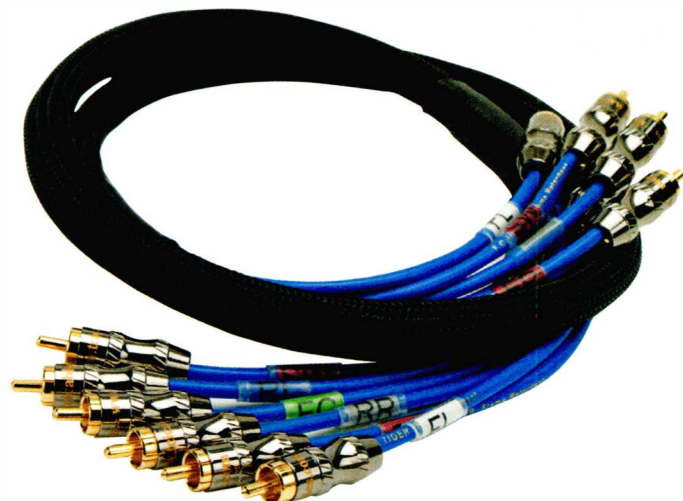


## ESSENTIALS

### TCI TIGERSIX MULTICHANNEL INTERCONNECT £80 (1M SET)

Home cinema and multichannel audio systems are messy enough round the back at the best of times, so putting six cables in one sheath is an admirably sensible idea. It saves you money and – from a sound quality point of view – theoretically reduces the chance of hum loops, though that's not often a big problem. The cable itself is not a particularly fancy one, but nonetheless offers a solid and believable sound which errs only in minor ways – for instance, the treble is not really as pure as with the best. Bass is nicely tuneful, though, and this is generally a fine budget cable.

☎ 07710 196949 🌐 www.true-colours.com



### CREEK OBH-21 SE HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER £250

Should one spend the price of a fairly upmarket set of headphones on the amplifier to drive them? Creek's answer is 'yes'... and on the basis of the OBH-21 SE, we're very happy to concur. This little box, with its outboard power supply, drives one or two sets of headphones to satisfying levels with a clarity that will have you grinning from ear to ear. Don't underestimate it! We fed it from a £9,500 dCS Elgar DAC and spent many hours enjoying unsuspected delights within familiar recordings. Much less exalted sources will likewise show you things you never knew were there. Fabulous extension, detail and clarity; noise could possibly be lower, but otherwise it's nearly flawless. Output (loop-through) phono sockets are a thoughtful touch too. We love it.

☎ 01442 260146 🌐 www.creekaudio.co.uk

### WYREWIZARD (BY NORDOST) SPELLBINDER ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT £70 (1M PAIR)

Too often associated with the unaffordable elite, Nordost has shifted gears with a range of relatively affordable cables under the Wyrewizard banner, Spellbinder being the least expensive of three interconnects. The low capacitance (15pF/ft) cable consists of two solid core, silver plated OFC braided conductors, with a double layer of shielding and an extruded FEP dielectric. Although not as sweet and sophisticated as more expensive variants, Spellbinder is an excellent low-cost, high-resolution choice and is well extended at the frequency extremes, without the rather messy fine detail of many competing cables.

☎ 01352 731310 🌐 www.nordost.com



### EXTREME PHONO CRIMSON TONEARM CABLE £149

The signal from a moving coil cartridge in particular is one of the smallest and most fragile in domestic or industrial electronics and should be cossetted to the max. Extreme Phono's answer is a very sensible star-quad type with a screen connected at one end only. This should ensure excellent rejection of both magnetic (from transformers) and electrostatic (from cables) interference, while signal integrity is protected by good quality materials and connectors. It seems to work in practice, with very clear and open sound from both MC and MM cartridges and with a range of phono amps. You should still take care over routing, and its thickness makes it a little bothersome to adapt to sprung turntables, but compared with regular tonearm leads this one offers a real sonic benefit.

☎ 01785 711232 🌐 www.audioatmosphere.com

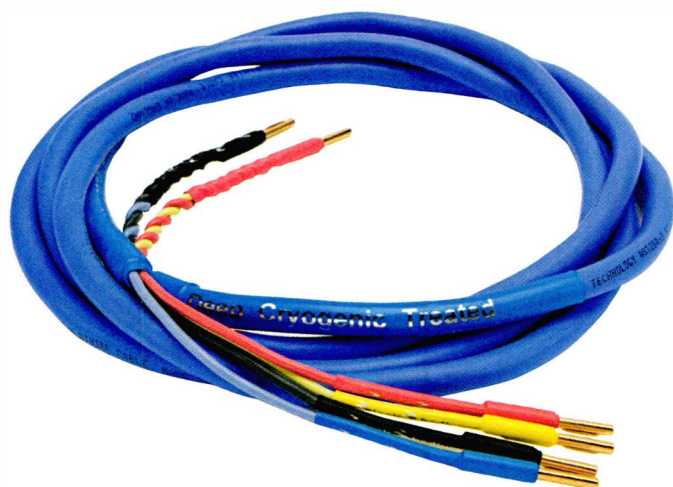




## XTREME AC QUICK SILVER CONTACT ENHANCER £50

⊕ A lot of money, one might think, for a tiny pot of gunk, but this one contains a lot of pure silver. It achieves its effect by bridging any gaps between male and female connector parts with highly conductive metal particles. It's simple enough to use, thanks to the thoughtful selection of implements and well written instructions. The results seem to be beneficial across a range of situations, from small-signal valve pins to mains connectors. The effect should be long-lasting, too, as silver is stable and its oxide is very soft and easily displaced if connectors are separated and re-mated. Worth the trouble.

☎ 01923 352479 🌐 [www.angelsoundaudio.co.uk](http://www.angelsoundaudio.co.uk)



## POLAR AST200X2 DCT LOUDSPEAKER CABLE £270 (3M TERMINATED PAIR)

⊕ Black Rhodium is so devoted to its Deep Cryogenic Treatment of cables, that it has set up a new brand specifically to market them. This is a long-standing favourite in the BR range, using stranded copper conductors and silicone rubber insulation in four tightly wrapped conductors. In bi-wire form, these are paired at one end and terminated singly at the other, with decent commercial banana plugs. We found that the sound from these cables was clear and detailed with excellent bass, traditionally a BR strong point. The treble is extended and open, and on the whole we'd say that the ambient decay is a little more realistically preserved than with the standard version of the cable. Nevertheless, the law of diminishing returns applies – audition against the standard, cryogenically untreated AST speaker cable, if possible.

☎ 01332 755766 🌐 [www.polarcables.co.uk](http://www.polarcables.co.uk)

## WYREWIZARD (BY NORDOST) SPELLBINDER

**LOUDSPEAKER CABLE £5.50  
(PRICE PER MONO METRE - TERMINATION EXTRA)**

⊕ In common with the new Wyrewizard interconnects, Nordost has launched two distinctly entry-level speaker cables, of which Spellbinder is once again the least expensive. It is sold exclusively unterminated off the reel, and mirrors the construction of the similarly named interconnect, consisting of two solid cores of OFC copper twisted for maximum RFI rejection. The sound has what you might expect of a solid core cable – it's all about resolution and fine detail – but the bass is surprisingly deep and powerful. Spellbinder is true purist product at a bargain price and deserving of firm recommendation.

☎ 01352 731310 🌐 [www.nordost.com](http://www.nordost.com)



## HARMONIC TECH PRO SILWAY III ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT £399 (1M PAIR)

⊕ US manufacturer Harmonic Technology markets a range of generally upmarket cables, now available in the UK through ECS. Belying what you might expect from the Silway name, this is in fact a copper-conductor cable, with low-loss dielectric... and various claims for its technical superiority. It's fat but not impossibly stiff, and is completed with locking RCA phono plugs (or XLRs if so specified). Sound is nicely balanced across the frequency range, though really deep bass sometimes seems a little on the dry side. Very good imaging and particularly sweet treble arguably make up for that; but against the very best sub-£100 cables, its value is questionable.

☎ 020 8743 8880 🌐 [www.harmonictech.com](http://www.harmonictech.com)



## FINE TWO CHANNEL AUDIO SYSTEMS



a



b



c

**a Wadia 302 CD player.**

One of the most musical players at this price. £3950.

**b McIntosh 275 valve amplifier.**

This modern reissue of their classic 1969 amplifier has robust, full bodied sound with smooth high frequencies. A healthy 75wpc will drive most speakers easily and can be bridged to give a conservative 150wpc. £2450.

**c Audio Physic loudspeakers.**

We are pleased to be demonstrating the new range from this highly respected manufacturer. Very accurate imaging and tonal balance with great styling. **Virgo 3** (shown) £3999, **Tempo 3i** £2199, **Yara** £999.



d



e

**d Bel Canto Pre 2 & eVo2 amplifier.**

A very transparent sound with good tonal balance and precise imaging. Although a digital amplifier, the sound is reminiscent of their valve heritage. Pre 2 £3999. eVo2 £2899. Also on demonstration, we have their integrated amplifier **eVozi** at a remarkable £2799.

**e SME Model 20/2 turntable.**

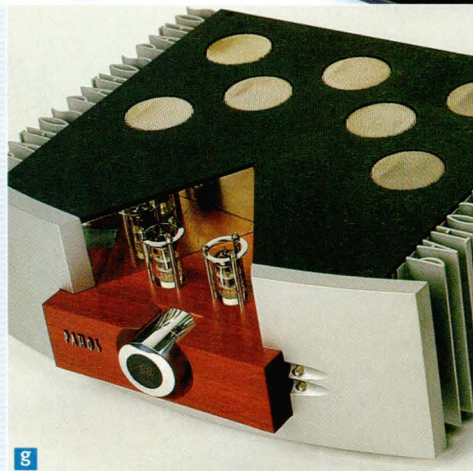
One of our best sellers, this turntable and arm combination produces a totally different listening experience in terms of tonal accuracy and transparency. Model 20/2 £3841. Series V arm £1697. Also on demonstration the exquisite **Model 30/2A**.

**f McIntosh MA6900 solidstate integrated amplifier.**

This solid state amplifier with transformer coupled output has sound that is close to their classic valve amplifier designs. The very reasonable 200 wpc output will drive into any speaker load. An all-in-one solution with a high-end sound. £3895.

**g Pathos Logos integrated hybrid amplifier.**

A popular amplifier with great looks and sound. £2750.



g



f

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# Plant one on me

Led Zeppelin's front-man and self-proclaimed 'golden god' has had a fitful solo career, yet has now returned with his strongest album in years. But Robert Plant still loves to listen vinyl, old and new

For a man who, when fronting Led Zeppelin, created a set of albums that represent one of the benchmarks in the advancement of modern sound quality, Robert Plant these days doesn't seem too interested in the intricacies of recording technology. "It really doesn't matter how you record. It's the *feel* that counts," he says. "You have to go with the wild and the beautiful."

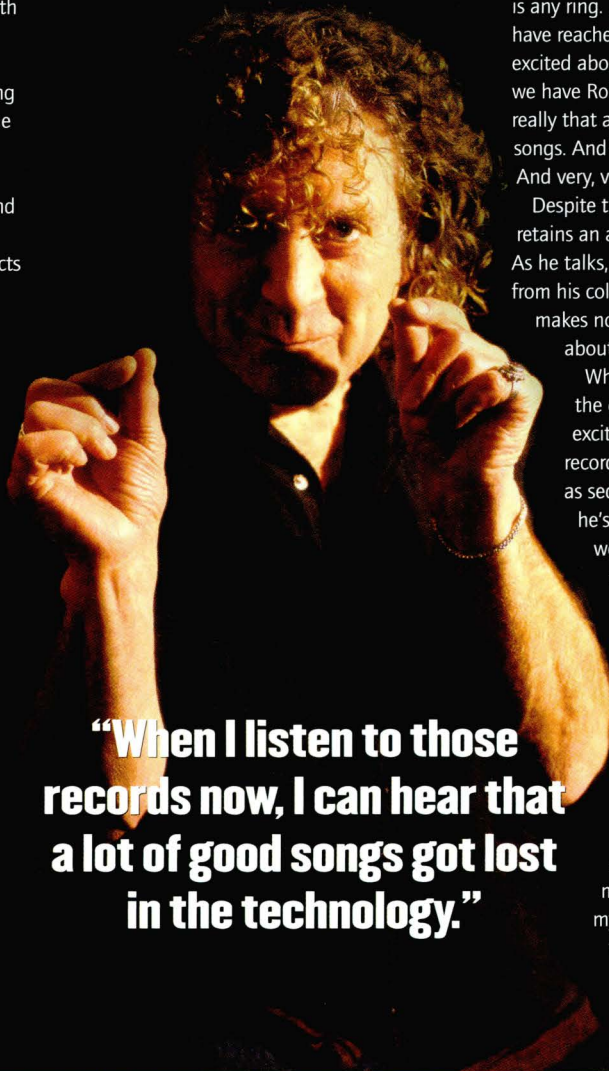
That said, he doesn't ignore how music is played. Brandishing the first vinyl test pressing of his new album, *The Mighty Rearranger*, due to be released on Sanctuary on 23 April, he announces: "I do still like vinyl. For years we thought the CD was embracing modernity and sonic prowess. But it wasn't at all."

After a period of deliberately low-key projects which found him singing cover versions and playing unadvertised gigs in tiny venues, the new album represents his most significant musical statement in years. Recorded with his new band The Strange Sensation, it's a tapestry of his eclectic musical passions, from rock riffs and blues roots to acoustic tunes via West Coast and North African influences. The lyrics tackle such diverse subjects as the state of the world and Plant's own colourful past.

"The music was arriving from all points east and west and within it there are some quite remarkable marriages and collisions," he says. "It's a new place to go. It's our own unholy liaison."

Vocally, he believes he's never sounded more potent. The power is still there when he chooses to summon it, but there's also a lot more subtlety and nuance to the Plant sound. "Instead of just using the power of the voice, I've tried just to tell the story and make it intimate," he says. "The vocal is right in the middle of the song without trying to take it over. Let the words do the talking, keep the voice gentle, but powerful within that."

For his own recent low-key approach after Zeppelin, Plant makes no apology. "To sell 200 million albums with Zeppelin was chance. But to say goodbye to the large stadiums I played with Jimmy Page was a very purposeful move. I just didn't think there was anything left for me to project to the back of an ice hockey arena."



**"When I listen to those records now, I can hear that a lot of good songs got lost in the technology."**

Plant feels that *The Mighty Rearranger* is the most powerful record he has made in some considerable time, but he refuses to describe it in conventional terms as a 'comeback'. "I don't feel I'm going forward, backwards or sideways. It's just another gamble," he insists. "Am I back in the ring slugging it out? I don't think there is any ring. I just feel incredibly grateful to have reached this time in my life and be this excited about something. People will say, 'here we have Robert Plant returning'. But it's not really that at all. We've just written some songs. And they are unremitting and honest. And very, very noisy."

Despite the passing of the years, Plant retains an almost boyish enthusiasm for music. As he talks, he pulls out ancient vinyl albums from his collection to illustrate a point and makes no attempt to hide his scepticism about digital technology.

When he launched his solo career in the early 1980s, he admits that he was excited by new developments in recording and musical instruments, such as sequencers and drum machines. Yet he's come to the conclusion that they were a false dawn. "When I listen to those records now, I can hear that a lot of good songs got lost in the technology," he says.

He's no technological dinosaur, though. Plant has made several concessions to the changing ways in which we now consume music. "I burn off compilation CDs to listen to in the car and tend to switch back and forth between vinyl and CD on my preamp at home," he says. "Both my sons have got iPods and say it's the only way forward. Sooner or later I can see I'm going to have to get one." **HFC**

Nigel Williamson

## ESSENTIAL ALBUMS

**1. Led Zeppelin 2**  
 (Atlantic 1969)

The album that gave birth to heavy rock and spawned a legion of inferior imitators.



**2. Physical Graffiti**  
 (Atlantic 1975)

After a two year absence, Zep returned with an intense, epic and brooding masterpiece.



**3. Remasters**  
 (Atlantic 1990)

Zeppelin's finest tracks on a four CD box set, remastered from the long-lost master tapes.



**4. Robert Plant: Sixty Six to Timbuktu**  
 (Mercury 2003)

Superb double album that chronicles Plant's non-Zeppelin career.







# WIN!

## A PAIR OF BRILLIANT MORDAUNT-SHORT PERFORMANCE 6 LOUDSPEAKERS WORTH £3,500!

**M**ordaunt-Short's new flagship speaker from its Performance series is every bit a thoroughbred – and now you've got the chance to win this exceptional high-end hero for your very own musical pleasure. It showcases all of the technologies that M-S has developed over the last three years and more, including the magnificent alloy ATT tweeter, an aspirated design that's decoupled from the main enclosure. Perhaps the most impressive feature, however, is the remarkable enclosure – designed to control stiffness and damping by using clever structural foams with density gradients. The twin bass drivers are mounted to the speaker's spine (the stiffest part of the enclosure) and a 10kg cast iron base acts as a mechanical ground.

The results are breathtaking – this speaker seems to combine many of the qualities of a good electrostatic with deep, tuneful bass and the gratifying overall sound of a good box design. In short, it's an instant classic.

In *HFC 264*, we awarded the Performance 6 an Editor's Choice badge for its high-tech approach and remarkable performance. For your chance to win one, simply answer the question below. The lucky winner will be drawn at random.

### CONGRATULATIONS...

to our last winner, Larry Jansen of Sevenoaks. He receives a Cyrus CD8x CD player and PSX-R power supply!

#### QUESTION:

**What has been used to control stiffness in the Performance 6?**

**A:** The remarkable enclosure

**B:** A tub of black market Viagra

**C:** A complete set of lacy lingerie enclosed within the cabinet

#### TO ENTER:

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

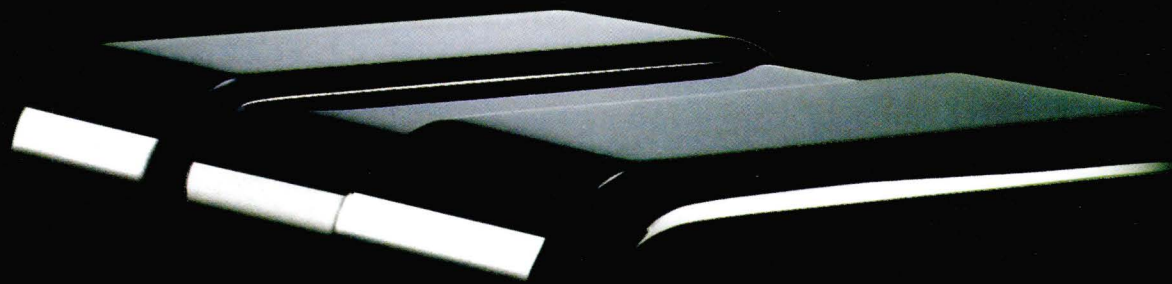
**By Text:** Send the text message **HFC COMP1** with the answer A, B, or C to **83070**. For example, if you think the answer is B: A tub of black market Viagra, then text HFC COMP1 B to 83070

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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

### FRED SIMON Remember The River

Naim 180g vinyl

**Music:** Fred Simon is a keyboard player with a bit of previous when it comes to audiophile labels, having featured on the Windham Hill label in the past and now releasing his second album for Naim. His playing is subtle rather than overt and reminiscent of Bill Evans but there's no danger of mistaking the two. His past associations have included Larry Coryell, Ralph Towner and Fairport founder Iain Matthews, so you can tell that he leans toward the acoustic side. This is a quiet but upbeat album with plenty of colour and little in the way of predictability – a real grower. ★★★

**Sound:** One of Naim's True Stereo recordings, this is an open, live and natural sounding LP that brings out the tonal colour of the instruments which include English horn and oboe. A nice quiet pressing, too. ★★★★★ JK

### BOZ SCAGGS Silk Degrees

Columbia/Simply Vinyl 180g vinyl

**Music:** Released in 1976, this album proved a nice earner for Boz Scaggs – by 1984 it had gone platinum four times so if you were buying records back then you've probably got it. But enough water has passed under the musical bridge for Simply Vinyl to repress it on heavy vinyl and a nice job they've done, too. Musically, *Silk Degrees* is refined white soul with a good dose of funk thrown in on the upbeat tracks. Often described as detached in an emotional sense, this album sounds understated by today's standards. At its best it combines the flare of the Temptations with the groove of Little Feat. ★★★

**Sound:** Mid-seventies Columbia recordings don't tend to raise one's hopes, but this pressing has more vigour than reissues from the day. It is still compressed but you can hear what's going on. ★★★★★ JK

These LPs are available from Naim Audio: ☎ 01722 332266 ● www.naim-audio.com and Simply Vinyl: ☎ 020 8545 8580 ● www.simplyvinyl.com

## COMPACT DISC & VINYL

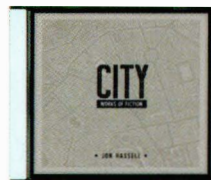


### DE VIBROLUXE Cracq Magic International

Couch

**Music:** Vienna is proving a hotbed of club music, and a magnet for producers and musicians from both Austria and its environs. The city already boasts a range of names such as Kruder & Dorfmeister or Zihan & Kamien who are almost worshipped in select circles. Add to the list Serbian-born guitarist turned mix-meister Nenad Stankov (De Vibroluxe) who has produced an album that melds jazz, funk, disco, Latin, found voices and much more in a genre-busting brew that satisfies both the head and the feet. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Recorded in three different studios, the album maintains a consistency despite its disparate influences, with close-miked spoken-word samples counterpointed by pin-sharp disco guitar licks and boombastic drum beats. ★★★★★ DO



### JON HASSELL City: Works Of Fiction

All Saints

**Music:** The incredible Jon Hassell story takes him from Memphis blues to New York classical music and then beyond to Stockhausen, Can and Terry Riley. Hassell saw God in India in the early 1970s and decided to marry his trumpet-playing to the kiranian Indian singing tradition. Here, Hassell reached the zenith of his musical style in a West Hollywood rehearsal space, as a live jazz/funk band grooved on early hip-hop and rap styles. This music is mesmerising, its beautiful ethnic patina – particularly on *Mombasa* – fully African, urban, jazz and hip-hop all at the same time. Astonishing. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Though some of the keyboards and gated percussion may seem clunky by today's standards, there's enough innovation here to have your ears straining for more. ★★★★★ MP



### MARTHA WAINWRIGHT Martha Wainwright

Drowned In Sound

**Music:** With father Loudon and offspring Rufus and Martha all enjoying singing cameos in *The Aviator*, the Wainwrights are fast becoming a musical soap opera to rival the Osbournes. At 29, Martha's debut album has been a long time coming. Her brilliant, bohemian songs combine lyrical honesty and wonderfully beguiling melodies, sung in a voice of empowerment that has hints of Cat Power, Kate Bush and Alanis Morissette, tempered with a gentler, folk-based inheritance from her mother and aunt, Kate and Anna McGarrigle. ★★★★★

**Sound:** She's learned from her parents' folk-based approach and something from brother Rufus's cabaret-style pop-operatics to create her own unique fusion that combines musical intensity with emotional intimacy. ★★★★★ NW



### GARBAGE Bleed Like Me

Warner

**Music:** Garbage seemed to have lost the plot with 2001's *Beautiful Garbage*, an album that uncomfortably straddled alternative rock and techno. Against the odds, they've come roaring back with an album that concentrates on what they've probably always done best – lots of loud, noisy grunge-styled guitars, as befits a band that includes drummer Butch Vig, who produced Nirvana's *Nevermind*. The layered electronics have been stripped away, leaving Shirley Manson's voice to emoté powerfully over a raw, ramped up collection with such self-descriptive titles as *Right Between The Eyes* and *Metal Heart*, while the lustful *Bad Boyfriend* features the explosive drumming of Foo Fighters' Dave Grohl. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Initial sessions produced by the Dust Brothers were unproductive, so they reverted to doing it themselves – a good call, because nobody knows how to record snarling guitars better than Vig. ★★★★★ NW



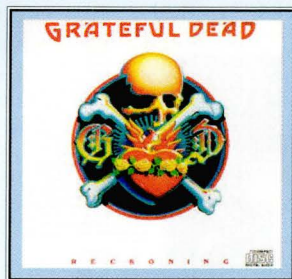
### SHELAGH MCDONALD Let No Man Steal Your Thyme

Castle

**Music:** As the 1960s blurred into the 1970s, pretty Brit singer-songwriter Shelagh McDonald was one of the nation's bright young folk things. She cut two great albums... and then vanished without trace. Fortunately, her songs survive and they – like her effortless, breezy vocals – can be enjoyed on this double CD collection. Numbers like *Rod's Song* and *City's Cry* summon up winter walks, art student coffee bars and late night chats, as well as aural visions of Joni Mitchell, Judy Collins and Sandy Denny (and, perhaps, a female Nick Drake – in a rare good mood). ★★★★★

**Sound:** Sandy Robertson's productions are crystal clear, really allowing listeners deep into these starkly attractive arrangements. ★★★★★ PS





## THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "The soundstage is absolutely massive."

**GRATEFUL DEAD** Reckoning Arista

**Music:** This is both one of the best Dead albums and unarguably the best sounding by far. Recorded live in San Francisco and New York in October 1980, it features 16 tracks from the *American Beauty* and *Working Man's Dead* period, combined with blues standards such as *Deep Elem Blues* and *Rosalie McFall*. What sets this apart is the unusually open and atmospheric nature of the recording, which captures not only the Dead in appealingly tight but

loose fashion, but also the tremendous enthusiasm of the crowd. The standout track is *China Doll* but it's far from being the only one – in fact, at least half the tracks here are acoustic country blues gems. ★★★★★  
**Sound:** Betty Cantor-Jackson's engineering and recording is among the best ever, the soundstage is absolutely massive and the instruments and voices natural and rich, the bass guitar being particularly gorgeous. ★★★★★ JK



**AL GREEN**  
**Everything's OK**

EMI

**Music:** Loverman, preacher, soul pop superstar, Al Green has done a lot since he first hit the big time in the early 1970s with a string of timeless hits (like *Let's Stay Together*) that pushed his hugely emotional yet delicate gospel-inspired voice (not to mention the limits of sartorial taste) to the limit. With regular time-outs to minister to the flock of his Memphis chapel, he's since recorded lots of gospel albums but offered few secular treats, though his occasional forays into the pop world have all contained samples of gold. Half the songs on *Everything's OK* are Green's own, the standout being the gorgeous *Real Love*, but he also offers some sublime cover versions, including *You Are So Beautiful*. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Back with legendary producer Willie Mitchell, this is a return to Green's classic Hi Records sound – muted rhythm section, big horns and that unique voice, still going strong. The Nutty Vicar proves that he can still cut it with the best of them. ★★★★★ DO



## DVD-AUDIO & SACD

### YO MILES!

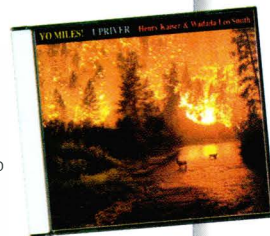
**Upriver**

SACD (stereo and multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Cuneiform Records

**Music:** Like the previous *Sky Garden* album, *Upriver* is a voyage into the darker regions of the Miles Davis early to mid seventies cannon, but not one that merely replays what you find on albums such as *Panagea* and *Dark Magus*. Yo Miles!'s third features only two original tracks in its two and a half hours of music, but the majority is original improvisation on Davis's themes by bandleaders Henry Kaiser (guitar) and Wadada Leo Smith (trumpet). *Upriver* is a more accessible treat than *Sky Garden* but has no less visceral impact and power thanks to the phenomenal recording and quality of musicianship. If you find Davis's originals dense but intriguing you need to check this powerful album out. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Recorded direct to DSD, this SACD is one of the best electric recordings you'll hear on disc. The soundstage is expansive and the instruments dynamic and real. Jazz-rock recordings never sounded this good before. ★★★★★ JK



### TCHAIKOVSKY

**Symphony No. 4**

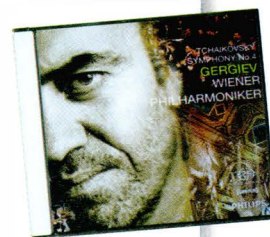
Valery Gergiev (cond) Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

SACD (stereo and multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Philips 475 6196

**Music:** Tchaikovsky is not my favourite Russian composer, but is made more palatable when performed by an orchestra of the quality of the Vienna Philharmonic – and conducted with all the passion of a musician with the emotional intensity and intelligence of Gergiev, who brings a certain magic from the declamatory opening to the powerful final allegro of this very popular work. The centrepiece of this symphony, however, is the melancholy *Andantino in modo di canzona* (track 2) and above all the famous *pizzicato* playing of the *Scherzo* (track 3), both of which are beautifully realised. ★★★★★

**Sound:** A live recording made at the Grosser Saal Musikverien, Vienna, the performance is compelling for its ideomatic quality (which is established in the opening chords) and for the variety of expression wrung out of the orchestra. The DSD recording adds fluidity and detail. ★★★★★ AG



### MENDELSSOHN

**The Complete String Quartets (plus Octet For Strings)**

Emerson String Quartet

DGG 00289 477 5370 (4 disc set)

**Music:** The Mendelssohn quartets have not been recorded in their entirety for a considerable period, which gives this set some status. This is increased by including the brilliant *Octet*, played by the four members of the Quartet (The Emersons recently celebrated their 30th anniversary) doubling up by the magic of multi-track recording. The technique could have come unstuck but in fact delivers a performance of great stature and complexity. ★★★★★

**Sound:** As a recording, the DGG sound is more than adequate, emphasising clarity of tone, line and articulation over the acoustic of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, where it was recorded. ★★★★★ AG



### HAYDN

**Piano Concertos No. 3, 4 and 11**

Norwegian Chamber Orchestra, directed from the keyboard by Leif Ove Andnes  
 EMI Classics 7243 5 56960 2 1

**Music:** The piano concertos of Haydn may not be in quite the same league as those of Mozart, but such is the quality of the performances on this disc that they transform music that in lesser hands has sometimes sounded very ordinary. The articulate and sensitive playing and the clean, astringent sound of the string orchestra add up to a superb programme. ★★★★★

**Sound:** The recording is every bit as good as the performances. The disc has been miked fairly close in the the Lommendalen Church in Oslo, which has allowed the superb instrumentation to be expressed without being squashed by over-cooked acoustics. A distinguished recording in every way. ★★★★★ AG

### VARIOUS ARTISTS

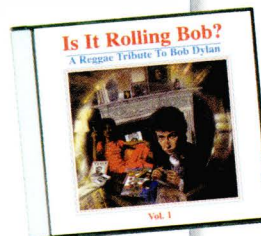
**Is It Rolling Bob? Vol 1**

DualDisc (one side CD stereo, the other multichannel DVD-Audio)

Silverline

**Music:** From the cartoon reimagining of the cover of Dylan's *Bringin' It All Back Home*, complete with mighty spliff and rasta records, to the punning title, this has novelty record written all over it. But a glance at the line-up and even the most cursory of listens will reassure you that this is actually a serious reappraisal of some of the best of Bob Dylan's back catalogue in a reggae style. Gregory Isaacs tackles *Mr Tambourine Man*, Toots Hibbert (of Maytals fame) does *Maggie's Farm*, Black Uhuru's Michael Rose does *The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll* and regga firebrand Sizzla does his barely comprehensible business on *Subterranean Homesick Blues*. For the most part, it works surprisingly well. ★★

**Sound:** Mostly done in a laid-back roots reggae groove, with just one sashay into raga, the DVD side also features half a dozen dub remixes by Jimmy Haynes. These make full use of 5.1 channels, echoes skittering around the room in a righteous dub fog. ★★★★★ JK





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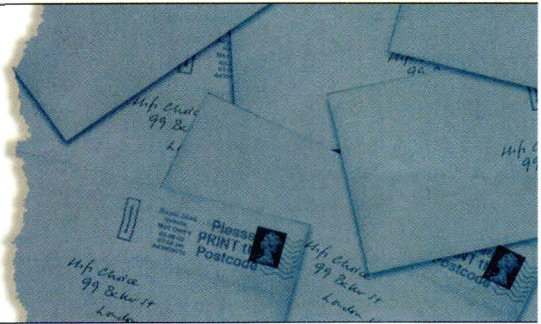


# ChoiceMail



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

### PHAT DENIALS

I read Alvin Gold's editorial on the 'demise' of SACD (in *HFC* 266) with interest. Despite flat denials from Sony (what else could it do), it would seem the rumours are rife and far too plentiful to be conjecture.

SACD is great for the audiophile, but I feel audiophiles don't need 5.1 surround and the mass market didn't want high-resolution audio. It didn't help matters that computer audio was gaining momentum and capturing the mass market's imagination. I hope the magazines aren't going to make another big fuss over DualDisc. Just wake me up when it's over.

**Bill Francis** Dorset

**HFC** Unfounded rumours are often the most pernicious, but we can only wait and see what happens with SACD. However, don't count out DualDisc before it's launched...



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: Arcam's CD192 CD player

### THE EMPIRE STRIKES OUT

While on a trip to the Netherlands recently, I excitedly purchased an Arcam CD192 player. Three months later, its laser pick-up unit failed and, although I was fortunate to get a replacement locally, it is very disappointing that a such highly rated player has failed after just three months.

Magazines like *HFC* speak of British hi-fi being alive and kicking, but UK companies do not seem to care for customers once goods are sold. Wake up, British hi-fi industry, the Empire is long gone.

**Chidambaram** India

**HFC** Unfortunately, Arcam has no distribution in India. But, that doesn't mean the company doesn't care, just that the nearest Arcam service centre is in Singapore. It's rare for a component to fail so soon, but problems occur in even the best products; luckily, Arcam's use of OEM components meant the CD192 could be repaired locally.

### PLEASURABLE HARD ONE

I have been using the Yamaha CDR-HD1300 MkII purely as a copying device – music taken from CD onto the hard drive and then onto a blank CD-R. This way, I could at least make my own high quality music compilations. Although the recording quality was good enough in its own right, my own tri-amped hi-fi system seemed simply too high-resolution to take advantage of the jukebox playback facility of the Yamaha recorder. However, by linking the Yamaha (via co-axial digital link) into my Tube Technology CD64 player and using it only as a DAC, the overall sound quality has improved and I am able to take full advantage of the Yamaha's hard disc facility and its 120 hours of music storage.

**Neil Saunders** via email

**HFC** It's amazing what a good DAC can do. It just goes to show that many a feeble-sounding digital source can come life when hooked up to a good D-to-A converter. It makes us wonder what the

## “Magazines speak of British hi-fi being alive and kicking, but UK companies do not seem to care for customers.”

plethora of hard disc music servers can sound like when given the very best conversion. Sounds like an interesting feature...

### DUALEMA

It's not long until DualDisc – the high-resolution CD/DVD is almost with us. But, had I not carefully read the hi-fi magazines, I could have missed the launch. Will the public be made aware of this new format – or, like the retarded promotion of SACD and DVD-A, will it still be a specialist product for a very niche market? I'm also intrigued by the pricing policy, as SACDs bought from the web are often only slightly more than the CD versions. How much will we pay for these hybrid discs? Oh and finally... fingers crossed the discs will play in my car/PC/CD player!

**Richard Lockwood** via email

**HFC** We can only wait to see the impact of DualDisc on the market. We're not expecting a big splash, but the fundamentals of the format make a lot of commercial sense and should appeal to both the audiophile and the average consumer. We anticipate pricing to be just above that of a CD, but it seems compatibility may be an issue with some players, notably with the CD side. Watch this space...

### BEAUTIFUL SURPRISE

My favourite article in *HFC* is *Beautiful Systems*, which is always the first thing I read in every issue. It's when we can see components coming together beautifully (excuse the pun). Of course, there's a minimum one has to spend to put together a hi-fi





**Above:** Roksan, Cyrus and Dynaudio made up a comparatively inexpensive *Beautiful System* in *HFC 265*

system, and somewhat more for a 'Beautiful System'. I was, however, pleasantly surprised by the recent April 2005 issue (*HFC 265*), which put together an amazing system that was more my kind of budget at £2,500. I would just like to suggest *HFC* alternates between various levels of budget for *Beautiful Systems*. I'm sure many readers would agree that although we like to read about the Ferraris and Porsches, we would also like to read about the Golf GTis and even the Skoda Fabias... perhaps.

**Eugene Tan** via email

**HFC** We're delighted you enjoy the feature and appreciated that particular dip into more 'real-world' systems. The feature is a great chance for us to indulge a little and assemble a truly sensational system with scant regard to cost. However, we like to throw in a *Beautiful System* that is less costly every now and then, so keep an eye out for some more real-world systems soon.

**BOOTIFUL TOO**

*Beautiful Systems* continues to be one of the highlights of the magazine. April's Cyrus/Roksan/Dynaudio system is very tempting indeed given the price... in fact, I think I might succumb, given that – for once – it doesn't cost a King's Ransom. It would be really useful if *HFC* could add cable recommendations in these features, as my experience with dealers on the subject shows there is little demo time or cable options available for customers.

I can understand this to some extent as the cable connection possibilities are vast and demos could go on for hours. Keep up the good work, though; it is always entertaining to read about the more exotic hardware featured in *Beautiful Systems*, even if the opportunity to listen to them (let alone own them) might elude us!

**Steve Cousins** via email

**“Although we like to read about the Ferraris and Porsches, we would also like to read about the Golf GTis.”**

**HFC** Fair comment, Steve. Cabling information is a real possibility so long as the various manufacturers submitting the products can all agree on the same wires! We'll look into it...

**OLDIE BUT GOODIE**

I've never been able to understand why hi-fi is still going. Stereo was hardly high-tech in my grandad's time and you all listen to a format that's older than I am. Okay, stereo is useful for playing downloads on the bus, but when I play music at home, I boost the sound to listen in surround. So do most of my friends. I don't buy CDs anymore – I either download the tracks direct, or wait for the music DVD, because that has videos as well as sound. And, I'd rather have six tiny speakers pumping out kickin' sounds round the room than two huge butt-ugly speakers getting in the way. Only those who listen to old-people's music listen in stereo, these days.

**Jason Graff** via email

**HFC** Perhaps we do listen to too much 'old' music – after all, The Kings of Leon are cracking on a bit compared to McFly. But, if music is to ever rise above the instant hit of the downloaded single, you need something physical to collect, whether that is a CD or DVD. As to surround, good stereo often renders it pointless. Just ask your dad!

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- Digital versus analogue: Tracking players from Steady (CD) and ChromaDuo (vinyl) demonstrate the state of the format

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**@ ONLINE FORUM**

A few choice comments plucked from our online forum. Join in the fun at [www.hifichoice.co.uk](http://www.hifichoice.co.uk)

Has anyone used the new Arcam Solo yet? How does it compare to, say, a budget separates system?

**Anton**

...It is hard to say – I have heard the Solo only briefly, but I got the feeling that you could do better with separates, but would have less of a 'lifestyle' box of tricks. If style and looks matter, then the Solo is fine.

**Dudywoxer**

I have a Denon UD-M31 mini system and I'm looking to upgrade the speakers, around the £150-£200 range.

**Brucie**

...The Monitor Audio Bronze B2s are supposed to be good, but if I were you I would look for some Castle Richmonds.

**Earl of Sodbury**

...I'd second the Castle Richmond recommendation – They will also stand you in good stead if you upgrade.

**Atoprak**

Had a rather odd experience at a demo today. I listened to Acoustic Energy AE1 MkIIIs costing £1,700 which were nice, if a little bright. Second came Richard Allan LS3/5As, definitely not my cup of tea. Finally, the dealer suggested listening to the Triangle Cometes and they were superb – I nearly fell off my chair when he told me they were £495!

**Big Al**



 **ProAc**  
perfectly natural



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floor standers**

The ProAc Studio 130 and Studio 140 speakers were launched officially at the Bristol Hi Fi Show in February. These new loudspeakers offer a powerful, natural sound, with over two years of development resulting in some clear performance improvements.

For more information about ProAc speakers and details of where to hear them for yourself visit [www.proac-loudspeakers.com](http://www.proac-loudspeakers.com) or call **01280 700147**





MERIDIAN G91 DVD-AUDIO/VIDEO PLAYER/TUNER/PREAMPLIFIER  
MERIDIAN G56 POWER AMPLIFIER | SPENDOR S8E LOUDSPEAKERS | £7,285



# Get a lifestyle

*This intriguing multiformat stereo system from Meridian and Spendor will make your life more beautiful. And it sounds as good as it looks*

Let's begin, this month, with a squint through the keyhole, Loyd Grossman stylee. Hmmm, nice pad – spacious, spare, achingly tasteful, beautifully understated. It's the distillation of every cool, modern, sleek interior ever imagined by an art director charged with the task of floating the word 'lifestyle' on a sea of white space.

What's this? An Apple Powerbook, all shiny titanium and softly-glowing apple logo, purring quietly to itself on the corner of the 2002 Giovanni Tommaso Garattoni coffee table.

Oops, accidentally touched the mouse pad and now there's text set against the backdrop image of a spacious, spare, achingly tasteful, beautifully understated room. Could be a clue here. "Since its launch in 1984, we have become accustomed to the Compact Disc – including its early problems and the more recent solutions. Today, a CD is capable of extraordinarily high quality – far better than the best the exponents of vinyl could ever have imagined, and far closer to the original sound in the studio than would ever have been possible with traditional disc technologies that had hardly changed in a century."

Interesting, let's recap: an impossibly stylish apartment, completely devoid of clutter; an interest in the recorded arts; and downloaded text stating that digital audio technology has left its faltering beginnings behind to represent the cutting edge of high-end sound quality. Who could possibly live in a utopia like this? "So, who lives here?", we ask in our best Mid-Atlantic drawl.

Well, how about the notional owner of this month's *Beautiful System*. Probably good looking, probably dressed head to foot in Hugo Boss or Armani, probably annoyingly successful but, above all, a serious appreciator of fine music. When

it comes to choosing hi-fi that's the polar opposite of 'hair shirt', no one does it better than Meridian. Instead, Meridian makes hi-fi that reflects your chilled appreciation of quality: hi-fi that integrates as seamlessly with your lifestyle as it does your home; hi-fi that's ahead of the curve; indeed, hi-fi that lets you live the digital dream.

## NUTHIN' BUT A G THANG

And so we have it. Two sublimely elegant units from the oh-so cool and reasonably 'affordable' G Series range that look very simple on the outside, but are packed with state-of-the-art digital electronics on the inside. It's hi-fi that, should you wish, can form part of a multichannel home theatre system (nothing too unusual there) and play music in stereo to a very high standard. That's much, much harder.

At its heart is arguably Meridian's most appealing single component ever, the G91. It combines a DVD-Audio/Video disc player, stereo digital preamplifier and AM/FM, RDS/RDBS radio tuner in a single unit. The G91 can function as a Meridian-oriented multichannel home theatre centrepiece but here, teamed with Meridian's G56 stereo power amp and a pair of Spendor S8e floorstanding speakers, the spotlight is on its purist two-channel capabilities.

The G Series look is distinctive yet understated and the feel (equally important to Meridian – it talks about handcrafted watches and fine automobiles in its brochure) is solid and smooth, with the company's signature contrasting textures of metal and glass. Build and finish are both exemplary.

Inside, the Meridian G Series is new from the ground up. Technologies originally devised for the company's flagship 800 series products have



**Meridian G91**  
DVD player/  
tuner/preamp  
£3,895

A shining example of what Meridian does best: cool industrial design, high-tech digital electronics, brilliant user interface, huge desirability... and it sounds wonderful.



**Meridian G56**  
power amplifier  
£1,495

Meridian made its bones with CD players, but this power amp still does the business. A strong yet sensitive type with bags of power but even more finesse.



**Spendor S8e**  
loudspeaker  
£1,895 per pair

Spendor doesn't know how to make bad speakers, but the S8e is something special even by its own high standards. Lovely midrange and deep bass combine to make a sound that's big and sweet.

**"The G Series look is distinctive yet understated and the feel is solid and smooth, with Meridian's signature contrasting metal and glass textures."**





been trickled down to the G Series. The G91 employs a DVD-ROM drive, with a FIFO (first in first out) RAM buffer system. This means the DVD drive spins at higher than normal speed and loads the digital data – whether from a CD or any flavour of DVD – meaning jitter is stamped on by powerful re-clocking in the buffering stage. Naturally, this means a wealth of Meridian-written control, navigation and error-correction software for speed and reliable disc-handling. Although falling short of full universality (Meridian is no lover of SACD), the G91 handles all relevant mass-produced and recordable variants of CD and DVD/DVD-Audio formats, including CD-R and hybrids. Upsampling of standard CD PCM data is to 24-bit, 176.4/192kHz.

#### FLASH: SAVIOUR OF THE FUTURE

Future-proofing is also a Meridian speciality. The G91 is equipped with Flash ROM. This contains the system software for the unit – its operating system, so to speak – and it can be updated when the need arises by downloading new software from the Meridian web site and transferring it to the unit from the computer, via the RS232 serial port.

The G91 is supplied with Meridian's latest multifunction programmable/learning remote control, the Meridian System Remote Plus. An auto-back-lit

remote with interchangeable source keys (alternative and blank keycaps are provided), it can control all Meridian products – along with virtually any other device you might wish to interface with your G Series system. You can even add commands to an existing database set.

The unit is equally simple to operate from the front panel, which is built around the latest Vacuum Fluorescent Display technology, with a particularly clear dot-matrix format that displays graphics as well as characters. The front panel switches have a positive, precise feel and the row of seven keys to the right of the panel under the display respond to a light touch. But only two of the seven front panel keys have permanent names – 'Home', which always takes you back to the top level of the interface; and 'More' which accesses additional features and functions.

All the other keys are 'soft'; the display labels them according to the context in which they appear. This means that a key is always clearly labelled with its current function. You don't have to remember all the possible operations a button can offer – because it tells you. 'Wizards' can lead you through different levels of configuration and even the most obscure settings can be made accessible from the front panel. Almost too clever for words... and makes the player almost 'fly by wire' in the manner of an Airbus.

Small, round buttons on the left of the unit open and close the disc drawer and power the G91 up or down. A soft blue glow indicates that the unit is in standby; when operating, the front-panel keys are similarly gently back-illuminated to make them easy to find in low light conditions. Another button allows you to change the player's display mode – you can dim its intensity or lose it altogether.

One of the more curious aspects of the G91 is its interaction with multichannel systems. You can hook it directly to a set of Meridian's digital active speakers, or a G68 processor and suitable power amps, but there are no multichannel analogue outputs and the only hi-res digital audio link is the Meridian-only MHR. That means options are limited if you want to use the unit with a processor or AV amp from another brand – but here we're harnessing the G91's player and preamp functions as part of a two-channel hi-fi system, and for that Meridian's G56 stereo power amp will do just fine.

The preamp section of the G91 includes fully dual-mono construction for maximum channel separation, while the dual-mono G56 derives much of its technology from Meridian's DSP8000 digital loudspeakers. The design topology has biasing for pseudo Class A operation, for which Meridian claims an amazingly low output impedance – virtually zero. Coupled with low feedback, the 100-watt







**“The G56 power amp is a good match for the poised, transparent Spondors, offering impressive drive and impetus. Partly this is due to the strong bass and is best appreciated with something loud.”**

per channel G56 is said to maintain audio quality and stability when driving almost any load. It can be bridged to mono for higher single-channel output.

As a Brit class act to follow a Brit class act, we could hardly do any better than the Spondor S8e, a modern, elegant two-way floorstander from one of the most famous names in speakerdom. The S8e aims for ‘broadcast reference’ performance – much like its legendary forbear, the BC1 – but brings the ambition bang up to date. Like the BC1, it also has an 210mm polymer-coned bass/mid driver with a high damping synthetic rubber surround, which boasts an exceptionally smooth extended response. The large cone area and freedom from resonance and break-up are said to maintain the BC1 tradition, aided by ‘3D linear flow’ reflex loading for greater bass depth and authority.

**BEST OF BRITISH**

The performance of this Meridian/Spondor combo is so anchored and assured, you’d trust it with your ISA account. Its presentation is very much of

the flesh and blood rather than etched and edgy school. It sounds both unforced and well-balanced. And bass fans are in for something of a treat, the lower registers marrying satisfying weight with fine smoothness, speed and integration. It doesn’t really matter if your fix is Marcus Miller or Hank Marvin, the power and expression of the playing is delivered with all of its attack, drive and note shaping intact. The effect is somehow luxurious and reassuring. Treble is also a class act, with well resolved tonal colours and harmonics.

The G56 power amp is a good match for the poised, transparent Spondors, offering impressive drive and impetus. Partly this is due to the strong bass and is best appreciated with something loud and energetic – say Steve Vai’s brand of super-virtuosic heavy metal guitar on CD. You get to hear it all; the production tricks, Vai’s own technical prowess, the kick and the slam. It’s ‘in yer face’ without being all over it like a rash.

Heart-tugging strings are handled just as deftly, whether from Radio 3 or John Williams’ main theme from the

*Schindler’s List* soundtrack on DVD-Audio.

Here the system’s exceptional midrange clarity shines, easily keeping the emotional core of the music intact. This is a classy sound; even-handed, uncoloured, musically truthful, easy to listen to and, ultimately, fulfilling.

You just want to keep listening – a good sign. Here’s a system that seems to have it all. It may not be in the Naim class when it comes to tempo, dynamic inflection and rhythmic vitality but it sounds natural, spacious and relaxed. The system as a whole responds to the subtlest nuance and its bass is warm and weighty without going soft, even on the very deepest notes. The presentation is all of a piece, yet with fabulous inner detail. All this and fantastic looks, too.

Indeed, the way this system marries elegant style and clever ergonomics with a high-resolution sound that’s comfortable and easy to listen to is a little miracle. There’s always a balance to be struck with hi-fi, but *Beautiful Systems* has seldom heard one quite so spot on. **HFC**

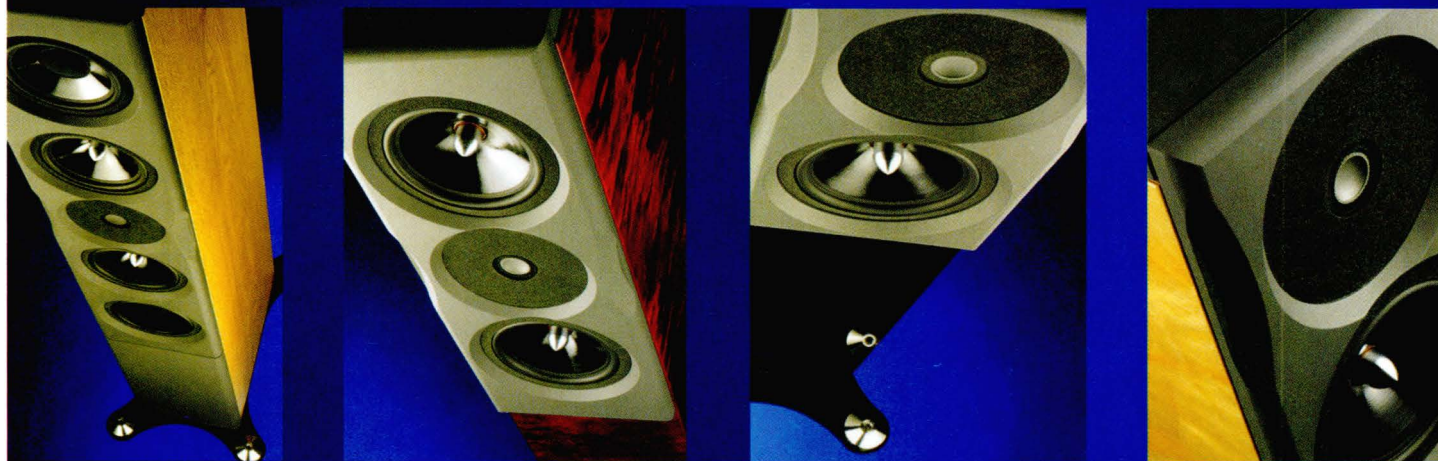
David Vivian





"...the Ultimatum is an exceptional achievement in every respect."

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HI-FI CHOICE

AWARDS  
2003/04

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## Shadow Audio are major stockists for a wide range of brands including:



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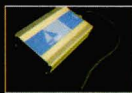
A range of very distinctive, beautifully built and superb sounding valve products from China.

Full-range available for demonstration including the very limited edition SCD-T300.

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An evening full of music and friends - not to be missed !!

We look forward to seeing you and don't forget to bring some music !!



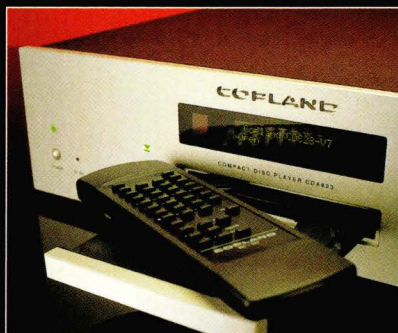
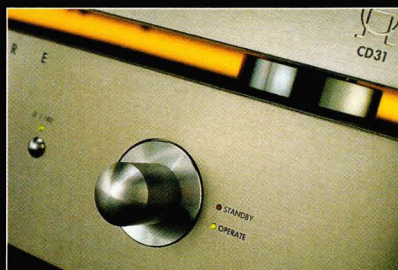
# REVIEWS



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

## EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

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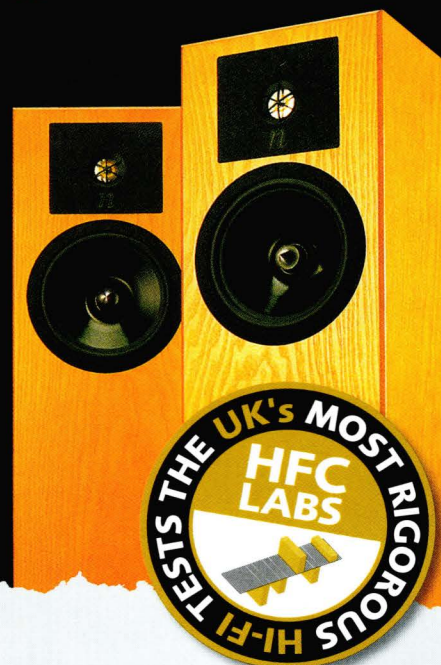


## ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

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£1,500-£1,900

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## 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...  
...are this with Marantz's £800 player, the 17 MKII M, which has excellent build and a very good impression in HFC 243. At the same price there's also the Cyrus 7, a ring all-rounder in a compact case.  
...fter 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... had been on for several days with the... after a livelier... 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... 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%**

**PRO** Well built and fully featured, with a snappy, open and dynamic sound.

**CON** Externally it's a £300 Marantz – no bad thing in itself, but it's better than it looks!

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...



# Primary numbers

*Primare's new CD and integrated amplifier combo proves there's more to Swedish design than Ikea*

**PRODUCT** Primare CD31 and I30

**TYPE** CD player and integrated stereo amplifier

**PRICE** £1,500 each

**KEY FEATURES** (CD31) Size (WxHxD): 43x10x39cm

- Weight: 10.5kg • Balanced and single-ended outputs
- Optical and electrical (RCA/XLR) digital outputs
- Custom install support (RS232, RJ45, I/R input)
- (I30) Size (WxHxD): 43x10x39cm • Weight: 15.5kg
- 100W per channel into eight ohms (180W into four ohms)
- Two XLR balanced and four RCA unbalanced line-level inputs
- Both products available in titanium or black gold finishes

**CONTACT** ☎ 01423 359054 🌐 www.primare.net

**P**rimare is a Swedish manufacturer of stylish, high-quality audio components.

The brand had a brief moment of prominence among the cognoscenti in the 1980s, but almost disappeared until it was rescued in the 1990s by fellow Scandinavian, Copland. The two have since gone their own ways, but both continue to epitomise Scandinavian cool and engineering excellence in the mid to lower high-end price area.

The I30 is the replacement for the long standing and popular A30.1 integrated

amplifier. It builds incrementally on the original, with relatively minimal changes, but those that have been made have had a significant effect. Like its predecessor, it is a balanced-mode amplifier, with two balanced and four single-ended inputs, along with outputs of both types. Internally, the amplifier's architecture is balanced, so there is good reason to choose a balanced-mode input source like the matching CD31. This almost certainly wouldn't pay off with amplifiers which perform signal amplification internally





using single-ended circuitry, irrespective of whether or not they have balanced input and outputs. In principle, there is nothing to choose between balanced and single-ended when the signal source is only a short distance away from the amplifier, but the reality can belie the perception. We'll return to this.

Much is otherwise as before. The I30 is rated at 100 watts into eight-ohms, all but doubling to 180 watts into four. This is a measure of the integrity and substantial capacity of the power supply, which is rated at  $\pm 40$  amps peak. It is a line-level design, though an external phono stage is said to be in preparation. In other respects, it conforms to the minimalist school of design, though the feature set does include a preamplifier output for bi-amplification. This also represents a potentially interesting alternative for those with 2.1-channel speaker systems, using the line outputs in tandem with the speaker outputs to drive the subwoofer.

The I30 also sports a tape monitor facility and an absolute phase switch. Balance can be adjusted within  $\pm 6$ dB limits from the remote control, and the display – a simple two digital numeric normally indicating the volume setting – can be turned on or off. Volume is adjusted by a rotary encoder with 80 1dB steps. Changes to the I30 include improvements to the input buffers, while top-quality Burr-Brown OPA2134 op-amps have been specified to upgrade the single-ended to balanced conversion stage.

Like the I30, the CD31 CD player replaces an earlier model – the D30.2 – but in this case,

the changes are necessarily more fundamental, as the Sony mechanism at the heart of the old model was discontinued. It has been replaced by a DVS 'Ultra Silent' DVD-ROM mechanism, and to make this work required substantial changes throughout the player.

Once again, this is a minimalist design with an unpretentious specification, though all the usual features are available from the remote control. These include direct track selection, a display dim feature and a variety of programming and repeat options. The six front panel controls have back lit legends, and allow most of the key disc handling options. ▶

**“In other respects, it conforms to the minimalist school of design, although the feature set does include a preamp output.”**





# Q & A

We discussed the story behind the development of this new CD player and amp with Primare's designer, Bjorn Holmqvist and managing director, Lars Pedersen (right)



**HFC:** What are the main differences between the old D30.2 CD player and the new model?

**BH:** Sony discontinued the transport, so we had to replace it, which we did with a DVS mechanism. At the same time, the power supply was improved, with better analogue stage regulation, and there's a new single-ended Class A output instead of the original op-amp. Finally, there's also a change in the way that the digital clock works. We now use a Burr-Brown 1703 digital audio receiver with jitter reduction, which is fed with the S/PDIF signal from the transport. We could use a normal clock, but this works better.

**What about changes to the A30.1 amplifier?**

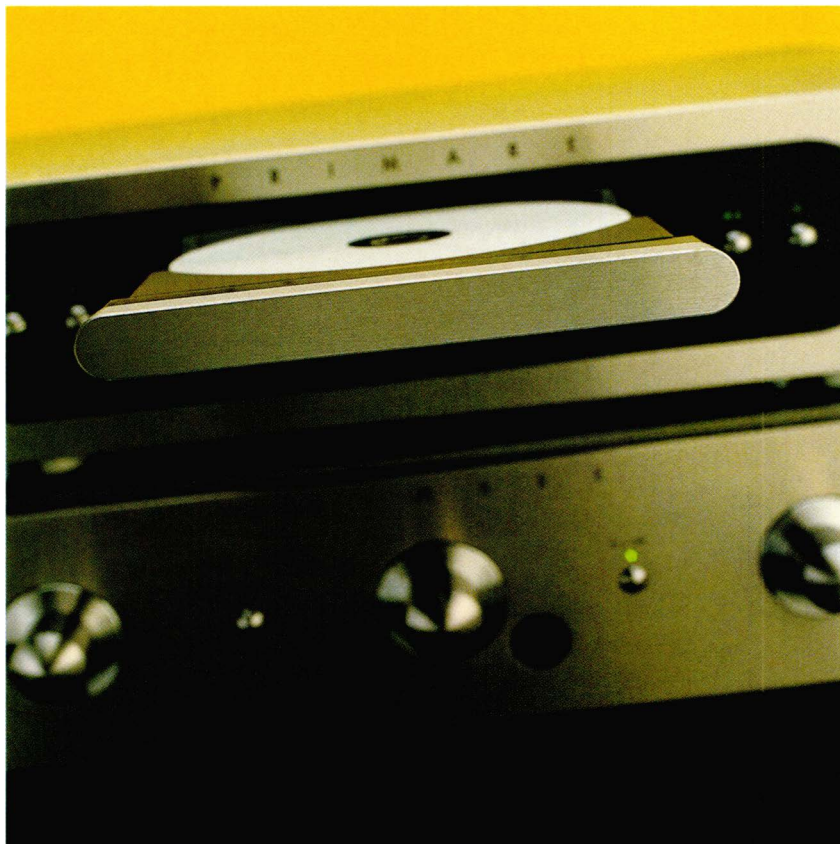
**BH:** The buffer stage has been improved with new Burr-Brown 2234 replacing the 2604. Again, it performs better. We think it is one of the best we can buy. It makes the amplifier a little more open, more dynamic yet delicate. The user interface has also been improved.

**How do you see Primare developing in current market conditions?**

**LP:** The market has become very fragmented, with many types of product. We find ourselves selling mostly into very conservative markets. Amplifiers, CD and DVD-Video is where it's at for us, and we have these markets fairly well covered, though if the format continues to get stronger, we may develop an SACD player. Overall, our sales have been increasing steadily year-on-year throughout the last few years.

**But so many people are saying that hi-fi is dying on its feet...**

**LP:** I don't see hi-fi dying, we're certainly doing well. But the market is changing. There's going to be more competition from different suppliers with parallel but slightly different products – web-based audio, servers and so on. There are a lot of positive things in these new technologies, but there will always be room for specialist hi-fi manufacturers like ourselves, who can offer affordable product with good aural performance and aesthetics. Our range is generally affordable compared to its direct competition, and we also have good distribution, all of which helps too.



## “The I30 sustains the good showing of previous models, but is now clearly lighter on its feet and less earth-bound.”

There are some surprises for the unwary, however. These include the play control that doubles as a pause button without this being directly indicated, and the eject key, which has to be pressed for about half a second before it initiates the eject cycle.

The DAC stage uses four Burr-Brown 1704 selected K grade DACs – two per channel for a configuration that remains balanced through to the output – with a DF1704 eight-times oversampling digital filter. Current to voltage conversion is built around OPA2134 op-amps, also from Burr-Brown. The player is equipped with an R-core transformer with three extensively regulated supplies for the analogue, digital and mechanism stages, and the unit features metal film resistors and FET output devices driven by an active current

source, rather than the more common passive resistor that can deliver high source impedance. A Burr Brown DIR1703 digital interface receiver chip is a key part of the jitter reduction strategy.

Both products are supplied with a newly minted remote control, the same model C22 remote control in fact, though the review samples had slightly different finishes, silk-screening and other minor details. It is a full system remote, capable of operating up to six components, and although perfectly serviceable, it is somewhat pedestrian, given the build and finish of the two main components. Still, with a spare to hand you won't have to worry unduly if one gets filed in the dog. The player's user interface has been improved by the inclusion of an RS232 port, which is able to respond to commands squirted from the more popular multiroom controllers (AMX, Crestron and so on). Sadly, the I30 has no such RS232 connection and cannot be operated in this way.

### SOUND QUALITY

Aesthetically, the two Primare components push all the right buttons. They look great, the new titanium finish really suits (blacks remains available as an option) and so do the revised front panel layouts, which continue with the most distinctive features of the original. These include the unique stand-off at the front that internally corresponds to a screened subsection for the front panel controls and displays.





Primare has always understood the importance of making their products tactile, and the tradition has been sustained on the amplifier in particular with its very solid controls, which have a smooth and finely engineered yet very positive feel. The casework is also unusually solid, and even before the listening commences, the Primare coupling provides confidence. They feel like top-notch products.

And they are. From experience of its predecessor, the I30 probably takes a while to come on song. But the review sample must have been properly run in, and it worked well straight from the box. It has much the same solidity and stability of sound of its predecessor, but where that model could sometimes appear to lack a certain liveliness (in an earlier review, it achieved high scores, and was felt to be ripe and listenable, but offset by a touch of opacity, with some comments concerning congestion and dullness), this is no longer the case.

The I30 sustains the good showing of the previous model, but is now clearly lighter on its feet, and less earth-bound when the music takes flight. Stereo imagery is also larger in scale, and there is a greater sense of air and space compared to the original model.

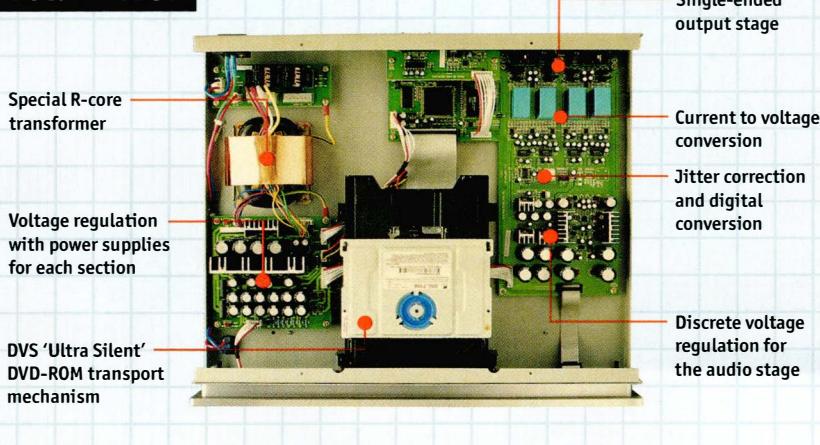
This assessment was made despite not having heard its predecessor for some months, but we are confident about the distinctive direction the new model has taken, which has been confirmed over an extended review period. For what it's worth, a later conversation with the designer pointed to just the improvements identified in the listening.

We can't claim to have such a clear picture of the earlier CD player's sound, perhaps because it was not as obviously distinctive, and perhaps also because we have spent less time with the older model. Again, an earlier panel test confirmed it as "unequivocally" top of its particular test group, with that characteristic Primare solidity, architecture and sense of drive. And again, the sound of the new model appears to have lightened up a little, though this may be in part a reflection of the changes that have been made to the amplifier.

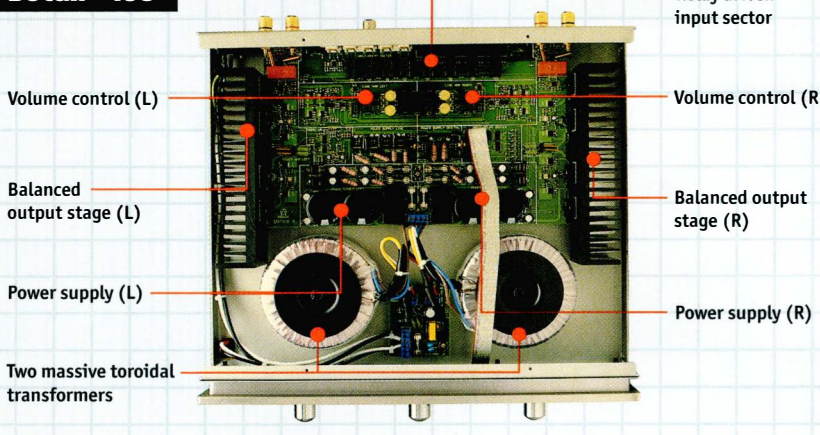
The overriding impression of the CD31 is of a clean, finely detailed player, arguably not quite as muscular as before, but still with real gravitas and expressiveness. It sounds like a low-jitter player, because it handles musical structure in a very clean, consistent and communicative way. High-jitter players often sound rather flat and mechanical, though there is no absolute one-to-one correspondence here.

Using Nordost Valhalla interconnects in single-ended and balanced versions, the balanced interface was clearly the better way of connecting the two Primare products together with marginally improved dynamics and a combination of greater solidity and expressiveness. The differences are subtle but unmistakable, and strong enough for a couple of percentage points on the sound quality

## Detail – CD31



## Detail – I30



ranking. Whether this works with cables that actually don't cost almost as much as the individual products remains to be seen.

In either configuration, the CD31 is a clean, attractive and agile sounding player which makes music in a sophisticated, polished yet direct way. Recent experience suggests this player has only been convincingly beaten by the latest players at significantly higher prices (such as the recently tested SA-11S1 from Marantz, which is also a stereo SACD player). Even then, they are in the same ballpark, with a similar vitality, clarity and dynamic progressiveness, and the same hugely beguiling ability to allow the sound to take flight in an organic way when the music is clearly pointing that way.

Primare appears to have a particularly strong relationship with its dealers (those we have talked to at least), which suggests the

company is doing something right, in addition to the particular merits of the equipment. Everything about the way that Primare hardware is built suggests that it should last a long time. The amplifier, in particular, is a clear advance on its already excellent predecessor, and although it is not readily obvious that the CD player is similarly improved, it was already a class-leading design. Put them together and the combination has a naturally fluid and very effective musical synergy. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*



## VERDICT – CD31

**SOUND >> 89%**



**FEATURES >> 83%**



**BUILD >> 90%**



**VALUE >> 86%**



**CONCLUSION**  
This is a first-class player, somewhat improved over its predecessor, with a fresh, clean character and a vitality to perfectly match the I30 amplifier.

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

## VERDICT – I30

**SOUND >> 91%**



**FEATURES >> 83%**



**BUILD >> 93%**



**VALUE >> 89%**



**CONCLUSION**  
Definitive mid-market integrated amplifier, with a new found vitality and airiness to match its solidity and unusual dynamic ability. Pretty looking, too!

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





# Diamond domes

*B&W's diamond diaphragm tweeter is just one of many new developments and refinements*

**PRODUCT** B&W 802D

**TYPE** Floorstanding loudspeaker

**PRICE** £8,000 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Dimensions (WxHxD): 37x115x56cm  
◊ Weight: 80kg ◊ Three-way design ◊ Separate enclosure for each 'way' ◊ Diamond diaphragm tweeter in separate tube-loaded module ◊ Twin 200mm bass drivers ◊ Surroundless Kevlar-cone FST midrange driver ◊ Twin terminal pairs

**CONTACT** ☎ 01903 221500 🌐 www.bwsspeakers.com

**T**he 1997 launch of B&W's revolutionary Nautilus 800 Series, stuffed with radical innovations, was a startling commercial success. It changed the whole perception of upmarket loudspeakers, both here in Britain and all round the world.

Seven years on, this Worthing-based market leader has given the whole range a major makeover – not that one might realise it at first glance. The new models look remarkably similar to their predecessors, but B&W cites Porsche as a very successful precedent, and points out that the 800s had never used style for its own sake, but were always based on strict form-follows-function principles. Anyway, the numerous underskin engineering improvements mean that roughly 90 per cent of the parts in the new models are indeed new.

On the name front, the Nautilus bit has been quietly dropped for this new 800 Series (even though B&W's inspirational original snail-shaped flagship model is currently selling better than ever). Each of the N800s has its successor among the new 800 Series. A number of entirely new models have also been added, mostly on the home cinema side of things (since the company found that around 60 per cent of its Nautilus customers were taking the multichannel route).

There are now seven stereo pairs in toto, numbered bottom-to-top from the 805S that we reviewed last month through to the top-of-the-line 800D. There are even two 803s – an 803S and an 803D. The suffix is a crucial distinction between the top four and the bottom three models, representing the difference between the S models – equipped with aluminium dome tweeters – and the much more costly D models, which use a diamond dome tweeter diaphragm.

Growing synthetic diamonds (via a process known as vapour deposition) is a very expensive process, so this 802D costs £8,000 per pair, which is £2,000 more than its Nautilus 802 predecessor. (By comparison the 805S costs just £200 more than the earlier

Nautilus 805 model.) But, why diamond? Theoretically, it has the best possible stiffness-to-density ratio on earth, and takes the dome's break-up frequency up to 74kHz – more than an octave above the aluminium dome's 29kHz.

If that's the highlight, there's much, much more. From the ground up, this three-way has a cast alloy plinth that houses and isolates the crossover network and the twin terminal pairs. This plinth comes fitted with ball-casters, but an optional reversible spike/foot kit has the option of nylon studs or massive, wicked spikes.

'Massive' is the adjective that runs throughout this design. Most of the bass enclosure is formed from a single piece of 26mm thick veneered plywood, shaped in a continuous curve around the sides and back. Inside, additional rigidity is supplied by honeycomb Matrix stiffening. Twin 200mm drivers supply the urge, along with a port firing downward between the base and the plinth. The drivers are a new design, using 150mm diameter sandwich diaphragms with 8mm-thick cores of Rohacell structural foam, laminated between woven carbon fibre. This improves rigidity and reduces the transmission of unwanted sound from inside the enclosure.





The midrange and tweeter both have their own sub-enclosures. The unique 'free edge' midrange driver with its 140mm woven Kevlar cone is housed in a large heavy teardrop, made in mineral-loaded Marlan, while a substantial tapered metal tube on the very top houses the 25mm tweeter. A small mesh grille covers the fragile diamond dome, and is probably best left on as an accident here could be very

expensive. Both mid and top sections are expressly designed to absorb (rather than reflect) the rearward radiation from behind the diaphragms, and are smartly finished in high gloss black.

Based on work done by a German academic called Kippel, the linearity of the magnetic motors driving the bass and midrange cones have been substantially improved, reducing distortion. A new tweeter suspension has lowered its fundamental resonance, allowing a simple first-order crossover network with just a

single top-quality Mundorf capacitor. Kippel's developments have already been applied in part to B&W's existing Signature and 700-Series models.

### SOUND QUALITY

Installed immediately after the 805S had left the listening room, the contrast was truly dramatic. While the little standmount is a superior example of the breed, changing over to this big 802D floorstander highlights the inadequacies of small loudspeakers.

Whereas the little 805S does a fine job of reproducing most of the signal it's fed, and perhaps even delivers a slightly more neutral balance than the much larger 802D, the latter completely destroys the small one's pretensions as soon as it's hooked up. It provides a dose of genuinely convincing reality that the baby 805S simply fails to approach.

Vivid dynamic drama, a real feeling of grip and tension and a healthy dose of hitherto unheard of realism are what this costly floorstander brings to the party. And you'd better believe it's a heady mix that quickly becomes seriously addictive.

The very essence of music lies in the generation of sonic contrasts, and the ability to recreate these contrasts with convincing and dramatic realism is what really sets this speaker way ahead of the norm. Most impressively for a three-way, there seems little evidence of time-smear here, and the consequent transient integrity is a key factor responsible for the 802D's serious dynamic capabilities.

So, what about that diamond tweeter? No, it doesn't add sparkle – indeed its strength seems to be that it doesn't add anything readily identifiable at all. You get the high frequencies alright, but they're so clean and well integrated you don't notice them – you'd only notice if they were missing. The most

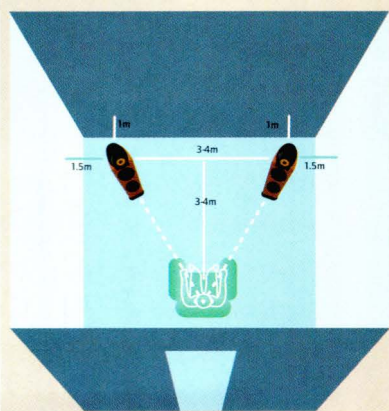
**“Vivid dynamic drama and a healthy dose of realism are what this costly floorstander brings to the party.”**

obvious direct evidence for the tweeter's contribution is found in the reproduction of hiss, either inherent FM hiss, or the tape hiss on early recordings, both of which have a quite unfamiliar and distinctive silky smoothness. Applause too is unusually sweet, yet also uncommonly realistic, and vinyl surface noise seems somehow less intrusive than usual.

In fact, vinyl sounded simply magnificent through these speakers. The sheer transparency of the 802Ds did a fine job with all the material they were fed, yet in no way disguised the ▶



## SET-UP



### POSITIONING

This speaker is undoubtedly intended for free space siting. Even in a room that's quite large by UK standards (4.3x2.6x5.5m), there's rather too much low bass (20-60Hz), though the overall balance seemed subjectively quite satisfactory. On our far-field in-room averaged measure, a slightly 'three humped' character may be seen in the frequency balance. There's some leanness through the lower midband, 150-350Hz, a slight excess in the upper mid (400-900Hz), and a quite obvious depression through the presence zone (2-4kHz). All these trends will add a measure of character to the sound, though the transitions are invariably smooth and gentle, and the trace falls within quite respectable limits above 60Hz.

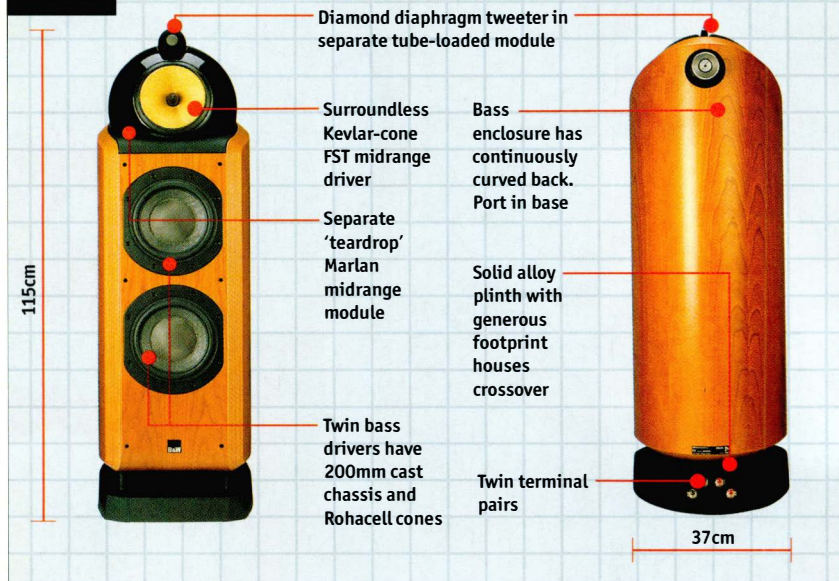
The bass enclosure's Flowport is tuned to a very low 25Hz, though it adds extra bass output right up to 95Hz, and blocking the ports (with some difficulty because of limited clearance between enclosure and plinth) did not seem to offer a subjective improvement. It would be worth experimenting with this, if the speakers have to be sited close to a wall. Frankly, though, this would be too great a compromise. Wall proximity will exaggerate the effects of the wide dispersion mid and treble drivers used here, creating relatively strong reflection coloration.

### SYSTEM MATCHING

Although slightly kinder than the loads presented by some of the Nautilus models, the impedance of this 802D is still decidedly low, its nominal four-ohm load falling to three ohms around 80-100Hz, and dipping again at around 600Hz. The load averages four ohms throughout much of the bass and midrange, from 60-800Hz, where peaks in program material will be quite common.

Although such a load will theoretically make fairly heavy current demands on the driving amplifier, in practice these will be substantially mitigated by a generous sensitivity of around 91 dB, so these speakers will go significantly louder than average for the same voltage (or volume control setting), so the volume can be turned down for the same loudness. In actual power terms, the 802D therefore has an efficiency similar to an eight-ohm speaker of average sensitivity, and should work well with any 'normal' high-quality amplifier.

## Detail



distinctive characters of the different source technologies. Indeed, these differences seemed emphasised, which is a tribute to the speaker's power of analysis. For example, it doesn't disguise the limitations of stereo or surround TV sound, but the unexpected roar of a lion during a wildlife programme was positively frightening!

As mentioned earlier, this isn't the most neutral speaker on the planet. As the in-room measurements confirm, the low bass is a little too strong, the upper mid a shade prominent, and the presence zone is a bit shy. These factors do impose a measure of character on the sound, but the transitions are smooth and gradual. Ultimately, this has less significance than the excellent dynamics and taut time-coherence.

Despite the presence dip, and unlike the previous Nautilus generation, the 802D avoids sounding shut in, and actually maintains fine intelligibility even at whisper-quiet levels. On long-familiar material, like Little Feat's *Hoy*

*Hoy*, previously obscure lyrics were magically revealed. At the same time, massive reserves of headroom are on tap here, and the sound stays clean, together and exciting even as you wind the amp up towards clipping levels.

The speaker's dynamic range is impressively wide, and its imaging precise and stable, though the wide dispersion means you hear much of the room signature, at some expense in ultimate focus precision. The cleverest trick of all is the way these speakers make even the most unfamiliar and difficult material sound interesting – a weird improvisational avantgarde jazz violin duet by Mark Feldman and Graham Clark, discovered by accident on Radio 3's *Mixing It*, proved unexpectedly engrossing.

Don't be fooled by the new 800 Series speakers looking like their predecessors. The improvement in dynamics and timing is prodigious, to the point where this 802D sounds significantly better than even the mighty Nautilus 800 from the earlier range. Once again, B&W has moved the goalposts, and I can't wait to try the top 800D model. **HFC**

Paul Messenger



## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 96%**



**PRO**  
Full-bandwidth sound with massive dynamic range, notably sweet treble, superb timing and vibrant dynamic expression. Can make any music sound interesting.

**EASE OF DRIVE >> 80%**



**BUILD >> 95%**



**CON**  
A bulky and costly loudspeaker. Bass is a little heavy, upper mid a little strong, and presence zone slightly weak.

**VALUE >> 89%**



### CONCLUSION

These can dramatically increase your enjoyment of hi-fi and music. Great timing, superior dynamics and a sweet top end come together to enhance musical communication, even making the unfamiliar more readily accessible.

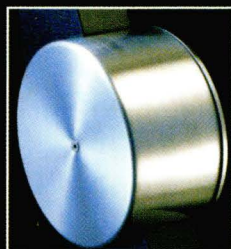
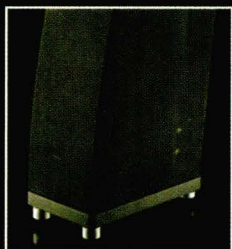
**HI-FI CHOICE** >> **93%**  
**OVERALL SCORE**



## 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](http://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





# Nordic charm



*Copland has performed far more than mere cosmetic surgery on its latest CD player*

**PRODUCT** Copland CDA823

**TYPE** CD player

**PRICE** £1,750

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 43x12x39cm

• Weight: 9kg • Analogue outputs: single-ended phono, balanced XLR • Digital outputs: coaxial electrical • System remote control

**CONTACT** ☎ 020 8971 3909

🌐 www.copland.dk

Copland's distinctive Scandinavian electronics are remarkably consistent in terms of styling; the look is as steady as the proverbial rock. The 823 may not be as massive as some of its predecessors, but it has the same four-square front plate and the bare minimum of controls for a front panel. It was one of the first brands to use silver front plates too, something that is the norm now but which was very unusual in the early 1990s when Copland first emerged.

The latest CD player from Olé Möller's Copland brand is a little more sexy-looking than its predecessors (like the CDA822). This is thanks to the unusual green backlighting on the front panel transport controls and the computer style dot matrix display, which states the amount of tracks and length of each disc as standard. It even tells you which firmware version it's running, in the style of Meridian players – in this case it's version seven.

Unfortunately, this level of style is not extended to the remote, which is a comparatively standard looking affair, festooned with indistinguishable buttons. It will run a whole Copland system, however, and you know it's not adding too much to the price of the player.

The CDA823 has an unusual display that graphically illustrates how far you have progressed through a given track. This is quite useful but if you find it a little too lively, there's

the option to dim or even defeat it. Placing a disc in the unusually noisy drawer mechanism produces the words 'Finding CD' on the display – a fairly slow process that reflects the DVD-oriented nature of the transport. Once it has sussed the disc out, it moves from track to track with alacrity.

Rifle through the spec sheet and you'll see the Copland is packing heat, with 192kHz oversampling and true 24-bit resolution (from a 16-bit format, remember). It also sports a dual differential DAC and multi-regulated power supplies, but differs from the CDA822 in using a Toshiba DVD transport mechanism that reads the disc at double speed and double re-samples the buffered signal. It uses discrete rather than op-amp Class A input amplifiers, while the output stage provides fully balanced and single-ended outputs.

Designer Olé Möller pinpoints clock accuracy as the most important and revealing parameter





when designing a CD player. He says that the lower the phase noise on the clock oscillator, the better the player will sound. In Möller's opinion, this is the only measurement which consistently indicates an improvement. Presumably, this is because you can build a player that measures very well by using off-the-shelf parts such as the op-amps he has avoided, yet this does not necessarily make for a great sound quality.

Connections are the solid and steady options of XLR and RCA phono analogue outputs, alongside another phono socket for the digital out, though the latter is not defeatable. The only other holes in the back are for remote switching of the 12volt trigger variety, something for the Americans but equally appealing to the multiroom install industry.

#### SOUND QUALITY

We used this player with a Bryston BP25 preamp and a pair of ATC SCM150 active loudspeakers, with cabling courtesy of Living Voice and support from Townshend Audio. From the moment you press play, the CDA823 is clearly a remarkably good CD player. You might expect all players at this price to be as much, but as good as most of them are, this is a distinct cut above the average. It does all the important things with impressive ease, by which we mean dynamics, acoustic space and bandwidth. All the while, detail and timing was pretty spot on, too. This was ably demonstrated by Madelaine Peyroux's *Careless Love* album, which sounded open and positively 'springy' with life through the

**“This is the sort of player that encourages the reviewer to stray from the usual test discs and rummage through the CD shelves.”**

CDA823. The quality of the recording was instantly revealed, and as a result, the Billy Holiday-like tones of her voice sounded patently clear.

The CDA823 also served up some unusually heavy bass, which brought out the full-bodied nature of even mellow jazz recordings. But this bass was not overpowering and differences in recording were clear cut. That said, differences in recordings are not easily discovered on the Copland, because you tend to play whole discs, not mere snippets! Timing is as perky as one would expect and the Copland seems to be both revealing and musically engaging – a rare combination in digital audio.

Moving away from audiophile discs, even heavily manipulated sounds are served up in full effect, as the scale of the image combines with the weight and power of the bottom end to produce a gripping experience. Add the sheer resolution of vocals, effects and spatial cues when playing albums like Missy Elliot's *Da Real World*, and you have a high energy experience simply bursting with colour.

This is the sort of player that encourages the reviewer to stray from the usual repertoire of test discs and rummage through the CD shelves. *Red Hot on Impulse* is a prime example; a compilation with a strong John

Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* theme that should be as the title suggests. However, it has never been an appealing album and the Copland revealed the distortions introduced by the mastering and/or mixing process that make it an uncomfortable disc. But, uncomfortable or not, the insight provided by the Copland makes you hungry for more.

Part of the reason why this player proves such a hit is the surprisingly quiet background. This initially seems odd, because CD is supposed to have a noiseless background; but the Copland subjectively registers even less background noise than most and this makes for compelling listening.

The quiet background is thus a factor of the player and a result of Möller's quest for great micro-dynamics – you can't hear the fine details and differences in level if the background noise floor is not inaudible. CD players never reveal a noise floor to the extent that analogue components can, but it's there nonetheless.

Possibly this lack of noise floor is more indirectly perceived (as something positive occurring) than audibly registered (as the absence of sound). What's more, when the noise floor is reduced to this vanishing level, the result is compelling listening. For example, Bugge Wesseltoft's *Sharing* album appears ▶



Q & A

We spoke to Olé Möller, one of Copland's founders and still the company's chief designer, about the genesis of the CDA823 CD player, and how it differs from its predecessor



**HFC:** Is there a big difference in filtering between this and the CDA822?

**OM:** Yes. When you increase the sampling frequency, the amount of filtering you need in the analogue section decreases. You want to avoid filters if you can, as they are always audible. By using a higher sampling rate, I was able to reduce the amount of analogue filtering which accounts for the change in sound.

We also changed the drive mechanism with this player, which means we had to change the values of many of the components in the analogue section. This gave me a chance to give it another try, and improve on things.

The CDA 823 has an unusually dynamic sound. How did you achieve this?

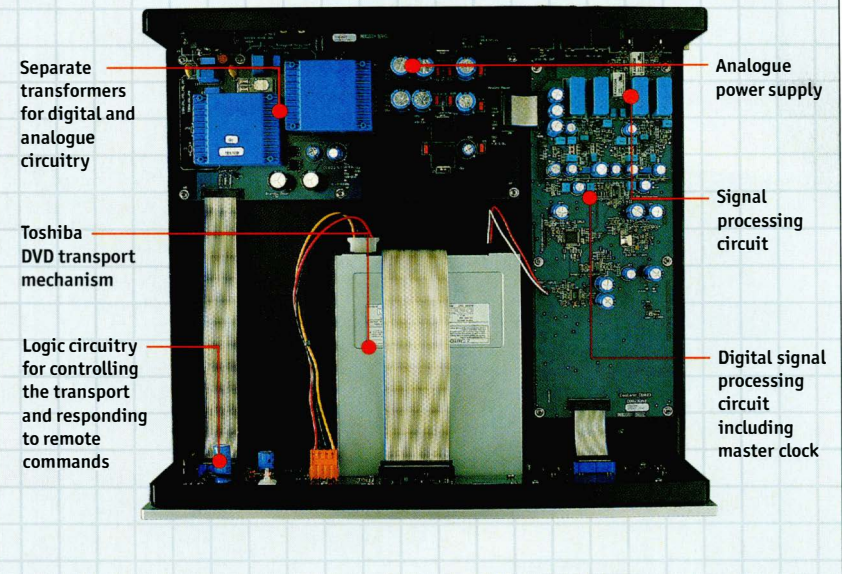
Dynamics are extremely important – one of the most important things to retain a sense of live music. There are two types of dynamics: micro-dynamics and macro-dynamics. Macro is all the explosive sounds like drums, where there is a change in overall energy level. Then you have all the fine things, the small sound levels – that's micro-dynamics. These two are very difficult to combine in one amplifier, whether it's the output section of a CD player or a power amp.

The discrete approach gives the designer the opportunity to adjust the sound. For good micro-dynamics, you need high local feedback and high internal bandwidth with a low global feedback. For good macro-dynamics, you want high internal current levels, low internal feedback and high global feedback. As these requirements are so different, what you have to do is find the best balance that gives the listener the illusion that everything is perfect.

You state in the literature that the input amps are discrete. Is this a part of the output stage?

The whole output section is discrete. It's the only way you have a chance to change the sound for the better. From a digital point of view, I think we all know what to do. We know the importance of a precise clock and the converters nowadays are very, very fine. The transparency of DACs is also superb, but they have a tendency to perform with less dynamics. The only way to compensate for this is in the analogue section.

Detail



**“The Copland is very good at delivering strong dynamics and three-dimensional space, but it never stops drawing you into the music.”**

significantly calmer and more relaxed than usual in the Copland's hands. It has a strangely quiet quality that makes you want to keep turning up the level, despite the occasional large dynamic swings in the music that often catch out lesser players.

The CDA823 features a high speed drive and delivers a very dynamic and open sonic character – features common to both the Copland and the Resolution Audio Opus 21 we rate so highly. In comparing the two side by side, the differences are surprisingly subtle until you play something with bass weight, like Eleanor McEvoy's rendition of *Memphis Tennessee*. The Copland has a drier, more grippy bass that makes the Opus 21 seem less precise, but the latter delivers a warmer, more rounded bottom end... and it's difficult to say which one is correct.

The Copland is very good at delivering strong dynamics and three-dimensional space, but it never stops drawing you into the music, however unfamiliar that music might be. There are those that prefer a more muscular sound

and others that go for a smooth, relaxed result, but if you want to get to the heart of the music, these qualities will often get in the way.

This Copland brings the price of outstanding CD replay down to a new low; or perhaps it brings the quality of 'affordable' players to a new high. Either way, it represents something of a high-end bargain. £1,750 isn't cheap, but it's considerably less than most of the real competition in sonic terms. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 93%**

**FEATURES >> 82%**

**BUILD >> 91%**

**VALUE >> 90%**

**CONCLUSION**  
The best Copland yet sets a new benchmark for CD players at the price. Its resolution of micro-dynamics and acoustic space is second to none, but its ability to engage the listener with all manner of music is worth even more.

**PRO**  
Dynamic and spatial resolution to compete with the best, along with high resolution of fine detail and solid build.

**CON**  
Ergonomically challenged handset, noisy drawer mechanism, slow 'CD Finding' thanks to DVD transport.

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 92%**







VENTO

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pure music





# Musical medicine

*ProAc's longest-running speaker is good enough to ensure we keep taking the Tablettes*

**PRODUCT** ProAc Tablette Reference Eight

**TYPE** Standmount loudspeaker

**PRICE** £699

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 15x27x23cm

• Weight: 5kg • Two-way design • 25mm silk dome tweeter • 110mm bass/mid driver with coated paper cone • Frequency response: 40Hz-30kHz • Sensitivity: 86dB • Impedance: 8 ohms (nominal) • Available in black ash, maple, cherry, mahogany and yew finishes

**CONTACT** ☎ 01280 700147

🌐 [www.proac-loudspeakers.com](http://www.proac-loudspeakers.com)

**B**ack in 1979, ProAc was one of the first companies to produce a high-quality bookshelf speaker, called the Tablette. There had been 'quality' mini-monitor designs before, notably the classic BBC LS3/5a, but the ProAc was distinctly audiophile. Speakers that followed, like the Acoustic Energy AE-1, owed much to the path cut by ProAc.

The design has changed much in the intervening 26 years, but the audiophile aspiration still holds. So does the small footprint – this is a free-space loudspeaker, with a cabinet that has returned to the original 'first days of Thatcherism' size. As such, it's best to forget centimetres; the Tablette Reference Eight is six inches wide and nine inches deep.

It's worth focussing on the cabinet, because it's so well made. It is bitumen damped and tuned, the box itself made from birch ply instead of MDF and finished in one of four lovely real wood veneers. The feel of the cabinet is luxurious and solid – the knuckle-rap test just comes up with sore knuckles and almost no internal resonance. There are two small ports at the rear of the speaker, just above the large bi-wire terminal block that also houses the high quality crossover network.

This crossover sports a larger bass inductor than previous Tablette speakers, to suit the new 110mm bass/mid driver. This coated paper long-throw cone (the original cone used back in 1979) sits in a magnesium chassis and features a raised suspension system and an extremely linear motor. This is partnered by a new drive unit: the chambered 25mm silk dome tweeter, set in a huge surround. Factor in good quality oxygen-free copper multistrand cable internally and you have a solid and well-engineered package that perfectly befits the Tablette name and reputation.

ProAc has designed the speaker to be a no compromise transducer in a small box, as distinct from a small 'bookshelf' entry-level speaker. As such, it has comparatively low sensitivity by today's standards, although a suggested 86dB is still a far from a difficult



drive, especially given a claimed eight-ohm nominal impedance. The speaker would be best partnered intelligently with amplifiers sporting stiff power supplies and good current delivery. You might also look for an amplifier from the warm end of the spectrum.

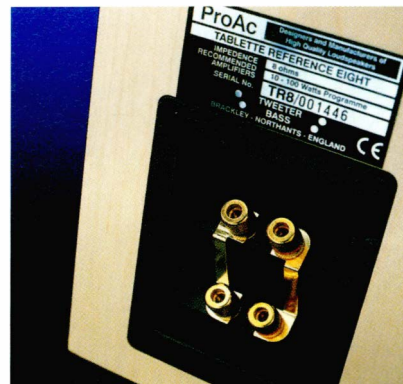
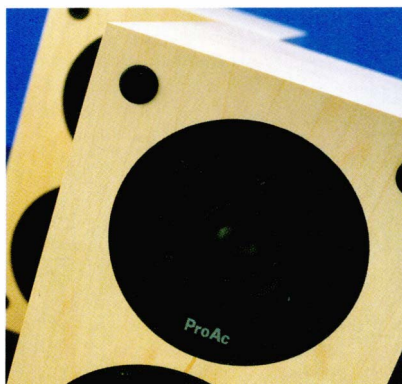
The Tablette is a free-space design, which needs the heaviest possible stand to bring out the best. Atacama R724 stands filled to the brim with Atabites are fine (and featured in ProAc's literature), but any light stand will make the speaker sound terribly insubstantial.

Bi-wiring seems considerably less important than the stands, in this case at least. The performance hike between one or two sets of decent speaker cables does not seem to be that dramatic, and you are better advised to sort out the rest of your system first. In fact, the speakers sounded best with 'shotgunned' cable – bi-wire cable terminated as single-wire cable at both amp and speaker end. You are also strongly advised to give the speakers at least a metre from the side and rear walls, a moderate toe-in and several days of run-in before they come to life. Experiment with positioning, although shunting around a speaker on half a ton of stand might make you want to limit the experimentation process.

**SOUND QUALITY**

These positioning and implementation caveats are not simply to pad out the review; they are central to getting good sound from the Tablette Reference Eight. Use insubstantial stands or the wrong amp and you'll wonder what all the fuss was about. In fact, with the wrong partners or in the wrong position, the Tablette Reference Eight can sound dreadful.

But, that just means you are missing a trick. Used with the right components and the transformation is near magical. The bass fills out with solid stands and a good, grippy power amplifier feeding the speaker terminals, and any inconsistencies just melt away. Similarly, potential brightness is replaced by sumptuous



**“There is a sense of sweetness and openness about the Tablette’s midrange that draws you into the sound.”**

insight and the sort of holographic imagery that's hard to find this side of an electrostatic. The timing sounds 'right', too.

So, what is the ProAc magic? Put simply – midrange. There is a sense of sweetness and openness about the Tablette's midrange that draws you into the sound, in a manner that you would be hard pressed to find with speakers twice the size and three times the price. It is detailed and articulate, making especially good work with voices of all flavours. Even the massed vocal histrionics of the choir in Delius' *Mass of Life* become distinct and separate, while the soft tones of KT Tunstall are silken and extraordinarily well defined.

This midrange openness makes for a speaker that delivers an image extremely wide of the boxes, with excellent image depth and even some image height. It's impressive enough to make people look for the surround speakers, when sitting in the hot spot. The rest of the room gets the open, articulate midrange, but misses out on the wonderful imagery. Still, this is not a bad compromise, all told.

This Tablette is surprisingly extended, especially at the top end. It handles bat-eared treble well, although this requires an amplifier with a rich, rather than sharp, tonality to keep the brightness at bay. At its best, this simply extends the midrange detail and openness further up the scale. Don't expect gut-churning bass miracles, though. This can play a precise, slightly dry and focused bass line well, but organ music fans will not be satisfied by the sheer lack of room-shaking bottom end.

In terms of dynamics, this is a speaker to enjoy, even though it does not swing effortlessly. Think of it as Miles Davis dynamics, instead of Stravinsky dynamics; a cool, easy and subtle range that draws the listener into the music, instead of big, impressive earth and air moving sound pressure levels.

ProAc has continued to develop the Tablette since the late 1970s, and this latest model shows how mature the design has become. It's not for everyone, but those who crave electrostatic imagery without the space and price issues will be soon be under the Tablette Eight Reference's spell. **HFC**

Alan Sircom

**REFERENCE EIGHT SIGNATURE**

Take a normal ProAc Tablette Reference Eight, upgrade the bass driver, make the veneer nicer still and stick a little Stewart Tyler signature on the back plate. Now pay £200 more for these changes... why should this be even more of a bargain? Two minutes in front of the Signature version, though, and the bargain shines through.

On paper, there are not great differences between the two designs. The 110mm driver uses the same paper cone, but sports a neodymium bar magnet system, in place of the standard ceramic magnet. It also has a copper phase plug. These changes mean the bass driver delivers bass from a claimed 38Hz (in place of 40Hz in Reference Eight) and costs four times as much as the unit in the standard model. That veneer (this sample in a politically incorrect ebony) costs considerably more than the standard one, too.

When the two are demonstrated side by side, at first it seems as if the Signature version is missing something over the Reference Eight. It is... it is missing that last bit of cabinet coloration that the Reference Eight has. Where the Reference Eight seems to sound like an electrostatic, the Signature has done the impossible: turned the speaker becomes effectively a dynamic and open sounding point source, far more so than its little brother. It also sounds deeper than the specifications suggest. Cleaner and deeper, too.

If the standard Reference Eight is magic, then someone should be burning the Signature at the stake for witchery. ProAc can take this speaker back when they prize it from our cold, dead speaker stands.



**VERDICT**

<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 86%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>PRO</b> One of the best-sounding small box speakers you can buy, especially for the money. Stunning imagery and excellent midrange makes for an enchanting performance.
<b>EASE OF DRIVE &gt;&gt; 73%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 89%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>CON</b> Very fussy about its partners, especially the stands used, which can limit deep bass. The Tablette Eight Signature is even better.
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 87%</b> [Progress bar]	

**CONCLUSION**  
Not for everyone but if you like the Tablette, you'll find nothing to match it – except the Signature version! If you like imagery and the sort of midrange that makes voices in particular come to life, this ProAc is a must for your audition list.

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





# The joy of Lex

*Lexicon spells out the secrets of a happy marriage between high-end hi-fi and home cinema*

**PRODUCT** Lexicon RV-8

**TYPE** Multichannel AV receiver

**PRICE** £5,000

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 44x20x54cm

● Weight: 29.5kg ● 7.1-channel amp with AM/FM radio ● Logic 7 processing ● Three zone operation

**CONTACT** ☎ 01423 359054 # www.lexicon.com

It is rare that manufacturers dedicate themselves entirely to multichannel. Lexicon, part of the Harman Specialty group, is one of that select few, and one of the fewer still who pay more than lip service to conservative design and sonic excellence in multichannel sound.

At first sight, Lexicon's new RV-8 is an extremely comprehensively endowed receiver. It comes complete with a vast array of features, some of which are quite subtle. For once, the front panel is as telling as the back. Aside from the dot matrix display and a large rotary

selector (with functions assignable by the receiver's firmware), the panel is divided up into four areas labelled Main, Zone 2, Zone 3 and Tuner, each featuring the major controls associated with a major part of the total feature set.

Special features include full support for up to three separate multiroom zones, with variable line-level audio and video routing. For Zone 2 (but not Zone 3) an audio output is available at fixed level, which is the key requirement where local amplification is to be used in the remote zone. Two of the main zone power amplifiers can be assigned to Zone 2 or 3 if the main system is limited to 5.1 channel operation. Additionally – and this is almost a given with Lexicon – there is plenty of industrial-strength support for multiroom controllers and the like, with all manner of connections for Crestron or AMX controllers. It's little wonder that custom installers just love to work with Lexicon!

The RV-8 is capable of processing up to eight input channels, delivered to seven power amplifiers, each rated at 140 watts RMS. This figure is quoted with all channels driven together, not with the two-channel duty cycle that is usual with multichannel amplification.

In extreme cases, the nominal rating can be practically reduced by as much as 60-80% when all the channels are under drive together.

The RV-8 is dominated by a massive toroidal transformer, with large area heatsinks down the full length of the two long sides, a layout that is clearly more audiophile than videophile. Lexicon's meticulous approach to design is a common feature of the Harman Specialty group's hi-fi and video brands, such as Revel and Mark Levinson.

Lexicon has made the RV-8 fully THX Ultra2 approved and it is equipped with all the usual sound processing algorithms, up to and including DTS Neo:6 and DTS 96/24. This is





## “It is a receiver as much at home with stereo and multichannel music as it is with data reduced codecs like Dolby Digital and DTS.”

powered by two 32-bit Hammerhead DSP engines at 96kHz and 24-bit resolution, to perform such tasks as bass management and enhancement, THX dialogue enhancement, proprietary Logic 7 processing (see later) and so on. A third proprietary processor is used for decoding multichannel compressed audio sources. Dolby Pro-Logic IIx is not fitted, but is expected to become available shortly as a firmware upgrade. The DTS equivalent, Neo:6, is already available. It has a profusion of inputs and outputs in most flavours, even including a respectable moving magnet phono input.

But although provision has been made for future technology improvements – thanks to upgradable firmware – the RV-8 avoids dabbling with i.Link, HDMI or comparable high-resolution digital links. Digital video data could be channelled directly to video displays of course, but the emphasis here is on high quality, minimally degraded performance with analogue signals, and also DTS and Dolby data reduced codecs, whose limited bandwidth requirements would not be materially improved with wideband interfaces. With this kind of signal, Lexicon applies very high performance

processing to minimise jitter. This also counteracts any phase or level imbalance in the incoming data, so that subsequent precision spatial processing can be performed with minimal compromise.

The remote control is a custom programmed version of the touch-screen Theatre Master MX-500, from Universal Remote Control Inc. This provides ‘soft’ (assignable) legends for ten control buttons, and a wide range of hard coded buttons. It is definitely one of the better examples of its type.

### SOUND QUALITY

There are two highlights to the RV-8 that mark it out from the crowd, and they do not include multizone operation. Powerful as the Lexicon is in this area, Denon comprehensively trounces it with the AVC-A1XV, reviewed favourably in *HFC* 266. The Denon is also much more futuristic in its ability to accept inputs in just about every conceivable flavour. But, the Denon’s advantage here may not add up to an audible or visible performance improvement in many cases, though it may do so in some specific system configurations.

The Lexicon’s strengths lay elsewhere. First and foremost, for the dedicated audiophile audience at least, the RV-8 is an exceptional sounding audio amplifier. It takes a design like the RV-8 (and there aren’t many of them) to show that there is still a performance gap between stereo and multichannel hardware in most other cases. Effectively, the RV-8 could be described as a kind of bridge between the two worlds of music and movies. It is a receiver as much at home with stereo and multichannel music as it is with data reduced codecs like Dolby Digital and DTS.

The RV-8 is indeed a powerful receiver, but it doesn’t throw its weight around. So, if you spend your life playing typical midmarket compressed music, you will never hear anything special from this receiver. Under such circumstances, the RV-8 may even end up sounding poorer than others because it is not obviously demonstrative, and it does nothing to spice up inadequate recordings.

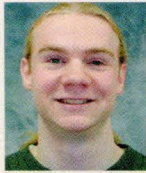
On the other hand, its reflexes are clean and organic. It breathes in a natural way, and allows the special qualities inherent in high quality recordings to make their musical point without strain, or by stripping away the interplay between instruments, voices and acoustic. It almost goes without saying that the Lexicon makes short shrift of dynamic, large-scale multichannel recordings (for much of the time it was auditioned using a Revel Performa 7.1 multichannel speaker system).

All this is obvious enough when listening in stereo, using only the analogue gain and buffer circuits inside the Lexicon. But, you can also select an analogue bypass mode for stereo and up to two separate 5.1 channel sources – enough for a separate CD player, a DVD player and a dedicated SACD player if required. ▶



Q & A

We spoke with Lexicon's product manager, Jeremy Frost, about the intricacies of the Lexicon RV-8 design and what is required to deliver an ideal Logic 7 surround sound for music



**HFC:** Please describe some of the less obvious aspects of the design.

**JF:** The single largest design issue was obtaining the performance of a separate multichannel power amplifier within an integrated chassis. With the RV-8, the customer is essentially getting a CX-7 amplifier (Lexicon's high-end power amp) as part of their purchase. The RV-8 was literally designed around this amplifier. It is configured differently to most, for better heat dissipation and casing requirements, but the performance is the same as a CX-7. The result is a receiver with real amplifier power.

**How much is it a home cinema product, and how much hi-fi?**

The RV-8 was designed to be the finest integrated multichannel amplifier, with no compromise as to the number of channels being used at any one time. Lexicon has a great reputation for movie sound, but there is a notion that good movie sound and good music sound are mutually exclusive, which we believe is completely wrong.

**What is the Lexicon view of the importance of Logic 7, both as an extension of Dolby and DTS, and as an add-on for music?**

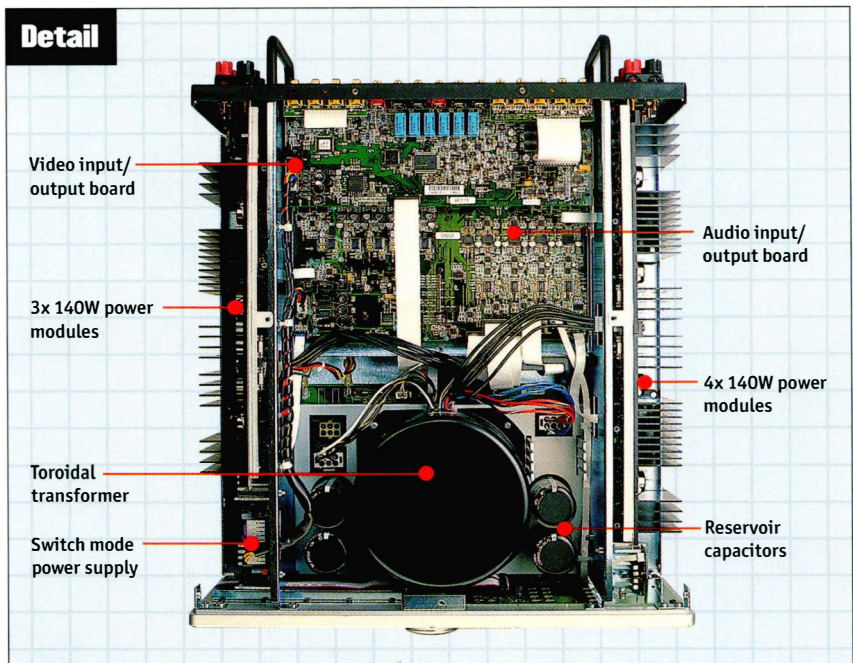
Lexicon's Logic 7 evolved from the desire of Dr. Griesinger (Lexicon's chief scientist) to accurately reproduce the sound of concert halls. Logic 7 is vitally important for all sources. Without Logic 7 processing, the most you can obtain from a source is 6.1 discrete channels, and there is comparatively very little of that material available. There is a large amount of music and movie material with two or more channels and these can greatly benefit from the increased envelopment that Logic 7 provides. Lexicon allows its customers to extract the most out of the music and films they love without necessarily picking holes in the age of the recording.

**How has Logic 7 developed since it was first introduced all those years back?**

Logic 7's development is an evolutionary process. From 15 years ago in the DC-1, in the era of stereo and Dolby-Pro Logic matrix recordings, Lexicon's Logic 7 was and still remains a full range and discrete multichannel process. With the advent of multichannel mixes, along with DVD-A and SACD recordings, and the development of more powerful DSPs, Lexicon has continually expanded and improved Logic 7's performance.



Detail



Video input/output board

3x 140W power modules

Toroidal transformer

Switch mode power supply

Audio input/output board

4x 140W power modules

Reservoir capacitors

There's a bit of a surprise in store when switching to digital, and this is the second real strength of the Lexicon. In some of its key modes, the on-board digital processing is in a class of its own, and this benefits users of regular home cinema codecs, with or without THX post processing. But the RV-8 can also benefit users of mono and stereo sources. Lexicon's understanding and continued development of the subtleties of real-world special processing was always a key strength.

Logic 7 in particular, which is capable of producing a 7.1 channel surround field from stereo, 5.1 and 6.1 channel sources, has come a long way from its relatively simple implementation a decade or so ago. The effects the current version of Logic 7 produces fully justify that increased sophistication, by generating a sound field with simultaneously well-focused dialogue and front central positioning, a smooth, progressive pan to the sides, and a more palpably spacious and stereo like surround effect. This makes it a lot more than simply Dolby Pro-Logic IIx's or DTS Neo:6's poor relation – it's a coherent alternative in its own right. A Logic 7 downmix is also available from the headphone socket, which could be seen as a Dolby Headphone equivalent. Although Logic 7 appears in more prosaic receivers, from the Harman Kardon brand for example, it truly shines here.

Ultimately, the phrase the RV-8 most readily draws to mind is 'industrial strength'. It's a solid, meticulously designed receiver, which has been thoughtfully designed for long term usability – for once both in stereo and multichannel. It is short of glamorous features like auto room set-up that may dominate the spec-driven world of the integrated home cinema receiver, but this product is so much more than simply a collection of features. In fact, it more than makes up for any spec shortfall with Logic 7, a powerful and effective family of sound processing algorithms that genuinely delivers a sense of enveloping wrap and spatial interest and variety from the rear channels that Dolby and DTS unaided struggle to match. **HFC**

Alvin Gold



**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 89%**  
 >> SUB RATINGS  
 STEREO 88% MULTICHANNEL 90%

**FEATURES >> 85%**

**BUILD >> 90%**

**VALUE >> 83%**

**CONCLUSION**  
 The lack of some of the latest gizmos does not mean lower performance. The reality is that the RV-8 is firmly old school, inspired by and engineered in accordance with strictly orthodox audiophile thinking.

**PRO**  
 Unusually useful multichannel/multiroom tool engineered for performance and longevity. Logic 7 is powerful and effective.

**CON**  
 No auto setup, no HDMI or i.Link connections and no conversion from component to S-Video may slightly complicate multiroom wiring.

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





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— Home Cinema, March 2005

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— Ultimate guide to Home Cinema and Hi-Fi, Spring 2005

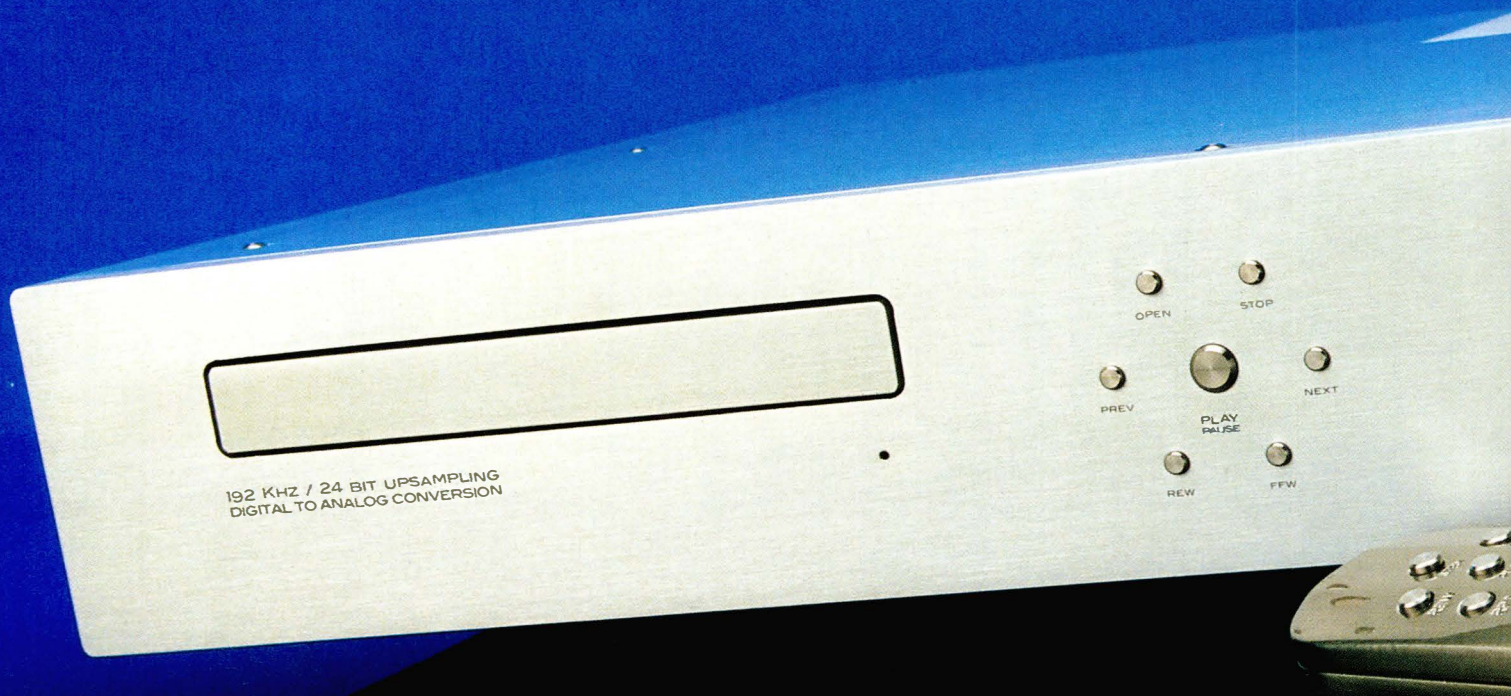


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# Italian smoothie

*Paganini's back, this time even better looking, but is it more than just a pretty fascia?*

**PRODUCT** Audio Analogue Paganini 192/24

**TYPE** CD player

**PRICE** £950

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 44.5x8.5x38.5cm  
● Weight: 11kg ● Upsampling 192/24 DAC ● Coaxial digital output ● Brass remote control

**CONTACT** ☎ 01753 652669  
🌐 www.audioanalogue.net

**H**i-Fi Choice reviewed the original Paganini from Italian brand Audio Analogue way back in *HFC* 191 (six years ago). For 2005, the player has been revitalised with an even smarter front panel and some impressive internals, in the hope of giving it a better chance against the competition.

Differences between the two models extend well beyond the casework. In fact, the only similarities are that they're both called Paganini and both play CDs. So, along with the higher oversampling rate (192kHz instead of 128kHz) and supporting sample rate converter, the D-to-A conversion, transport, filtering and output stage are all built from all new parts.

The Paganini's latest suffix is owing to a 192kHz/24-bit DAC of the sort developed for DVD-Audio players, but which – thanks to

sample rate conversion – can be used to convert the 44.1kHz/16-bit PCM bitstream found on CDs. The data is read off the disc by a CD-ROM transport that's said to be more robust than CD-specific transports, although the slightly tortured way this particular sample opened didn't exactly back that up. Sample rate conversion is courtesy of an Analog Devices AD1896 chip that feeds an AKM DAC which "bufferizes" the signal to eliminate jitter.

The output stage uses "high speed, low noise" op-amps and Audio Analogue's choice of "the best components in the filter". The player's power supply is described as "huge" and provides six regulated lines for the player alongside a switched mode supply for the display. The latter is a high efficiency design with reduced electro-magnetic emissions for the benefit of the player's analogue stages. These stages feed a single pair of RCA phono output connectors, with the digital output emerging from the same connector in electrical form.

Audio Analogue has also endowed the new Paganini with the heaviest remote handset we've ever encountered with a sub-£1,000 player... and even most two grand players are seldom so well-equipped. Its labelling is not

clear, but we found it easy to learn. With a little practise, we could even induce it to skip tracks rather than fast forward through them.

The legends on both remote and player are tiny, but the hexagonal button layout has its own logic and we'd rather struggle with six buttons instead of 16, as is often the case with system remotes. The handset is built out of a clamshell brass casting with buttons that rattle slightly but operate with a tactile click. Usefully, the stop button also induces the drawer to open but there are no direct track access buttons – it's hard to make a sexy remote with a full keypad at any price, let alone at this 'affordable' level.

The player's casework is very fine indeed, the anodised aluminium front, top and sides giving it a luxury feel. This, combined with the stylish button layout, blue LED display and substantial mass of both player and remote almost doubles the perceived value. That it's made entirely in Italy suggests that labour costs are more affordable there than they are here in Blighty.

## **SOUND QUALITY**

Despite the revisions, the Paganini's sound remains recognisably similar to its predecessor, in so much as it is still a little bit laid back by





**“The midrange is this player’s strongest asset and, combined with a fluid sense of pace, it all makes for engaging listening.”**

contemporary standards. This is better than being aggressively forward and doesn't seem to undermine musicality, unless you like your dynamics to have a bit of spring in their step. Take Outkast's *Love Below* album for instance; too much energy can make this disc appear overbearing. In the Paganini's hands, there was a degree of dynamic smoothing that calmed things down quite palatably.

Timing is perhaps an area where one might wish for a bit more get up and go. It's not in the same league as a Cyrus CD8x, for instance, which has a better sense of snap thanks to good definition of leading edges. There's no danger of your foot not tapping, however, and the player's rhythmic pulse did inspire a bit of involuntary foot motion during our test – it's just that the Cyrus is rather better in this department.

The dusty female vocal of Madelaine Peyroux stood out in shapely fashion, thanks to the player's grasp of imaging, and it proved equally capable with the instruments behind her vocal too. Its keen midrange helps to pull out voice detail, so you can always understand what is being said in the movie samples that find their way onto all manner of discs these days.

While the Paganini is not a bright CD player, it does have a tonal forwardness that can be heard on pianos and is probably the reason why

speech intelligibility is good. This is balanced to an extent by a slightly relaxed and pudgy bottom end. Bass can sound overblown when playing the likes of Fila Brazillia, a 'band' that likes bass... but not quite this much! On many tracks played through leaner varieties of loudspeaker, this will be all but sonically invisible, but systems that are already short on grip could be pushed over the edge. As with the original Paganini, system matching is critical.

The midrange is this player's strongest asset and, combined with a fluid sense of pace, it all makes for engaging – but ultimately not that revealing – listening. The double bass and oud duet on Anouar Brahem's *Thimar* seemed more interesting than usual, however; the notes had plenty of presence in the room and the reverb on the higher instrument projected its own distinctive character.

Even when playing laid-back music, there is a strange sense of the 'chilled out' about the Paganini sound. It comes down to timing, because the balance is not unduly mellow and the detail levels pretty good. Not quite good enough to really get to grips with where some of the quieter sounds are coming from, but good enough to let you know that something is going on at low levels. The other reason for the relaxed state is the restraint in dynamic

terms – the level between notes is a little compressed, so you lose out on sonic contrast.

This is one of those CD players that uses its not inconsiderable charm to distract one's ears from its shortcomings. Maybe it's the Italian breeding that accounts for this – it's certainly got the look in spades, and this impression is not significantly undermined by the sound. If you need a great looking CD player that will bring out the 'musical' in everything you play, and you have a system that is nice and open at the top end and tight in the bass, this laid-back beauty could prove a perfect match. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



<b>VERDICT</b>	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 78%</b> [Progress bar]	<p><b>PRO</b> Gorgeous casework and fascia design with the chunkiest remote around. Relaxed yet engaging sound that draws you in and chills you out.</p> <p><b>CON</b> A bit too relaxed for some and restrained dynamically. No direct track access keys. Small display and key legends.</p>
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 69%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 92%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 80%</b> [Progress bar]	
<p><b>CONCLUSION</b> Despite its laid-back sense of timing, this elegant player has got what it takes to make your music enjoyable. Voices are well projected and tonal quality taken advantage of, too. The bass is a bit full, but this will suit many speakers.</p>	
<p><b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 79%</b></p>	



# *The colouration's in the finish*



# *Not in the music*

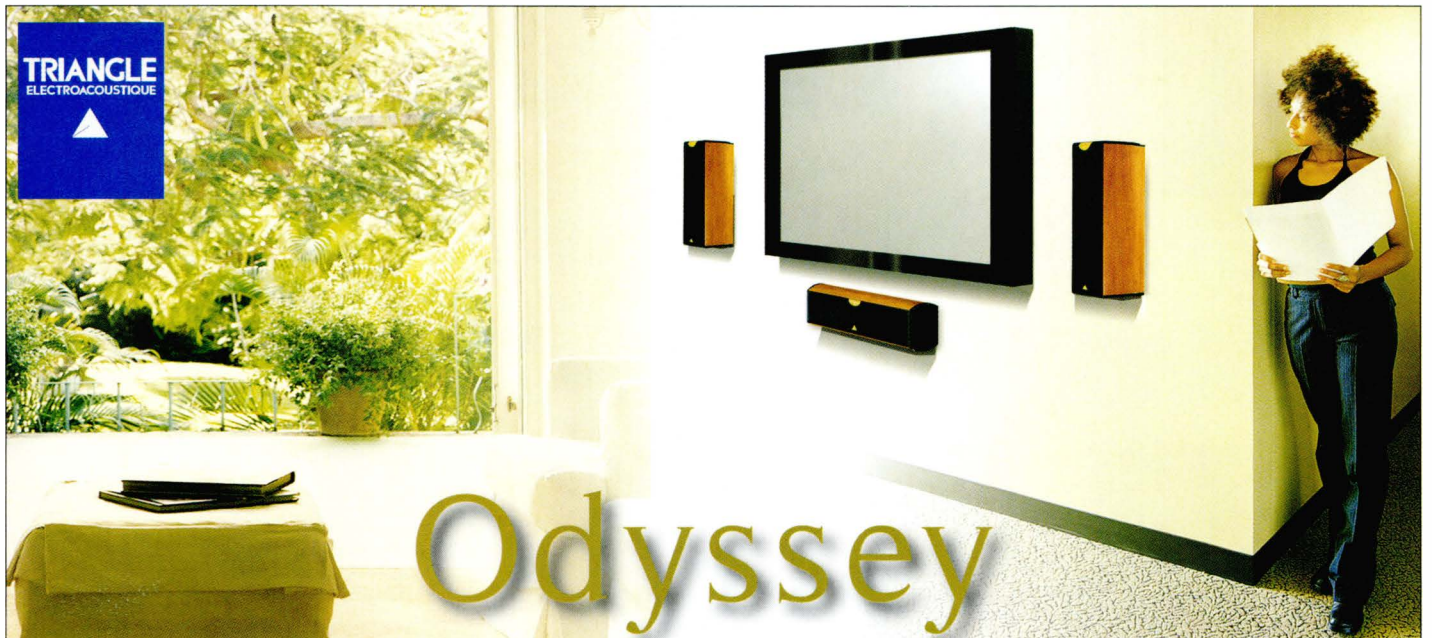








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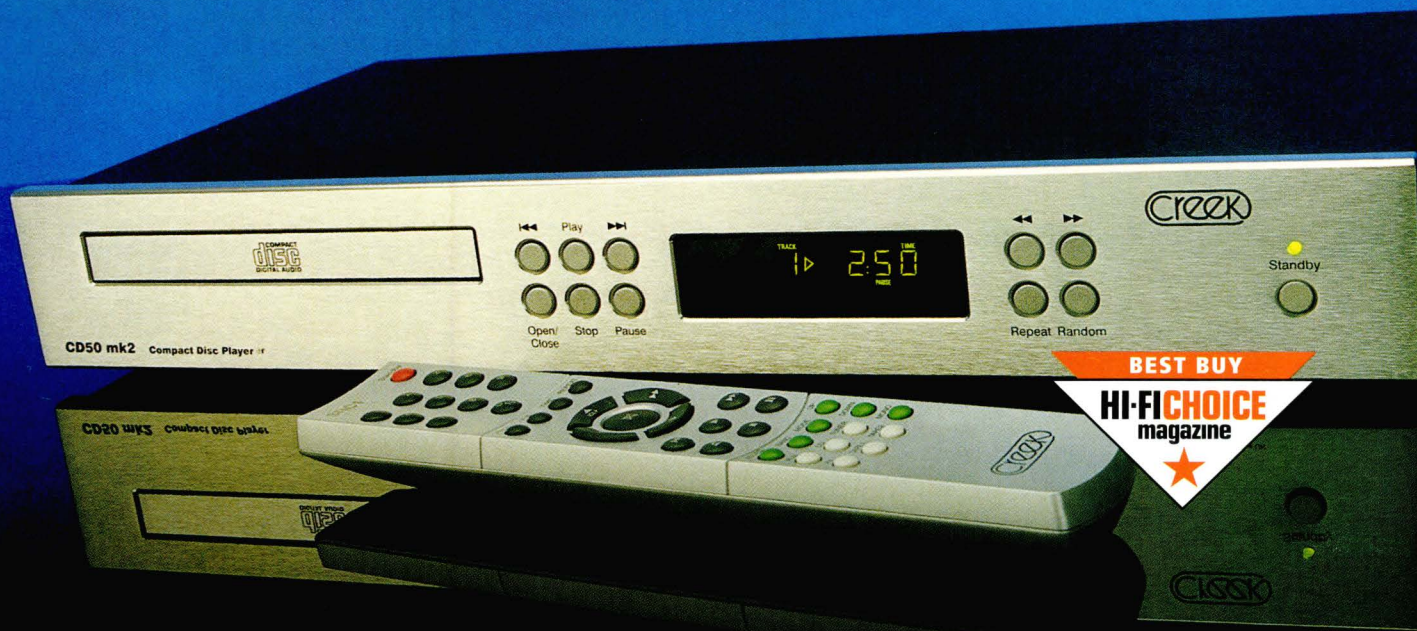
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# Up the Creek

Do 'Mark two-and-a-half' revisions address our concerns over the Mk2?

**PRODUCT** Creek CD50 Mk2 'revised'

**TYPE** CD player

**PRICE** £850

**CONTACT** ☎ 01442 260146 🌐 www.creekaudio.com

In our CD player *Ultimate Group Test* in Issue 264, we included Creek's CD50 in Mk2 form with revised firmware. We liked the way the player didn't draw attention to itself, but we also listed some reservations; these included the player's bass extension, treble accuracy and resolution of fine detail. Little did we know at the time (the review sample having been with us for a while) that Creek was even then putting the finishing touches to some subtle but significant revisions to the beast.

Externally, it's the same smart, functional, relatively diminutive box with the same display and the same light-action buttons to operate it. Internally, Creek has improved clocking and various component details – the little intangibles that, experience suggests, can really lift a product when done properly.

The CD50 Mk2's transport still uses a good quality DVD drive which reads data off the CD at twice normal speed, buffering it and clocking it out appropriately to play back at normal pitch. Creek uses a large 'gate array' integrated circuit to do all that stuff, before passing the digits to a top-grade Crystal DAC chip. The analogue output of that is filtered by carefully selected op-amps and passive components before making it to the output

sockets. Particular care has been paid to the power supply, including separate mains transformers for analogue and digital sections and some unusually chunky capacitors.

## SOUND QUALITY

Like the unit we tested in *HFC 264*, the 'new' CD50 Mk2 has a happy knack of not drawing undue attention to itself, yet for the most part our criticisms have also been dealt with. The bass, for example, is now well balanced between extension and over-emphasis. In fact, it has the kind of low-frequency performance that is so well-mannered and controlled that at times one might think it's reticent, but when a recording with serious bass crops up, such thoughts are utterly banished. If the idea of controlled bass appals you, consider that uncontrolled bass can bring on headaches faster than probably anything else except really rancid treble... or a pint of tequila. This is controlled, as in 'only let out when it's asked for', not 'suppressed'.

The treble is in some ways similar, in others not. Similar, because it is not prominent unless there really is a lot of HF information on the disc. However, it also has a slight reticence, especially when compared to other similarly priced players. It's not a huge difference, but there is a tendency to mellowness – though frankly this is far from unpleasant. It's not anything as obvious as tilting the frequency response or other CD-enhancing tricks played by some models, so it's presumably down to subtle differences in distortion, noise and suchlike.

We even ran some measurements and compared them with the original sample and struggled to spot any differences. This is fine, since most measured parameters were exemplary in the first place. The measured performance ties in well with similar impressions of the treble but doesn't shed much light on the bass, nor on the seemingly better detail from this new sample – for that's what we got. It's not at all in-yer-face but, like the bass, it's there when you need it. At the same time, long-term listening is as relaxed and enjoyable as ever. It seems that Creek has indeed spotted the same minor flaws that we did – and fixed 'em! **HFC**

Richard Black

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 85%</b>	<b>PRO</b> Smart, nice to use, efficient disc handling. Really involving sound, from deep bass to the clear but not overstated treble, with plenty of detail and good imaging.
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 80%</b>	<b>CON</b> Some mild mechanical noise and a very slightly recessed treble by comparison with some other players.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 85%</b>	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 87%</b>	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> A thoroughly professional product that stands back and lets the music take pride of place without superimposing any real 'character' and a distinct improvement on the previous 'version'. Just how specialist audio kit should be.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 86%</b>	



GROUP TEST & LAB REPORTS: PAUL MESSENGER

# LOUDSPEAKERS

*The place between 'mid-price' and 'high-end' is a rich and fertile land of floorstanders*

**O**ur group of six loudspeakers are all relatively upmarket models – not exactly 'high end', but with a price spread that starts at £1,500 per pair and goes up to £1,900. All are floorstanders on this occasion, though there's a wide variation in size, weight and driver configuration.

Even at these prices, the simple two-way has its adherents, as seen in two recently updated 'classics' from British brands Ruark and Neat Acoustics. Ruark's MkI Talisman was one of the very first compact floorstanders to hit the market – our review of the original goes back nearly fifteen years. Many have subsequently followed this trendsetter's example, but the Talisman still makes sense today and in MkIII guise, continues to offer a genuinely original approach to styling and presentation. Neat's Elite with its unusual planar tweeter was a more recent *Hi-Fi Choice* favourite in its 1999 guise, and this SE update is notable for featuring the superior driver unit developed for the more upmarket Ultimatum models.

Two of our six – the Audiovector and Dynaudio models, both from Denmark – follow the increasingly popular 'two-and-a-half-way' configuration. This design seeks to retain the advantages of a comparatively simple two-way design, while using an extra bass/mid driver as a bass-only unit just to augment the bass octaves. This also takes advantage of the extra box volume that's inevitably available with a floorstander.

The French BC Acoustique looks very similar to those two-and-a-half-ways, but is actually a true three-way design, which will enhance the power handling but also add to the crossover complexity. All three designs have some *Hi-Fi Choice* previous: Dynaudio's Audience 72SE succeeds the 70 and 72; Audiovector's Mi 3 Super is one step down from the Signature version; and BC Acoustique's ACT-A2 is one step up from the impressive A1 model.

The largest model in our group comes from Germany's leading hi-fi speaker maker, Canton. It is a full three-way design, using twin bass drivers and placing the midrange driver above the

tweeter. The imposing enclosure has attractively curved and tapered sides, in line with currently fashionable trends, and this will add stiffening and spread out the internal standing waves. **HFC**

## EQUIPMENT USED

- ▶ Naim CDS 3 CD player
- ▶ Burmester 001 CD player
- ▶ Linn Sondek LP12 turntable
- ▶ Rega RB1000 tonearm
- ▶ Linn Akiva cartridge
- ▶ Magnum Dynalab MD 102 tuner
- ▶ Naim NAC552 preamp
- ▶ Naim NAP500 power amp
- ▶ Yamaha MX-D1 power amp
- ▶ Cables from Vertex AQ, Chord Company and Naim

## MUSIC USED

- ▶ Alabama 3 *Exit On Coldharbour Lane*
- ▶ Massive Attack *Danny The Dog*
- ▶ Nitin Sawhney *Beyond Skin*
- ▶ Joni Mitchell *Mingus*
- ▶ Robbie Robertson *Robbie Robertson*
- ▶ LSO Rostropovich *Shostakovich: Symphony No. 11*
- ▶ BBC Radios 3 and 4 were also used throughout the test

## ON TEST



Audiovector MI 3 Super  
£1,596

BC Acoustique ACT A2  
£1,895

Canton Vento 809 DC  
£1,800

Dynaudio Audience 72SE  
£1,750

Neat Elite SE  
£1,500

Ruark Talisman III  
£1,500





## LISTENING TESTS

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

## LAB TESTS

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

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

## LAB REPORTS: THE BAR GRAPH

Our 3D bar graphs are a simple way of showing how the speakers compare across quantitative and qualitative measures. Individual parameters are assessed and shown as better or worse than the group average.

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

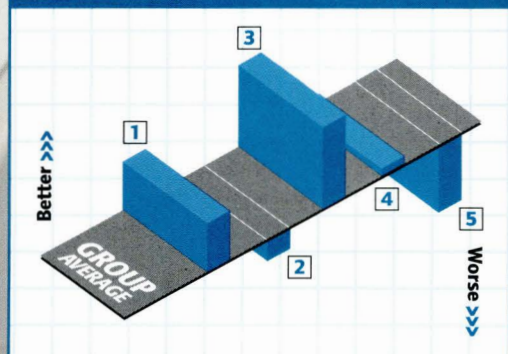
**2] Bass extension:** A speaker's bass is heavily modified by the room. To replicate 'real world' conditions, our figure represents the averaged bass roll-off frequency at -6dB with reference to the broad midband, measured across the far field for a stereo pair in a 4.3x2.6x5.5m room.

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

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

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

## OUR BAR GRAPHS: AN EXAMPLE





£1,596 per pair ☎ 01732 451938 🌐 www.audiovector.com

# AUDIOVECTOR MI 3 SUPER

*This delightful Danish floorstander proves a firm Best Buy*

One of Denmark's smaller brands, Audiovector has a long history but has only had sporadic availability here in the UK. More's the pity, as the examples that have come *Hi-Fi Choice's* way have all distinguished themselves well.

The company has an unusual but very logical way of organising its mainstream M-series models. There are just two basic stereo models; the Mi 1 two-way stand-mount and the Mi 3 two-and-a-half-way floorstander. Each model comes in four versions, however – Basic, Super, Signature and Avantgarde – with steadily improving specifications and correspondingly increasing prices. The really clever trick is that it's possible to upgrade from one level to the next, as and when funds permit, so purchasing this Mi 3 Super is – possibly uniquely – not necessarily an end in itself. Active drive conversion, using the Avex active filter unit and additional power amplification, is another option that's possible at any stage.

All the Mi 3s are substantial port-loaded two-and-a-half-way floorstanders, finished in a

choice of four real wood veneers with metallic silver paintwork. The basic version costs £1,026, this Super model is £1,596, while the Signature variant has a £2,204 pricetag (all these prices are for black wood veneer – other colours cost five per cent more). The step from base model to Super involves adding an extra front baffle section, using more powerful main drivers with cast alloy chassis (rather than moulded ABS plastic) and upgrading the crossover. The Signature version, reviewed in *HFC* 260, adds an extra rear baffle, a leaf-spring decoupling plinth, and an improved tweeter.

The two main drivers have 125mm diameter composite cones, and the motors have copper-plated poles and alloy rings to minimise distortion. The fabric dome tweeter diaphragm is fully vented at the rear, via a tube that passes right through the enclosure and exits through the back panel. Three pairs of terminals give complete wiring flexibility, and the vibration-control plinth is fitted with 6mm reversible spike/ball feet.

## SOUND QUALITY

Given the close physical similarity between the Mi 3 Super and the previously reviewed Signature version, it's no surprise to find this Super delivering a similarly high standard of sound quality. Just how the two differ is impossible to say without making direct side-by-side comparisons, but the measurements certainly indicate that the main distinctions between the two are that this Super lacks a touch of the smoothness of the Signature, as well as some treble extension.

The overall sound is essentially neutral, with just a little extra warmth that's both pleasant and positive, but which does mean this speaker is best positioned well clear of walls. As a pair, they deliver a beautifully open sound, with a notably sweet and coherent top end that conveys ample detail yet is free from any unpleasant exaggeration. The stereo image shows fine focus and natural perspectives, with no tendency for the sound to cluster too close to the boxes.

The midband has little coloration, apart from a touch of boxy nasality, and is dynamically very expressive with good communication skills, conveying a degree of grip and tension which is uncommon at this sort of price level. Voices are very clear, making lyrics and speech very intelligible, so it's easy to distinguish the contributions of different individuals. And given the price, this Super is arguably even better value than the Signature version. **HFC**

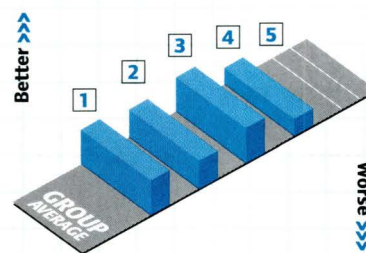


## LAB REPORT

There's a close similarity between this Audiovector Mi 3 Super and the Signature version reviewed last year, though this cheaper model falls a little short of its more costly brother in several respects. Most significantly, it's rather less smooth through the subjectively critical upper midband and presence zones, even though the overall tonal balance remains very similar.

Sensitivity is a very decent 89dB, especially so in view of the generous bass extension of -5dB at 20Hz under far-field in-room conditions. Contributing factors include a port tuned to a low 35Hz, and a minimum impedance of four ohms – low, but not exceptionally so. The tonal balance is fundamentally neutral, if a little warm and rich through the bass region, even with the speakers well clear of walls. The midband could be smoother, for sure, but looks very well judged, as is the treble, despite a tendency to peak up a little at around 12kHz.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> +30%
- 2] Bass extension >> +25%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +30%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> +15%
- 5] Response smoothness >> 0%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	91dB	89dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/- ohms	6/4 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	-	22Hz

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 89%**

**PRACTICALITY >> 86%**

**BUILD >> 88%**

**VALUE >> 90%**



This upgradeable real-wood floorstander combines delicate detailing alongside a neutral but warm and rich tonal balance. Dynamically communicative and expressive, though the sound might be smoother.

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 89%**





£1,895 per pair ☎ 020 8882 2822 🌐 www.bc-acoustique.com

# BC ACOUSTIQUE ACT A2

We love the ACT A1, so how does its bigger brother measure up?

**F**rench brand BC Acoustique has made a couple of previous appearances in *Hi-Fi Choice*, most recently with this model's baby brother, the ACT A1. This model achieved a Best Buy rating in *HFC* 257 some ten months ago. The full ACT range includes five stereo pairs – one stand-mount and four floorstanders. The £1,895 per pair ACT A2 sits right in the middle, one step up from the A1, despite costing an extra £700.

You get an extra main driver here, and although the speaker looks just like a two-and-a-half-way design, it operates as a full three-way. The lower driver acts as a bass-only device, while the upper one only handles the midband. The rear-ported enclosure is quite deep, and it all feels exceptionally solidly built, as the 27kg weight indicates, using 30mm thick MDF. Real wood veneer, which has little visible grain in the French tradition, covers all faces. This comes in four alternative finishes, from a very light maple via cherry to two dark

brown shades with the comparatively unattractive names 'amarant' and 'wenge'.

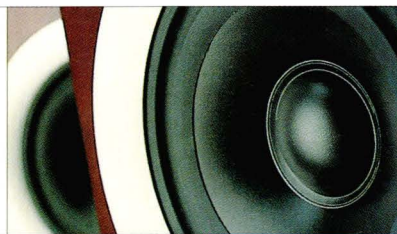
The most unusual feature is the shiny horn-loaded tweeter – unusual among hi-fi speakers that is, but offering certain benefits in directivity control and headroom. The 180mm bass and midrange drivers each have cast open frames plus 115mm diameter polypropylene cones, surrounded by attractive silver-coloured fixing rings. Silver too are the chunky cast metal feet that are tedious to fit (fortunately, you'll only do it once) but ensure fine stability. However, the cone tips look better suited to preserving wooden floors than penetrating carpets, and have no lock-nut provision. The large terminal/network plate (also silver) on the rear incorporates a jumper arrangement to give five tweeter level options across a 6dB spread, plus two terminal pairs. The crossover has gentle 6dB slopes, for best phase coherence, and uses top quality components.

## SOUND QUALITY

Even when sited well clear of walls, the ACT A2 delivers a rather generous thump at low frequencies, which is at least clean, if not exactly crisp. The consequences vary somewhat according to the type of material being played; where the bass content is relatively amorphous, such as the ambience of a large venue, it works rather well, but with complex bass interplay, such as that found on Massive Attack's *Danny the Dog* album, the lack of evenness is more apparent and less welcome.

The real problem with this speaker, however, is that the mid and top ends are simply too laid back, so there's a distinct lack of voice and dynamic projection. This also means that, by default, the tendency to bass 'thump' becomes that much more obvious than it would on a speaker with a more forthright mid and top.

A poorly judged tonal balance such as this shouldn't necessarily condemn a speaker out of hand, but the combination of a rather heavy bottom end with extreme restraint through the upper mid and presence region does make it hard to 'listen past' the balance anomalies on this occasion. The A2 does possess some of the positive qualities we found in the ACT A1, including a top end that's sweet, refined and notably free from strain. Box coloration is clearly well under control and temporal coherence is pretty convincing, too. Also, the overall dynamic range is wide, allowing low level details to come through well. But the imbalances remain a significant impediment to achieving this design's full potential. **HFC**

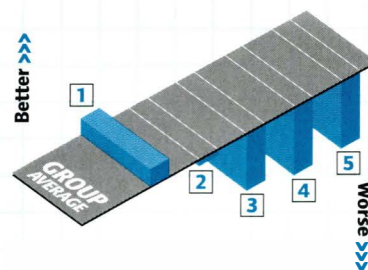


## LAB REPORT

One might have expected to find close correspondence between the measured performance of the ACT A2 and its A1 sibling tested in *HFC* 257. This turned out not to be the case, however, and the results for this larger three-way proved rather strange in comparison. For starters, the impedance has a particularly nasty characteristic, dipping to around 1.6 ohms at 150Hz, which is likely to make any amplifier's task tricky.

Like the A1 though, the 40Hz-tuned port gave rather hefty mid-bass output in our room, but the unexpected part is that output started to fall at around 700Hz, and was roughly -6dB by 3kHz before recovering a little above 7kHz. Selecting maximum treble could add 2-3dB to the party, but only above 6kHz. The ACT A1 also showed some loss of energy through the presence region, but it was far less severe, and the treble output was nearly 5dB stronger.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> +15%
- 2] Bass extension >> -5%
- 3] Ease of drive >> -50%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> -60%
- 5] Response smoothness >> -60%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	92dB	88dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	4/3.2 ohms	4/1.6 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	44Hz	27Hz

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 73%**

**PRACTICALITY >> 65%**

**BUILD >> 85%**

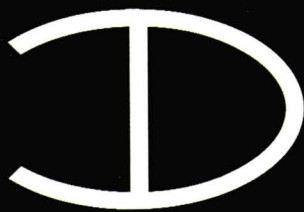
**VALUE >> 69%**

A handsome, solid loudspeaker, but the A2 suffers from a tonal balance that's altogether too rich and laid back, and a difficult load for the partnering amplifier. The A1 fared far better.

**HI-FI CHOICE**

**OVERALL SCORE 71%**





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Review of the B-300 by Hi-Fi Choice



£1,800 per pair ☎ 02392 501888 🌐 www.canton.de

## CANTON VENTO 809 DC

Top German brand's curvaceous new floorstander reaches the UK

German hi-fi speaker companies have made occasional forays into the British marketplace, not with any great success it must be said. Few, however, have the muscle to match Canton, which is number one in Germany, and reckoned to hold fifth place in the world rankings. *Hi-Fi Choice* actually reviewed a Canton way back in the late 1980s, but the brand has now returned after an extended absence.

We reviewed Canton's Karat L800 with rather mixed results in *HFC 247*, and this new Vento 809 occupies a very similar market slot to that large floorstander. While it is also a large floorstander selling for a very similar price, it belongs to the all new Vento rather than the Karat range, and is quite different in styling and driver disposition.

This £1,800 per pair 809 is the top model in the Vento range, and is comfortably the largest in this test group, standing 112cm tall and weighing nearly 29kg. It's a full three-way, four-driver design, combining a pair of 200mm

port-loaded bass units, each with 130mm diameter metal 'dish' diaphragms. The 180mm midrange driver, placed above the tweeter at the top of the enclosure, has a 115mm aluminium dish, and the tweeter uses a 25mm aluminium-manganese alloy dome under a moulded phase compensator.

The *pièce de résistance* here is the attractive (and functional) enclosure. This has curved sides that taper towards the back, adding considerable extra stiffness and helping avoid focusing internal standing waves and reflections. Our sample came in an attractive dark cherry wood veneer, though silver lacquer is also available. The speaker is mounted on an unusually thick plinth with integral shock-absorbing characteristics, providing acoustic isolation from the floor. The supplied spikes are more like studs, presumably to avoid damaging wooden floors, but compromising the ability to pierce carpets, and there's no lock-nut provision either. Twin terminal pairs are fitted, nice and close to the floor.

### SOUND QUALITY

Although probably best kept well clear of walls, to avoid thickening up the mid-bass, some close-to-wall reinforcement may well be worth exploring here. Whatever, the Vento 809 brings a richness and warmth to proceedings that's particularly inviting, and more than makes up for a mild lack of weight and scale. Absolute extension apart, 'generous' perhaps best sums up this speaker, not just in physical dimensions, but also for the sound generated.

The tall enclosure places the midrange drive units above head height, which helps to enhance the impression of space and scale, as well as minimising reflection colorations. The overall tonal balance is exceptionally neutral, with just a hint of forwardness and thinness in the way the presence band is reproduced. This has the advantage that fine detail and especially speech remain fully intelligible, even when operating at whisper quiet levels. The down side is that no attempt is made to soften any unpleasantness in aggressive sounding recordings, and playing the system loud does emphasise any aggressive characteristics.

For such a large loudspeaker, the Vento 809 somehow still manages to sound light on its feet, with a quick and lively delivery, good agility and fine overall coherence. Dynamics are expressive, dynamic range wide and any boxiness is kept well under control. All of which adds up to a thoroughly impressive all round performer. **HFC**



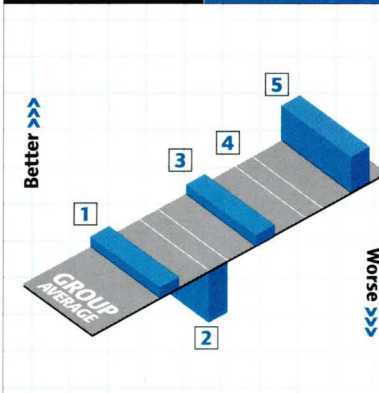
### LAB REPORT

Given that this is the largest speaker in this test group, with the biggest bass driver area to boot, it came as something of a surprise to discover it has comparatively modest bass extension. The -6dB in-room far-field datum comes out at a relatively modest 28Hz here, in part because the port is tuned to a highish 48Hz.

That said, sensitivity registers a quite generous 90dB here, a little higher than Canton's 88.5dB claim. That is partly due to an impedance that dips down to 3.3 ohms twice in the bass region, and stays resolutely low throughout.

The overall balance is exceptionally flat and neutral – indeed one of the very flattest we have ever encountered above 150Hz – and with a trace that's smoother than most as well. Such a result is undoubtedly an impressive engineering achievement, though no guarantee of superior sound quality in itself.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> +10%
- 2] Bass extension >> -45%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +10%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> 0%
- 5] Response smoothness >> +30%

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	88.5dB	88dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/4 ohms	4/3.3 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	20Hz	37Hz

### VERDICT

**SOUND >> 88%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

**PRACTICALITY >> 82%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

**BUILD >> 86%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

**VALUE >> 85%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

It's difficult to make a large speaker sound lively, yet Canton has achieved this without sacrificing the coherence or dynamic range. A good, warm sound too, although slightly lacking in weight and scale.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
OVERALL SCORE **86%**



£1,750 per pair ☎ 020 7378 1810 🌐 www.dynaudio.com

# DYNAUDIO AUDIENCE 72SE

*This SE version of the Audience 72 adds some luxury touches*

Leading Danish speaker brand Dynaudio has been around for a couple of decades, though it has only had a serious presence in the UK for the last decade or so. The company's reputation was initially built on its unique approach to drive unit design and construction, and the ruggedness and high power handling was particularly welcomed by professional users. Today, Dynaudio is better known for its premium complete speakers.

The Audience models are the least costly, and are normally clothed in vinyl woodprint, though this latest 72SE incarnation has a choice of four real wood veneers and represents a significant move upmarket compared to its predecessors. Whereas the Audience 70 and 72 (reviewed in 2000 and 2001 respectively) both cost £1,100 per pair, and availability of the standard 72 continues, this 72SE, with its real wood finish and other specific SE improvements (including drivers 'borrowed' from the Contour range) comes in at an altogether more substantial £1,750.



A substantial floorstander, weighing nearly 18kg and standing 96cm tall, the styling is attractively plain and discreet, being veneered on five faces and with a 25mm thick front panel painted in metallic slate grey. A similarly chunky plinth is fitted via spacers to the base of the enclosure, to accommodate the substantial 8mm spikes. This does not extend the footprint in any way – indeed, rather the reverse – though stability seems fine nonetheless. One of the sockets was loose on our samples, and one should take care not to over-tighten the spikes, but fortunately the plinth is easily replaced. The front edges are chamfered underneath a three-quarter height black grille, which may be attached to the back rather than the front panel by those who prefer their drivers nude.

Two 170mm main driver units are used in a 'two-and-a-half-way' configuration, where the lower one is rolled off by the crossover network at a lower frequency than the upper one. Each has a 112mm plastic cone/dome diaphragm, a cast alloy frame and a 75mm diameter voice coil... very much a Dynaudio trademark. The tweeter is a classy version of the company's familiar 28mm soft fabric dome, and the speaker has just one terminal pair, as Dynaudio doesn't believe in bi-wiring.

## SOUND QUALITY

Given previous experience of Dynaudio speakers, it came as no surprise to find that this 72SE has a sound quality that is beautifully neutral and even-handed. This is a very smooth and polished performer that draws very little attention to itself, with no overt problems and fine stereo imaging.

The midband is notably free from boxiness, but perhaps restrained. One becomes conscious of some thickening of textures in the lower midband, adding a touch of chestiness to male speech. At the same time the presence region and lower treble is just a little too obvious, which makes for very explicit detail and clarity when playing the system at relatively low levels, but which can also become a little wearing when the volume knob is wound up very high.

The bass end of things is particularly impressive, however. With the speakers sited well clear of walls, it's deep, smooth and even, bringing a fine sense of scale to the soundstage. But there's also some lack of transparency, dynamic tension and expression, so the end result can sound rather matter of fact, lacking vigour and excitement. **HFC**

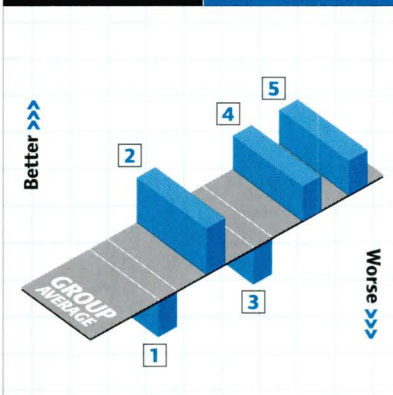


## LAB REPORT

Dynaudio has opted to trade some midband sensitivity for superior power handling and bass extension. Our sensitivity rating of 86dB is below average, but bang on that claimed in the specification. However, the ultimate bass extension registers a very impressive -3dB at 20Hz when measured under in-room far-field conditions, thanks in part to a port that's tuned to a low 33Hz. The load is quite demanding, staying below six-ohms across nearly the whole band, and dipping to a four-ohm minimum.

With the speakers sited well clear of walls, the Audience 72SE delivers a beautifully neutral overall tonal balance, staying within +/-4dB right across the audio band under in-room conditions, which is a remarkable result. It's also smoother than average, with little in the way of trends to disturb the overall neutrality – just a hint of forwardness around 900Hz, and slight restraint in the 1.4-1.8kHz region.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> -30%
- 2] Bass extension >> +40%
- 3] Ease of drive >> -30%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> +30%
- 5] Response smoothness >> +30%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	86dB	86dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	4/- ohms	4/3.5 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	28Hz	20Hz

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 84%**

**PRACTICALITY >> 74%**

**BUILD >> 84%**

**VALUE >> 81%**

The typical Dynaudio neutrality is in full effect, this time with smoothness to match the real wood veneer finish. But the speaker needs to be more dynamic, and the mid-range could be a bit less obvious.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
OVERALL SCORE **83%**



£1,500 per pair ☎ 01833 631021 🌐 www.neat.co.uk

# NEAT ELITE SE

The Ultimatum main driver upgrades Neat's Elite to SE class

**A** small British hi-fi speaker specialist that has been around for a good number of years now, Neat Acoustics' consistent and individualistic approach towards loudspeaker design has created something of a cult following. At the time of our original review back in 1999, the Elite was the top model in a limited range that's always been refreshingly free from hype. Neat keeps its models unchanged for long periods, but in 2001 it introduced a range of upmarket Ultimatum models. The work done in developing these has now started 'trickling down' into the less costly models.

The key change with this SE version of the Elite is that it uses the same bass/midrange driver as that found in the Ultimatum models. This has required some adjustment of the complex reflex loading arrangements, but in other respects – notably a most unusual planar tweeter – the mixture is much as before.

The price has gone up to £1,495 per pair, £300 more than the original back in 1999.

This seems a reasonable enough increase for a six year interregnum, especially considering the more costly main driver. In broad outline terms, the Elite SE takes the compact floorstanding enclosure of the Neat Mystique and beefs it up in terms of extra internal bracing, and incorporates a solid slate plinth for superior solidity and stability.

It's a relatively simple two-way design, a touch wider than it is deep. The enclosure itself is used to excite two quite separate ports, differentially tuned to widen the operating band. The larger one fires down towards the plinth, with spacers to let the air in and out, while a much smaller port is sited near the top of the rear panel. Bi-wire terminals are fitted on a substantial inset block fairly high up the back panel.

Although the enclosure itself is exceptionally elegant, with lovely real wood veneer and nicely softened edges, one thing you don't get with Neat speakers is any form of grille. The cast frame main driver has a 120mm doped paper cone, while the tweeter is an 'area drive' device not unlike a ribbon, the 25mm circular diaphragm consisting of a thin plastic film on which is printed a spiral voice coil.

## SOUND QUALITY

The Elite SE is best kept clear of walls for the flattest overall in-room balance and the smoothest and least coloured midband. However, because the speaker has an even and relatively dry bass end, it can tolerate a degree of wall proximity and reinforcement without creating serious problems.

Above all, this speaker has a delightfully smooth and delicate sound quality, with impressive neutrality and superior top-to-bottom coherence. Far more than most, this speaker seems to 'disappear', aurally speaking, leaving just the music playing for your entertainment. The treble end of things is particularly sweet and discreet, never drawing attention to itself, yet still conveying plenty of musical detail and information.

It may not have the dynamic grip and tension associated with significantly larger and more costly loudspeakers, but the Elite SE remains a very natural performer. It's notably expressive through the midband, delivering fine voice articulation that makes speech in particular very clear and persuasive. This is a speaker that's as beautifully easy on the ears as it is on the eyes, and in its new SE form comfortably continues to merit the praise deservedly given to its predecessor. **HFC**

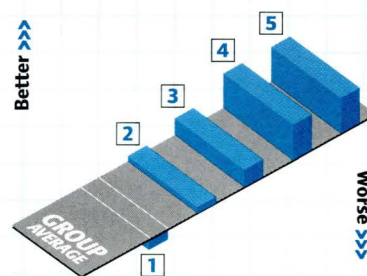


## LAB REPORT

Sensitivity came out a shade below average at 87dB on our measurements, which is respectable enough, if somewhat below the 89dB claimed. However, under in-room far-field conditions, the bass extension registers a generous -6dB at 25Hz. This is assisted by the main port tuning frequency occurring at a low 40Hz, while the amplifier load looks very benign, staying above six ohms at all frequencies below 8kHz.

The overall frequency balance is exceptionally good, holding within very impressive +/-4dB limits right across the band even under in-room conditions, apart from a minor dip at 9kHz. The bass is much smoother than average too, with an alignment that looks very well-judged for free space siting. However, because the net bass output is just a shade dry, it should also be possible to use a pair of these speakers reasonably close to a wall without too much excess.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> -10%
- 2] Bass extension >> +5%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +15%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> +30%
- 5] Response smoothness >> +30%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	89dB	87dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/- ohms	8/4 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	-	25Hz

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 88%**

**PRACTICALITY >> 83%**

**BUILD >> 90%**

**VALUE >> 90%**

The Elite SE might lack the dynamic grip of larger loudspeakers, but this smooth and natural performer has a notably expressive midband, delivering fine voices and unusual sweetness.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
OVERALL SCORE **89%**





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**Ken Kessler, HiFi News, February 2004**



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**HiFi News - August 2003**

**T+A**

**T+A TCI 1RE high end speakers**

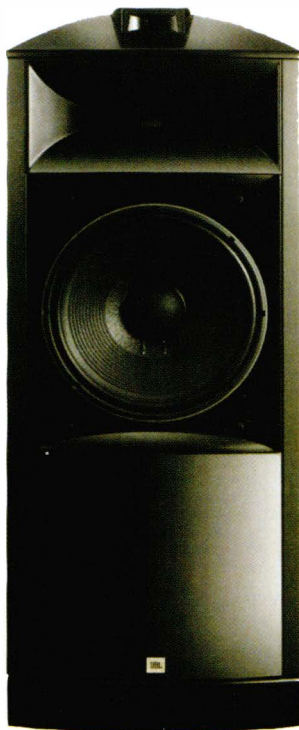
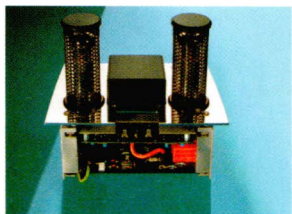
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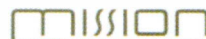
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Inside view of valve amplifier



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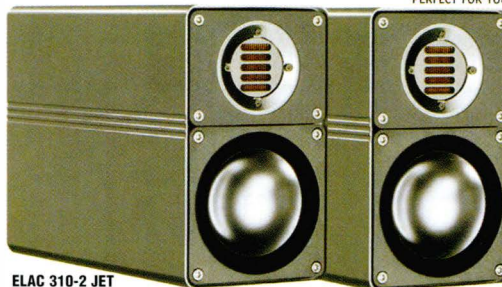
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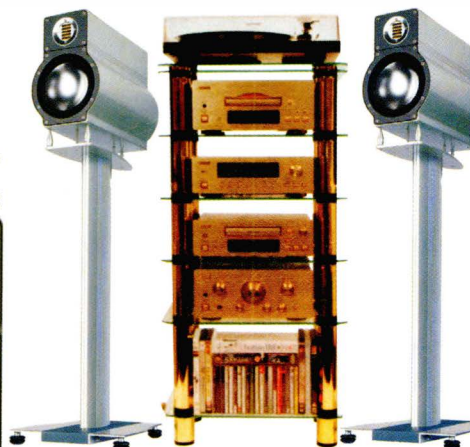


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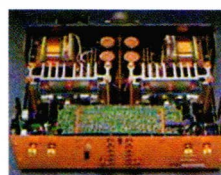
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## RUARK TALISMAN III

Does the latest Talisman still bring good fortune for Ruark?

**R**uark is an Essex-based loudspeaker specialist that has long been known for its excellent cabinetwork and finish. This particular product is something of a blast from the past – the original Talisman, reviewed and recommended in *Hi-Fi Choice* nearly fifteen years ago, was not only one of Ruark's most successful models. It was also significant as one of the earliest examples of the compact floorstanders that have since become such an important feature of the market.

The Talisman, now in MkIII form and costing £1,500 per pair, returned during 2004, and was reviewed *solus* in *HFC* 259. It retains all the character and unusual styling of the original, though the implementation is rather more sophisticated, inside and out.

A simple port-loaded two-way design, the enclosure construction is intriguingly different in several respects. Think shoebox – this enclosure is made up from two distinct tray-like sections. The deeper but smaller back section, 18mm thick, is finished in textured black and fits inside a shallower, larger and thicker (25mm) real wood front section. This not only



stiffens the whole structure, it also creates a quite effective optical illusion that the speaker is only as deep as the front section, some 10cm, as the 15-20cm deep rear section tends to disappear.

The back panel stays vertical, while the rear section depth variation creates a modest backward tilt in the front section. The two useful consequences are that the enclosure height is a modest 83cm while still ensuring the tweeter output is aimed directly towards the listeners, and the inherent mechanical stability is improved. The front section has nicely radiused edges, and the drivers are held in by gold coloured machinehead screws. The net result is both traditionally classy and delightfully discreet.

The 180mm cast frame main driver uses a 120mm doped paper cone, while the tweeter has a 27mm fabric dome. OFC cables are hardwired to the high-quality crossover components and twin bi-wire/amp terminals. Chunky 8mm spikes and reinforced sockets ensure superior physical stability.

### SOUND QUALITY

The Talisman III made a strong first impression, packing a goodly punch at the bottom end, and projecting the voice band with enthusiasm and vigour. The enclosure is clearly very solid here, and is thoroughly effective at minimising and controlling any box colorations.

Over the longer haul, however, the top end seemed to become more intrusive and consequently less welcome. This adds a degree of edginess that can sound uncomfortable with bright material and poor quality recordings, though it can also usefully highlight fine detail under other circumstances. The mild mid and treble forwardness ensures speech is fully intelligible even at very low levels – which is a plus – though the musical balance remains thin. Instruments have a slightly cold character, lacking a little richness and warmth.

With the right material, this is very much a fun loudspeaker. It has fine pace, good timing, a wide dynamic range and plenty of bottom end urge and drive. In our room, it was definitely best kept well clear of walls, to avoid generating too much mid-bass thump. This also helps to keep midrange reflection colorations low and create the most convincing and spacious imaging. While it can get too exuberant with the wrong kind of mix, it brings some extra life to proceedings when the sources are a little dull. **HFC**

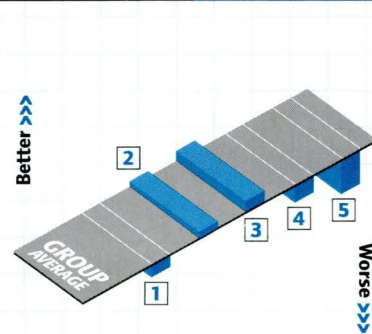


### LAB REPORT

Ruark specifies a sensitivity of 88dB, though under our measurement regime, 87dB looks closer to the mark. This is creditable enough given the compact dimensions, decent bass extension (-6dB at 25Hz), and relatively benign impedance. The latter stays comfortably above six ohms through the most of the band, dipping somewhat at high frequencies to a 4.5-ohm minimum at 5kHz.

Whether that impedance dip is actually desirable is debatable, as it corresponds to a 2-3dB peak in the overall frequency balance, which might be better avoided. Elsewhere, the balance shows a slight but smooth forwardness through the upper midband (900Hz-2kHz), and a corresponding leanness throughout the upper bass and lower midband. The port tuning (centred on 40Hz) helps to generate plenty of output around 40-50Hz, even with the speakers in free space. This means close-to-wall siting is better avoided.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> -10%
- 2] Bass extension >> +5%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +10%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> -15%
- 5] Response smoothness >> -30%

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	88dB	87dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/- ohms	8/4 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	42Hz	25Hz

### VERDICT

**SOUND >> 82%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

**PRACTICALITY >> 82%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

**BUILD >> 89%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

**VALUE >> 81%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

The Talisman III's fine pace, good timing, wide dynamic range and good bass drive makes it a fun loudspeaker with the right material, but it can also sound a little too fierce and exuberant with the wrong kind of mix.

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



# CONCLUSIONS

*Sound quality aside, there are some spiky issues for this sextet of floorstanders*

**T**his test raised several issues. First, there's the question of floor coupling. Spikes are the best means for proper rigidity, but they're naturally unacceptable with decorative wooden flooring. Four of our six come with proper carpet-piercing spikes, but the BC Acoustique and Canton have much blunter cones that could be a compromise on thick carpeting. The dilemma is perhaps best solved by Audiovector's reversible spikes, pointed one end, spherical the other – a solution that rivals (throughout the loudspeaker industry) could usefully copy.

The data comparison chart quotes the driver sizes claimed by the manufacturers (where available). However, these often bear little relationship to the actual diameter of the moving diaphragms themselves, which we measure and quote in the actual reviews. Greater consistency and transparency would be welcome.

The third point concerns the terminals. One potential advantage of floorstanders over standmounts is that the terminals may be fitted close to the floor, so avoiding the standmount's (almost) unavoidable trailing wires. But only the

Dynaudio and Canton take advantage of this – the other four all place their terminals well off the floor, which is a shame.

This is a fine crop of speakers, as indeed it should be at these sort of prices. Given the success of the Signature version, it's no surprise that Audiovector has chalked up another Best Buy with the Mi 3 Super. All it lacks is a little smoothness, when compared to its more costly stablemate.

Canton's big Vento 809 represents a substantial improvement over the similarly priced Karat L800, reviewed in

HFC 247. The Vento 809 delivers a generous sound with fine neutrality and dynamic conviction. Our third Best Buy is Neat's Elite SE – less muscular than the Mi 3, but sweet, delicate and discreet.

Dynaudio's Audience 72SE also came close to a Best Buy, and is notable for its very superior bass delivery. The Ruark Talisman III is a very involving speaker, albeit with a rather forward balance that can become aggressive, while the BC Acoustique ACT A2 (unlike the smaller A1) goes too far the other way and is just too laid back for its own good. **HFC**

## TRY THEM WITH THESE

### AMPLIFIERS

**DENSEN BEAT 200/300** £1,980

Discrete pre/power combo delivers plenty of punch and fine coherence.

**AUDIO RESEARCH VS155** £2,895

A practical integrated valve amp that delivers a fine all-round performance.

### CD PLAYERS

**ORELLE CD100EVO2** £1,299

Sweet, with an unusual combination of fine transparency and superior timing.

**NAIM CD5X** £1,450

One-box player with fine grip and a very engaging, musically involving sound.

## HINTS AND TIPS

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

» Finding the right place to put the loudspeakers acoustically is very important. Do take time and trouble experimenting with positioning.

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

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

## LOUDSPEAKERS AT A GLANCE



MAKE MODEL	Audiovector MI 3 Super	BC Acoustique ACT A2	Canton Vento 809 DC	Dynaudio Audience 72SE	Neat Elite SE	Ruark Talisman III
PRICE	£1,596	£1,895	£1,800	£1,750	£1,500	£1,500
SOUND						
PRACTICALITY						
BUILD						
VALUE						
OVERALL						
CONCLUSION	This superb upgradeable all-rounder delivers delicate detailing alongside a beautifully rich and neutral balance.	Tonal balance is too laid back, lacking presence energy, and the load is difficult for amplifiers.	Generous and attractive floorstander has fine neutrality and dynamic expression, though could have more grunt.	Pretty floorstander delivers very deep and even bass and fine neutrality, though top might be sweeter.	Beautifully discreet floorstander combines superior coherence with fine neutrality and an innate sweetness.	Attractively compact floorstander projects detail very well but can sound a shade unruly when working hard.
KEY FEATURES						
SIZE (WxHxD)	20x100x28cm	22x100x36cm	25x112x35cm	20.5x96x26cm	20x90x18cm	22x84x31cm
DRIVER CONFIG	2.5-way	3-way	3-way	2.5-way	2-way	2-way
MAIN DRIVER SIZE(S)	2x170mm	2x180mm	1x180mm, 2x200mm	2x170mm	1x165mm	1x180mm
STAND/FLOOR?	Floor	Floor	Floor	Floor	Floor	Floor
CABINET FINISH	Real wood	Real wood	Real wood	Real wood	Real wood	Real wood
BI-WIRE?	Yes (tri)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
LAB CONCLUSIONS E = EXCELLENT • G = GOOD • A = AVERAGE • P = POOR						
SENSITIVITY	89dB <b>G</b>	88dB <b>A</b>	90dB <b>G</b>	86dB <b>P</b>	87dB <b>A</b>	87dB <b>A</b>
EST. BASS EXTENSION	22Hz <b>G</b>	27Hz <b>A</b>	37Hz <b>P</b>	20Hz <b>G</b>	25Hz <b>G</b>	25Hz <b>G</b>
IMPEDANCE (NOM/ MIN)	6/4 ohms <b>A</b>	4/1.6 ohms <b>P</b>	4/3.3 ohms <b>P</b>	4/3.5 ohms <b>P</b>	8/4 ohms <b>G</b>	8/4 ohms <b>G</b>
OVERALL FREQ. BALANCE	+15% <b>A</b>	-60% <b>P</b>	0% <b>A</b>	+30% <b>G</b>	+30% <b>G</b>	-15% <b>A</b>
RESPONSE SMOOTHNESS	0% <b>A</b>	-60% <b>P</b>	+30% <b>G</b>	+30% <b>G</b>	+30% <b>G</b>	-30% <b>P</b>



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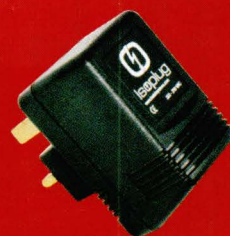
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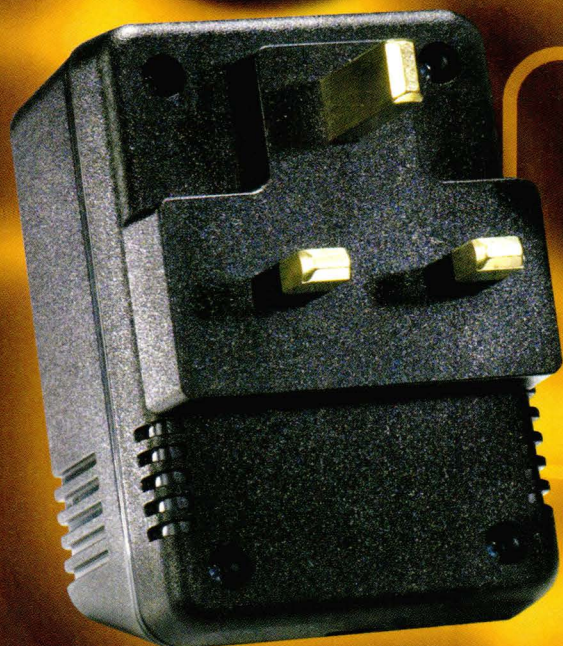


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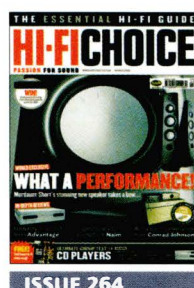
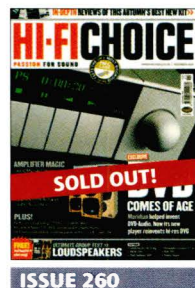
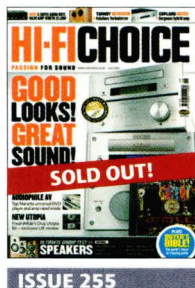
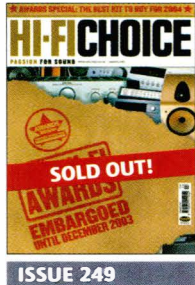
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# HI-FI CHOICE BUYER'S BIBLE



Welcome to the *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible* – the ultimate guide to the very best high performance hi-fi and multichannel gear you can buy. Here, you'll find our favourite current products listed under easy to use categories, plus 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 stringent 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 CD PLAYERS

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

### Audio-only CD and SACD players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	CD-RW COMPATIBLE	CD TEXT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>												
<b>BB</b>	Arcam DIVA CD73T	400	Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic – a finely judged balance for budget to mid-price systems		●	●	●	●				247
<b>BB</b>	Arcam DIVA CD192	850	Beautifully built, well featured player with clear, open and involving sound		●	●	●	●				264
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Cyrus CD8x	1,000	Impressive mix of detail, musicality, analysis and appearance. Even better with the PSX-R power supply (£400)		●	●	●					264
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Marantz CD7300	350	Astonishingly capable sub-£500 player with effortless bass, detailed mid and treble and vast soundstages		●	●	●	●		●		250
<b>BB</b>	Musical Fidelity X-Ray <sup>v3</sup>	900	Think of this as an A3.2 CD player in a smaller, cheaper box. Great, earthy CD sound for the money		●	●	●					255
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Roksan Kandy MkIIID	650	Clean, tidy and expressive player – a more than worthwhile improvement on previous versions		●	●	●		●			259
<b>BB</b>	Sony SCD-XA3000ES	800	A revised and refined version of the SCD-XA333ES that provides an almost holographic sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		248
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>												
<b>BB</b>	Audio Analogue Maestro	1,650	The new Maestro 192/24 delivers a sound that's slightly rosy yet always musical and thoroughly enjoyable		●		●		●			257
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	Lindemann 820	6,999	Stereo SACD player with sumptuous build and sound, onboard analogue volume control and multiple digital inputs	●	●				●	●		262
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	Meridian 808i Signature	8,250	Stunning CD player with added preamp functions. Versatile and quite delightful		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	263
<b>BB</b>	Naim CD5x	1,450	A genuinely engaging CD player with remarkable musical grip and coherence									264
<b>EC</b>	Naim CDX2	2,700	Fine quality one-box CD player, but its best feature is upgradeability via outboard XPS supply				●					238
	Orelle CD100ev2	1,299	Relaxed, but strong on refinement and detail. An intelligent choice, particularly strong with acoustic music		●	●	●					259
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	Wadia 302	3,999	A dynamic and gripping player, with bass to die for and resolution to change your listening habits		●	●	●	●	●	●		253
<b>EC</b>	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.



**BEST BUY**  
**HI-FI CHOICE**  
magazine

**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.



**EDITOR'S CHOICE**  
**HI-FI CHOICE**  
magazine

**Resolution Audio Opus 21 £2,850**  
This player is king of subtlety. Outwardly, the music sounds dynamic and well-scaled, but it's the level of inner detail resolved here that is truly outstanding.



# DVD PLAYERS

*Disc players for audio and video*

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

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



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

## Q&A

### WHICH AUDIO OUTPUTS GIVE THE BEST QUALITY?

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

### WHICH VIDEO OUTPUTS GIVE THE BEST QUALITY?

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

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

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

### DO I NEED PROGRESSIVE SCAN VIDEO?

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

## DVD-AUDIO

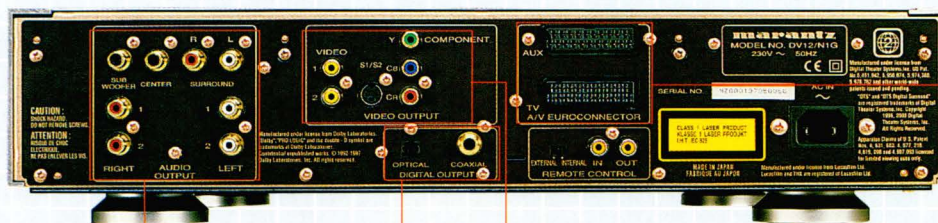
DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player.

While offering similar benefits to SACD, it has the advantage of on-screen display for information – lyrics, images and so on. To save

you having to decide which format to go for, a few brands are bringing out universal players to cover SACD and DVD-A, alongside CD and DVD-Video – a neat and relatively future proof route into high-resolution multichannel music. Higher-end models featuring high-bandwidth compatible digital audio links are now also appearing, enhancing DVD-A/SACD sound when used with similarly equipped amps.



## CONNECTIONS



**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

BBB BEST BUY EC 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
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
BB	Arcam DVA 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
BB	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
BB	Denon DVD-3910	900	Exceptionally well-specified universal player with a performance to match. A true class-leader	●	●	●	●		260
BB	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
BB	Pioneer DV-668AV	600	HDMI-equipped universal player without i.Link audio output, but still absurdly well equipped and highly capable for the price	●	●	●	●		252
BB	Pioneer DV-868AVi	1,000	State of the art universal player with next-gen digital outputs – HDMI for video and i.Link for high-resolution audio	●	●	●	●		252
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>									
EC	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
BB	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
EC	Denon DVD-A1XV	2,500	Sophisticated universal player with state of the art video processing, high class disc replay, especially SACD	●	●	●	●	●	266
EC	Linn Unidisk SC	2,995	Groundbreaking universal player with built-in preamplifier, with excellent picture for home cinema and sound for hi-fi	●	●	●	●		259
EC	Meridian G98	3,625	Meridian's most widely compatible G-Series DVD player – groundbreaking DVD-Audio replay and a fine CD player too	●		●	●		265
EC	Meridian 800	10,805	The ultimate in DVD replay, modular construction, buffered ROM drive, upsampling and high-res digital outputs	●		●		●	230
EC	Naim DVD5	2,565	Naim's first DVD player is a real success, notable for its class-leading sound with CD and (optional) multichannel DVD-Audio	●					263
EC	Primare DVD30	2,000	A universal player for audiophiles – no wideband digital outputs but masterful with music and a good picture too	●	●	●	●		253
EC	Townshend TA 565 Evo 2	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 2 £2,995**  
This player builds on Pioneer essentials to deliver breathtaking sound across all formats.

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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	ISSUE NUMBER
<span>BB</span>	Audio Note TT1/ARM1	728	Simple and unpretentious, it delivers a real taste of true high-end performance at an affordable price	33/45	●	●	203
<span>BB</span>	Avid Diva	1,100	A solid and powerful sounding deck with fine build, requires a smooth, relaxed cartridge for best results	33/45	●		247
<span>EC</span>	Avid Volvere Sequel	3,500	Heavyweight turntable that will deliver more of what's in a vinyl groove than most of the competition	33/45	●	●	229
<span>EC</span>	Avid Acutus	6,000	Extremely capable design with no apparent shortcomings. Don't sell your vinyl 'til you've heard it on this!	33/45	●	●	194
<span>EC</span>	Clearaudio Master Reference	12,610	Revealing and exciting turntable that revels in the fine details (reviewed with Master TQ-I arm/Accurate cartridge)	33/45		●	256
<span>BB</span>	Goldring GR2	265	Nicely finished Rega-manufactured deck with RB250 arm and an open, engaging sound quality	33/45		●	266
<span>BB</span>	Michell Gyro SE	1,058	New DC motor-equipped Gyro offers great looks and even better sound. Price includes RB300 arm	33/45	●	●	239
<span>EC</span>	Michell Orbe SE	2,015	A superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price. Now features new DC motor	33/45	●		235
<span>BB</span>	Nottingham Analogue Horizon	529	A fluid midrange and nimble but rich bass are two of the many attributes of this bargain deck (price inc RB250 arm)	33/45		●	253
<span>BB</span>	Pro-Ject Debut III	120	Superb budget deck offering fine build and performance	33/45		●	261
<span>BB</span>	Pro-Ject 1 Xpression	210	Well designed and executed budget deck with an entertaining and revealing sound	33/45		●	248
<span>BB</span>	Rega P2	198	Updated Planar 2: just as much fun as ever and now even better value as the competition falls away	33/45		●	214
	Rega P3/RB300	298	Updated Planar 3, building on the strengths of the P2 with added subtlety and detail	33/45		●	214
<span>BB</span>	Rega P5/RB700	698	Combines a great sense of timing with market-leading resolution and a phenomenal tonearm – a hard act to beat	33/45		●	opt 257
<span>BB</span>	Rega P7/RB700	1,298	A highly capable player that could hold its own in the most exalted company – a vivid and natural performer	33/45		●	opt 257
<span>EC</span>	Rega P9/RB1000	2,498	Exceptionally elegant hi-tech player with complex outboard supply, ceramic platter and wonderful RB1000 tonearm	33/45		●	228
<span>BB</span>	Roksan Radius 5/Nima	850	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation (acrylic version tested)	33/45	●	●	248
<span>EC</span>	Roksan TMS2/Artemiz	7,500	Typical Roksan sound, but better: pitch-accurate, lean, detailed and controlled, without the 'bloat' of lesser designs	33/45	●	●	246
<span>EC</span>	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V/309 hybrid arm	33/45	●	●	195
<span>EC</span>	SME Model 20.2A	5,274	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	33/45/78	●	●	186
<span>EC</span>	T-A G10R/PH-G10MC	2,550	Style meets substance in a highly credible complete package, with integral phono step-up	33/45		●	261
<span>EC</span>	Townshend Rock Anniversary	8,000	If you want to get to the meat and bones of the music this is a great tool for the job (price inc. Excalibur arm)	33/45	●	●	259

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

# PHONO CARTRIDGES

### MM and MC cartridges

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS		
				MM	MC	ISSUE NUMBER
<span>BB</span>	Cartridge Man MM III	625	The MM III challenges MCs at twice the price, it produces detail, space and energy and has stunning resolve in the right arm	●		266
	Grado Prestige Black	40	Offers admirable detail and treble extension, with good bass and ambience too	●		214
<span>BB</span>	Grado Prestige Gold	110	Produces rich, open and expansive music with the minimum of fuss	●		235
<span>EC</span>	Lyra Helikon	1,095	Highly capable and highly neutral, this is a cartridge for all seasons, albeit fussy about vinyl quality	●		215
<span>BB</span>	Sumiko Blue Point Special	250	A no-nonsense performer with engaging musical properties – one of the best around for less than £300		●	192
<span>BB</span>	Van den Hul MC One Special	699	A gorgeous cartridge that's worth the price every time you hear a familiar track in a whole new light		●	235
<span>EC</span>	van den Hul Colibri XGP	2,699	Phenomenal resolution, custom building to suit hard and software, but needs 500 ohm loading and is vulnerable to damage		●	244
<span>EC</span>	van den Hul Condor XCM	2,400	A stunning cartridge with stereo imaging, dynamics and detail resolution to die for		●	265
<span>EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Naked Analog	1,450	With its smooth clean highs, transparent midband and nimble bass, this is a lot of performance for the money		●	253

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

# PHONO STAGES

### Phono stages

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	ADJ. GAIN	ISSUE NUMBER
	Musical Fidelity X-LPS <sup>3</sup>	249	Simple, well turned out valve-driven phono stage lacks adjustability, but sounds sweet, open and well-behaved	●	●		248
<span>BB</span>	NAD PP2 phono stage	50	A fine buy for turntable users on a tight budget – open tonality and clarity is distinctly impressive for the money	●	●		245
<span>BB</span>	Tom Evans Microgroove	400	For dynamics and real bass extension with good tonal colour this is the one to beat. The Plus version (£700) is even better!		●		234
<span>EC</span>	Tom Evans The Groove	1,800	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for maximum information retrieval off any LP		●		201
<span>BB</span>	Trichord Dino/Dino+	498	Relaxed yet resolute with very good image depth and natural balance, not to mention great flexibility	●	●	●	234

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

**SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE** Some decks are supplied with a starter cartridge and this is included in the price shown.

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

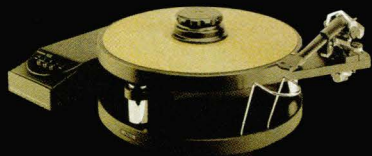
**REPLACEABLE STYLUS** Some cartridges have separate styli for ease of replacement, but it compromises sound quality.



# SME

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Model 10



Model 20/2



Model 30/2



Series M2



Series 300



Series IV



Series V



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

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

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

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

### RECEPTION

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

### TOP BUYS



#### Denon TU260L II £130

The benchmark for all other budget AM/FM tuners, with great sound and features.



#### Cambridge DAB500 £150

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



#### Creek T50 £499

A thoroughly accomplished AM/FM tuner with a substantial and detailed sound.



#### Magnum Dynalab MD 90T £1,195

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

## Our favourite TUNERS

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

### FM & DAB HI-FI SEPARATES

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>FM TUNERS</b>										
BB	Creek T50	499	Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics	FM,M,L	128	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	251
BB	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
EC	Magnum Dynalab MD 90T	1,195	No remote or presets as standard, manual everything and valves... but its sound is simply sublime	FM	opt		opt	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	257
EC	Magnum Dynalab MD 102	2,200	Superb remote control analogue FM tuner delivers a superbly transparent sound that makes radio fun	FM	5		● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	241
BB	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity	FM,M	30	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	250
BB	NAD S400	600	One of the best around – bass and treble are both well extended and detail is excellent	FM	30	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	230
BB	Primare T21	600	Identical to NAD S400 and likewise a very fine tuner	FM	30	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	230
BB	Rega Radio 3	398	Unpretentious unit which does what it claims, very well. Unusually fine FM sound in all areas	FM,M	20	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	242
	Rotel RT-02	279	A highly competent tuner which always sounds appealing and fuss-free	FM,M	30	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	242
<b>DAB TUNERS</b>										
	Arcam DIVA DT81	650	A very smart and polished DAB performer	DAB	16		● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	221
BB	Cambridge Audio DAB500	150	Very good sound, plus optional response tweaks, and slickest operation yet	DAB	10		● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	248
	Cambridge Azur 640T	200	Slightly ahead of the pack in DAB performance, though FM is never better than decent	DAB,FM	60	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	260
	Pure Digital DRX-701ES	250	An excellent introduction to DAB, fine value, simple to use and feature loaded	DAB	99		● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	234
	Pure Digital DRX-702ES	330	Very flexible DAB (inc L-band) and FM tuner. DAB is good, FM a touch disappointing	DAB,FM,M	99	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	242
	Sony ST-SDB900	200	Nicely designed UK-tuned model is a touch bright with both DAB and FM but generally insightful and clear	DAB,FM,M	60	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	● ● ● ● ●	259

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



# DIGITAL AUDIO RECORDERS

CD, MiniDisc and hard drive recorders



## MiniDisc

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

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

## Recordable CD

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

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

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

## Hard drive

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

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

TOP BUYS



BEST BUY  
HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

Philips CDR802 £300

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

---



BEST BUY  
HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

Marantz DR6000 £400

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

---



BEST BUY  
HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

Yamaha CDR-HD1300 £600

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

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BEST BUY  
HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

Imerge S2000 £1,599

Impressively flexible hard disk music server for multiroom applications.

## Our favourite DIGITAL RECORDERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

CD-R/RW, MD and HDD recorders

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				DECKS	HD CAPACITY (GB)	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS
CD-R/RW RECORDERS							
	Denon CDR-1000	400	A respectable player and recorder, though some midband congestion was noted when recording	1		● ●	218
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">BEST BUY</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">BEST BUY</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">BEST BUY</span>	Philips CDR951	380	An improvement on previous models, it delivers the musical goods in some style	1		● ●	205
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">BEST BUY</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">BEST BUY</span>	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

57 CROWN STREET 01224 252797

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



### 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.

**smarthome** show  
14-17 April 2005  
NEC, Birmingham

The new Smart Home Show brings together everything you need to create your own unique digital home.

The Sevenoaks Sound & Vision Fusion Lounge (Stand 3409) allows you to experience an incredible 'real world' concept room, containing some of the world's best home entertainment systems - a 'must-see' if you're looking to integrate music/home cinema systems into your home. Plus, when you visit the amazing Fusion Lounge, you could be in with a chance of winning £25000 worth of state-of-the-art equipment! Terms and Conditions apply

**HD ready** HDTV

(High-Definition Television) will

start to be broadcast in the UK within the next 18 months. With almost double the resolution of normal broadcasts, HDTV is set to redefine picture quality.

In order to enjoy the benefits of HDTV, you'll need a suitable television. Most televisions in the world today will not show HDTV, but there are some that are HDTV ready.

Want to know more? Sevenoaks was one of the first to demonstrate HDTV. Most Sevenoaks stores have a dedicated satellite link to Euro1080, Europe's first HDTV channel and can advise you which screens are future proofed.

Contact your nearest Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store today and get ready for tomorrow. THE 'HD READY' LOGO IS A TRADEMARK OF EICTA.

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.

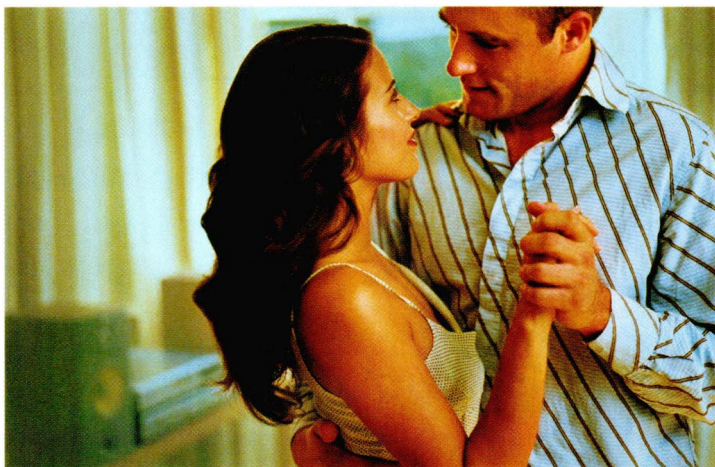
Whatever your requirements, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision has a diverse range of products and the expertise to advise, demonstrate and guide you through the home entertainment jungle.

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

### ABERDEEN (NEW)

BEDFORD  
BIRMINGHAM  
BRIGHTON  
BRISTOL  
BROMLEY  
CAMBRIDGE  
CARDIFF  
CHELSEA  
CHELTENHAM  
CRAWLEY  
CROYDON  
EALING  
EDINBURGH  
EPSOM  
EXETER  
GLASGOW  
GUILDFORD  
HOLBORN  
HULL  
IPSWICH  
KINGSTON  
LEICESTER  
LEEDS  
LINCOLN  
MAIDSTONE  
MANCHESTER  
NEWCASTLE  
NORWICH  
NOTTINGHAM  
OXFORD  
PETERBOROUGH  
PLYMOUTH  
POOLE  
PRESTON  
READING  
SEVENOAKS  
SHEFFIELD  
SOLIHULL  
SOUTHAMPTON  
SOUTHGATE  
STAINES  
SWINDON (NEW)  
SWISS COTTAGE  
TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
WATFORD  
WEYBRIDGE  
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.



**NEW ARCAM SOLO ALL-IN-ONE MUSIC SYSTEM**



**SOLO:** A 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.

**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

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
**AWARDS 2004**  
**PRODUCT OF THE YEAR**  
**CD PLAYER**  
**CYRUS CD6**

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
**AWARDS 2004**  
**BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER**  
**DM61100**  
**CYRUS 8VS**

## 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



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

## 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 05/05/2005, 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, New Silver RS, Bronze and Radius, a seriously compact system bringing true hi-fi performance to both music and movies at home.

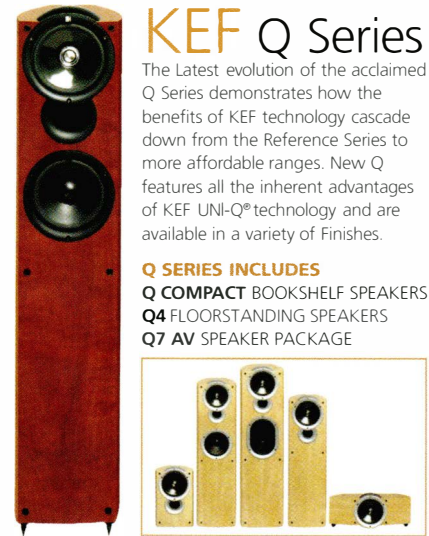
**NEW SILVER RS6**

**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."

**RADIUS**

**Best Buy 2003**

**MODELS INCLUDE**  
BRONZE B2, B2 AV, B4 AV  
SILVER RS1, RS6, RS8  
GOLD REFERENCE 10 & 60



**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 SPEAKERS  
Q4 FLOORSTANDING SPEAKERS  
Q7 AV SPEAKER PACKAGE

**Digital Radio**  
**Harman Kardon**

**TU970 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**

**Product of the Year 2003**

**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.

**AWARDS 2004**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
STEREO SPEAKERS  
WHARFEDALE DIAMOND 9.1

**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.

**RANGE SERIES INCLUDES**  
CD5400 CD PLAYER  
PM4400 AMPLIFIER  
PM7200 AMPLIFIER  
ST4000 TUNER  
SR4500 AV RECEIVER  
SR5500 AV RECEIVER  
DV4500 DVD PLAYER

**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."

**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**

**AWARDS 2004**  
BEST STEREO SPEAKERS OVER £2000  
Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII

**Denon**  
**D-M31 CD RECEIVER**

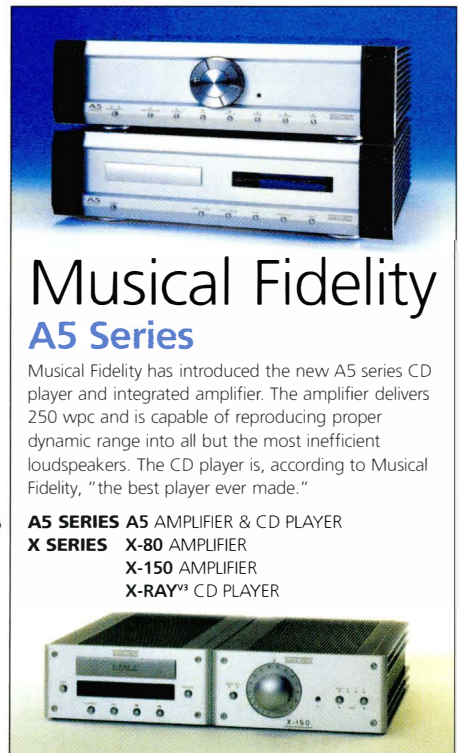
"Even better than the Award-winning DM30, making it phenomenal value for money."

**AWARDS 2004**  
BEST HI-FI MICRO SYSTEM OVER £150  
Denon D-M31

**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-RAY<sup>MS</sup> 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.



## 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



**WHAT IS IT?**  
**AWARDS 2004**  
BEST MULTICHANNEL RECEIVER £550-£750  
Denon AVR-2805

**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."



**WHAT IS IT?**  
**AWARDS 2004**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEM  
DENON DHT-500SD

## Pioneer

### MODELS INCLUDE

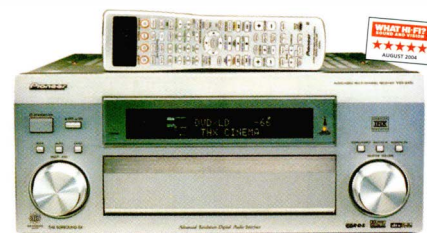
**A/V AMPLIFIER** VSA-AX10Ai

**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-V1500 & RX-V2500

#### DVD PLAYERS

DVD-S550 & DVD-S1500



**NEW YSP-1**  
Digital Sound Projector



## 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



**WHAT IS IT?**  
**AWARDS 2004**  
BEST MULTICHANNEL RECEIVER £750-£1000  
Arcam AVR250

**WHAT IS IT?**  
**AWARDS 2004**  
BEST DVD PLAYER £750-£1000  
Arcam DV79

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\*Added Value Offers - From range available in-store. Not in conjunction with any other offer. ADVERT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 05/05/2005, 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 • DVR-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



## 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.



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

Q400E

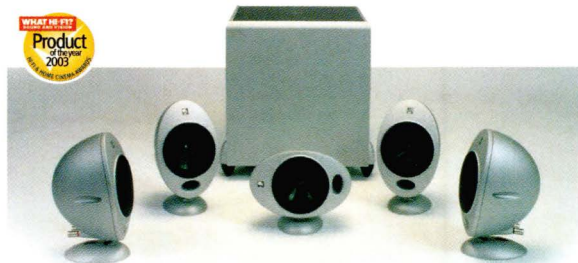
**Q SERIES**  
Quake • Q150E • Q201E • Q400E  
**ST SERIES**  
Stampede • Strata 5 • Storm 5

## 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



**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 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."



## 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

## 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





Some products/brands are not available at all stores. Please call to confirm or visit [www.sevenoakssoundandvision](http://www.sevenoakssoundandvision) before travelling.

## TURNTABLES

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

## TUNERS

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

## CD PLAYERS

<b>Arcam</b> DIVA CD73T	£399.95
<b>Arcam</b> DIVA CD192	£849.95
<b>Arcam</b> FMJ CD33T	£1349.95
<b>Cyrus</b> CD6	£599.95
<b>Cyrus</b> CD8 X	£999.95
<b>Cyrus</b> DAC X	£1099.95
<b>Denon</b> DCD485	£119.95
<b>Linn</b> RANGE	£ CALL
<b>Marantz</b> CD5400	£119.95
<b>Meridian</b> RANGE	£ CALL
<b>Musical Fidelity</b> X-Ray V2	£899.95
<b>Musical Fidelity</b> A5	£1499.95
<b>Quad</b> 99 CD-P	£999.95
<b>Roksan</b> Kandy KD1 MKIII	£649.95
<b>Roksan</b> Caspian M	£1099.95
<b>Rotel</b> RCD02	£379.95
<b>Rotel</b> RCD1072	£594.95

## CD RECORDERS

<b>Pioneer</b> PD R609 CD-RW	£199.95
<b>Yamaha</b> CDR-HD1300II	£479.95

## AMPLIFIERS

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

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

## SPEAKERS

<b>Acoustic Energy</b> Aegis Evo One	£129.95
<b>Acoustic Energy</b> Aegis Evo Three	£249.95
<b>Acoustic Energy</b> Aelite Two	£449.95
<b>Acoustic Energy</b> Aelite Three	£749.95
<b>Acoustic Energy</b> AE1 MKIII	FROM £1699.95
<b>AVI</b> Neutron IV	£499.95
<b>B&amp;W</b> DM601 S3	£249.95
<b>B&amp;W</b> DM602 S3	£299.95
<b>B&amp;W</b> 705	£899.95
<b>B&amp;W</b> 703	£1999.95
<b>KEF</b> Q RANGE	£ CALL
<b>KEF</b> XQ RANGE	£ CALL
<b>Linn</b> RANGE	£ CALL
<b>Meridian</b> RANGE	£ CALL
<b>Mission</b> m31j	£129.95
<b>Mission</b> m34j	£299.95
<b>Monitor Audio</b> Bronze B2	£199.95
<b>Monitor Audio</b> Silver RS1	£349.95
<b>Monitor Audio</b> Silver RS6	£599.95
<b>Monitor Audio</b> Silver RS8	£799.95
<b>Monitor Audio</b> Gold Reference 10	£799.95
<b>Monitor Audio</b> Gold Reference 60	£1999.95
<b>Quad</b> 11L	£379.95
<b>Quad</b> 12L	£499.95
<b>Quad</b> 22L	£894.95
<b>Ruark</b> RANGE	£ CALL
<b>Wharfedale</b> Diamond 9.1	£179.95

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<b>Arcam</b> Solo Ex Speakers	£999.95
<b>Denon</b> 201 Ex Speakers	£479.95
<b>Denon</b> DF101 Ex Speakers	£299.95
<b>Denon</b> DM31 Ex Speakers	£189.95
<b>Linn</b> Classic Music Ex Speakers	£ CALL

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<b>Denon</b> DHT-500SD Inc 5.1 Speaker Package	£ CALL
<b>Denon</b> DHT-550SD Inc 5.1 Speaker Package	£ CALL
<b>KEF</b> KIT100 Inc Speakers	£ CALL

## MULTI-ROOM AUDIO

<b>Cyrus Link</b> RANGE	£ CALL
<b>Living Control</b> RANGE	£ CALL
<b>Yamaha MusicCast</b> RANGE	£ CALL

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MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
<b>Arcam</b> DIVA DV78	£699.95	£699.95
<b>Arcam</b> DIVA DV79	£999.95	£999.95
<b>Arcam</b> FMJ DV29	£1599.95	£1599.95
<b>Cyrus</b> DVD8	£1199.95	£1199.95
<b>Denon</b> DVD-1710	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Denon</b> DVD-1910	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Denon</b> DVD-2910 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Denon</b> DVD-3910 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Denon</b> DVD-A11	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Denon</b> DVD-A1xv	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Harman Kardon</b> DVD22	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Harman Kardon</b> DVD31	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Marantz</b> DV4500	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Meridian</b> RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Pioneer</b> DV370	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Pioneer</b> DV575A Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Pioneer</b> DV668Av Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Pioneer</b> DV868Avi Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Yamaha</b> DVD-S550	£ CALL	£ CALL
<b>Yamaha</b> DVD-S1500	£ CALL	£ CALL

## DVD RECORDERS

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

## A/V AMPLIFIERS RECEIVERS & PROCESSORS

<b>Arcam</b> AVR250 A/V Receiver	£999.95
<b>Arcam</b> AVR300 A/V Receiver	£1299.95
<b>Arcam</b> AVP700P1000 A/V Processor/Power	£ TBA
<b>Arcam</b> AV8/P7 A/V Processor/Power	£5749.95
<b>Cyrus</b> AV8 A/V Processor	£1099.95
<b>Denon</b> AVC-A1XV A/V Amplifier	£ CALL
<b>Denon</b> AVR1705 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Denon</b> AVR1905 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Denon</b> AVR2105 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Denon</b> AVR2805 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Denon</b> AVR3805 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Harman Kardon</b> AVR330 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Harman Kardon</b> AVR630 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Harman Kardon</b> DPR2005 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Lexicon</b> RANGE	£ CALL
<b>Marantz</b> SR4500 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Marantz</b> SR5500 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Pioneer</b> VSX-D814 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Pioneer</b> VSX-2014i A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Pioneer</b> VSX-AX5Ai A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Pioneer</b> VSA-AX10Ai A/V Amplifier	£ CALL
<b>Rotel</b> RSX1056 A/V Receiver	£1199.95
<b>Rotel</b> RSX1067 A/V Receiver	£1799.95
<b>Rotel</b> RSP1098 A/V Processor	£2294.95
<b>Yamaha</b> DSP-AX750SE A/V Amplifier	£ CALL
<b>Yamaha</b> DSP-29 A/V Amplifier	£ CALL
<b>Yamaha</b> RX-V550 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Yamaha</b> RX-V650 A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Yamaha</b> RX-V1500RDS A/V Receiver	£ CALL
<b>Yamaha</b> RX-V2500RDS A/V Receiver	£ CALL

## A/V SPEAKERS & PACKAGES

<b>Acoustic Energy</b> Evo 3B	£679.95
<b>Acoustic Energy</b> Aego P5/II	£449.95
<b>Acoustic Energy</b> Aelite 5.1	£1894.95
<b>Artcoustic</b> RANGE	£ CALL

<b>B&amp;W</b> VM1/AS1	£849.95
<b>KEF</b> KHT1005	£299.95
<b>KEF</b> KHT2005.2	£ CALL
<b>KEF</b> KHT5005	£ CALL
<b>KEF</b> Q7 AV	£ CALL
<b>M&amp;K</b> RANGE	£ CALL
<b>Mission</b> M30 AV Package	£ CALL
<b>Mission</b> M31 AV Package	£ CALL
<b>Mission</b> M Cube AV Package (ex stands)	£ CALL
<b>Mission</b> Elegante e82 7.1 Package	£ CALL
<b>Monitor Audio</b> Bronze B2 AV	£799.95
<b>Monitor Audio</b> Bronze B4 AV	£949.95
<b>Monitor Audio</b> Radius	£ CALL
<b>Mordant Short</b> Genie	£ CALL
<b>Quad</b> L-Series	£1899.95
<b>Wharfedale</b> Diamond 9 HCP	£499.95
<b>Yamaha</b> YSP-1 Sound Projector	£799.95

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

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<b>Fujitsu</b> RANGE	£ CALL
<b>Hitachi</b> 32PD5200 32"	£ CALL
<b>Hitachi</b> 42PD5200 42"	£ CALL
<b>Hitachi</b> 55PMA550TE 55"	£ CALL
<b>Panasonic</b> TH37PW7B 37"	£ CALL
<b>Panasonic</b> TH42PW7B 42"	£ CALL
<b>Panasonic</b> TH37PE30B 37"	£ CALL
<b>Panasonic</b> TH42PE30B 42"	£ CALL
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<b>Pioneer</b> PDP435DE 43"	£ CALL
<b>Pioneer</b> PDP435XDE 43"	£ CALL
<b>Pioneer</b> PDP505XDE 50"	£ CALL
<b>Toshiba</b> 42WP46 42"	£ CALL

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<b>Hitachi</b> 28LD5200 28"	£ CALL
<b>Panasonic</b> TX26LX2 22"	£ CALL
<b>Panasonic</b> TX26LX1 26"	£ CALL
<b>Panasonic</b> TX32LX1 32"	£ CALL
<b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-26GA5 26"	£ CALL
<b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-32GA5 32"	£ CALL
<b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-32GD1 32"	£ CALL
<b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-37GD1 37"	£ CALL
<b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-37GA5 37"	£ CALL
<b>Sharp</b> AQUOS LC-45GD1 45"	£ CALL
<b>Toshiba</b> RANGE	£ CALL

## PROJECTORS

<b>Screenplay</b> SP4805 DLP	£ CALL
<b>Screenplay</b> SP5700 DLP	£ CALL
<b>Screenplay</b> SP7205 DLP	£ CALL
<b>Screenplay</b> SP7210 DLP	£ CALL
<b>Screenplay</b> SP777 DLP	£ CALL
<b>Sharp</b> XV-291E DLP	£ CALL
<b>Sharp</b> XV-Z200/201 DLP	£ CALL
<b>Sharp</b> XV-Z2000 DLP	£ CALL
<b>Sim 2</b> Domino 18 DLP	£ CALL
<b>Sim 2</b> Domino 20-H HDMI DLP	£ CALL
<b>Sim 2</b> Domino 30-H HDMI DLP	£ CALL
<b>Sim 2</b> HT300E DLP	£ CALL
<b>Sim 2</b> HT500 Link DLP	£ CALL
<b>ThemeScene</b> H30A Cinema DLP	£ CALL
<b>ThemeScene</b> H57 Cinema DLP	£ CALL
<b>ThemeScene</b> H77 Cinema DLP	£ CALL

## REMOTE CONTROLS

<b>Marantz</b> RC5400	£399.95
<b>Marantz</b> RC9500	£799.95
<b>Philips</b> i-Pronto RU1000	£1399.95

# The Magnificent Seven

Visit the special offers page on our website for some fantastic savings on new and ex-demonstration equipment. [www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk](http://www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk) and click-on **Special Offers**

## 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.

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

ADVERT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 05/05/2005, E&OE.



# Nationwide Store guide



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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*

## WITHAM (ESSEX) 01376 501733

• 1 THE GROVE CENTRE

## WOLVERHAMPTON 01902 312225

• 29-30 CLEVELAND STREET

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E-MAIL: [insert store location]@sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk

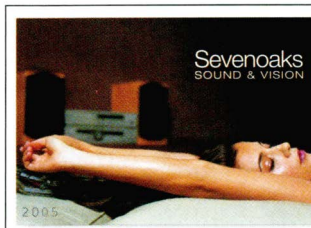
## Who are Sevenoaks?

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.

## How to shop at Sevenoaks

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.

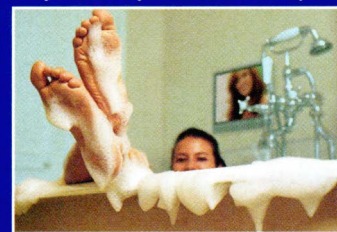


### Hi-Fi & Home Cinema Guide - 2005 Edition

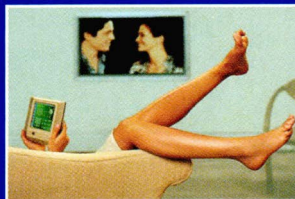
Pick-up a copy of our **New 72 Page Guide** at your nearest Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store or order a copy via our Website. The brochure will be posted to you (UK mainland addresses only) free of charge.

## Custom Installation

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



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



**FREE CUSTOM INSTALLATION BROCHURE** available now from your nearest store or via our website.

## Sevenoaks Website

The Sevenoaks Sound & Vision website has news and information on the Sevenoaks group and detailed pages to help you locate your nearest store. In addition, there are hundreds of **SPECIAL OFFERS** and **STOCK CLEARANCE** items available from our stores nationwide - many with savings of up to 50%. To view our regularly updated product lists, visit [www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk](http://www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk) and click on **special offers**

[www.sevenoakssoundandvision.co.uk](http://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 transistors can't replicate. If you want to play your music loud, use transistors; 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.

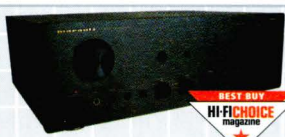
### WHAT IS BI-WIRING AND BI-AMPING?

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 STEREO AMPLIFIERS

 BEST BUY  EDITOR'S CHOICE








### Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
	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
	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
	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
	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
	Electrocompaniet EC13	999	Large and fairly powerful, with individual looks and very refined sound	6		●		70	262
	Exposure 2010 S	599	Beneath the unassuming exterior lurks a very capable performer that's passionate about music	6	opt	●		75	262
	Marantz PM4400 OSE	250	Highly competent and well specified – a lively performer that makes great music	5	●		●	50	256
	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
	Musical Fidelity X-80	600	The entry-level to Musical Fidelity's amplifier range sounds both powerful and refined	4		●		55	255
	NAD C352	350	Dynamic and musical sounding update on what was already a star product	7		●	●	80	253
	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
	Rotel RA-02	349	Agile and capable slimline design with an engaging sound that draws you into the music	4	●	●	●	40	232
	Rotel RA-03	499	Gutsy amp that's equally happy belting out anthems and whispering romantic secrets. Good phono stage too	5	●	●		70	265
	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
	Sugden A21a	899	This single-ended, Class A transistor amp has exquisite resolving ability and presence – an authentic classic	5				25	224
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>									
	Arcam FMJ A32	1,200	Ultra-civilised amp with plenty of features that's also highly revealing and musical	7	●	●	●	100	266
	Audio Note Oto Line SE	1,599	Single-ended valve amp lacks power but sounds remarkably delicate and coherent	5	opt			10	254
	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
	Audio Research VS155	2,895	Superb all-rounder provides the delights of valve amplification without sacrificing convenience	5		●		50	254
	AVI Laboratory Series	1,399	Terrific power, control and resolution – effortlessly musical and fine value	6	opt	●		200	241
	Copland CSA29	1,900	A hybrid valve/solid state amplifier that gets close to offering the best of both worlds	6	opt	●		85	255
	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
	Krell KAV-400xi	2,698	The best integrated Krell yet is quick, agile, solid and finely detailed	5		●		200	247
	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
	Moon i-3	1,595	Powerful Canadian amp whose lively presentation is particularly suited to big-scale music	6		●		100	265

## Our favourite STEREO AMPLIFIERS

 BEST BUY  EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £2,000</b>										
	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
	Cyrus DAC XP	2,200	A knockout DAC/pre with naturalness and resolution to die for and six digital inputs for signals up to 96kHz	●		2		●		266
	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
	Naim NAC 112x/NAP 150x	1,475	Upated entry-level Naim pre/power is a master of musical communication	●	●	6		●	50	262
	Quad 99/909	1,650	Well thought out and well executed, with good strong sound and just a little veiling	●	●	5	●	●	136	256
<b>ABOVE £2,000</b>										
	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
	Chapter Preface/II+	9,800	Among the finest amps available, the resolution of this preamp and power amp challenges the best at any price	●	●	6		●	300	249

**SPECS KEY** **LINE INPUTS** Input sockets for source components with a line level output: CD players, DVD players, tape decks, tuners, phono stages etc. **PHONO INPUT** Input sockets and onboard phono stage for a cartridge. Either MM (moving magnet) or MC (moving coil), occasionally both. **REMOTE CONTROL** A remote control is supplied with the amplifier. **HEADPHONE SOCKET** To drive your cans with. **POWER OUTPUT** Manufacturer's rated output in watts per channel.



Our favourite EB BEST BUY EB EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS *continued*

## Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					ISSUE NUMBER
				PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EB</span>	Conrad-Johnson ACT2/Prem 350SA	20,000	Valve preamp and solid-state power deliver some of the most transparent and naturally dynamic sounds around	●	●	5	●	350	264
	EAR 864/534	4,156	Valve combo delivers fine measured and subjective performance and inspires great confidence	●	●	6	●	50	254
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EB</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EB</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EB</span>	Gamut D200 Mk3	3,950	A great power amp that's now even better – one of the best regardless of price		●			200	247
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EB</span>	Halcro dm10/dm68	25,550	Extravagant, extreme and massive amp combo will probably polarise opinions, but delivers stunning midrange clarity	●	●	5	●	225	243
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EB</span>	Hovland HP-100/RADIA	12,745	Uncommonly musical valve/transistor hybrid transcends stereotypes, one of the genuine high achievers	●	●	9	opt	125	250
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EB</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EB</span>	Linn Klimax Kontrol	6,000	Beautifully executed example of Scots audio art, sounds as clean as it looks and is a lot more transparent than most	●	●	4	●		238
	Naim NAC 202/NAP 200	2,720	More sophisticated than its forebears with a fleet-footed sound that draws you into the music	●	●	8	●	70	241
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EB</span>	Naim NAP 500	11,875	Wonderful neutrality, bandwidth and dynamic range, plus Naim's traditional leading-edge definition		●			140	208
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EB</span>	Naim NAC 552	12,100	Extremely expensive preamp, but still solid value. Magnificent sound with fine flexibility and convenience	●	●	6	●		233
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EB</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EB</span>	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

# AV AMPLIFIERS

*Surround sound amps for music and movies*

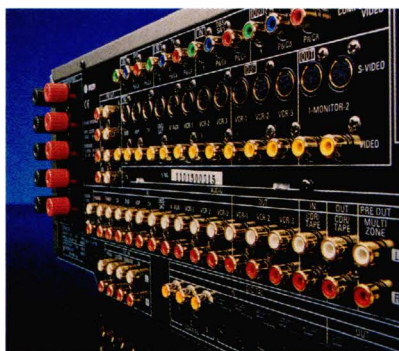


The multichannel, surround sound or AV amplifier is a popular option, thanks to the success of the DVD player and home cinema. Now you can buy five channels or more of amplification for the price of two. Now that multichannel music is also on the agenda, there's a lot to be said for a good AV amp or 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 built-in amplification 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

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Multichannel amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	RECEIVER	LINE INPUTS	7.1 COMPATIBLE	5-CHANNEL POWER (W)	SPECS NUMBER
<b>MULTICHANNEL INTEGRATED AMPS</b>								
	Arcam AVR200	800	Upgraded AVR100 with Dolby Pro-Logic II and some bass management. Great for stereo, a bit bass-light for multichannel	●	6	●	70	229
BEST BUY	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
BEST BUY	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
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Denon AVC-A1XV	4,000	Inelegant, but powerful and effective tool with excellent auto set-up and capable of driving two 5.1 systems simultaneously		●	●	170	266
	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
BEST BUY	Pioneer VSA-AX5i	1,200	Standard setter in its price category, with i.Link digital interface and MCACC auto set-up	●	11	●	100	248
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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
BEST BUY	Sony STR-DB795	300	A superb value little amplifier, well appointed technically and successfully tuned for UK ears	●	7	●	100	260
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Sony TA-DA9000ES	2,600	Arguably the first convincing fully digital amplifier, an excellent match for players with i.Link encrypted outputs	●	10	●	200	253
<b>MULTICHANNEL PREAMPS/PROCESSORS AND POWER AMPS</b>								
BEST BUY	Arcam A90+7.1 mod, P90/3	1,920	Add Arcam's multichannel module and a P90/3 power amp to the A90 stereo integrated and you've got got superb purist 5.1	8	●	90	250	
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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	
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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	
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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	
BEST BUY	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	
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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	
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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	
BEST BUY	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.

## ULTIMATE Power Conditioners

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2004 What Hi-Fi?  
Category Winner  
IsoTek Gal Vision

2004 Hi-Fi Plus  
Category Winner  
Nordost Thor by IsoTek

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





# What, How & Where

## TO BUY YOUR HI-FI SYSTEM

Get the best system for your money by asking our Top Twenty UK specialist hi-fi dealers.

Isn't it easy to buy a new system? You read the magazine product reviews, you find out who sells the recommendations, five-star favourites or best buys at the cheapest price, you order the system, get a friend who knows his onions to install it - and live happily ever after.

This is a fairly well-trodden path but it leads to dissatisfaction, endless upgrades and a lot of wasted money. It's likely that the system will help you lose interest in music pretty rapidly. The problem is that there are more myths about hi-fi than Aesop's Fables. CD gives you perfect sound. All CD players sound the same. A £50 CD player plays high fidelity music. All magazine reviewers are experts. Big speakers are always better than small ones. More watts per channel is everything. MP3 format gives you high quality. A collection of 'Best Buy' components will be a great system. And so on and so on. All myths.

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

Oscar Wilde

### ? Music - the real aim

Our aim must be to buy a hi-fi system that will prove musically satisfying, reliable and deliver true value for money. If the system doesn't excite you musically you've wasted your money. What is even worse is that you may not even realise you've bought a bad egg - you'll just switch the TV on instead and your desire to listen to music will gradually diminish. Have you ever been in a pub or club where you realise it's very difficult to conduct a conversation, even to the extent of being really tiring? A poor quality system continuously distorts but I don't mean it necessarily reaches the point of audibly breaking up. With a top quality system you can play music very loudly and still hold a conversation because it's free of distortion.

A poor system is tiring to listen to even when it's played at low volume. If you want proof, go into a shoe or clothes shop where they play background 'music' and try to enjoy listening. It's odds on you'll fail.

### ? What and Where to buy

So where do you start? Perhaps it's better to say what you don't start with and that is *WHAT*. It's better to start with *WHERE*. There is only one way to give yourself the best chance of getting it right first time, and that's through a specialist hi-fi dealer. Now it's likely you have preconceived ideas that may put you off visiting one. Although you would welcome the advice and guidance, you don't know the technical jargon. You don't want to be talked down to. Your friend has said they only sell expensive gear and they're not interested if you don't have a big budget. They're expensive. Again, just myths. Most specialist hi-fi dealers are running their business because, above all, they love music. They spend a large portion of their time listening to music and







comparing systems to get the best possible results. They know the component combinations which don't gel together and, conversely, they know the combinations which give the best performance within a given price range. But they all also know the system must suit you.

### Buying or being sold to?

Now there's a group of long-established specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer first. Their idea of 'selling' is to discuss your requirements, offer their advice, give you the best options, then play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge.


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

The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put your hand in your pocket. They won't leave you to set up the system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it sounds great, and make sure you're entirely happy with the way it works. Why? Because a high proportion of these dealers' custom comes through people who have bought from them before, either directly or by recommendation. It's vital to them to get it right for you.

### Getting the best deal

Oscar Wilde wrote "...too many people today know the price of everything and the value of nothing." Specialist retailers know that not all potential purchasers will seek them out. They tend to attract the more discerning, thoughtful customers. Let's face it, a good deal is about a great deal more than just price. After all, unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years. Most of these dealers offer much longer equipment guarantees than provided by the manufacturer, a very worthwhile benefit, but it also makes it in the dealer's interest to ensure high build quality and reliability. Maybe you could save a few pounds by buying piecemeal but you'll

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

 Listed below are 20 of the best hi-fi shops in the country. They have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give them years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.

### STAR QUALITIES

#### VALUE FOR MONEY

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

#### SERVICE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

#### FACILITIES

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

#### VERDICT

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

## OUR TOP 20 UK SPECIALIST HI-FI DEALERS

### LONDON

**N1 GRAHAMS HI-FI**  
190a New North Road  
020 7226 5500

**SW11 ORANGES & LEMONS**  
61/63 Webbs Road, Battersea  
020 7924 2043

### SOUTH

**Ashford, Kent**  
**SOUNDCRAFT HI-FI**  
40 High St. 01233 624441

**Chelmsford RAYLEIGH HI-FI**  
216 Moulsham Street  
01245 265245

**Colchester RAYLEIGH HI-FI**  
33 Sir Isaac's Walk 01206  
577682

**East Grinstead**  
**AUDIO DESIGNS**  
26 High St. 01342 314569

**Horsham AUDIO DESIGNS**  
7-9 Park Place  
01403 252255

### Brighton THE POWERPLANT

40 Church Road, Hove  
01273 775542

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**Ringwood, Hampshire**  
**PHONOGRAPHY**  
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**Southend-on-Sea**  
**RAYLEIGH HI-FI**  
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**Southampton PHASE 3 HI-FI**  
37 Bedford Place  
023 8022 8434

### Worthing PHASE 3 HI-FI

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01903 245577

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**Birmingham SOUND**  
**ACADEMY**  
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01922 493499

**Coventry FRANK HARVEY**  
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**Leicester CYMBIOSIS**  
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0114 275 6048

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**York SOUND ORGANISATION**  
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### N. IRELAND

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028 90 381296





# STEREO SPEAKERS

*Speaker pairs for stereo sound*



While loudspeakers are relatively straightforward in construction, they have one of the most difficult jobs in hi-fi – turning an electrical signal into an acoustic one. Most consist of two or more drive units in a box that usually has a port in it to make life easier for the cone in your mid and/or bass driver. Alternatives to this arrangement include panel speakers, which use electrostatic or ribbon technology, and horns, which use drive units in complex cabinets that greatly improve efficiency.

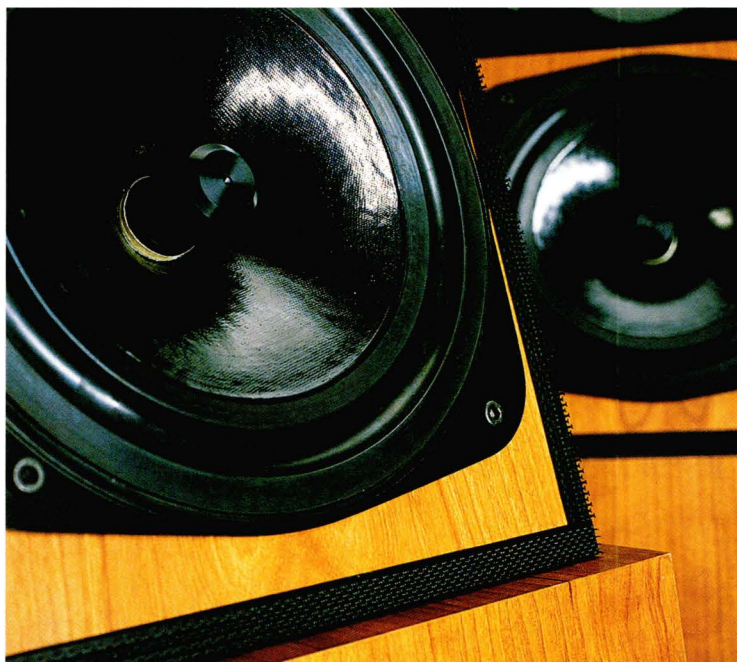
Box speakers are either designed to stand on the floor (floorstanders) or on a stand (stand or shelfmounts). Floorstanders have greater internal volume which can translate into greater efficiency and/or bass extension, but less substantial designs also introduce cabinet resonance and thus distortion. But they don't need stands and therefore have the aesthetic edge. Standmounts have less cabinet to vibrate and often score in terms of imaging and timing, but need good stands to work well.

## Positioning

The closer the speaker is to a wall, the greater the reinforcement of bass. As all rooms differ, there's no simple formula for placement and experimentation will yield the best results. Altering the angle at which the speakers face the listener can also make a difference to balance and stereo image.

## Going multichannel

Many stereo speakers can be augmented with centre and surround channels from the same brand to create a multichannel system. The most important element is a centre channel, which needs to match the stereo pair as closely as possible. For the best musical results, surrounds should be as per the front left and right channels, but if space or funds don't permit, smaller designs can be used quite effectively.



## Choosing speakers

Because speakers and the rooms they are used in vary so much, choosing a pair tends to be quite subjective. To find some that will suit you, try to listen to a good variety to hear how they differ, and if possible, audition some at home. Tonal balance tends to vary the most, but is less important than more subtle factors such as timing and dynamics. Finally, listen with your ears not your eyes – great-looking speakers aren't necessarily great sounding.

## Spikes

Floorstanding speakers and stands have threaded inserts for spikes that allow rigid coupling with the floor. These have the advantage of draining resonance from the speaker and giving tighter bass, but can result in more vibration getting back to the electronics and often cause the floor to resonate as well.

## POWER

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

your amp needs to avoid a mismatch. An above-average (A+) speaker will work with amps rated at 25W plus, while an average (A) speaker will need 50W or more, and a below average (A-) speaker could require 100W plus to sound its best. These are guidelines rather than rules.

## Q&A

### IF SPEAKERS ARE RATED AT 75 WATTS, DOES THAT MEAN I NEED A 75 WATT AMP?

No, see the box on power for the full story.

### WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR SMALL ROOMS?

Those designed to work close to the wall will be smoother in confined spaces. Speakers that have relatively dry, tight bass will also sound better.

### WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR BIG ROOMS?

Big, efficient, easy-to-drive designs are more likely to be able to fill a room better than compact models.

### DO I NEED TO BUY CENTRE AND SURROUND CHANNELS FROM THE SAME BRAND AS MY STEREO SPEAKERS?

Yes, assuming that you're wanting to create a homogenous surround sound experience, where voices don't change when they move from one channel to another.



## TOP BUYS



**Tannoy**  
Sensys DC1 £449  
A new dual-concentric main driver plus super-tweeter in a solid standmount box results in a neutral yet expressive speaker at a very tempting price.



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



**B&W**  
805S £1,600  
A superbly well-engineered standmount that's capable of delivering magnificent musical communication, alongside superior subtlety and delicacy.



**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
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>										
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	Pricy 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
	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).



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## AUDUSA

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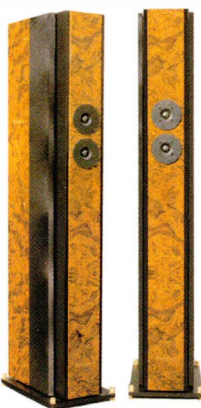
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£48 for 1.0m, £58 for 1.5m, £68 for 2.0m.  
GNLM cables are available off the reel



## BOSENDORFER

### Loudspeakers

AC-7 voted Best Loudspeaker for 2004 by Wallpaper Magazine.  
Le Festival Son et Image de Montréal 2004..... It was also perfectly obvious that the Bösendorfer loudspeakers had the finest reproduction of piano music that I have ever heard. Seeing the quality of the piano in the same room as the loudspeakers, I was impressed, but not surprised. They obviously knew what they were doing when they built these beauties.....



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

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				SIZE (WxHxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	FACE-OF-DRIVE	BASS-FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE-TO-WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
BB	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	
BB	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	
	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	
BB	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	
BB	Tannoy Sensys DC1	449	Modest sensitivity but beautifully balanced with fine authority at a very realistic price	21,41,29		A	40	●	245	
	Tannoy Eyris 1	600	Pricy but very cute standmount miniature; oddball, but has marvellous midband subtlety and delicacy	17,35,26		A+		●	227	
	Tannoy Sensys DC2	649	Has impressive scale and weight with fine stereo imaging, but is also rather laid back, lacking easy agility	21,97,29	●	A	20	●	250	
	Tannoy Eyris 2	999	This super-slim and cutely different-looking floorstander is very communicative, despite weak treble	17,91,26	●	A	20	●	231	
BB	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	
BB	Triangle Comete ES	500	Bulky standmount lacks style but delivers engrossing musical coherence and vivid dynamics	20,42,34		A	40	●	265	
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>										
BB	Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII	1,690	Luxury miniature has a laid-back but bouncy sound, a marvellous dynamic range and very superior imaging	19,31,25		A-	30	●	251	
	Acoustic Energy AE3 MKII	4,490	A beautifully neutral speaker with very wide dynamic range and superior imaging, plus lovely Art Deco styling	19,99,29	●	A	20	●	251	
BB	Anthony Gallo Nucleus Ref	2,400	Occasionally raw, but engaging and capable beyond its physical stature	20,89,41	●	A	34	●	257	
	ATC Active 10	1,269	Stylish, active powerhouses with plenty of subtlety when required (balanced connection only)	23,39,31		act	45	●	221	
BB	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	
BB	Audio Note AN-E/LX	2,650	Though not very pretty, this is a thoroughly entertaining speaker with great dynamic subtlety and integrity	36,79,27	●	A+	22	●	256	
BB	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	
BB	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	
BB	B&W 704	1,400	Cleverly tapered enclosure and external tweeter delivers superior bass and treble, with a laid-back midband	22,96,32	●	A	20	●	257	
BB	B&W 805S	1,600	A wonderfully communicative, entertaining and subtle speaker, despite some lack of tonal richness	24,39,33		A	25	●	266	
BB	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	
BB	BC Acoustique ACT-A1	1,195	Exceptional focus, dynamic coherence and expression through the voice band, but bass could be more even	21,90,33	●	A+	25	●	257	
	Beauhorn B2.2 Revelation	3,984	Magnificent midband and fine overall balance but limited bass is best with small-scale material	34,130,75	●	A+	80	●	244	
EC	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	
EC	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	
BB	Dynaudio Audience 82	1,460	Bulky, with vinyl finish, but offers exceptional neutrality, bass extension, power handling and loudness potential	22,106,36	●	A	30	●	229	
	Dynaudio Contour S 1.4	1,850	Sound has fine mid-to-treble coherence and neutrality, though port tuning was ill-suited to our room	19,40,36		A-	28	●	260	
	Eclipse TD Lulét 307/316	1,250	Extraordinary satellite plus sub solution sounds a cut above other sub/sats. Can be expanded to multichannel	12,16,16		act	40	●	247	
EC	Focal-JMlab Micro Utopia Be	3,500	New 'Be' version is clearly an exceptional standmount, capable of revealing the innate quality of the music	25,42,5,38		A	50	●	245	
EC	Focal-JMlab Diva Utopia Be	7,599	Lovely slimline speaker combines remarkable transparency with fine dynamics and gorgeous bass	25,110,53	●	A+	30	●	255	
EC	Focal-JMlab Alto Utopia Be	11,000	Attractive and beautifully balanced, with fine bass alignment and focus, low coloration and very clean top end	37,121,53	●	A-	20	●	248	
	Harbeth Super HL5	1,699	Looks old-fashioned, but classic monitor combines authority and transparency with good neutrality	33,64,31		A	30	●	233	
	Living Voice Auditorium	1,700	Gloriously coherent and dynamic midband, though the top end is restrained and bass was uneven in our room	22,86,28	●	A-	30	●	247	
EC	Living Voice Avatar OBX-R2	4,000	Has Dynamics, tonal colour, detail, space and time resolution in spades. External crossovers require extra cabling	22,100,27	●	A+	35	●	244	
	MartinLogan Mosaic	1,799	Curious hybrid construction marries many panel speaker-like attributes with moving coil simplicity	24,102,30	●	A-	46	●	257	
BB	MartinLogan Clarity	2,498	Relatively affordable and easy to live with electrostatic hybrid with class-leading resolving power	26,135,31	●	A-	46	●	245	
BB	Mission Elegante e83	1,990	Uncommonly clean, agile and refined floorstander, and as elegant as the name	33,111,36	●	A-	44	●	257	
EC	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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Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO SPEAKERS *continued*

## Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (WxHxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EDGE 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
	Naim SL-2	4,995	Delivers magnificent musical analysis and communication skills in a notably discrete physical package	28,103,33	●	A-	20	●	232
	Neat Ultimatum MFS	2,995	Wonderful five-driver standmount sounds bigger than it looks. Very spacious and informative	22,38,37		A+	25	●	241
	Neat Ultimatum MF9	8,500	Superb musical communicator with splendidly deep and agile bass and fine open neutrality	22,150,40	●	A-	20	●	226
	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
	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
	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
	PSB Platinum M2	1,600	Chunky stand-mount with cast alloy cabinet creates exceptionally clean bass and impressive overall neutrality	24,39,33		A	25	●	266
	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
	Revel F32	3,200	Meticulously balanced, tonally neutral design makes for a taut, well disciplined sound	22,105,39	●	B	30	●	265
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	Waterfall Victoria TWN	2,000	Stunning transparent glass enclosure and a sonic treat too, with great dynamic expression	22,100,22	●	A	28	●	262
	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
	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
	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
	Wilson Benesch Chimera	15,000	Elegant with lovely sonic delicacy and plenty of weight too. Works best at low levels, but a difficult load to drive	24,145,55	●	A-	20	●	234

# AV SPEAKERS

## Speaker solutions for multichannel surround sound



Multichannel speaker systems have a front left/right (L/R) stereo pair, a centre or dialogue channel, two (5.1) or four (7.1) surround speakers and often a subwoofer. For best results, each of these speakers bar the sub should be identical. The problem is that few surround systems are dedicated to music and perform a home cinematic role as well, meaning the centre speaker has to sit above or below a video

monitor. Centre channels are usually wide and short for this reason.

This should not be a barrier to great surround for music and movies however, as many brands make centre channels with a very close sound to their L/R designs.

### Music vs movies

High-resolution SACD and DVD-A music recordings tend to be mastered with

surround speakers in the ITU standard position which is as far behind the listener as the front channels are in front. 5.1 movie soundtracks tend to place surround channels not so far behind and to the side of listeners. Usually, practical limitations will dictate a limited range of placement options, but if you are a dedicated music fan, check out the ITU set-up regulations in the booklet supplied with SACD discs.

### SET-UP

Ideally you should set up surround speakers with as much care as you would stereo systems, but practical issues tend to have a significant bearing on surround and centre speaker placement. Surround channels can be floorstanding or wallmounted, and centres usually have to perch on the TV or underneath it. Given these limitations, adjust your L/R front

speakers to give the best tonal match with the centre. If there's more than just you listening, 'toe in' the speakers so that their axis crosses in front of the listening position - this gives a wider stereo image. And if there's a subwoofer it should be placed near the front speakers. Use a sound pressure metre (available from Tandy among others) to accurately set levels.

### SUBWOOFERS

Subs start working where stereo speakers run out of steam at low frequencies. The idea is to create deeper, better-controlled bass rather than more of it. They usually have onboard amplification (active) and connect to either the LFE (Low Frequency Effects) channel in a home cinema set-up or the speaker terminals in a stereo set-up.



## TOP BUYS



**B&W**  
600 S3 package £900  
Incorporates 602s, 601s and an LCR 600 centre speaker. Great in both stereo and multichannel surround modes.



**KEF**  
Q AV7 £1,300  
With the latest Uni-Q refinements, this system is astonishingly accomplished and amazing value.



**ATC**  
Concept 3 £4,877  
It might not look as flashy as some, but the quality of engineering in this ATC package ensures superb all-round performance.



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

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

## AV SPEAKER PACKAGES

### Multichannel speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				
				EASE OF DRIVE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
	ATC Concept 3	4,877	Extremely engaging, revealing and musical multichannel system providing 360 degrees of full-on entertainment	A-	6	12	opt	255
	B&W 300 package	900	An excellent compromise between the requirements of music and those of home cinema (inc. subwoofer)	A	6	27		241
<span>BB</span>	B&W 600 S3 (602/601/LCR 600)	900	Unquestionably delivers the sonic goods. High-quality drivers in standmount enclosures	A	5	22		224
	Castle CAV Sterling	1,250	Lovely real wood veneers. Sound has fine dynamic drive and expression, but can sound a little hard	A	5	28		224
	Dynaudio Audience 42 package	1,142	Multichannel package for hi-fi purists with real authority and imaging, but needs subwoofer for full-bore movie sound	A-	5	53		241
	Final Sound Electrostatic system	4,875	Slim, attractive, electrostatic panels have clever connections, limited loudness but a breathtaking transparency	A-	6	20		251
	Focal-JMLab Electra package	3,017	Bold, solid system, tremendous consistency and easy to expand with an added subwoofer	A	5	50		232
<span>BB</span>	KEF Q AV7	1,300	With latest Uni-Q refinements, this system is astonishingly accomplished and amazing value	A+	5	35		232
<span>EC</span>	Linn Akurate (242/212/225/221)	13,750	An extremely capable system that offers new insights into the potential for multichannel audio	A-	6	18		253
	Mirage Omni 2	2,650	Dark tonality, but superb imagery makes this an excellent all-round choice	A	5	30		232
<span>BB</span>	Mission m5 package	1,450	Main m52 is a clean, attractive full-range stereo speaker, while the m5as sub does big bass for movie fans	A	6	28		241
	Mordaunt-Short Genie	800	A prince among sub/sat packages – good integration and impressively little compromise compared to full-size models	A-	6	38		262
	Mordaunt-Short Declaration 500	1,600	Good value vinyl THX Select package with Power Towers. Good authority, but must be 5.1-connected	A	5	25		210
	Rega Jura/Ara/Senta	938	Classy real wood package does a good all-round job, though some may find it a touch bright	A	5	25		210

**SPECS KEY** **EASE OF DRIVE** How much power the amplifier needs (approximately) to drive the loudspeaker effectively: **A+** 25 watts plus **A** 50 watts plus **A-** 100 watts plus.

**NUMBER OF SPEAKERS** The amount of individual loudspeakers in the package. **BASS FROM** How low the speaker goes, the smaller the number the deeper the bass.

**FREE SPACE** The speakers work best away from wall(s). **CLOSE TO WALL** The speakers will work best when up against a wall (but avoid corners).

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

## SUBWOOFERS

### Bass speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				SIZE (WxHxD) (CM)	POWER (W)	BASS FROM (Hz)	ISSUE NUMBER
	B&W PV1	950	Gorgeously styled sub shakes the air but not the floor, delivering a very clean sound with negligible coloration	29,34,35	500	20	259
<span>EC</span>	B&W ASW850	2,000	Does all the things subwoofers should do with music and movies alike, but transparently and seamlessly	53,56,52	1000	18	246
	Monitor Audio ASW100	300	For the price, this compact subwoofer performs particularly well	32,32,34	120	27	225
<span>BB</span>	REL Q150E	500	Great value compact 'cube' sub adds genuine weight and drive thanks to superior filtering	29,32,33	150	20	239
<span>BB</span>	REL Stampede	550	Few subs at this price match the Stampede's subtlety and ease of integration. Much more hi-fi than AV	28,40,29	100	18	257
<span>BB</span>	REL Strata 5	700	Highly musical sub that integrates well but the REL Stampede offers near-identical performance for less money	32,46,33	150	18	257
	REL Storm III	900	Excellent sub with powerful, detailed and deep bass. Comprehensive facilities, including flexible filter adjustment	42,62,33	150	18	225
<span>EC</span>	REL Stadium III	1,500	It's a bulky piece of furniture, but offers superior filtering as well as an ability to delve deep into the bass nether regions	59,56,39	200	16	217
	Titan Saturn	800	Very bulky sub has curious styling, but decent filtering gives good weight and headroom	72,48,72	200	20	239

**SPECS KEY** **SIZE WxHxD (CM)** Width, height and depth of one cabinet in centimetres. **POWER (W)** How many watts the onboard amplifier of active models delivers

**BASS FROM** How low the sub goes, the smaller the number the deeper the bass



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

*Do you want friendly and impartial advice ( and a cup of tea) ...?*

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

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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

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

### Stereo headphones

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUM-AURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT (g)	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR
<b>BB</b>	AKG K44	20	Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed: a bargain						190	219
<b>BB</b>	AKG K270 Studio	129	Pro oriented design which is very transparent and great with acoustic material						270	230
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Beyerdynamic DT990	160	Impeccable balance, very extended bass and treble, and bags of detail place this model ahead of the pack						250	245
<b>BB</b>	Grado SR-60	90	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste						200	194
<b>BB</b>	Grado SR-80	110	Not perhaps as neutral as some but they communicate well and that's the point of the exercise						200	230
<b>BB</b>	Philips HP890	70	A remarkably sophisticated and very comfortable headphone						330	219
	Sennheiser HD595	150	Technology from upmarket HD650 model makes this a very revealing headphone that's also extremely comfortable						270	266
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	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. **CIRCUM-AURAL** 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.

Billy Vee

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Arcam CD82T CD Player (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(619.00)	<b>£399.00</b>	Naim CD 3.5 CD Player S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(899.00)	<b>£475.00</b>
Arcam CD93 CD Player (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(949.00)	<b>£599.00</b>	Naim CD-XPS CD Power Supply S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(2100.00)	<b>£1375.00</b>
Arcam AVR 200 AV Receiver S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(799.00)	<b>£395.00</b>	Naim CDX CD Player S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(2470.00)	<b>£1395.00</b>
Arcam P90 Power Amp Blk S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(549.00)	<b>£349.00</b>	Naim NAC 112 Preamplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(675.00)	<b>£350.00</b>
B&W 705 Speakers - Maple (2Yr/Gtee) . . . . .(900.00)	<b>£675.00</b>	Naim 250 Power Amplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1910.00)	<b>£895.00</b>
B&W 703 Speakers - Cherry (2Yr/Gtee) . . . . .(2000.00)	<b>£1399.00</b>	Naim 135 Power Amps - Pair S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(5020.00)	<b>£1590.00</b>
B&W Nautilus Signature 805 - Tigers Eye (2Yr/Gtee) . . . . .(2500.00)	<b>£1675.00</b>	Naim XPS Power Supply - New casework . . . . .(2100.00)	<b>£1575.00</b>
B&W Nautilus 804 Speakers - Cherry (2Yr/Gtee) . . . . .(2500.00)	<b>£1695.00</b>	Naim NBL Speakers - Beech (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(7700.00)	<b>£3795.00</b>
Denon AVR 2803 AV Amplifier (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(649.00)	<b>£399.00</b>	Quad 99 FM Tuner (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(699.00)	<b>£399.00</b>
Linn Ikemi CD Player - Blk S/H (1Yr/Gtee) . . . . .(2200.00)	<b>£1495.00</b>	ProAc Studio 125 Speakers Maple (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(999.00)	<b>£699.00</b>
Linn Majik Phono Amplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(945.00)	<b>£625.00</b>	Pioneer DVR3100* DVD Recorder/Player (1Yr/Gtee) (349.00)	<b>£219.00</b>
Linn Kairn Pro Line Preamp S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1400.00)	<b>£599.00</b>	REL Q100E Sub Wooferv (1Yr G/tee) S/H . . . . .(495.00)	<b>£249.00</b>
Linn Trikan Centre Spkr - maple (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(549.00)	<b>£299.00</b>	Vibe Zeta Subwoofer (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(600.00)	<b>£399.00</b>



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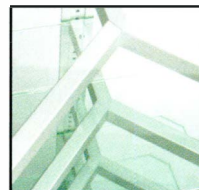
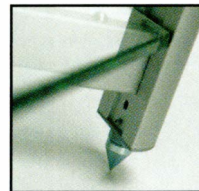
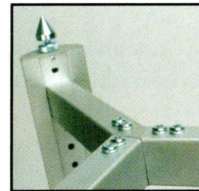
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# CABLES



## Wires to hook your system together



Hi-fi cables come in two varieties: interconnects and speaker cables.

Analogue interconnects come in preset lengths, generally with RCA (phono) plugs attached, though some equipment uses XLR connectors for balanced connection – this can be sonically advantageous, especially over longer runs. Speaker cable is commonly sold by the metre and can be used without plugs or can

be fitted with screw or solder-on types.

Choosing cables is not quite as straightforward as it might seem. One problem is that components interact with the cables you use and this often results in audible effects, but there are few cables that are fundamentally incompatible with any components, and we recommend the advice of a good dealer. In any case, you should look to spend as much as you can afford.

Digital cables come in two flavours: electrical and optical. In most instances electrical varieties sound better than optical, given the choice, but optical cables may be a better bet over long runs (10m+). Optical inputs/outputs usually use Toslink connectors, while most electrical types use RCA plugs, but some opt for BNC connection instead – check your components before you buy.

## Our favourite CABLES

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

### Interconnects and speaker cables

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIGITAL CABLE TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS</b>									
	Black Rhodium Illusion	77	An upfront, lively, exciting cable which still manages subtlety when needed. Slight coloration though		●	●			248
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Chord Company Chorus	200	Very even-handed balance with notably extended bass	●		●			259
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Kimber Timbre	83	Typical Kimber construction with ditto sound – clean, extended and detailed	●		●			248
<b>BB</b>	Monster Interlink 400 Mk2	70	Really lively and enjoyable sound at a sensible price	●		●			224
<b>BB</b>	Townshend DCT100	100	Unusual construction with copper strip conductors, giving very detailed sound, but just an occasional hint of hardness		●	●			241
<b>EC</b>	Townshend Isolda DCT	300	Unusual construction and cryogenically treated too: whatever the reason, a remarkably capable wire		●	●			234
<b>BB</b>	van den Hul The Bay C5	45	Terrific detail, nice balance – a great cable	●		●			224
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	van den Hul D102 Mk III	79	Hybrid conductors (carbon and copper) and intelligent construction give strong bass and excellent detail	●		●			234
<b>BB</b>	Wireworld Solstice 5	70	A cable with all-round appeal – treble is slightly 'dark' but bass is excellent and the overall balance very good indeed	●		●			259
<b>DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS</b>									
<b>EC</b>	Kimber Select KS2020	629	Provides a subtle but rewarding lift in musicality with any DAC, justifying the price		●	●		E	260
<b>BB</b>	QED Qunex P75	25	A superbly capable interconnect that's highly detailed and well balanced			●		E	207
<b>EC</b>	QED Qunex Signature 75	80	First-rate balance and imaging – ever so nearly as good as it gets at any price			●		E	265
<b>BB</b>	QED Qunex SR75	50	Lots of bass and good clear midrange and treble at a sensible price	●		●		E	234
<b>BB</b>	Supra ZAC	32	High grade fibre and quality plugs add up to a noticeable improvement over giveaway optical leads					O	259
<b>BB</b>	van den Hul Optocoupler II	49	Noticeably has the edge over other optical leads, but still second best to electrical types					O	234
<b>SPEAKER CABLES PRICE PER METRE</b>									
	Black Rhodium S300	18	Tight, precise and extended bass makes this a great cable for rock 'n' roll	●		●			241
	Chord Company Signature	117	Dynamic, solid sounding cable, but it's bulky and not very tractable	●		●			255
	Ecosse Reference MS2.3	23	Favours excitement over refinement: can be slightly bass-shy, but plenty of life	●		●			227
<b>EC</b>	Electrofluidics 20/20	45	Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere – one of the best all-round cables available		●	●			241
<b>BB</b>	Kimber 4PR	5	Considering the price, this cable's very slight dryness is forgivable when everything else is so right	●		●			192
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Kimber 8TC	39	Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass. Price for 5m terminated pair	●		●			203
<b>BB</b>	QED Silver Anniversary	5	A few minor flaws, but overall performance is very assured for this price	●		●			192
<b>BB</b>	QED X-Tube XT300	10	A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems		●	●			234
<b>EC</b>	Townshend Isolda DCT	50	Cryogenically treated 'impedance matched' cable with stabilising components added: great sound all-round		●	●			241
<b>BB</b>	Wireworld Terra 5	5	Deep powerful bass, clear treble and very solid imaging add up to above-class performance	●		●			261
<b>BB</b>	Wireworld Solstice 5	20	Unfriendly to handle, but makes up for it with very assured sound – heaps of bass and great insight	●		●			248
<b>BB</b>	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



# 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

**BB** BEST BUY **EC** 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
<b>BB</b>	Audiophile Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities – a worthy upgrade	82	43		4	MDF	193
	Avid Isosshelf	1,100	An enthusiast's equipment support stand free from coloration, if a little fiddly to set up	87.5	48		5	MDF	193
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!	92	50,40		5	Glass	217
<b>EC</b>	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

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

### Speaker stands

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF LEGS	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	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 – '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 drive unit 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 217.5-230MHz band. 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** (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 driving it.

**JITTER** An insidious distortion specific to digital audio caused by imprecision in the clock, used to regulate the conversion of data into analogue audio.

**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-acoustic 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.

**MUSICAL** (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.

**MUSICALITY** or musicality. A sense of cohesion and subjective 'rightness' in the sound.

**NATURALNESS** Realism.

**OPAQUE** Unclear, lacking transparency.

**OPEN** Sound which has height and 'air', relates to clean upper midrange and treble.

**PACE** Often associated with rhythm, a strong sense of timing and beat.

**PRESENCE** A sense of an instrument or voice occupying a place in the listening room.

**PRESENCE RANGE** The upper midrange.

**SEISMIC** Very low bass that you feel rather than hear.

**SIBILANCE** An emphasis of the 'S' sound, often heard on radio.

**SNAP** A system with good speed and transient response can deliver the immediacy or 'snap' of live instruments.

**SPEED** A fast system with good pace gives the impression of being right on the money in its timing.

**STURDY** Solid, powerful, robust sound.

**THICK** A lack of articulation and clarity in the bass.

**THIN** Bass light.

**TIMBRE** The tonal character of an instrument.

**TIMING** A sense of precision in tempo. See speed and pace.

**TRANSIENT** The leading edge of a percussive sound. Good transient response makes the sound as a whole more live and realistic.

**TRANSPARENCY, TRANSPARENT** A hear-through quality that is akin to clarity and reveals all aspects of detail.

**TWEAK** To tune a system or component in an attempt to get the best performance from it.

**TWEAKER** Someone who enjoys this process.

**VEILED** Loss of detail due to limited transparency.

**WARM** A fullness in the lower midrange/upper bass.

**WEIGHT** A sense of substance and underpinning produced by deep, controlled bass.



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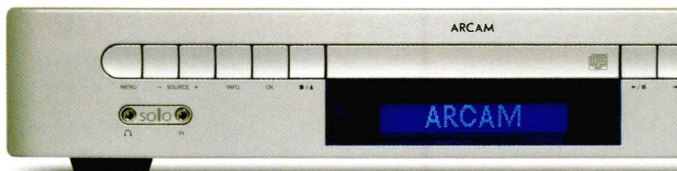
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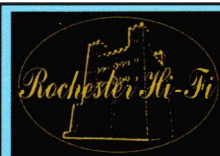
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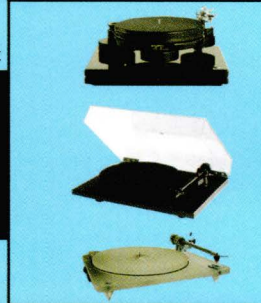
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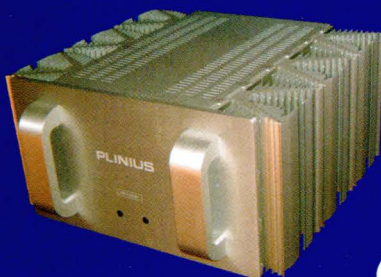


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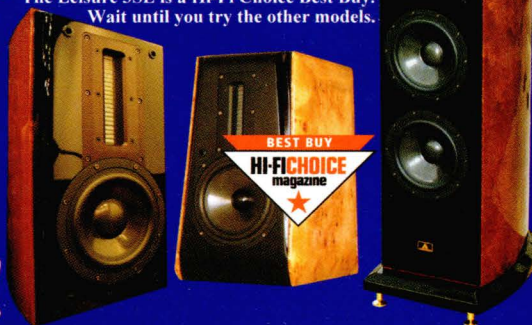
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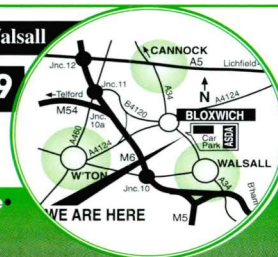
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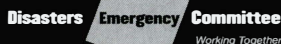
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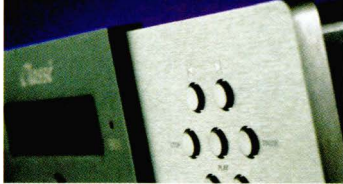
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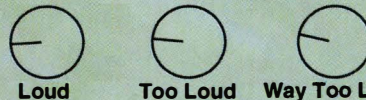
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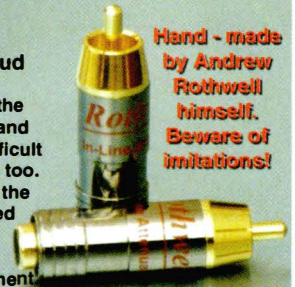


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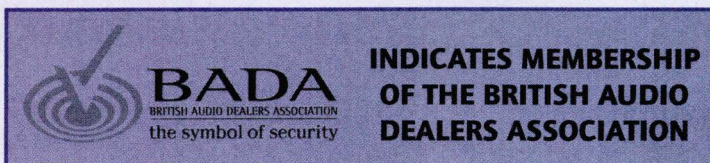
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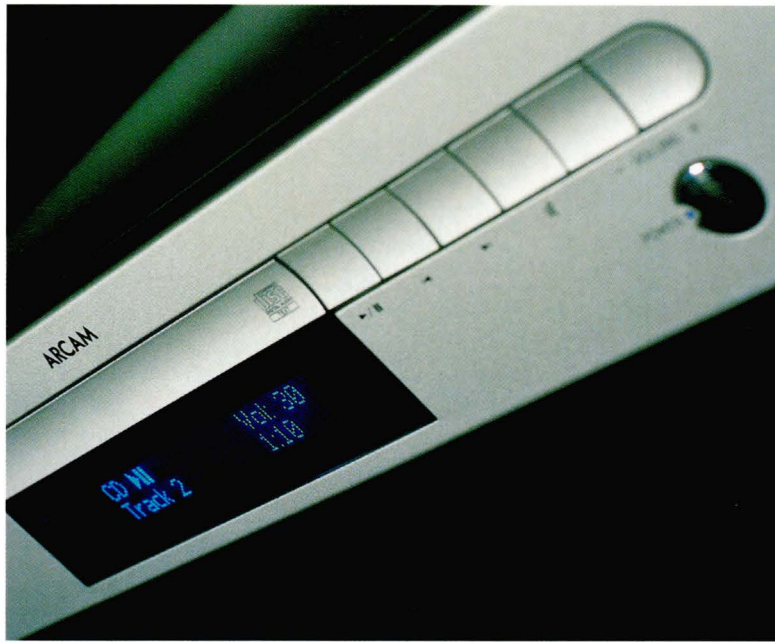
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# A-Z GUIDE TO SECOND-HAND KIT #09 EXPOSURE ELECTRONICS

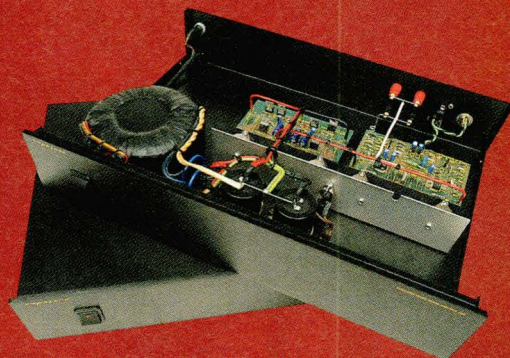
**D**espite an excellent track record and years of fine reviews, Exposure remains an under-rated brand. You'll find that the prices old models go for now are far less than their rivals of the time. For the aspiring second-hand buyer, though, this is great news.

Exposure first appeared on the radar in the 1980s, although the company changed hands in the late 1990s. The Exposure X integrated was well rated, and the pre/power amps of the early 1990s were equally fine, but we'd look at a mid-1990s model instead. As with many companies, Exposure tends to only keep spares for around 10-12 years. Also, Exposure's earlier designs didn't have any form of overload protection; given that prices for newer models aren't much higher than older designs, it's clear that a later model makes more sense.

Our advice is to start your search by seeking out one of the 'Super' models. These had larger transformers and higher voltage rails. They also came with the all important output protection. The pick of the integrated selection is the Super XV. Although this cost around £800 in 1996, this unassuming little beauty is now available for less than £300. If you're lucky, you may even find one for around £200. It should ideally be matched to efficient speakers, and used with comparatively straightforward speaker cables such as Naim's NAC A5, but when so partnered, proves to be a highly articulate, focused and musical device. Vinyl fans will also be pleased to hear that the standard MM/MC phono stage is also of

excellent quality. A cherished example shouldn't give any problems although, as with most Exposure amps of this age or older, the power switches can prove troublesome. A flickering LED is common, and not really worth worrying about, but a noisy switch should be replaced. Exposure will fit a new one for around £30. Incidentally, if you fancy a full overhaul, Exposure will provide free quotations, but typically charges around £175 – probably not worth it on the Super XV, then.

The full service is worth the expense for the Super XVIII/XXI pre/power combination,



Above: Exposure Super XVIII power amps

**“It offers the taut musicality of its integrated brethren, but with more slam and attack.”**

though. This combination cost around £2,000 less than 10 years ago, but can now be picked up for between £500-£700. Compared to a Naim pre/power of a similar vintage, that's fantastic value. It offers all the taut musicality of its integrated brethren, but with a good deal more slam and attack. Even today, this is a highly impressive amp. Like the integrated, it's worth checking the power switch, but otherwise it should be in fine form. But, even if the model you're looking at has blown output devices, these can be replaced for a relatively modest £17.50 each, making a tired example worth considering – so long as it's cheap. As an aside, if you manage to find a piano gloss

black version, at a reasonable price, then snap it up. These were around £300 more expensive than the standard finish at the time, and look superb. As most went to export markets, they're also very rare in the UK.

Pretty much any Exposure amp will provide an involving and musical experience. If you've got some efficient speakers and use vinyl then they make particularly good sense, especially as the pre/power is able to drive trickier loads, too. With cheap second-hand values and good reliability, the newer models make an excellent second-hand purchase. **HFC**

*Dominic Todd  
Next month: Garrard*

## DIY CORNER SPEAKERS

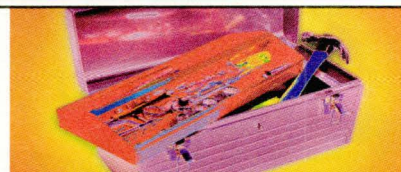
### Part 9 Drive units – introduction

**V**arious techniques and physical principles may be used to create loudspeaker drive units, but the overwhelming majority involve a moving-coil-in-magnet motor driving some form of diaphragm – usually a cone or dome. This in turn shakes the adjacent air molecules and creates the sound. The original Rice and Kellogg patent for this drive unit was granted way back in 1929.

In those early pre-WWII years, the drive units used electromagnets (often called 'field coils') because the materials needed to make sufficiently powerful permanent magnets simply didn't exist. Permanent magnets with sufficient power were developed during the 1940s, but

the aluminium/nickel/cobalt (alnico) alloy used was (and is) very costly. In the 1960s, cheaper iron oxide (ferrite) magnets became the norm, while the 1990s saw powerful new magnetic materials like neodymium/iron/boron coming on the scene, and are often found in tweeters.

Just as there are alternative magnetic materials, so a variety of substances are used for the diaphragms that actually generate the sound. Paper was the original material used to make bass and midrange cones, but synthetic plastics like bextrene and polypropylene started appearing in the late 1960s. Today, a range of woven materials like Kevlar and glassfibre, plus aluminium alloys also have their followers.



Metal is particularly popular for tweeters, as is doped woven fabrics. Again, there's no consensus about the ideal materials, though the debate is often interesting. **HFC**

*Paul Messenger*

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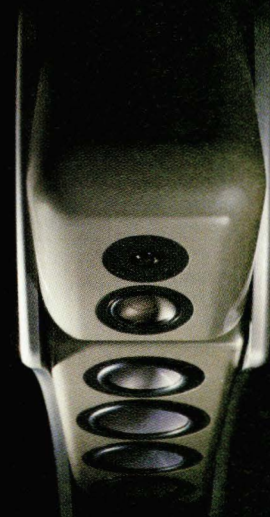
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Glenrothes  
KY7 6RU

tel: 01592 744 779  
fax: 01592 744 710

info@shadowaudio.co.uk  
www.shadowaudio.co.uk



# definitive audio

Definitive Audio creates a quality of musical experience that is irresistible. We achieve this using some of the world's most splendid contraptions and by employing a value system that places musical considerations above all others.

Our inventory includes the tantalising KSL **Kondo** amplifiers from Japan. We have the M7 Line, M7 Phono, M77 Phono, the Neiro integrated and of course the extraordinary Gakuoh. We also have a range of single minded amplifier designs from, amongst others, Border Patrol, Art Audio and Sugden. Our Aladdin's cave of analogue treasures includes 12 choices of moving coil cartridge, the Kuzma Airline, Triplanar 6, and SME Series V tonearms. Keeping this company is an enviable selection of turntables including the Scheu range and the unequivocal SME Model 30 and Kuzma Stabi Referen e.

We have the complete range of **Living Voice** loudspeakers including the internationally celebrated Avatar OBX-R2.

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## EX DEMO AND SECONDHAND ITEMS

	Was	Now
Densen Beat400+ x-demo	1295	979
Accuphase DP77V CD/SACD player x-demo	7600	4999
Audio Note CDT Zero DAC Zero 2 box valve S/H	998	499
Audio Research CD3 S/H	5490	2799
dCS Elgar 24/192 1998 Version S/H	8500	3299
dCS Elgar+ DSD 1394 Version S/H	9500	4500
dCS Verdi SACD/CD Transport S/H	9000	4995
Mark Levinson No31.5 Transport S/H	9999	4999
Mark Levinson No3608 DAC S/H	7500	2999
Meridian 508.24 Clock III S/H	N/A	799
Meridian G08 CD S/H	2250	1899
Naim Audio CD3 S/H	980	449
Primare V10 CD/DVD Player x-demo	795	499
Theta Generation V Balanced S/H	6290	1999
Theta Pro Basic II DAC with Oscom/Balanced S/H	2990	995
Clearaudio Accurate MC x-demo	2800	1699
Clearaudio Unify Unipivot Tonearm New&Boxed	795	599
Clearaudio Victory MC New&Boxed	1030	699
Dynavector XX2 MC Cartridge 100hrs S/H	950	679
EAR The Head MC Transformer S/H	N/A	399
Heed Quazar 2 box MC/MM Phono stage new	550	395
Koetsu Red K Signature 300hrs max S/H	1998	950
Kuzma Stabi/Stogi S Turntable New&Boxed	N/A	1399
Project 2 Turntable S/H	N/A	250
Roksan Xerxes Cognoscenti XPS3 RW Rega Cut S/H	1500	599
Roksan Xerxes XPS1/Alphason HRS100 S/H	N/A	599
Roksan Xerxes X /XPS3/Tabrizi S/H	2695	1699
SME 20/2A Turntable S/H	5537	3799
Systemdeck X II900 /RB250 S/H	N/A	250
Trichord Research Delphini 4 box phono stage S/H	1999	1399
Triplanar Series VI Tonearm S/H	3500	1999
Audio Analogue Bellini Remote Preamplifier X-demo	625	499
Audio Research LS25 Preamplifier S/H	4999	2799
Hovland HP100MC Preamplifier S/H	5995	2999
Naim NAC102/K s/n125*** Preamplifier S/H	1089	549
Spectral DMC15 Preamplifier S/H	1480	3250
Spectral DMC12 Preamplifier Line S/H	4250	1995
Rega Cursa Preamplifier Black x-demo	598	429
Audio Analogue Corelli Stereo Power Amplifier X-demo	695	479
Audio Analogue Donizetti Mono Power Amplifiers X-demo	1050	729
Audiolabs 800Op Black S/H	N/A	199
Audio Research VT200 MkII Valve Power Amplifier S/H	9998	6999
Krell KAV300i Integrated S/H	2790	1299
Krell FPB300 Stereo Power Amplifier S/H	9500	3799
Krell KSA50 Class A 50 Stereo S/H	N/A	999
Krell FPB 700cx Class A Stereo Power Amplifier S/H	14989	8995
Naim NAP180 S/H	1189	599
Red Rose Spirit Integrated x-demo	1000	649
Rega Maia Power amplifier Black x-demo	548	399
Sugden Music Master Power Amplifier S/H	1299	899
Spectral DMA100s Amplifier S/H	4295	2250
ATC Active 10 SL x-demo	1650	1999
ATC Active 20 SL x-demo	3250	2399
ATC SCM7 Cherry x-demo	499	375
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 CLSII Anniversary Electrostatics 7 months Old S/H	6700	4295
Naim Audio Intro Black Ash S/H	875	499
ProAc CC1 Response Centre Speaker Black Ash S/H	599	329
Peak Consult Incognito Rosewood x-demo	7500	5799
Rega ELA Cherry X-demo	749	579
Cardas Neutral Reference 1m RCA-BNC S/H	550	375
Elemental Audio Speaker Stands Special Edition 21" S/H	1599	549
Finite Elemente Pagode E14 Signature Maple 4 tier S/H	1200	849
Finite Elemente Pagode E21 Amplifier Stand S/H	299	179
Madrigal MDC 2 1m Fatboy Digital cable new boxed	319	159
Madrigal MDC1 1m AES/EBU 110ohm Digital Cable new boxed	420	199
Nordost SPM 2x2m Biwired S/H	2199	950
Sennheiser HD600 S/H	249	119
Sennheiser HD565 S/H	199	99
Siltech SQ58G3 2x4m Balanced Interconnect x-demo	2370	1499
Spectral MI-330 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA x-demo	800	499
Spectral MI-330 3ft Interconnect RCA-RCA S/H	625	399
Spectral MI-750 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA x-demo	1400	799
Transparent Music Link Ultra XL 1m RCA S/H	999	499
Transparent Music Link Ultra XL 2m RCA S/H	1299	599
Magnum Dynalab FT-R Remote Switcher for FT101A/Etude	450	279
Magnum Dynalab MD106T 4 months old	3600	2999
Nakamichi BX300E 3 head cassette deck S/H	N/A	299
Rega radio 3 Silver X-demo	398	279

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Audio Research, Krell, Mark Levinson, Naim Audio, SME, Wadia.

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### Sale of part exchanged and ex-dem items

	Sale	New
SME 20 A turntable. Old bird in good nick	£1700	
DCS Elgar / Purcell / Verdi / Verona / Firewire / Uncle Tom Cobley and all	£16000	£24000
Meridian 502 pre-amplifier and 557 power amplifier	£1000	
Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista Integrated. 12 months, boxed, spotless. Big knobs	£2700	£4000
Sugden A21 Integrated with phono. Titanium finish. Modem classic.	£700	£1050
Aloia two box line pre-amp. Look it up on www - rare, boxed, perfect. V. good	£1400	£2800
Art Audio PX25 power amp. Flea power for hom users, like Lowther fans	£2000	£4500
Art Audio Concerto power amplifier. Class A with 6550s	£1400	£2650
TEAD Micro Groove standard. Moving coil phono stage (0.8mv / 1Kohm)	£300	£450
Ruark Crusader 2 loudspeakers. Black. Very nice condition.	£600	
Mark Levinson 383 Integrated amp.	£3500	£6000
Eastern Electric Mini-Max. Valve rec' valve line pre-amp. Sweet, new, boxed	£400	£800
Audio Innovations Series 1000 monos. EL34 class A power amps	£580	
Canary 303 monos. 300B push pull. Lovely, beefy and very nearly new cond.	£3500	£7250
Canary 309 monos. 300B parallel push pull. Very beefy, 6 months use only	£4500	£10000
Canary 301 300B stereo power amp. Very nice sound. 4 years old, revalved	£2250	£5400
Audio Mecca Mephisto CD transport	£1500	£2500
Croft Charisma X line pre-amp. Nearly new, excess stock	£2100	£2850
Croft OTC power amp. Nice condition	£1500	
Canary 608 integrated amp. HF+ Product of the Year. Great sound	£1900	£3000
Revolver 45 floorstanding speaker. New, unused. Cherry	£1200	
Audio Note Japan M7 line pre-amp. 10 years, classic, just serviced	£3000	

## LIVING VOICE



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# turntableworld!

*Like to audition a number of different decks in one place? Love to compare a modified tonearm with the original on the same deck?*

*Want to hear a new cartridge for yourself before you buy? Never found anywhere interested enough to do it for you?*

For some time now its been nigh on impossible to make informed choices about analogue products because while reviews are a great start point, no reviewer has your individual listening preferences - let alone your very own personal ears.

We are here to offer every customer the chance to decide for themselves what they like, by offering genuine choice and service in what we call 'turntableworld'.

Whether it's time to spend scary money or just the hundred quid starter deck you're after, you'll still be talking to someone who is genuinely interested.

turntableworld has selected items from:

- Audio Technica
- Clearaudio
- Dynavector
- Tom Evans Audio Design **NEW!**
- Goldring
- Grado
- Graham Slee Projects
- G F C Hadcock
- Lyra
- Michell Engineering
- Moth
- Nottingham Analogue
- Origin Live
- Ortofon
- Project
- SME
- Sumiko
- Transfiguration
- Trichord Research
- Wilson Benesch

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With part exchange upgrades continuing to be our speciality, you'll also have access to the widest range of used items in the UK - many from manufacturers you'd half forgotten existed, and still supported by our in house warranty of course.

Here's a selection of current stock...

Alchemist	Bragi phono stage and Forset p/s - vgc, superb flexible stage	399
Alphason	Sonata - good, light ash	299
Alphason	Xenon - ex, trimmed down HR100	199
Audiolab	8000PPA phono stage - vgc, flexible stage, rare	449
EAR	834P - fair, mm/mc switchable version	379
Chord	Phono stage - ex, stunning	999
Garrard	401/SME 3009 - ex, plinth and cover	449
Garrard	401/SME 3009 - ex, in gorgeous Aphelion plinth	599
Heybrook	TT2/BasikLVV - ex, boxed	199
Linn	Troika - vgc, boxed	279
Linn	LP12/Lingo/Ittok/VIII/Asaka - nr mint, boxed	1199
Linn	LP12/Armageddon/Aro - nr mint, black, boxed	1599
Linn	LP12/Lingo/Ekos - ex, black, boxed	1499
Linn	LP12/Valhalla/Akito - ex, afromosia, boxed	649
Linn	LP12/Valhalla/IttokLVII - ex, afromosia	699
Linn	LP12/Armageddon/RB300 - vgc, black	979
Linn	Basik, LVX - vgc, black	129
Linn	Axis, Basik plus - vgc, black	279
Linn	Ittok 12" - ex, black, apparently one of only 20 made	999
Logic	DM101/Datum - ex, bargain LP12 challenger	249
Michell	(Transcriptors) Reference hydraulic - ex, fluid arm	649
Michell	Gyrodec/RB300 - ex, brand new arm	799
Michell	Focus One/Focus arm - ex	399
Monrio	AND-N - mm/mc phonostage	179
Mission	774 - ex, fab 80s tonearm	159
MTM	The Source - ex, mahogany	599
Musical Fidelity	XLP - nr mint, boxed	99
Origin 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, cherywood plinth, bargain	199
Rega	Planar 2/RB250 - ex/ex	149
Rega	Planar 3/RB300 - vgc/ex	179
Rega	Planar 78/RB250/Mono Cart - ex/ex	175
Rotel	RQ970 - ex, phono stage	79
Roksan	Xerxes/Tabriz Zi - ex, black	449
Roksan	Xerxes/RB300 - ex, black	399
RMS	309 - ex, boxed	499
Systemdek	IlX/RB250 - ex, in cherry	199
Thorens	TD160b - ex, clw Mission 774	249
Thorens	TD160b/RB250 - ex, black	199
Thorens	TD160s/SME IIIs/V15 - ex, black	199
Transcriptors	Skeleton/Vestigal - ex/ex	799
Transcriptors	Saturn - fair	199
Voyd	Valdi/Helius Scorpio or RB300 - vgc, black, off board p/s	629
Wilson Benesch	Act/Act 2 - the best ever? Rare as....	2499

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Audiolab	Alpha 1 - nr mint, remote	299
Audiolab	8000DAC - ex, boxed	779
Audiolab	8000 Transport and DAC	399
Audiolab	1.1x DAC - ex, boxed	499
AVI	S2000Reference - ex, boxed	199
Cambridge Audio	Discmag/Dacmag - ex, nice combo for peanuts	199
DAI 1.5	nr mint, remote, boxed	299
DPA	Renaissance - nr mint, boxed	89
Kenwood	DP1100 - ex, v. underrated	49
Krell	CD-DSP - ex, clear and smoky, remote, stunning	199
Marantz	CD80 - ex, boxed fantastic 80s heavyweight	69
Marantz	CD60 - ex, remote	49
Marantz	CD46 - ex, remote	129
Meridian	DV4100 OSE - nr mint, remote, boxed	449
Meridian	200 transport and matching dac - ex superb combination	379
Meridian	208 - ex, with built in preamplifier and 209 remote	349
Meridian	200 transport - ex, richard rock, excellent	799
Micromega	508/20 - nr mint, remote	179
Micromega	Stage 1 - ex, smooth sound on a budget	249
Micromega	Stage 5 - ex, sweet sounding player from top French firm	799
Micromega	T-dwe and T-dac - vgc, remote, superb sound, £1000s new	1449
Micromega	Trio - ex, the ultimate Micromega	129
Micromega	Opto - nr mint, budget intro to the delights of Micromega	699
Micromega	Duo B3 and matching DAC - superb combination	119
Musical Fidelity	X Act - nr mint/boxed	199
Musical Fidelity	X10 v3 nr mint, boxed	249
Myriad	T20 - black, nr mint, boxed, remote, bargain!	199
NAD	C541 - nr mint, boxed with remote	1749
NVA	The Transparent Statement - vgc, crated, ... ultimate NVA	299
Quad	77 - ex, remote	799
Quad	95CDP - nr mint, boxed, remote	199
Rega	Planet - ex, black, well reviewed	1499
Resolution	CD50 - nr mint/boxed	749
Roksan	Caspian M Series - ex dem, save £350!!	449
Rotel	RDD980/RDP980 - nr mint, transport and dac vary rare with remote	699
SAT	CDP - ex nr mint, boxed, dedicated remote, superb	149
Sony	MDP8500 - nr mint, laserdisc, VCD, CD, PAL, NSTC	399
Adcom	GTP500iPreTuner and GS45iSPower - bargain!	199
AMC	2445 - ex, well reviewed weighty poweramp	199
Arcam	P75 - ex display remote, silver	199
Arcam	8P - nr mint	199
Arcam	A85 - nr mint	419
Arcam	10P - nr mint	449
Audiolab	8000C - ex, black	229
Audiolab	8000C - nr mint, boxed, remote	379
Audiolab	8000S - nr mint	329
Audiolab	8000Ms - nr mint monoblocks	899
Audiolab	8000P - vgc, grey	299
Audiolab	8000A - ex, boxed, grey, mm/vc	199
Audion	Silver Knights - Stunning boxed valve monoblocks	1199
AVI	SC2000 - gc, integrated	349
Creek	4330 - ex, was Stereophile 'Budget component of the Year'	199
Cyrus	7 - ex, black, boxed	429
Cyrus	3 - ex, black, boxed	229
Denon	POA400 - nr mint monoblocks, rare and superb	399
Denon	POA600 - nr mint monoblocks, rare and superb	599
Exposure	X integrated - nr mint, boxed, black	199
Harmankardon	Citation 17 and 19 - vgc, boxed	399
Heybrook	C2 and P2 PrePower combo - ex, boxed	349
Lavardin	11 - nr mint/boxed/Integrated, superb	1799
Linn	LK10Drak - ex, black, mtm, exceptional vfm	299
Linn	LK100 - nr mint, boxed	299
Magnum	MP300iMP125 x2 - ex, pre and monoblocks	599
Magnum	MA120 - ex, integrated, bargain!	149
Marantz	PM66SE KI Slg - nr mint, boxed	179
Marantz	PM6100SE - nr mint, boxed, champagne	179
Meridian	605a - ex, boxed, pair monoblocks	799
Meridian	505a - ex, boxed, pair monoblocks	899
Meridian	205a - ex, pair monoblocks	599
Meridian	501 - ex, boxed with phono stage	349
Meridian	555 - ex	349
Meridian	501/505x2 - combination asabove	1179
Michell	Alecto - ex, Monoblocks	899
Mission	Cyrus One - from	70
Mission	Cyrus Two and PSX - gc, nestel finish	229
Musical Fidelity	X-A2 - nr mint, boxed integrated	299
NAIM	Nait 3 - ex, boxed	299
Onix	AQ215 - ex, great 80s integrated	179
Primare	A20 - nr mint integrated	379
Quad	405 - ex	179
Quad	405/2 - good, brown	225
Quad	33/303 - nr mint	199
Quad	500 - good, pair monoblocks	249
Quad	909 - nr mint/boxed	699
Rega	Luna - nr mint, black, boxed, better than an original Briori Mira	179
Rega	Mira 2000 - nr mint, boxed	299
Roksan	Caspian M Series - ex dem, superb integrated, save loads	799
Roksan	Caspian M Series - ex dem, pre and monoblocks - stunning	Call
Roksan	Caspian - ex, black, power amp	349
Rotel	RB30 power - ex display, boxed, silver	199
Rotel	RC95 - nr mint remote pre	249
Rotel	RB981 - ex, black powerhouse 2 available for monoblocking etc	225
Rotel	RB970BX - ex, black, stacks of grunt	119
Rotel	RB960BX - ex, black, rock n roll	69
Rotel	RC970BX - ex, black, quality pre	79
Shearpe	Phase 2 - nr mint, boxed, blue marble styling	279
Shearpe	Phase 2 Reference - as above, with phono stage etc	199
Sony	STR-DB940 av amp - vgc, DTS 5.1 etc reduced to just	149
Sugden	A41 prepower - ex, black	499
Acoustic Energy	AE1 - ex, black grittex	399
Acoustic Energy	AE1 mk2 - ex, black ash	449
Acoustic Energy	AE2 - ex, c/w dedicated stands	399
AVI	Nu Neutron - vgc, amazing baby	299
B&W	601S3 - nr mint, black, boxed	249
Celestion	5000 - vgc, ribbon standmount	149
Dynaudio	Audience 50 - nr mint, black boxed c/w dedicated stands	299
Epos	M15 - nr mint, light cherry, boxed	449
Heybrook	HB100 - vgc, superb vfm	79
Heybrook	Quartet - nr mint, boxed c/w matching operaframe stands	229
Impulse	H6 - fair, but greatsound	199
JPW	200 - new, baby bookshelf, save...	79
JPW	204 - new, great floorstander save proverbial shedload	199
KEF	Reference 104/2 - ex, rosewood	699
KEF	C10 - nr mint, boxed	89
KEF	Coda 9 - ex, rosewood	129
Martin Logan	Sequel/SL3 - ex, best value in the UK?	999
Meadowark	Shearwater Hotrod - nr mint/boxed	1199
Mission	70 centre - ex display, boxed	199
Mission	770 - ex display, boxed	99
Mission	771 - nr mint, boxed, rosewood	79
Mission	772 - ex, rosewood	99
Mission Cyrus	780 - ex, black larger bookshelf	99
Mission Cyrus	781 - ex, black larger bookshelf	99
Monitor Audio	Studio Centre - ex display, boxed	299
Monitor Audio	Silver S2 - nr mint, matching, boxed	199
Monitor Audio	Gold Reference 10 - ring for details	379
Monitor Audio	Silver S8 - nr mint, boxed 6 months old	499
Mordaunt Short	912 - ex display, boxed	149
Mordaunt Short	914 - ex display, boxed	199
Opera	Platea - nr mint, beautiful looks and sound	1499
QED	Aria - ex display, boxed mini surrounds	39
QUAD	ESL63 - just back from Quad	299
QUAD	11L - nr mint, boxed, birds eye maple	199
Rega	Ayla - ex, boxed, pretty little cherry floorstander	249
Rega	Jura - ex, cherry	249
REL	Q50 - ex, black	199
Rogers	Studio Monitor - Original vgc, with stands - suit valve amps	199
Equinox - ex, boxed, beautiful monster standmount	899	
Spendor	Prelude - ex, boxed	129
Tandberg	Studio Monitor - Ex, large standmount	399
TDL	Studio 1 - vgc, wood finish transmission line	249
Vienna Acoustics	Strauss - ex, stunning floorstanders in excel	2249
Wharfedale	Pacific P130 - nr mint, boxed, light cherry, beech	299
Audiolab	8001 - nr mint	379
Cyrus	FM75 - nr mint, silver, digital, presets, boxed	279
Cyrus	Original 'Mission' tuner - vgc	79
Nakamichi	1.5 - vgc, black	152
Nakamichi	CR4E - vgc, black	425
NAIM	Nait 03 - new in box	449
Quad	FM2 - vgc, just back from QUAD	199
Quad	FM4 - nr mint, grey	249
Rotel	RT02 - ex display, boxed, silver	199
Sony	MDS JE480 - ex, midsize, with remote	79
Sugden	DTFM - gc, rare, matches A48mk3 etc	179
Technics	STGT1000 - ex, v rare DAB tuner	399
Beyer	DT880 - ex dem	149
B&O	2200 system - ex, turntable, tape and tuner, inc speakers	199
JPW	204/200/208 - 5.1 Speaker package, new bargain, save over £200!	399

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Welcome to *Hi-Fi Choice Reader Classified*, the UK's first and best free private ads service for second-hand hi-fi. These pages are a must-read if you're thinking about buying used kit, and if you want to sell something it's definitely the place to be. It's free to place an advertisement – simply submit your ad of up to 30 words,

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## FOR SALE

**ACCUPHASE DP-65V** CD player with E-307 integrated amp. Two years old, superb condition. £3,750 the pair (cost £7,495), will sell separately. 0161 439 5317 (Stockport).

**AMPHION** valve monoblocks. 6C33c, 12AX7, 12AU7. Class A, 12 WPC. Gold, chrome and glass. Spare set of valves. Boxed, superb. Mike 01202 481386 (Dorset).

**ARCAM ALPHA 8SE** CD player in excellent condition, with Russ Andrews isolating feet. Includes box, manual, remote and Kimber optical lead, £150. 01905 770810 (Worcs).

**ATC SCM7** monitors, cherry, superb (£500), £375. Atacama SE6 stands, black with Atabite lead chips (£110), £75. All as new, six months old, receipts and packaging. Stephen 01462 680262 (Herts).

**AUDIOLAB 8000C** preamp. Late model (1998, F serial) in mint condition with original packaging and manual. Sensible offers please. 07968 060141 or email [jacob.a.rogers@talk21.com](mailto:jacob.a.rogers@talk21.com) (Norfolk/Suffolk).

**AVI BIGGATRON RED SPOT** loudspeakers. Super sound, midrange as to ESL63. Mint, boxed, serial No 533/534, £290. 01903 247779 (Worthing).

**B&W DM6**, Quad 44 & 405. Thorens TD125 MkII. SME 3009 plus Shure V15 Type III. Marantz

CD63 MkII (Signature) CD player. Sony ST700ES tuner. Kenwood KX-W6070 cassette. Nakamichi CR-4E cassette. £570 the lot. 01903 772833 (W/Sussex).

**CHORD COMPANY COBRA 2** interconnects, 2 x 1 metre pairs £30, Cambridge Audio Silver Spirit 60 interconnects, 2 x half metre pairs, £30. Dave, 01483 892955 (Guildford)

**CYRUS 3** amplifier with PSX-R power supply £350. Pure Evoke 2 DAB/FM radio £95. B&W DM602 S3 speakers, as new two months old in original box, with Atacama Nexus stands £225. 01993 709141 (Oxon)

**DYNAUDIO CONTOUR S5.4** stereo and centre speakers (boxed). One year old, move of house forces sale. £3,800 and £650 (ono) respectively. 07900 248604 (Gloucester).

**ELAC 310i JET** loudspeakers, with own stands, £500. Audio Note K/D loudspeaker, £300. ELAC 4pi omni tweeter, £350. Vintage Sugden A21. All except the A21 come with original packaging. 07801 368455 or email [m00d@boltblue.com](mailto:m00d@boltblue.com) (London).

**EXPOSURE XXV RC** amplifier, £430. Castle Avon loudspeakers (Mahogany) including four metres Audioquest bi-wire and plugs, £250. Both in excellent condition 01482 887409 (Hull)

**GOLDRING LENCO GL75** four speed turntable, £55.

01235 532780 (Abingdon). **GRADO SR-60** headphones, £50. 020 7536 0466 or email [jonathan.kempster@bbc.co.uk](mailto:jonathan.kempster@bbc.co.uk) (London).

**GRAHAM SLEE GRAM AMP 2** £90. Aura VA100MkII amp, £200. Aura TU80 tuner, £150.


All mint and boxed. Pioneer PD-S703 CD player in excellent condition but no box, £425 the lot. Email [jonathan.kenyon@wanadoo.fr](mailto:jonathan.kenyon@wanadoo.fr) (Herts).

**KEF Q35** floor standing speakers, cherry wood, excellent as new condition, £125. 01908 640803 (Milton Keynes).

**CYRUS 781** bookshelf loudspeakers, rosewood, boxed, lovely condition and sound, £100. 01751 430911 (York).

**INTEGRA RESEARCH RDV-1** DVD player, RDC-7 AV controller, RDA-7 amp, recently upgraded to the latest formats, as new. Offers to George, 07771 806234 (Glos).

**LEAK TROUGHLINE 3** tuner. Custom made oak case and stereo decoder. Excellent, £150. 01487 814015 (Cams)

**LEXICON DC2** AV processor. DTS, Dolby Digital, THX EX, Full Logic 7. As new, no marks, 

## 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. For more information please call 01942 891741 (Wigan).

**KEF REFERENCE SERIES** Model Four Two loudspeakers, any finish except albina burr. Cash waiting call Martyn. 01494 445005 (High Wycombe).

**NVA DACON**, junior. Alan 01254 705589 (Lancs).

**PIONEER A300 PRECISION** amplifier. Naim 32/32.5, 110/140. Yamaha CDR HD1300. 07810 387 005 (York).

**TANDBERG 2080 OR 2075** amplifier. Good condition, reasonable price. 020 8440 7804 (New Barnet).

**ROYD MINSTREL** loudspeakers, any finish, but must be in perfect working order. Alternatively, a pair of new main driver units would be ideal if possible. John 0161 439 5122 (Stockport).



Above: Musical Fidelity A3.2 amplifier

## BUYING TIPS

Buying second-hand can be a great way to pick up a bargain. A formerly expensive second-hand component might well prove a better long-term bet than a brand-new product if the price is right.

Do some research on which brands have a good service back-up, so if something does go wrong, you can get it fixed. Unless you purchase from a dealer, you're unlikely to get any warranty, so it's up to you to ensure the fitness of any gear that you buy.

Usually, speakers should be less prone to breakdown than amps, and amps should be more reliable than CD players. But any abused component could be trouble – have a proper dem, and judge the seller as well as the goods!



**FOR SALE**

boxed. £3,800 new, a bargain at £800 plus p+p. 07947 758479 (Dorset)

**LINN ACTIVE SYSTEM** seven years old, new condition. Karik transport, Numeric DAC, Wakonda preamp, with Sneaky tuner. Three LK100 power amps, Keilidhs on granite base, £4,000 the lot, (ono). 01305 776932 (Weymouth).

**LINN AXIS** turntable with Basik Plus tone arm, £170. Marantz CD63 MKII CD player, £50. Rotel RA 930BX amplifier, £80.

Yamaha KX580 CD player, £50. NAD 8225 speakers, £70. B&W CC3 C/S £40. Yamaha DSP E390 digital processor, £60. Boxed, vgc. Rick, 01707 885 597 (Welwyn Garden City).

**LUMLEY REFERENCE LM120** monoblocks, 120w of valve power, chrome finish, mint condition. Recently serviced, boxed and with set of spare valves £1,200 ono. 01547 530535 (Shropshire).

**KEF Q3s** boxed as new, £140. 07976 054660 (Reading).

**KRELL KSL** preamp. Excellent condition classic preamp. Can be seen working. Bargain for a Krell at £450. Call Ken on 07917 021328 (Cambridgeshire).

**LINN ACTIVE** system Karin preamp with power supply, Kaber Activ crossover, 3x LK100 power amps, Ikemi CD player, Pekin tuner, Kaber active speakers, K400 cables, equipment support, and manuals. £2,500 the lot. 01371 820182 (Essex)

**LINN LP12** turntable. Naim preamp. Naim 250 power amps.

Pioneer tuner. BX1 cassette. 0121 353 3019 (Sutton Coldfield).

**LINN TROIKA** cartridge, £345. Leak Stereo Fetic tuner, £55. Audiotech Tables x2, £55 each. 01344 773465 (Berks).

**MARANTZ PM4000** amplifier in black. Pair of Mission M71i speakers in beech. Alphason stands. All less than two years old, perfect condition, boxed. £120 ono. Call Richard, 01686 650900 (Powys).

**MARANTZ SR4300** receiver. Dolby 5.1, DTS, Pro-Logic II, EX and others, 5x80 watts power. Also Mission m73c centre and m7ds bipole surrounds. All in excellent condition with books and boxes, £300 ono. 07771 508444 (Boston).

**M&K LCR 850** satellite speakers in cherry wood (x3), plus matching stands. Cost £1,900 new, one year old, £1,200 ono. 01792 474608 (Llanelli)

**M&K S85** satellite speakers, and S85C centre speaker, all as new. Offers to George on 07771 806234 (Glos).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A3.2CR** power amplifier, £650. Terry, 020 8482 0363 (London)

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A3.2** CD player and A3.2 integrated amplifier. Silver, 10 months old. As new (£2,000), accept £1,100. Call Rob 0116 2811567 or 01973 501199 (Leicester).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY F16** power amplifier. Mint and boxed, £995. Alan 02392 453382 (Hants).

**NAD C541i** CD player. Hardly used, boxed with manual and remote. Upgrade forces sale,

£120. Call 02392 617256 (Portsmouth).

**NAIM 102** preamp with power supply, £600. Naim 250 power amp £800. Naim Hi-Cap, £250. Naim SBL speakers, £650.

Edinburgh Wireless Company FMT1 tuner. offers. Call 01482 656611 (Hull).

**NAIM HI-CAP** power supply, £595. Epos ES14 speakers, black and stands, £275. All mint, boxed. Can demonstrate. Call Andy 01527 835769 (Worcs)

**NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN** speaker cable bi-wire five metres. Call 0161 2266125 or 07961 427777 (Manchester).

**PERPETUAL TECHNOLOGIES** P1A + P3A with Level 2 Modwright upgrade, Monolithic PSU and Revelation Audio Cryo silver cables. A bargain at £995. 020 8205 4710 (London).

**PRO-JECT TUBEBOX** MM/MC phono stage, external power supply, three impedance settings for moving coil. Boxed as new – only six months use, £200 ono. 07867 605552 (Reading).

**PRO-JECT DEBUT** turntable £50. VideoLogic DRX-601ES £75. Dynaudio Audience 60, black, £175. All excellent condition. Call Vic 01372 454451 (Surrey).

**PURE DIGITAL DRX 702ES** DAB/FM tuner. Black, boxed and mint condition, £180. 07981 533084 (Swansea)

**REGA PLANAR 25** with RB600 arm, rosewood. Heed audio power supply/speed change (radically improves performance). Roksan Chorus Black cartridge, little used and boxed, £695 the lot. Kimber

PowerKords, £35 each. Call 01285 862539 (Cirencester).

**REVOX B260S-RDS** FM tuner, black finish with gold lettering, beautiful sound. Very good condition, boxed with instructions, cost over £1,000 new, but will accept £175. Call 0161 3309791 or email pazmar@supanet.com (Manchester).

**REVOX B77 MK11 HS** complete with perspex protective cover and spool hubs. Had very little use, £480 ono. Call 01340 810687 or email keithnorth@f2s.com (North East Scotland).

**REVOX B77** 1/2 track. 15ips-7ips tape recorder. With 10in and 7in reels and tapes, £300. Call David 01978 757177 (Wrexham).

**ROTEL RCD 02** CD player, Denon PMA 355 UK amplifier, Denon DRW695 twin cassette deck, Celestion SATS L110. All in mint condition. £835 12 months ago, now a bargain at £400. 0114 2401614 (Sheffield)

**ROTEL RCD1070** CD player, silver, boxed, excellent, £250. Rotel RB 991 power amp, black, boxed, excellent £200. Call 07887 527397 (Staffs).

**SONUS FABER GRAND PIANO** loudspeakers, black. Mint and boxed, £895. Call Alan 02392 453382 (Hants)

**SONUS FABER GUARNERI** Homage loudspeakers with dedicated stands. Unbelievable sound and build. Mint condition with crates and books (£5,400) £3,000. Stuart 0161 330 8238 (Manchester).

**SUGDEN A21A** amplifier, £600, also A21A power amp, £600. Both mint condition. Buy both for £1,100. 0161 226 6125 or 07961 427777 (Manchester)

**SUGDEN A21A** amplifier. Little used. Excellent, £350. Call 01487 814015 (Cams)

**TDL RTL 2** loudspeakers on 12inch stands. Rosewood finish. Good condition, £140. 07729 600847 (West Sussex).

**TEAC SYSTEM** comprising AH500 amplifier, TH500 tuner, RH500 cassette player, PDH500 CD player and Mission 731 loudspeakers, £350.

Call Tony on 07957 354064 or 01277 633660 (Essex).



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