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- > Michell TecnoDec
- > Pro-Ject RPM 9 X
- > Rega P5
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JULY 2005



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# CLASSE



# HI-FI CHOICE

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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.



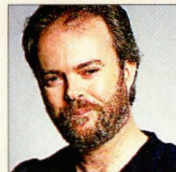
### DAN GEORGE

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*.



### DOMINIC TODD

Like many industry types, Dominic started his hi-fi life working in the retail sector. But he is now better known as a hi-fi reviewer, columnist, and all-round audio journalist. He has been writing about his passion since 1993.



### JASON KENNEDY

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



### ALAN SIRCOM

After a stint selling hi-fi, Alan began his journalistic career in 1991. 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 turntables priced from £750 to £1,500 are put before the *HFC* revolution committee. We find the best spin doctor

### THREE-BOX STEREO STUNNERS

Sub/sat speaker subtlety from Naim Audio and B&W. Are they good for music?

### ARCAM TAKES A SOLO

Arcam's new direction takes the one-box system to greater heights than ever before

### CLASSY, CLASS A, CLASSÉ

Yorkshire's hottest amplifier and Canada's sexiest CD and amp all win our vote

### AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...

The next issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* is on sale 2 June. Don't miss a thing – see p74 for our latest great subscription offer





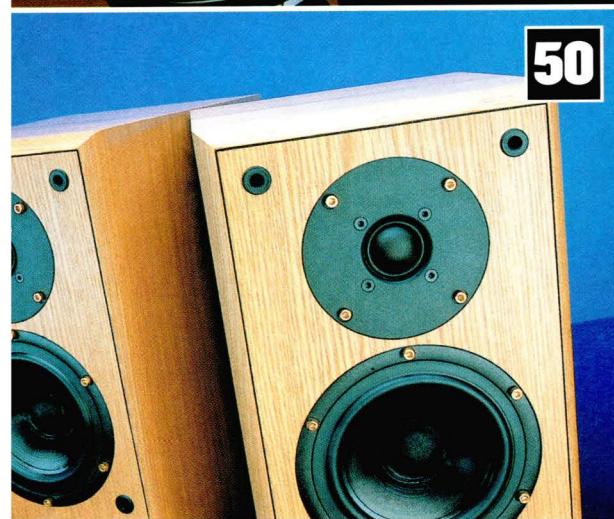
58



48



56



34



# Contents

## NEWS AND FEATURES

### 6 DUALDISC

Your exclusive chance to try out DualDisc

### 9 PRODUCT NEWS

The juiciest new fruit from the hi-fi tree

### 14 HAPPENINGS

Hot stories and events from around Planet Hi-Fi

### 16 DISPATCHES

Fresh opinion from the hi-fi commentators with clout

### 22 ESSENTIALS

Hot hi-fi accessories – tested just for you

### 25 INTERVIEW

Classical virtuoso Alexander Balanescu

### 26 COMPETITION

Win Audiovector's stunning MI 3 Super loudspeaker, worth £1,600

### 28 CHOICE CUTS

New music – rated by our experts

### 31 CHOICE MAIL

A selection of your letters and emails

### 34 BEAUTIFUL SYSTEMS

A high-end set-up of genuine sonic beauty... This issue: Absolute Sounds

## EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

### IN-DEPTH PRODUCT TESTS

40 Classé CDP-100 CD player and CAP-2100 integrated amplifier

44 Naim n-SAT satellite speaker and n-SUB subwoofer

48 Arcam Solo CD/DAB receiver

50 Ruark Sabre III loudspeaker

52 Sugden A21SE integrated amplifier

56 B&W M-1 satellite speaker and PV1 subwoofer

58 Marantz DV9500 universal disc player

61 Stax SR-001 Mk II headphone

## ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

### TURNTABLES £750-£1,500

64 Clearaudio Champion

65 Marantz TT15

67 Michell TecnoDec

68 Pro-Ject RPM 9 X

69 Rega P5

71 Roksan Radius 5

## BUYER'S BIBLE

The ultimate guide to high performance hi-fi and AV gathering together all our favourite products for your perusal. Your shortlist starts here...

### SOURCE COMPONENTS

78 CD players

80 DVD players

82 Vinyl

85 Radio tuners

86 Digital recorders

### AMPLIFIERS

94 Stereo amps

96 Multichannel amps

### LOUDSPEAKERS

100 Stereo speakers

104 Multichannel packages

### ANCILLARIES

107 Headphones

109 Cables

110 Stands and supports

## READER SERVICES

Our regular information service, including where to buy, how to get a back issue and a very special subscription offer

74 How to subscribe

76 Back issues

113 Choice Bits accessories shop

114 Dealer Guide

120 Dealer Directory

122 What's in next month's edition of *Hi-Fi Choice*

## FREE MINI-MAG!

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

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

3 Trading Pages

7 Reader Classified





# DualDisc is here!



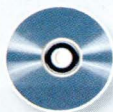
The new DualDisc music format has launched in the UK at last. To celebrate, we're giving a DualDisc away free with this issue, so try it for yourself! Like all DualDiscs, our superb sampler has two sides – one side carries a CD-compatible layer, for use in ordinary stereo CD players, while the other features a DVD version of the same recording, complete with surround sound versions of the same tracks, video content and much, much more...



Your free disc is brought to you by the 5.1 Entertainment Group and features tracks taken from full DualDisc releases. Each track is recorded in CD stereo on the CD side, and then again in multichannel DVD-Audio (MLP Lossless encoding) on the DVD side, with extras including video clips, photo galleries and so on. The full track listing can be seen on the facing page. So give it a whirl... and enjoy!

*\*For copyright reasons, we regret that the free DualDisc sampler is only available with UK copies of Hi-Fi Choice. Sorry!*

## DualDisc: The Technical Low-Down



DualDisc is a new hybrid CD/DVD, each disc comprising a CD-compatible side and a DVD side. The Record Industry Association of America controls the format and only licensed plants can replicate discs, and these currently include Cinram, Sony DADC and Sonopress.

For the CD side, 'CD-compatible' is the operative phrase – it is not actually 'Red Book' standard, but contains the same 16-bit/44.1kHz PCM data found on a standard audio CD and will play in most (but it seems not quite all) ordinary stereo CD players. Cinram states that the CD side can hold "approximately" the same amount of data as required from a standard CD, equivalent to 74 minutes of audio. However, the longest playing time currently stands at 65 minutes.

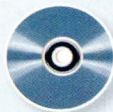
At 0.9mm, the distance from the disc surface to the data layer is thinner than the 1.1mm of a regular audio CD and therefore reflectivity is reduced. Owing to both factors, the standard 'Compact Disc' logo cannot be used as the discs are technically non-compliant.

Typically, a CD is 1.2mm thick, while DualDisc currently stands at 1.45-1.46mm. CD-DA 'Red Book' specifications allow for a discs between 1.1-1.5mm, so DualDisc does fit within 'Red Book' limits.

The DVD side is equivalent to a DVD-5 and there are no technical compromises. Disc capacity is 4.37GB and mandatory audio formats are the same as standard DVD-Video/DVD-Audio releases. Discs with DVD-Video content must include Dolby Digital, MPEG-Audio or PCM, at or above a 48kHz sample rate. Any DVD-Audio content must be linear PCM, with or without MLP lossless compression, with sample rates ranging from 44.1kHz to 192kHz and sample sizes from 16 bits to 24 bits. (At sample rates of 176.4kHz or 192kHz, only two-channel sound is supported, rather than multichannel).

The only content stipulations are that the CD side offers the complete album and that the DVD side offers the same tracks (at least) at a higher resolution. Two channels of 16-bit/48kHz PCM (just above CD standard) would satisfy this criterion – a DualDisc does not have to contain DVD-Audio content, but it seems that plenty will (including all the tracks on our sampler).

## DualDisc: An Audiophile View



DualDisc promises great things, including the potential to put high-resolution multichannel audio on the map with the added convenience of backward-compatibility, thanks to the CD side.

Unlike the hybrid SACD discs of today, there's the option of video content too. It offers music producers the option of packaging both DVD and CD versions of an album together, so that the same disc may be purchased for CD and DVD players alike.

It's early days for the format and compatibility of the CD side appears not to be universal from machine to machine. It also varies from disc to disc. Some audiophile CD players appear to have difficulty playing the CD layer, particularly those using DVD-compatible optics, and the same goes for CD/SACD combination players. Many DVD players won't play the CD side, either – this is owing to the decreased reflectivity, and affects CD-R discs, too... but that's what the DVD side is for!

Much has been written about the warnings (now being revoked in many cases) from some hardware manufacturers. Many of these can be summarised as knee-jerk reactions by over-zealous lawyers to an untried format. If your player adheres to CD-DA (standard audio CD) specifications, the disc won't get stuck, weaken the mechanism, explode or cause World War Three, so there's no need for panic...

For the audiophile music listener, the biggest question raised by DualDisc will be whether or not releases contain high-resolution audio. DVD-Audio content is not mandatory and disc space is at a premium (until DVD-9 versions become available), so record companies could eschew 24-bit/192kHz PCM for Dolby Digital and the mass-market appeal of extras, such as 128kbps MP3 or video clips. We can only hope that quality-conscious labels and producers will embrace the format and squeeze out every last drop of its potential. DualDisc might not revolutionise the world of music replay, but the potential to make a lasting impression is certainly there.





## What's on your DualDisc

### 1. LAUREN ELLIS

#### Dry As A Bone

**AUDIO** CD side:

16-bit/44.1kHz stereo

**DVD side:** 24-bit/

96kHz multichannel

DVD-Audio, plus Dolby

Digital 5.1 on the video footage

**VIDEO** Excerpt of a video that combines interview clips with live performance footage to provide background on this exciting artist. Excerpt of video scrapbook shows collection of reviews, awards and concert posters set against the instrumental track from the album.

Taken from the Silverline Records release:

*Feels Like Family*



### 4. JOSH ONE

#### Midnight Samba

**AUDIO** CD side:

16-bit/44.1kHz stereo

**DVD side:** 24-bit/

96kHz multichannel

DVD-Audio, plus Dolby

Digital 5.1 on the video footage

**VIDEO** Excerpt of longer video that features several tracks from the album. The disc is also supplied with a video of the artist as he goes about a typical day in his hometown of Long Beach, California – it's a tough life, Josh!

Taken from the Myutopia Recordings release:

*Narrow Path*



### 7. JANE MONHEIT

#### Once I Walked In The Sun

**AUDIO** CD side:

16-bit/44.1kHz stereo

**DVD side:** 24-bit/

96kHz multichannel

DVD-Audio

**VIDEO** Lyrics for the track are included and browseable in DVD-Audio playback.

Taken from the Silverline Records release:

*In The Sun*



### 2. DAR WILLIAMS

#### I Won't Be Your Yoko Ono

**AUDIO** CD side:

16-bit/44.1kHz stereo

**DVD side:** 24-bit/

96kHz multichannel

DVD-Audio, plus Dolby Digital 5.1 on video

**VIDEO** Excerpt of exclusive video recording, specially shot during the rehearsals for the tour supporting the release of *The Green World* album.

Taken from the Silverline Records release:

*The Green World*



### 5. DISHWALLA

#### Somewhere In The Middle

**AUDIO** CD side:

16-bit/44.1kHz stereo

**DVD side:** 24-bit/

96kHz multichannel

DVD-Audio, plus Dolby Digital 5.1 on the video

footage

**VIDEO** Includes an excerpt of the music video for the track and a bonus audio commentary by the entire band relating to the recording itself.

Taken from the Immergent release: *Opaline*



### 8. UTAH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA/

#### ABRAVANEL

Excerpt from

*Swan Lake* –

*Tchaikovsky*

**AUDIO** CD side:

16-bit/44.1kHz stereo

**DVD side:** 24-bit/

96kHz multichannel DVD-Audio, plus Dolby

Digital 5.1 on the video footage

**VIDEO** Members of Abravanel's Utah Symphony provide background. Packed with extras from the Vanguard Archives.

Taken from the Silverline Classics release:

*Swan Lake/Tchaikovsky*



### 3. PONCHO SANCHEZ

#### Batiri Cha Cha

**AUDIO** CD side:

16-bit/44.1kHz stereo

**DVD side:** 24-bit/

96kHz multichannel

DVD-Audio, plus Dolby

Digital 5.1 on the video footage

**VIDEO** Includes an excerpt of exclusive video footage included only on the DualDisc release.

Taken from the Silverline Records release:

*Poncho At Montreux*



### 6. TIPPER

#### No Dice

**AUDIO** CD side:

16-bit/44.1kHz stereo

**DVD side:** 24-bit/

96kHz multichannel

DVD-Audio, plus Dolby

Digital 5.1 on the video footage

**VIDEO** The recording on your free DualDisc includes a special excerpt of the music video for *No Dice* on the DVD-Audio layer.

Taken from the Myutopia Recordings release:

*Surrounded*



### 9. GORDON GOODWIN'S BIG

#### PHAT BAND

High

Maintenance

**AUDIO** CD side:

16-bit/44.1kHz stereo

**DVD side:** 24-bit/

96kHz multichannel

DVD-Audio, plus Dolby Digital 5.1 on the video

footage

**VIDEO** This footage focuses on the recording of the album. Music transcriptions of the featured solos on the track by Eric Marienthal and Andy Martin. Excerpts of a much larger photo gallery that exists on the DualDisc.

Taken from the Silverline Records release: *XXL*



DualDisc titles like the ones featured on this sampler are now available from Amazon.co.uk, Play.com, HMV and other good music retailers.

Typical prices are around £15.

For further information or in the unlikely event you experience problems with the DualDisc, please email: [essential@essential-music.com](mailto:essential@essential-music.com)

Many thanks to Emma Jeffs at Dolby for her help in putting this DualDisc sampler together.



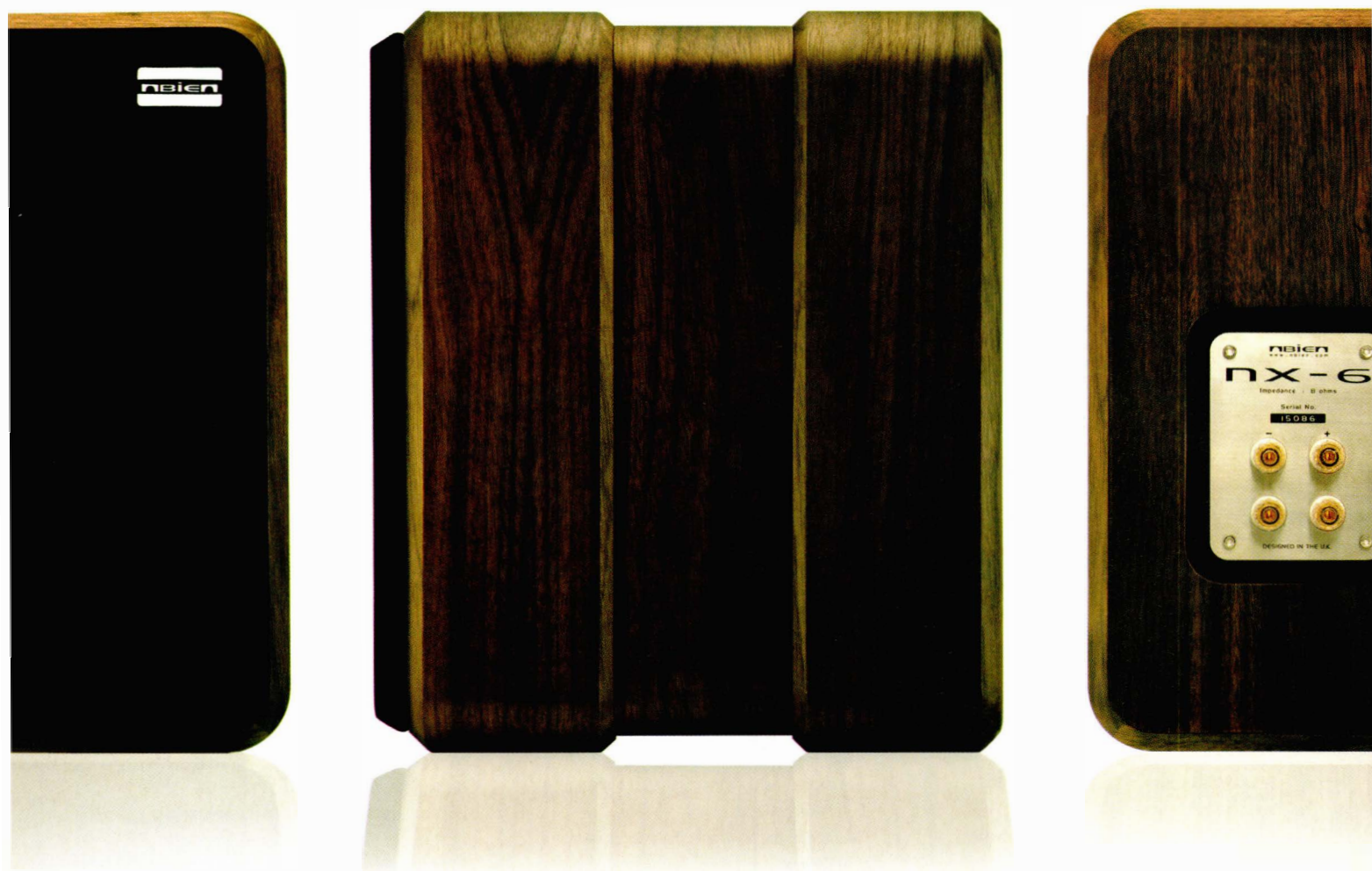


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## ELAC FS 607 X-JET FLOORSTANDING LOUDSPEAKER

**▶** This gorgeous hunk of aluminium is the new Elac FS 607 X-Jet – an exciting new floorstander that's just a step down from the two Elac flagships. This ultra-rigid new three-and-a-half-way design is dominated by the coaxial X-Jet tweeter unit – a ribbon tweeter with an 'O'-shaped planar midrange driver around it.

The large ribbon unit uses neodymium magnets to deliver a frequency range up to 50kHz, while the woofers help deliver

bass down to 28Hz, it is claimed. Behind the ribbon, an aluminium honeycomb midrange driver delivers the midband until 2.35kHz, where the Jet takes over.

Closely hugging the sophisticated tweeter/mid array is a pair of sizeable 180mm woofers, which use an aluminium sandwich cone. But, does this metal guru do timing, too? We can't wait to find out.

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

<b>PRODUCT</b> Elac FS 607 X-Jet
<b>TYPE</b> Floorstanding loudspeaker
<b>PRICE</b> £5,000
<b>KEY FEATURES</b> Aluminium chassis ▶ X-Jet tweeter array ▶ Three and a half way design ▶ Twin 180mm bass drivers
<b>CONTACT</b> 0800 652 5002 <a href="http://www.elac.com">www.elac.com</a>



# Vivid Loudspeakers



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.....



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**£7,750**



**K1**  
**£10,750**



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[ray@rowlesmusic.co.uk](mailto:ray@rowlesmusic.co.uk) [www.vividspeakers.com](http://www.vividspeakers.com)





## AUDIA FLIGHT CD ONE CD PLAYER

▶ Audia who? That's Audia Flight – a high-end Italian specialist with a natty line in amplifiers. Its first stab at a CD player is impressive, too – the CD One is a beautiful piece of engineering, boasting upsampling Crystal DACs and a respected Philips mechanism. The top-loading player is extensively damped and contains three beefy toroids in the power supply for analogue, digital and mechanism sections.

Jitter is helped kept low by mounting the mechanism on a high-mass machined base, which is just one of a series of fine design aspects within this player. The CD One exudes sex-appeal from the sumptuous remote to the subtle blue glow it emits, but only time will tell whether it's set to trouble the Wadias and Naims of this world.

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

**PRODUCT** Audia Flight CD One

**TYPE** CD player

**PRICE** £4,500

**KEY FEATURES** Upsampling CD player ▶ Crystal CS43122 DAC ▶ Phillips Pro 2 mechanism ▶ Single ended and balanced outputs ▶ BNC and RCA digital inputs

**CONTACT** ☎ 01235 511166 🌐 www.audio.it



## NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS



### CHORD ONE

Chord's sublime new One CD player follows the successful launch of the DAC64 and Blu upsampling transport, from the group's petite Choral series. One uses the same die-cast CD mechanism and top-loading arrangement as the Blu, adding the latest 24-Bit/192kHz D to A conversion with 128-times oversampling. Philip's CD-Pro2M mechanism has been utilised with features including a fully-buffered, balanced analogue output stage with RCA and XLR connections, plus a BNC coaxial digital output. The One can be further enhanced with Chord's DAC64 DAC unit and is available in a range of finishes including the new highly-polished Brilliant.

**Price** £2,995 **Due** now

☎ 01622 721444 🌐 www.chordelectronics.co.uk

### LINN CHAKRA

Linn Products has announced a range of power amplifiers for both stereo and multichannel applications under the Chakra moniker. The eight individual models in the range have all been designed to offer 'silent power' through new topology, developed from Linn's high-power monolithic amp circuits. The approach is claimed to combine the merits of a monolithic and bipolar design, thus offering significant speed and linearity. All models are available with either balanced or single-ended phono connections.

**Price** From £1,400 to £3,200 **Due** spring/summer

☎ 0141 307 7777 🌐 www.linn.co.uk



### LEHMANN AUDIO BLACK CUBE LINEAR

Phono goodies from Lehmann Audio are now available in the UK through Roksan/Pro-Ject distributor Henley Designs. The Lehmann range includes the highly regarded Black Cube and Silver Cube phono stages plus the new Black Cube Linear – a headphone amp and single source preamp. All Lehmann Audio products are designed and handcrafted in Germany.

**Price** Black Cube Linear £320 **Due** now

☎ 01235 511166 🌐 www.henleydesigns.co.uk



### MONITOR AUDIO SILVER RS SERIES

High-street dealers across the UK will soon be stocking Monitor Audio's new Silver RS loudspeaker range. The RS series is distinguished from the original Silver range by its new drivers and a fresh cabinet design, and comprises a standmount (the RS1), two floorstanders (the RS6 and RS8) plus a centre channel, subwoofer and dedicated surround speaker. All models feature proprietary driver technology and all designs (except the subwoofer) include a 25mm ceramic coated tweeter and a 150mm coated mid/bass driver. The ceramic coating is said to avoid break up modes that are associated with distortion.

**Price** From £350 (RS1) to £800 (RS8) **Due** now

☎ 01268 740580 🌐 www.monitoraudio.co.uk



## ONKYO 275 SERIES

Onkyo has added to the 'new wave' of Japanese audio with the launch of three new stereo components. All three components in the 275 series are solidly built with a 1.6mm thick aluminium chassis, and each sells for below the £500 mark. The C-733 CD player boasts Wolfson 24-bit/192kHz DACs plus an in-house, low-vibration mechanism for greater disc stability. The 80W A-933 integrated amp sports a MM phono stage, and the T-433 FM/AM tuner boasts auto tuning, 30 presets and a timer. **Price** A-933 amp £500; C-733 CD player £400; T-433 tuner £300 **Due** now

☎ 01494 681515 🌐 www.onkyo.co.uk



## Soundbites

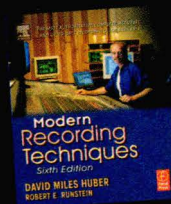
**NORDOST** has a new reference mains lead called the Brahma. Priced at £900 for a two metre lead, it is constructed from five mono-filament, solid core conductors. Each conductor is ultrasonically cleaned and polished and coated in silver. The five cores maintain impedance and capacitance to tight tolerances, it is claimed. ☎ 01352 730251

**SENNHEISER's** new HD215 closed back headphone is aimed at the semi-pro market and offers high isolation from outside noise and high SPLs. The £50 cans also feature swivelling ear cups for one-ear monitoring and 'outstanding' comfort, it is claimed. One for DJs and commuters alike. ☎ 0800 652 5002



**SONY** has launched a palm-sized DAB/FM Walkman – its smallest player yet. Despite its diminutive dimensions the XDR-M1 packs in a four-line backlit LCD display with scrolling text. Battery life extends to a respectable nine hours and extra features include a 40-preset memory and a text store function, so you'll never forget the name of that Celine Dion track again. Expect to pay around £150. ☎ 08705 111999

**MODERN Recording Techniques** from Focal Press gives a comprehensive insight into the professional recording world. Along with advice and tips on getting the best from both project and professional recording sessions, the £25 book is full of the latest recording technology, including both surround and digital flavours, there's even a career advice section. ☎ 01865 474010



## PHONOSOPHIE IMPULS

New CD players are always of interest to HFC and the three upmarket Impuls models from Hamburg are of special interest; they are made by Phonosophie, perhaps best known for the £2,250 P3 turntable. Brought in by UK distributor uberphon, the CD player range comprises three models (the 1, 1.5 and 2), which are all fully upgradeable. Common features shared throughout the range include a Philips mechanism, one-bit D to A converter, plus a low-noise toroidal transformer. The flagship Impuls 2 also benefits from a special 'floating disc' mechanism and patented proprietary circuitry. **Price** Impuls 1 £2,675, Impuls 1.5 £3,675, Impuls 2 £4,875 **Due** now

☎ 01730 261924 🌐 www.phonosophie.co.uk



## RUSS ANDREWS PRO HIFI LINK

Hi-Fi accessories specialist Russ Andrews has devised a new computer-audio product that allows users to connect PCs loaded with MP3 files to hi-fi systems, bypassing the soundcard. The device called the Pro HiFi Link, plugs into the PC's USB port and offers connectivity with amplifiers via RCA, or to a DAC/multichannel receiver via a digital connection. Russ claims the device upgrades the sound from regular soundcards 'massively'. An upgraded version with an external power supply is also available. **Price** £80 **Due** now

☎ 0845 345 1550 🌐 www.russandrews.com



## AVI BRIO

AVI head honcho Ashley James has announced the company's flagship loudspeaker, the Brio. The substantial 60Kg floorstander is a three-way, sealed box design with what James describes as, "a combination of ideal sizes of the best drive units available". The handmade individually-calibrated boxes use a 25mm tweeter, 125mm midrange unit and a whopping 300mm bass driver configured in an asymmetric layout. The cabinet is based on a 25mm veneered MDF box that houses AVI's unique 'active in a passive' crossover. The speakers have been designed to work predominantly with AVI amplification, yet sensitivity is rated at a valve-friendly 90dB. The Brio is built to order, but can be auditioned at AVI's Gloucestershire factory. **Price** £4,750 **Due** now

☎ 01453 752656 🌐 www.avihifi.com



## HAPPENINGS

### The Insider

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

**KULWINDER SINGH RAI**  
Job Title: PR executive  
Company: RAI PR,  
representing various brands



#### What's the future of hi-fi?

It would be much rosier if the industry were able to better communicate that quality hi-fi gets you appreciably closer to the music.

#### DVD-Audio or SACD - and why?

From a subjective point of view, neither really move me. Commercially, both are non-starters.

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

*Piano Music Volume 1* by Rodrigo, played by Artur Pizarro (on Naxos, CD) blew me away a few weeks ago.

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

As of today, I've yet to hear a universal machine that can play CDs as well as a dedicated CD player. Being able to play a CD is one thing, being able to play it well is another.

#### CD or vinyl - and why?

CD can be very good but it still lacks a whole dimension of presence and intimacy, no matter how good the replay chain. Vinyl reaches much deeper, but be prepared to make compromises to experience it. Adding valve amplification restricts the format's appeal, but the combination invariably sings with a fluency that silver disc, amplified by transistors or integrated circuits, has yet to equal.

### Hi-Fi Diary

#### JUNE

27-30 CEDIA Expo  
ICC, Birmingham [www.cedia.co.uk](http://www.cedia.co.uk)  
[www.cedia.co.uk](http://www.cedia.co.uk)  
Annual custom installation showcase

#### SEPTEMBER

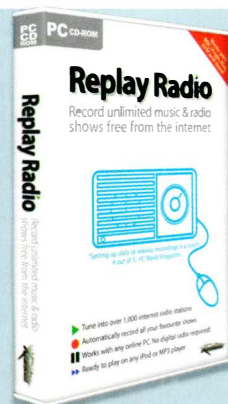
23-25 The Hi-Fi and Home  
Entertainment Show  
The Renaissance and Park Inn hotels,  
Heathrow, London  
London's best-established hi-fi show

#### NOVEMBER

29-30 Home Entertainment Show  
Renaissance Hotel, Manchester  
Manchester's hi-fi and home  
cinema expo

## What's on the radio?

Replay Radio is taking advantage of the broadband revolution by letting PC users record radio shows from any of the over 1,000 stations available on the internet. Replay operates like a VCR; you can program it to record a particular show which can be played in the home or downloaded onto your MP3 player. The £20 Replay Radio software is published by XtraMedia in Brighton, which provides free updates to its EPG (electronic programme guide). Meanwhile, Pure Digital has given its latest DAB radio iVOX, or the ability to speak in 'a real human voice, not robotic synthesized speech'. The iVOX announcements tell you the station name, time and alarm settings and can even guide you through setting alarms or presets.



## Fighting the file sharers

The BPI (British Phonographic Industry), which represents UK record companies, has reached 23 settlements with file sharers paying up to £4,500 in fines. It won a court ruling that meant six UK internet service providers had to provide information about subscribers suspected of file sharing. The BPI suggests that the nine million legal downloads last year were just a drop in the ocean compared to illegally exchanged files.

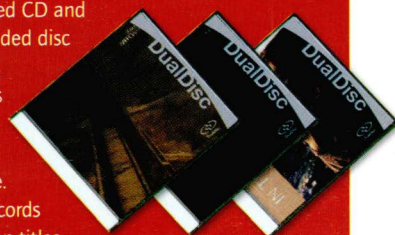
April 17th saw downloads included in the Official Singles Chart, with sales in the preceding week being counted toward that week's chart.



## DualDisc lands in the UK

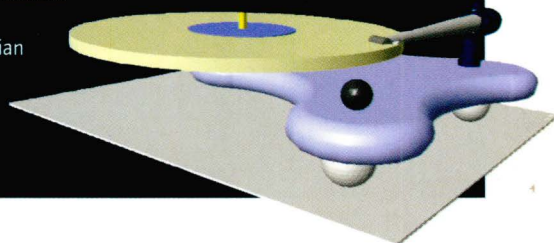
April 25th saw the UK launch of DualDisc, the combined CD and DVD double-sided disc that the music industry hopes will revive interest in 'hard' software.

Silverline Records is launching ten titles, offering AAC/WMA9 tracks that can be downloaded to iTunes or a PC as well as compatible MP3 players, alongside tracks encoded for Dolby Headphone playback. Silverline's first batch of titles includes Todd Rundgren's *Liars* and Gary Moore's *Back to the Blues*, and all include DVD-Audio. Prices are anticipated to be on a par with those for premium CDs. DualDisc is also hoped provide a way of finally getting high-resolution audio into the record shops (see pages 6-7 for more DualDisc details).



## Funk Vector turntables

The forthcoming Funk V turntable from ex-Pink Triangle impresario Arthur Koubesserian incorporates some radical thinking on getting the best from vinyl. Instead of using acrylic, glass or metal for the platter, the Funk uses what's dubbed an 'Anchroplat' made from expanded foam. This, the designer claims, has precisely the same properties as vinyl itself, and incorporates self-damping through bubbles of air. The Funk V also uses slave pulleys to remove the tendency for the motor to pull at the bearing; these are arranged in an asymmetric fashion called Vector and are said to achieve a balance with the motor and to drive the sub-platter with equal force at three points. Koubesserian has applied for a patent for the latter and plans to release his turntable this summer. The Vector treatment is also available for existing Pink Triangle and Linn LP12 turntables.





# Mergers and acquisitions

➤ American horn loudspeaker specialist Klipsch Audio has purchased the Danish speaker company Jamo. Klipsch, a privately-owned company, wanted to expand its operations into the European and Asian markets, where Jamo has a strong presence (Jamo has 135 shops in China, for example). Klipsch has a ten per cent share of the US standalone loudspeaker market, but it is not yet known whether the move will afford Klipsch greater presence in the UK.



Loudspeaker drive unit giant Danish Sound Technology (DST) has merged with Tymphany Corp, inventor of the Linear Array Transducer (see *Happenings HFC 264*). The move will give DST (which produces the Scan-Speak, Peerless, Vifa, and Logic brands) access to Tymphany's growing collection of patents. The merger is part of a commitment to "fuel audio innovation through a deep investment in research and development", according to CEO Michael Hackworth.

## JIMMY'S TWEAKS #24

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



### High and low volume levels

A big powerful system capable of high volume levels often sounds 'flat' and anaemic when played at low or moderate levels. Conversely, a system that sounds lively and articulate at low levels may lack control and refinement (and even suffer break-up) when pushed hard. A high power loudspeaker with

stiff cone and a big powerful magnet offers excellent control when played loud. But having a big magnet usually results in an over-damped sound at lower volume levels. It's a *Catch-22* situation. When you're choosing hi-fi components, especially amplifiers and loudspeakers, it's important to understand these conflicting characteristics and plan accordingly.

## TOP 10 THE TOP 10 ARTISTS WITH THE MOST UK NO.1 SUCCESSES

- 1 **Elvis Presley** 20 number ones
- 2 **The Beatles** 17
- 3 **Cliff Richard** 14
- 4 **Westlife** 12
- 5 **Madonna** 10
- 6= **Abba** 9
- 6= **The Spice Girls** 9
- 8= **The Rolling Stones** 8
- 8= **Take That** 8
- 10 **Michael Jackson** 7



## ➤ New Music

### IN THE STUDIO

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



#### RY COODER

**Title:** *Chavez Ravine*

**Release date:** 6 June

Banned by the US authorities from returning to the scene of his Buena Vista Social Club triumphs in Cuba, Cooder has been recording with Latin musicians based in LA. Reports say it's a 15-track concept album with lyrics in both English and Spanish, about a Mexican neighbourhood in the city destroyed by grasping property developers in the 1950s.

#### OASIS

**Title:** *Don't Believe The Truth*

**Release date:** 30 May

They started recording their sixth studio album 18 months ago, scrapped it and then started again. Now they've almost completed 11 new tracks that have found Noel Gallagher boasting that the old trademark swagger is back. But he also says the band have broken new ground: "There's a song called *Part Of The Queue* which doesn't sound like anything we've ever done before and includes Cuban percussion."

#### COLDPLAY

**Title:** *X&Y*

**Release date:** 6 June

Coldplay unveiled material from their eagerly-awaited third studio album at a secret show in LA last month. Among the new songs debuted were *Square One*, *White Shadows*, piano ballad *What If*, and *Speed Of Sound*, slated as a likely first single. Also expect their first British tour in two years, opening on 27 June.

#### THE WHITE STRIPES

**Title:** *tbc*

**Release date:** autumn

The Detroit duo started work on the follow-up to 2003's *Elephant* in their home city last month. "It should be done pretty



quick," promises Jack White, who recorded their last album in ten days flat at London's Toe Rag studios. White has also reportedly recorded a collaborative album with Detroit singer-songwriter Brendan Benson.

#### ELBOW

**Title:** *tbc*

**Release date:** July

Having recorded the follow-up to their 2003 platinum release *Cast Of Thousands* in their home town of Salford, Lancashire, new wave prog rockers Elbow have now decamped to LA, where they have been mixing their third album with producer Tom Rothrock at Marlene Dietrich's former home.

#### ALSO COMING SOON

##### JAZZ/ CLASSICAL

**Zimmer** *Gladiator* 5th Anniversary Edition (May) **Anna Netrebko** *Opera Arias* (May), **Nicola Benedetti** *Szymanowski Violin Concerto* (May), **Christian Thielemann** *Bruckner* 5th Symphony (May)

##### SACD/ DVD-A

**Porcupine Tree** *Deadwing* (DVD-A, May), **Alfred Brendel** *Mozart: Piano Concertos* (SACD, May), **Simple Minds** *Once Upon a Time* (DVD-A, May), **Jackson Browne** *Running on Empty* (DVD-A), **Kaori Muraji** *Transformations* (SACD, May)





Stuart M Robinson

## Central Line

*Centre speakers have a voice in stereo*

This month's column is not a column. This is a party political broadcast on behalf of the centre channel party.

It is our belief, that in this country, there is a forgotten third-channel minority, considered to be unworthy of both financial and artistic support by listeners and music producers alike.

In 1933, J. C. Steinberg and W. B. Snow of Bell Laboratories conducted a series of tests that would define the reproduction of sound from that day forward. Now, some 72 years on, their conclusions are just as valid but have been largely forgotten by many mixing engineers or ignored completely by ignorant two-channel listeners, intent on supporting only the right and left.

**“This is a party political broadcast on behalf of the centre channel party. It is our belief there is a forgotten third-channel minority.”**

In a paper entitled *Auditory Perspective: Physical Factors*, which is available from the AES website, Steinberg and Snow detailed a series of experiments conducted to evaluate the sense of space, depth and positioning conveyed by two- and three-channel systems. The latter comprised a left, centre and right loudspeaker array.

They concluded that a two-channel reproduction method gave “good satisfaction”, but in all cases fell short of the realism created by three channels, especially where speech or soloists were concerned. “The three-channel system proved definitely superior to the two-channel by eliminating the recession of the centre-stage positions and in reducing the differences in localisation for various observing positions. For musical reproduction, the centre channel can be used for independent control of soloist renditions.”

The film industry was quick to adopt the research and even conducted its own, which led to the investigation of comb filtering (undesirable phase effects created when the left and right reproduce the same, monaural sound) and the Haas Effect. In 1940, conductor Leopold Stokowski who had been involved in the famous ‘Orchestra Behind the Curtain’ demonstration for Bell, insisted on a similar recording and playback system for Disney’s *Fantasia*, Fantasound being the world’s first commercial multichannel format, complete with three front channels.

When home reproduction became popular, three-channel systems were impractical because the technologies required simply didn’t exist. So in the 1950s and 1960s, engineers settled on a compromise and developed formats with just two channels, primarily delivered by the phonograph.



Today, we are free of the technical limitations of the last millennium. But the average voter spends about £50 on a centre channel loudspeaker and then complains that vocals don't have the same qualities as when replayed through their £1,000 pair of floorstanders. Engineers shy away from using the centre channel, often because a lack of understanding of basic acoustic principals.

It is this party's manifesto to increase the use, awareness and understanding of the centre channel. Ignore the claims of the far right and left; at the centre our aim is not just to deliver movie soundtrack dialogue and our employment is not in any way, shape or form 'unrealistic' for either Beethoven or the Beatles. We guarantee heightened enjoyment and a greater appreciation for the musical arts.

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



## Uncertain futures

*The end of the (audio) world is nigh?*

I cannot recall a time when there was greater confusion and alarm in the hi-fi industry concerning its future. I have reported previously on the rumours concerning the future of SACD, which were especially prevalent at the Consumer Electronics show in January, but which have not completely died away since. Specifically, the absence of DSD from the HDMI roadmap (though I have been assured that this is temporary), claims that Philips is proving very difficult for potential SACD OEMs to deal with, and the fact that Sony has essentially withdrawn from selling SACD mechanisms at all, handing over the whole shebang to Linn Products, do nothing to make matters clearer, or provide confidence in the longevity of SACD.

DVD-Audio has been a dead duck – until now. Now it enters its own hybrid game with the launch of the first DualDiscs; these are 'CD compatible' on one side, DVD-Audio/Video on the other, hopefully putting an end to the situation where high-resolution discs are racked apart from the main CD areas. At least, that's the theory. ▶

# R

## RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

RUARK SABRE



Ruark was formed in March 1986 out of the ashes of Diesis, a short-lived, much-loved speaker brand with the accent on

fantastic build quality. The original Sabre, a compact two-way standmount, was launched alongside the larger Broadsword in July the same year. Pitched at £299, its main competitors were the more expensive Celestion SL6, and, at nearer to the same price, the Gale 301, the Epos ES14 and the then ubiquitous but smaller Linn Kan. The Sabre Mk II, very similar but with the inclusion of the then new and fashionable bi-wire terminals, followed shortly thereafter.

The Sabre was always one of the best-liked Ruark models. There was nothing radical about the design, but radicalism has never been a part of Ruark's stock in trade. Where others innovate, Ruark has always seen its role as refining familiar ingredients, and in particular producing loudspeakers that would be accepted as furniture in their own right.

Ruark has always had another vital skill too, namely the ability to fine-tune an existing design to achieve a desired acoustic end. Ruark (in practice, this meant the late Brian O'Rourke, who founded the company and was the main designer) understood what made a loudspeaker tick, what it should sound like, and how to adjust the variables to achieve the desired end result. Of course there is nothing unique about this ability, but you might be shocked by how many producers don't have this essential set of skills.

Given the Ruark/Diesis company heritage, the Sabre was a fine piece of traditional looking furniture – "it happens to sport a well cut suit instead of the more commonplace donkey jacket" as one contemporary review had it. Measuring 37cm high by 23cm wide by 27cm deep, it was made from braced 19mm chipboard, except for front and rear panels, which were made from MDF, and it was a two-way sealed (IB) loudspeaker. Gold plated Allen headed bolts securing drivers provided a visual touch of flair. As did a veneer so rich and deep, it could be mistaken for real tree, and rare hardwood tree at that.



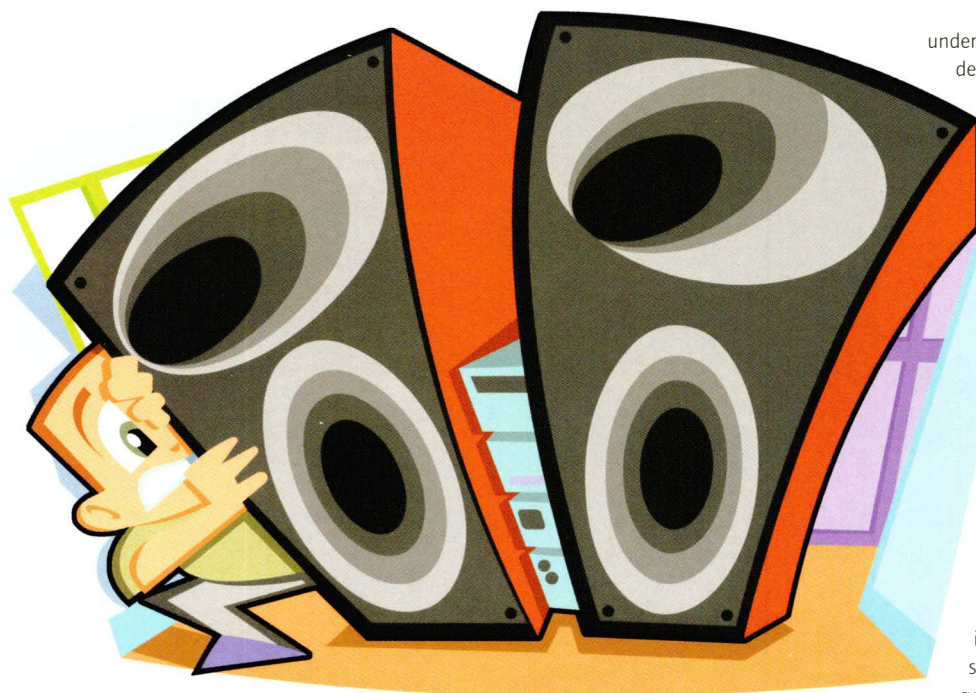
**"Ruark has always had the ability to fine-tune an existing design to achieve a desired acoustic end."**

Times move on and of course there has been progress. The Sabre II gradually faded from view in the late 1990s, as the company shifted its gaze from loudspeakers to developing the profile of the Tivoli Audio products it distributed. The Sabre was reintroduced to the range late in 2004, and is reviewed in this issue, but the old and the new Sabre are significantly different. A back of envelope calculation suggests the new model is around 30 per cent smaller by volume, and the bass/mid unit has shrunk from 165 to 150mm nominal diameter. Yet, the new model has a deeper bass response (50Hz new, 60Hz old), and slightly better power handling to compensate for a 1dB reduction in sensitivity.

The broader LF ability of the new model is probably related to the change in bass loading from IB (sealed box, or infinite baffle) to reflex port loading, and the *quid quo pro* is that the new model is likely to have faster roll-off below the port resonance (probably around 55Hz). The main difference, however, based on talking to those who remember the old model (my own recollections are patchy) suggest that the early Sabres were softer and less analytical, a little less tautly defined. Visually it has changed too; the edge treatment of the original Sabre gave it a much more traditional – or perhaps dated – appearance. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*





## “Choose a room too small and – surprise, surprise – the system swamps the room.”

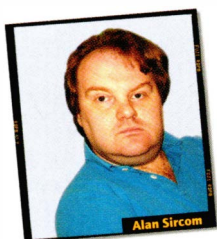
■ SACD and DVD-Audio (and variants) are there to provide a revenue stream for their respective developers for decades to come. For either format to succeed, it needs to fulfil two clear requirements. One is that it must deliver the goods. The other is that it must be readily available to a wide audience, as no format can survive on the basis of audiophile sales alone.

By making SACD mechanisms inordinately expensive or impossible to obtain in small numbers, specialist producers are being squeezed out, quite deliberately I would maintain. And the same is happening with DVD, which from one side is beset by commoditisation from Far Eastern OEMs who in the past didn't bother with minor details like intellectual copyright. However, DVD is almost impossible for small manufacturers to afford, with costly licences required by Macrovision, Dolby, DTS and others, presenting a minefield that only the largest and best financed multinational can hope to face with any degree of equanimity.

History should teach us a lesson here. It was not Sony and Philips who made CD happen, though they provided the enabling technology. It was the input of small companies (Meridian was a key player then as now) who took the medium by the scruff of the neck, and made it sing, which at the time the majors singularly failed to do. Right now, we're at the tipping point for the high-resolution formats. If the industry fails to allow the specialists access to

improve on and promote their technology, it will surely die. If this happens, the undermining of confidence in high-quality music replay could be dealt a blow from which it may not recover.

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



### Room rumblings

*Get the room right and the sound will follow*

**T**he choice of listening room is of prime importance. Get it right and you have given your system a terrific boost; get it wrong and the sound crumbles away. And, if you think that's bad, consider the lot of the kit designer.

We all have to listen in rooms, but when the listening room is designed specifically for the purpose of making a sound conducive to producing good audio products, the room becomes a tyrant. A poorly designed room will not only sound bad, it can potentially

undermine the sound quality of every product designed in it. Think on that: a whole raft of products that sound bad because of where they were designed, not the competence of the designer. Of course, it's possible to 'listen past' a room. If you use known references, you can apply that knowledge and attune yourself to compensate for the signature of the room. But this is never entirely perfect, and often the listening room's acoustic shapes the performance of the products designed there. By 'products' of course, I mean mostly speakers, but this applies to any product to a lesser extent.

How can a room go wrong? Make a room too large and it swamps the sound, making the system sound boomy in regular rooms. Choose a room too small and – surprise, surprise – the system swamps the room, so in regular rooms, the system becomes too thin. Too lean and the end result gets too fat sounding; too fat and... you get the point.

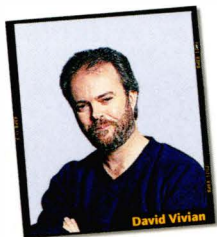
There are standards to observe. The IEC standard room is designed to deliver a reverberation time of 0.4 seconds, with carefully proscribed sizes and volumes. But this merely delivers a 'typical' room and will often deliver no bonus for domestic environments. Some companies – B&W, for example – have used a room that is deliberately designed to deliver maximum detail, even at the expense of bass depth, to hear precisely what the speaker is delivering. When a room is designed to minimise flutter echo (high frequency reverberations), reverb (bass and midrange boosts) and other, more general tonal problems, you get to listen to the speaker and nothing but. Well, almost.

How does this have any bearing for the home listener? We don't have access to the listening rooms the system was designed in, but we can make our listening rooms as good as possible. What works for the professional (eliminating room resonances, tonal problems and minimising flutter echo) applies in the home. You don't need fancy tools or measuring instruments, just soft furnishings. We are naturally extremely good at producing an environment where the midband sounds good, because our homes have to be places where people talk to other people.

Ultimately, there is no way of correcting the imbalances made by a system designed in a poor room, no matter how good your room.

*Alan Sircom began his journalistic career at HFC some 13 years ago. He has since become one of the hi-fi and AV industry's most respected scribes*





## Fantastic Voyage

*A journey through hi-fi, but no Raquel Welch*

**T**hey say to know where you're going, you have to know where you've come from. I wonder whether entanglement with the exotic and esoteric is inevitable, once you've set off on the road to audio enlightenment.

My first 'real' system comprised a Linn Axis/Akito/K9 turntable, a long-forgotten Sony CD player, a Naim Nait 2 amp and a pair of original Linn Kan speakers. And I'd be lying if I said I don't remember it fondly; it provided an unfeasible amount of enjoyment.

However, I soon found myself being drawn towards a type of sound so very different and, I was inclined to think, so superior to that made by my own system, I began to wonder what I ever heard in it. First to go was the Linn Axis, replaced initially by a Little Pink Thing, then, after an A-B with an LP12, a Thorens 3001 (anyone remember that?). The Nait 2 found a good home as I 'down-graded' to a Pioneer A-400. That made far more sense of the Meridian CD player I'd started using than the Naim ever had, and would drive a much broader range of speakers to realistic volumes – including the smooth, wide-bandwidth Meridian Argent 2s I'd taken a shine to.

So, while I'd started out believing that a tight, fast, rhythmically explicit, leading-edgy sound was the way to go, I'd ended up preferring a transparent, tangible one where previously ignored ambience and depth were as important as transient attack and timbral resolution. In other words, my instinct had been to want to hear more rather than increasingly accomplished versions of less.

But, rather sooner than I expected, curiosity got the better of me. I dusted off the Kans (literally), borrowed the Axis/Akito/K9 from the colleague I sold it to and secured the muscular services of a Linn Intek amplifier to connect to my Meridian 602/603. The system's presentational style touched a chord somewhere at the back of my memory that was so fundamentally different to what I'd been listening to more recently it was startling.

Female vocals sounded wonderfully warm and human; rhythms weren't just tight but took on a metronomic certainty; expression and inflection were laid bare. In all, I suppose, the euphoria lasted about a week and, in truth, was based on me feeding the system ▶

# M

## MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

LED ZEPPELIN 'IV'



Variouly dubbed *The Runes*, *Zoso* or *Untitled*, *Led Zeppelin IV*, as it became known, is arguably rock's most famous album. It all started in a Welsh cottage called Bron-Y-Aur in late 1970, where Zeppelin wrote the bulk of their folksy third album. Around a dozen demos were brought from there to Island studios in London's Basing Street (including *The Battle Of Evermore*), but nothing happened. In early 1971 the group, plus engineer Andy Johns, gathered at a derelict Hampshire mansion, built in 1795, called Headley Grange.

A week into rehearsals, the Rolling Stones' Mobile Studio arrived and then six days were spent recording! *Rock And Roll* came out of a creative block, when drummer John Bonham teased out the rhythm and Page spontaneously laid down some Scotty Moore guitar lines. Robert Plant added his vocal and the song was nailed in just 15 minutes! Bonham saved *When The Levee Breaks*, too. A new drum kit was delivered and Bonham set it up in the massive hallway with two M160 mics hanging ten and twenty feet high. His incredible (much sampled) thwack was achieved by pushing the mic sounds through two desk channels and then compressing them with a Binson Echorec. Both Plant's harmonica and Page's guitar had backwards echo added to complete the narcotic effect.

Gathered around an open fire at nights, the group played versions of acoustic numbers such as *The Battle Of Evermore* and *Going To California*. *Evermore* was a call-and-response ballad that was full of Plant's obsession with history and *The Lord Of The Rings*. The riff was picked out on a mandolin by Page one night and then recorded on guitars. Space was left for another vocalist and Plant's "favourite singer out of all the British girls that ever were", Sandy Denny, tracked her vocal at Island the following month and emerged hoarse after the effort. *California*, a tribute to songstress Joni Mitchell, was actually recorded in front of the Grange. And *Misty Mountain Hop* was composed on piano by multi-instrumentalist bass player John Paul Jones one morning.



**"This 200-chord monster rocker has been played on the radio at least four million times since."**

*IV*'s opening rocker *Black Dog* was originally in 3/16 time but it was John Paul Jones who worked out the complex 4/4-on-top-of-5/4 time that finished up on the record. A tribute to Fleetwood Mac, Page's four different Les Paul parts were DI'd together through two Universal compressors distorted through a Mic amp. If the atmosphere at Headley had created great results, tracks like *Misty Mountain Hop* and *Four Sticks* (literally Bonham hitting the drum kit with four sticks) needed the sheen of Island studios in Feb 1971. As did the biggest song of Page's life, *Stairway To Heaven*.

This 200-chord monster rocker has been played on the radio at least four million times since. *Stairway To Heaven* was to be everything the group had ever wanted to be. At Headley, it was Jones and Page who wrote out the music with all its changes. Lyrics were conjured on the spot and it took five takes for the group to play it through.

At Basing Street they added Jones's Moog keyboard and virtually re-recorded the lot. The beautiful opening tones were Jones on multi-tracked recorders and Page's near-mythical solo at 5:56 was his fourth attempt through four Tannoy speakers on one of fellow Brit guitar master Jeff Beck's old Fender Telecasters! Some 25 million albums later, the world is still in thrall. **HFC**

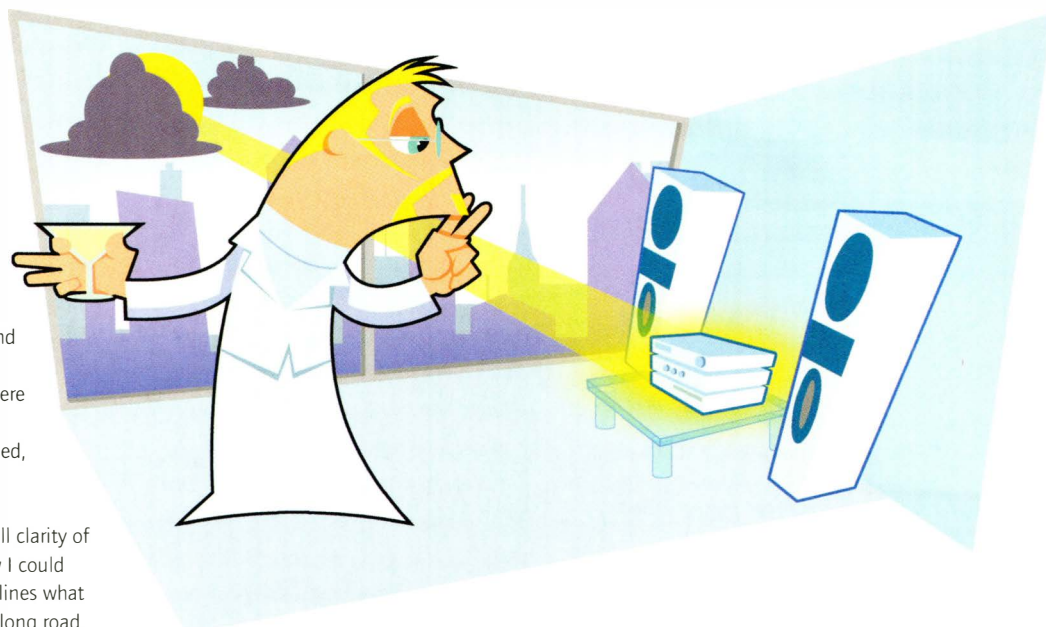
Mark Prendergast



material with which I knew it would excel. Simple, cleanly recorded stuff: Tori Amos, Paul Brady, Gregson and Collister, Mary Black. As I widened the repertoire, though, disenchantment started to set in. Classical, heavy rock, fusion and funk didn't really work. When pressed – both by difficult music and turning up the wick – the system started to shout; what little bass there was thickened and blurred, treble sounded closed in and poorly defined, soundstaging two-dimensional and disturbingly airless.

Suddenly I wanted the warts 'n' all clarity of my recent hi-fi listening and I knew I could never go back. I guess it just underlines what we all know to be true – it's a very long road.

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



**“Perfect sound. Sound so good, it’s indistinguishable from the real thing. That used to be hi-fi’s ultimate goal.”**

whole fall into place. For the listener, it's the difference between merely hearing something, and really experiencing it at a deeper more intimate level. In that moment, your whole relationship to the music is transformed...

On a more mundane level, imperfection keeps us interested in upgrades and improvements. It even makes us buy albums we've already got, because the record company claims the original master tapes have been newly remastered and improved. But some types of imperfection are bad. When quality is excessively compromised, delicacy and fine detail are sacrificed, robbing the music of flavour and goodness – like food that's been over-processed and badly cooked.

A quarter century ago, digital revolutionised hi-fi. Like all technology, it had (and has) its good and bad points. If your ultimate goal was a purer more truthful sound, then digital and CD were for the most part important steps in the right direction. But once CD made it easy to obtain clean, sharply focussed sound against a whisper-quiet noise-free background, perfection lost some of its appeal...

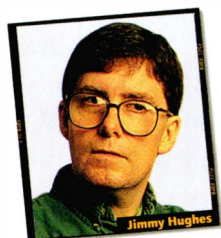
Suddenly, 'perfection' didn't seem quite so cool. Some performers actually added vinyl surface noise and grungy distortion effects to their CD recordings to simulate LPs behaving badly. How ironic!

Noise, the Great Enemy of Realism that CD so triumphantly banished, was invited back. Dirty became the new clean. Turns out, all the various sonic nasties it had taken almost a century to eradicate, were actually an

important part of the listening experience, and were to be embraced and enjoyed.

How curious, this sudden turning back, when we're in the home straight and approaching the finishing line! Seems, the road to Perfection had a massive U-turn in it. Or should that be S-bend?

*Jimmy Hughes is one of the country's best known hi-fi experts. His knowledge of tweaking and his record collection know no bounds*



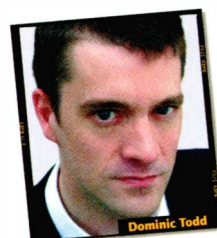
**Perfection...**

*Is perfect sound still a quest of hi-fi?*

**P**erfect sound. Sound so good, it's indistinguishable from the real thing. That used to be hi-fi's ultimate goal. Okay – it was and is an impossible dream. Perfection doesn't exist. But don't fret; the various stages on the road to perfection can be deeply rewarding. While you're still journeying, you can dream about how far there is to go.

Knowing there's always more to come makes hi-fi a fascinating pastime. However good something sounds, it can still get better – it can always be improved. There aren't many things in life you can say that about! For the true enthusiast, hearing a recording you've known for five, ten, or maybe even twenty years, sounding better than you ever imagined possible, creates an indescribable thrill – like suddenly experiencing a long-term partner as though it were the very first time you'd met.

A really good hi-fi system has a transformative effect on your music collection, revealing fine detail and subtleties of expression that other lesser systems barely hint at. Suddenly, the music acquires an added depth and meaning it never quite had before, as all the various strands that constitute the



**MiniDisc Redux**

*Is MiniDisc worth a second look today?*

**T**here has never been a better time to buy MiniDisc. You might think to advocate the purchase of a format that's in its twilight years is madness, but there is good reason here. Let me first make clear that this is not going to be a column marking the comeback of MiniDisc. According to the official GfK figures, last year the MiniDisc market shrunk by 42 per cent, and this shows no signs of abating in 2005.

Yet, what makes MiniDisc such a great buy now is that old retailer adage that, 'everything



has a price'. And, boy, is that price cheap right now. Whether you're a fan of online shopping, or prefer the traditional high street, you'll find seriously discounted MiniDisc players from the large, multi-national players, right down to the smallest independents. The reason for this is that, with fairly hefty supplies about, manufacturers are offering wholesalers and distributors extremely tempting prices. These are prices that, in turn, are passed onto retailers and customers.

I found the range-topping portable, the Sony MZ-NH1, for a ridiculously cheap £110 (£300 originally). The highly-competent Sony MZ-NH900 was an equally tempting £70. Remember, these are both machines that will hold 1GB of music on a single disc and, more importantly for the Audiophile, record a reasonable length of music, uncompressed. With 1GB portable MP3 players costing more than the £70 asked for the MZ-NH900, it's no wonder that this particular retailer is selling more of these than any other portable MP3 barring the 20GB iPod, the Zen Micro and the smaller iPod Shuffle.

What relevance is this portable price slashing to the audiophile you might ask? Well, it has two effects. The first is that with the format still showing a strong fan base, it bodes well for long-term production of blank media. The second is that, although they aren't around in as big as numbers, prices for the full-size decks are beginning to drop, too. Although I'm the first to admit to not being the greatest fan of the format, I've generally always been impressed by the high-end Sony models. The MDS-JB980 is a fine machine and, now that prices are falling below £200, makes a good case for itself. Better still is the MDS-JA333ES. Although this is much harder to find, this particular recorder is well worth hunting out. With a sporty Honda sounding, Type-R, ATRAC system, a 24 bit Current Pulse DAC, an R-Core transformer and Sony's traditional, quality, ES construction, it's a model that could tempt me. Prices are still around £400, but that could come down in the not too distant future.

Ironically, although the MD format was despised by many Audiophiles at conception, and for good reason, one can't deny the extensive development that Sony, and others, have put into the format. It's now a respectable recording format. Just as the last Nakamichi cassette decks were thoroughly honed and superb value, the last of the high-end Sony MD decks make real sense. Buy cheap, stock up on blank media, and enjoy your recordings whilst watching the bloodbath of other recording formats come and go.

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

# TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

## TURNTABLES – DRAGGING A ROCK THROUGH A WIGGLY GROOVE



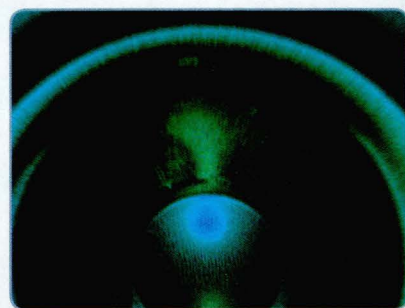
With the group test in this issue being devoted to a change to LP players, we thought it timely to have a brief look at some of the difficulties of recovering sound from that tiny groove traced in the vinyl. With over a century's experience of doing it, surely the process must be near as dammit perfect by now?

Well, yes and no. Like a lot of things in audio, once you start looking in detail at the problems it becomes harder and harder to see the true solution. The root of it all is that all conventional cartridges rely on sensing relative motion – that is, the stylus relative to the cartridge body. The cartridge body is assumed stationary, and what's more so is the disc (rotation apart), and both of those assumptions are fundamentally unjustified.

When you are dealing in the near-microscopic world of styli and grooves, even the smallest motion must be considered. There are plenty more dodgy assumptions too, for instance that the disc is made of perfectly rigid material, but let's look at the relative motion aspect.

It's obvious that the cartridge body can't be truly stationary, as it must traverse the record surface and cope with warps. At audio frequencies, though, its inertia keeps it nearly stationary. If inertia were the only factor at work, the resultant imperfections would amount only to a very small bass roll-off, nothing else. The fly in the ointment is that while the stylus moves, the other end of the cantilever in which it is mounted is fixed to the cartridge. As a result, every movement of the stylus as it traces the groove results in a force being applied to the cartridge. That force causes vibrations within the cartridge – and in turn in the headshell, the arm tube, the arm base... every component in the chain, essentially. This vibration can be reduced, but never entirely eliminated.

At the same time, the disc experiences a reaction force as it pushes the stylus hither and yon, and so vibrations occur in the disc itself, and in the platter, the bearing etc. Now, the big problem with mechanical vibrations is that at some frequencies they will coincide with resonances in the structure and that means



**“With over a century's experience of doing it, surely the process must be near perfect by now?”**

that the vibrations will effectively be amplified and (even worse) prolonged. In essence, the tail is wagging the dog and the cartridge body or the disc is moving and causing relative motion within the cartridge which gets turned into electrical signal – and there is no subsequent way of removing what is in effect a distortion in the audio output.

The only way to prevent this problem is to banish – or in the real world, minimise – resonances in the turntable and arm. Solid acrylic platters, felt and rubber mats, carbon fibre arms: these are all attempts to bring about that happy state of affairs. 'Brute force' approaches including 40kg solid metal platters simply attempt to reduce the magnitude of any resonance below the level where it can to significant harm, though a disc on a metal platter can still resonate itself due to the 'acoustic impedance mismatch' which plastic platters largely avoid.

It's terribly hard to put numbers on the extent to which this kind of thing corrupts disc replay but the sonic evidence is there to hear in turntables which make serious efforts to address it. Oh, and of course there are the familiar old problems of keeping platter rotation steady, minimising vibration from the motor and from the outside world – compared to all this stuff, digital's a breeze! **HFC**

*Richard Black*





## VINYL ESSENTIALS



### CLEARAUDIO SMART-PHONO PHONO STAGE £250

At just 10cm wide, this nifty unit won't take up much space within your system. But, despite the size, it's suitable for both moving magnet and moving coil cartridges, equipped as it is with some very low noise electronics. It's highly immune to hum pick-up too, and it sounds a real treat. Its tonal balance may seem a touch bright compared with other phono stages but, in fact, it simply isn't subtly tailored like quite a few others; the frequency response is dead flat to way above 20kHz and distortion is very low. That apart, it's a very clean-sounding unit which can give real insight into the sound, and it has particularly solid and weighty bass. Loading isn't adjustable, so it won't suit über-tweakers, but if you want to fit and forget a first-class phono stage you'll have to look hard to better this one.

☎ 01252 702705 🌐 www.audioreference.co.uk

### LAST POWER CLEANER FOR RECORDS RECORD CLEANER £28

Alongside a regular 'daily-use' disc wet cleaning solution and a record preservative, which – to some extent – overlaps in function with Stylast (see facing page), LAST offers this cleaner specifically targeted at new LPs as well as old. New records are often contaminated with residues from the manufacturing process (while old ones often pick up muck) that's not over-keen to come off with the usual alcohol and/or detergent cleaners. LAST won't say what's in this, but it does seem to have a clear and worthwhile effect on the discs we tried, old and new. Lower noise, cleaner transients. Seems the LAST crowd know their stuff!

☎ 01234 741152 🌐 www.britishaudio.co.uk



### EXTREME PHONO TURNTABLE MAT SET £89

There's nothing particularly outrageous about these two mats but they do look rather unconventional. The 'Non-felt' mat is made of something a bit like a rubber Aertex vest, while the thinner 'The Speed' uses carbon fibre. They can be used separately or together, in which case The Speed normally sits on top. We actively disliked the lack of focus that came from the Non-felt on acrylic, but The Speed gave a change in tonality that may please you if you like, well, speed in your sound. On metal platters, though, results from both mats were most encouraging, especially when used together – the pair combining to achieve a very gratifying increase in both detail and neutrality.

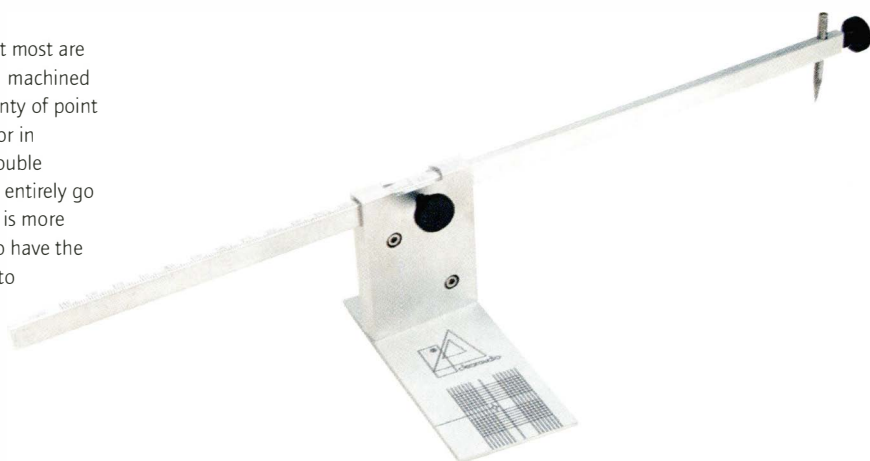
☎ 01785 711232 🌐 www.extremephono.com



### CLEARAUDIO CARTRIDGE ALIGNMENT GAUGE ALIGNMENT PROTRACTOR £90

There are plenty of alignment protractors available, but most are little more than printed cards. But this is different – all machined metal parts, adjustable for different arm lengths. There is plenty of point in aligning your cartridge really accurately, as one degree error in azimuth, or one millimetre in overhang, will approximately double worst-case distortion due to alignment errors. While we can't entirely go along with Clearaudio's assertion that a single measurement is more accurate than two or more at different positions, if you like to have the best things in life, the pride of ownership in this tool is hard to beat – and it's harder to lose than a bit of card!

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## LAST STYLAST STYLUS LIQUID £23

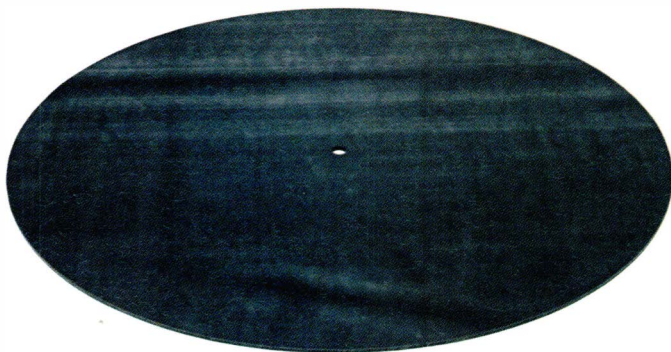
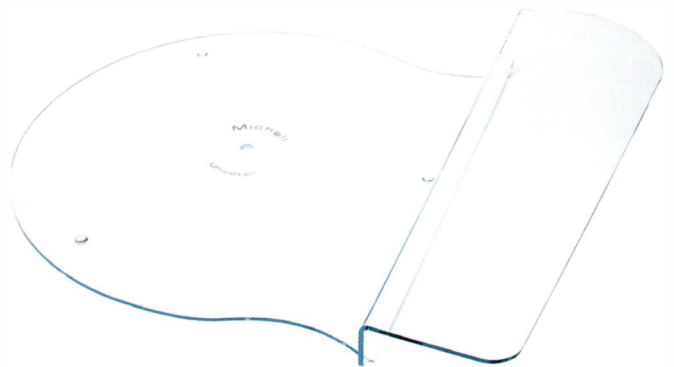
⊕ If ever anything looked like snake oil, this is it. A colourless, odourless, clear liquid which you brush on to the stylus, in minute quantities, which 'is not a lubricant and leaves no residue'. It claims to modify the 'surface free energy' of the vinyl, and indeed when we looked into the science of surface free energy we could see the point. But the real proof is in the listening, which is convincing, nay astounding. The added clarity heard in discs after treatment is well worth the (very minor) bother of applying Stylast before each side. LAST also sells a stylus cleaner which is worth using as necessary, but this does something else, increasing disc tracking accuracy and very audibly improving the contact between stylus and groove. That it also claims to increase stylus life expectancy we're prepared, at this rate, to take on trust. Cor!

☎ 01234 741152 🌐 www.britishaudio.co.uk

## MICHELL UNICOVER PLATTER/ ARM DUST COVER £46

⊕ Like most really clever ideas, anyone could have thought of this, but no one else actually did. Of course, it's not as effective in keeping the turntable dust-free as a proper hinged lid or all-over cover, but popping this over the spindle after a listening session does keep daily accumulations of dust off the platter and provides a modicum of protection to the arm. It also looks great. It just about crashes on the arm-lift lever of one or two decks we tried, but otherwise fits almost anything, and since its weight is not at all massive, it even suits suspended turntables.

☎ 020 8953 0771 🌐 www.michell-engineering.co.uk



## SRM TECH SILICONE MAT RECORD MAT £25

⊕ The rubber turntable mat was once, decades ago, standard fitment. Then we had felt, then bare plastic platters... But now the rubber mat has been reinvented, though with a slight new twist in the use of silicone rubber and with completely flat faces. We experimented with it on various decks; we would hesitate to use it on a plastic platter, but on both metal (Linn etc.) and glass (Rega), it's definitely worth a try. It damps vibrations in both platter and disc and as a result gives a sound that's not quite as lively as the original but can be more informative. Some users report good results using it with felt, under or over.

☎ 01234 741152 🌐 www.britishaudio.co.uk

## MICHELL RECORD CLAMP LP CLAMP £24

⊕ This has been around for years, though with one notable change: the body used to be aluminium but is now Delrin plastic. We couldn't hear any difference in performance, though we miss the stroboscope markings that were printed on the original. The main point of a clamp is to hold the disc firmly against the platter, maximising contact and optimising damping of resonances. It's near-impossible to use effectively on turntables with really springy suspension and has little effect on those with a felt mat, but on most of the turntables tested in this issue, it proved eminently suitable and noticeably effective in providing a final polish to already-good sound.

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# Raising the dead

When the leader of the Balanescu Quartet felt an urge to play with the Romanian Edith Piaf, he didn't see a problem, despite the fact that she had been dead for over 40 years

"The string quartet is so eternally flexible. Although it hasn't really changed for over 200 years, it still has the capacity to somehow renew itself all the time." Alexander Balanescu, virtuoso violinist and eclectic musical leader of one of the most adventurous groups today, is passionate about extending the possibilities of the classical string quartet in general, and his own Balanescu Quartet in particular.

"When I started I did a lot of 'contemporary classical music', very interesting, but after a few years I got disappointed, because I felt this was music that was alienated from the public. There was a specialised audience, but I wanted to find music that involves the whole person, the emotions, movement... and that's when I started to look for inspiration in ethnic music, in jazz, in pop music, electronic music."

Balanescu's musical ethos combines the old and the new, and the Quartet has worked with the likes of Kate Bush, David Byrne, the Pet Shop Boys, Ornette Coleman, Spiritualized and Kraftwerk, as well as recording numerous film scores, notably for Michael Nyman and Peter Greenaway. But their latest recorded project, *Maria T*, marks a more personal exercise for their leader. Maria Tanase has been described as Romania's Edith Piaf, a versatile singer who recorded pop and operetta, as well as appearing in films, but who is best remembered as an interpreter of folk songs. Tanase is still one of the country's best-kept secrets, over 40 years after her death.

"I was impressed and inspired by the voice of Maria Tanase, who is still very much an icon in Romanian culture," says the Romanian-born Balanescu. "So I chose some songs to build compositions around and used different ways of working with this material. Sometimes I used the old recordings as samples, building up new tracks that mix in with the live quartet, sometimes taking melodic or rhythmic fragments as inspirations, sometimes taking texts from songs and sometimes just using Maria's voice. There is a kind of meeting over generations, with the aid of technology."

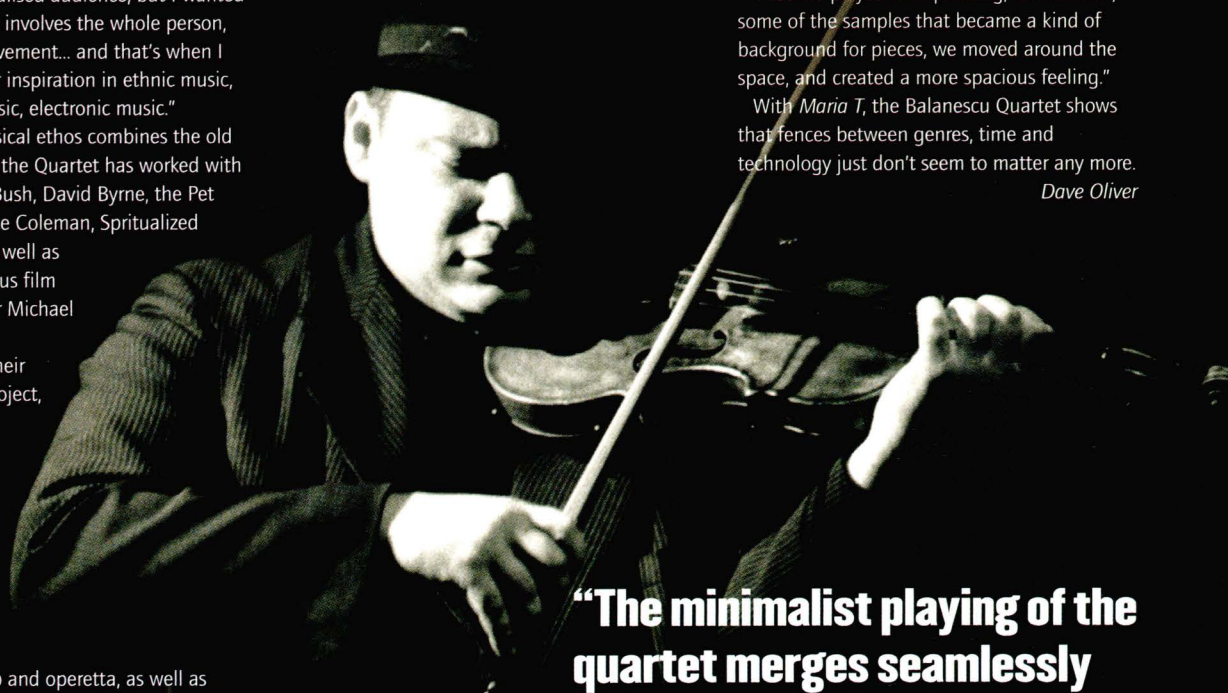
The results are fascinating. The minimalist playing of the quartet, augmented by sparse percussion, merges seamlessly with recordings that date back 50 years and beyond. Both Balanescu and mixing engineer Michael Dutton create a convincing illusion of synergy that's eerily mesmerising.

"I wanted to conjure up the spirit of Maria Tanase, and to create a meeting of the styles of different artists. I think Michael achieved a really good balance, especially in the pieces that feature Maria Tanase's voice, you can still hear every note the quartet plays, and yet you can still hear the words."

"Also we played with panning, for instance, some of the samples that became a kind of background for pieces, we moved around the space, and created a more spacious feeling."

With *Maria T*, the Balanescu Quartet shows that fences between genres, time and technology just don't seem to matter any more.

Dave Oliver



**"The minimalist playing of the quartet merges seamlessly with recordings that date back 50 years."**

## ESSENTIAL BALANESCU QUARTET

### 1. *Possessed* (1992)

Balanescu's interpretations of Kraftwerk songs. "I wanted to create a parallel version of Kraftwerk's electronic soundworld. It was like approaching baroque music."



### 2. *Luminitza* (1994)

Balanescu took traditional themes and developed new pieces from them, blending the fatalistic nature of Romanian folk with a modern perspective.

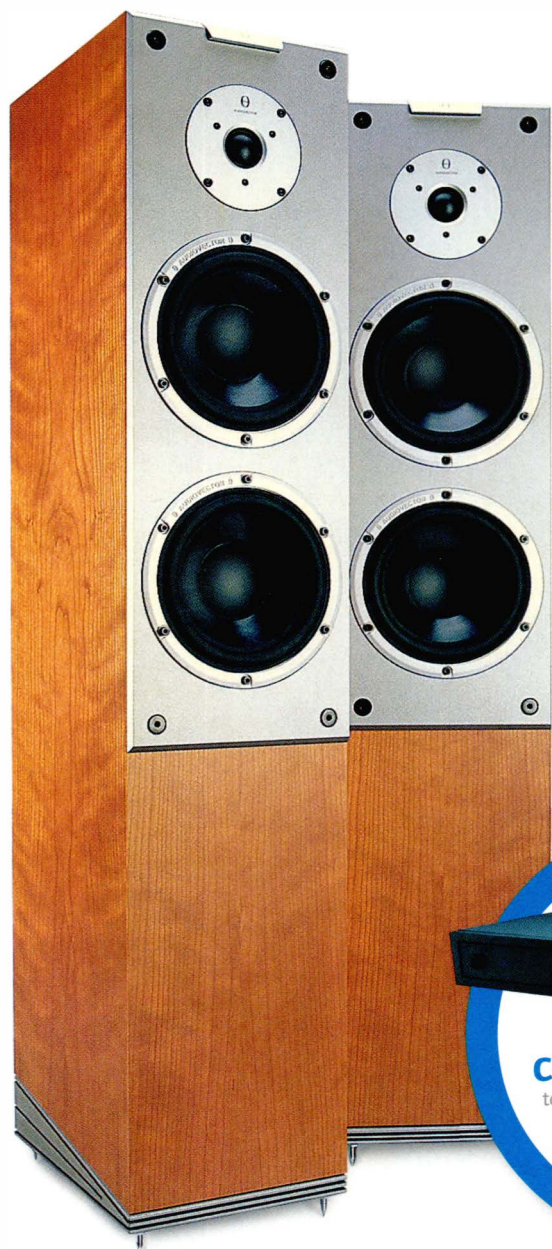


### 3. *Maria T* (2005)

Balanescu takes the folk influences of *Luminitza* a stage further "I feel there's this kind of synthesis between classical, jazz, folk and electronic music."







# WIN!

## AUDIOVECTOR'S STUNNING MI 3 SUPER LOUDSPEAKERS WORTH £1,600!

**O**ne of the stars of last month's (*HFC 267*) *Ultimate Group Test*, the Audiovector MI 3 Super loudspeaker quickly established itself as a distinguished performer dressed in a superb real wood veneer. The two-and-a-half-way, port-loaded floorstander uses

composite cones and a fabric tweeter to produce a wonderfully neutral sound that's both open and detailed with a notably sweet top end. We were similarly impressed with the MI 3 Super's grasp of dynamics and musical expression – it's a real communicator with a strong talent in reproducing voices and speech. What makes Audiovector particularly special is that each model can be upgraded when funds allow – drivers, tweeters and an active filter unit with power amplification can all be retro-fitted. A Best Buy without question. For your chance to win a pair, simply answer the question below. The lucky winner will be drawn at random.

### CONGRATULATIONS...

to our last winner, Jason Crammer of Aldershot. He receives a superb Naim CD5x CD player!

#### QUESTION:

**What does the MI 3 Super have real talent in?**

- A:** Reproducing voices and speech
- B:** Novelty glass blowing
- C:** Monster truck racing

#### TO ENTER:

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

**By Text:** Send the message **HFC COMP1** with the answer A, B, or C to **83070**. For example, if you think the answer is C: Monster truck racing, then text HFC COMP1 C to 83070

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ISSUE 37 / HI FI PLUS / CD3MKII / ALAN SIRCOM

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ISSUE 35 / HI FI PLUS / PH5 / JIMMY HUGHES



Audio Research has studiously applied the technology gained from their Reference series amplifiers to every model in their range, right down to the entry-level designs.

The SP16 preamplifier, VS55, VS110 and VM220 power amplifiers, the state-of-the-art CD3 Mk II CD player, the multi-channel amplifier and the VSi55 integrated amplifier are not only packed with knowledge gained from the company's legendary flagship models, but they herald a change in the way reasonably-priced high-end equipment is perceived. The astonishing PH5 brings Reference Phono performance to a remarkably affordable price point. The LS25 Mk II Pre-amp clearly shares parentage with the Reference pre-amplifiers. And the VT100 Mk III boasts DNA derived from the Reference 300 and 600 power amps.

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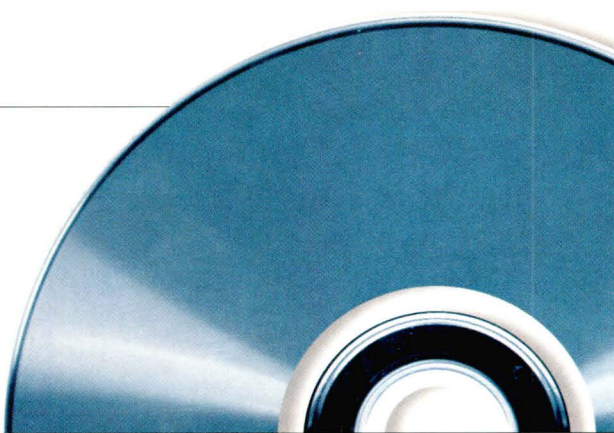


# ChoiceCuts



This month's varied musical morsels

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



## AUDIOPHILE VINYL

### CHARLIE HADEN AND JOHN TAYLOR

Nightfall

Naim 180g vinyl

Music: Charlie Haden is one of the foremost double bass players of our time, while John Taylor is an English pianist who was a founding member of Azimuth. This is their first album, yet they play together effortlessly and with considerable synergy.

With only two of the seven tunes by other composers (William Walton's *Touch Her Soft Lips And Part* and *The Apache My Love And I*), there is a considerable intimacy to these melodic pieces. While Haden's playing style will come as no surprise, Taylor's piano is an inspiration that makes you wonder why he's not better known. ★★

Sound: Naim's True Stereo recordings all seem to be good, but this ups the ante. Ken Christianson's recording brings out the colour and body of both instruments with clarity but no sense of artificiality about the acoustic. Excellent. ★★★★★ JK

### JOHNNY SHINES

Last Night's Dream

Blue Horizon/Pure Pleasure 180g vinyl

Music: Johnny Shines is best known for playing with the 'original'

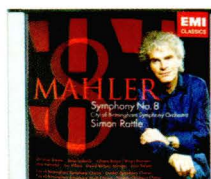
bluesman Robert Johnson, with whom he spent three years on the road. Between that time (1937) and the late sixties, he fell in and out of the music business, which produced a well of experience from which this 1969 work

draws. He had a powerful Delta blues voice and this album reveals the considerable depth and breadth of his talent. Aided and abetted by Willie Dixon (bass), Big Walter Horton (harmonica), Otis Spann (piano) and Clifton James (drums) this is the authentic article and an essential for any blues enthusiast, especially an LP fan. ★★★★★

Sound: Pure Pleasure has managed to get hold of original quarter-inch tapes for this Ray Staff mastering and the results are powerful and rich as a result. A very successful transfer indeed. ★★★★★ JK

These LPs are available from Naim: ☎ 01722 332266 @ www.naim-audio.com and Pure Pleasure: ☎ 01273 688284 @ www.purepleasurerec.com

## COMPACT DISC & VINYL



### MAHLER

Symphony No. 8

Simon Rattle (conductor) City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra et al EMI 7243 5 57945 2 9

Music: More an oratoria on an epic scale than a conventional symphony, the *Symphony Of A Thousand* makes sparing use of the full massed forces at its disposal. This live performance made at the Birmingham Symphony Hall is beautifully measured, albeit with some disconcerting tempi changes. Best of all though, this is a performance that really thrills, steered by a conductor who reveres the music with a burning passion. ★★★★★

Sound: The Decca sound is rich and opulent, with good detail in the quieter passages, but comes nowhere close to capturing the dynamics or the inner detail at the forte end of the scale. This is a function of CD itself... when will we get the hi-res version? ★★★★★ AG



### TAKEMITSU

Garden Rain, Le Son calligraphie I-III, Hike/Elegy, Folios I-III, Distance, Voice, Stanza II, Eucalypts I & II

Philip Jones Brass Ensemble, et al, Jurg Wittenbacher (conductor) DGG 00289 477 5382

Music: Takemitsu's works on this recording are mostly short and varied. The music, instruments used, and the performers too, all give the impression that this is an East meets West project, but the language is clearly Takemitsu's own. The subtlety of the brass playing in the title piece, *Garden Rain*, is entirely characteristic. ★★★★★

Sound: Recorded in a studio belonging to Polydor in Tokyo between 1972 and 1975, this mostly softly spoken music is given a recording of exquisite refinement, with a near-holographic sense of space and distance. There is nothing about the sound that points to their relative antiquity. ★★★★★ AG



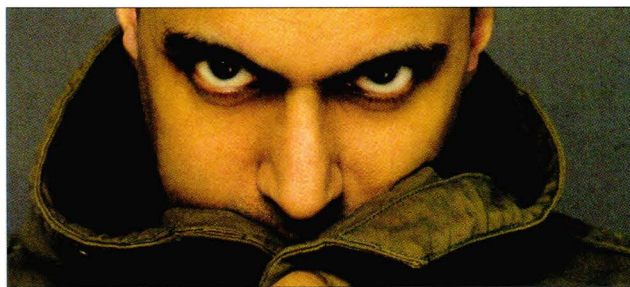
### ROBERT PLANT & THE STRANGE SENSATION

The Mighty Rearranger

Sanctuary

Music: In the seven years since he last recorded with former Led Zep colleague Jimmy Page, Robert Plant has played semi-anonymously with a pub band and released an album of covers. Now he comes storming back with a collection of a dozen new compositions. Songs such as *Freedom Fries* provide a powerful commentary on the post 9/11 world, while on a more personal level *Tin Pan Valley* is a mature reflection on his own career. Will anyone from today's crop of bands still be making music of such depth, adventure and passion in 30 years time? ★★★★★

Sound: Rock riffs collide thrillingly with Zep III-style acoustics and Arabic and North African influences, and while his voice can still roar, it also deploys plenty of subtlety and nuance. ★★★★★ NW



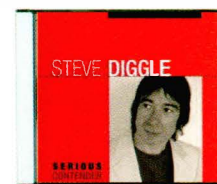
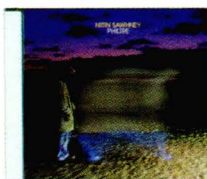
### NITIN SAWHNEY

Philtre

v2

Music: Nitin Sawhney is the original Anglo-Asian renaissance man, as at home DJ-ing in a dance club as he is composing the score for a Shakespearean TV production. He's also a visionary songwriter, instrumentalist and producer, and Philtre is his most free-flowing, natural and effortlessly impressive album to date. The only thing he doesn't do is sing, and so there's the usual roster of guest vocalists, ranging from rock singer Jacob Golden to Bollywood star Reena Bhardwaj. Asian flutes, harmoniums and tablas weave seamlessly among the dance beats and downtempo grooves on an album that defies cultural boundaries. World music in the most genuine and expansive sense of the term. ★★★★★

Sound: The most cutting-edge digital production techniques meet authentic Indian instruments and voices in a breathtaking sonic melting-pot that balances sophistication and emotion in equal measure. ★★★★★ NW



### STEVE DIGGLE

Serious Contender

EMI

Music: For those who don't know, Steve Diggle is the guitarist of The Buzzcocks who were, indeed still are, from the crunchy, poppy end of the punky-indie spectrum. Diggle's produced two previous solo efforts, but this is the first time that his work doesn't conjure up the Buzzers, being a fine, original distillation of Who, Beatles and a hefty dose of pre-Houses Led Zep in a brighter mood. The exhilarating *Lie In Bed* and the anti-corporate *Starbucks Round The World*, are but two of a dozen gems that snap, fizz and seriously rock. ★★★★★

Sound: The Buzzcocks could hardly have laid claim to being an audiophile band, but this effort is laced with lean, clear distortion, well cut by Diggle himself. ★★★★★ PS



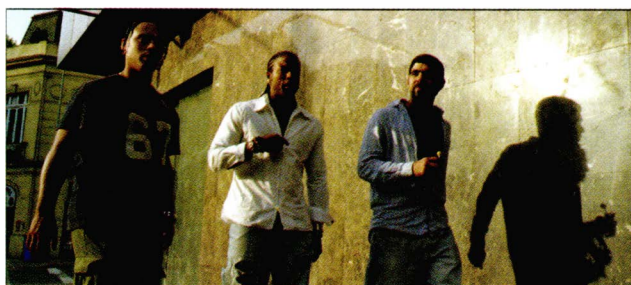


## THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "This is essential listening."

**STEELY DAN** Pretzel Logic EMI Records

**Music:** On this 1974 album, Fagen and Becker were at their compositional peak, bringing together the harmonic style of the Doobie Brothers with the jazz of Charlie Parker. The hit is *Rikki Don't Lose That Number* but highlights include the immortal *Charlie Freak*, a ballad of tragedy and redemption propelled by a driving piano line. Another classic that reveals the breadth of the Dan's capabilities is *Barytown*, not only is this a highly insightful song, but the

arrangement is nothing short of remarkable. Featuring the talents of top session musicians including Jeff Porcaro and Victor Feldman, this is essential listening. ★★★★★  
**Sound:** By the standard of its time this is a decent sounding album, but things have moved on a bit since. There is little in the way of genuine high frequency or space, but it's not too compressed and you can hear the qualities of the musicians with little difficulty. ★★★ JK

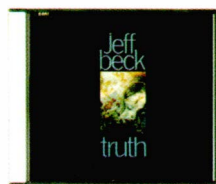


**ORISHAS**  
EL KILO

EMI

**Music:** Cuba's premier exiled rap group first came to the attention of the world with *A Lo Cubano* in 2000. Although this was clearly heavily influenced by US-based rap, it featured an undeniable Caribbean lilt to the rhythms and delivery. The trio's third album builds further on traditional music from their homeland, with big blasts of funky brass and rumba rhythms aplenty through which their Spanish language rhymes wind and weave with impressive dexterity. Though they're based in Europe these days, the trio continue to reinvent the music of their homeland with a disarming casualness to create a world their octogenarian homeboys in the Buena Vista Social Club would barely recognise – pure pleasure all the way. If you think rap begins with Dr Dre and ends with Eminem, this will change your thinking. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Playing with a full band ups the dynamic range and fullness of sound available on most rap albums – this comes on like a spice-flavoured slice of life lived to the full. ★★★★★ DO

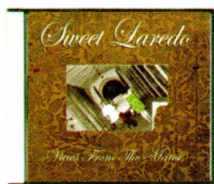


**JEFF BECK**  
Truth

EMI

**Music:** Jeff Beck's first post-Yardbirds set was the blueprint for Led Zeppelin and much that followed. Rod Stewart's wailing utterances were matched note for note by Jeff Beck's scintillating Fender guitar work. The explosive opening salvo of *Shapes Of Things* was unheard-of in 1968. There's plenty of variety here to catch your ear, including great versions of both folk standards *Morning Dew* and *Greensleeves* plus the still amazing sailing ambiances of Beck's *Bolero*. This remaster comes packed with eight bonus cuts including all the early singles. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Given the limitations of 1968 equipment and the vintage stereo spacing the sound is terrific, especially on the drifting slide guitars of Beck's *Bolero*. ★★★★★ MP



**SWEET LAREDO**

Views From The Manse

Belleville Records

**Music:** This Bristol-based duo have been peddling good blissed-out soul jazz for a few years now. Their second disc sees Sarah Scott's smoky vocals acquiring a richness of tone, while Dan Coggins' acoustic guitar has been augmented with judiciously deployed flute, double bass and other instrumentalists culled largely from Manchester DJ Jon Kennedy's soul jazz collective. The sound is cool, the vibe chilled, though there's plenty of gently grooving rhythms and interesting melodic corners to keep the head nodding and the toes tapping. Perfect summer sounds. ★★★★★

**Sound:** The mix is a warm one overall, with just a hint of lo-fi fuzziness that somehow adds to the morning after feel of the album overall. ★★★ DO

## DVD-AUDIO & SACD

**BILL FRISELL**

Richter 858

SACD (stereo SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Songlines

**Music:** Bill Frisell is a guitar player who is not afraid of adventure. Recent works have included the good ol' boys style of *Good Dog*, *Happy Man*, the heavily African *Intercontinentals* and now the distinctly abstract *Richter 858*. He is clearly a jazz guitarist with imagination. This album is a collection of compositions inspired by the paintings by German pop artist Gerhard Richter. Frisell is joined by the 858 Strings Trio of Jenny Scheinman, Eyvind Kang, and Hank Roberts, their sound being as significant as Frisell's in the resulting music. This is challenging stuff, but look at the pictures in the accompanying booklet or the CD-ROM section of the disc and you'll see that it's an apt reflection of the oil on aluminium work being interpreted. ★★★

**Sound:** A direct to DSD recording, this SACD is rich and dynamic with plenty of space and energy – with a good player, it's a fine example of the advantages offered by hi-res recording. ★★★★★ JK



**RACHMANINOV**

Piano Concerto No 2, Paganini Variations

Lang Lang (piano), Valery Gergiev (conductor),  
Orchestra of the Marinsky Theatre

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo  
CD layer)

Deutsche Grammophon DGG 00289 477 5499

**Music:** An unashamedly lush romantic work, Lang Lang clearly pushes all the right buttons (in both senses) in the second piano concerto, which may perhaps sound overblown to ears trained on 20th century modernism. The performance is without question virtuosic, but rather self-conscious, and at times even heavy-handed. It seems almost to try too hard, as though it is a vehicle for the soloist rather than for the composition. The disc is on firmer ground with the *Paganini Variations*, which starts with the familiar theme tune to a well known TV arts programme. ★★★

**Sound:** A live recording (though you would probably never know it), the opulence of the scores reflects in the sound, the orchestra (clearly excellent) is rather distant, but airy and well spread out. But, the piano is far too close and boomy, giving a disconnected feel to the performance as a whole. ★★★ AG



**EST**

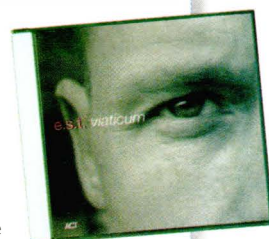
Viatikum

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo  
CD layer)

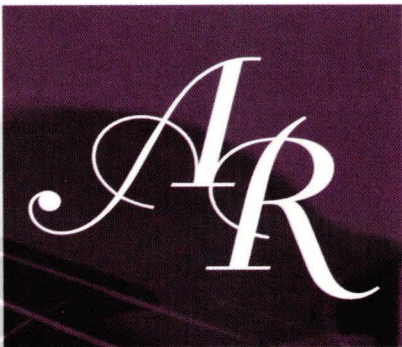
ACT

**Music:** Sweden's EST is a jazz group that attracts the kind of devotion more associated with rock groups. Their music is a vibrant and always entertaining mix of influences that ranges from classic small combo acoustic jazz groups, through classical elements, rock, avant garde and electronic music, though not on this almost all-acoustic recording. For this album, the trio relied more on composition than they have in the past, but the integration sounds as fluid and unpredictable as ever, with drummer Magnus Öström's shuffling beats and pianist Esbjörn Svensson's liquid piano trills occasionally counterpointed by blasts from Dan Beglund's electrically treated double bass bowing. ★★★★★

**Sound:** The record has a close – but never claustrophobic – feel, which the surround SACD layer does nothing to interfere with, opening up a little with clarity, but retaining the close-knit dynamic of the group. The unnamed grand piano sounds wonderful too. ★★★★★ DO







# AUDIO REFERENCE

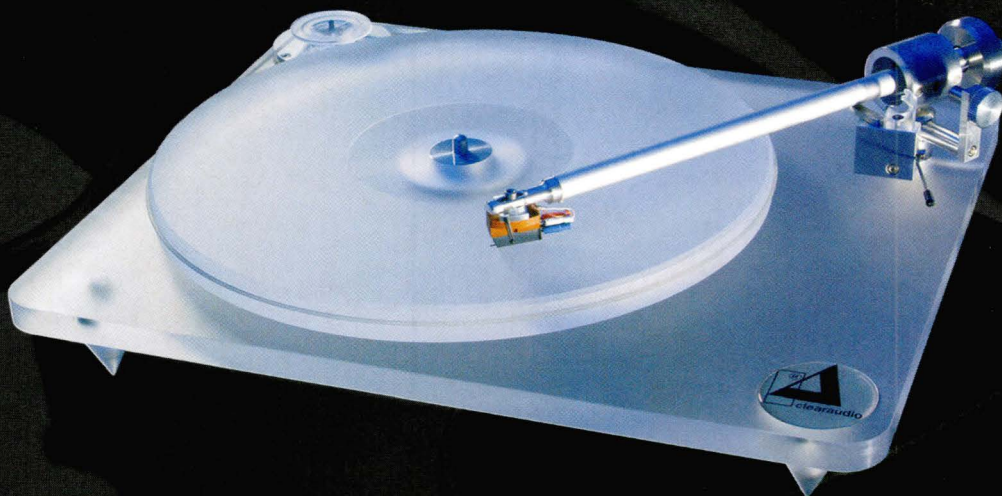
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Speakers left & right: Acapella LaCampenella

## WHAT HI-FI

Turntable of the year 2004  
Clearaudio Emotion

- Acapella Loudspeakers
- Accoustic Arts
- Audio Valve
- Convergent Audio Technology
- Clearaudio
- Gamut Electronics
- Graham Tonearms
- Halcro
- Transfiguration Cartridges
- Shun Mook
- Stello
- Virtual Dynamics



Left: Gamut's new L3 reference monitor

Right: The world class Phantom B44 unipivot tonearm from Graham Eng.



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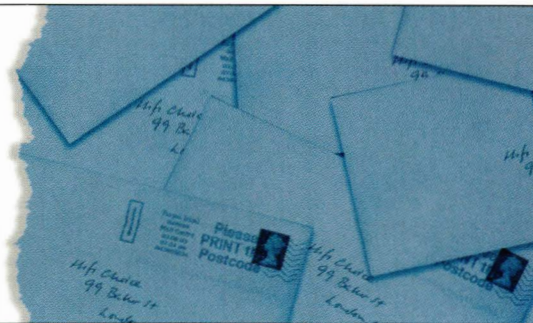


# ChoiceMail



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](mailto:dan.george@futurenet.co.uk)



## ★ LETTER OF THE MONTH

### COSTA FORTUNE

I've been a reader for around eight years now and have noticed that, particularly over the last few years, the average price of the equipment you test has shot up. Most of us aspire to spending around £1,000 per piece, which, when you think about it, is a hell of a lot of money. There is questionable worth to the plethora of reviews you publish costing several thousand pounds – how many of your readers do you expect are actually in the market to spend this much?

**James Anstiss** via email

**HFC** We are committed to keeping a balance, but feel we are simply reflecting the patterns emerging from UK sales and the level of new product emerging from the hi-fi industry itself. If cheaper products come to market, *Hi-Fi Choice* strives to be first in the queue to review them.



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:** B&W 805S loudspeaker

### NAIM THAT SPEAKER

I have a Naim system comprising CD5x, NAC 112x, NAP150x and FlatCap2 power supply. I also have a Roksan Radius 5 turntable. I'm looking for some speakers around £2,000 and my tastes include the smooth end of R&B and jazz, such as Boney James, David Sanborn and Jazzmasters etc. Something with attack would be nice.

**Brian Martin** via email

**HFC** Our first thought at £2,000 would be the new B&W 805S standmount with good stands, which should work well and harmoniously with your Naim CD and amps. It may not deliver the attack you crave, however, and as such, you could try speakers with a more midrange-forward presentation, although ensure a lengthy audition to determine this. If the B&W's don't cut it for you, try Neat's excellent Elite SE at £1,500 or Naim's Arriva at £1,275, either of which could be just the ticket for your system.

### COULD DO BETTER

Love the mag, I get most issues and enjoy both the varied opinions therein and ogling over stuff I may one day own. Glad to see AV is keeping a low



**“The new B&W 805S with good stands should work well and harmoniously with your Naim CD and amps.”**

profile – I hope that it continues. I'm realist enough to know you can't ignore it, but it holds little interest for me. One change I would like to see, however, would be less of the *Audiofile Dispatches* 'editorials'. They often seem like filler. Second, a template or tick list based features list for any equipment reviews would help keep some consistency to make comparisons easier. Oh and finally, some more meat to the bones of the *Buyer's Bible* would be good. If you can make some room I'd like to see more reviews of the sort of kit produced by tiny manufacturers of accessories and peripherals that many of us on the forum experiment with; one-man bands, and obscure sources of gear. But, don't let the mild criticisms skew this though, *Hi-Fi Choice* is a grand mag – the most professional looking and best balanced of the lot.

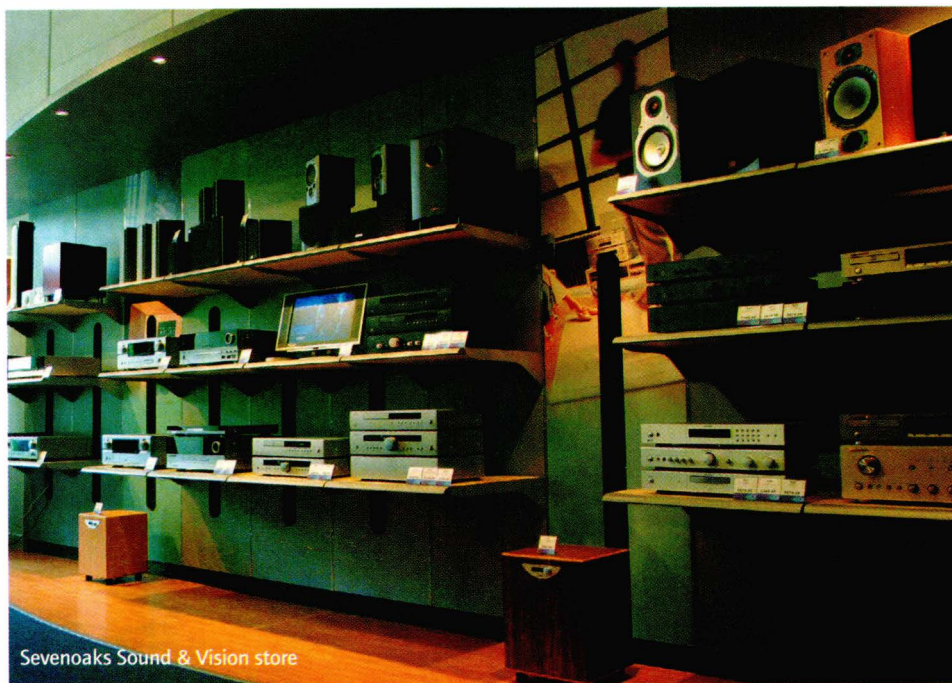
**Earl of Sodbury**, HFC Forum

**HFC** Thanks for your input. We'll certainly take your points into consideration and welcome reader feedback. The *Buyers Bible* we admit is due for an overhaul so look out for a refreshed and exciting new section later this year.

### SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES

In answer to Paul Lee-Kemp's comments in *Audiofile Happenings* (HFC 266) – “support the high-street retailer against distance sellers” – surely the hi-fi manufacturers will give support wherever sales are coming from? Perhaps it is Sevenoaks who are going to suffer the consequences if they don't look at an online ordering solution and follow the lead of companies like Superfi etc. Sevenoaks, like others, ☐





have probably enjoyed big margins and are obviously reluctant to let go of this. However, like any business, 'nothing happens until you sell something', and Sevenoaks may have to work on smaller margins in order to survive. There are a number of good retailers who seem to balance running an online business with a shop-front outlet. So why can't Sevenoaks?

**Paul Nottingham** via email

**HFC** We asked Paul Lee-Kemp, managing director of Sevenoaks Sound & Vision to reply: "Your point – that manufacturers will support where sales are coming from – is entirely true. If a supplier decides to sell its products mail order or on the internet, that is their choice.

"At Sevenoaks, we believe it's crucial to get specialist advice and demonstrations for hi-fi before you buy, and provide back-up and support after the purchase. That is our choice.

"But, manufacturers expect us to invest heavily in staff, facilities, premises and stock so the public can see and hear the benefits of the equipment they make. The price of that support is that we, as a retailer, expect manufacturers to make those same demands of every retailer they supply to. That only seems fair.

"That's not what's happening. By allowing internet suppliers to sell their products without insisting they provide real support, many manufacturers are tacitly encouraging consumers to use our facilities, but buy elsewhere online for less. Why should Sevenoaks (and others) continue to provide free advice and demonstration facilities for the customers of internet suppliers?

"We're saying manufacturers can't have it both ways. We are not anti-internet; we just believe online sales are more appropriate for high volume commodity items. Quality hi-fi and home cinema equipment is still best bought from specialist 'bricks and mortar' retailers."

## "We believe it's crucial to get specialist advice and demonstrations for hi-fi before you buy, and provide back-up, too."

### CART ME UP

I own a Michell Gyrodec with Rega RB300 arm and Goldring 1012GX cartridge. I would like to upgrade my cartridge to an even better moving magnet type. Could you give me three or four suggestions, ideally priced between £50-£150?

**Yasvanth** via email

**HFC** Sure, how about a Grado Prestige black (£40), Rega's Elys (£85), or an Ortofon MC15 super II (£130). We also feel it's worth spending an extra ton on a cartridge considering the quality of your hardware and look at the Sumiko Blue Point Special (a high-output moving coil cartridge, that works through MM stages well) at £250.

### APRIL FOOL

While reading a speaker review in a very recent issue of a rival hi-fi publication, I thought I'd spotted an obvious April Fool editorial – the final concluding paragraph of the review was missing. I found it as frustrating as finding the final page of a novel ripped out. However, I noticed an erratum printed just two issues later. I'm glad *Hi-Fi Choice* is always 'all there'.

**Keith Franklin** via email

Any magazine that runs features over more than one page could suffer the same fate, unless the staff are very, very careful. Fortunately, we at

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IN THIS ISSUE

**FANTASTIC NEW ISSUE OUT NOW!**  
Fresh off the press, the August issue of **HI-FI CHOICE** is packed full of exclusive in-depth tests of the latest high performance kit, including...

- The world's most rigorous group test of pre-processor amps, £800 to £2,500 – six crucial combos from Arcam, Brno, Hifi, Phono, Quad and Roksan
- Digital versus analogue: flagship players from Wadia (CD) and Clearaudio (vinyl) demonstrate the state of the art

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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)

I have just read a thread on a hi-fi myths site that says frozen CDs sound better. So please people, listen to a CD you like a couple of times make notes about the tracks, then put it in your freezer for 24 hours, listen again and report back. I am doing Snow Patrol...

**Davewhit2**

...How about Ice Cube or Ice T?

**Mattpwil**

I'm going to buy a pair of Grados when I go to visit my sister in Canada – prices are much cheaper over there for Grado stuff, check it out.

**Pbirkett**

I am upgrading my speakers, currently Dynaudio Audience 52s, to some that will work close to the wall. I plan on having a demo of the new B&W 805S on the weekend, has any one got any other suggestions?

**Sometimesuk**

...The new 805S sounds extremely good (according to Paul Messenger in *HFC* 266). Be warned; B&Ws have a very different sound to Dynaudios.

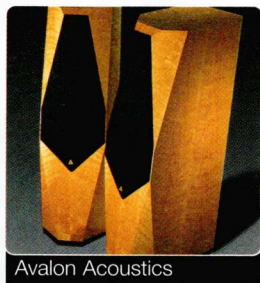
**Jezzor**

A knowledgeable hi-fi nut once said to me, "Soon after the introduction of CD, the technology reached a plateau. That's all changed with new technology like SACD, which has taken hi-fi sound to a new and better level." I think that the guy is correct.

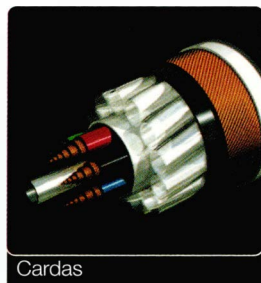
**Strabat**



*for the love of music...*



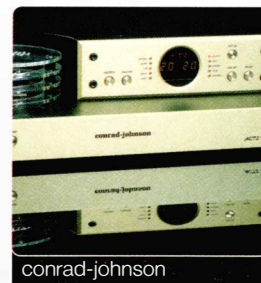
Avalon Acoustics



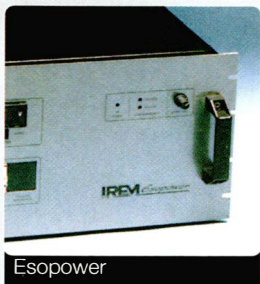
Cardas



Karan Acoustics



conrad-johnson



Esopower



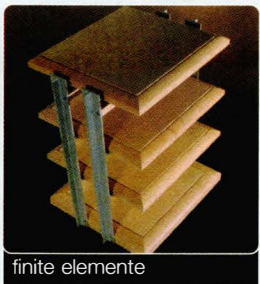
Tri-Planar



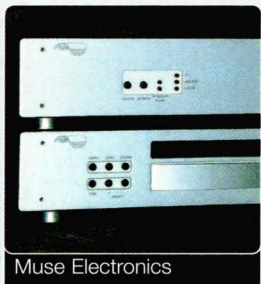
McCormack



Avalon Music Systems



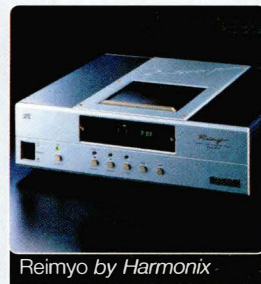
finite elemente



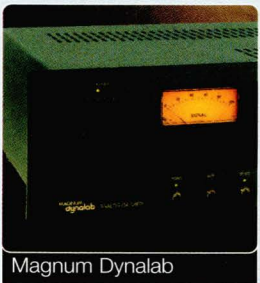
Muse Electronics



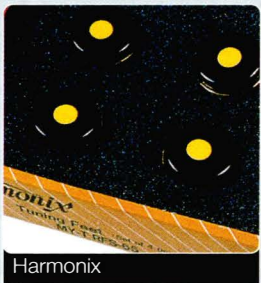
Kuzma



Reimyo by Harmonix



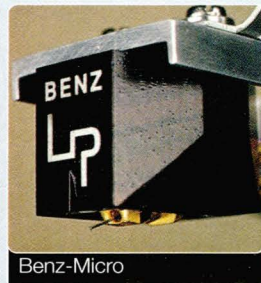
Magnum Dynalab



Harmonix



Acustica Applicata (DAAD)



Benz-Micro

## HiFi Show & AV Expo 2004

Please visit us at the Lancaster Suite, Renaissance Hotel, Heathrow  
24 September (trade), 25-26 September (public) 10am – 6pm

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COPLAND CDA823 CD PLAYER | PRIMA LUNA PROLOGUE ONE AMPLIFIER  
SONUS FABER CREMONA AUDITOR SPEAKERS | £4,700



# Old school

*The old laws of system building were supposed to have been overturned with the coming of CD players. Meet the exception to the rules*

If, like me, you regard people moaning about the approach of their 40th birthday with envy, I invite you to think back. Think back to the time when rules ruled. When putting together a hi-fi system had militarily strict protocols you ignored at your peril. Younger readers, unburdened by the tectonic shifts in system building, might like to count their plug 'n' play blessings for the next few minutes.

I'm talking about the emergence, in the 1970s, of The Hierarchy. This came after the seemingly interminable age of The Foolishness when, for many decades, no one questioned the established wisdom that all solid-state amplifiers of a given technical competence sounded identical, a turntable's sonic abilities were determined chiefly by its wow, flutter and rumble performance, and the components that would ultimately decide the loftiness of your system's fidelity were the loudspeakers and the loudspeakers alone.

No wonder The Hierarchy caused nuclear shockwaves. The foundations of The Foolishness were swiftly overturned by the new enlightenment. It dawned at roughly the same time as personal computers small enough to fit on a large table, and the defining analogy (for both hi-fi and computers) was struck: garbage in, garbage out. That this became the advertising slogan of the prime mover in the system hierarchy movement was no surprise, as Linn manufactured the linchpin product in the argument, the LP12 – the most musical sounding turntable there had ever been.

The source became by far the most important component in a system. Nothing downstream of it could improve its sound quality; it set the sonic ceiling for the system. Quite right, of course. Suddenly, it all seemed so obvious.

Numerous regimes were constructed for allocating budget in accordance with The Hierarchy. Some were extreme but most people agreed that 60 per cent on the source (predominantly turntable then, of course) and 20 per cent each on amplifier and speakers was about right.

The intrinsic logic of The Hierarchy still pertains, of course, but its slavish implementation has long since fallen out of fashion. The difference is mainly that made by digital sources. CD's price/performance ratio has improved so radically since its introduction 22 years ago that a good budget player (say £250) can be plugged into a £20k system with far from disastrous results, turning all those rigid old budgetary strictures on their head.

## INTRODUCING THE COMEBACK

The Hierarchy makes quite a comeback in this month's *Beautiful System* supplied by Absolute Sounds, albeit with an audacious twist in the tail. Let's start at the front, though, and in the £1,750 Copland CDA823 CD player, Absolute Sounds hasn't spared the horses. As Jason Kennedy discovered in *HFC 267*, as well as being reassuringly solid and unfrivolous. It's a silver disc spinner of outstanding ability and notched up a whopping 93 per cent for sound quality.

Developed from the CDA822, the CDA823 uses the same DACs and analogue amplifiers but implements them with double resampling and disc-reading speed. According to Copland's co-founder and chief designer Ole Moller, the increased over-sampling rate of 192kHz negates the need for complex output filters and the attendant loss of energy and transparency. The CDA823 has a true 24-bit, high resolution, dual differential DAC with current output for a wide dynamic ▶

**“No wonder The Hierarchy caused nuclear shockwaves. The foundations of The Foolishness were overturned by the new enlightenment.”**



**Copland CDA823 CD player**  
£1,750

A worthy source. Sets a new benchmark at the price. Its ability to engage the listener with all manner of music is worth the price of admission.



**Prima Luna Prologue One integrated amplifier**  
£800

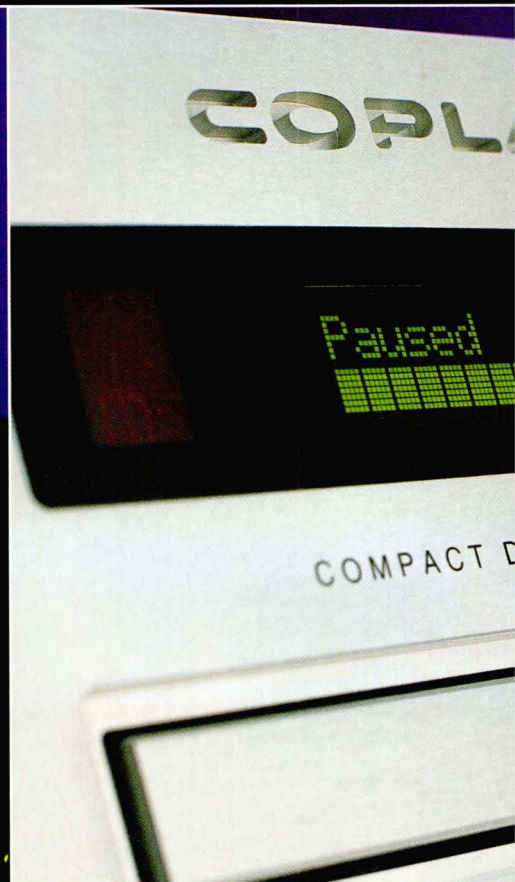
Currently one of hi-fi's greatest bargains, the Prima Luna offers high-end valve sonics for peanuts, opening up all sorts of system building possibilities. Nice paintwork.



**Sonus Faber Cremona Auditor speakers**  
£2,150

Speakers to fall in love with, not just for their exquisite sonic capabilities but for craftsmanship and build closer to a fine musical instrument than a piece of hi-fi.





range, fast conversion and low noise. Jitter distortion arising from time errors is claimed to be virtually eliminated by sample converters and a high precision internal master-clock.

All the audio power supplies are multi-regulated and there isn't an op-amp in sight. Instead, the CDA823 employs discrete Class A input amplifiers with carefully selected operational points for the specific electronic environment in which they have to perform. On the output side, there's provision for both balanced and single-ended outputs. The CDA823 also allows for future updates of firmware through flash memory.

A classic top-quality source, then – up there with the very best. Okay, it isn't cheap, but then pinching pennies at the source, Hierarchically speaking, isn't a good idea. No, the scope for easing back on the throttle a little begins with the amplifier. And this is where the system goes deeply Old School, for not only is the Netherlands designed and Chinese built Prima Luna Prologue One integrated amplifier double-take affordable at £800, it also boasts an array of eight gorgeously glowing valves behind a brilliantly convenient removable metal tube cage.

It's a good job they glow so gorgeously, though, because with the best will in the world, it would be a stretch to call the rest of the Prologue

One 'beautiful'. The dark (very dark) grey-blue gloss paint finish of the chassis can look good in bright sunlight but when it comes to styling, well... there isn't any. It's just another functional cage covering the transformers behind the valves and a rectangular fascia, with two nondescript knobs (volume, input selection) and a blue LED between them to show when it's switched on.

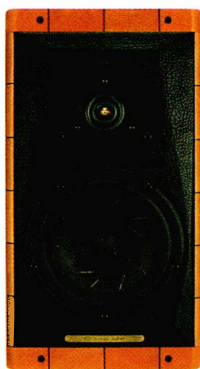
Still, we've made exceptions for sub-Clooney handsomeness in *Beautiful Systems* before and the Prima Luna is a particularly deserving case. Rather like an Alfa Romeo, which its paintwork so resembles, the money's been spent where it counts. Under the bonnet. 'Entry level' it may be, but the Prima Luna is a very classy, glassy piece of kit. Inside, for instance, there are no circuit boards; everything's hard wired and the major components bolted down rather than glued. All the tube sockets are good ceramic ones, and the terminal strips are ceramic, too. If any shortcuts have been taken to keep costs down, it's hard to see where.

The tube complement comprises four big EL34s operating in push-pull 'enhanced' Class A/B to optimise power delivery while still sounding sweeter than if they were used in pure pentode mode. Each channel's preamp tube is a 12AX7A dual triode. The Prologue One is also less tweaky than many valve

amps, toting something called Adaptive AutoBias, a circuit that continuously adjusts the bias voltage in response to changing temperatures and input signals to the benefit of both long-term performance and reliability. If there is a downside (apart from the rather brutal appearance) it's one of functionality. There's no recording output. If that's a big deal it's a shame, because it means you don't get to experience the thrill of what happens next.

What happens next, to the untrained eye, might look like a return to the discredited dictates of The Foolishness when speakers were considered the most important part in the hi-fi chain. What would you expect to follow on from an £800 valve amp? An £800 pair of speakers with a notably high sensitivity rating, of course. Sensible certainly. But unnecessarily cautious according to Absolute Sounds. You see, despite its modest price, the Prologue One is no shrinking violet in the power stakes. It delivers a healthy 40 watts a side, enough – so long as you don't want to fill a large room with window-rattling volume – to broaden the choice of suitable speakers significantly. So, why not push the envelope a little?

Indeed, why not go for what are probably the sexiest standmounts in the world? Because you can. So here they are, Sonus Faber's iconic £2,500







**“Alluring? Totally. Utterly beguiling, too. You don’t feel in the least inclined to analyse what it’s doing. Rather, it gently reminds you what natural tonal shades and textures really sound like.”**

Cremona Auditors. You see, that’s the brilliance of modern system building – it allows you to be creative.

The Cremona Auditor’s stats barely do it justice. All right, it’s a 9kg, two-way, rear-ported bass reflex design, with 88dB claimed sensitivity and a frequency response SF suggests runs all the way from 46Hz to an SACD/DVD-A friendly 40kHz. Its 29mm ring tweeter has a solid centre phase plug and the 150mm bass unit uses slices carved in the paper cone, that curve out radially from the soft dome centre. Good stuff. The real jaw-slackener, though, is the tear-drop shaped cabinet constructed from solid wood pieces, curved into a shape that helps to overcome internal standing waves better than the rectangular box designs that predominate. Both to look at and touch, it’s a work of art.

#### SOUND QUALITY

It’s almost impossible not to form preconceptions about how a system like this will sound, not least because EL34 tubes have a reputation for being warm

and cuddly and so do Sonus Fabers. We could be looking at the sonic equivalent of Bailey’s Irish Cream and egg nog chaser, here. And there’s little doubt that the amp and speakers do impose their character on the sound – probably more than hard bitten Hierarchy advocates would be comfortable with. But, hey, what a sound.

Alluring? Totally. Utterly beguiling, organic and luxurious, too. The way this system puts the music first is almost anti-hi-fi. You don’t feel in the least inclined to analyse what it’s doing. Rather, it gently reminds you what natural tonal shades and textures really sound like. Imaging not so sharp? After a while you don’t care; not when you’re hearing such a lovely delicate treble which is almost entirely free from grain and never even hints at harshness.

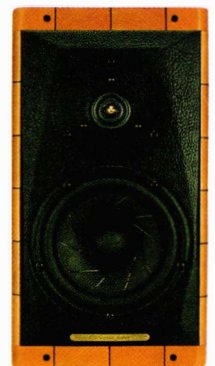
The smoothness and absence of fatiguing effects are a relief as much as anything. The music is allowed to communicate without that sense of mechanical detail some expensive systems push to the fore. It isn’t that it doesn’t do dynamic and incisive (on the

contrary, the Copland excels in these areas), just that it never seems forced – which is as it should be... but seldom is.

By the best solid state standards, bass is a little under damped, especially in the lowest two octaves but, again, the shortfall doesn’t seem important in the context of the overall performance. This isn’t a wham, bam, lapel-grabbing kind of system. What’s much more telling is its effortless weight and presentation of fine detail – both specific and ambient. It can sound stunningly open and airy, yet also potently full-blooded. And although the bass isn’t the tautest or most extended you’ll ever hear, it isn’t lacking in energy and rhythmic drive. Even the most seriously Kraftwerk-tight dance-oriented will find it hard to fault the sound of the system in terms of bass solidity and grip.

In short, this system goes straight for the musical sweet spot and doesn’t trip up. Unbalanced on paper, it’s anything but in practice and proves that while rules remain important in system building, they’re there to be bent. **HFC**

David Vivian





# 21-30,000 Hz

all present and correct



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# REVIEWS



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

## ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

### TURNTABLES £750-£1,500

- 64 Clearaudio Champion
- 65 Marantz TT15
- 67 Michell TecnoDec
- 68 Pro-Ject RPM 9 X
- 69 Rega P5
- 71 Roksan Radius 5

## EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

- 40 Classé CDP-100 CD player and CAP-2100 stereo integrated amplifier
- 44 Naim n-SAT satellite speaker and n-SUB subwoofer
- 48 Arcam Solo CD/DAB receiver
- 50 Ruark Sabre III loudspeaker
- 52 Sugden A21SE integrated stereo amplifier
- 56 B&W M-1 satellite speaker and PV1 subwoofer
- 58 Marantz DV9500 universal disc player



61 Stax SR-001 Mk II headphone



## OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

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

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

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

**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 83%**

**FEATURES >> 85%**

**BUILD >> 85%**

**VALUE >> 85%**

**CONCLUSION**  
This is a highly entertaining and colourful player at a competitive price. The build quality is good and the feature list...  
**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 84%**

The things we like most about the product

The things we think could be better

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

## OUR AWARD BADGES EXPLAINED



### Best Buy

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

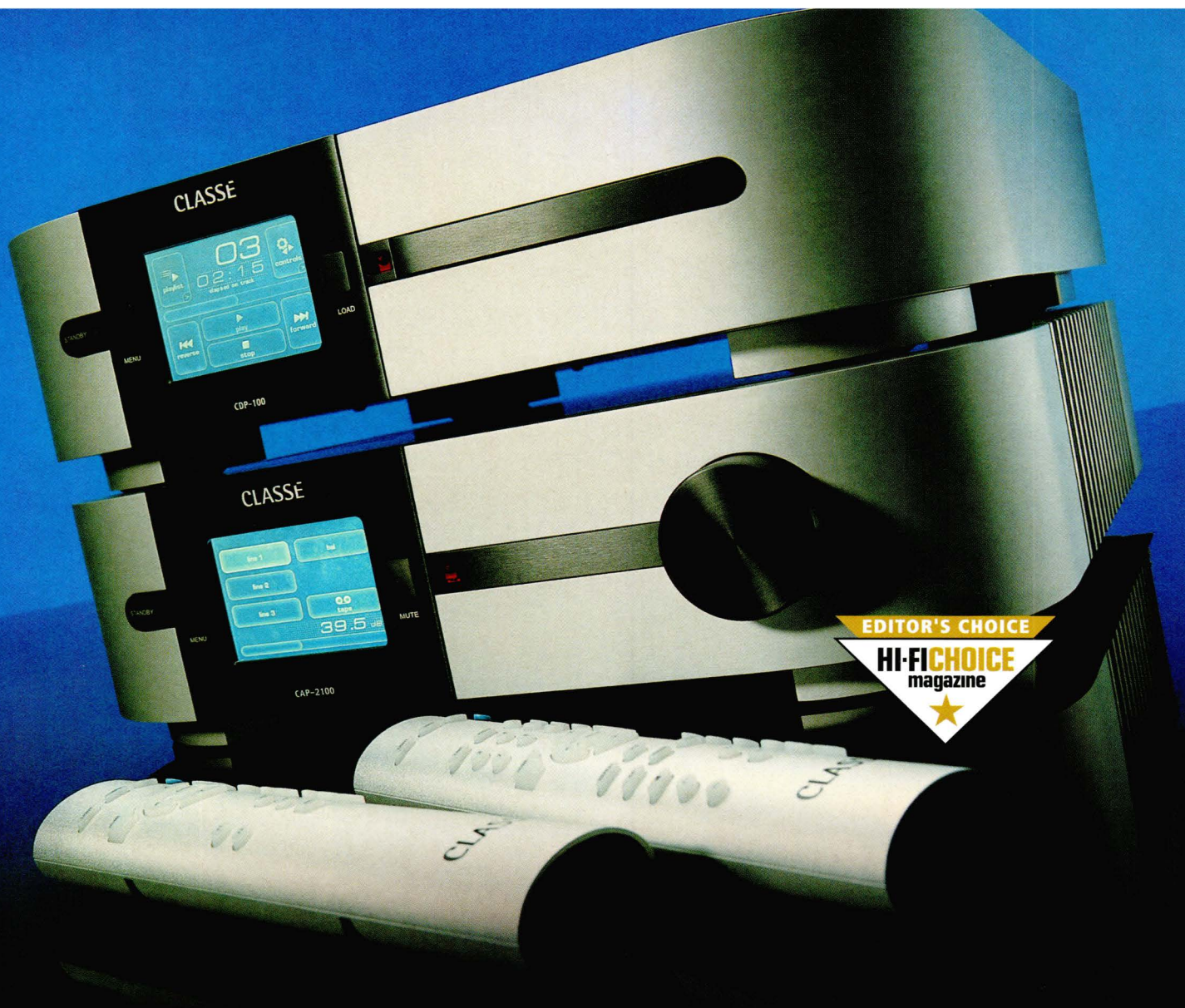


### Editor's Choice

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

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





# Canadian smoothie

*Classé pairing combines eye-catching style with ear-pleasing stereo sound*

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

**TYPE** CD player and integrated amplifier

**PRICE** (CDP-100) £2,950, (CAP-2100) £3,950

**KEY FEATURES** (CDP-100) Size (WxHxD): 44.5x12.1x41.9cm • Weight 12kg • Balanced and single-ended outputs • Full custom install support • Plays CD, CD-R & CD-RW • HDCD decoder included • (CAP-2100) Size (WxHxD): 44.5x12.1x41.9cm • Weight 23kg • 5 inputs including tape • Preamp output • 100W per channel (8 ohms) • 200W per channel (4 ohms)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01903 221500 # www.classeaudio.com

Look at the photos and you may conclude that Classé has gone all image-led; the old range didn't have an image (or even much of a presence in the UK, if truth be told). Trouble was, any two randomly chosen Classé

components were likely to look as though they had come from completely different brands. But Classé has always had a strong reputation among the cognoscenti, and with good reason; the sound was first rate.

This rather parochial Quebec-based hi-fi specialist has now been fully integrated into the B&W global empire. In fact, this happened about three years ago, although the new Delta products have only started to trickle out to the shops in the last few months.

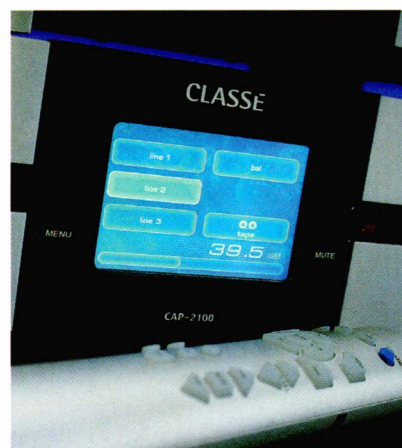
The ambitious Delta series consists of an extensive and fully integrated range of stereo and multichannel/home cinema components, each of which conforms to the same radical styling and user interface groundplan. This is also a range where voicing (if that is the word)

also has a real uniformity across the range, thanks to consistent design strategies and the use of common modules across the range.

Industrial design is from the Morten Warren stable, previously responsible for the B&W Nautilus 800 series. The single piece curved extrusion that constitutes the front and side panels is one of the two most distinctive features of the design. Its strength and solidity allows it to behave as a mechanical ground along with a dual layer anti-vibration base (made in conjunction with Navcom, a vibration control specialist), to which everything else is attached. The fascia extrusion is also largely responsible for the clean-cut appearance.

More distinctive still is the user interface. The two Delta series components reviewed here





**“The software to drive the TFTs has been superbly implemented, using the various components to their fullest extent.”**

have an irreducible minimum of hardware controls (power/standby switching, a menu key and – for the amplifier – a rotary volume control), and the rest of the range is similarly (under)endowed. The main element of the control system, however, is a high-resolution blue touch screen thin-film transistor (TFT) display. The default display shows the main touch selectable controls (play for the CD player, input selection plus a volume readout for the amplifier). Subscreens provide access to the secondary features – a playlist for programming the CD player, for example – and the various display and setup options. It’s also useful for troubleshooting, via a dealer’s laptop. The software to drive the TFTs has been superbly implemented, using the various components to their fullest extent. One final advantage of TFTs is that they’re electrically quieter than the alternatives, and the screens used here have a wide viewing window and sport adjustable brightness (and off) settings.

But there is always the option of remote control, using handsets that can be stood on their heels, or external control using Crestron and similar controllers. The Delta range is

specifically designed for custom install, with trigger outputs, IR inputs, system bus sockets as well as RS232 communications connections, which allow internal firmware upgrades.

The CDP-100 is a single disc upsampling CD player. The Philips VAE1250 professional transport is controlled by a master clock positioned close to the 24 bit/352.8kHz D/A conversion upsampled D/A converter stage, rather than using the clock on the transport servo board, which is subject to a lot of electrical noise. The digital filter is a Pacific Microsonics PMD200 HDCD design, chosen partly because Classé’s engineers believe it to be one of the best for all disc types, but the choice also means that HDCD encoded recordings are correctly decoded. The D/A section is driven by two differential mode Burr-Brown PCM1738 multibit delta-sigma 24-bit converters. The single-ended output is itself derived from a fully balanced source, and each of the + and - pins in the balanced XLR output are derived from four D/A conversion stages. The player is powered by 11 separate and regulated power supplies from a substantial toroidal transformer.

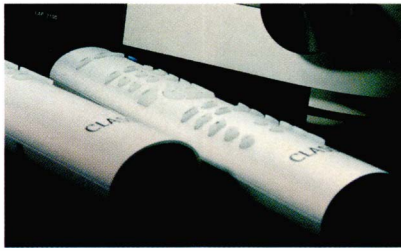
The CAP-2100 is Classé’s entry level integrated amplifier, rated at 100 watts per channel into eight ohms. This amplifier has a balanced internal topology, and a single balanced input plus four line inputs, one a tape circuit, with a preamp output available in addition to the main output. Internally, there are three screened toroidal transformers, one each for the preamp, the power amps and the control circuits, while the main reservoir uses multiple small value caps to maintain speed and load independence without prejudicing current capability. The input stage loading is determined by J-FETs, which drive a MOSFET driver stage, and ultimately a bipolar high current output block.

Other design highlights include very short signal paths and four-layer high-grade PCBs that include a ground plane. The amplifier is DC coupled, and includes extensive protection circuitry using non-intrusive Hall effect sensors. Overheat protection is also included, and the amplifier monitors line voltage, frequency, phase and ground condition and internal temperature, with readings accessible via the TFT display. An optional MM/MC phono module is promised soon.

**SOUND QUALITY**

The Classé pair has been put to the test for an extended period – a little in excess of two months – during which they have been used in a variety of systems, mostly wired in true XLR ▶





## Q & A

Russell Kauffman, Classé's European Brand Manager, discusses the new Delta range and how TFT panels came to dominate the Canadian high end



**HFC:** What was the thinking behind the styling of the Delta range?

**RK:** Product design contributes to a long-term effect on the experience of ownership. Making equipment that is good to look at, touch and operate was important to us. With many manufacturers slugging it out in the same area, everyone concentrates on how their equipment sounds, but often on very narrow grounds. Our ambition was to produce equipment that would contribute to longevity by being exciting all round, so that the owner would keep going back to it, keep enjoying it.

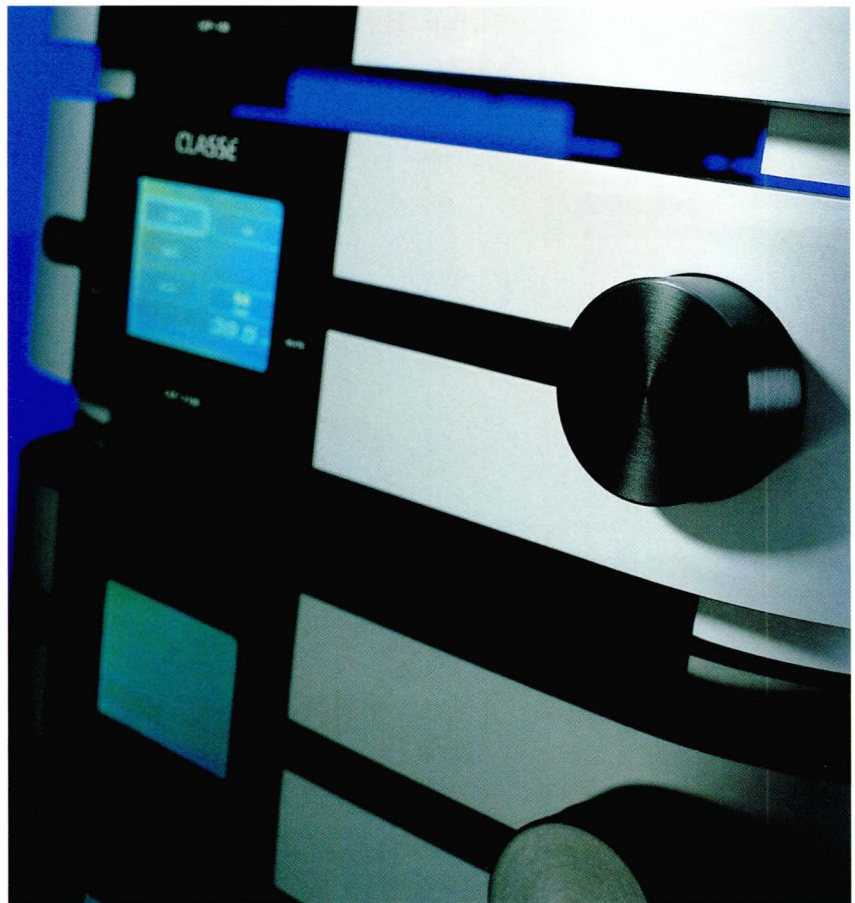
This is one key reason for the aesthetic design of the Delta range. But this is a performance related argument too. The stiffness of the front extrusion, in conjunction with the Navcom feet, improves rigidity... and the sound, of course.

**Why was the TFT screen included?**

One of the benefits of the TFT screen is that it contributes to the consistent styling across the range. It also helps the equipment fit well in a domestic environment. In addition, because technology moves so quickly, we expect the TFT interface will make it easier to offer a number of upgrades to users as firmware updates through our dealers. These may be added features, too, but the way the Delta range has been designed makes it easy to improve the performance quality as well.

**What main performance issues is the Delta range meant to address?**

With some high-end brands, the ambition seems to be to stretch resolution so far that you can hear every single detail, sometimes to the point where the big picture is sacrificed, and the user's enjoyment is impeded. I can own up to this in my own case, because I used to listen almost exclusively to female vocals. In live presentations, I tell the audience that they can tell if their friends' hi-fi system is any good without turning it on, by just looking at their record collection. In my own case, classical music was lost to me because my system couldn't play it. Now I find I can listen to classical, and all kinds of music I wouldn't have listened to previously. I feel it is a major issue, because any product Classé introduces, enhances the emotional connection with the music.



## “Imagery tends to be unusually explicit and ‘out of the box’, with clear differentiation of the layers of sound in the depth plane.”

balanced mode with Nordost Valhalla, which suits their character well, though pricing is bound to be an issue. They have been used as a front end for a number of loudspeakers from Revel, B&W (800D), Ruark, Opera (the new high-end Divina) and others. The Classé equipment played musical chairs with counterparts from the likes of Marantz, Denon and Krell (the KAV-400xi integrated amp). From experience with other Delta range components, burn-in time is extended considerably, and the amplifier was kept under power for most of the test period.

At the end of all this comparative listening, it is very difficult to level any real criticism at the player or the amplifier, at least when judged against price. The bigger Classé power amps are significantly better than the one in the CAP-2100 when driving difficult loads like the B&W 800D, and I have heard better players, though none that I can recall close to the price.

The essential qualities of the Classé components that stand out on audition are their speed and agility. They are not achieved at any cost, but in the context of a smooth, surprisingly comfortable and a very neutral

overall presentation. Other than this there is... nothing much, in all the right ways. There is no hint of temperament, a complete lack of drama other than of the musical kind, even in system combinations which are known to be tricky (the B&W 800D is a good example for the reasons already given).

No brash treble, either; just the opposite in fact: the high frequency region is silky smooth, with a near complete absence of grain and imposed structure, and the overriding Classé demeanour has a touch of warmth and grace, but not to the extent that the sound could be described as valve like, still less lacking in resolution or bite. They just don't sound solid-state in any pejorative sense. In short, there is very little readily identifiable character to the sound, and as is often the case when this happens, imagery tends to be unusually explicit and ‘out of the box’, with clear differentiation of the layers of sound in the depth plane. There's even an impression of height information given suitable recordings.

The comments above are especially true of the amplifier, which is a peach. Power output is notably generous, and although this is not



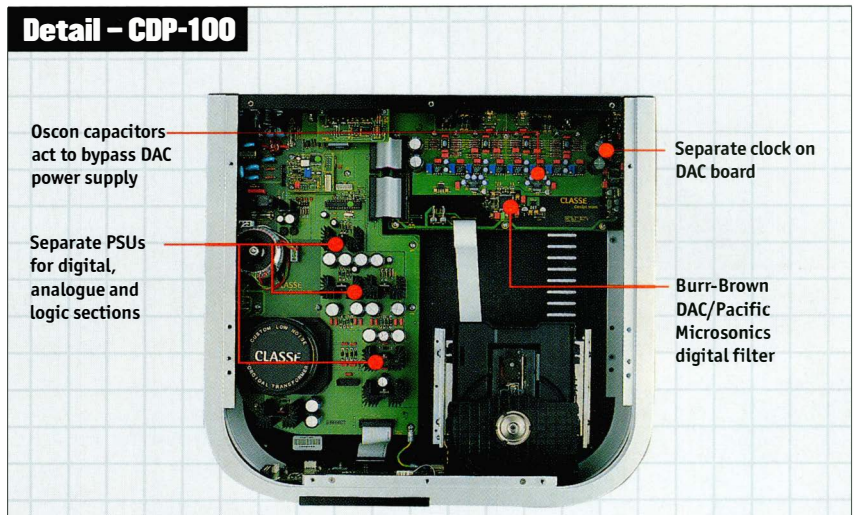
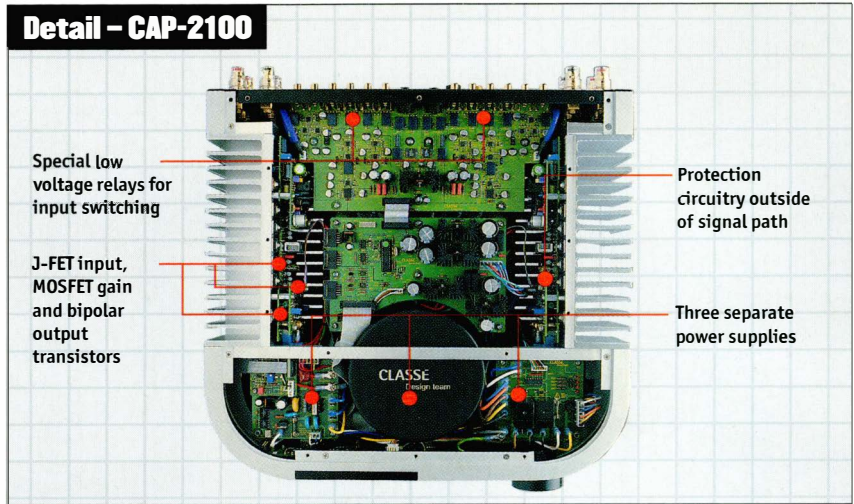
unusual in ambitious designs of the type, 100W per channel could easily be mistaken in practice for, say, 150W. Despite this, the CAP-2100 doesn't have the devastating authority or the ultimate control necessary to show the B&W 800D in the best light, but it would have been a major upset to the natural order had it been otherwise. And in the final analysis, the CD player is 'very good' rather than 'great'. The Denon DCD-SA1 SACD/CD player has even more of the Classé's best points – refinement, elegant tonality, articulation and fluidity – but take note also of the Denon's £5,000 bottom line.

Through the variety of permutations of system, we came to see the Classé pairing as a safe pair of hands. The combination would easily show much of what most speakers, even high-end models, were capable of. Their voicing was consistent and, in the best sense, predictable and there was never felt to be much danger – when winding the volume up – that the amplifier was likely to break first.

The visual elegance of the design is an excellent metaphor for the sound, especially in the case of the amplifier. Pricing is also clearly realistic for the engineering and performance on offer. But, no-one could ever mistake this duo for cheap electronics – the fit and finish, coupled with the high-tech front panel displays and sheer bulk put paid to any ideas like that.

When buying equipment like this, the final decision is often determined by factors other than outright performance. The Classé pairing has good performance in spades, but above all they are great all-round packages. They don't just sound good, they are visually elegant and refined, flexible in their configuration, and the touch-screen interface is the finest contribution to its field that I can recall.

There are also features you can't see which add to the attraction, notably in the way that serviceability is addressed, which should maximise reliability and minimise downtime. My only slight disappointments are that the CD player lacks CD-Text (inexcusable given the qualities of the display), and that it is not also



an SACD stereo player. But clearly most important of all is that the TFTs are not driven in white (sorry, shades of grey), instead of blue on blue. This grey panel against a grey and black amplifier would surely look even, er, classier. If the only disappointments have no real bearing on the sound quality of the products as they stand, it's clear that Classé is on to a winner or two, here. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*



**VERDICT – CDP-100**

**SOUND >> 85%**

**FEATURES >> 85%**

**BUILD >> 94%**

**VALUE >> 86%**

**CONCLUSION**  
Sophisticated internal design architecture yields excellent, character free sonics, good balanced circuitry and elegant user interface. CD Text is an obvious omission, though.

**HI-FI CHOICE >> 86%**

**VERDICT – CAP-2100**

**SOUND >> 89%**

**FEATURES >> 90%**

**BUILD >> 95%**

**VALUE >> 87%**

**CONCLUSION**  
Refined high resolution amplifier with superb user interface, this is a natural marriage between audiophile sound quality and style-led, designer packaging.

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





# Rock n-Roll

*Naim's versatile and compact new speaker system is intended for both stereo and multichannel use*

**PRODUCT** Naim n-SAT/n-SUB

**TYPE** Satellite and subwoofer speaker system

**PRICE** (n-SAT) £695 per pair, (n-SUB) £1,495

**KEY FEATURES** (n-SAT) Size (WxHxD): 20x29x21cm  
 • Weight: 5.5kg • Curved sealed enclosure • 100mm woofer • 19mm annular 'ring' tweeter • 'single-point' stand  
 (n-SUB) Size (WxHxD): 39x39x39cm • Weight: 29.5kg • 250mm bass unit • 350W amplifier • Sealed box • Front control panel • remote control

**CONTACT** ☎ 01722 332266  
 🌐 www.naim-audio.com

**S**mall loudspeakers might not be the first choice for many hi-fi purists, just as multi-channel surround sound is not (yet) the format of choice for the majority of music enthusiasts. But surround sound for music as well as movies is now an established part of the home entertainment pantheon, placing a premium on creating multichannel sound systems compact and discreet enough to be accommodated comfortably within the typical British lounge.

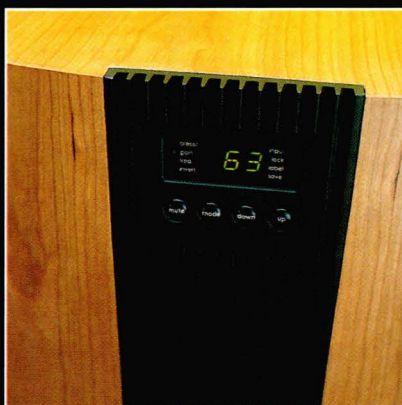
To help cope with this situation, two obvious techniques spring to mind. The first is to design small main 'satellite' speakers that work well when they're mounted on or close to a wall; the second is to rely on one or more subwoofers to generate the low bass. The compact sub/sat speaker system has become a

key ingredient in today's multichannel sound systems, though – carefully executed – it's equally applicable to two-channel stereo reproduction, and indeed a high quality system ought to be equally adept at handling either configuration well.

The majority of commercial sub/sat packages are low-cost affairs, placing discreet appearance at the top of the list of priorities, and therefore featuring tiny satellites that significantly compromise performance. However, Naim Audio is not a company to make compromises – it builds serious kit at serious prices, and its new sub/sat speaker

system shows the same heritage and serious intent as other Naim speakers and electronics.

The n-SAT satellite speaker might be significantly smaller than Naim's other speaker designs, but the five-litre enclosure, 19mm annular tweeter and 130mm bass/mid driver are similar in size to the 'miniature' speakers that have for decades been a popular stereo loudspeaker pair choice for smaller UK rooms. These usually manage to deliver decent in-room output down to around 50Hz when sited close to walls. It's slightly unusual in one key respect – whereas most speakers today have reflex ports, Naim sticks rigidly to





sealed-box loading. This gives less bass output but superior extension and phase accuracy; it also ensures that close-to-wall siting can be used with little fear of mid-bass excess. The main driver has a 100mm flared paper cone, while the tweeter is a high class Scandinavian design with a ring diaphragm. The crossover uses high power handling components, and the signal is fed in via a single pair of 4mm sockets (since Naim doesn't rate bi-wiring).

It's a pretty little speaker, finished in a choice of cherry or maple real wood veneers, or a more costly silver/black lacquer alternative. It's also attractively shaped, with curved sides and a more gently curved front adding a distinctive touch, stiffening the whole thing, and helping spread internal standing waves. An elegantly vestigial yet decidedly costly (at £195 per pair) matching n-STAND cleverly provides low-mass 'single-point' support, and a wall bracket alternative is in preparation.

Just a pair of n-SATs alone ought to be capable of very satisfactory results, albeit with some rather obvious limitations in bass grunt and power. The n-SUB therefore does represent a rather costly upgrade, at roughly twice the price of an n-SAT pair, and only serving to reinforce the bottom couple of octaves. But the bass end is crucial in bringing genuine scale and realism to the proceedings, and the n-SUB looks better equipped than most to carry out the task.

The n-SUB is a hefty unit, turning the scales to nearly 30kg. It's quite bulky, though handsomely finished to match the n-SAT, and the choice of features looks very intelligent. Best of all is the full remote control with display feedback. This might sound like gilding the lily, but it's actually very useful and practical, as it's vital to adjust a subwoofer for best performance at the actual listening seat, and therefore very convenient to be able to do so while seated.

The 250mm bass unit is loaded by a 20 litre sealed box, with a separate compartment for the electronics. Power equivalent to 350W gives plenty of headroom, and three inputs allow easily selectable stereo or multichannel LFE options. The low pass filter has 22 positions, and six different set-up configurations can be preset into memory for recall from the handset. Multi-channel users should note that there's also a £500 n-CENT centre-front speaker to partner the n-SAT and n-SUB. It's similar to n-SAT but is horizontal in configuration and has an extra main driver and appropriately larger enclosure.

#### SOUND QUALITY

With the speakers sited close to a wall as the manufacturer intended, the overall in-room balance of a pair of n-SATs alone looks pretty good, if not exactly neutral in the strict sense of the word. There's a significant tendency to over-emphasise upper-mid and presence detail (800Hz-2.2kHz) and under-emphasise



**“This might be a very small loudspeaker, but its superior dynamic qualities and range belie its modest dimensions.”**

frequencies lower down in the midband (200-400Hz), but the overall trend is quite smooth. Although the bass starts rolling off below the driver/box resonance at 90Hz, it does so very gently (at -6dB/octave) and is compensated by room gain, so the end result shows good ultimate extension, albeit at reduced level. Sensitivity is around 87dB, which is respectable enough in view of the easy load and good extension. Especially as the speakers will likely partner Naim amps.

Listening began with just a pair of n-SATs connected, and if the rather lean and forward balance was subjectively quite obvious, it didn't detract as much as one might expect from the enjoyment of an otherwise very fine speaker. This might be a small loudspeaker, but its superior dynamic qualities and range belie its modest dimensions, and the way the pair filled their end of the room with a generous and spacious soundstage was impressively convincing. ▶

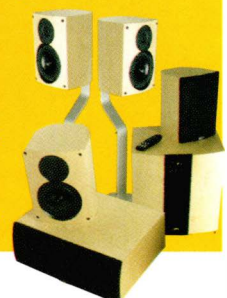
### MULTICHANNEL PERFORMANCE

Adding another pair of n-SATs and a £500 n-CENT centre speaker brings this 2.1 system to multichannel standing. The sealed-box n-CENT features a swept-back front baffle with two 150mm bass drivers and a 19mm annular ring tweeter, which is entirely isolated from the bass units internally.

Precise and distinctively mid-forward, this system manages to keep some of the typical home cinema brightness at bay, yet doesn't squash the life out of multichannel sounds in the process. What this does in practical terms is make the Naim system that bit more easy to sit in front of.

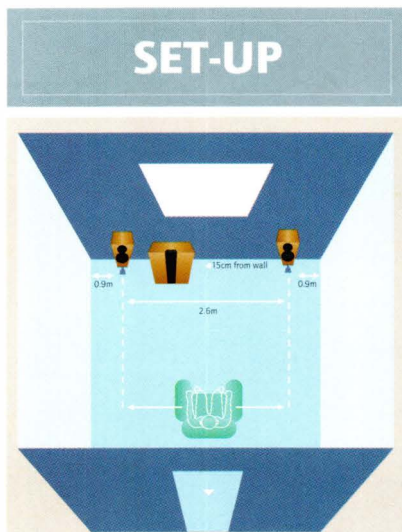
The Crazy 88 fight scene in the first *Kill Bill* movie is a half-hour martial arts fest, with some delicious DTS surround effects and excellent background music. Most reviewers will play this for a couple of minutes and move on. Not here; the whole scene has to be watched, because it's so entertaining. That's what the Naim speaker system does best, it brings back the fun to multichannel. **HFC**

Alan Sircom





# [Review] Naim n-SAT satellite speaker and n-SUB subwoofer



## POSITIONING

According to the manufacturer, the n-SAT is intended for close-to-wall siting, which is consistent with its small size and sealed-box loading. It's also entirely consistent with the results of our far field in-room averaged responses, which show output holding up well down to 50Hz, the rolling off so the 20Hz is roughly 10dB below the 50Hz datum. The bass is quite smooth, though its level is around 4dB less than the prominent upper mid (800Hz-2kHz), and output is particularly weak in the lower midband, 250-500Hz.

Adding the n-SUB, set to the default 60Hz rolloff, provided excellent integration with the n-SAT, and added as much weight as one liked 20-60Hz. Naim recommends placing the subwoofer with its driver pointing towards a structural wall, and a gap of between 10 and 15cms. This was tried and proved very effective advice under our conditions. However, because the n-SUB only operates at the very lowest frequencies, it doesn't affect the midband imbalance mentioned in the last paragraph.

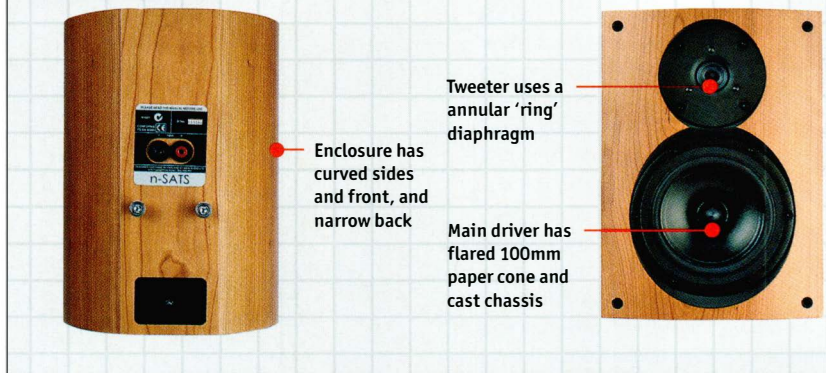
There are no easy rules about finding the best position for a subwoofer, because of the unpredictable way its specific siting will excite the standing wave modes of any given room. The key is to try and find the position from which it will deliver the most even bass throughout the room. There's no substitute for experimental trial and error here, though in fact the best way to achieve this is to use more than one subwoofer, as a second device will usually excite a different and hence complementary set of modes.

## SYSTEM MATCHING

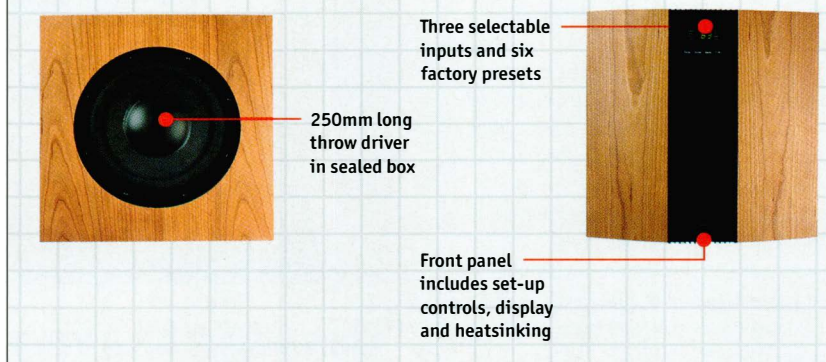
There should be no problem driving the n-SAT, which has respectable sensitivity and presents a relatively easy load to the driving amplifier. The impedance stays above six ohms throughout the bass and midrange, falling to around four ohms above 3.5kHz.

The n-SUB is very flexible. Three separate inputs allow stereo connection via pre-out or speaker terminal, alongside an LFE channel AV input. Up to six combinations of input and filtering may be preset into memory and accessed remotely. There's an output socket so that one or more extra subs may be added, and comprehensive earthing options to avoid hum. This gives the n-SUB enough flexibility to cope with hi-fi and home cinema.

## Detail – n-SAT



## Detail – n-SUB



Introducing the subwoofer provided the right amount of icing on the cake, adding serious weight, power and authority to the party, and doing so without in the slightest affecting the poise and agility, or indeed the stereo imaging. Crucially, it totally avoids one of the biggest endemic problems that tend to afflict most three-box sub/sat speaker systems – that of maintaining good timing between the bass and the rest.

A probable reason is that Naim has deliberately avoided going for a sub-miniature satellite, and instead opted for one that's big enough to operate right across the band. This means that the satellites are able to deliver a coherent full-bandwidth sound, albeit with limited bass level, while the subwoofer adds the requisite weight.

The net result provides stiff competition for any serious pair of stereo speakers, delivering a full bandwidth sound with great detail and wide dynamic range, to the point where even difficult material, such as a broadcast of Messiaen's *Des Canyons aux Etoiles*, proved fascinating and engrossing. All of which makes n-SAT a prince among satellites, while the speed and weight of the n-SUB pushes it to the forefront of subwoofering. The forwardness and lack of warmth remain something of a drawback, but that seems to be the only significant downside to an exceptionally discreet and flexible package. **HFC**

Paul Messenger



## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 87%**

PRO

EASE OF DRIVE >> 87%

BUILD >> 92%

VALUE >> 86%

CON

CONCLUSION

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 86%





# Product of the Year

Best Full Size Speaker Package



Awards 2004-2005



“Quite simply, the performance of the Quad package is astonishing... for the money, the Quad is untouchable.”

— *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision Awards 2004*

“The overall performance of this downward firing 12” subwoofer is the best I’ve heard at anywhere near its price.”

— *AV Guide Monthly / The Absolute Sound - February 2005*

“At almost any price it would be good value for money: the fact that it comes in at a shade under £2000, at least in 5.1 form, makes it outstanding”

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



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# System addict

*Arcam's debut one-box system looks the part, but has the Solo retained an audiophile edge?*

**PRODUCT** Arcam Solo

**TYPE** CD/DAB receiver

**PRICE** £1,000

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 43x8x3.5cm

• Weight: 7.75Kg • Five line-level inputs • Optical digital output • 50W per channel (75 watts into four ohms) • DAB/FM tuner

**CONTACT** ☎ 01223 203200 # www.arcam.co.uk

**T**iming is everything. It may seem that Arcam – following the management buyout towards the end of last year – has turned the Solo around in a remarkably short time. In fact, the Cambridgeshire company's first ever one-box system has actually been on the drawing board for a lot longer – almost two years.

Still, the timing is prescient, as this product is the perfect means of demonstrating a new way of thinking at Arcam. Not that we have to worry about the company moving into the mini system market any time soon, it's just that the new management is interested in opening up untapped markets, especially in the two-channel arena. Hence this rather smart looking integrated CD and DAB receiver. And there's more: Arcam's first loudspeaker in more than a decade – the Alto – will partner this system and is promised soon.

Initial impressions are definitely good, and the Solo's styling and build quality are both straight out of the top drawer of the design cabinet. The fascia is a solid piece of metal with a centre-mounted disc drawer and a row of six inlaid controls to each side. The blue display is large, clear and bright. Rather cleverly, the size of the information displayed changes, depending on importance. So, info such as the raising and lowering of the volume is larger when actually adjusting the volume than it is when you change tracks, for example. The display is also dimmable, going from very bright indeed to completely switched off.

If there is a question mark over the Solo's build and design, it's with those natty buttons on the front. While they look great, on our review sample they felt a little bit wobbly, and didn't respond quite as we would have liked. However, this is a minor detail, as most of the controlling will be done by the rather snazzy remote control – the first appearance of this new Arcam handset.

The CD section of the Solo uses Arcam's impressive entry-level CD73 CD player squeezed into this new box, complete with its 24-bit Wolfson DAC and Colpitts reclocking system for reducing jitter as the information comes off the CD mechanism.

The only conceivable downside to using the internals of the CD73 is on the feature front, because, as with the dedicated player, the Solo isn't able to read or play back CD-Rs loaded with MP3 files. This is not big news for people looking for out and out sound quality, but perhaps a bit of a problem for potential buyers who are more interested in style than performance. However, there is that rather inviting 3.5mm input on the front panel, next to a similarly sized headphone socket, for connecting up a personal MP3 player, iPod or even a PlayStation's audio.

Arcam's long-term involvement with digital radio has led to a DAB/FM tuner being included in here as well, which is a major feather in the Solo's cap. It's actually the same chip-set the company uses in its DT91 tuner, and therefore includes the processing of FM signals in the digital domain for those unable to receive DAB yet, and providing a digital output for these broadcasts should you want to record them.

While the above elements are tried and trusted Arcam components, the 50 watts (75 watts into four ohms) amplification is all new and something of a departure. As Arcam couldn't squeeze its current amp technology into the box with everything else, it instead







# Sabre strikes back

*Ruark revives a classic loudspeaker, upgrading its 1986 two-way to keep it fresh for 2005*

**PRODUCT** Ruark Sabre III

**TYPE** Standmount loudspeaker

**PRICE** £900 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 20x33.5x27cm • Weight: 8kg • Frequency response: 50Hz-22kHz +/-3dB (free space) • Power handling: 120 Watts • Sensitivity/impedance: 86dB/8 ohms (nominal)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01702 601410 • www.ruark.co.uk

**A**fter a period of treading water while much of the company's energy and resources went in to promoting the Tivoli brand, Ruark is now back doing what it

historically does best: designing and manufacturing purist loudspeakers for the discerning music lover.

The Sabre III is a compact, rear-vented two-way, intended for stand mounting, though it could be used on shelves at a pinch. There is absolutely nothing tricky or revolutionary about the design; Ruark has always seen its business as getting the fundamentals right, and refining those fundamentals to the best of its ability. Because Ruark understands what it is doing, the company generally achieves strikingly good results.

As always, there has been no attempt to engineer down to a price. Instead, the design is hand-built in the UK to high standards and is wood veneered on all surfaces, apart from the black painted rear panel. It is sold at a realistic price, taking into account the care and attention that has been lavished on the design.

The original version of the Sabre standmounter was introduced as long ago as 1986, actually the year that Ruark was formed. This new version amounts, in effect, to a relaunch of the model, which has not been available since 1997. But, it is not simply a







**“It doesn’t just go with the flow, it seems to revel in it, and the result is a loudspeaker with real strength and authority.”**

relaunch without change – the bass unit and the enclosure are smaller than before, in line with a generally increased unwillingness to accommodate big boxes. The way the 18mm and 25mm (baffle) enclosure is constructed has changed too, with a different and more contemporary aesthetic. Although smaller, improved technologies and construction techniques have allowed a marked overall improvement in performance.

The blond oak veneer of the test pair had a matt finish, with a strongly figured grain and a hint of texture under the fingers. The tucked-in edges are extremely well handled, and so are the rounded edges at the front, which – by mitigating diffraction effects – are acoustically superior to the original fluted edges on the earlier series enclosures, and do much to lighten and shrink the appearance of the Sabre. An asymmetric bulkhead brace helps control the sides, top and base panels, and the inset terminal block, which accommodates quality biwire 4mm binding posts, is itself a wood panel and not the usual nasty resonant plastic moulding often used to simplify construction. The edges at the back are smoothed over and the reflex port is radiused at both ends of the tube.

Drive units are from SEAS, customised to Ruark’s requirements. The 27mm fluid-cooled tweeter has a dome and surround fabricated

from a proprietary material, Sonolex, which is a lightweight textile, pre-coated with damping material, heat cured and pressure formed to shape. The unit has a vented motor system leading to a damped rear chamber, which absorbs much of the energy that would otherwise be reflected back through the dome. It also features aluminium coil windings and an aluminium former. The bass driver is a 150mm unit featuring Ruark’s favoured impregnated paper cone. The low Q motor system, again featuring an aluminium former, is mounted in an injection-moulded chassis with low aerodynamic loading and is designed for good power handling.

**SOUND QUALITY**

There has always been a very special joy in finding a good, simple, standmounted two-way loudspeaker. Models of this kind tend not to be high profile, because there are not often very sexy compared to the flagship models, but as they are not too large, and their relatively lightweight enclosures are easier to control, they can be decidedly high achievers. This is just such a loudspeaker.

The gap between this model and the earlier Sabre is too long to retain a clear recollection of what the former model was like, but in a way this hardly matters. Presumably, few will be considering replacing an earlier Sabre with a Sabre III, whether or not differences are likely to be incremental and a mild reordering of priorities, rather than a giant leap forward.

Assessed in its own right, and without reference to what came before, the new Sabre III comes across as a lean, highly detailed speaker, with stereo imagery that is clearly out of the box. Without attempting to rewrite the laws of physics, bass extension is good for a small speaker, but this might not be obvious at first, as the bass/mid balance is on the lean, dry side of neutral. The low notes, for example from the cello and bass of a full orchestral


recording, are there, but they tend to sound a little distant and low in level, or at least they were when the Sabre III was first used some distance from the back wall. Fine-tuning the setup by moving the speakers closer to the back wall helps lift the bass without necessarily disturbing the midrange balance, and in many rooms, about 30-35cm of free air behind, with minimal toe-in (the tweeter is a little more directional than some, so orientation counts), should work well.

Other features of the sound are open to personal interpretation. At first, the balance appeared rather hard and forward, at times verging on aggressive. The treble is not the sweetest around, an impression reinforced after an extended recent diet of high end loudspeakers with diamond and sapphire tweeter domes. But, it’s still easy to appreciate and enjoy the balance the Sabre III offers, especially after a period of acclimatisation. Yes it can sound bright and rough (it will probably sound even more so fresh from the box, but the test pair had been well run-in), but the level of detail is high. It’s partly because of the treble that the Sabre III has a quality best described as ‘grip’. It doesn’t just go with the flow, it seems to revel in it, and the result is a loudspeaker with real strength and authority, that doesn’t fudge detail in a layer of false sophistication. In short, this is a speaker that gets down to business with a sense of openness and vitality. As a result it encourages extended listening.

The Sabre III has a fundamental honesty that doesn’t set out to sanitise music and doesn’t apply too much polish, but which allows it to speak with its own voice, for better or for worse. It may not be ideal for those who simply want to relax by melting away with Mantovani as a way of unwinding at the end of a difficult day at the office. Conversely, it is a natural for those who want to make the most of the vitality and musical expression locked up in their disc (or record) collections. It’s an old fashioned idea, but sometimes the old ones are the best. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*



<b>VERDICT</b>	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 86%</b>	 <b>PRO</b> Honest, lively and thoroughly grippy performer that does exactly what it says on the tin, and does it with panache and much conviction. <b>CON</b> There has been no attempt to sanitise this speaker, which can sound raw, especially if partnered unsympathetically.
<b>EASE OF DRIVE &gt;&gt; 88%</b>	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 93%</b>	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 83%</b>	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> Back to basics design resurrects famous Sabre name from Ruark’s early years, and squares the circle with similar – and in some respects improved – performance from a smaller and visually superior enclosure.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 85%</b>	





# A-level music

*Yorkshire's finest beefs up its classic Class A amp and gives it a makeover in the process*

**PRODUCT** Sugden A21SE

**TYPE** Integrated amplifier

**PRICE** £1,995

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 43x11.5x31.5cm  
 • Weight: 12.5kg • Rated power output: 30W (pure Class A) per channel into eight ohms • Four line-level inputs, one tape input/output • remote control

**CONTACT** ☎ 01294 404088  
 🌐 www.sugdenaudio.com

Shhh, wanna know a secret? One of the best-sounding products money can buy is virtually unknown. The £1,100 Sugden A21 has been delivering a sound that is hard to match at more than three times the price. It's little-known in part because the power output is so low (just 25 watts) it becomes hard to partner with some loudspeakers, in part because it lacks a remote control but mostly because it looks like a bit of a minger. The styling seems to skip the last 18 years of product design.

So, Heckmondwike's longest-running amp needed a bit of a makeover, and it's called the A21SE. Fuelled by the success of the Bijou and Masterclass lines (that look more attractive than the A21 series), Sugden took the basic amplifier design, gave it a boost (to 30 watts for an eight-ohm load, 40 watts for a four-ohm speaker), a new preamp, remote and the sort of styling exercise that brings it right up to date. This has a thick gunmetal fascia and a big, bold finish that gives the A21SE an almost Scandinavian look. The black rear panel is also extremely thick and has high-quality WBT-style speaker terminals, although the gold-plated phono sockets for the four line inputs and tape and preamp line outputs are all of standard quality. There's also no provision for a phono stage or a headphone socket.

This improves upon the bluff styling of the A21, but the amplifier is still not quite 'there' when it comes to ease of use. The logic of the remote control is a bit, er, twisty. For example,

to operate volume control from the remote only happens when you press the 'CD' function key, which seems odd. The input selector and volume knobs – and the power button – don't feel as beefy as some similarly priced integrated's control surfaces. Some labelling of inputs would be nice, too, although this might break up the minimalist lines of the A21SE and is forgivable.

Sugden has made this an amplifier to suit the new generation of sources, thanks to an extremely wide frequency response and even wider bandwidth. It delivers sound from 12Hz-141kHz and a potential bandwidth of 6Hz-280kHz, according to Sugden.

Peer through the circular grill holes on the top panel and you will see four separate PCBs (an input block at the back of the amp, a main amp stage and power supply board and two power amplifier stages tacked onto the heatsinks on either side of the amplifier). In the middle of the amplifier is a dirty great big



toroidal transformer, which accounts for a pretty large proportion of the weight of this chunky Sugden.

Heatsinks and vents on the top and bottom of the amplifier should suggest a lot of heat dissipation going on. The Class A operation confirms this. Remember those Holsten Pils adverts where Donald Pleasence intoned “most of the sugar turns to alcohol”? Well Class A needs its own vaguely creepy actor saying “most of the power turns to heat”. There’s no getting around it, the A21SE runs hot, uncomfortably hot to the touch. If you leave it powered up continually, it will behave like a small radiator, warming up the room – and your electricity bill – considerably. Sugden is not unmindful of the Class A nature of this amp; the first page of the manual comes with a warning about placing things near or on top of the amplifier. Putting anything other than a shelf within 10cm of the A21SE is not recommended, probably because what you put near the A21SE will slowly melt.

It sounds ironic given all this heat dissipation, but the amplifier still needs a substantial warm up period, both as a run-in and before each play time. The sound gets better and better over the first month or so, and it takes about 20-30minutes after each power up of the amplifier for it to come on song. But there’s no need to set your stopwatch – turn the thing on, wait for the room to become a sauna and it’s ready.

#### SOUND QUALITY

All that dissipated heat from running this amplifier in Class A seems to boil off lots of the negative aspects of most other amplifiers. Grain, brightness, any form of etched quality and colorations all disappear in the heatwave, leaving instead a sound that is remarkably clean and open. Given the amount of heat, paradoxically, it’s not a warm sound. But nor is it a cool sound – it’s just very, very clean and entirely free from grain. The two are not a tautology; it has that just-scrubbed clean sound of good transistor amplifier amps and the lack of grain that is hard to find this side of a single-ended triode design.

The A21SE delivers some of the best soundstaging in the business. It is wide, deep and even has height. But there’s more; the sound is so very three-dimensional that it makes it seem like the studio space is recreated in your living room. Not too small, not too big, just a soundstage at precisely the right scale and size, making the boundaries of room and speaker disappear at a stroke. This is, of course, dependent on the quality of the soundstage recorded on the disc, but if there is a hint of soundstaging, the Sugden will dig it out.

Perhaps the biggest feather in the A21SE’s cap is the coherence of the sound. This is an almost forgotten, overlooked aspect of a product’s presentation, but is in fact more crucial than we give it credit. It’s all very well



**“Good midband coherence is usually a factor at the sort of level where you’d pay two grand for a mains lead, not the whole amp.”**

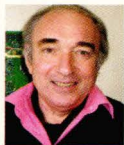
having a beautifully detailed delivery, with perfect rhythm and first-rate dynamics, but if the piano sounds like a marimba for the bass and someone playing the spoons in the upper registers, everything soon falls apart. Starting with one of the best midbands around, the Sugden manages to keep every sound coherent and tonally accurate into the highest treble and well into the regions where most speakers give up the ghost. It’s that midband that leads you in, of course. The midband has a richness and clarity that can sound breathtaking, effectively sounding like the amplifier has been removed from the audio chain.

Of course, this is not to say the A21SE lacks detail or dynamic range. Far from it, in fact. The dynamic capabilities of this amplifier are particularly quicksilver, shifting from quiet to loud with no sense of artifice. Also, the detailing is first-rate, with plenty of information peeled from the source. But good dynamics and detail are not that uncommon, especially at the more stratospheric price levels; good midband coherence is another matter and is usually only a factor at the sort of level where you’d happily pay two grand on a mains lead, not a whole amplifier. At the price, you will not find Sugden’s equal. ▣



Q & A

We talk to Tony Miller, director of Sugden about the long-standing success of the A21 amplifier, why Class A is so important to Sugden and how to update a classic.



**HFC:** What is the history of the A21?

**TM:** Jim Sugden's original A21 10 watt Class A design was first introduced in late 1967. It originally sold for £56; of course, that's equivalent to more than £650 today. This lasted until 1973 in Class A mode and until 1976 in Class AB. Twenty years later, we decided to revisit those early Class A designs. The development had to retain the main design aspects of the A21, such as single voltage rail and the 'push pull' load-sharing output transistors in correct Class A design. No 'B....' configurations here. We increased from 10 watts to 25 because we considered that sufficient to project a large enough soundstage to fill a reasonable living room. The A21a was born and is still in production, today.

**How do the A21a and A21SE differ?**

The A21SE is more than just an up-rated A21a. It is a new amplifier with increased power availability and stiffness with low-impedance characteristics to give the amplifier greater load tolerance. A major contributor to the performance of the A21SE is the completely new preamplifier with a cascode input stage, current feedback, with the input and output in phase. To cope with the increased power, the A21SE uses larger, more efficient heatsinks to absorb the 50 per cent increase in installed power as part of a new thermally designed case. Quite a number of the improvements were the result of developments encompassed in Sugden's 'Masterclass' range.

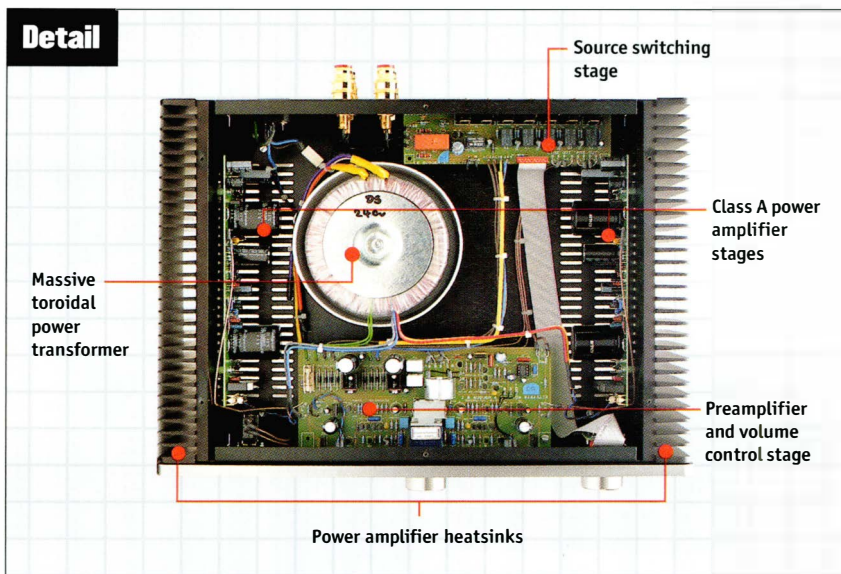
**What's the advantage of Class A operation?**

Sound quality. We prefer the euphonic performance of good Class A to the more favoured dry clinical and 'detailed' performance of some of the more popular solid state amplifiers on the market. The development of more efficient loudspeakers with more stable load characteristics has been of great assistance. The requirement for amplifiers of maximum grunt to control recalcitrant speakers is no longer a major necessity. We can now utilise all the advantages of Class A design, at reasonable power levels.

**What's next for the SE range?**

Since the development of the A21SE, a matching SE CD player has been released and a separate phono stage is about to go into production. Sugden's future development will be associated with a pure Class A, such as a DC-coupled esoteric amplifier and an associated preamplifier.

Early experience of these new products has thoroughly whetted our appetites and only outstanding performance will satisfy us. Creating a product of the ultimate musicality from a combination of new and trusted circuits consolidated by discreet components is our way of 'Rescuing music from technology'.



There is one thing to note with the A21SE. Although it is considerably more speaker compatible now, thanks to the increase in power, don't think this is the sort of amplifier that can be partnered with any old boxes. A speaker too demanding, too soft or too insensitive will be a poor partner for the Sugden. Instead, it responds best to an easy to drive, reasonably sensitive speaker that has a clean, perhaps forward treble and exciting, dry bass. As a consequence, the ProAc Tablette Reference Eight Signature speakers (tested in HFC 267) are a perfect match for the Sugden. This is not 'two wrongs making a right', more like 'two rights making a fantastic'.

If there is a mild short-coming to the Sugden's performance, it's in the timing. The thorny subject of whether a product 'times' is difficult; many find this an unimportant, or even undetectable feature of a product; others choose their hi-fi on the basis of this and this alone. The Sugden is about average in its ability to keep a beat – it certainly doesn't make you want to pump out the likes of LCD Soundsystem at full tilt like the best, which may mean the A21SE is less good at keeping the beat intact than the likes of a good Naim amplifier, for example. But, if the trade-off is between a perfect sense of rhythm and the spacious and clean sound of the A21SE, many people will choose the latter.

What Sugden has done is boosted the power of its A21 without any negatives occurring. This is a rarity, as many upscaled low-powered products lose some of the magic in the scaling process. Sugden has simply made a bigger, small amp. It's still no headbanger amplifier, but that's like saying a Bentley is no good for drag racing – it simply doesn't matter.

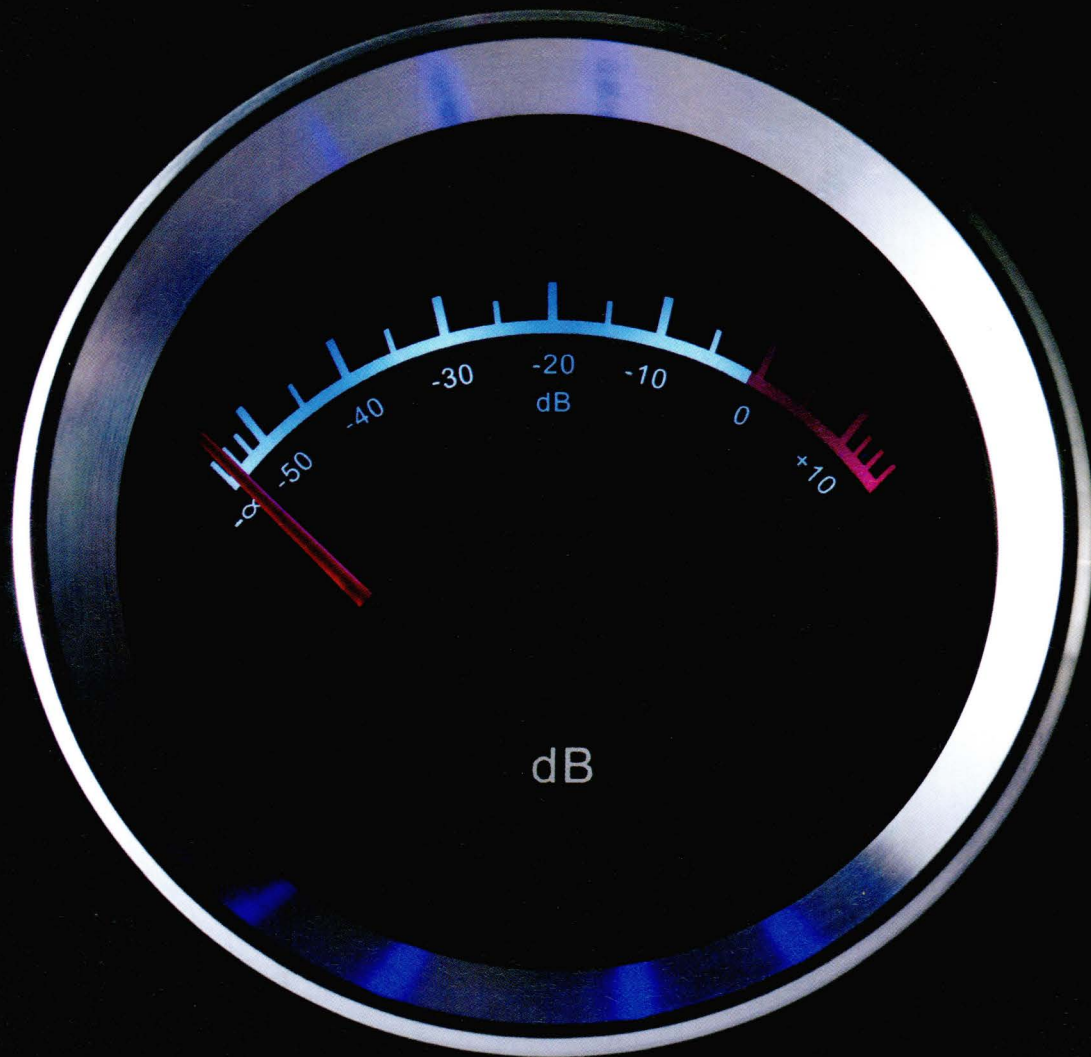
A hot-running, comparatively low-powered amplifier is a hard product to justify in a world of global warming and energy conservation. It's also a hard product to sell to a generation of buyers who have been programmed into believing the best sound only comes from forcing half a grillion watts up your speaker sockets. But this is about hi-fi not specifications or practical considerations like heat dissipation. The sound is everything, and the Sugden A21SE sounds so good, it may make you want to tear up the Kyoto Agreement. The sound is Class A, all the way. **HFC**

Alan Sircom



VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 91%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>PRO</b> A truly magical sound with a soundstage and transparency to die for. Almost everything else at the price sounds grainy by comparison.
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 79%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>CON</b> Can double up as a space heater and toaster. Needs careful speaker matching. Perhaps not the amplifier for the rhythm kings or those wanting headbanging levels.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 83%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 89%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> Sugden has managed to upgrade the A21 without losing any of its magic. Although it may still lack raw power and doesn't follow the rhythm method, if you want to lose yourself in unforced, uncolored music, put this at the top of the list.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 90%</b>	





How much did you ever like the neighbours anyway?

That pounding in your chest isn't just the bass line. Vifa's Reference home theatre system quickens the pulse of even the most devout audio purists. Patented dual concentric dome tweeters relay every nuance. 10" subs throb bass-lines down to 25 Hz. They'll never dare ask for a cup of sugar again.

Vifa home theatres – *Awfully good*



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# Full metal jacket

B&W's pretty little M-1 satellite makes a stylish partner for the massive 'medicine ball' PV1 sub

**PRODUCT** B&W M-1 and PV1

**TYPE** Satellite and subwoofer speaker system

**PRICE** (M-1) £125 each, (PV-1) £950

**KEY FEATURES** (M-1) Size (WxHxD): 11x21x15 cm  
• Weight: 2.7kg • Flexible mounting system  
• Cast alloy enclosure • 25mm tube-loaded tweeter  
• 100mm main driver • (PV1) Size (WxHxD):  
29x34x35 cm • Weight: 20.5kg • Spherical cast alloy  
enclosure • 2x200mm drivers • 500W power amplifier

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

Sound reproduction has gone through big changes in recent years. The advent of surround sound music and movie sources are changing the hi-fi landscape dramatically. *Hi-Fi Choice* continues to focus firmly on the reproduction of music in stereo, but it would be myopic to ignore multichannel developments entirely, especially given the development of SACD and DVD-Audio.

Because of the space required to house a home cinema system, the 5.1 sub/sat combination has become a core multichannel market stereotype. Five small and easily sited satellite speakers cover the mid and top, and provide the surround effects, while the low bass goes to a subwoofer that can be tucked discreetly out of the way. This sub/sat approach might particularly suit multichannel systems, but it's by no means a new idea, and is equally valid for stereo. *HFC* tested a batch of three-box stereo sub/sat systems way back in 1992; that's practically prehistoric in home cinema terms.

B&W obviously expects to sell most of its new M-1 satellites as part of 5.1 systems, alongside one of three alternative subwoofers, but the '2.1' or 'three-box' stereo option is clearly an integral part of the scenario, too. The press release claims the M-1 speakers front "an audiophile sub/sat system", and full discussion of the stereo options is found in the very thorough manual.

For the purposes of this review, the M-1 satellites were underpinned by the excellent PV1 subwoofer, which we reviewed in full in *HFC* 259. In fact, two PV1s were drafted in for some tests, because physically separating the bass sources gives more even room-drive. That's really a separate issue. The superior performance of the PV1 is already a given, and the main purpose here is to evaluate the little M-1 satellite, and see how well it lives up to its 'audiophile' billing.

'Son of Solid' is the first reaction on unpacking this system, though that's largely because both the M-1 and the previous Solid designs feature an integral swivelling stand. In fact, this new model is not only considerably smaller and more flexible, it also, ironically, feels a whole lot more, er, solid. Picking one up, its considerable 2.7kg weight comes as quite a surprise, since the enclosure is probably no more than a litre or so in total volume (think Tetrapack). Back and sides are a single alloy casting, while the baffle, top and base is made from tough ABS plastic. And if the alloy itself

is inherently very stiff, rigidity is further enhanced by the curvaceous shape.

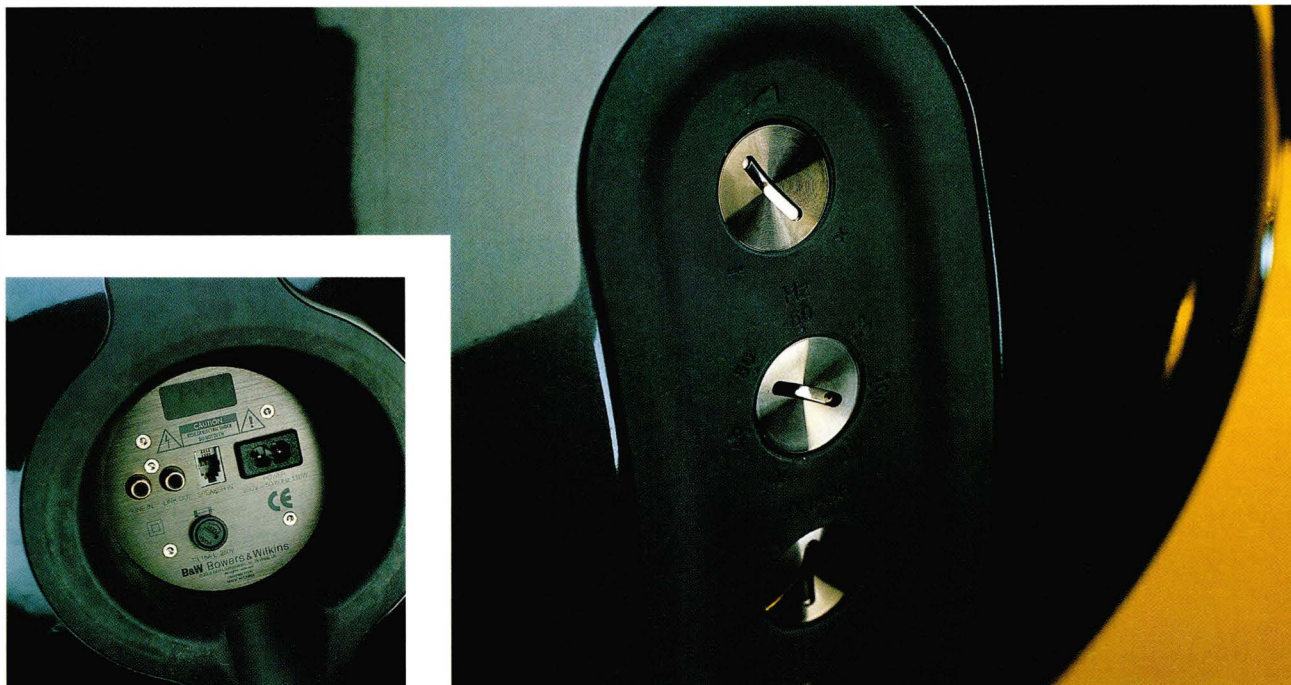
How small can you go? That's the key question the designer of any satellite speaker must confront. Make it too big and no-one will buy it; make it too small and you can kiss goodbye to all hi-fi pretensions. The M-1 looks a little larger than many of its rivals, which should be a performance plus, but is still small enough to look cute. Priced at £125 per speaker, it's hardly the cheapest satellite around, but the serious engineering content and clever design justify the asking price.

A two-way port-loaded design, it combines a 100mm main driver that has an advanced 80mm fibreglass cone, with a 25mm metal dome tube-loaded tweeter. The crossover is deliberately minimalist, and the mounting arrangements are clever and flexible; the unit may be used horizontally or vertically on its stand/base, or fitted to a wall bracket or a slim free-standing pillar. Cleverly, the stand also doubles as a tiny speaker terminal block. The M-1 is available in black, silver or white.

## SOUND QUALITY

The satellites naturally have limited bass extension, though they work well enough down to around 140Hz. This matches seamlessly to the PV1, which may be fed either via its (unfiltered) line-level phono input, or using the speaker-level connector with the filter set to maximum bandwidth (150Hz).





There's considerable scope for making subtle adjustments to the tonal balance by moving the subwoofer and satellites around and/or blocking the M-1 ports. Under our conditions, best results for the M-1 were found with the ports blocked and placed on stands clear of walls; the PV1 likewise works best away from nearby walls, to avoid excessive mid-bass.

The net result, under our far-field conditions, is a quite superbly well-balanced in-room frequency response. It's not entirely smooth and free from character, though the variations remain very well controlled. There are slight midband dips at 1.3kHz and 3.5kHz, which may well account for the nasality that is just audible with speech. The treble is a little strong, relatively speaking, with a distinct peak at around 12kHz, and this is audible as a degree of top end emphasis, though happily it's also quite sweet and delicate.

The small main driver and enclosure inevitably lead to a correspondingly 'small' measured performance. On our measure, sensitivity achieves an unusually low 84dB,

**“The sound as a whole is beautifully neutral and natural, providing well-focused stereo, albeit with some lack of depth resolution.”**

just 1dB below that claimed, yet it isn't particularly easy to drive, with an impedance between four and six ohms through most of the bass and midband.

Initially, the sub/sat combo showed rather obvious dynamic range constraints, as well as noticeable midband coloration and congestion. However, after a little acclimatisation the strengths of this combo started to come through, unlike the performance of many sub/sat systems. One seemed to adjust to its limitations easily, and if the end result falls well short of the best in full-sized loudspeakers, that's hardly surprising given the modest price and size of the M-1 satellites, and they certainly deserve commendation for an essentially vice-free performance.

Unsurprisingly, the PV1 definitely outperforms the M-1, delivering clean, crisp bass and driving along any techno or hip-hop beats with appropriate enthusiasm and punch, plus considerable weight and authority. And the sound as a whole is beautifully neutral and natural, providing a very well-focused stereo soundstage, albeit with some lack of depth resolution and perspectives.

It might be difficult to endorse the M-1's audiophile pretensions with real enthusiasm, but it's very easy to like and enjoy – it's exceptionally neat and discreet, and relatively inexpensive too. And that's praise-worthy in a very small satellite speaker. **HFC**

*Paul Messenger*

## MULTICHANNEL PERFORMANCE

The B&W system is not about stereo, really. The system is referred to as 'Mini Theatre' by B&W, which is a bit of a giveaway. There are three versions of Mini Theatre, and the choice swings on the subwoofer.

We compared the mid-price MT-20 system (five M-1s and an AS2 subwoofer) with the top MT-30 system (identical save for a PV1 in place of the AS2). The AS2 is a 150W square closed-box sub with a 250mm cone bass unit. And, surprise, surprise, the MT-30 is clearly better than the cheaper system, the sub filling out the sound and improving the separation along the way. The MT-20's no slouch, though; it's deep and possibly a better match for the M-1.

What both systems have is an ability to melt away the slight colorations heard in two channel. The sound is accurate if bright, and perfectly steered around the room. Both systems are also extremely fast (often, better but deeper subwoofers slow down the sound). This is principally good home cinema, but tidy multichannel audio, too. **HFC**

*Alan Sircom*



## VERDICT

**SOUND >>> 70%**



**PRO**

The M-1 is an exceptionally neat and solid satellite speaker, with an impressively even and neutral balance, and very clever and flexible mounting arrangements.

**EASE OF DRIVE >>> 70%**



**BUILD >>> 90%**



**CON**

Midband dynamics lack vigour, there's some coloration and congestion here, and the top end is a shade strong.

**VALUE >>> 85%**



### CONCLUSION

Not exactly audiophile, but a beautifully balanced and neutral combo with kickin' bass. It may be colored and congested in 2.1 mode, but the 5.1 performance focuses the listener on the positives, not the limitations, and makes a lot of sense.

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >>> 77%**





# Universal soldier

*With Dolby Headphone and DTS 96:24, will the new Marantz win the format war?*

**PRODUCT** Marantz DV9500

**TYPE** Universal disc player

**PRICE** £1,500

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 44x11.5x38.4cm • Weight: 8.5kg • Universal disc playback • DTS 96:24/Dolby Headphone • PAL/NTSC progressive scan • AMX/Crestron compatible via RS232

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

**M**arantz makes an impressive range of universal disc players, all of which are able to play DVD-Audio, SACD and CD audio discs, as well as DVD-Video discs. The very attractive DV9500 player is the latest addition to this extensive line up, and one that boasts some unique features, including the ability to output PAL and NTSC progressive scan.

The basic feature set starts with the disc compatibility story. There are no obvious omissions other than DVD+R, though samples made on a Sony computer burner worked satisfactorily, and the Marantz has been marked as a compatible in our list. However, in reality, because DVD+R is not officially part of the Marantz guest list, this compatibility should be taken as apocryphal.

It has a wide range of front panel controls, a well laid out if not very pretty remote control, and a so-so on-screen display, which is a prerequisite to make full use of all the menu options on many DVD-Audio discs. The player has separate 10-bit progressive and 14-bit 216kHz interlaced video decoders, with an Analog Devices NSV (Noise Shaped Video) chip to reduce video noise. Other internal highlights include a new mechanism with an OEM loader, but the rest of the transport is Marantz-specific and new from the ground up, a significant investment for any company. There are two transformers, one for the digital and one for the analogue circuits, and the analogue signal path employs Marantz's favoured discrete HDAM circuits instead of IC based operational and buffer amps.

DV9500 includes an HDMI digital video output with HDCP encryption, which can also handle data reduced sound codecs like Dolby Digital and DTS. But, the DV9500 does not use the very latest version of HDMI and will not look at full bandwidth digital audio from DVD-Audio (CD audio is available from the standard optical and electrical digital outputs). In the absence of i.Link there is no way of extracting a full bandwidth digital audio

output at all from SACD. The player offers separate stereo and six-channel outputs that can be connected in parallel, with internal speaker management for PCM signals. These can be used with the on-board Dolby Digital and DTS decoders. Setup options extend to speaker distance settings for SACD, but only if signal processing is switched to PCM from DSD (an on-screen menu option).

But the player does have some other interesting tricks up its sleeve. One is the inclusion of Dolby Headphone for the first time on a disc player, which is intended to give a more relaxed, out of the head listening experience from surround encoded material. Although Marantz doesn't make it clear, Dolby Headphone is available in a version suitable for use with stereo source material. Although this could be rather useful in a disc player, this version is not included as it also requires a Dolby Pro-Logic II decoder, which virtually no DVD player offers. There is also an internal DTS 96:24 decoder, another first in this kind of player. Aside from the fact that there is limited public recognition of what DTS 96:24 is, the range of titles available in this format is painfully limited. DTS 96:24 is a kind of halfway house between standard Dolby



Digital/DTS and DVD-Audio, with less audio compression than the former, but still multichannel. And it retains full-motion video and backwards compatibility with standard DTS decoding.

**SOUND QUALITY**

The DV9500 is not a great CD player, and it is certainly no match for most dedicated CD players at the £1,500, or even the £1,000 level. But it is a very competent one, and it would not be disgraced in such a comparison. The sound is generally lively and clean. There is a mild roughness of the kind sometimes associated with the presence of jitter, but a very attractive treble and a layered midband help the player sound expressive and open. The bass is of excellent quality too, if lean in balance. In a range of systems, the Marantz generates music off CD which is airy, agile and moderately detailed. There isn't the grip or solidity of a high-end CD player, but few DVD players do better.

The sound improves considerably with SACD, and there are indications that it's not too bad with DVD-Audio, too. Comparing the CD and the stereo SACD layer of a range of hybrid SACD titles, it was clear that, in most cases, the SACD recordings sounded clearer and more detailed, and that they had a greater sense of vitality and space. The sound was generally more expressive, but these benefits were at the expense of losing the limited SACD speaker setup that is available. Converting the sound to PCM produces a flatter, somehow more mechanical sound, one that is simply not quite in the same league as untrammelled DSD replay, given a replay system with the resolving ability to show the difference (in practice most half-decent systems will do so).

Adding multichannel to the equation draws a veil over any direct comparison with CD sound quality, after all apples can't be directly compared to pears, but surround processing gives a satisfying effect where the engineering has been done sympathetically. This is often the case with classical titles subject to a bit of subtle mixing on the rear channel volume level, and where the quality of the surround sound system employed for the purpose was up to the task – we used a T+A receiver and a Revel speaker system. From what we can ascertain (apples and pears again), DVD-Audio discs were broadly comparable in terms of basic sound quality to SACD, but they often had greater immediacy and presence, if less spaciousness and less of the organic quality that comes with the best SACDs. Very often these differences can be traced to the format,



**“There isn't the grip or solidity of a high-end CD player, but few DVD players do better.”**

so it was unclear what part the player had in what was heard (transparency being a sign of quality, here), though some Naxos recordings we have in both flavours (48kHz sampling only on DVD unfortunately) did tend to support the proposition. Finally, Dolby Headphone sounded inconsistent to these ears, with some added spaciousness with some material, but very little by way of extra positioning cues, and a degree of phasiness. On the whole I preferred to leave it switched off.

**VIDEO PERFORMANCE**

Marantz is an audio company, but it knows about video replay, too. Picture quality is clean and vivid, with excellent colour reproduction across the band, with a hint of moiré in some of the more difficult test signals used, and some low-level video noise and loss of the finest detail. Some of the best results were from the component progressive output, with deinterlacing quality on fast moving images clearly superior to some low-cost DLP projectors on tap during the review. HDMI produced slightly crisper and more vivid pictures still. This model is more than routinely good as a DVD player; even the onboard Dolby Digital and DTS decoders are good enough to match some budget receivers, confirming the DV9500 as a good to excellent all-rounder for audio/video systems. **HFC**  
*Alvin Gold*

FORMAT COMPATIBILITY			
DVD-A	✓	DVD+R	✓
DVD-V	✓	DVD- AM	✗
SACD	✓	MP3 AUDIO	✓
CD	✓	WMA AUDIO	✗
HDCD	✗	AAC AUDIO	✗
CD-R/ RW	✓	VIDEO CD	✓
DVD-R/ RW	✓	JPEG PICTURES	✓



**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 81%**  
 >> SUB RATINGS: STEREO 79% MULTICHANNEL 82%

**VISION >> 85%**

**BUILD >> 86%**

**VALUE >> 84%**

**PRO**  
 A good, flexible all-rounder with no significant weaknesses, clean video performance, and good audio, especially SACD.

**CON**  
 Hint of roughness from CD, and video performance stops short of ideal thanks to some loss of fine picture detail.

**CONCLUSION**  
 A good all-rounder, and the shortcomings are no more than expected at the price. Picture quality benefits from good video processing, especially from HDMI. The player is a good choice for CD and a better one for high-resolution discs.

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





# *The colouration's in the finish*



# *Not in the music*







# Static on the move

*Stax makes a purist – yet portable – electrostatic headphone for music on the go*

**PRODUCT** Stax SR-001 Mk II

**TYPE** Battery-powered electrostatic headphone

**PRICE** £239

**CONTACT** ☎ 01727 865488  
 🌐 www.stax.co.jp

It's a truism, but if you look hard enough, you'll find the audio industry has something for just about everyone. But, a battery-powered electrostatic headphone for your iPod or other personal stereo takes that to extremes. Enter Stax, the Japanese company responsible for the *Premier Cru* of electrostatic headphone technology.

The Stax SR-001 Mk II is a jewel of a headphone. Lightweight with a headband, the band itself is a light and thin steel hoop, dressed with a leather covers to spread the (minimal) load. The earpieces are compact and lightweight, though slightly bulkier than on most headphones designed for personal stereo, and are set in place with offset swivel mounts. The drivers are open back (but protected by a perforated backplate), and the sound is squirted towards the ear through a short oval tube which locates in the outer ear. Sealing the ear cavity is necessary for bass coupling, and this is achieved with interchangeable compliant polymer washers.

The Stax is equipped with a miniature flat six-core cable which carries the audio and polarising voltage. The supplied power supply (every electrostatic 'phone has to have one) is about the size of an average hard disc

personal, and is fitted with a power indicator LED, a combined off/volume control, a 3.5mm stereo socket and comes with a connector lead to plug into standard headphone sockets, or the phono outputs on any player or amplifier.

## SOUND QUALITY

The SR-001 feels rather knobbly in ear at first, but when the compliant washer adopts the shape of the ear canal, it quickly becomes unobtrusive, and outside sounds are only mildly attenuated. Thanks to clever design, surprisingly little of the irritating squealing associated with the breed makes its way to the person sitting next to you.

There has been no attempt to go for the deepest or fullest bass from these cans. Stax is playing the quality card here, but I did feel that they have taken this to the point of excess, and in practice there is little harm, and quite a lot of gain from adding some bass reinforcement, which is usually available in the form of electronic boost from the player. Bass extension in fact is quite good, but the excessively lean balance won't go unnoticed, and can lead to a dry, rather hard presentation.

The treble on the other hand is clean, open and extended, and the midband is smooth and layered. There's plenty of detail and a less 'in head' presentation than with most headphones. This gives an overall balance that is near ideal, allowing for a helping hand through the bottom octave or so. We found the Stax is more than good enough to listen to

long, difficult works of the kind that you'd normally avoid on a personal stereo, though the close ear coupling is never entirely comfortable in extended use.

There is enough gain for most headphone sockets. Used on aircraft, there is also enough gain in hand to overcome cabin noise, but this does sap battery power, and you'll find that a pair of AA/MN1500 cells peg out far faster than the normal five or six hour lifespan.

Of course the SR-001 Mk II is expensive, but iPods are not exactly cheap either. Used with lossless compression, you have a legitimate recipe for an audio revolution, and this is the best personal headphone we've heard. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 88%**



**FEATURES >> 75%**



**BUILD >> 90%**



**VALUE >> 80%**



## PRO

A genuine attempt to drag music on the move into the high-end. With a good lossless source, it can deliver fantastic sound.

## CON

The add-on battery PSU adds an extra box and weight to your portable audio set-up. Bass could be deeper. It's (necessarily) expensive for portable headphones.

## CONCLUSION

If you think it's time to take the iPod seriously, the SR-001 Mk II is the best way to deliver the goods, even if it costs as much as the iPod you are connecting it to. Push the envelope of music on the move. The Stax is one of a kind.

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



GROUP TEST & LAB REPORTS: RICHARD BLACK

# TURNTABLES

Even after more than 20 years of CD dominance, reports of vinyl's death are greatly exaggerated judging by this sextet of cutting-edge LP spinners

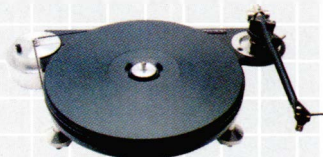
## ON TEST



Clearaudio Champion  
£1,475



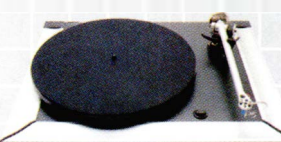
Marantz TT15  
£1,000



Michell TecnoDec  
£767



Pro-Ject RPM 9 X  
£1,000



Rega P5  
£1,011



Roksan Radius 5  
£850

Ten years ago, it seemed that vinyl was finally on the way out. Back then, few in the hi-fi business would have considered it likely that a magazine in 2005 could assemble a group of six turntables to review, never mind six within the typical 2:1 price spread of a *Hi-Fi Choice* group. But here they are, and the surprises don't stop at the mere existence of these beasts.

For a start, they are not apologetic leftovers, in fact in terms of fit, finish and polish, they'll show a clean pair of heels to many current CD players. They are truly the sort of product that the fashion-conscious are just as likely to buy for their stunning good looks as the sound-conscious are to buy for their performance. And while four of the manufacturers are old-timers, one is a large and generally very high-tech international brand and one, amazingly, started up only a few years ago making vinyl-related replay equipment.

It's absolutely as clear as an acrylic subchassis, then, that rumours of LP's rebound from the doldrums are not in the least exaggerated. Several different factors lie behind this. For a start, many people have the greatest fondness for LP despite more than two decades of CD dominance, considering it at least the latter's equal on sound and definitely far more fun to own and use.

This alone keeps the secondhand disc market lively and maintains a reasonably healthy industry in new LP issues (though that is probably the weakest link in the LP revival). But it's also evident that people are rediscovering the attractions of a good hi-fi as a status symbol, and as one of our listening panel commented over lunch, a smart modern LP spinner has a 'Wow, will you take a look at that!' factor which few CD/DVD/SACD players can aspire to. Status symbols like this have to work well, of course, but as you'll find out in the next few pages, these all do.

If you're looking to upgrade an existing turntable, now's a great time to do it. If you've dropped LP and are missing it, now's a great time to come back. Dig out those old records, go browsing through charity shops and car boot sales, you'll soon build up a collection of cheap classic discs to play.

If you're new to turntables you'll find that there's a whole extra level of involvement, not just in the sonic delight of a well-made and well-set-up turntable but in the pleasures of 144 square inches of album cover, the satisfying feel of the disc and the whole harmless rigmarole of putting the disc on, cueing up the arm, checking disc and stylus for dirt, playing the disc, tweaking the deck occasionally. We had a ball testing this lot. Go on – treat yourself! **HFC**

## EQUIPMENT USED

- ⊕ ATC SCM20 loudspeakers
- ⊕ Moth phono stage
- ⊕ Electrocompaniet ECI-3 integrated amplifier
- ⊕ EAR 802 preamp/519 power amps
- ⊕ Shure VST V and Highphonic MCA-3 cartridges
- ⊕ Cables by Furukawa, Kimber, Besspie and Hitachi

## MUSIC USED

- ⊕ Mahler *Symphony No. 2* (*Symphonica/Wyn Morris*)
- ⊕ Little Feat *Feats Don't Fail Me Now*
- ⊕ Savourna Stevenson *Tickled Pink*
- ⊕ Messiaen *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus* (*Malcolm Troup*)
- ⊕ Pink Floyd *The Wall*

## EARS USED

We are indeed fortunate to have in this industry public-spirited souls who come and listen, without visual clues, to the equipment, all in the name of art and science – on this occasion, thanks to:

- ⊕ Laurence Armstrong (*Henley Designs*)
- ⊕ Keith Martin (*hiiforsale.com*)
- ⊕ Ed Selley (*Cambridge Audio*)



## LISTENING TESTS

For the first time in a turntable group test, we have employed the *Hi-Fi Choice* 'blind' listening methodology throughout. A panel of listeners is presented with each product in turn, care being taken to match levels and eliminate external clues as to which product is currently in use. The same tracks were played in the same order, with minimal changeover time between one deck and the next. After this, further 'sighted' listening, with a broader range of music and under different circumstances, was also carried out.

Turntables are sensitive to their surroundings, and for the sessions, we used a 'reference' isolation platform consisting of 27kg of concrete and lead on an air suspension to wring the ultimate performance from each deck.

## LAB TESTS

Various tests were carried out to check for accurate and constant speed, extraneous vibration from the motor, bearing and surroundings, damping of resonances within the disc and in the arm, and other parameters such as arm friction, not reported unless thought distinctly wayward. Test equipment used for this included a specially cut test lacquer and a separate custom-made test disc, commercial test discs, a rumble coupler and, the biggest change since our last turntable group some years ago, a CD recorder, the A/D converter of which (linked to a PC running various bits of analysis software) made interpreting measurements a vastly simpler and quicker process than it used to be – digital has its uses, even for vinyl!

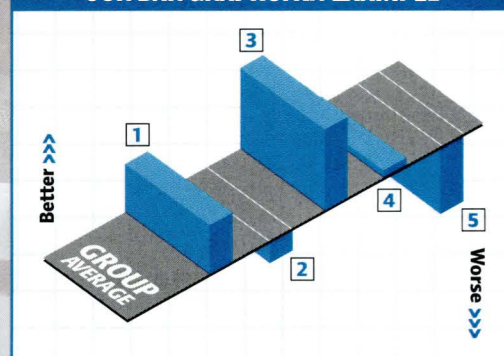
**No other magazine offers an equivalent test and listening programme for comparative tests.**

## LAB REPORTS: THE BAR GRAPH

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

- 1] Speed accuracy:** Simply a question of how close the platter gets to rotating at the nominal 33.33RPM.
- 2] Wow and flutter:** A measure of how much the platter speed 'wobbles' about the nominal 33.33RPM.
- 3] Rumble:** The background low-frequency noise the deck itself produces due to bearing friction and motor noise.
- 4] Arm resonance:** How well the arm holds the cartridge still against the reaction of the stylus in the groove.
- 5] Vibration breakthrough:** The degree to which vibration from the floor gets through to the disc and stylus.

### OUR BAR GRAPHS: AN EXAMPLE





**£1,475 (inc. arm and cartridge)** ☎ 01252 702705 🌐 www.audioreference.co.uk

# CLEARAUDIO CHAMPION

*Clearaudio's plastic fantastic turntable lives up to its name*

**A**mong turntable designers, transparent acrylic is currently 'in', but Clearaudio was the trend-setter. The German brand's upmarket models look clearly (pun intended) spectacular and simply exude high end values. The £810 Champion is hardly less impressive to behold, but is designed and built to be very easy to assemble and use.

A large slab of solid acrylic forms the basis of the deck, standing on three conical feet of the same material, and topped by a platter again of acrylic, machined flat and round. The construction gives next to no isolation from external vibrations, at least not in the way a conventional sprung subchassis does, but despite that, levels of breakthrough are lower than they might be thanks to the mass and intrinsic damping of the material. The bearing is fairly conventional. It's 'inverted' so that the bearing point is within the platter, enhancing stability. An external synchronous motor, mounted in a heavy metal case, provides drive via a round-section belt.

Clearaudio's £555 Satisfy arm is a new version of a popular model, using the current wonder material for arms, carbon fibre (as pioneered, of course, by Wilson Benesch). The bearing is simple but solid, with magnetic anti-skating and calibrated downforce adjustment. For review, the deck was supplied with an £110 Aurum Classic Wood cartridge, a moving-magnet design from near the bottom of Clearaudio's extensive range.

## SOUND QUALITY

As perhaps befits the most expensive deck in the group, the Champion turned in one of the best performances. It was found by our panel of 'blind' listeners to have one of the most

engaging and involving sounds overall, with good performance in each of the specific areas – bass, treble, detail, rhythm and so on. There were minor criticisms – one listener found the bass a little closed in, though well balanced in level – but on the whole the sound was very well liked.

Vocal presentation was particularly successful, with real emotion and character in each voice and excellent clarity in the words. Bass was found deep and tuneful, occasionally a little over-prominent but generally very likeable, while treble seemed a touch harsh to one listener, though not in such a way as to mar detail. There was consistent praise for the deck's articulation and its natural separation of various instruments within a mix. Overall, the sense definitely emerges from the listening notes that it can really get to the heart of the music and involve the listener.

Subsequent sighted listening pretty much confirmed this impression. Not surprisingly, given the unsprung construction, sound loses a little detail and grip if the deck is not given at least a little added isolation from the floor, but it never becomes unpleasantly congested or muddy. Trying alternative cartridges suggested that the arm is very capable of dealing with a wide range of types, and confirmed the deck's general sense of neutrality. Under any conditions, it produces a sound which appeals and encourages longer listening sessions, and it is always informative and in control. It can keep the foot tapping in rhythmic numbers without losing the sense of a beguiling melodic line, and in addition is uncritical of LP surface noise and defects. A taste of luxury without the lottery-winning price tag. **HFC**



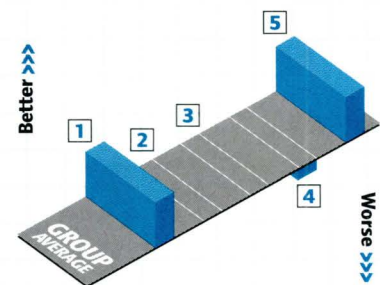
## LAB REPORT

As expected from its construction, the weak point of this deck is its pickup of external vibration, but that's still better than some and, significantly, not very highly 'tuned'.

Aside from the need for a good equipment support (as required by all components, but especially turntables), the Clearaudio acquires itself well. The lack of resonance shows up in analysis of response to impulses applied to the disc and arm in simulation; output is quite low in level and relatively free of distinct resonances. This surely explains the deck's largely neutral character.

Its pitch stability is pretty good too, with one of the better wow and flutter figures in the group, and speed accuracy is pretty much beyond reproach at a scant 0.1% slow. The freestanding motor produces hum breakthrough at a worst-case level of around -73dB weighted, mostly 100Hz hum which is not highly audible.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Speed accuracy >> +40%
- 2] Wow and flutter >> 0%
- 3] Rumble >> 0%
- 4] Vibration breakthrough >> -10%
- 5] Arm resonance >> +40%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Speed accuracy (50Hz)	0.2%	0.1%
Wow and flutter	–	0.06%
Rumble (motor breakthrough)	-80dB	-73dB

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 88%**

**FEATURES >> 80%**

**BUILD >> 87%**

**VALUE >> 85%**

A smart looking turntable package that is also practical, good sounding and neutral, thanks not least to an impressively 'dead' arm. High-quality, dedicated isolation support is strongly recommended.

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





£1,000 (inc. arm and cartridge) ☎ 01753 680868 🌐 www.marantz.com

# MARANTZ TT15

Marantz commissions Clearaudio for a welcome return to vinyl

Some turntables put out by 'big-time' manufacturers have been mediocre. This is not one of them. It's a serious piece of kit made for Marantz by Clearaudio, and it bears a fair bit of resemblance to the latter's entry-level 'Emotion' model.

The most obvious difference from anything in the Clearaudio catalogue is the feet, which are big, with felt on the bottom face. They're undeniably kinder to the surface beneath than Clearaudio's acrylic spikes, though. The main body member and platter are both acrylic, with a Clearaudio arm and cartridge – a Virtuoso Wood moving-magnet model, all supplied as a £1,000 package. A felt mat also comes in the box, which we tried and discarded.

As with the Clearaudio Champion, the motor is mounted in a metal housing which is free-standing; but in this case, clearance round the housing is a couple of millimetres or so, and the switch is on the side of the housing. It's a virtual certainty that at some point, while operating the switch, you'll disturb the motor position so that it presses on the body. Since motor vibration is actually rather noticeable when running, direct contact with the body makes for vastly increased motor noise pickup – not a good thing at all.

That apart, construction is excellent with a high-quality bearing, a neat and easily adjustable arm mounting and looks which, while they hardly match any other Marantz kit, brook little criticism otherwise.

## SOUND QUALITY

Does it sound like a Clearaudio then? One listener certainly thought so, initially wondering if this was in fact a repeat of the previously heard Clearaudio Champion. Many

other comments point to a family likeness, but there are differences too, particularly in the bass performance, which was found repeatedly to be less full than the dearer Champion. In addition, the sound never showed the same drive or impact of the Clearaudio combination, though taken in isolation one might not think this deck lacking in either regard.

There is certainly plenty of atmosphere in this deck's sound, and pretty good detail too. Vocals seemed very slightly less incisive than with some other decks but were still found easy to follow, while soundstaging seemed to divide opinion, with one listener finding it muddy and indistinct but others praising it as quite extended and natural. The tonal balance of the deck is, on the whole, neutral (barring the slight lack of bass extension noted above) and while treble is not always utterly clean, it is never grainy or harsh.

Although the Marantz is supplied as a complete package (including cartridge), we replaced the supplied cartridge with a Shure VST moving magnet (this was also tried with all the other decks). It seemed to extend the bass a little further, though it still didn't quite match the best in the group on that score. Less well isolated supports also significantly reduced the detail in the sound, bringing the ranking down from the upper half to the lower and suggesting that a proper isolation mount of some sort should be considered essential.

Throughout all this, though, the essentially lifelike and enjoyable character of the Marantz deck remained constant and there's no doubting that it can provide very appealing sounds across a wide range of music. Marantz chose it's turntable partner wisely. **HFC**



## LAB REPORT

As with the Clearaudio Champion turntable, vibration breakthrough is quite high. It seems a little more tuned than with the Champion, though not markedly so.

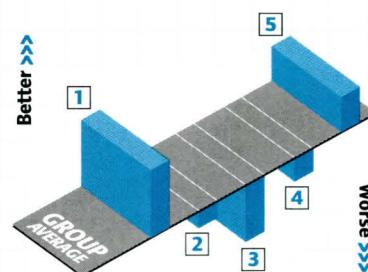
Motor breakthrough, however, is among the highest in the group, giving a weighted figure of around -65dB, dependent to some extent on the mounting surface.

Speed of the review sample was spot-on, about as good as many CD players (120ppm). Few turntables get as accurate as this.

Wow and flutter seemed as good as any on the wow front, but showed some evidence of hum modulation at 50Hz. This was possibly the cause of the slight bass lack noticed in the listening test.

Vibrations in the disc are well damped by the platter, while the arm has admirably low levels of resonance – not quite as good as the Champion's, but still considerably better than average.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Speed accuracy >> +60%
- 2] Wow and flutter >> -15%
- 3] Rumble >> -50%
- 4] Vibration breakthrough >> -20%
- 5] Arm resonance >> +30%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Speed accuracy (50Hz)	0.2%	0.01%
Wow and flutter	0.07%	0.07%
Rumble (motor breakthrough)	-80dB	-65dB

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 84%**

**FEATURES >> 80%**

**BUILD >> 86%**

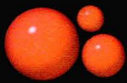
**VALUE >> 86%**

Kudos to Marantz for producing (more strictly commissioning) such a natty machine. It performs decently and looks the biz, and comes as a well thought-out and hassle-free turntable package.

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





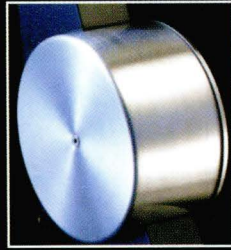


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*adj.* an individual who does not comply with conventional norms or socially approved patterns of behavior or thought

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# MICHELL TECNODEC

*Pulling together the best of Michell makes for a cut-price classic*

**M**ichell has been doing the pretty turntable thing since the 1970s. The £699 TecnoDec is a recent arrival though, featuring selected Michell specialties from the popular GyroDec at a lower price.

The DC motor and its control electronics, and even the oil-pumping bearing are all from the GyroDec/Gyro SE design, a real rarity in a deck at this kind of price. The platter is made of a mix of acrylic and vinyl intended to match the mechanical impedance of discs as closely as possible for optimum disc damping. Options include an upgraded power supply, a dust cover and a record clamp. We reviewed the deck with the standard Rega RB250 arm, fitted with Michell's £68 TecnoWeight upgrade, which lowers the arm's centre of mass and adds finely-calibrated tracking weight adjustment. We added also an Ortofon MC25FL cartridge, approved (not supplied) by Michell.

The motor is housed in a free-standing enclosure that sits snugly in a curve in the deck's corner. The main body member is a piece of 12mm dark acrylic sheet, thinner than the other decks but still substantial, and it's isolated from the outside world only by the slightly squidgy feet on the bottom of the adjustable legs. Drive from the motor is via the usual round-section belt but it seems a little perverse that despite the use of a DC motor (which automatically means electronic speed control), speed change is still done by moving the belt to a different pulley diameter. Still, assembly of the deck is straightforward.

## SOUND QUALITY

Despite somewhat dividing opinion on certain details, this deck was well liked and the panel's

surprise and delight when it was revealed, at the end of the listening, that this was the cheapest of the group tells its own story. The TechnoDec was highly praised for crisp, precise articulation and unfussy presentation of details and soundstaging. Oddly, vocals received some criticism for not being quite as clear as on other decks in the group, but separation and delineation of instruments was thought definitely among the best.

Comments diverged principally over the bass. Our opening orchestral track was found by one listener to have good deep bass, while another found low frequencies a little restrained, lacking some richness and weight. Similarly in the rock 'n' roll excerpt, comments varied between "great bass attack" and "(bass) a little held back". But these may not be completely contradictory – some folks value bass attack over its sustain and some vice versa, and indeed it does seem that this deck manages the attack part very well, although the sustain is a little less well handled.

Not surprisingly, then, our bass-rich piano track did very well, and although a little congestion was noted, the basic sound of the instrument was thought very lifelike. Later listening suggested that while cartridge changes seem not to alter the basic sound very significantly, this deck 'reads' the sound of the surface it stands on perhaps more than any other in this group and, once again, some form of isolation seems most advisable. However, it is worth the trouble because the sound has a combination of solidity, precision, accuracy and liveliness that is most attractive and at this price deserves a confident Best Buy. **HFC**



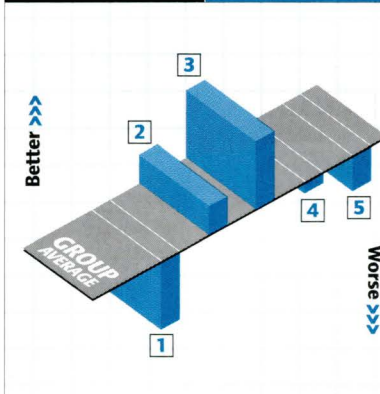
## LAB REPORT

Measurements of the deck's isolation show little obvious difference from most of the others, but a hint of resonance around the 230Hz area (due to the main member bending, perhaps) may be of some significance.

One way in which it seems quite immune to its mounting is motor breakthrough, which is hard to measure with any confidence – better than -78dB anyway. However, speed was around 1% slow, which is enough to be audible to many listeners, dropping to 0.5% slow at the end of a side.

Wow is very low while flutter, of course, lacks 50Hz sidebands but shows some evidence of motor-related artefacts around 20Hz, albeit at a pretty low level. Disc damping is good, similar to most of the others, while arm damping is only moderate, the RB250 being behind Clearaudio's arms, for instance, in this regard, despite the inclusion of the TecnoWeight.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Speed accuracy >>> -60%
- 2] Wow and flutter >>> +25%
- 3] Rumble >>> +60%
- 4] Vibration breakthrough >>> -10%
- 5] Arm resonance >>> -30%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Speed accuracy (50Hz)	-	1%
Wow and flutter	-	0.04%
Rumble (motor breakthrough)	-	<-78dB

## VERDICT

**SOUND >>> 86%**

**FEATURES >>> 80%**

**BUILD >>> 85%**

**VALUE >>> 90%**

A simple and straightforward product, smartly understated in looks, which performs a level or three above expectations with a sound quality that's full-bodied and highly detailed.

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



£1,250 (inc. arm and cartridge) ☎ 01235 511166 🌐 www.henleydesigns.co.uk

# PRO-JECT RPM 9 X

Top of the range for the Czech chief, is this deck a clear winner?

For anyone who has missed the last decade or so of turntable history, Pro-Ject produces good quality turntables made cheaply in the Czech Republic. With 11 models in the current line-up, it's a thorough coverage of LP replay, the £1,000 RPM 9 X being the pinnacle. Like all Pro-Ject turntables, the deck and arm are not available separately, while Henley Designs supplied the review sample with an £250 Ortofon MC25FL MC cartridge.

Rising standards of living in eastern Europe are obviously a good thing, but they must be putting the squeeze on Pro-Ject somewhere – you'd be pushed to see just where, though, looking at what this deck offers for the price. It's made from the thickest acrylic sheet of any here (and that stuff ain't cheap), and it features a tonearm with a conical carbon-fibre tube and serious quality bearings, something plenty of makers would find hard to match on its own at a grand. The platter bearing is substantial and the deck's looks are superb – only one corner has been cut, and that quite openly, with the supplied (replaceable) interconnect lead being merely a 'get-you-going' wire of no special sonic merit. A dust cover is an option.

The low voltage AC motor once again stands separately from the rest of the deck, driving through a square-section belt. The motor is physically separated from the deck which helps absorb its vibration, while the turntable itself is further decoupled from sources of vibration by three compliant feet, which give more isolation than one might expect.

## SOUND QUALITY

The listening panel agreed wholeheartedly that this deck has a very natural midrange,

which combines clarity with musicality and gives a most realistic portrayal of different instruments playing together or separately. They were less uniform in describing the treble, though, one finding a little harshness there in some tracks, another accusing it of lacking some definition in a bit of close-miked violin (decidedly treble-rich), while there was also praise for the treble's openness.

As for bass, this was mostly liked, but subject to slight criticisms of occasional lack of extension and some muddling, particularly in the piano track. All the same, and despite those comments on specifics, the overall picture that emerges is that this deck made a clear musical impression on the panel and it was remembered with evident affection at the end of the listening session as providing one of the most involving experiences.

After the panel had left, we tried hard to put a finger on exactly what it is with the treble that seems to cause mixed reactions, and on the whole it seems to be a little, quite subtle, coloration. This admittedly limits the ultimate resolution of high-frequency detail to some extent, but it doesn't prevent the deck from creating lifelike images of instruments and spaces. The bass does seem slightly less prominent than with some, but that seems more a question of taste than anything actually wrong, and the midrange is certainly both natural and detailed – and significantly less dependent on the mounting surface than most other decks in this group. This turntable offers a fine standard of performance and great looks; it only serves to enhance Pro-Ject's already commanding reputation. **HFC**



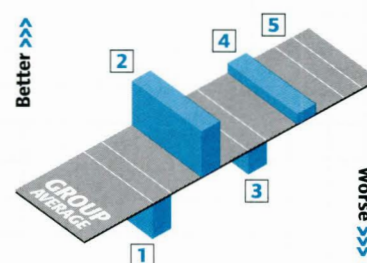
## LAB REPORT

Perhaps not surprisingly, with the heaviest platter of the group, this deck has the lowest figures for wow and flutter by a clear margin, the wow figure indeed reassuring us of the validity of our test disc.

The weight also helps in keeping motor breakthrough to a very low -75dB or lower, and in combination with the suspension afforded by the feet attenuates external vibration quite effectively above a few tens of Hz.

Disc impulse output is low, but despite the arm's shape and material there are a couple of quite pronounced arm resonances around 590Hz and 910Hz. It's hard to be certain that the treble coloration noted in the listening test is a function of those – they're not at very high frequency after all – but we can only guess that these are the reason for this, as no other very plausible candidates appear for coloration among a generally impressive set of measurements.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Speed accuracy >> -30%
- 2] Wow and flutter >> +40%
- 3] Rumble >> -20%
- 4] Vibration breakthrough >> +10%
- 5] Arm resonance >> 0%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Speed accuracy (50Hz)	0.5%	0.4%
Wow and flutter	0.06%	0.04%
Rumble (motor breakthrough)	-73dB	-75dB

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 89%**

**FEATURES >> 80%**

**BUILD >> 89%**

**VALUE >> 88%**

Carefully sited, this deck can extract stuff from the vinyl you didn't know was there, though care in setup is needed to avoid some slight muddling of detail. Oh, and it looks the absolute business, too!

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



**£1,011** (inc. external PSU, arm and cartridge) ☎ 01702 333071 🌐 www.rega.co.uk

# REGA P5

*Rega's midrange record player is a chip off the old block*

In essence, everything in the former *HFC* Award-winning £698 Rega P5 stems from the limited-edition P25, scaled down to a more real-world price. In the scaling-down process, the subchassis, compliant rubber feet, synchronous motor, 15mm thick glass platter riding on a plastic subplatter, and a short round-section drive belt all hark back to original Planar designs. But, P5 uses a micro-fibre plinth in place of the P2 and P3's MDF, and it features an aluminium frame instead of the wooden one used in the P25. The main board is thicker, the motor is a low-voltage one with a more sophisticated phase splitting circuit to give much lower vibration, and there's the option, which we took, of adding an external power supply – the £148 TT PSU – for even lower vibration and better speed accuracy. The reduced motor vibration has allowed Rega to fit the motor rigidly to the main board, rather than compliantly as of old.

The arm fitted as standard is the RB700, a radical development of the original RB250/300 arms with all sorts of sophisticated engineering nips and tucks to enhance rigidity and improve damping. Most noticeably, it is secured via a three-legged steel arrangement rather than the familiar single-hole fitting in the RB300 – this puts less stress into the plinth itself. Like the RB300, it features calibrated spring-applied downforce, and of course it caters for three-hole cartridge fitting, as found on Rega's own £165 Super Elys moving magnet cartridge with which we reviewed the deck. Uniquely in this group, a hinged dust cover is supplied as standard.

### SOUND QUALITY

Given that the Rega is the odd man out in terms of construction, it's no surprise that its

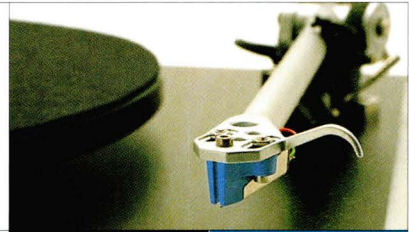
sound stood out as markedly different from the rest of the group in many ways.

There was much praise for certain aspects in our listeners' notes. Bass was certainly appreciated, with comments on its excellent weight and slightly forward presentation which appeared to improve its impact.

The drawbacks seemed to be mostly related to a lack of musical involvement and 'drawing-in' of the listener. This meant vocals were less immediate and slightly suppressed, relative to the rest of the mix, while bright instruments gained a touch of brassiness, especially when loud. In the bass-heavy piano track, the individual notes seemed quite easy to follow but their decay was felt less realistic and the acoustic around the instrument was less clearly defined.

There was some mention of this deck's relatively poor timing and lack of toe-tapping quality, which is a little surprising as this is often thought to be a typical Rega attribute, and the P5 was itself praised for having a "keen sense of timing" when tested in *HFC* 257. In fact, in later tests with the deck less well isolated from the floor, the sound got some back of its rhythmic qualities – amazing what a little feedback can do! But there is a price to pay in reduced detail, something our panellists felt was generally pretty good.

Tonally the deck is indeed strong in the bass and a little prominent in the treble too, which means it's slightly recessed in the midrange, but that's not especially troubling. Ultimately, despite some strong sonic aspects, the Rega P5 did not shine in the context of the test system and this very strong group. But, we have heard this distinctive deck sounding good in other systems – good enough to win an Award – and it's well worth auditioning in context. **HFC**



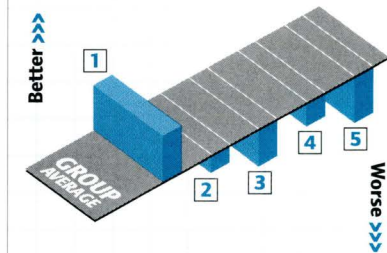
### LAB REPORT

Despite the improved motor drive (thanks to the TT PSU) motor breakthrough is relatively high, leading to a weighted figure of -68dB. That high figure reflects that higher frequencies are transmitted more easily from motor to stylus in this design than with better-decoupled designs.

Wow is slightly on the high side, although flutter is relatively well controlled. The felt mat gives less disc damping than the acrylic platter of the other decks here, but the spectrum is flat and arm damping is good.

Vibration breakthrough from below is poor at low frequencies, not helped by rather high levels of resonance within the main board. That, and the motor breakthrough, probably explains the lack of involvement in the sound. Rega has always recommended using its decks with a light, rigid support (ideally it's own spindly yet solid wall shelf) and this would help limit vibration.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Speed accuracy >> +40%
- 2] Wow and flutter >> -15%
- 3] Rumble >> -30%
- 4] Vibration breakthrough >> -20%
- 5] Arm resonance >> -40%

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Speed accuracy (50Hz)	0.25%	0.1%
Wow and flutter	0.3%	0.07%
Rumble (motor breakthrough)	-	-68dB

### VERDICT

**SOUND >> 82%**



**FEATURES >> 84%**



**BUILD >> 83%**



**VALUE >> 83%**




Rega's P5 (with all the trimmings) has bass weight and a forward presentation that will appeal to many. In the right context we've heard it sound great, but this time our blind listening panel was less enamoured.

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





To hear the fine  
detail you some  
times need a little  
*muscle*

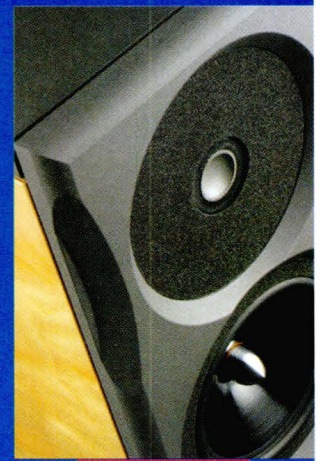
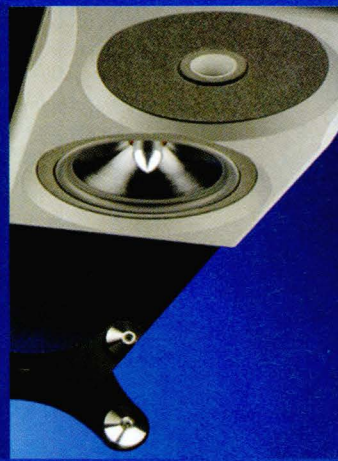
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# ROKSAN RADIUS 5

Roksan uses Xerxes design and a new arm for its entry-level deck

**R**oksan's entry-level Radius 5 turntable is supplied with the specially designed Nima arm as a complete package; neither are available separately (the brand's distributor, Henley Designs, added a £150 Ortofon MC15 cartridge but this is not an obligatory part of the Roksan package). This is the only deck in this group to have anything resembling a traditional turntable suspension; not a particularly sophisticated or complex one, but effective at moderate frequencies.

The shape of the subchassis is related to that of Roksan's more up-market Xerxes – a shape designed to be intrinsically low in resonance. In true 21st-century fashion, this is made in smart acrylic. The same material turns up in the platter, the plinth, the motor board and even the arm, where the headshell and several rear-end parts are made of it. The arm uses a unipivot bearing, something that takes a little getting used to. However, this offers a virtual guarantee of low friction forever. Roksan has cleverly designed this one to be practical for transporting the deck, and has equipped it with a very unusual take on arm wiring, using ultra-thin flexible printed circuit board material instead of conventional thin wires.

Particularly floppy suspension is used for the motor, to reduce its contribution to proceedings, which makes for some alarming sounds as the deck starts up but seems to work well. The usual round-section belt conveys power to the platter and three adjustable feet round things off.

## SOUND QUALITY

The ingredients look promising, yet this deck failed to make a profound impact on our

listeners. Few comments point explicitly to a cause for this, and indeed in some areas performance was thought good – bass, for instance, had good weight and scale. That certainly helped it in the rock track, where it also presented the vocals believably and highly expressively.

However, against that there were several comments about a 'thick' midrange and a lack of detail, most especially in thickly textured music. Lone instruments managed much better in that regard, but ensembles, and heavy piano music, suffered from muddle and lack of definition. There were also several references to lack of life and personality in the sound.

Later, listening sighted and with different cartridges and supports, we tried to put our collective fingers on exactly what went wrong here. It does seem that this deck and arm like high-compliance cartridges and we obtained noticeably better results with a Shure cartridge fitted. The suspension stands the deck in good stead compared to others on simple racks or tables with no isolation, and indeed under those circumstances the Radius looks considerably more competitive. But it never quite manages to achieve the levels of detail that the Pro-Ject and Michell do.

Detail isn't everything, for sure, but in this case, the way in which it varies depending on circumstances seems to confuse the brain and leave it unwilling to interpret the sounds coming in, and the result is a lack of musical communication. We like the basics of this deck and its suspension and simplicity count strongly in its favour, but on sonic grounds alone there are others in this group that piece together a more convincing musical argument. **HFC**



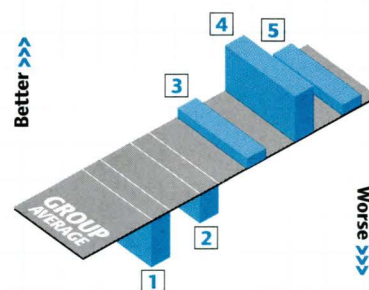
## LAB REPORT

The motor's isolation seems to work and breakthrough is pretty low at about -74dB. However, coupling through the drive belt gives rise to notably high flutter at 100Hz, and in addition the belt does not ride quite true on the platter and pulley, causing lower-rate flutter and wow.

Speed accuracy is okay at 0.5% slow (virtually unnoticeable in all practical terms), while disc damping is good and arm damping rather impressive, with just one resonance showing up around 460Hz. The suspension clearly does its job in the midrange, though there is still some low-frequency coupling from the plinth and footfall vibration, for instance, is little attenuated.

However, the true culprit of the sonic problems is almost certainly speed instability which, in the presence of complex sounds, produces a correspondingly complex spectrum of 'hash' noise in the background.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Speed accuracy >> -40%
- 2] Wow and flutter >> -25%
- 3] Rumble >> +10%
- 4] Vibration breakthrough >> +40%
- 5] Arm resonance >> +10%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Speed accuracy (50Hz)	-	0.5%
Wow and flutter	0.04%	0.08%
Rumble (motor breakthrough)	-75dB	-74dB

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 82%**

**FEATURES >> 82%**

**BUILD >> 85%**

**VALUE >> 83%**

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

The suspension adds to this deck's relative performance when placed on an unsuspended support, but its speed instability compromises the sound in terms of overall musical communication.



# CONCLUSIONS

*No radicals here, just good solid engineering... and a lot of clear acrylic*

**N**one of these turntables represents any remarkably radical thinking on the performance front, but the best of them produce musical, informative and highly pleasing results. This is because the decks are grounded in solid turntable engineering.

Rega's P5 is in essence a veteran design, given a new lease of life in the details of its new incarnation but nonetheless will be instantly recognisable to anyone who's ever seen any Rega deck of yore. We found it, on the whole, good but not great. It scores highly for practicality, as the only one with

even the option of a proper hinged lid, and will suit those who like the traditional look. For the ultimate in musical resolution we reckon you can do better.

Roksan's Radius 5 looks terrific, it sports a highly capable arm and its suspended construction, with integral motor support, is also a very practical solution. But we thought it a bit uninvolved and lacking in fine details, and given the high degree of correlation shown within this group between speed stability and sound we reckon that's where the problem lies. You can actually see the belt

riding up and down the platter and that can't be right.

Marantz has really raised eyebrows with the TT15. Okay, it's obviously a Clearaudio in drag but so what? Fact is, it's a highly competent turntable, supplied as a neat package with (excellent) arm and cartridge at a sensible price. It's not the most detailed of the bunch, but it's not so far short and we like it. We like its Clearaudio half-brother, the Champion, too, and strongly recommend the Satisfy arm (on a Clearaudio or other deck, indeed). The Champion offers a bit of everything and really

keeps you listening, always a reliable indicator of quality hi-fi.

Pro-Ject's RPM 9 X is probably the best-looking of a very smart bunch, and in terms of value, including its carbon-fibre arm, it's most attractive. A big, lifelike, well-balanced sound draws you in and envelops you – excellent.

The star, though, is Michell's TecnoDec. The cheapest of the group, it's one of the best sounding, and it's as smart as any. Michell's reputation for lasting quality can't hurt, either, but its crisp, precise and extended sound is the clincher. **HFC**

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### EAR 834P FROM £575

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### LOUDSPEAKERS

**SPENDOR SP2/3E** £1,295

This 'bookshelf' Spendor seems to be particularly fond of vinyl.

### ATC SCM35

£2,000  
A highly analytical joy if partnered with classic, high quality vinyl treasures.

## HINTS AND TIPS

- >> Clean old records with a wet cleaner then store them in clean inner sleeves. Use a carbon-fibre brush to remove loose dust. Clean the stylus with a soft brush or the Onzow squidgy cleaner.
- >> LP turntables are sensitive to external vibration. A little feedback can

- sometimes sound nice, admittedly, but isolation supports will improve detail.
- >> When fitting a cartridge, grip it firmly by the sides. Many styli have been wiped out by nervous handling. Always fit the stylus guard and clamp the arm when moving or fiddling with the deck.

## TURNTABLES AT A GLANCE



MAKE MODEL	Clearaudio Champion	Marantz TT15	Michell TecnoDec	Pro-Ject RPM 9 X	Rega P5	Roksan Radius 5
<b>PRICE</b>	£1,475	£1,000	£767	£1,000	£1,011	£850
<b>SOUND</b>						
<b>FEATURES</b>						
<b>BUILD</b>						
<b>VALUE</b>						
<b>OVERALL</b>						
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	Smart, practical and good-sounding, thanks not least to an impressively 'dead' arm.	It performs decently and looks great, and comes as a well thought-out and hassle-free package.	Performs a level or three above expectations with sound that's full-bodied and highly detailed.	Can extract unsuspected information from the vinyl: care in setup is needed to avoid some slight muddling.	Sounds rather uninvolved and lacking musical impact: less than ideal detail resolution.	Suspension adds to the appeal, but its rather high levels of speed instability compromise the sound.
<b>KEY FEATURES</b>						
<b>SIZE (WxHxD)</b>	47x14x39cm	42x14x36cm	46x10x32cm	44x16.5x32.5cm	40x13x35cm	40x15x35cm
<b>WEIGHT</b>	12kg	8.8kg	5kg	8.5kg	4kg	7.0kg
<b>SPEEDS</b>	33/45	33/45	33/45	33/45	33/45	33/45
<b>REPLACEABLE LEADS</b>	No	No	No	Yes	No	No
<b>MOTOR TYPE</b>	Synchronous	Synchronous	DC	Synchronous	Synchronous	Synchronous
<b>ARM INCLUDED?</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>LAB CONCLUSIONS</b> E = EXCELLENT • G = GOOD • A = AVERAGE • P = POOR						
<b>SPEED ACCURACY</b>	0.1% <b>E</b>	0.01% <b>E</b>	1% <b>A</b>	0.4% <b>G</b>	0.1% <b>E</b>	0.5% <b>G</b>
<b>WOW AND FLUTTER</b>	0.06% <b>G</b>	0.07% <b>A</b>	0.04% <b>E</b>	0.03% <b>E</b>	0.07% <b>A</b>	0.08% <b>G</b>
<b>RUMBLE</b>	-73dB <b>G</b>	-65dB <b>A</b>	<-78dB <b>E</b>	-75dB <b>G</b>	-68dB <b>A</b>	-74dB <b>G</b>
<b>VIBRATION BREAK</b>	-10%	-20%	-10%	+10%	-20%	+40%
<b>ARM RESONANCE</b>	+40%	+30%	-30%	0	-40%	+10%





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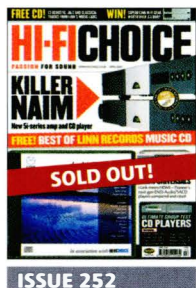
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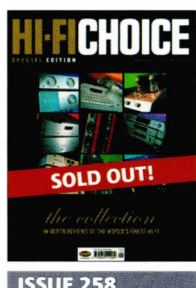
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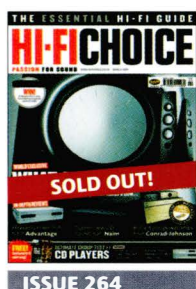
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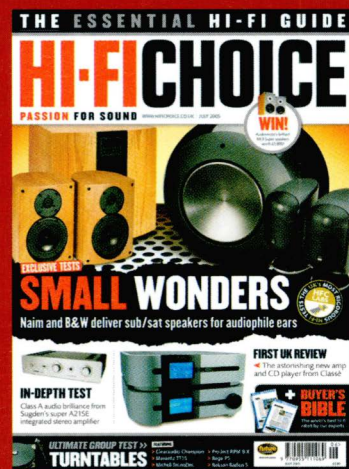
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# HI-FI CHOICE BUYER'S BIBLE



Welcome to the *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible* – the ultimate guide to the very best high performance hi-fi and 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.

## SOURCE COMPONENTS

- 78 CD PLAYERS
- 80 DVD PLAYERS
- 82 VINYL
- 85 RADIO TUNERS
- 86 DIGITAL RECORDERS

## AMPLIFIERS

- 94 STEREO AMPS
- 96 MULTICHANNEL AV AMPS

## LOUDSPEAKERS

- 100 STEREO SPEAKERS
- 104 MULTICHANNEL SPEAKER PACKAGES

## ANCILLARIES

- 107 HEADPHONES
- 109 CABLES
- 110 STANDS AND SUPPORTS

- 113 CHOICE BITS ACCESSORIES SHOP

## DEALER CLASSIFIED

- 114 DEALER GUIDE
- 120 DEALER DIRECTORY



# 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

**BEST BUY** **EDITOR'S CHOICE**

### Audio-only CD and SACD players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS							ISSUE NUMBER
				SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUT	OPT DIG OUT	CD-RW COMPATIBLE	CD TEXT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>											
	Arcam DIVA CD73T	400	Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic – a finely judged balance for budget to mid-price systems	●	●	●	●				247
	Arcam DIVA CD192	850	Beautifully built, well featured player with clear, open and involving sound	●	●	●	●				264
	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
	Cyrus CD8x	1,000	Impressive mix of detail, musicality, analysis and appearance. Even better with the PSX-R power supply (£400)	●	●	●	●				264
	Exposure 2010 S	599	Highly communicative sounds with good bass, though not always the most analytical	●	●	●	●				264
	Marantz CD7300	350	Astonishingly capable sub-£500 player with effortless bass, detailed mid and treble and vast soundstages	●	●	●	●		●		250
	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
	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
	Roksan Kandy MkIIID	650	Clean, tidy and expressive player – a more than worthwhile improvement on previous versions		●	●	●		●		259
	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>											
	Audio Analogue Maestro	1,650	The new Maestro 192/24 delivers a sound that's slightly rosy yet always musical and thoroughly enjoyable	●					●		257
	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
	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
	Copland CDA823	1,750	Its ability to resolve micro dynamics and acoustic space is second to none.	●					●		267
	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
	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
	Lindemann 820	6,999	Stereo SACD player with sumptuous build and sound, onboard analogue volume control and multiple digital inputs	●	●				●	●	262
	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
	Meridian 808i Signature	8,250	Stunning CD player with added preamp functions. Versatile and quite delightful	●	●	●	●		●	●	263
	Naim CD5x	1,450	A genuinely engaging CD player with remarkable musical grip and coherence								264
	Naim CDX2	2,700	Fine quality one-box CD player, but its best feature is upgradeability via outboard XPS supply				●				238
	Orelle CD100evo2	1,299	Relaxed, but strong on refinement and detail. An intelligent choice, particularly strong with acoustic music	●	●	●	●				259
	Primare CD31	1,500	Fresh clean sounding player, with well designed control system and support for custom installation.	●	●	●	●		●		267
	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
	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
	Wadia 302	3,999	A dynamic and gripping player, with bass to die for and resolution to change your listening habits	●	●	●	●		●	●	253
	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.



**Copland CDA823** £1,750

This distinguished, yet minimalist Scandinavian CD player combines a real ear for detail with full-scale dynamics and an effortless musical style. A genuine hi-fi star.



**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

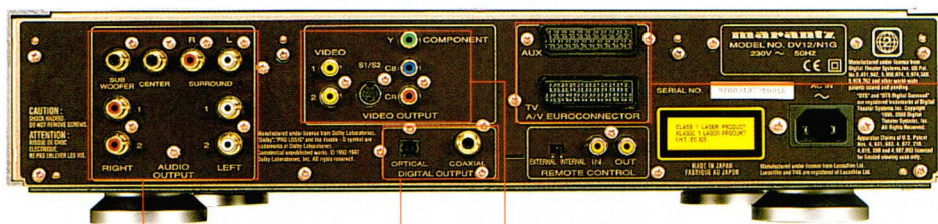
DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player.



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

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

### Audio/Video disc players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	DVD-A COMPATIBLE	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
<b>BB</b>	Arcam DiVA DV78	700	Imagine almost all of the DV88 Plus at a knock-down price. Top picture and sound performance for the money			●	●		254
	Cambridge Audio Azur 540D	200	Very respectable and well presented DVD-Audio player at a knockdown price	●		●	●		257
<b>BB</b>	Denon DVD-2910	600	Denon's entry-level universal player lives in the shadow of the '3910, especially on CD, but is a fine overall model	●	●	●	●		262
<b>BB</b>	Denon DVD-3910	900	Exceptionally well-specified universal player with a performance to match. A true class-leader	●	●	●	●		260
<b>BB</b>	Pioneer DV-575A	150	A universal player for peanuts! CD ain't great, but it's decent with DVD and allows you to try DVD-A/SACD at very little cost	●	●	●	●		261
<b>BB</b>	Pioneer DV-668AV	600	HDMI-equipped universal player without i.Link audio output, but still absurdly well equipped and highly capable for the price	●	●	●	●		252
<b>BB</b>	Pioneer DV-868AVi	1,000	State of the art universal player with next-gen digital outputs – HDMI for video and i.Link for high-resolution audio	●	●	●	●		252
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>									
<b>EC</b>	Advantage S12.3	9,350	Adaptable ultra-high grade player with built-in preamp functionality that can be extended further. Unusually strong with CD	●	●	●	●		264
<b>BB</b>	Arcam FMJ DV29	1,600	An excellent DVD player, very fine with both CD and DVD-Audio music discs and superb in its video role	●		●	●		263
	Cyrus DVD8	1,200	An impressive step up from the DVD7+, which includes component video outputs			●	●		238
<b>EC</b>	Denon DVD-A1XV	2,500	Sophisticated universal player with state of the art video processing, high class disc replay, especially SACD	●	●	●	●	●	266
<b>EC</b>	Linn Unidisk SC	2,995	Groundbreaking universal player with built-in preamplifier, with excellent picture for home cinema and sound for hi-fi	●	●	●	●		259
<b>EC</b>	Meridian G98	3,625	Meridian's most widely compatible G-Series DVD player – groundbreaking DVD-Audio replay and a fine CD player too	●		●	●		265
<b>EC</b>	Meridian 800	10,805	The ultimate in DVD replay, modular construction, buffered ROM drive, upsampling and high-res digital outputs	●	●		●		230
<b>EC</b>	Naim DVD5	2,565	Naim's first DVD player is a real success, notable for its class-leading sound with CD and (optional) multichannel DVD-Audio	●		●	●		263
<b>EC</b>	Primare DVD30	2,000	A universal player for audiophiles – no wideband digital outputs but masterful with music and a good picture too	●	●	●	●		253
<b>EC</b>	Townshend TA 565 Evo 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!



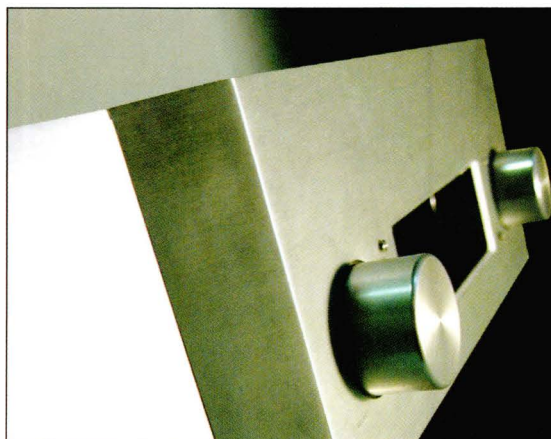
**Denon DVD-3910 £900**  
New-generation Denon is currently the most complete universal player below £1,000.



**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.



The new **Primo, Composers** and **Maestro Series** from **Audio Analogue** offer elegance, classic Italian styling, excellent value and a natural, musical sound.

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soundpleasure



# 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 with a great sense of musical 'timing'. The new RB700 arm is included in the price.



### Roksan Radius 5 £850

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



### Michell Orbe SE £2,015

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



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

# TURNTABLES

### Record players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER
				SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	
<span>BB</span>	Audio Note TT1/ARM1	728	Simple and unpretentious, it delivers a real taste of true high-end performance at an affordable price	33/45	●	●	●	203
<span>BB</span>	Avid Diva	1,100	A solid and powerful sounding deck with fine build, requires a smooth, relaxed cartridge for best results	33/45	●	●	●	247
<span>EC</span>	Avid Volvere Sequel	3,500	Heavyweight turntable that will deliver more of what's in a vinyl groove than most of the competition	33/45	●	●	●	229
<span>EC</span>	Avid Acutus	6,000	Extremely capable design with no apparent shortcomings. Don't sell your vinyl 'til you've heard it on this!	33/45	●	●	●	194
<span>EC</span>	Clearaudio Master Reference	12,610	Revealing and exciting turntable that revels in the fine details (reviewed with Master TQ-I arm/Accurate cartridge)	33/45	●	●	●	256
<span>BB</span>	Goldring 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
<span>BB</span>	Rega P3/RB300	298	Updated Planar 3, building on the strengths of the P2 with added subtlety and detail	33/45	●	●	●	214
<span>BB</span>	Rega P5/RB700	698	Combines a great sense of timing with market-leading resolution and a phenomenal tonearm – a hard act to beat	33/45	●	●	●	opt 257
<span>BB</span>	Rega P7/RB700	1,298	A highly capable player that could hold its own in the most exalted company – a vivid and natural performer	33/45	●	●	●	opt 257
<span>EC</span>	Rega P9/RB1000	2,498	Exceptionally elegant hi-tech player with complex outboard supply, ceramic platter and wonderful RB1000 tonearm	33/45	●	●	●	228
<span>BB</span>	Roksan Radius 5/Nima	850	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation (acrylic version tested)	33/45	●	●	●	248
<span>EC</span>	Roksan TMS2/Artemiz	7,500	Typical Roksan sound, but better: pitch-accurate, lean, detailed and controlled, without the 'bloat' of lesser designs	33/45	●	●	●	246
<span>EC</span>	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V/309 hybrid arm	33/45	●	●	●	195
<span>EC</span>	SME Model 20.2A	5,274	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	33/45/78	●	●	●	186
<span>EC</span>	T+A G10R/PH-G10MC	2,550	Style meets substance in a highly credible complete package, with integral phono step-up	33/45	●	●	●	261
<span>EC</span>	Townshend Rock Anniversary	8,000	If you want to get to the meat and bones of the music this is a great tool for the job (price inc. Excalibur arm)	33/45	●	●	●	259

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

# PHONO CARTRIDGES

### MM and MC cartridges

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			ISSUE NUMBER
				MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	
<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
<span>BB</span>	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	ADJ IMPEDANCE	
<span>BB</span>	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.

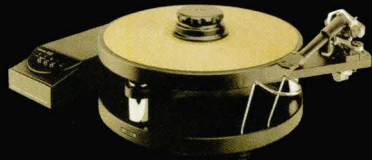
**REPLACEABLE STYLUS** Some cartridges have separate stylus for ease of replacement, but it compromises sound quality.



# SME

The way to play vinyl ...

Model 10



Model 20/2



Model 30/2



Series M2



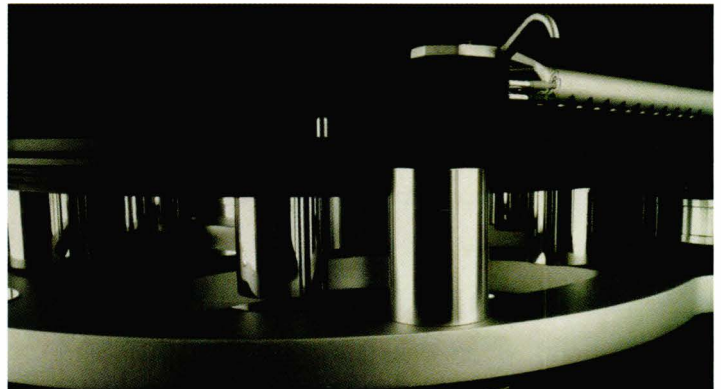
Series 300



Series IV



Series V



BRITISH DESIGN AND  
ENGINEERING AT ITS BEST

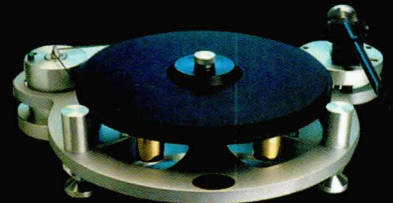
After 35 years, Michell is still a family run business with a team of dedicated and proud craftsmen, producing quality turntables and accessories

Orbe SE



The Michell flagship for music lovers who are not prepared to compromise

Gyro SE



The classic Michell turntable, refined over many years of development to its current level of performance.

TecnoDec



Entry level turntable incorporating features from the classic Gyro



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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

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### FM & DAB HI-FI SEPARATES

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>FM TUNERS</b>										
	Creek T50	499	Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics	FM,M,L	128	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	251
	Denon TU-260L II	130	The return of the all-time favourite, now enhanced with RDS and sounding as fine as ever	FM,M,L	40	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	193
	Magnum Dynalab MD 90T	1,195	No remote or presets as standard, manual everything and valves... but its sound is simply sublime	FM	opt	<input type="checkbox"/>	opt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	257
	Magnum Dynalab MD 102	2,200	Superb remote control analogue FM tuner delivers a superbly transparent sound that makes radio fun	FM	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	241
	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity	FM,M	30	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	250
	NAD S400	600	One of the best around – bass and treble are both well extended and detail is excellent	FM	30	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	230
	Primare T21	600	Identical to NAD S400 and likewise a very fine tuner	FM	30	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	230
	Rega Radio 3	398	Unpretentious unit which does what it claims, very well. Unusually fine FM sound in all areas	FM,M	20	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	242
	Rotel RT-02	279	A highly competent tuner which always sounds appealing and fuss-free	FM,M	30	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	242
<b>DAB TUNERS</b>										
	Arcam DIVA DT81	650	A very smart and polished DAB performer	DAB	16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	221
	Cambridge Audio DAB500	150	Very good sound, plus optional response tweaks, and slickest operation yet	DAB	10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	248
	Cambridge Azur 640T	200	Slightly ahead of the pack in DAB performance, though FM is never better than decent	DAB,FM	60	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	260
	Pure Digital DRX-701ES	250	An excellent introduction to DAB, fine value, simple to use and feature loaded	DAB	99	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	259

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



# DIGITAL AUDIO RECORDERS

CD, MiniDisc and hard drive recorders



## MiniDisc

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

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

## Recordable CD

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

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

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

## Hard drive

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

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

TOP BUYS



**Philips CDR802** £300

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

---



**Marantz DR6000** £400

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

---



**Yamaha CDR-HD1300** £600

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

---



**Imerge S2000** £1,599

Impressively flexible hard disk music server for multiroom applications.

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE DIGITAL RECORDERS

CD-R/RW, MD and HDD recorders

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

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



# SEVENOAKS

SOUND & VISION

## Custom Installation

With our custom designed installations, your home entertainment choices become as convenient as they are clever. We can help transform every room and every home, whatever your requirements and budget.

Our installation experts are trained to the highest standards in all areas and provide a prompt, reliable and totally professional service. Rest assured also that our commitment to service doesn't end once your equipment is in place. Sevenoaks staff will continue to support you and your kit long after your initial visit to one of our stores.



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

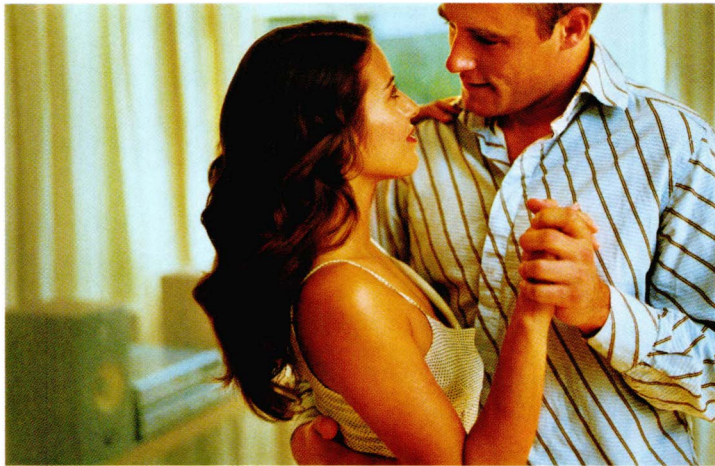
WATFORD

WEYBRIDGE

WITHAM (ESSEX)

WOLVERHAMPTON





## 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 an RA-01, RA-02 or RA-03 integrated amplifier represents 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

### ROTEL RA-03 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

"The Rotel is simply the best-sounding amp here, and one of the cheapest - if you're after an amp, you must hear it."



## 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 A/V RECEIVER
- AVR300 A/V 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 & CD8X CD PLAYERS
- 6VS & 8VS AMPLIFIERS
- PRE X VS PREAMPLIFIER
- DAC-X DAC & FM X TUNER

**LINKSERVER SOLO**

A Cyrus CD Player with built in 80Gb hard disk drive. Keep all your favourite music instantly accessible in a single, easy to operate component.

## 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**

**1 XPRESSION TURNTABLE WITH OM10E CARTRIDGE**

**2 XPERIENCE TURNTABLE (PICTURED RIGHT)**

## 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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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 02/06/2005, 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

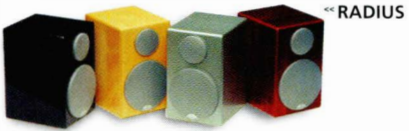
**AWARDS 2004**  
BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £150-£200  
Roksan Kandy MKIII

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
BEST BUY 2003

## 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.



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

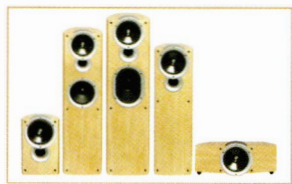


**BRONZE B2**  
"Monitor Audio's Bronze B2s sound much more expensive than their £200 price tag would suggest. In fact, they sound superb... In the competitive world of budget hi-fi, speakers don't get much better than the B2s."



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

**Q SERIES INCLUDES**  
Q COMPACT BOOKSHELF 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."

**AWARDS 2004**  
FEBRUARY 2004

## 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**



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
BEST HI-FI MICRO SYSTEM OVER £150  
Denon D-M31

## Denon

**D-M31 CD RECEIVER**  
"Even better than the Award-winning DM30, making it phenomenal value for money."




**WHAT HI-FI?**  
BEST HI-FI MICRO SYSTEM OVER £150  
Denon D-M31

## Quad

Founded in 1938, Quad's history is one of audio excellence. Today's range includes both electronics and speaker systems.

**PRODUCTS INCLUDE**  
99 CD-PREAMPLIFIER  
11L SPEAKERS



**AWARDS 2004**  
BEST STEREO SPEAKERS £20-£50  
Quad 11L

## Musical Fidelity

Musical Fidelity's X-Series combines exceptional build quality with value for money.

**X SERIES** X-80 & X150 AMPLIFIER  
X-RAY<sup>93</sup> CD PLAYER  
**A5 SERIES** A5 AMPLIFIER & 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 DVD-A1XV

"An exceptional player with excellent sound quality, plus essentially state of the art picture performance."

HI-FI CHOICE • MAY 2005



## Denon

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

### MODELS INCLUDE

#### A/V RECEIVERS

AVR-1905 • AVR-2105 • AVR-2805 • AVR-3805

#### A/V AMPLIFIER

AVC-A1XV

#### DVD PLAYERS

DVD-1710 • DVD-1910

#### UNIVERSAL DVD PLAYERS

DVD-2910 • DVD-3910 • DVD-A11 • DVD-A1XV

#### DVD SYSTEMS

DHT-500SD • DHT-550SD



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

### DHT-500SD

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



**DHT-500SD** "PRODUCT OF THE YEAR ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEM DENON DHT-500SD"

## Pioneer

### MODELS INCLUDE

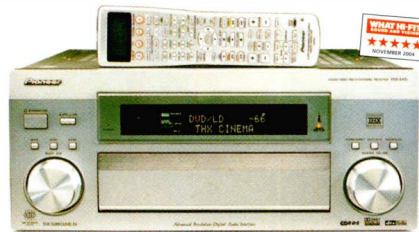
**A/V AMPLIFIER** VSA-AX10Ai

**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

DV78, DV79

FMJ DV29

### A/V RECEIVERS

AVR250, AVR300

### A/V PRE/PROCESSOR

AV8, AVP700

### MULTICHANNEL POWER

P7, P1000



**AWARDS 2004**  
BEST MULTICHANNEL RECEIVER £750-£1000  
Arcam AVR250



**AWARDS 2004**  
BEST DVD PLAYER £750-£1000  
Arcam DV78

## PRICING POLICY

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## 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 • DMR-ES10

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



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

### Pioneer

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

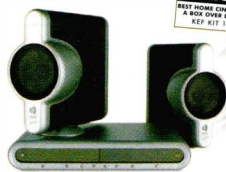
**HARD-DISK MODELS (HDD/DVD-RW)**  
DVR-420H 80GB • DVR-520H 80GB  
DVR-720H 160GB • DVR-920H 250GB



**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."



## 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.

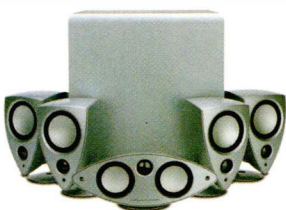
### MODELS INCLUDE

KHT1005 • KHT2005.2  
KHT5005 • KHT9000ACE

## 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."



Elegante  
Colour Options Available



### M-Cube

"Mission has shaken up this market with an innovative, desirable product of rare ability - audition today."



## 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.



Q400E™



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

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



## 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

Goldring GR1	£139.95
Linn RANGE	£ CALL
Michell Gyro SE/RB300	£1049.95
Project Debut Phono SB	£169.95
Project Debut III (Black)	£129.95
Project 1 Xpression	£209.95
Project 2 Xperience	£549.95
Roksan Radius 5 (Wood)	£749.95

## TUNERS

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

## CD PLAYERS

Arcam DIVA CD73T	£399.95
Arcam DIVA CD192	£849.95
Arcam FMJ CD33T	£1349.95
Cyrus CD6	£649.95
Cyrus CD8 X	£999.95
Cyrus DAC X	£1099.95
Denon DCD485	£119.95
Linn RANGE	£ CALL
Marantz CD5400	£119.95
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL
Musical Fidelity X-Ray 98	£899.95
Musical Fidelity A5	£1499.95
Quad 99 CD-P	£999.95
Roksan Kandy KD1 MKIII	£649.95
Roksan Caspian M	£1099.95
Rotel RCD02	£379.95
Rotel RCD1072	£594.95

## CD RECORDERS

Pioneer PDR609 CD-RW	£199.95
Yamaha CDR-HD1300/II	£479.95

## AMPLIFIERS

Arcam DIVA A65 Plus	£389.95
Arcam DIVA A80	£599.95
Arcam DIVA A90	£849.95
Arcam FMJ A32	£1199.95
Cyrus Gvs	£649.95
Cyrus 8vs	£849.95
Cyrus Pre X vs Pre	£999.95
Cyrus Mono X Power (Each)	£1199.95
Denon PMA355	£169.95
Linn RANGE	£ CALL
Marantz PM4400	£139.95

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

## SPEAKERS

Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo One	£129.95
Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo Three	£249.95
Acoustic Energy Aelite Two	£449.95
Acoustic Energy Aelite Three	£749.95
Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII	FROM £1699.95
AVI Neutron IV	£499.95
B&W DM601 S3	£249.95
B&W DM602 S3	£299.95
B&W 705	£899.95
B&W 703	£1999.95
KEF Q RANGE	£ CALL
KEF XQ RANGE	£ CALL
Linn RANGE	£ CALL
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL
Mission m31i	£129.95
Mission m34i	£299.95
Monitor Audio Bronze B2	£199.95
Monitor Audio Silver RS1	£349.95
Monitor Audio Silver RS6	£599.95
Monitor Audio Silver RS8	£799.95
Monitor Audio Gold Reference 10	£799.95
Monitor Audio Gold Reference 60	£1999.95
Quad 11L	£379.95
Quad 12L	£499.95
Quad 22L	£894.95
Ruark RANGE	£ CALL
Wharfedale Diamond 9.1	£179.95

## HI-FI SYSTEMS

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

## DVD SYSTEMS

Denon DHT-5005D Inc 5.1 Speaker Package	£ CALL
Denon DHT-5505D Inc 5.1 Speaker Package	£ CALL
KEF KIT100 Inc Speakers	£ CALL

## MULTI-ROOM AUDIO

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

## DVD PLAYERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Arcam DIVA DV78	£699.95	£699.95
Arcam DIVA DV79	£999.95	£999.95
Arcam FMJ DV29	£1599.95	£1599.95
Cyrus DVD8	£1199.95	£1199.95
Denon DVD-1710	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-1910	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-2910 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-3910 Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-A11	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-A1txv	£ CALL	£ CALL
Harman Kardon DVD22	£ CALL	£ CALL
Harman Kardon DVD31	£ CALL	£ CALL
Marantz DV4500	£ CALL	£ CALL
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV370	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV575A Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV668Av Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV868Avi Universal	£ CALL	£ CALL
Yamaha DVD-S550	£ CALL	£ CALL
Yamaha DVD-S1500	£ CALL	£ CALL

## DVD RECORDERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Panasonic DMR-E55	£199.95	£219.95
Panasonic DMR-ES10	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E65	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E85	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E95	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic DMR-E500	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-220	£199.95	£219.95
Pioneer DVR-320	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-420H	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-520H	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-720H	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DVR-920H	£ CALL	£ CALL

## AV AMPLIFIERS RECEIVERS & PROCESSORS

Arcam AVR250 AV Receiver	£999.95
Arcam AVR300 AV Receiver	£1299.95
Arcam AVP700/P1000 AV Processor/Power	£ TBA
Arcam AV8/P7 AV Processor/Power	£5749.95
Cyrus AV8 AV Processor	£1099.95
Denon AVC-A1XV AV Amplifier	£ CALL
Denon AVR1705 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Denon AVR1905 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Denon AVR2105 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Denon AVR2805 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Denon AVR3805 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Harman Kardon AVR330 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Harman Kardon AVR630 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Harman Kardon DPR2005 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Lexicon RANGE	£ CALL
Marantz SR4500 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Marantz SR5500 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-D814 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-2014i AV Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-AX5Ai AV Receiver	£ CALL
Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai AV Amplifier	£ CALL
Rotel RSX1056 AV Receiver	£1199.95
Rotel RSX1067 AV Receiver	£1799.95
Rotel RSP1098 AV Processor	£2294.95
Yamaha DSP-AX750SE AV Amplifier	£249.95
Yamaha DSP-29 AV Amplifier	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V550 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V650 AV Receiver	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V1500RDS AV Receiver	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V2500RDS AV Receiver	£ CALL

## AV SPEAKERS & PACKAGES

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

B&W VM1/AS1	£849.95
KEF KHT1005	£299.95
KEF KHT2005.2	£599.95
KEF KHT5005	£ CALL
KEF Q7 AV	£ CALL
M&K RANGE	£ CALL
Mission M30 AV Package	£ CALL
Mission M3i AV Package	£ CALL
Mission M Cube AV Package (ex stands)	£ CALL
Mission Elegante e82 7.1 Package	£ CALL
Monitor Audio Bronze B2 AV	£799.95
Monitor Audio Bronze B4 AV	£949.95
Monitor Audio Radius	£ CALL
Mordaunt Short Genie	£ CALL
Quad L-Series	£1899.95
Wharfedale Diamond 9 HCP	£499.95
Yamaha YSP-1 Sound Projector	£ CALL

## SUBWOOFERS

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

## PLASMA

Fujitsu RANGE	£ CALL
Hitachi 32PD5200 32"	£ CALL
Hitachi 42PD5200 42"	£ CALL
Hitachi 55PMA550TE 55"	£ CALL
Panasonic TH37PW78 37"	£ CALL
Panasonic TH42PW78 42"	£ CALL
Panasonic TH37PE308 37"	£ CALL
Panasonic TH42PE308 42"	£ CALL
Panasonic TH50PV308 50"	£ CALL
Pioneer PDP435FDE 43"	£ CALL
Pioneer PDP435XDE 43"	£ CALL
Pioneer PDP505XDE 50"	£ CALL
Toshiba 42WP46 42"	£ CALL

## LCD TV

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

## PROJECTORS

Screenplay SP4805 DLP	£ CALL
Screenplay SP5700 DLP	£ CALL
Screenplay SP7205 DLP	£ CALL
Screenplay SP7210 DLP	£ CALL
Screenplay SP777 DLP	£ CALL
Sharp XV-Z91E DLP	£ CALL
Sharp XV-Z200/201 DLP	£ CALL
Sharp XV-Z2000 DLP	£ CALL
Sim 2 Domino 18 DLP	£ CALL
Sim 2 Domino 20-H HDMI DLP	£ CALL
Sim 2 Domino 30-H HDMI DLP	£ CALL
Sim 2 HT300E DLP	£ CALL
Sim 2 HT500 Link DLP	£ CALL
ThemeScene H30A Cinema DLP	£ CALL
ThemeScene H57 Cinema DLP	£ CALL
ThemeScene H77 Cinema DLP	£ CALL

## REMOTE CONTROLS

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

# The Magnificent Seven

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.

## 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 02/06/2005, E&OE.



## Nationwide Store guide



### ABERDEEN 01224 252797 **NEW**

• 96 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 BURLLEIGH 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

### 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

### 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

### MANCHESTER 0161 831 7969

• 69 HIGH ST, CITY CENTRE

### 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

### WITHAM (ESSEX) 01376 501733

• 1 THE GROVE CENTRE

### WOLVERHAMPTON 01902 312225

• 29-30 CLEVELAND STREET

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

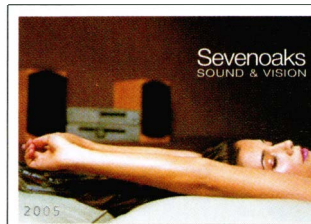
## Who are Sevenoaks?

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.

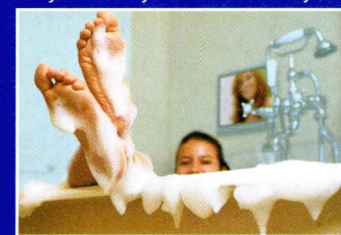


### Hi-Fi & Home Cinema Guide - 2005 Edition

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-AMPLING?

Bi-wiring is when you run separate cables to the treble and bass/mid terminals on the speaker. In most instances, this improves sound quality so long as identical cables are used. Bi-amping is using two stereo amps to drive one pair of speakers, using one amp to drive the treble and the other for the bass/mid sections of the speakers.

### WHY DO VALVE AMPS HAVE SO LITTLE POWER?

Valve amps are inherently low powered in absolute terms – at least when you compare them to their transistor-based cousins. But when partnered with high-sensitivity loudspeakers, they are quite capable of producing perfectly adequate head-banging levels.

## TOP BUYS



**Marantz**  
PM7200 £330

A true budget belter from Marantz – power and finesse in equal measure, plus the ability to switch between Class A and Class AB operation. Giant killing amps are back!



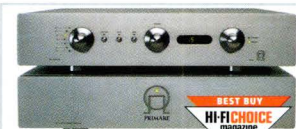
**Exposure**  
2010 S £599

Another cracking integrated from the Exposure stable – admirable musical insight and communication at a thoroughly sensible price. Top stuff.



**Naim**  
NAC 112x/NAP 150x £1,475

Naim's new entry-level pre/power amp is a fabulously engaging combo. As you'd expect, rhythm and timing are to the fore, with a healthy dollop of finesse to boot.



**Primare**  
PRE30/A30.2 £2,400

Beautifully made and with a sound to match, this Scandinavian pre/power combines warmth and body with energy and detail – a truly musical performer.







Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE  
**STEREO AMPLIFIERS** *continued*

Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					ISSUE NUMBER
				PREAMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	
EC	Conrad-Johnson ACT2/Prem 350SA	20,000	Valve preamp and solid-state power deliver some of the most transparent and naturally dynamic sounds around	●	●	5	●	350	264
	EAR 864/534	4,156	Valve combo delivers fine measured and subjective performance and inspires great confidence	●	●	6	●	50	254
EC	ECS EA-1	6,000	Understated monoblocks with real transparency to the fine detail, passion and energy in your record collection		●			180	253
	Exposure XXIII/XXVIII	2,790	Highly natural and dynamic amplifier that offers the fluidity and energy of valves via transistors	●	●	6	opt	70	241
EC	Gamut 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
EC	Gamut D200 Mk3	3,950	A great power amp that's now even better – one of the best regardless of price		●			200	247
EC	Halcro dm10/dm68	25,550	Extravagant, extreme and massive amp combo will probably polarise opinions, but delivers stunning midrange clarity	●	●	5	●	225	243
	Hovland HP-100/RADIA	12,745	Uncommonly musical valve/transistor hybrid transcends stereotypes, one of the genuine high achievers	●	●	9	opt	125	250
EC	Krell FPB 700cx	14,998	Reference class amplifier may represent overkill in many systems, but when no compromise is called for, this is it		●			700	234
EC	Linn Klimax Kontrol	6,000	Beautifully executed example of Scots audio art, sounds as clean as it looks and is a lot more transparent than most	●		4	●		238
	Naim NAC 202/NAP 200	2,720	More sophisticated than its forebears with a fleet-footed sound that draws you into the music	●	●	8	●	70	241
EC	Naim NAC 500	11,875	Wonderful neutrality, bandwidth and dynamic range, plus Naim's traditional leading-edge definition		●			140	208
EC	Naim NAC 552	12,100	Extremely expensive preamp, but still solid value. Magnificent sound with fine flexibility and convenience	●		6	●		233
EC	Primare PRE30/A30.2	2,400	Smart kit that lives up to the visual promise with gorgeous sound – a really musical performer	●	●	7	●	128	256
EC	Quad QC-24/II-40	4,007	Big, muscular valve sound that's smooth and easy on the ears, plus solid engineering with good power delivery	●	●	7		40	254
	Roksan Caspian M Series	2,050	Confident and highly enjoyable sound with lively music, perhaps a little less sure with subtler, complex scores	●	●	6	●	78	256

# AV AMPLIFIERS

*Surround sound amps for music and movies*

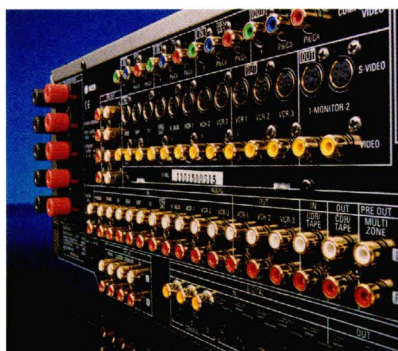


The multichannel, surround sound or AV amplifier is a popular option, thanks to the success of the DVD player and home cinema. Now you can buy five channels or more of amplification for the price of two. Now that multichannel music is also on the agenda, there's a lot to be said for a good AV amp or 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 BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

# AV AMPLIFIERS

### Multichannel amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	RECEIVER	LINE INPUTS	7.1 COMPATIBLE	5-CHANNEL POWER (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>MULTICHANNEL INTEGRATED AMPS</b>								
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Arcam AVR300	1,300	Cracking all-round music and movie ability sets the Arcam apart from the AV crowd	●	8	●	100	257
<input type="checkbox"/>	Denon AVR-2803	650	Merely 'average' sound but it's impossible to argue against the flexibility and value of its engineering	●	9	●	130	251
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Denon AVC-A1XV	4,000	Inlegant, but powerful and effective tool with excellent auto set-up and capable of driving two 5.1 systems simultaneously		●	●	170	266
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lexicon RV-8	5,000	Classy multi-zone receiver lacks high tech digital attributes (HDMI etc) but majors on very effective audio engineering	●	10	●	140	267
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pioneer VSA-AX5i	1,200	Standard setter in its price category, with i.Link digital interface and MCACC auto set-up	●	11	●	100	248
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sony STR-DB795	300	A superb value little amplifier, well appointed technically and successfully tuned for UK ears	●	7	●	100	260
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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>								
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyrus AV8/3x Smartpower	2,900	Classic Cyrus sound translated to a multichannel arena, limited features and power, but civilised sound		3		105	238
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Linn Exotik	1,750	Is hi-fi ready to make the jump to multichannel music? Linn think so with this musical preamplifier		4			260
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Meridian 861	9,833	Powerful surround processor with flexible modular construction, marvellous versatility to drive any speaker configuration		6	●		230
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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

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2002 Hi-Fi News  
Category Winner  
IsoTek SubStation

2003 What Hi-Fi?  
IsoTek Mini Sub

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2004 What Hi-Fi?  
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IsoTek Gil Vison

2004 Hi-Fi Plus  
Category Winner  
Nordost Thor by IsoTek

2004 What Hi-Fi?  
IsoTek Gemini-B-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

#### Kingston-upon-Thames INFIDELITY

9 High Street Hampton Wick  
020 8943 3530

#### Maiden Bradley, Wiltshire FLAMING BOX

Perry Farm. 01985 845440

#### Rayleigh, Essex

#### RAYLEIGH HI-FI

44a High St. 01268 779762

#### Ringwood, Hampshire

#### PHONOGRAPHY

Star Lane 01425 461230

#### Southend-on-Sea

#### RAYLEIGH HI-FI

132/4 London Road  
01702 435255

#### Southampton PHASE 3 HI-FI

37 Bedford Place  
023 8022 8434

#### Worthing PHASE 3 HI-FI

213-217 Tarring Road  
01903 245577

### MIDLANDS

#### Banbury OVERTURE

3 Church Lane  
01295 272158

#### Birmingham SOUND ACADEMY

152a High Street, Bloxwich  
01922 493499

#### Coventry FRANK HARVEY

163 Spon Street  
024 7652 5200

#### Leicester CYMBIOSIS

6 Hotel St. 0116 262 3754

### NORTH

#### Cheadle THE AUDIO WORKS

14 Stockport Road  
0161 428 7887

#### Oldham AUDIO COUNSEL

12/14 Shaw Road  
0161 633 2602

### Nottingham

#### CASTLE SOUND & VISION

48/50 Maid Marian Way  
0115 9584404

### Sheffield

#### MOORGATE ACOUSTICS

184 Fitzwilliam St  
0114 275 6048

### Warrington

#### CHRIS BROOKS AUDIO

29 Gaskell Street  
01925 261212

#### York SOUND ORGANISATION

2 Gillygate 01904 627108

### SCOTLAND

#### Glasgow STEREO STEREO

260 St. Vincent Street  
0141 248 4079

### N. IRELAND

#### Belfast LYRIC HI-FI

429-431 Lisburn Road  
028 90 381296





# STEREO SPEAKERS

*Speaker pairs for stereo sound*



While loudspeakers are relatively straightforward in construction, they have one of the most difficult jobs in hi-fi – turning an electrical signal into an acoustic one. Most consist of two or more drive units in a box that usually has a port in it to make life easier for the cone in your mid and/or bass driver. Alternatives to this arrangement include panel speakers, which use electrostatic or ribbon technology, and horns, which use drive units in complex cabinets that greatly improve efficiency.

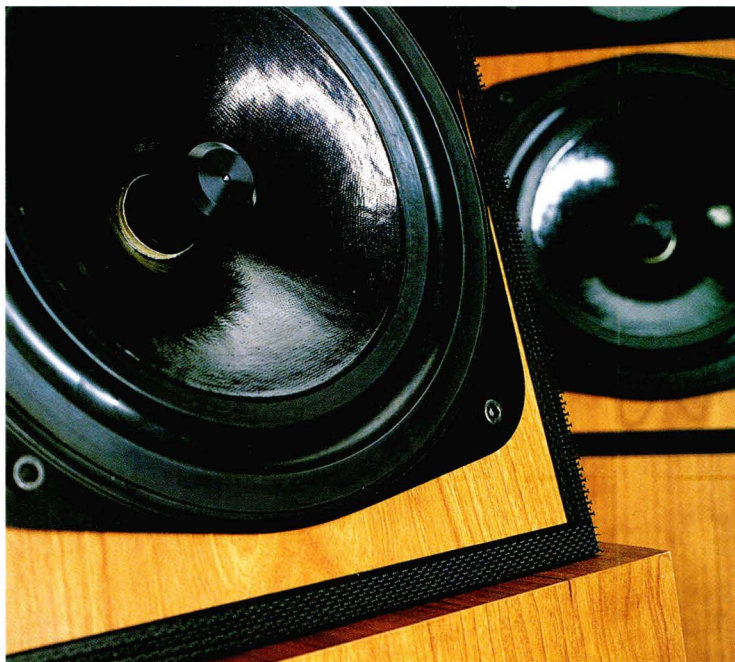
Box speakers are either designed to stand on the floor (floorstanders) or on a stand (stand or shelfmounts). Floorstanders have greater internal volume which can translate into greater efficiency and/or bass extension, but less substantial designs also introduce cabinet resonance and thus distortion. But they don't need stands and therefore have the aesthetic edge. Standmounts have less cabinet to vibrate and often score in terms of imaging and timing, but need good stands to work well.

## Positioning

The closer the speaker is to a wall, the greater the reinforcement of bass. As all rooms differ, there's no simple formula for placement and experimentation will yield the best results. Altering the angle at which the speakers face the listener can also make a difference to balance and stereo image.

## Going multichannel

Many stereo speakers can be augmented with centre and surround channels from the same brand to create a multichannel system. The most important element is a centre channel, which needs to match the stereo pair as closely as possible. For the best musical results, surrounds should be as per the front left and right channels, but if space or funds don't permit, smaller designs can be used quite effectively.



## Choosing speakers

Because speakers and the rooms they are used in vary so much, choosing a pair tends to be quite subjective. To find some that will suit you, try to listen to a good variety to hear how they differ, and if possible, audition some at home. Tonal balance tends to vary the most, but is less important than more subtle factors such as timing and dynamics. Finally, listen with your ears not your eyes – great-looking speakers aren't necessarily great sounding.

## Spikes

Floorstanding speakers and stands have threaded inserts for spikes that allow rigid coupling with the floor. These have the advantage of draining resonance from the speaker and giving tighter bass, but can result in more vibration getting back to the electronics and often cause the floor to resonate as well.

## POWER

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

your amp needs to avoid a mismatch. An above-average (A+) speaker will work with amps rated at 25W plus, while an average (A) speaker will need 50W or more, and a below average (A-) speaker could require 100W plus to sound its best. These are guidelines rather than rules.

## Q&A

### IF SPEAKERS ARE RATED AT 75 WATTS, DOES THAT MEAN I NEED A 75 WATT AMP?

No, see the box on power for the full story.

### WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR SMALL ROOMS?

Those designed to work close to the wall will be smoother in confined spaces. Speakers that have relatively dry, tight bass will also sound better.

### WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR BIG ROOMS?

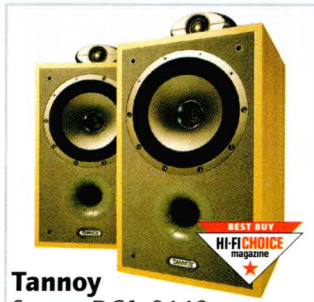
Big, efficient, easy-to-drive designs are more likely to be able to fill a room better than compact models.

### DO I NEED TO BUY CENTRE AND SURROUND CHANNELS FROM THE SAME BRAND AS MY STEREO SPEAKERS?

Yes, assuming that you're wanting to create a homogenous surround sound experience, where voices don't change when they move from one channel to another.



## TOP BUYS



**Tannoy**  
Sensys DC1 £449

A new dual-concentric main driver plus super-tweeter in a solid standmount box results in a neutral yet expressive speaker at a very tempting price.



**PMC**  
GB1 £995

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



**B&W**  
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 BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE **STEREO SPEAKERS**

### 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>										
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	ATC SCM12	999	Magnificent main driver confers great authority, grip and smoothness, though upper bass a little lean	22,39,26	A-	55		●		253
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	Epos ELS3	200	Few affordable speakers sound as clean and convincing while taking up so little real estate	18,27,19	A-	60	●			241
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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

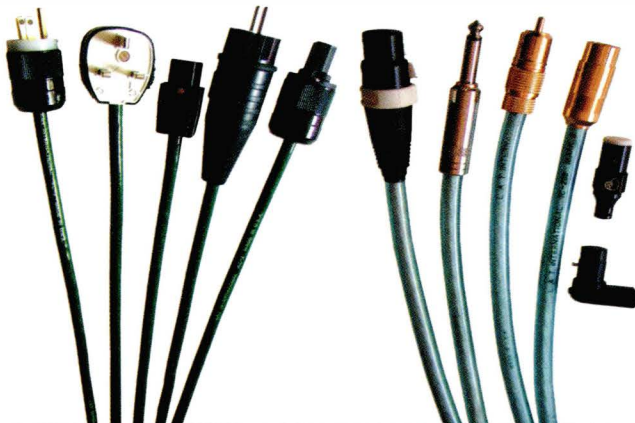
**SPECS KEY** SIZE WxHxD (CM) Width, height and depth of one cabinet in centimetres. **FLOORSTANDER** Speakers that don't require stands. **EASE OF DRIVE** How much power the amplifier needs (approximately) to drive the loudspeaker effectively. **A+** 25 watts plus **A** 50 watts plus **ACT** Active - 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).



# AUDUSA



LAT AC-2 Power cord compare with products costing ten times as much, then decide



**LAT INTERNATIONAL - USA - Mains Power, Analogue, Tonearm, Digital, Video interconnects and single and biwire Speaker cable . Silverfused wire technology, LAT cables proven better than most others at double the price**

**Bosendorfer Loudspeakers**, by the company who make, arguably the best pianos in the world. certainly the oldest piano maker - 1828



HiFi Choice  
April 2005



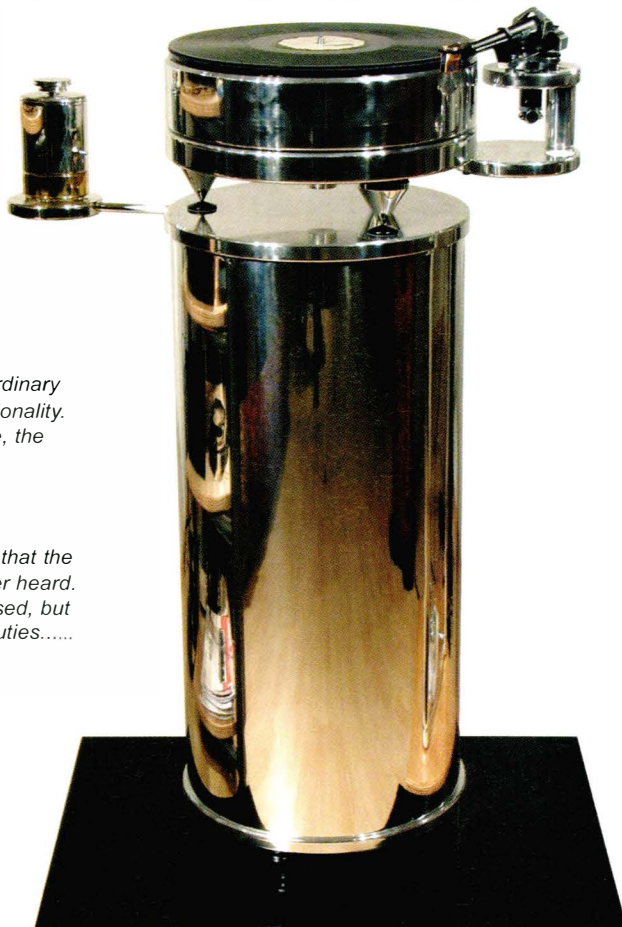
**HiFi News and Record Review** May 2005.....*The sound is extraordinary in its overall balance. The VC7's are capable of exceptionally fine detail and dimensionality. In terms of the sensible compromises, the sheer musicality and sense of being there, the VC7 is masterpiece. The Bosendorfer VC7 is for me a dream come true*

**Best Loudspeaker 2004 - 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.....*

## AUDUSA EUPEN

The world only true Ferrite technology cables - a high quality ferrite is extruded over the conductor strands. Power Cords - GNLM 5/2.5 (CSA 2.5) and GNLM 05/04. From 48 for a 1m cord terminated with an IEC and MK tough plug. Also available are the CMS Analog, Digital and Video Interconnects with RCA, XLR or BNC connectors



**Acoustic Solid**  
One to One turntable

**ACOUSTIC SOLID** Small Royal Turntable polished aluminium with 60cm aluminium platter, topped with a 6mm acrylic platter and leather mat. Features a near zero tolerance bearing. Nylon thread belt - weight 25kg, shown with Type Two stand. Available in a mat finish. One of a range of turntables made by Acoustic Solid - Germany.

**WWW.AUDUSA.COM**

**T: 020 8241 9826, 020 8264 0249 F: 020 8241 0999 E: sales@audusa.com**



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

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (WHD) (MM)	FLOORSTANDER	EDGE-OF-DRIVE	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
	ProAc Tablette Ref Eight	699	Stunning standmount with electrostatic-like imagery. Its Signature brother costs £200 more and is even better!	15,27,23	N	A+	40	●	267
	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
	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
	Tannoy Fusion 4	350	This big d'Appolito twin two-way has fine coherence and dynamics. A neutral and even all-rounder	21,97,29	●	A	20	●	255
	Tannoy Sensys DC1	449	Modest sensitivity but beautifully balanced with fine authority at a very realistic price	21,41,29		A	40	●	245
	Tannoy Eyris 1	600	Pricey but very cute standmount miniature; oddball, but has marvellous midband subtlety and delicacy	17,35,26		A+		●	227
	Tannoy Sensys DC2	649	Has impressive scale and weight with fine stereo imaging, but is also rather laid back, lacking easy agility	21,97,29	●	A	20	●	250
	Tannoy Eyris 2	999	This super-slim and cutely different-looking floorstander is very communicative, despite weak treble	17,91,26	●	A	20	●	231
	Triangle Antal ES	975	Neither pretty nor smooth but a very exuberant and involving communicator, with plenty of scale and expression	20,108,34	●	A	20	●	263
	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>									
	Acoustic Energy AE1 MkIII	1,690	Luxury miniature has a laid-back but bouncy sound, a marvellous dynamic range and very superior imaging	19,31,25		A-	30	●	251
	Acoustic Energy AE3 MkII	4,490	A beautifully neutral speaker with very wide dynamic range and superior imaging, plus lovely Art Deco styling	19,99,29	●	A	20	●	251
	Anthony Gallo Nucleus Ref	2,400	Occasionally raw, but engaging and capable beyond its physical stature	20,89,41	●	A	34	●	257
	ATC Active 10	1,269	Stylish, active powerhouses with plenty of subtlety when required (balanced connection only)	23,39,31		act	45	●	221
	ATC SCM35	1,999	If you want to hear the uncoloured truth about your record collection in all its glory, this is a speaker to treasure	23,88,30	●	A-	48	●	250
	Audio Note AN-E/LX	2,650	Though not very pretty, this is a thoroughly entertaining speaker with great dynamic subtlety and integrity	36,79,27	●	A+	22	●	256
	Audiovector Mi 3 Signature	2,320	Smooth and beautifully balanced with superb neutrality, wide dynamic range and a warm, sweet character	20,100,29	●	A-	24	●	260
	Audiovector Mi 3 Super	1,596	Dynamically very expressive, clear and intelligible voices, arguably even better value than the Signature version	20,100,29	●	A	20	●	267
	Aurum Cantus Leisure 3SE	1,200	Fabulous lacquer finish and a classy ribbon tweeter. Sounds smooth and sweet, if a touch laid back	25,40,30		A	28	●	263
	B&W 704	1,400	Cleverly tapered enclosure and external tweeter delivers superior bass and treble, with a laid-back midband	22,96,32	●	A	20	●	257
	B&W 802D	8,000	Great timing, superior dynamics and a sweet top end all enhance musical communication. Makes sweet music	37,115,56	●	A	<20	●	267
	B&W 805S	1,600	A wonderfully communicative, entertaining and subtle speaker, despite some lack of tonal richness	24,39,33		A	25	●	266
	B&W 703	2,000	Bass is immensely powerful and even, and the overall sound is lively and dynamic, though not overly smooth	23,101,36	●	A-	20	●	260
	BC Acoustique ACT-A1	1,195	Exceptional focus, dynamic coherence and expression through the voice band, but bass could be more even	21,90,33		A+	25	●	257
	Beauhorn B2.2 Revelation	3,984	Magnificent midband and fine overall balance but limited bass is best with small-scale material	34,130,75	●	A+	80	●	244
	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
	Canton Vento 809DC	1,800	Quick, lively and agile, with fine overall coherence and expressive dynamics. A thoroughly impressive allrounder	25,112,35	●	A	30	●	267
	Dali Helicon 400	3,300	Advanced drivers and enclosure give a generous sound with wide dynamic range and no boxiness	22,103,46	●	A	20	●	264
	Dynaudio Audience 82	1,460	Bulky, with vinyl finish, but offers exceptional neutrality, bass extension, power handling and loudness potential	22,106,36	●	A	30	●	229
	Dynaudio Contour S 1.4	1,850	Sound has fine mid-to-treble coherence and neutrality, though port tuning was ill-suited to our room	19,40,36		A-	28	●	260
	Eclipse TD Lulé 307/316	1,250	Extraordinary satellite plus sub solution sounds a cut above other sub/sats. Can be expanded to multichannel	12,16,16		act	40	●	247
	Focal-JMlab Micro Utopia Be	3,500	New 'Be' version is clearly an exceptional standmount, capable of revealing the innate quality of the music	25,42,5,38		A	50	●	245
	Focal-JMlab Diva Utopia Be	7,599	Lovely slimline speaker combines remarkable transparency with fine dynamics and gorgeous bass	25,110,53	●	A+	30	●	255
	Focal-JMlab Alto Utopia Be	11,000	Attractive and beautifully balanced, with fine bass alignment and focus, low coloration and very clean top end	37,121,53	●	A-	20	●	248
	Harbeth Super HL5	1,699	Looks old-fashioned, but classic monitor combines authority and transparency with good neutrality	33,64,31		A	30	●	233
	Living Voice Auditorium	1,700	Gloriously coherent and dynamic midband, though the top end is restrained and bass was uneven in our room	22,86,28	●	A-	30	●	247
	Living Voice Avatar 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



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<b>Arcam DV88</b> DVD Player S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(999.00)	<b>£349.00</b>	<b>Linn Keltik</b> Spkrs - Wal inc Aktive Cards (2Yr G/tee) (6000.00)	<b>£1795.00</b>
<b>Arcam DV89*</b> DVD-A Player New (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1299.00)	<b>£599.00</b>	<b>Naim CD-XPS</b> CD Power Supply S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(2100.00)	<b>£1375.00</b>
<b>Arcam CD82T</b> CD Player (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(619.00)	<b>£399.00</b>	<b>Naim NAC102</b> Preamp S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1175.00)	<b>£799.00</b>
<b>Arcam AVR 200</b> AV Receiver S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(799.00)	<b>£395.00</b>	<b>Naim NAC 252</b> Preamp S/H (1 Yr G/tee) . . . . .(4100.00)	<b>£2900.00</b>
<b>Arcam FMJ CD33</b> CD Player (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1349.00)	<b>£945.00</b>	<b>Naim CDX</b> CD Player S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(2470.00)	<b>£1395.00</b>
<b>Arcam FMJ AV8</b> Preamp THX Ultra (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(3149.00)	<b>£2190.00</b>	<b>Naim NAC 82</b> Preamp S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(2500.00)	<b>£1575.00</b>
<b>Arcam FMJ P7</b> 7 Channel Amplifier (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(2599.00)	<b>£1795.00</b>	<b>Naim 250</b> Power Amplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1910.00)	<b>£895.00</b>
<b>B&amp;W 703</b> Speakers - Cherry (2Yr/Gtee) . . . . .(2000.00)	<b>£1399.00</b>	<b>Naim XPS</b> Power Supply - New casework . . . . .(2100.00)	<b>£1575.00</b>
<b>B&amp;W Nautilus Signature 805</b> - Tigers Eye (2Yr/Gtee) . . . . .(2500.00)	<b>£1675.00</b>	<b>Naim NBL</b> Speakers - Beech (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(7700.00)	<b>£3795.00</b>
<b>Denon AVR 2803</b> AV Amplifier (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(649.00)	<b>£399.00</b>	<b>ProAc Studio 125</b> Speakers Maple (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(999.00)	<b>£699.00</b>
<b>Linn Ikemi</b> CD Player - Blk S/H (1Yr/Gtee) . . . . .(2200.00)	<b>£1495.00</b>	<b>Pioneer DVR3100*</b> DVD Recorder/Player (1Yr/Gtee) (349.00)	<b>£219.00</b>
<b>Linn Majik</b> Phono Amplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(945.00)	<b>£625.00</b>	<b>Sugden CD21</b> CD Player (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1049.00)	<b>£759.00</b>
<b>Linn Kairn Pro</b> Line Preamp S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1400.00)	<b>£599.00</b>	<b>Sugden A21a</b> Integrated Amplifier (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(949.00)	<b>£675.00</b>
<b>Linn Trikan</b> Centre Spkr - maple (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(549.00)	<b>£299.00</b>	<b>Sugden A21p</b> Power Amplifier (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(823.00)	<b>£575.00</b>
<b>Linn Exotik</b> Preamp S/H (2Yr/Gtee) . . . . .(1750.00)	<b>£1350.00</b>	<b>Vibe Zeta</b> SubWoofer (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(600.00)	<b>£399.00</b>



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

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				SIZE (WxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS (FRONT/2)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
	MartinLogan Mosaic	1,799	Curious hybrid construction marries many panel speaker-like attributes with moving coil simplicity	24,102,30	●	A-	46	●		257
<span>BB</span>	MartinLogan Clarity	2,498	Relatively affordable and easy to live with electrostatic hybrid with class-leading resolving power	26,135,31	●	A-	46	●		245
<span>BB</span>	Mission Elegante e83	1,990	Uncommonly clean, agile and refined floorstander, and as elegant as the name	33,111,36	●	A-	44	●		257
<span>EC</span>	Mordaunt-Short Perf 6	3,500	Revolutionary enclosure design and aspirated tweeter make for a fast, hi-res ride	24,121,37	●	A-	35	●		264
	Naim Ariva	1,275	Cute and discreet floorstander has superb bass and a wide dynamic range, but it could be smoother and sweeter	23,88,31	●	A	25		●	259
<span>EC</span>	Naim SL-2	4,995	Delivers magnificent musical analysis and communication skills in a notably discrete physical package	28,103,33	●	A-	20		●	232
<span>BB</span>	Neat Elite SE	1,499	Smooth and natural performer with notably expressive midband. Fine voice articulation and unusual sweetness	20x90x18	●	A	25	●		267
<span>EC</span>	Neat Ultimatum MFS	2,995	Wonderful five-driver standmount sounds bigger than it looks. Very spacious and informative	22,38,37		A+	25	●		241
<span>BB</span>	PMC FB1+	1,625	Nicely proportioned floorstander has a sweet top and a beautifully natural, open and restrained midband	20,100,30	●	A	20	●		260
	PMC OB1	2,450	Genuinely deep bass and lovely overall neutrality, though mid could have more tension and bass more punch	20,103,33	●	A	20	●		243
<span>EC</span>	PMC IB2	6,150	Stunning in an understated way, this speaker creeps up on you and hooks you with its transparency and power	33,74,47		A-	25	●		237
<span>EC</span>	ProAc Response D25	2,995	The traditional ProAc high-end detail mixed with greater efficiency and more pace - a splendid speaker	22,107,25	●	A+	20	●		254
	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
<span>BB</span>	Rega R9	2,498	This subtle, laid back but very informative performer has a very superior dynamic range, especially in the bass	17,103,39	●	A	20	●		256
<span>EC</span>	Revel F32	3,200	Meticulously balanced, tonally neutral design makes for a taut, well disciplined sound	22,105,39	●	B	30	●		265
<span>BB</span>	Ruark Talisman III	1,499	No bass demon, but a sophisticated and agile speaker epitomising Ruark's design ideals	22,84,31	●	A	22	●		259
<span>BB</span>	Sonus Faber Cremona A.	2,149	Standmount 'Auditor' version of the Cremona makes a soundstage bigger and better than its size suggests	19,35,32		A	48	●		246
	Spendor S6e	1,495	Combines deep, powerful bass with an attractively open midband, but perhaps too much restraint up top	30,88,19	●	A+	23	●		257
	Spendor S9e	2,895	An improvement on the original S9 - very entertaining at high levels with a fabulously open and weighty bass	24,101,38	●	A+	40	●		256
<span>EC</span>	Tannoy Dimension TD8	4,000	This stylish speaker is a splendid all-rounder, with fine dynamics, precise imaging and minimal coloration	31,86,30	●	A-	25	●		240
<span>EC</span>	Tannoy Dimension TD12	6,500	Art Deco-inspired style, plus magnificent headroom and genuine monitoring neutrality - a tour de force	42,126,41	●	A-	23	●		225
<span>EC</span>	Tannoy Yorkminster	9,000	Deliciously delicate and expressive at low listening levels, it still has massive headroom when your in the mood	62,102,45	●	A+	20	●		255
<span>BB</span>	Totem Forest	2,390	Low sensitivity but wonderfully open neutrality, at heart a beautifully communicative and musical loudspeaker	20,90,27	●	A	25	●		247
	Triangle Naia	1,900	Exciting, vivid and communicative, but also a bit untidy and uneven, the Naia is a whole lot of fun	23,119,32	●	A-	25	●		247
<span>EC</span>	Triangle Magellan Concerto	9,995	Scintillating midrange and treble, with tuneful, well-timed bass - a thoroughly engaging musical ride	28,149,34	●	A	35	●		262
<span>EC</span>	Vivid Audio B1	6,590	Impressive cabinet design combined with hi-tech drivers to make truly world class speaker	27,110,38	●	A-	40	●		261
<span>EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,000	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package	23,91,37	●	A	28	●		254
<span>EC</span>	Wilson Benesch ACT	8,400	Superb enclosure gives uncanny freedom from 'boxiness'. Well balanced, but top end might be sweeter	23,108,37	●	A	20	●		252

# 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 AV SPEAKER PACKAGES

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

### Multichannel speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				EASE OF DRIVE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>HB</b>	ATC Concept 3	4,877	Extremely engaging, revealing and musical multichannel system providing 360 degrees of full-on entertainment	A-	6	12	●	opt	255
	B&W 300 package	900	An excellent compromise between the requirements of music and those of home cinema (inc. subwoofer)	A	6	27	●		241
<b>HB</b>	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
<b>HB</b>	KEF Q AV7	1,300	With latest Uni-Q refinements, this system is astonishingly accomplished and amazing value	A+	5	35	●		232
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>HB</b>	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 walls. **CLOSE TO WALL** The speakers will work best when up against a wall (but avoid corners).

## Our favourite SUBWOOFERS

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

### Bass speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				SIZE (WxHxD (cm))	POWER (W)	BASS FROM (Hz)	ISSUE NUMBER
	B&W PV1	950	Gorgeously styled sub shakes the air but not the floor, delivering a very clean sound with negligible coloration	29,34,35	500	20	259
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>HB</b>	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
<b>HB</b>	REL Strata 5	700	Highly musical sub that integrates well but the REL Stampede offers near-identical performance for less money	32,46,33	150	18	257
	REL Storm III	900	Excellent sub with powerful, detailed and deep bass. Comprehensive facilities, including flexible filter adjustment	42,62,33	150	18	225
	REL Storm 5	1,000	Well engineered, good bass depth, appropriate for mixed hi-fi & home cinema/multichannel systems	34,52,37	200	15	267
<b>EC</b>	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...?*

### **Do you live in GUILDFORD...?**

.....or Addlestone, Aldershot, Ashford(Middx), Ashstead, Bagshot, Basingstoke, Bracknell, Bookham, Bramley, Camberley, Chertsey, Chipstead, Chobham, Cobham, Cranleigh, Crowthorne, Dorking, Epsom, Esher, Farnborough, Farnham, Fleet, Frimley, Godalming, Hartley Wintney, Hampton, Haslemere, Hook, Horsham, Kingston, Liphook, Leatherhead, Liss, Molesey (East&West), New Malden, Odiham, Petersfield, Reading, Reigate, Redhill, Richmond, Shepperton, Virginia Water, Walton-on-Thames, West Byfleet, Weybridge, Windsor, Woking, Wokingham, Yateley .

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

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

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

DVD players: Arcam & **FMJ**, **Cyrus**, Denon, Harman Kardon, Meridian, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**, Yamaha,  
Processors: **Arcam FMJ AV8**, **Cyrus**, **Lexicon**, Linn, Meridian, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**.

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

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

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

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

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

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# HEADPHONES

*For your ears only*



Headphones come in several varieties and some are designed for particular usage. The majority of 'cans' use dynamic cone and coil-type drive units and can be used with anything from a personal stereo to a dedicated amplifier. Other types also exist, most significantly electrostatics that use a charged panel membrane to produce a distinctly refined sound. These are supplied with their own dedicated amplifiers, which tends to increase the price.

Cans are split into several types. There are open and closed-back designs, the latter being best for noisy (or noise sensitive) environments as they minimise leakage and intrusion. Open-back types tend to have a more open, less 'in-head' sound. There are also three variants of earpad design: circumaurals enclose the ear and press on your head, supra-aurals press on

the ear and intra-aurals sit in the ear and are particularly popular with personal stereo users.

### Getting the best from your cans

Getting a good result with headphones is not quite as straightforward as it should be. Merely plugging them into the output on your CD player or amp will not give particularly engaging results unless you are very lucky. If you are planning on serious listening, invest in a dedicated amp – the increase in dynamics is not in the least bit subtle. A variety of models are made and prices start at around £80 for a QED, a little more for designs from, say, Creek or Musical Fidelity. And if you're really into cans, look up the valve-powered Earmax.

## Our favourite HEADPHONES

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Stereo headphones

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS							
				ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT (g)	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR	ISSUE NUMBER
	AKG K44	20	Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed: a bargain			●		●	190	●	219
	AKG K270 Studio	129	Pro oriented design which is very transparent and great with acoustic material			●		●	270		230
	AKG K1000	600	Neutral, analytical and completely out of the head sound, suitable for connection to speaker outputs only					●	270		244
	Audio Technica ATH-D40fs	105	Detailed and involving sound with a professional 'studio' quality appeal			●		●	250		194
	Beyerdynamic DT990	160	Impeccable balance, very extended bass and treble, and bags of detail place this model ahead of the pack			●	●		250	●	245
	Grado SR-60	90	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste		●			●	200	●	194
	Grado SR-80	110	Not perhaps as neutral as some but they communicate well and that's the point of the exercise		●			●	200	●	230
	Philips HP890	70	A remarkably sophisticated and very comfortable headphone			●	●		330	●	219
	Sennheiser HD595	150	Technology from upmarket HD650 model makes this a very revealing headphone that's also extremely comfortable			●	●		270	●	266
	Sennheiser HD650	300	Astonishing resolution and hardly less impressive tonal balance make this a true hi-fi experience			●	●		260	●	252
	Sony MDR-CD480	40	Generally neutral and nicely detailed – comfortable too			●	●		250	●	219
	Stax SRS-2020 Basic Sys. II	349	Luxury option at its price, but the sound delivery is five-star quality all the way	●		●	●		295	●	205

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

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## Don't let them ban the Blue Murder Sale

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You don't need to take to the streets, just get down to the High Street, New Malden before 4th June. It could be your last chance to meet up with other hi-fi enthusiasts and enjoy famous brands at famously-low prices.

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Some of the brands in our sale: Acoustic Energy (AE), Acoustic Solid, Anthony Gallo, Apollo, Arcam, Arcam FMJ, Atacama, Audiovector, Beyer, Bosendorfer, Boston, Bryston, B&W, Cable Talk, Celestion, Cerwin Vega, Chord, Chord Cables, Denon, Denon Gold, Ecosse, Heybrook, Insert Audio, IXOS, JAMO, JBL, KEF, KEF Reference, Koetsu, LAT, Lexicon, Marantz, Marantz Premium, Morduant Short (MS), Michell, Mission, Musical Fidelity, NAD, Nakamichi, Nordost, Optimum, Ortofon, Panasonic, Parasound, Pioneer, PMC, Polk, Primare, ProAc, Project, Pure, QED, Quad, REL, Roksan, Rotel, Sennheiser, Shure, SME, Sonus Faber, Sonus Systems, Sony, Soundstyle, Spendor, Stands Unique, Stax, Sunfire, Supra, Tag McLaren, Talk Electronics, Tannoy, Target, Teac, Technics, Threshold Audio, Thule, VDH, Wilson Benesch, Yamaha.



# 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

			SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER		
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER		SILVER	DIGITAL CABLE TYPE
<b>INTERCONNECTS AND SPEAKER CABLES</b>									
<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
	Chord Company Chorus	200	Very even-handed balance with notably extended bass						259
	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 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
	Wyrewizard Spellbinder	5.50	Sold off the reel, this entry level cable is a surprisingly purist performer, lean yet powerful, with good detail resolution.						267
<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 Fram	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	240

## 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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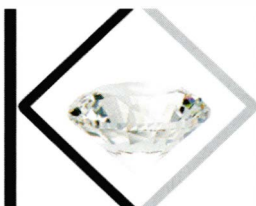
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### Scotland

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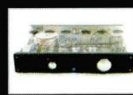
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Full-range available for demonstration.



### Musical Fidelity kW Series

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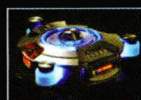
### Living Voice

The Auditorium series comprises three D'apollito designs. Simple, elegant, book-matched cabinets house performance that exceeds the expectations of the most discerning music lover. Each models performance is well beyond it's respective pricepoint.

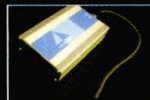
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### Shanling

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



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### Vertex AQ cables

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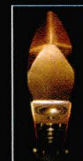
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### Wadia

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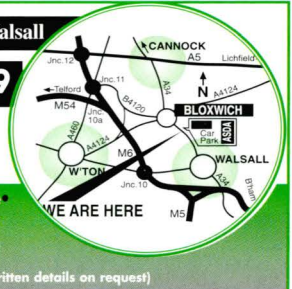
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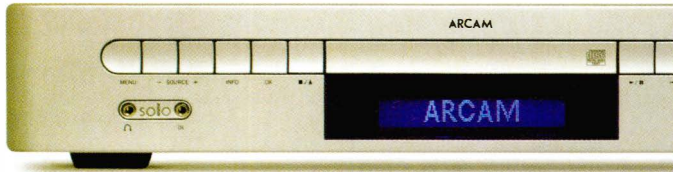


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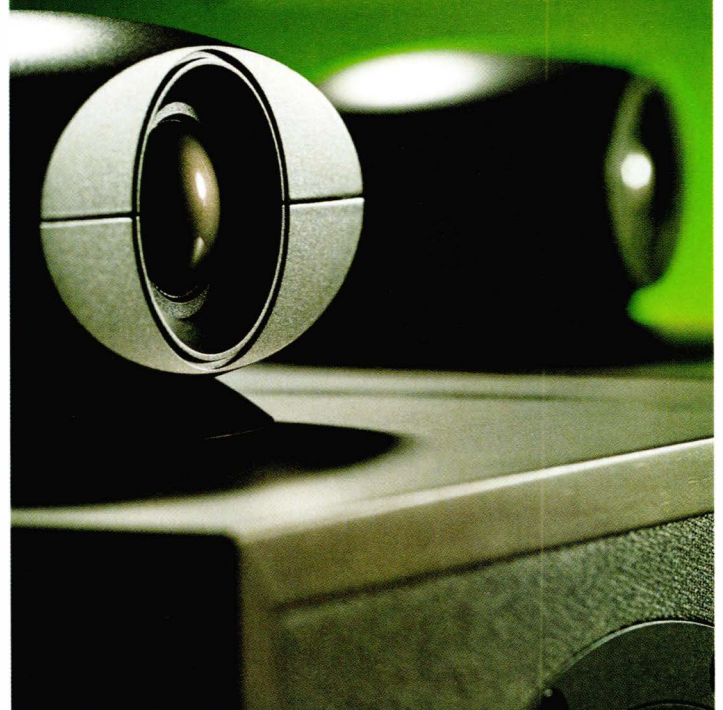
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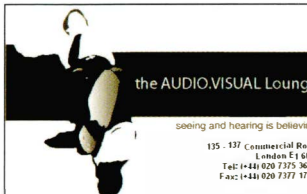
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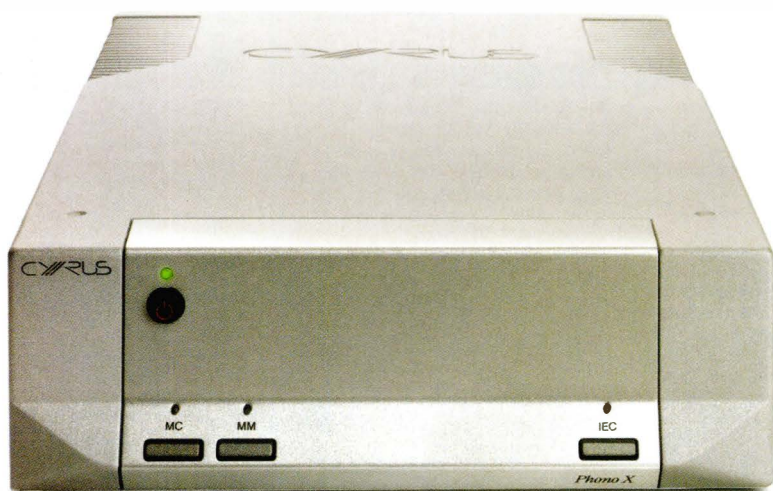
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# Next month...

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- ▶ Unison Research Unico 200 amplifier

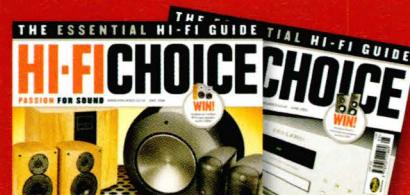
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# A-Z GUIDE TO SECOND-HAND KIT

## #10 GARRARD

**A**lthough Garrard made a number of turntables in the latter part of the last century, it's the 301 and 401 models that stand out. Launched in 1954, the 301 quickly became the benchmark of its time. It was the first turntable to be able to play all three speeds (78, 45 and 33.3rpm) on one chassis – hence the name, 301. It survived its near 15-year production run with few changes; early on, the chassis colour changed from grey to white, and the bearing housing was modified to use oil instead of grease.

Released in 1965, the 401 was effectively a 301 in a sharper suit. Technically, the changes comprised the fitting of a strobe light and there were improvements to the motor's magnet screening. The eddy current brake was also more substantial, offering greater speed adjustment. Sadly, by the beginning of the 1970s, the quality of the 401 began to slip. The charcoal silk finish was changed for an 'avant-garde' matt brown, and the strobe was simplified. By 1977, it was (strobe) lights out for the 401.

During the 1980s many 301/401s were shipped to Japan, and it wasn't until the early 1990s when Garrard's home market realised what an under-rated deck this was, thanks to the enthusiasm of the likes of Terry O'Sullivan of Loricraft Audio. A well set-up 301/401 should give rock-solid dynamics, smear-free resolution and amazing bass extension. It may not be as detailed as more modern decks, but the differences are not that vast, really.

And so to buying. Well, not to put to fine a point on it, buy with care! Despite its age, the 301/401 has proved to be remarkably robust, but a poorly looked after example or, worse still, a poorly restored one, can prove to be more trouble than it's worth. If you're unsure, then this is one occasion when I wouldn't recommend buying blind on an Internet auction site, but to go to a specialist instead. Prices start from around £100 for a tatty example and can go up to well over £1,000 for



Above: Shindo Labs' modified Garrard 301

**“A well set-up 301/401 should give rock-solid dynamics and amazing bass extension.”**

the best, SME arm-equipped ones. Bear in mind that, unlike more modern decks, the 301/401 are simply chassis units and, therefore, require a plinth. Contemporary plinths, usually by SME, actually sound pretty rosey, but there are some excellent modern designs around that will truly transform the sound. If you're looking at a higher priced 301/401 then look for plinths by companies such as Loricraft (who still make the Garrard 501/601), Martin Bastin and Slate Audio. Shindo Labs' – imported by Nick Besley of The Emporium – takes things a stage further with a plinth, new bearing and arm, sporting a customised Ortofon SPU cartridge.

The Garrard's condition is more important than age but, all things being equal, our pick

would probably be an early (grey) 401, fitted to a modern plinth. Reliability is rarely a problem, but rumble can be. This is often blamed on the rubber edged idler wheel, but is actually more likely to come from the eddy current braking system. The problem with this is at normal (45/33.3rpm) speeds, the brake is still half applied! There are upgrades that can easily eradicate this problem, and by speaking to either Loricraft or Martin Bastin, your 301/401 can soon be silenced. For such an old design, parts are freely available and this is one piece of vintage hi-fi that can be bought with long-term confidence. Get a good one and prepare to be stunned! **HFC**

Dominic Todd  
Next month – Linn

## DIY CORNER SPEAKERS

Part 10 Drive units – Introducing diaphragms

**L**ast month, we mentioned the various material used to create the cone diaphragms that are almost universally used by bass and bass/mid drive units.

The prime requirement for the diaphragm is that it should follow the motion of the voice coil as accurately as possible. This is easier said than done.

In the bass, the diaphragm acts almost like an air-pump, moving to and fro through a significant excursion 20-times a second. Up around the crossover point, the vibration rate is around 3,000 'excursions' per second, although the cone travel is minimal, and it behaves more like a drum skin. It's therefore

pretty clear that the diaphragm needs to be both very light and very stiff.

A cone shape is inherently stiffer than a flat disc. A variety of different material and construction techniques are used for diaphragms, and this is a key factor that manufacturers use to differentiate their particular products from rivals, and often has much to do with a third factor.

This concerns the way a diaphragm ultimately breaks up. Stiffness is ideal at low frequencies, but at the top end of the operating band, it can be more of a liability, as the stiffer the diaphragm, the sharper and more uncontrolled its ultimate break-up is



likely to be. Even if this occurs outside the normal operating band, it can still be audible, as crossover slopes are not steep. Next month, we'll look more closely at this. **HFC**

Paul Messenger

### DIY CONTACTS

**FALCON ACOUSTICS** ☎ 01493 751100  
🌐 [www.falcon-acoustics.co.uk](http://www.falcon-acoustics.co.uk)

**WILMSLOW AUDIO** ☎ 01455 286603  
🌐 [www.wilmslow-audio.co.uk](http://www.wilmslow-audio.co.uk)

**IPL ACOUSTICS** ☎ 01271 867439  
🌐 [www.iplacoustics.co.uk](http://www.iplacoustics.co.uk)

**NEXT MONTH:** Diaphragm materials



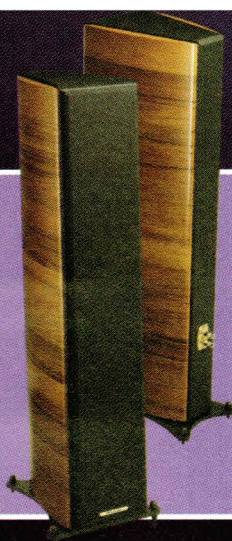
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AUDIO RESEARCH M300 MK2 MONOBLOCKS	£3,250	£12,000
AUDIO RESEARCH LS2B PREAMP	£850	£2,750
AUDIO NOTE AN-SPX 2.7 METRE SPEAKER CABLE	£895	£2,500
BAT VK51 SE PREAMP	£4,250	£8,000
BEARD P35 MK2 POWERAMP	£595	£N/A
BEARD CA35 PREAMP	£395	£N/A
CEC TL-2X BELT DRIVE CD TRANSPORT	£1,200	£2,500
CLASSE CAV150 6 CHANNEL POWERAMP	£1,500	£3,600
GAMUT CD2	£1,500	£3,000
GRAHAM MODEL 2 TONEARM [boxed as new]	£1,100	£1,900
JEFF ROWLAND CONCENTRA MK2 [BOXED AS NEW]	£3,500	£7,500
LINN SONDEK LP12/ITTOK/ASAK	£625	£N/A
LINN SONDEK LP12/EKOS/TROIKA	£1,000	£3,500
NAIM 101/SNAPS PSU	£495	£N/A
NORDOST 1 METRE VALHALLA DIGITAL INTERC	£800	£1,400
PS AUDIO CLASSIC 250 POWERAMP	£1,800	£4,500
SD ACOUSTICS SD1 SPEAKERS	£450	£N/A
SONUS FABER MUSICA INTEGRATED AMP	£1,500	£2,995
SPI ALBA TURNTABLE	£7,000	£15,000
TOWNSHEND ELITE ROCK/EXCALIBUR/MERLIN PSU/PLINTH/LID	£900	£N/A
TUBE TECHNOLOGY GENESIS MONOBLOCKS	£1,600	£4,500
AMPHION XENON SPEAKERS [AS NEW]	£1,800	£2,400
AUDIO RESEARCH CLASSIC 120 MONOBLOCKS	£2,400	£8,000
AUDIO RESEARCH VT150 MONOBLOCKS	£2,995	£14,000
AUDIO RESEARCH VT200 mk2	£5,995	£12,000
AUDIO RESEARCH LS25 PRE	£2,500	£5,000
AUDIONOTE TT3 + SPLIT PHASE PSU	£1,200	£2,000+
ALON MK4s	£1,200	£3,500
BAT VK 60	£1,700	£4,500
BAT VK6200 POWERAMP	£2,200	£4,750
CAT ULTIMATE PRE	£2,950	£6,500
CARTRIDGEMAN MUSICMAKER CARTRIDGE	£275	£575
CONRAD JOHNSON PREMIER 8A MONOS	£7,995	£16,000
CONRAD JOHNSON 17LS MK2 PREAMP	£2,750	£5,300
CONRAD JOHNSON PREMIER 10 PREAMP	£995	£3,500

CONRAD JOHNSON PREMIER 11	£1,600	£3,750
CONRAD JOHNSON PV8 PREAMP	£500	£2,000
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EAR 509 mk1 MONOBLOCKS	£895	£N/A
EXPOSURE 17 [pre] 18 [monoblocks] AS NEW	£1,000	A£2,200
EXPOSURE SUPER 18 POWERAMP	£350	£800
EXPOSURE SUPER 21 PREAMP	£300	£800
EXPOSURE SUPER 15 INTEGRATED	£295	£800
GOERTZ AG3 DIVINITY SPKR CABLE 4metres X2	£1,000	£5,000
JEFF ROWLAND SYNERGY PREAMP	£1,900	£5,500
KEF REFERENCE 2s	£800	£N/A
KHAMA CERAMIQUE CE3s	£1,800	£5,000
LONDON SUPERGOLD S3 CARTRIDGE	£300	£695
LINN SONDEK LP12/ITTOK/KHARMA	£595	£N/A
LINN SONDEK LP12/BASIK PLUS	£450	£N/A
LUMLEY ST70 VALVE POWERAMP	£650	£2,450
MARANTZ MA24 MONOBLOCKS	£1,200	£2,800
MARANTZ CD12	£1,200	£N/A
MARK LEVINSON ML380 PREAMP	£1,700	£4,500
MICHELL ALECTO MONOBLOCKS	£895	£2,000
MUSICAL FIDELITY A370 MK2	£900	£N/A
MUSICAL FIDELITY DVD 1	£850	£1,500
NAIM NAP90/NAC62K PRE/POWER	£295	£1,200
NAIM NAIT 3 INTERGRATED	£325	£N/A
PLINIUS ODEON 5 CHANNEL AMP	£3,200	£4,000
QUAD ESL57s	£400	£N/A
REFERENCE 3A DE CAPOS	£995	£2,500
REFERENCE 3A ROYAL VIRTUOSOS	£2,200	£4,400
REL Q200E SUB	£425	£650
SONIC FRONTIERS CD1 TRANSPORT	£2,500	£7,000
SONUS FABER CONCERTO HOME [PIANO BLACK]	£650	£1,200
SPENDOR LS35A SPEAKERS [15 OHM]	£550	£N/A
TOM EVANS THE GROOVE PLUS	£2,650	£3,850
TOM EVANS THE VIBE/PULSE PSU	£3,250	£4,800
TRANSPARENT ULTRA 6M PAIR	£1,000	£3,200
VINCENT SV238 [integrated amp 200 wpc]	£850	£1,795
VTL 85 VALVE POWER AMP	£850	£1,850

## new products

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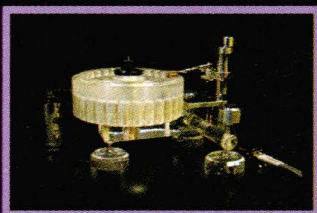
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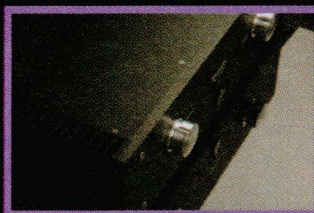


The Delphi is a remarkably handsome work of art. Clearly a refinement over its predecessors, the new MkV is engineered to a level that the industry is invited to emulate.

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Lamm ML2 Monos. Unusual second hand find. 2000	£13500	£24000
Lamm LP2 Deluxe phono amp. 2004 with 100 hours	£2800	£5995
Living Voice Avatar OBX-R2. Maple. 10 months old	£2900	£4000
Living Voice Auditorium II. Cherry. 1 year old	£1000	£1700
Nottingham Analogue Mentor with SME V	£2300	£4300
dCS Verdi, Elgar 2, Purcell (serviced by dCS)	£11250	£22500
dCS as above but with Verona master clock	£16000	£26500
Supratak Cortese pre-amp. December 2003, 10 hours use	£2500	£4000
Living Voice Avatar. Cherry. 1 year old	£1900	£2700
Goldmund Eidos 18 SACD/CD/DVD transport		ring for details
Audio Research Reference 600 monos. 3 man lift welding kit	£10000	Lots
EMM Meitner DCC2. 3 months old	£5000	£9500
Acustik Lab Stella Extremus super tweeters. 20 hours use	£1000	£2000
Nagra PLP line/phono pre-amp. 100 hours use	£4500	£7500
Reussenzehn V8 amplifier. 2003 with 10 hours use	£2750	£5200
Sophia Electric 300B SET monos. 2004 with 50 hours	£2000	£4000
Viva Linea pre-amp. 20 hours use	£3300	£6600
Viva 845 30 watt monos. 20 hours use	£6500	£12000
Wyetech Labs Topaz 572 15 watt stereo amp. 2004 with 10 hours use	£4750	£9500
Art Audio Carissa 15 watt 845 SE stereo. 10 hours use	£2500	£3500
Art Audio PX25 5 watt SE stereo. 15 hours use	£3000	£4000
Audio Pax Model 88 monos. 18 months old with 30 hours use	£5500	£8000
Acapella Plasma tweeter - pair. 2 hours use!	£1500	£2500
Canary 303 300B push/pull monos. Lovely sound, big and beefy	£3500	£7250
Canary 309 300B parallel push/pull monos. Lovely, beefy, nearly new	£4500	£10000
Canary 801 line pre-amp. In very nice condition	£2250	£4500
Sugden A21 integrated amp with phono stage. Modern classic	£700	£1050
Aloia 2-box line pre-amp. Rare, boxed, perfect condition	£1200	£2800
Art Audio PX25 power amp. Flea power ideal for horn users	£2000	£4500
TEAD Micro Groove standard. MC phono stage 0.8mv/1k	£300	£450
Eastern Electric Mini Max. Valve rectified line pre-amp. New, boxed	£400	£800
Melos 509 balanced input monster valve amp. 10 years old	£1500	Lots
Art Audio Concerto 6550 Class A power amp, 30 watts. 5 years old	£1400	£2600
Border Patrol P21 nearly new	£4500	£5400
Border Patrol Control Unit line pre-amp. Very, very nearly new	£1250	£1750
Croft Essence OTL. Just serviced by Croft. 4 years old	£1200	£2500
van den Hul Colibri XPM (4mv). New and boxed	£1900	£3000
van den Hul Colibre XCM (0.6mv). New and boxed	£1900	£3000
Audio Note UK Zero pre-amp	£600	
SME Model 10. New. Sealed box. Excess stock	£2450	£2750
Living Voice Auditorium Mk1. Walnut. 7 years old	£850	£1500
Rega RB300. New, boxed. Excess stock	£130	£170
Mark Levinson 383 integrated	£3000	£6000

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Mark Levinson No360s DAC S/H	7500	2999
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Clearaudio Victory MC New&Boxed	1030	699
Conrad Johnson EV1 Valve Phonostage S/H	1500	995
Dynavector XV15 200hrs S/H	2900	1699
Dynavector SX2 MC Cartridge 100hrs S/H	950	679
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Jeff Rowland Model10 Power Amplifier S/H	7300	3299
Krell KA3000 Integrated S/H	7300	1299
Krell KSA250 Stereo Power Amplifier S/H	6599	1999
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Naim NAP180 S/H	1189	599
Pathos Model One V2 Hybrid Integrated S/H	1295	799
Red Rose Sprit Integrated x-demo	1000	649
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JM Lab Micro Utopia Anigre with Stands S/H	3999	1699
JM Lab Micro Utopia be with stands S/H	4400	2995
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JM Lab Sib XL x5 Grey S/H	1000	650
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Quad ESL 63 Brown just serviced with stands S/H	N/A	1499
Quad ESL57 Black with 1 thing stands S/H	N/A	599
Rega ELA Cherry X-demo	749	579
BCD Engineering 1m UK-IEC Main cable x-demo	99	69
Cardas Neutral Reference 1m RCA-BNC S/H	550	375
Elemental Audio Speaker Stands Special Edition 21 S/H	1599	549
Finite Elemente Pagode E21 Amplifier Stand S/H	299	179
Madrigal MDC 2 1m Fatboy Digital cable new boxed	319	159
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Roksan Kandy MKIII (Current spec) silver or black ex-dem	£450
Roksan Caspian M series CD player 6 months old, boxed as new £1100	£695
Chord DAC 64. Boxed, manual, 1 owner	£1395
Heart CD 6000, boxed	£495
Audio Analogue Paganini, boxed	£475
Audio Analogue Maestro, boxed, ex-dem	£850
Meridian 508/24, as new	£895
Primare D30.2, boxed	£895
Sony SC1 SACD player	£1795
Marantz SA-1 SACD player, one owner	£2495
Musical Fidelity NuVista CD	£1695
Electrocompaniet EMC1 24/192 boxed as new	£1295
Unison Research Unico, as new	£865
Krell KFS 20 cd player, Legendary and extremely rare £10k new	£2995
Musical Fidelity A3.2 CD player, boxed as new	£549

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Musical Fidelity A300cr power amplifier, one owner, boxed as new	£895
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Audio Physic Tempo3i SE, new boxed, Cherry or light maple, new £2599	£1799
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JM Lab Micro Utopia be with stands	£1995
Audio Physic Utopia III Cherry	£2895
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Wilson Benesch Actor	£2295
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Triangle Antal 202 - best buy award	£595
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### Analogue

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Nottingham Analogue Spacedec	£695
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Ruark Equinox - ex, boxed, beautiful monster standmount	899
Spendor Prelude - ex, boxed	199
Spendor BC1 - scruffy but fully functional	119
Tandberg Studio Monitor - Ex, large standmount	329
TDL Studio 1 - vgc, wood finish transmission line	249
Triangle Tilius 202 - good, boxed	119
Vienna Acoustics Strauss - ex, stunning floorstanders in beech	2249
Warfedale Pacific P30 - nr mint, boxed, light chery, excellent	299
<b>Tuners and Tape</b>	
Cyrus Original Mission tuner - vgc	79
Nakamichi BX125 - ex, boxed	99
Nakamichi 1.5 - vgc, black	125
Nakamichi CR4E - vgc, black	425
Nakamichi FM2 - vgc, just back from QUAD	149
Quad RT02 - ex display, boxed, silver	249
Rotel DTFM - gc, rare, matches A48mk3 etc	199
Sugden STG1000 - ex, v rare DAB tuner	399
<b>Systems, cables and miscellaneous</b>	
Beyer DTR8 - ex, dem	149
B&O 2200 system - ex, turntable, tape and tuner, inc, speakers	199
JPW 204/200/208 - 5.1 Speakerpackage new bargain, save over £200!	299
QUAD 67/66/66/606 - ex, CDT/Tuner/Pre/Power with system remote	1449
QUAD X-1000R - nr mint, beautiful reel to reel engineering at its best	599

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COMMISSION SALES TOO!



# READER CLASSIFIED

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,

remembering to include your name, phone number and home town or county. The simplest way to send your ad is via email – send to: [dan.george@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:dan.george@futurenet.co.uk). Or mail to: **Reader Classified, Hi-Fi Choice, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP**. Please note that this service is open to private advertisers only.

## FOR SALE

**APOLLO FIVE TIER** equipment rack in smoked glass with pine posts and spiked feet, (£350) £150. 01302 739976 (Doncaster).

**ARCAM P75 PLUS** power amps (x2), silver, boxed mint (£375), £219 each. B&W 602 speakers, black, bi-wireable, £119. Could deliver East/West Midlands. 0115 960 3934 (Notts).

**ATC 50SL ACTIVE** loudspeakers, burr walnut finish, stands, still under warranty. Perfect, £5,350 (no boxes). ATC 20SL active tower loudspeakers rosewood finish, perfect condition, £3,650. Arcam FMJ CD23T silver, £650. Chris 07850 836337 or email [cris\\_morrin@yahoo.com](mailto:cris_morrin@yahoo.com) (Herts).

**AUDIOLAB 8000Q** preamp, vg condition, £600. Quad FM3 tuner £50. 07905 762363 (Putney).

**AUDIOLAB 8000C** preamp. (1998, F serial) mint, 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 LCRC** centre speaker, perfect condition, cherry. 01225 443163 (Bath)

**B&W NAUTILUS 804s**, red cherry, as new in original boxes, manual and spikes, (£3,500) £1,650 ovno. Pick up recommended but can ship within UK (additional). 020 8488 0175 (SE London).

**CHORD DAC64**, mint, £1,250. 020 8473 6997 (London).

**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).

**DENSEN XS** CD player (£2,500), Gizmo Remote (£200), £1,350. QED Silver Spiral interconnect, £45. Russ Andrews Classic Powerchord, £30. Audiosource powerport six way mains filter, (£350) £180. Offers, Chris 07854 704163 (Sheffield).

**DYNAUDIO BARGAINS!** Special 25, new in Masser Birch £2,000. 1.4s new, £1,000. Also Audience 42s, 52s and 82s. 01732 741883 (Kent).

**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 with original packaging. 07801 368455 or email [m00d@boltblue.com](mailto:m00d@boltblue.com) (London).

**FREE GRADO SR-60** headphones with Meridian 504 FM tuner, (£795) £400 ono. J Kempster 020 7536 0466 (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:kenyon@wanadoo.fr) (Herts).

**IMPULSE H2** floorstanding horn loaded speakers. Awesome dynamics, high sensitivity (94dB), (£2,250) £690. Pair of Robertson 4010 amps, one needs attention, offers. Marantz CD63, £40. 07974 274615 (Yorks).

**INTERESTED IN A MARANTZ PM66SE** amplifier? Award winner, mint, boxed, £50. 01732 886860 (Kent).

**JM LAB ELEKTRA 905**, three-way standmount, cherry, bi-wireable, wonderful condition, (£1,250) £550 ovno. 07795 552220 (Birmingham). ☐

## WANTED

**CYRUS PSX-R** silver in good working order. For details call 07977 185216 (Kent).

**DENON DRM 790R** cassette recorder. Details 01684 573607 (Worcestershire).

**KENWOOD L-1000 M** stereo power amp (circa 1991) £400 ono. 256087 (Stoke-on-Trent).

**KRELL FPB 300/200** or Gamut/Sirius D200. Interconnect and speaker cable from Transparent, Kimber Select or Cardas. 07973 220663 (Leicester).

**MARANTZ CD-84**, gold, vgc, will pay excellent price. 07745 804320 (Cams).

**MERIDIAN 502** preamp must be in excellent condition, will pay reasonable price. 07715 555214 (London).

**MITCHELL GYRODEC** or SE. Good condition please. Mr Hartley 01469 540255 (North Lincolnshire).

**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).

Below: Musical Fidelity X-Series components



## BUYING TIPS

Buying second-hand can be a great way to pick up a bargain. A formerly expensive second-hand component might well prove a better long-term bet than a brand-new product if the price is right.

Do some research on which brands have a good service back-up, so if something does go wrong, you can get it fixed. Unless you purchase from a dealer, you're unlikely to get any warranty, so it's up to you to ensure the fitness of any gear that you buy.

Usually, speakers should be less prone to breakdown than amps, and amps should be more reliable than CD players. But any abused component could be trouble – have a proper dem, and judge the seller as well as the goods!



**FOR SALE**

**KEF MODEL 4** speakers, excellent condition, £1,200. Lexicon MC1 processor, £1,500. Parasound HCA2205a poweramp, £900. Call for more 07879 456452 (Aberdare)  
**KEF REFERENCE MODEL 3.2** in Rosetta Burr, £999. TDM34DS Dipole Surround Black, £280. Celestion A6s sub black, £280, vgc. John 01634 238110 (Kent)  
**KEF Q3s** boxed as new, £140. 07976 054660 (Reading).  
**KRELL KSL** preamp. Excellent condition classic. Can be seen working. Bargain for a Krell at £450. Ken 07917 021328 (Cambridgeshire).  
**LFO** integrated amp, £200 01438 743807 (Herts).  
**LINN KANS** and stands, B&W DM601S2 surrounds, B&W CC6 centre, REL Q150 subwoofer, all in black ash finish, and excellent condition, £300. 0161 788 7597 after 6pm (Manchester).  
**LINN LP12 SONDEK**, Ion systems power amp. Luxman CD player, Sony cassette, Armstrong tuner. Housed in luxury made to measure mahogany cabinet. Pair Ruark Talisman speakers, £1,250 01323 729073 (Sussex).  
**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 PM8200** amp, (£500) £200. Prestige condition 07903 6133418 (London).  
**MERIDIAN 500** transport and Musical Fidelity A324 192k upsampling DAC and Chord Company Prodac cable, £800. 01438 743807 (Herts).  
**MICHELL TRANSCRIPTOR** Hydraulic Reference Turntable, Alphason Opal Arm, new belt, new turntable oil, wonderful condition, £750 ono. Simon 01765 698492 eves (N.Yorks.)  
**MICROMEGA STAGE 2** CD player, near mint but slight skip, (£700) £50. 01672 519358 (Wilts)  
**MUSICAL FIDELITY A220** Class A integrated amplifier, piano black, boxed, instructions, superb condition, £450. 020 7223 8589 (London)  
**MUSICAL FIDELITY X-10v3** tube buffer. Limited edition, mint and boxed. Sensible offers please. John 07855 121587 (W.Yorks)  
**MUSICAL FIDELITY X-Ray V3** CD player, £600. Musical Fidelity A3.2CD power amp, £550. Please call Terry 020 8482 0363 (Enfield)  
**MUSICAL FIDELITY E600** CD player, balanced outputs, piano gloss fascia, oak cone feet, excellent sound quality, £175. Dali SWA12 subwoofer, unboxed, unused, £225. Rega EL8 floorstanders, black ash, £95. Andrew, office hours 020 7663 1264 (Romford)

**NAIM NAIT 3** £300. Quad 77 CD, £100. 01732 741883 (Kent)  
**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 inc. Revelation Audio Cryo silver cables, £995. 020 8205 4710 eves (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-601 ES £75. Dynaudio Audience 60, black, £175. All excellent condition. Call Vic 01372 454451 (Surrey).  
**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)  
**REL STADIUM 111** subwoofer, HFC Editors Choice. Rosenut finish, immaculate with all original packaging, £995. VDH teatrac bi-wire speaker cable, four metre pair, £100. Sam 01630 647580 eves (Shrops/Cheshire).  
**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).  
**ROTEL RA01**, Arcam CD62, Monitor Audio Silver1s, Black Rhodium AST cable, QED interconnect, Atacama Nexus 6 custom stand, many CDs, £750 ono or separately (good offers) Sven 0117 9604640 (Bristol)  
**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)  
**RUARK EQUINOX** speakers with dedicated stands, £675 ono. Micromega Tempo 2 amplifier, Stage 4 CD player, FM tuner, £475 ono. Excellent condition superb sound, will consider swop. 023 8073 8935 (Hants).  
**RUSS ANDREWS** 0.5m Crystal Cu interconnects (x7), £25 a pair. Kimber 0.5m DV-75 digital interconnect, £25. Shaun 07835 836565 (Swindon)  
**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).  
**SONY DTC1000ES DAT** tape deck, semi-pro, no longer used. Excellent condition bargain at just £250. Steve 07973 334623 (W.Mids)  
**SUGDEN A21A** amplifier, £600, also A21A power amp, £600. Both mint condition. Buy both for £1,100. 0161 226 6125 or 07961 427777 (Manchester).  
**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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LINN

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## For Sale

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### PERFORMANCE MULTI-CHANNEL MUSIC/HOME THEATRE SYSTEM

containing four components, all virtually brand new, complete with original packaging & manufacturer's warranties: high-fidelity CD player, DVD (Audio & Video) player, SACD player and a comprehensive AV processor. **A bargain at £2,995 the lot.** (Same price as the Linn UNIDISK SC player I've replaced them with). For more info/specs etc... phone 0500 888909 and ask for Ivor. I'm also open to offers for my rather attractive multi-shelf equipment rack.

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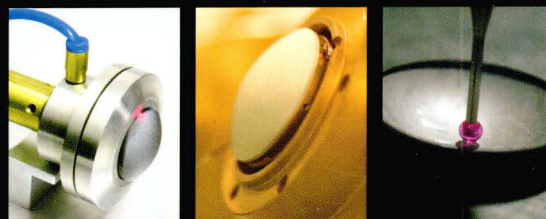
**The New UNIDISK SC** universal disc player with integrated surround sound processing and control. A complete pitch-accurate source and control component from the leaders in true-convergence technology. For more information or to arrange a demonstration e-mail [helpline@linn.co.uk](mailto:helpline@linn.co.uk) or call us on 0500 888909.

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**B&W** Bowers & Wilkins

## The new B&W 800 Series Diamond Tweeter Technology



> RELEASED

The mark of a truly great tweeter – one that can release all the vivid detail in your music – is what's called 'perfect piston behaviour'. As long as the tweeter dome is vibrating rigidly, like a piston, its delivery will be accurate. The higher the frequency, though, the harder that becomes. The materials most resistant to 'break-up' combine lightness and stiffness. And there's one that does that better than anything else on earth.

The new B&W 800 Series feature tweeter domes of pure, ultra-hard diamond. It may seem extravagant, but nothing gets closer to the behaviour of a hypothetical 'perfect tweeter' – one with infinite stiffness. Our diamond dome carries on vibrating like a piston well beyond the range of human hearing, and delivers audible sound with unheard-of clarity.

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