

HI-FI CHOICE

PASSION FOR SOUND WWW.HIFICHOICE.CO.UK | SUMMER 2005



WIN!

Arcam's brilliant Solo one-box hi-fi system See page 26

EXCLUSIVE TESTS

X-RATED AMP

Seductive Pathos is dressed to thrill – in stereo or surround



WORLD'S FIRST REVIEW

Sonus Faber's latest speaker – Italian luxury at a price you can afford



DIGITAL DREAM

Best sounding universal player yet – see p48



HOT CANS

New Grado delivers headphone heaven

+BUYER'S BIBLE



The world's best hi-fi – rated by our experts

ULTIMATE GROUP TEST >> CD PLAYERS

FEATURING

- > Audio Analogue Paganini
- > Consonance Ref CD2.2
- > Cyrus CD8x
- > Myryad MXC6000
- > Primare CD31
- > Shanling CD-T100C



SUMMER 2005



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WELCOME TO HI-FI CHOICE

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



"Music digs deep into our emotional core like no other art form. It touches the soul and makes grown men weep. Hi-fi is simply a means to a musical end – it provides the conduit for its energy and detail, delivers scale and space, ensures you get closer to the tone and impact of the original performance. It makes music seem more real and hence achieve its emotional goal. Quite simply, the music that moves you, moves you more." Tim Bower, Editor



PAUL MESSENGER

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



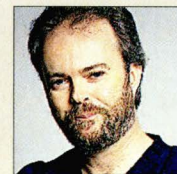
DAN GEORGE

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



ALVIN GOLD

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



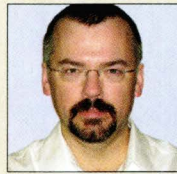
DAVID VIVIAN

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



RICHARD BLACK

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



ART DUDLEY

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



JASON KENNEDY

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



ALAN SIRCOM

After a stint selling hi-fi, Alan began his journalistic career at *HFC* some 13 years ago. Now a successful freelancer, you too can benefit from his extensive hi-fi knowledge, from purist two-channel stereo to the latest multichannel gear.

ESTABLISHED 1975

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



HIGHLIGHTS INSIDE >>

ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

Six top CD players priced from £900 to £1,700 are put before the *HFC* judges. Which gets probation, which gets the life sentence?

DOMUS DULCIS DOMUS

Can Sonus Faber's new Concerto speakers make your house a Latin home, sweet home?

IMPULS BUYING

Phonosophie is one of the few to offer an upgradable CD player. Is it worth the cost?

MORE JOY OF 'X'

Last issue, we had X-rated products from Cyrus and Elac, now Pathos joins the club...

AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...

The next issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* is on sale 28 July. Don't miss a thing – see p74 for our latest great subscription offer!



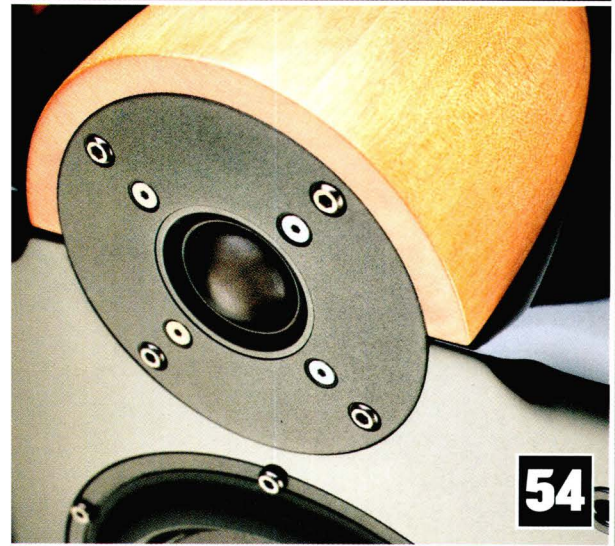
50



34



48



54



56

Contents

NEWS AND FEATURES

7 HI-FI CHOICE TEST DISC

Tune up your system... and your ears!

9 PRODUCT NEWS

The juiciest new fruit from the hi-fi tree

14 HAPPENINGS

Hot stories and events from Planet Hi-Fi

16 DISPATCHES

Opinion from hi-fi's top commentators

22 ESSENTIALS

Hot hi-fi accessories – tested just for you

25 INTERVIEW

Contemporary jazz maestros EST

26 COMPETITION

Win Arcam's compact and stylish Solo CD/DAB receiver worth £1,000

28 CHOICE CUTS

New music – rated by our experts for sound and content

31 CHOICE MAIL

A selection of your letters and emails

34 BEAUTIFUL SYSTEMS

A high-end set-up of genuine sonic beauty... This issue: big, beautiful sounds from Primare and Revel

EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH PRODUCT TESTS

40 Pathos Cinema-X multichannel amp

44 Sonus Faber Concerto Domus loudspeaker

48 Townshend TA 565 CD universal disc player

50 Densen Beat B-250 preamplifier and B-350 monoblock power amps

54 Usher Compass CP-6381 loudspeaker

56 Phonosophie Impuls 1.5 CD player

59 Sumiko Blue Point Special Evo III phono cartridge

61 Grado SR325i headphones

ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

CD PLAYERS £900-£1,700

64 Audio Analogue Paganini 192/24

65 Consonance Reference CD2.2

67 Cyrus CD8x

68 Myryad MXC6000

69 Primare CD31

71 Shanling CD-T100C

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

80 CD players

82 DVD players

84 Vinyl

87 Radio tuners

88 Digital recorders

AMPLIFIERS

96 Stereo amps

98 AV amps

LOUDSPEAKERS

100 Stereo speakers

104 AV speaker packages

ANCILLARIES

107 Headphones

109 Cables

111 Stands and supports

READER SERVICES

Our regular information service, including where to buy, how to get a back issue and our brilliant hi-fi accessories shop

74 How to subscribe

77 Back issues

113 Glossary

115 Choice Bits accessories shop

116 Dealer Guide

120 Dealer Directory

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



FREE MINI-MAG!

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

2 A-Z Guide to 2nd-hand kit – this issue, Marantz, plus DIY tips

3 Trading Pages

7 Reader Classified

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.....



B1
£7,750



K1
£10,750



VIVID audio

UK Authorised Distributor:

Rowles Music Limited, 3 Marlborough Road, Lancing Business Park, Lancing, Sussex, BN15 8UF. Tel 01903 530005 Mob 07950 274224

ray@rowlesmusic.co.uk www.vividspeakers.com



HI-FI CHOICE System Tune-Up Disc

Welcome to this, the first disc of its kind to be offered by a UK magazine. We're sure you will find it useful for a full range of burn-in, warm-up and demagnetisation functions on your system. Developed in consultation with the boffins

behind Isotek's *Full System Enhancer & Rejuvenation Disc*, and also borrowing from the *Ultimate Stereo Hearing and Equipment Refresher CD* (developed by HFC's own Richard Black), this unique sampler features the latest ideas in efficient system optimisation.



The disc is divided into three distinct sections. **Part One** is based on the Isotek disc, which uses a variety of signals to perform an ordered sequence of functions on the equipment. Here, we've separated the functions to make it clear which one does what and to help explain the thinking behind Isotek's disc. They're somewhat simplified and don't cover quite the same frequency range, but they are still surprisingly effective.

Track 1, 'Wavelets', combines electronic 'bumps' with a unique kind of noise to give equipment a thorough work-out, useful for burning in and reviving equipment. At the start is some noise alone: this is designed to set the playback level, so that this signal is not uncomfortable to listen to.

Track 2, 'Chirps', performs a somewhat similar function to track one, but this time

using chirps – very fast frequency sweeps. For illustration, these start slow and get quicker. This stresses the equipment in a useful way.

Track 3, 'Isotek Noise'. There are many different kinds of noise, and Isotek developed one with a unique 'Probability Distribution Function', which provides maximum exercise for replay equipment. This track switches between 'normal' noise and Isotek's own noise at the same peak level – the Isotek sounds much louder. The noise then fades gently.

Track 4, 'Warm-down', is a much gentler kind of electronic exercise, analogous to warming down your muscles after strenuous exercise in the gym.

Track 5, 'Demagnetisation', uses the usual idea of signals that fade progressively from a high initial level, with added noise and frequency sweeping for maximum effect.

Part Two is taken from the USHER disc, with tracks for hearing improvement, equipment tweaking and analysis.

Track 6, 'Hearing refresher', progressively filters the slow movement of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Violin Sonata* (played by Wilson Collins and Richard Black, from Musaeus MZCD101) to remove most of the bass. This forces the ear/brain to listen more attentively to higher frequencies. At the end, return to the start of the track – we bet you'll hear more detail!

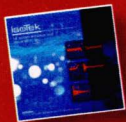
Tracks 7, 8 and 9 test the imaging of your system. Track seven, **'Blumlein'**, uses accurately simulated Blumlein miking and the image of the castanets should move progressively from left to right. Track eight uses Richard Black's **'OMS'** miking technique and the sound should go in a complete circle. Track nine duplicates track seven on headphones.

Track 10, 'Speaker shakedown', uses low-frequency tones to exercise loudspeaker cones. Level setting is critical and the first section of the track has spoken and illustrated instructions on how to do this.

Tracks 11 and 12 feature **'Pure'** and **'Noisy'** frequency sweeps to help you trace rattles etc. in your speakers and listening room. The sweeps cover ten octaves, from 20Hz to 20,480Hz, at exactly 12 seconds per octave.

Part Three is a single track, developed exclusively for this disc – a novel burn-in derived from real musical sounds, in this case heavily modified chords on a piano. The basic idea behind this was to create a burn-in signal that's not quite so hideous to hear as a purely electronic one. We think it's very effective – send us your feedback!

Complete your tune-up!



The Isotek *Full System Enhancer & Rejuvenation Disc* features more comprehensive versions of the signals in Tracks 1-5, in versions for 'normal' and 'large' loudspeakers, plus a quick daily equipment warm-up. For more information, go to: www.isoteksystems.com



The USHER CD likewise has more fully developed versions of the hearing improvement track, plus various other test and analytical tones including fine-resolution imaging tracks. For further information, visit: www.musaeus.co.uk

Both discs are available from Choice Bits, *Hi-Fi Choice's* accessories shop, priced at £14.95 each. ☎ www.choicebits.co.uk ☎ 0870 240 7228. Or, simply turn to p115!

SPECIAL OFFER!

IF YOU BUY BOTH DISCS FROM CHOICE BITS, YOU'LL RECEIVE A STUNNING 30% DISCOUNT! TURN TO PAGE 115 FOR DETAILS.

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DALI IKON 6 LOUDSPEAKER

Next month brings a world exclusive review of Dali's new Ikon 6 from the Danish marque's colossal loudspeaker line up. Ikon is all about real-world affordability with technology passed down from its upmarket big brothers.

Take the hybrid tweeter, for instance: evolved from the Euphonia and Helicon models, it combines a conventional soft dome with a ribbon unit offering extension beyond 30kHz. The Ikon 6 also takes

advantage of in-house manufactured 160mm paper/fibre bass units that are said to be both ultra stiff and low mass.

Each speaker weighs in at an impressive 18.6kg and early tests indicate there's nothing lightweight about the sound, either. The 6 is the first model to arrive from the all-new Ikon line up, which features a variety of models, all with similar voicing.

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

PRODUCT Dali Ikon 6

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £899

KEY FEATURES Hybrid soft dome/ribbon tweeter

• In-house bass/mid drivers • Two and a half way design • 150 watts handling • Bi-wirable

CONTACT ☎ 07990 528790 🌐 www.dali.dk

**"THIS MACHINE IS PURE AUDIO RESEARCH:
HIGH-END, THOROUGHbred AND UTTERLY MUSICAL."**

DECEMBER 04 / HI FI NEWS / CD3MKII / KEN KESSLER

ARC ANGELS

"SOUNDS ARE PRODUCED FROM AN UNSHAKABLE FOUNDATION... YOU FEEL LIKE YOU COULD TRIP OVER THE MUSICIAN"

ISSUE 37 / HI FI PLUS / CD3MKII / ALAN SIRCOM

"THERE IS SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT THEIR SIMPLE 1950'S STYLING; THEIR USE OF VALVES AND THEIR UNDOUBTED ABILITY TO PRODUCE MUSICAL SOUNDS THAT MAKES THE PRODUCT EXTREMELY DESIRABLE."

JUL/AUG 04 / YOUR GUIDE TO HI FI AND HOME CINEMA / SP16 / STAN CURTIS

"A SUPERB ALL-ROUNDER AND AN OBVIOUS BEST BUY"

THE COLLECTION 04 / HI FI CHOICE / VM220 / ALAN SIRCOM

"OUTSTANDING SOUND QUALITY AND EXCEPTIONAL EASE OF USE"

ISSUE 35 / HI FI PLUS / PH5 / JIMMY HUGHES



AUDIO RESEARCH REF 3

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 VS155 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.

Now, there is new inspiration. Joining these classics is the most radical product yet to wear the AudioResearch logo: the Reference 3 preamplifier. An absence of conventional controls, refined circuitry, better sound.

The bloodline strengthens.

For details of the full range and your nearest dealer, contact Absolute Sounds.

Audio Research: not a cautious choice, but a considered one.



AUDIO RESEARCH VM220



AUDIO RESEARCH CD 3 MK2

audio research
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www.absolutesounds.com info@absolutesounds.com





NAD C555 TURNTABLE

After a brief spell away from the record playing world, NAD is back with a new budget turntable, sporting a 'rigid plinth' design concept. The idea, apparently, is to keep all of the deck's elements in perfect alignment, so that the maximum amount of energy may be captured from the record itself. Similarities to a certain classic Rega design are no coincidence...

Non-resonant MDF material is used for the belt-driven platter, which spins on a precision

steel bearing. The package includes a pre-mounted Goldring Elektra MM cartridge, a Perspex dust cover and specially designed isolation feet. A large-diameter cast tonearm is matched to the cartridge and features a magnetic anti-skate compensator for improved tracking. Looks like the C555 could give Pro-Ject and Goldring a run for their money in the budget turntable department...

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

PRODUCT NAD C555

TYPE Turntable, arm and cartridge

PRICE £250

KEY FEATURES Package includes Goldring Elektra MM cartridge • 'Rigid plinth' design • Perspex dust cover • Large-diameter cast tonearm

CONTACT 01908 319360
www.nadelectronics.com

NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS



MICROMEGA COMPONENT RANGE

The French Micromega brand is back in the UK, courtesy of new distributor Shadow. It will offer Micromega's complete product line-up, which includes two CD players, three stereo integrated amplifiers and a number of preamp/processor and power amp options. There are also two upmarket products that form the brand's Reference range: an SACD player and DVD-Video player, available at £2,800 apiece. Shadow is in the process of setting up a UK dealer chain for Micromega and plans to offer a 30 day money-back guarantee across the range.

Price From £349 to £2,800 **Due** now
 ☎ 01592 744779 www.micromega.co.uk



MARANTZ SA-15S1 AND PM-15S1

Marantz is expanding its 15-Series line-up of Premium products with the launch of a new SACD player and integrated stereo amplifier to join the existing TT-15 turntable. The SA-15S1 stereo SACD player descends from the flagship SA-1 and uses a number of bespoke components, plus a conventional Crystal CS DAC.

The matching 90-watt PM-15S1 amplifier uses a current feedback design, enabling it to drive a variety of speakers with ease and features choke inputs in the power supply section. An MM/MC phono stage is included with a Wolfson chip taking care of volume control. The usual Marantz refinements have also been cast upon the duo, including gold plated terminals, shielded circuits and independent power supplies. An FM tuner is expected later in the year to complete the line up.

Price £1,200 each **Due** now
 ☎ 01753 680868 www.marantz.com



ARCAM FMJ CD36 AND C31

Arcam has updated its top-end CD player and preamp, with the new products said to offer the best performance from the brand's portfolio. The CD36 CD player and C31 preamp share a number of proprietary features, including a new Acousteel damped chassis to minimize damaging vibration and four-layer PCBs.

The CD36 also includes a re-engineered power supply and control electronics, plus four upsampling Wolfson DACs, and is claimed to feature extremely low jitter. The C31 preamp is a 'clean-sweep' design and sports five line inputs, an optional phono stage and a Burr Brown electronic volume control.

Price FMJ CD36 £1,400; FMJ C31 £1,200 **Due** now
 ☎ 01223 203200 www.arcam.co.uk



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 740C AND 740A

September sees the launch of Cambridge Audio's new upmarket Azur range. The budget specialist hi-fi and home cinema brand will assault the stereo middle market with the new Azur 740C CD player and 740A stereo integrated amplifier. These flagship products will feature a number of proprietary technologies, including ATF (Adaptive Time Filtering) upsampling for the CD player and XD amp technology for the 200-watt 740A – providing Class A operation at lower levels and Class B power economy at higher levels.

The 740C CD player also includes a 32-Bit Analog Devices 'Black Fin' DSP in dual mono DAC configuration, rather than the commonly used D-to-A convertor and filter arrangement. Data is upsampled to 24-bit/384kHz before conversion and provision for two external sources is available from the twin digital inputs. Both products use a bespoke chassis with a 7mm aluminium faceplate and come with a slimline remote control plus a choice of silver or black finish.

Price £500 each **Due** September
 ☎ 0870 900 1000 www.cambridgeaudio.com





CLEARAUDIO AMBIENT

➤ Clearaudio's new Ambient turntable is based on a revolutionary composite material called Panzerholz that is claimed to offer ideal mechanical and acoustic properties. The material, said to be incredibly dense and acoustically dead is formed by compressing fine layers of wood and resin which are then sandwiched between two machined aluminium plates. The Ambient is available with the new Satisfy Carbon Directwire tonearm – a twin-axis unit with a carbon fibre shaft. The arm also features Clearaudio's Directwire cable from the impedance-matched cartridge pins to the phono plugs. See next month's *Hi-Fi Choice* for an exclusive review.

Price Ambient turntable £2,228; Satisfy Carbon Directwire tonearm £555 **Due** now

☎ 01252 702705 🌐 www.clearaudio.de

➤ Soundbites



WYREWIZARD has produced new digital cables for connecting products that sport the latest AV interfaces, HDMI and DVI. The cables use OFC conductors and gold plated plugs and cost £85 for a one metre length, plus £10 per additional metre increment.

☎ 01352 730251

SOUNDSTYLE has released a new range of wood/glass equipment supports called Finewoods. The supports are available in two widths – 600mm (£280) and 1200mm (£380), with end pieces finished in real wood. The wood disguises a metal frame which supports the three glass shelves.

☎ 01279 501111

AKAI's new ADR-5800Di DVD recorder offers massive value at just £150. The multiformat recorder is compatible with both DVD-R/RW and DVD+R/RW and offers playback of 18 disc formats – but not SACD and DVD-A.

☎ 020 7887 7780

SONY's new solid-state Network Walkmans are set to rival Apple's slinky Shuffle portable. The players offer 512MB and 1GB of storage and an impressive 50-hour battery life. The four models support MP3, ATRAC 3, WMA and WAV files. A quick charge facility offers three hours battery life from just a three minute charge using a home PC's USB port.

☎ 08705 111999

TCI has unleashed the Boa Constrictor Reference Powerlead – its new flagship mains cable. Prices start at £480 for a 1.5 metre lead, which features 26 silver-plated copper alloy cores in a braided construction with PTFE insulation.

☎ 07710 196949



ISOTEK NOVA

➤ Mains power specialist IsoTek has launched a new mains filtering device specifically designed for source components. The Nova features adaptive gating circuits to provide ideal conditions for every component and offers six individually filtered outlets. IsoTek suggests using the Nova in conjunction with its Titan filter for the ultimate performance, although Nova's massive 3.68kW capability may be adequate for an entire system. The product comes with a 25-year guarantee and weighs in at 20kg.

Price £1,495 **Due** now

☎ 01635 291357 🌐 www.isoteksystems.com



EPOS ELS 303

➤ Epos has launched a new floorstanding speaker that has been developed from the standmount ELS 3. It uses the Epos Soft Tweeter and Lightening 130 midrange unit, with a new 130mm bass woofer based around the same chassis. Both drivers are mounted into a narrow 150mm baffle, which is said to improve treble imaging. The speaker has the same footprint as the smaller standmount ELS 3 but comes with an MDF plinth to increase stability. Provision is made at the rear for bi-wiring.

Price £400 per pair **Due** now

☎ 01442 260146

🌐 www.epos-acoustics.com



ALR JORDAN RANGE

➤ Loudspeakers from German manufacturer ALR Jordan are to be widely available in the UK, thanks to a new distribution deal from Uberphon Limited. Although previously obtainable on these shores with limited availability, all models from ALR Jordan's three complete ranges – Entry, Classic and Note – will now be available for the first time in the UK. The line-up includes both hi-fi and home cinema models with speakers at every price point, including the high end. All speakers are hand assembled in Germany and come with an international five-year guarantee.

Price From £250 to £7,300 per pair **Due** now

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The Insider

THIS MONTH, HFC TALKS TO...

MAX TOWNSHEND
Job Title: **Proprietor**
Company: **Townshend Audio**



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

A two, six or eight channel remote-controlled volume control with multi-tapped transformers wound with Enhanced DCT copper wire.

What's the future of hi-fi?

It's bleak for two channel stereo, but high-resolution surround will ensure that music may again be prime entertainment in the home.

DVD-Audio or SACD - and why?

They are both cosmic. I've waited fifty years for the sound of the master tape in my home and here it is. What makes me cry is those people in our industry and the press who are hell-bent on killing high-resolution off - Luddites, who in the process are killing off hi-fi itself.

CD or vinyl - and why?

I used to think vinyl, but I have heard CD replay recently that vinyl simply wouldn't be able to beat. And I can demonstrate it. Just ask.

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

Our complete system, comprising multichannel high-resolution surround sound with the option of high-definition, big-screen TV/Blue-Ray/HD-DVD and, of course, vinyl.

Hi-Fi Diary

SEPTEMBER

23-25 **The Hi-Fi and Home Entertainment Show**
The Renaissance and Park Inn hotels, Heathrow, London
020 8515 2151
London's best-established hi-fi show

OCTOBER

29-30 **Home Entertainment Show**
Renaissance Hotel, Manchester
01206 391001
A premier hi-fi and home cinema event in the north of England

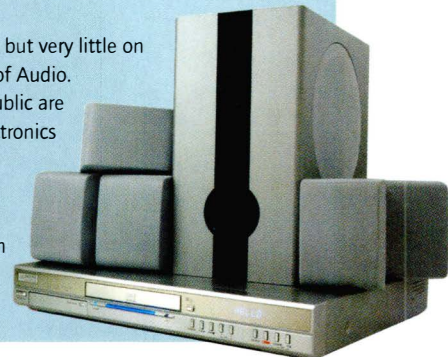
NOVEMBER

4-6 **What Hi-Fi Sound and Vision Show 2005**
Novotel, London
020 8267 8378
Third year for this new London show

Big telly, bad sound

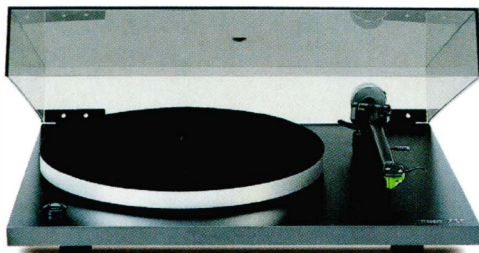
Many are missing out by spending big money on a plasma screen but very little on a sound system to go with it, according to the British Federation of Audio. BFA chairman Stephen Harris says: "It's a real shame that the general public are sacrificing the true cinematic and musical experience by not buying electronics and speakers of a matching quality to the TVs they buy".

What's more, trends in the US suggest that more of us are listening to music than has previously been the case. The Consumer Electronics Association's online 'Audio Consumption Study' indicates that more than 90% of adults reported listening to music in the past year. Now all we have to do is teach them that quality is as important as quantity!



P2 retires

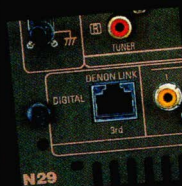
One of the UK's longest running budget turntables is retiring. Rega has decided to stop making its P2 (formerly the Planar 2) entry-level turntable, which first appeared thirty years ago. The reason cited is that Rega's dealers are concentrating on the other models in its range, including the popular P3 and impressive P7. The P2 has also effectively been replaced by models which Rega makes for Goldring and NAD, which are based on the P2 design and sold complete with a fitted cartridge. We have favourably reviewed both Goldring turntables and next month will be turning our attention to the NAD's new C555.



The third link

Denon has announced that the third edition of its Denon Link has been officially licensed for SACD. Roger Batchelor from Denon UK claims the two-way digital connection between players and processors is "faster than any other digital connection" currently on the market. Denon Link 3 provides a 1.2GB/s transmission rate that triples the speed offered by i.Link and is claimed to be jitter free.

Multichannel Denon amplifiers purchased in the last year already feature a DL3 ready RJ45 connector. Denon will be offering the option to upgrade existing DL2-equipped players to DL3, but it has not yet established whether the upgrade will be free of charge, as was the case when the move was made from DL1 to DL2. New players featuring DL3 are likely to be available in the late summer.



Does anyone recycle hi-fi?

The British Federation of Audio is continuing to pressure the Government to make the cost of the forthcoming WEEE (waste electrical and electronic equipment) recycling directive a visible fee like VAT. The WEEE levy will be based on market share and product weight.



Manufacturers, distributors and importers will be liable not only for the cost of recycling the goods they produce, but also need to provide for the collection, treatment and environmentally sound disposal of all separately collected household WEEE in proportion to their current market share. So, if you take your antique Rogers speakers back to a retailer, for example, current hi-fi manufacturers will have to pay for their disposal.

At present, it's not known how much this is likely to add to the cost of hi-fi components, but the BFA's view is that the burden will be shared between the industry and consumers. The WEEE directive is now due to come into force in January 2006, six months later than originally planned.

Download fidelity

Red Rose's Mark Levinson has got together with recording engineer Richard Burwen to produce the Burwen Bobcat, which consists of a software plug-in for Windows Media Player 10 and a USB DAC. The purpose of the product is to enhance the sound of MP3 music, the claim being that it makes 128kbps downloads sound as good as CD. A US retail price of around \$1,500 is predicted.



If you'd rather get better quality downloads in the first place, MusicGiants (www.musicgiants.com) could be the answer. It claims to be the "first company to offer high-fidelity downloads" and is offering music files at exceptionally high bitrates (between 470 and 1,100kbps) for \$1.29 per track, plus a \$50 per year subscription fee. MusicGiants also claims to be the only company licensed by all of the major record companies to sell lossless downloads, which is why it's not too concerned that its system is not naturally compatible with the Apple iPod. Its aim is to offer the best sound from an online catalogue that has an emphasis on classical and jazz music.

JIMMY'S TWEAKS #33

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



True High Fidelity

In its strictest truest sense, High Fidelity refers to the faithful and accurate reproduction of sound. Not necessarily a sound that's enjoyable, impressive, pleasing or beguiling – though it could (and probably will) be all of those things too – but truthful and correct, neither adding nor subtracting from the original.

Trouble is, it's becoming harder and harder to hear pure natural unamplified music, as even buskers in the street use small PA systems! That's why it's valuable to acquaint yourself with live natural sound – from a solo acoustic guitar, a piano, or even a drum kit. It's akin to knowing how freshly squeezed orange juice tastes compared with the stuff you get in cartons!

TOP 10 BEST ALBUMS AS VOTED BY CHANNEL 4 VIEWERS

- 1 **Radiohead** OK Computer
- 2 **U2** The Joshua Tree
- 3 **Nirvana** Nevermind
- 4 **Michael Jackson** Thriller
- 5 **Pink Floyd** Dark Side of the Moon
- 6 **Oasis** Definitely Maybe
- 7 **The Beatles** Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band
- 8 **Madonna** Like a Prayer
- 9 **Guns and Roses** Appetite For Destruction
- 10 **The Beatles** Revolver



New Music

IN THE STUDIO

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



NEIL YOUNG

Title: tbc

Release date: autumn

After recent surgery on a brain aneurysm, Young has made a swift recovery and was back in a Nashville studio within weeks, recording the follow-up to 2003's *Greendale*. With longtime collaborators keyboardist Spooner Oldham and pedal steel guitarist Ben Keith on board, expect a mellow, country-tinged collection.



have been urging him to do for years – an all-acoustic cut, spotlighting his emotive voice and accomplished guitar picking.

GOLDFRAPP

Title: *Supernature*

Release date: August

Goldfrapp follow 2003's acclaimed *Black Cherry* with a collection which singer Alison Goldfrapp describes as "an electronic glam cross between Berlin, New York and north-east Somerset", where people "dance with spirits and howl like beasts wearing Lycra and stilettos."

SUPER FURRY ANIMALS

Title: *Love Kraft*

Release date: August

Singer Gruff Rhys has returned to the studio with the SFAs after his first solo album. One song is about a chicken crossing the road and getting hit by a meteorite. "It didn't look up and that's the moral," Rhys says.

DAVID GRAY

Title: tbc

Release date: September

The singer-songwriter whose *White Ladder* carried him to the top is back, now backed by a rocking, full-on band. "It's less intimate but the melodies and lyrics are some of the best he's ever written," says an insider.

ALSO COMING SOON

JAZZ/ CLASSICAL

Boulez/ Chéreau Wagner: Ring Cycle (Jul), **Shaham/ Söllscher** Schubert for Two (Jul), **Various** Jazz In Paris (Jul), **Michael Galasso** High Lines (Jul)

SACD/ DVD-AUDIO

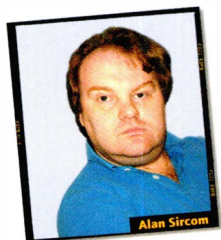
Sir Adrian Boult Beethoven: Symphony No. 6 (DualDisc, Jun), **Jonathan McEuen** One Step Ahead (DVD-A, Jun), **Patrick Zimmerli** Phoenix (SACD, Jun), **Alexander Dmitriev Shostakovich:** Symphony No. 7 (SACD, Jun)

RICHARD THOMPSON

Title: *Front Parlour Ballads*

Release date: August

The veteran former Fairport Convention man has finally done what many of his fans



Alan Sircom

Copy conundrum

Piracy protection vs. people power in France

The consumer electronics world, it seems, is not without its sense of irony. Just as anti-piracy expert Macrovision develops code to plug yet another gap in DVD's copy-protection arsenal, so an appellate court in France rules against copy-protection in its entirety. It seems the French like saying 'non' a lot right now.

DVD had reasonable copy-protection from the outset. There are anti-piracy measures to effectively prevent people from recording DVD in the digital or analogue domain.

Unfortunately for big business, just as there are smart people trying to prevent the recording of discs, there are an even larger number of similarly smart people trying to crack the code used to prevent recording. And,

“It seems that the bellicose egalité of the French courts has paid off for the little guy. How Hollywood will react remains to be seen.”

so far, the crackers and hackers have won, and anyone with a PC and a bit of computer nous can download software to make perfect digital copies of copy-protected discs.

It's five years since the last great code cracking, but Macrovision has recently announced RipGuard, a stronger form of copy-protection designed to prevent DVD ripping and peer-to-peer online piracy. RipGuard is said to work with 'nearly all' current DVD players, although there are concerns that the geek-chummy Linux operating system will be unable to support it. But, as you might imagine, RipGuard has strong support from Hollywood and as such the code is expected to be included on discs by the end of the year.

But, by then, copy-protection could be outlawed, in Europe at least. Several countries across Europe (most notably Germany and France, two of the largest software consuming countries in the EU) include laws guaranteeing

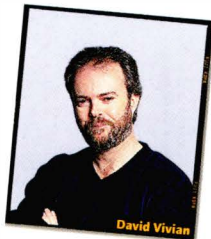
the right of a consumer to make copies of recordings for private use. This comparatively obscure law has come back to haunt the software companies in France, as UFC-Que Choisir (a French consumer protection organisation) has successfully sued for a French citizen's right to transfer *Mulholland Drive* from DVD to videotape. After the ruling went against the software company at the Paris Court of Appeal, DVD vendors across the country had to remove copies of *Mulholland Drive* on DVD. The discs violate French consumer protection laws, which state that vendors should clearly indicate the essential characteristics of the disc. As the DVD sleeve only says 'CP' ('copy prohibited') in small print, this was taken as an insufficiently explicit warning of the disc's copy-protected nature.

This single ruling could have dramatic implications across hi-fi and home cinema. It effectively outlaws any draconian forms of copy-protection, unless clearly marked as

being in contravention of the rights of the individual in several key countries. Ultimately, RipGuard may not have been cracked (unlike the CSS system that is currently in use), but it may not be strictly legal, unless heavily flagged on the front of protected discs.

Normally, my distrust of the upper echelons of jurisprudence is such that I think the whole cabal could be effectively replaced by a monkey in a top hat, but it seems that the bellicose *egalité* of the French courts has paid off for the little guy. How Hollywood will react remains to be seen; perhaps it's back to Freedom Fries for the West Coast lawyers.

Alan Sircom began his journalistic career at HFC some 14 years ago. He has since become one of the hi-fi and AV industry's most respected scribes



Obsession

Hi-fi doesn't whisper the name... Calvin Klein

Obsession isn't just a perfume. It's what you see when hi-fi enthusiasts (maybe us, possibly our friends) get the bit between the teeth. I believe this column has already confronted the 'single track mind', the person who plays just one cut from one record or CD over and over again while incrementally tweaking the system.

Now we move to the other end of the evolutionary scale and the human jukebox. More gregarious by nature, these are people who like to share the joy of music with anyone and everyone. You get to hear the lot in under ten minutes: the opening bass drone from *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, the cannons from the 1812, a Keith Moon drum solo, a Diana Krall breath sound, four bars of silence, Queen's classic *Bohemian Rap...* Each 6.3 seconds carefully chosen to illustrate a particular facet of their system... Richter scale bass response, tree-cracking transients, thermal imaging, dog worrying treble and the hiss-free noise floor. 'HJs' play air guitars, transparent keyboards, invisible drums, wear high quality trainers and knee pads and have more stamina than most triathlon champions.

Even a catalogue of samples, however, is preferable to that singing sensation you get ▶

R

RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

ARCAM ALPHA 9
CD PLAYER



Arcam did not make its reputation with technological overkill, rather with easy on the ear voicing, good engineering and strong backup. It is a formula that has served Arcam (formerly A&R Cambridge) well over the years, but at some point Arcam realised that in a technology-rich environment, it could not rest on nice-sounding laurels. The company needed to innovate to expand, and it needed to expand just to survive.

Arcam was the first British manufacturer to sign up for all the CD technology and manufacturing licences, a considerable financial investment at the time. This allowed them to roll their own players at a time when others were in effect badging or modifying other people's hardware. There is nothing wrong with modifying other players – many brands do this with some considerable success, though in the early days the players were not always very distinctive. By building its own players, though, Arcam had a head-start on many of its rivals.

By 1998 or thereabouts, the market had become polarised into multibit and bitstream proponents, neither of which at the time offered a working solution that minimised the problems associated with the two technologies. Bitstream conversion, which in its simplest form processes just one bit at a time, with high-speed oversampling and noise shaping to reduce the inherently poor noise performance, is susceptible to clock errors, or jitter. Multibit conversion processes all 16 bits in parallel, reducing susceptibility to clock errors, but relies on a very accurate relationship between the different current sources, which in a 16 bit converter requires that each level is exactly one half the previous level, down to the least significant bit which is 1/65,536 the level of the most significant bit. In practice it is difficult to ensure the required accuracy, especially long term, and the result is often poor resolution at the very lowest signal levels.

The solution found was based on the one adopted by a close neighbour of Arcam, dCS, whose high-end Elgar D-to-A converter was developed from aerospace radar technology.



“Arcam was the first British manufacturer to sign up for all the CD manufacturing licences.”

The dCS RingDAC is an elegant approach, which combines the best of multibit and bitstream conversion in a five-bit design. It is not susceptible to the timing errors or noise limitations of bitstream, or the accurate level matching requirements of multibit, and moreover it can be used with a very simple, audibly benign analogue output filter. The problem was complexity: dCS's discrete implementation was clearly unsuitable for a mainstream mass production player. So, Arcam funded and helped in the process of transcribing the RingDAC onto a single piece of silicon, a major undertaking.

The Alpha 9 was the first Arcam CD player to feature the RingDAC – a well equipped, top of the line player that offered other benefits too, including Pacific Microsonics (now Microsoft) HDCD decoding. The RingDAC went on to be refined and improved, and saw service in early FMJ series players like the FMJ CD22. At its best, the RingDAC offered superb resolving ability and dynamics, with excellent retrieval of fine ambient and other detail. But, by 2003, Arcam found that developing DAC technologies meant they could achieve as much, or more from the best conventional processors (from Wolfson in Arcam's case) and at a lower price, marking the end of the road for the company's involvement with the celebrated RingDAC. **HFC**

Alvin Gold

in your ears after you've visited someone who likes to play it LOUD. By LOUD I don't mean the kind of volume that ruffles your hair and demands your undivided attention. Or even the kind that can drop a bison at 50 metres. I mean LOUD as in sound pressure waves you could drown in. There's something slightly sinister about being invited to sit in a black, leather dentist's chair while shoulder-high stacks of monstrous fan-cooled bridged mono power amps blow a gentle, balmy breeze in your direction. You almost expect iron manacles to snap out of the armrests and hold you prisoner by the wrists.

And you listen – boy, do you listen – track after track, record after record, boxed set after boxed set. Iron Maiden, Mega Death, AC/DC, Van Halen, Paul McCartney. At the absolute, eleven-on-a-scale-of-ten, edge-of-oblivion, eye-drilling, ear-busting, chest-crushing, stomach-rupturing MAX. Involving? Like being nuzzled to death by Pamela Anderson.

After that, you need to spend some time in the company of those who use their hi-fi systems as a form of sonic wallpaper. You'd be forgiven for thinking that any old music centre, midi stack, BeoSystem 6500 and a pile of 'Clayderman plays Mantovani'-style discs could execute the background muzak brief, but you'd be wrong. We're talking state-of-the-art multi-room with computer controlled mood lighting, here, those tinkling ivories wafting eerily out of the lounge, down the hall, through the dining room, round the kitchen, up the stairs, into the shower cubicle, down the plug hole.

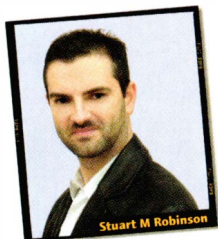
True, a fluffy cloudbase of soothing, mellifluous murmurings might be okay in a cocktail lounge. But where's the focus, the sense of occasion, the emotional output? Finally, you can't stand it any longer. Can I turn it up just a wee bit, perhaps? "We've been wondering how to do that, too. And to turn it off, actually. The control panel's disguised as a bowl of fruit but we're not sure whether it's the banana or the Kiwi fruit. Any ideas?"

But that's hi-fi, isn't it? The idea that you can just put it on, sit down and be absorbed for an hour or so every time is just too simple, too perfect. There's always something that, if not apparent when you start listening, isn't quite right by the time you stop. And, of course, tastes, perceptions and expectations change. If they didn't, there'd be no hi-fi industry, no *Hi-Fi Choice*. Obsession? Splash it on.

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



“Everyone will be listening to their SACDs on a PlayStation this time next year.”



Standard deviation

The specs for DualDisc are out

After what seems like an age, the RIAA has finally got around to publishing the specifications for DualDisc, the double-sided hybrid DVD/CD you've been hearing so much about lately (one such disc was given away free with *Hi-Fi Choice* two issues ago).

The specifications state that the DVD side has to conform to the DVD Physical Specification dated May 2004 or later, the minimum thickness being 0.550mm and jitter below seven per cent. The CD media side of the DualDisc must have a minimum thickness of 0.870mm, meaning the total thickness must be less than 1.5mm.

My own measurements indicate all the DualDiscs in my collection are thinner than 1.5mm... but there's a catch. That figure only relates to the playing surface; on the DVD side a small ridge, designed so that transports can grip and centre the discs, increases the overall thickness to 1.7mm in the case of some titles.

On the CD side, the data has to be CD-DA compatible, so that's 16-bit/44kHz PCM, just like a regular CD. The DVD side has to contain

the same tracks and the audio must be 16-bit/48kHz at a minimum, the mandatory formats being Dolby Digital or PCM. Surround content is not mandated, nor is a dedicated stereo track in the case of multichannel audio being present (unlike SACD, where a two-channel hi-res mix is always present).

In other words, there is no obligation for labels to produce high-resolution content and it is worth remembering that everything else being equal, the audible difference between 16-bit PCM at 44 and 48kHz is negligible.

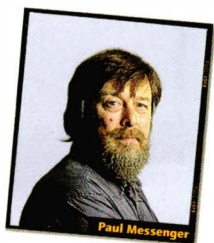
Sony Music is the first label content to meet the basic requirements. 16-bit/48kHz is commonplace on its DualDiscs released so far, even though a quick analysis of titles such as *Ashes of the Wake* from Lamb of God indicates that the DVD side does not suffer the aggressive clipping and limited frequency response of its CD counterpart.

And still with Sony, the company's hardware division has become the first manufacturer to announce a machine as being specifically DualDisc compatible, but instead of a CD or DVD player, it's actually the next generation PlayStation, announced at the E3 expo in Los Angeles. Scheduled for release in the spring of 2006, PlayStation 3, now boasting an IBM 3.2GHz Cell processor, high-definition video, a full array of standard DVD-Video features, SACD playback and Blu-Ray compatibility (including BD-ROM, BD-Video, BD-R, and BD-RE) in addition to its gaming capabilities. But DVD-Audio is not supported. C'mon Sony, isn't it time you went 'universal'?

Meanwhile, the entire ES line of Sony SACD players appears to have vanished from Sony.com

and its sub-domains (if you can find a URL, send us a postcard), which makes me wonder if they hope everyone will be listening to their SACDs on a PlayStation by this time next year...

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



To bi or not to bi

Is bi-wiring loudspeakers a panacea?

In the March issue, I mentioned Vertex AQ, which is making accessory components expressly designed to absorb wideband mechanical vibrations. These various treatments seem effective at expanding the clarity and dynamic range of my system.

One of the most interesting components is the Mini-Moncayo, a short length of wire with a spade terminal one end, a locking 4mm plug the other, and a small alloy box vibration absorber halfway down the length. They're used when mono-wiring a speaker with twin bi-wire terminals. You need two per speaker, one joining the positive terminals, the other the negatives, in place of the supplied links (usually brass strips). Their effect is bound to vary from one speaker to another, but proved quite dramatic with a pair of B&W 802Ds.

While these Mini-Moncayo links can work very well, this effectiveness has some fascinating general implications for loudspeakers and their connections. First, it would seem to confirm that the vibrations generated by individual drive units can interfere with each other, and this can adversely affect sound quality. This in turn seems to imply that separate, mechanically isolated crossover network sections are probably a good thing.

But one can take the argument much further. Speaker bi-wiring might have been around for more than twenty years, but it remains a technique without a proven and accepted rationale. Arguments that high and low frequency electrical signals are best kept separate are myths that have no basis in the physics of electrical theory. It's also a continuing source of debate and controversy – several leading brands (Focal, Sonus Faber, Dynaudio, Naim and many others) publicly prefer mono-wiring. ▶

M

MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

BLIND FAITH



Few albums in rock history have spawned as much hype, adulation and disappointment as the one and only album by the first supergroup of the 1960s, Blind Faith. Featuring the stellar talents of Eric Clapton, Stevie Winwood, Ginger Baker and Rick Grech, the album (with its controversial naked pre-pubescent girl) was a million-selling Number One smash on both sides of the Atlantic in the Summer of 1969.

On paper the idea of two thirds of Cream and parts of Traffic and Family united with the Stones producer Jimmy Miller couldn't miss. When they debuted at Hyde Park in June 1969 in front of between 100,000 and 500,000 people (depending on who you believe), the band could barely get through 65 minutes of music because they were so stoned.

They were together for just seven months but their one album holds the seeds of a post-psychedelic comedown, especially in the acoustic Winwood classic *Can't Find My Way Home*. After Cream, Eric Clapton returned to his Surrey home to listen to what he felt he had lost: the blues. He had known Stevie Winwood for years and felt a new direction could be pursued with him. The pair began writing in January 1969 in a workroom Clapton had put together in his house, with Baker joining shortly afterwards.

Morgan Studios, London, was the first location for recording and yielded a version of Buddy Holly's *Well All Right* and Eric Clapton's outstanding *Presence Of The Lord*, with its jaw-dropping guitar solo. Clapton even thought he could do a better version of the Hendrix standard *Hey Joe*, but after eight takes realised the master had already nailed it and quietly put it to one side.

Ginger Baker was a copious hash user and in the beginning of March 1969 suggested a jamming approach. The results were foggy and noodlesome and wholly dispensable. Winwood, fearing drift, suggested he was doing too much and that they should recruit Rick Grech (then in the US on tour) to play bass. In May 1969, the new quartet, now called Blind Faith, convened at Olympic studios in Barnes to



“The band could barely get through 65 minutes of music because they were so stoned.”

record in earnest. In just six takes, the Winwood composition *Sea Of Joy* was finished with Grech playing dreamy violin. Then in June, the heavyweight *Had To Cry Today* was completed in 21 takes, a song whose weird sonic effects were later added by Jimmy Miller.

Miller was drafted in because the band's managers were fearful that the album wouldn't be ready for the upcoming US tour in July. The plan worked: in only four days of work at Olympic near the end of June 1969, Miller finished the record! *Had To Cry Today* and *Do What you Like* were done in one day. Master tapes were checked, better takes were selected of other songs and cleaned up in the following days and on 28 June in Olympic, Miller brought off a masterstroke. He deemed all-electric versions of *Can't Find My Way Home* redundant, drafted in Andy Johns to engineer from Morgan and made the group work through a live acoustic version using only three mics. With Clapton playing lovely acoustic ripples, Winwood gave the performance of his life on a song that became an anthem for the post-psychedelic generation.

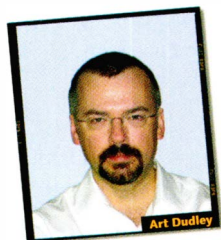
A shoddily packaged first CD of *Blind Faith* came out in 1986 but in 2001, Polydor released a highly recommended Deluxe edition, which sports nine out-takes and copious sleevenotes. **HFC**

Mark Prendergast

❏ In practice, bi-wiring tends to have unpredictable results. Sometimes it's beneficial, but other times it's better to devote the budget to a single run of good cable. However, one aspect of bi-wiring that never seems to have been discussed, or even considered, is its potential influence on the mechanical vibration effects discussed above. Although few (if any) cable makers even consider the mechanical damping properties of their products, the fact remains that the act of bi-wiring replaces the usual short links mono-wiring with the full length of the cable to and from the amplifier. Intentionally or not, this will probably add a measure of mechanical damping.

If the benefits of bi-wiring are debatable, few would deny that bi-amping offers real sonic benefits, even though the reasons again remain obscure and unresolved. However, bi-amping obviously achieves much greater mechanical isolation between the speaker drivers than other techniques, especially where the networks feeding each driver are kept separate too, and this could well be at least one reason why bi-amping is an effective upgrade, if an expensive one.

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



Game, SET and match

Italian triodes set Art's pulse racing

Here are just some of the things every single-ended triode amp I've used does better than every push-pull amp of my experience: SETs have a more involving musical presentation; they play melodies with an easier, more believable sense of flow; they allow solo voices and instruments to stand proud of their surroundings in a remarkable way. Within their power envelope, and paired with the right speakers, they're more dramatic. (I've never been startled, thrilled, or captivated by a push-pull amplifier the way I've been by the best SETs.) And although a few push-pull amps are pacier and capable of greater levels of rhythmic relentlessness – round up the usual suspects on that one – all the SET amps



“As Swiss Toni might say, ‘playing the Solista amplifier is very much like making love to a beautiful woman’.”

I've heard are ahead of the rank-and-file in that regard. It's that aspect of their performance that's makes a SET so surprising to the audiophile who's new to the breed – hearing an amp with a timbrally thick and somewhat riper-than-real upper mid-bass range that carries the music's timing element better than most comparatively lean push-pull amps.

Which brings me to the good-looking Solista integrated amp from Viva Audio Devices of Vicenza, Italy. The Solista uses a single 845 output tube per channel to pass a maximum of 18 watts across an eight-ohm load, and its front end can sort the input signals from four line-level sources – or you can use this integrated as a power amp only, driven from a pair of inputs that skip the first gain stage. The Solista is every inch a SET in all the best ways and a few of the worst (it's hot, pricey and shy of neutral), but with a character all its own. As Swiss Toni might say, “playing the Solista amplifier is very much like making love to a beautiful woman”. Indeed, like the world's most beautiful women, its bottom end is full – a shade more than average, I suppose – and almost unimaginably seductive. And like the world's most beautiful instruments, the Solista has texture; loads of gorgeous, music-sounds.

Driving my Quads, the Solista makes music unfailingly interesting and colorful, like a good, willful conductor. It makes the interplay between the French horn and Nathan Milstein's violin in the Dvorak *Concerto* sound like the dialog that it is, and it gives Bill Monroe's picking hand a wrist and a forearm to go with it, if you know what I mean. The Solista may not be the flattest, most accurate audio amplifier I've ever heard, but it finds the

heart and soul in every piece of music I throw at it, and that's rarer than you may think.

At just under \$10,000, the Viva Solista isn't cheap, but it pushes all the right buttons – and its smooth, sculpted chassis, which manages to look both high-tech and organic, is a pleasure for two of my other senses. In every way, this may be the most expressive amp you can buy.

Art Dudley has written for Hi-Fi Heretic, Sounds Like and Listener. He lives in the US and works as Stereophile's editor-at-large



Two-channel reprise

Stereo's death was greatly exaggerated

I've been saying this on and off for so long I'm beginning to believe my own hype. Something is happening, and it looks and smells remarkably like a resurgence of interest in good, old-fashioned two-channel stereo.

I noticed it towards the back end of last year. One of the first to break cover was Marantz, which released the PM11 stereo amplifier and the SA11 stereo SACD player, both costly designs with real talent. Denon soon followed with a more expensive take on the same idea, the PMA-SA-1 and the DCD-SA1. Although the two companies are part of the same group, the

products are completely different, and equally clearly the progeny of enthusiasts who have managed to get the backing to launch components with few of the usual commercial imperatives. How else do you explain why the amplifier half of the Denon pairing doesn't even make provision for remote control?

Other straws in the wind include T+A (in some ways like Linn Products a decade ago), which has launched its dramatically styled top loading SACD player – the D10 – to match the V10 integrated valve amp and G10R record player. There are other examples of new and important stereo products, from producers who hitherto nailed their colours to the multichannel mast, as well as from ones who continue to fly the flag for two-channel high fidelity or even batted for both teams. These include Classé, NAD and Arcam – all of which have recently made significant announcements – and Cambridge Audio, which is about to venture into Arcam/Cyrus territory.

Another example has just been unveiled by Onkyo on a recent press visit to the company headquarters in Osaka. For many, Onkyo has been almost exclusively associated with home cinema, though on its home turf, the company turns out to be a market leader in compact stereo systems, way ahead of Denon for example. What they are about to launch, however, is a new amp and matching CD player, not much bigger than a Cyrus 6 and similarly equipped. They're even less expensive, too, at £500 for the amp and £400 for the player. The difference is that the amp is a hybrid Class D design, with some interesting and novel circuit design, but with dual toroidal transformers in charge of its analogue power supply. On the basis of a listening session at Onkyo's ranch, using some intriguing speakers of their own design (and also a brief spell driving B&W's famously undriveable DM801 in an enormous train shed of a conference room), it is a thoroughly listenable combination that could easily stir up the market when they appear in the shops in the not too distant future. And there's a tuner to follow, too...

A handful of swallows don't make a spring, and I'm not about to suggest that two-channel sound is rampant once more, or that it's driven surround sound to the point of extinction. And no, valves and vinyl will not inherit the earth. But there is life in the old dog yet. Stereo isn't ready to be put out to pasture in hi-fi land, and the last few months show that even the biggest, most commercial electronics multinationals have people on board who are willing and able to fight the good fight, people who clearly love music reproduced well... in stereo.

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

TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

THE ACID TEST?



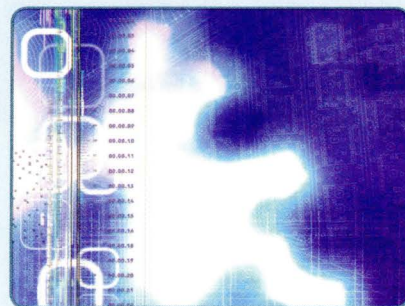
While preparing this month's *Ultimate Group Test*, I was struck (not for the first time) by how well many of the CD players

around today measure. At least in terms of the basic tests – frequency response, distortion, jitter – they come up smiling to an extent that makes one wonder how they can possibly sound discernibly different. Are we missing something significant?

It goes through every audio tester's mind from time to time that the simplified signals we generally use for lab testing may fail in some important way to simulate the behaviour of the equipment in the presence of real music. So why not test with real music? This isn't a new suggestion – 'null testing' of amplifiers in particular goes back decades and is the core of all reviews, even blind panel listening tests. The big problem is interpretation. You subtract the output from the input and there's something left. In principle it's distortion, but is it significant? It may be something as innocuous as a minute phase shift, or something as damaging as high-order crossover distortion. Simple test signals will allow you to identify causes more easily.

But modern test equipment is making it ever easier to compare equipment with a reference, correcting for side effects on the way. Once the output of the Device Under Test has been stored on a computer, the data can be manipulated in all sorts of ways to sift out the most significant elements of the difference between input and output. For a start, pure time delaying is possible on a computer, despite being something almost impossible in the analogue domain.

I tried something of the sort with a couple of the CD players. Play a track, record the analogue output via a good ADC (synchronised to the player's digital output for a proper time reference), then digitally compare the result with the original digital recording, which is stored on the computer. Even then, it's not simple. There will be an element of delay between the reference and the Signal Under Test, and while it is trivial to synchronise them to the nearest whole sample



“The simplified signals used for testing may fail to simulate the behaviour of hi-fi with real music.”

interval, if you want a good null test, you need to do a lot better than that. In order to achieve sub-sample delays with good accuracy, you have to upsample both reference and SUT by a large factor, leading to horribly large file sizes (anything up to 80MB per second of audio). You then delay by an exact number of new samples. Tedious.

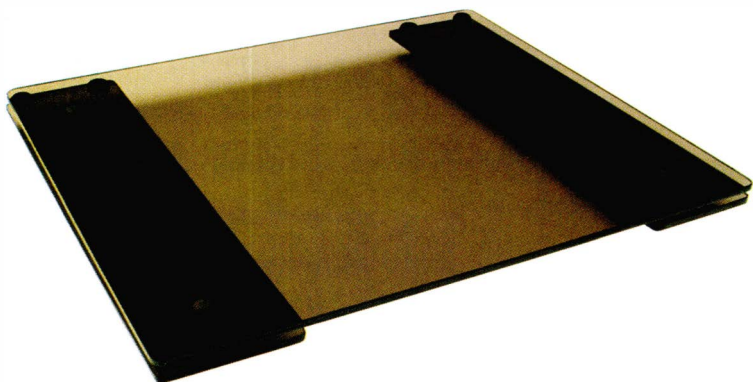
Once this is all achieved, you simply subtract reference from SUT. The result, in one case, was around -70dB. Well, that's not at all bad, but if it's non-linear distortion, it's not great either. If, however, it's just frequency-dependent phase shift due to the output filter, it's excellent. But, how to tell? Actually, ears work very well here; boost the level of the residual until it's audible, and if it sounds reasonably 'musical', then it's probably mostly the result of harmless phase shifts. Then you can start trying to simulate the output filter to remove its effects. Again, tedious.

With digital techniques like this, jitter can be a problem, as can amplitude jitter (small amplitude variations, probably inaudible in themselves), giving inflated readings. All the same, as we learn tricks to make this kind of measurement more practicable, expect to hear more about 'real music' lab testing. In the end, it may give us more convincing answers than we're used to. **HFC**

Richard Black



ESSENTIALS



SE TAIRE 'GOLDEN EARS' EQUIPMENT PLATFORM £179

In describing this as a 'tuneable platform', Fidele is not at all doing justice to the myriad options this support kit offers. The basic idea is that a laminated glass shelf sits on a couple of glass bars, one each side, with Sorbothane under the bars and between bars and shelf. The feet on the bars are fixed, but for intermediate duty there are 12 adhesive feet which can be positioned to taste. You can also position the bars too, right at the edge, further in... and you could perfectly well borrow a few of the feet to support the equipment directly, if it's not too heavy. The end result is that you really can set this up for optimum performance under pretty much any equipment. Better still, however it's arranged, it's unusually non-resonant for glass. The Sorbothane gives pretty good isolation too, so you could even put a turntable on this platform.

☎ 01563 829372 🌐 www.fidele.co.uk

BLACK RHODIUM POLAR CONCERTO ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT £225 (1M PAIR)

This smart and not-too-inflexible interconnect, another of BR's cryogenically treated 'Polar' range, is a pseudo-balanced design. It has the screen connected at one end and an asymmetric arrangement with three separately insulated conductors connecting the 'hot' side and one the ground. No problem with that, nor with the eminently sensible twisting together of the two channels, which aids interference rejection. Sound is clear but slightly dark in timbre, a BR trademark. We obtained particularly good results using this cable between a couple of phono stages and an integrated amp, and while it gave no problems with digital sources, we'd recommend it particularly for analogue devices.

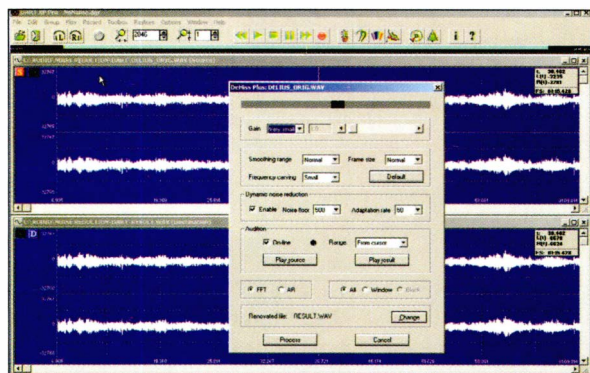
☎ 01332 755766 🌐 www.blackrhodium.co.uk



DART XP PRO AUDIO SOFTWARE SUITE \$200

XP Pro is a new product from one of the best-known names in the audio restoration software field, DART. It's not the cheapest, but you do get a plethora of features. Most impressively, this clearly represents a major advance on quality on what one could get a couple of years ago. With a little practice, one soon learns to set the restoration controls for a real reduction in annoying crackles and hiss on elderly and damaged recordings. Okay, so at high reduction settings odd warbles and modulations still crop up, but they're pretty much banished at modest settings. For anyone interested in audio restoration and manipulation, this is a must-try chunk of code.

🌐 www.dartpro.com



LAST RECORD PRESERVATIVE LP TREATMENT £27.50

A couple of issues ago we looked at LAST's Stylast, which claims to prolong stylus life. This does the same for LPs, so say LAST. Can it work? The evidence looks quite convincing and an admittedly crude test we carried out with a spare LP and an elderly, heavyweight arm and cartridge seemed to bear it out. At any rate, brushing this liquid on and off a disc as per instructions is a painless process that certainly does no harm that we could discern and indeed did seem to reduce surface noise slightly. That could have been just due to shifting some dirt, but we're inclined to think this works. Worth the bother for those really irreplaceable LPs!

☎ 01234 741152 🌐 www.britishaudio.co.uk





LAST STYLUS CLEANER STYLUS CLEANING FLUID £15

⊕ Unlike much of the LAST range, at least there's little controversy over the premise of this accessory – keeping your stylus clean prevents unnecessary distortion and noise in your LP sound. It also helps prolong stylus and disc life. The little bottle of faintly medicinal-smelling liquid, and the accompanying carbon-fibre brush, provide just the thing for easy removal of both dust and sticky deposits from the stylus, and it's pretty hard to damage the cartridge with either of them. There's been some argument over whether wet stylus cleaning is a good idea, but while indiscriminate use of fluids may be a bad thing, really fussy cleanliness is hard to achieve by other methods and this is an excellent solution. This is well worth the asking price.

☎ 01234 741152 🌐 www.britishaudio.co.uk

GODAR FM-1A FM/ DAB ANTENNA £40

⊕ There are plenty of indoor antennas (aerials) available for FM, and this one modestly claims a useful mix of gain and directivity for city-dwellers. But when one looks closely at the specs, there's a hint at other uses in the mention of coverage from 180MHz to 216MHz – the very band where DAB resides. Now this isn't the smallest or most discreet indoor antenna, but therein lies its strength; the only substitute for size in an antenna is more size. So yes, gain on FM is better than most indoor aerials and since it's not too hard to angle this one for best reception, it's easy to optimise. But the coverage also of DAB makes it a proper no-brainer for anyone with a two-band tuner and single antenna input. Just hope the same placement captures both!

☎ 01752 607474 🌐 www.tamaraudiovisual.co.uk



BLACK RHODIUM POLAR SCHERZO DIGITAL INTERCONNECT £135 (1M)

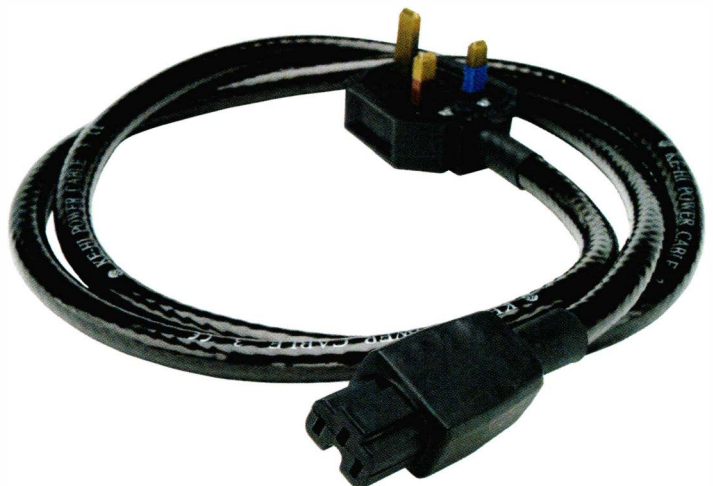
⊕ 'Scherzo' means 'joke', but there's nothing funny about this cable. It's an honest-to-goodness 75-ohm coaxial link that, in our trial systems, provided reliably beneficial connection between digital sources and DACs. Compared with familiar references, it comfortably held its own at the price, slightly missing out on the magic we've heard from the very best, most expensive digital cables but still offering really solid, stable stereo images and well presented lashings of detail. In these important areas, Polar Scherzo is well ahead of giveaway (and near-giveaway) digital leads. Practical, compatible and recommended.

☎ 01332 755766 🌐 www.blackrhodium.co.uk

KEMP ELEKTRONIKS HI-POWER CORD MAINS CABLE £56 (1M)

⊕ The flood of upgrade mains cables shows no sign of abating yet. Dutch manufacturer Kemp Elektroniks sticks mainly to the affordable end of the market, though to many folks, £56 is a pretty hefty price for 'just' a mains lead. But can it upgrade sound? Like most of them, it seems to have a small beneficial effect, the sort of thing you'll probably notice in a familiar and well-honed system. In all honesty, we couldn't describe this as dramatically more or less effective than similarly-priced competitors, but it does seem to have a bit of a distinctive character, quite fast and light on its feet. Well made and practical too.

☎ 01753 652669 🌐 www.kempelektroniks.nl



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The future of jazz?

EST's unique blend of jazz, classical, rock and electronic elements puts them at the vanguard of modern jazz. Now, the group is at the cutting edge of surround sound experimentation, too

The Esbjörn Svensson Trio is nominally an acoustic jazz group, that regularly sells out the kind of venues more commonly associated with rock concerts, whose videos appear on MTV (in Scandinavia anyway) and whose albums sell in tens of thousands.

Styling themselves as a "pop band that plays jazz", the trio formed in 1990 when jobbing pianist Esbjörn Svensson hooked up with drummer and childhood friend Magnus Ostrom and later brought in bassist Dan Berglund.

Their latest album, *Vaticum* (a Latin phrase meaning provisions for a journey, apparently), doesn't break any new stylistic boundaries. There's the classically-influenced piano, with nods to Keith Jarrett. This is coupled with endlessly inventive drum improvisations and powerfully surging, often electronically treated bowed and pizzicato bass. All this underpinned by a melodic sensibility that keeps it in the zone for background music, while offering the attentive listener plenty of rewards.

But, since it's released on SACD (in Europe at any rate – record company ACT didn't think an SACD release was really viable for the UK at this time), it's also the first time they've gone out of their way to record and mix in 5.1 surround sound. From his home in Stockholm, band leader Svensson is excited about the possibilities the medium offers.

"From a musical aspect, I think it's really interesting to be able to work with music not only in stereo, but also in surround. It's totally changed the way of mixing music and actually playing it also, because it can create so many new dimensions in sound.

"We released a live DVD last year (*Live In Stockholm*) and mostly used the surround mix to create ambience in the back speakers. So, you get an impression of being in the concert room. But on this album some of the effects are coming from different parts of the room. When I record, I always use two channels, one of which has effects on it, so it sounds like I'm

playing some sort of weird, prepared piano. And then mixing the album, you can work with the acoustic sound of course but then you can also add some of that electrified sound and create kind of a new world. You can hear it a bit in the stereo mix, but in surround, there's even more to it, with some of these things coming from other speakers. It's quite experimental, but quite subtle too.

"On the last album, we recorded onto 24-track analogue tape. But on this one, for many reasons, we changed, and recorded everything on ProTools. We had problems before when we've recorded in analogue and

transferred it to digital for mixing – we missed so much of the analogue feeling, we cancelled it all and mixed it in an analogue way.

"This time however, we made it digital the whole way and I think it works fine now. A new digital desk can be a bit too clean sounding, but we're using a very old Neve desk; it makes a lot of noise and has its own sound, so there's a lot of distortion when you go through that desk that fits us fine. So, I'm still a little sceptical about the digital format, but if you do it the right way like we did on this album, then it can work... I think." **HFC**

Dave Oliver

"I think it's really interesting to work not only in stereo, but also in surround."



Essential EST

1. *Seven Days Of Falling* (2003)

A straight stereo album featuring some of Svensson's most memorable tunes, including *Ballad Of The Unborn*.



2. *Live In Stockholm* (2003)

EST's last foray into surround sound (available on DVD) used the rear channels subtly to generate audience ambience, without affecting the music.



3. *Vaticum* (2005)

Released in Europe on SACD (it's CD only in the UK), where the acoustic instruments get the surround treatment. Impressive!





WIN! ARCAM'S INCREDIBLE SOLO CD/DAB RECEIVER WORTH £1,000!

Arcam's first attempt at combining audiophile sound with one-box simplicity has proven a real hit here at *Hi-Fi Choice*, with the new Solo earning a Best Buy award in the July issue (*HFC* 268). The unit combines the CD playing essentials from the CD73 with a DAB/FM radio tuner and a chip-based 50-watt 'audiophile' amplifier. All this in a standard width, sleek and sexy aluminium case with full remote functionality. Arcam has also upgraded the aesthetics of the Solo, managing to retain those distinctive Arcam styling cues, yet making something wholly new and cool looking. The product has connections for

up to five other source components plus a preamp output for expansion into high power territory, so there's plenty of growth potential.

The result is a genuine fit and forget hi-fi system offering the ultimate in compact, convenient one-box fidelity. Sonically, it keeps music tight and true, expressing dynamics and conveying impressive body. It does 'natural' as well as it does 'gutsy', proving that a neat, single-box 'music centre' really can deliver high-fidelity sound.

For your chance to win this superb integrated CD/DAB receiver, simply answer the question below. The lucky winner will be drawn at random.

QUESTION:

What cutting-edge technology is the Solo's amp section based on?

- A:** A chip
- B:** A potato wedge
- C:** A curly fry

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).

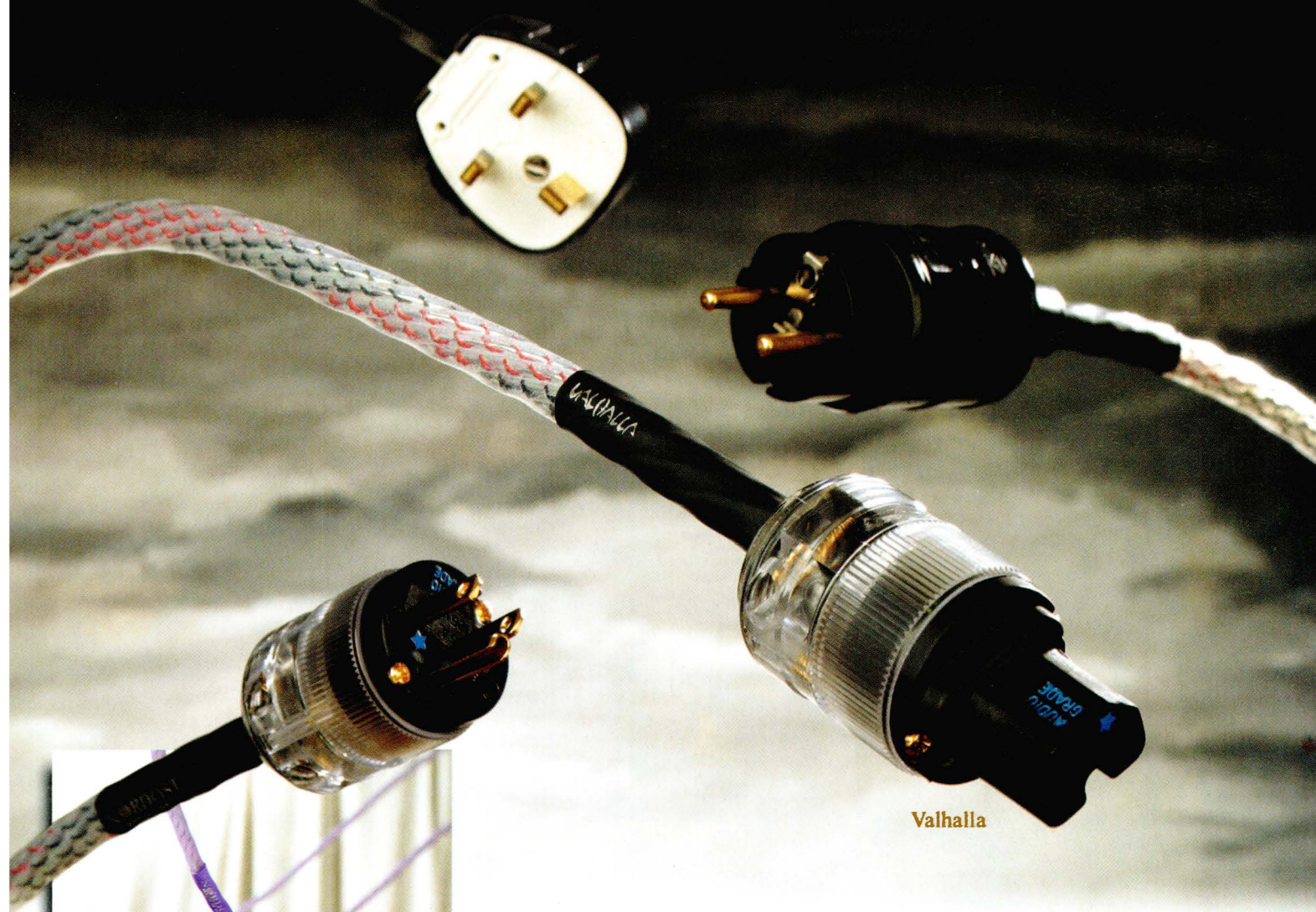
By Text: Send the message **HFC COMP1** with the answer A, B or C to **83070**. For example, if you think the answer is C: A curly fry then text HFC COMP1 C to 83070.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

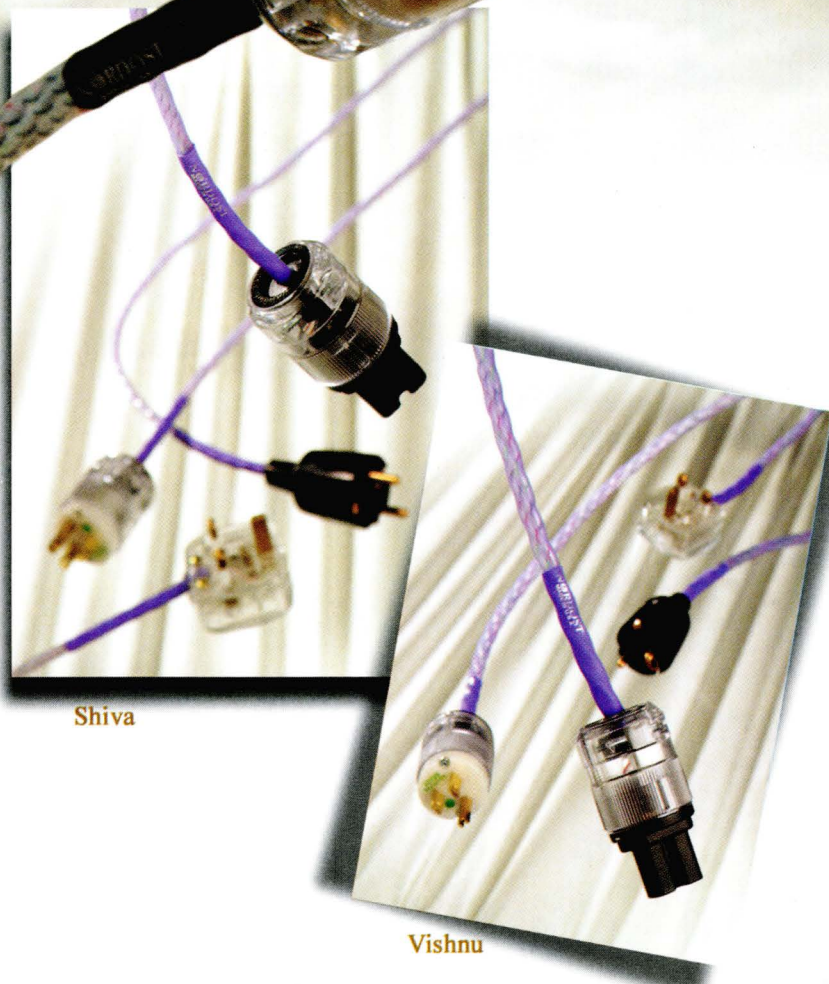
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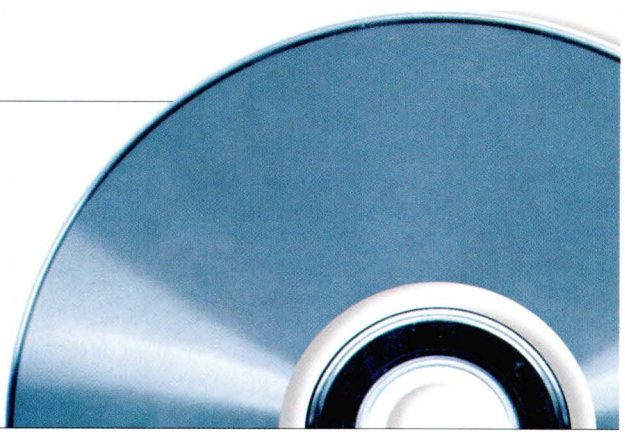


ChoiceCuts



This month's varied musical morsels

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



AUDIOPHILE VINYL

CHET BAKER SEXTET

Chet Is Back

RCA Victor/Speakers Corner 180g vinyl
Music: This 1962 recording was made in Italy, where a briefly drug-free Baker and his trumpet made their home in 1955. It features an all-star European line-up, yet precisely because they aren't American, their names will only be familiar to a few. Amedeo Tommasi on piano, Bobby Jaspar on tenor and flute and René Thomas on guitar are ably driven along by Benoit Quersin on bass and Daniel Humair on drums. This album of standards like *These Foolish Things* and *Over The Rainbow* are never clichéd thanks to Baker and band's finesse and invention, proving that relaxed jazz does not have to be soporific. René Thomas is a particular star, here, too. ★★★★★
Sound: A mono recording, this inevitably produces a small image but the quality of transfer cannot be argued with. Clean and revealing, it's hard to imagine that an original print would come close. ★★★ JK

PAUL DESMOND

Take Ten

RCA Victor/Speakers Corner 180g vinyl
Music: Saxophonist Desmond played in Dave Brubeck's band and wrote the tune that made it famous, *Take Five*. He describes himself as having "won several prizes as the world's slowest alto player, as well as a special award in 1961 for quietness", and was conspicuous in his generation for not being influenced by be-bop. The emphasis here is on harmonics and subtleties of texture and tone, which might suggest a lack of energy but that ain't the case. The title track is, like its predecessor, in 10/8 time but, thanks to Desmond's playing, goes to places Brubeck's piano rarely ventured. ★★★★★
Sound: Another superb Speaker's Corner pressing on silent vinyl, this recording allows the fine playing and quality of tone to be fully appreciated, and it undoubtedly sounds better than the Dynagroove original. ★★★ JK

These LPs are available from Vivante: ☎ 01293 822186 @ www.vivante.co.uk and Speakers Corner @ www.speakerscorner.de

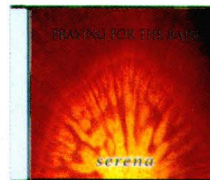
COMPACT DISC & VINYL



HAYDN

The Creation

Andreas Spering (conductor), Vokan Ensemble Köln
Naxos 8.557380-81
Music: This budget two-disc set on the Naxos label is one of the few recordings of this important and largescale oratorio performed on original instruments. It gives the orchestral sound a sharper quality and more open textures than you might expect, but without loss of gravitas and power. The soloists, chorus and orchestra have a vitality that casts many more celebrated and costly versions in the shade. This is an assured performance too. ★★★★★
Sound: A co-production with German Radio, the recording was made at Deutschlandfunk Sendesaal, Köln in 2003 in an acoustic that has a very real but far from excessive warmth, which suits the nature of the music and the performers. Great value. ★★★★★ AG



PRAYING FOR THE RAIN

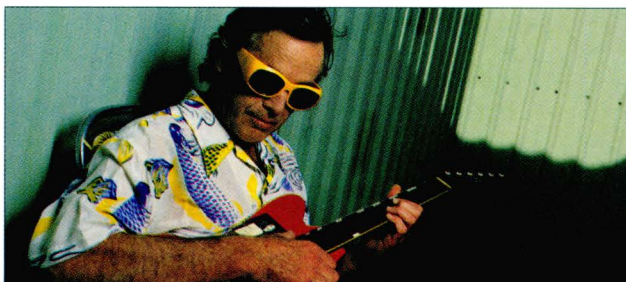
Serena

Twin Arrows Music
Music: Praying For The Rain are, essentially, Italian-Canadians Domenico and Vincenzo Deccico plus various pals and their bag is an often breezy blend of European melodies and world rhythms – effortless vocals, violins, guitars and accordions drift in and out over hand-drums, congos and instruments most of us can't pronounce. And it all works well on this, their ninth album. *Where The Heart Lies* (recorded live at Islington's acoustic bastion, the Union Chapel) is the most uptempo piece, the title track is the most catchy, while the atmospheric *Italian Lullaby* is the most evocative but, really, they'll all good. Magical. ★★★★★
Sound: Even the live stuff cuts through well and the studio numbers here are laced with any number of discreet, and discrete, subtleties. ★★★★★ PS



AMERICAN CONTEMPORARIES

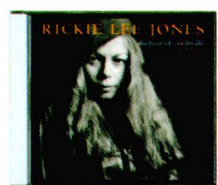
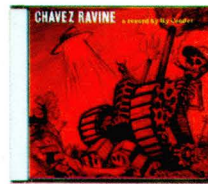
John Harbison: Quartet No. 2
Richard Wernick: Quartet No. 4
Gunther Schuller: Quartet No. 3
Emerson String Quartet
DGG Echo 21 28947 75384
Music: The three quartets in this recording are by three contemporary North American composers who use relatively tough, uncompromising musical language. The recording is easier to listen to than you might expect, partly because of the quality of the works (the Harbison being the most approachable), and partly thanks to the excellence of the Emerson Quartet, who act as effective advocates of music that they clearly believe in. ★★★★★
Sound: The eclectic nature of the music matches the clean, translucent acoustic of the recording venue, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in New York, which confers clarity of line and analysis. ★★★★★ AG



RY COODER

Chavez Ravine

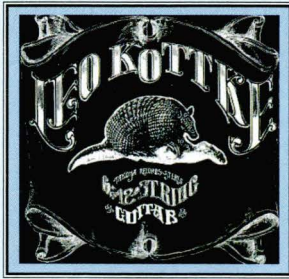
Reprise
Music: Since Ry Cooder's last solo album – 1987's *Get Rhythm* – he's won Grammys for his world music collaborations with Ali Farka Touré and Buena Vista Social Club, while insisting he would never make another record under his own name. Whatever changed his mind to fly solo again, we can only be grateful for *Chavez Ravine* is a masterful concept. Based on the story of a Mexican community in LA demolished in the 1950s to make way for the Dodgers stadium, Cooder tells the story of the impact on the lives of the displaced residents through a series of potent songs that also find him singing on record for the first time in almost 20 years. ★★★★★
Sound: Mexican and fifties rock 'n' roll influences blend to create a time-warp effect enhanced by an old-fashioned production that recalls the balmy days of valve technology and live takes. The bright, all-digital days of *Bop 'Til You Drop* are long forgotten, thankfully. ★★★★★ NW



RICKIE LEE JONES

Duchess Of Coolsville

Rhino
Music: Since her 1979 world-wide hit, *Chuck E's In Love*, Rickie Lee Jones has rarely seen fit to trouble the charts. Over the years, she's dipped in and out of a variety of musical genre and has worked with Rock's Great and Good. Her cut glass razor of a voice cuts a beautiful swathe through a range of highlights too numerous to mention – she's quite simply an icon and this compilation is well overdue. ★★★★★
Sound: The music has been culled from a dozen albums spanning nearly 25 years, as well as a bunch of demos and unreleased material. There's been little if any attempt to remix or remaster the tracks as a cohesive whole, but they remain an authentic record of the time and place they were recorded, for good or ill. ★★★ DO



THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "The recording's strength lies in its simplicity."

LEO KOTTKÉ 6 & 12 String Guitar Takoma Records

Music: Leo Kottke's third album, was made for John Fahey's short-lived Takoma Records label in 1972 and makes a good showcase for his considerable talent. Clearly influenced by Fahey as well as country and blues musicians of the 1950s and 1960s, it reveals Kottke's enthusiasm and vitality as a player. Here you have 13 original tunes and a version of Bach's *Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring* played on zingy steel strings. Flavours vary from the upbeat

energy of *Watermelon* to the contemplative *The Fisherman*. Having listened to this on and off since its release I can vouch for its long term appeal and the fact that Kottke has rarely bettered it. ★★★★★
Sound: This recording's strength lies in its simplicity, one man and one guitar. You wouldn't have thought this difficult, but many have failed to reproduce the energy and tonal variety on offer here. ★★★★★ JK



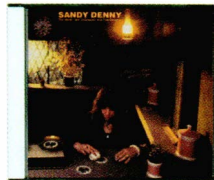
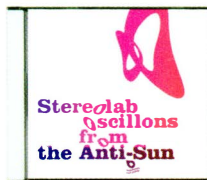
STEREOLAB

Oscillons From The Anti-Sun

Pure

Music: Since they formed in 1992, Stereolab have pursued an idiosyncratic path, releasing records prolifically if irregularly on their own Duophonic label. This, their first compilation, consists of three CDs and one DVD featuring a clutch of self-produced videos and a handful of UK TV appearances. The CD features snippets of their space age bachelor pad music culled from throughout their career, and includes many examples of their Krautrock-influenced dronescapes and more than a few pop masterpieces, including the gargantuan *Fluorescences* and the pop perfection of *Ping Pong*, without a doubt the finest example of Marxist dialectics married to featherlight electronic pop as exists in the English language. ★★★★★

Sound: Despite their lo-fi image, Stereolab and main man Tim Gaine in particular have a delicate ear for warm, analogue-sounding electronics and coolly endearing vocals. Throughout, it sounds like the friendliest of computers at work. ★★★★★ DO



SANDY DENNY

The North Star Grassman And The Ravens

Island

Music: In 1971, Sandy Denny was riding the high of highs. For her first solo outing (original title *Slapstick Tragedies*), engineer John Wood and producer Richard Thompson alchemically produced gold from a singer who was legendary at putting things off till the last second. *Late November* and *The Sea Captain* sound like Fairport Convention never sundered and the dronal masterpiece *Next Time Aroun'* will take your breath away. This disc also comes with wonderfully stripped demos and non-orchestrated bonus tracks. ★★★★★

Sound: From Richard Thompson's jazz-inflected electric guitar to Hary Robinson's lush string setting the sound never falters a jot. ★★★★★ MP



AMADOU & MARIAM

Dimanche à Bamako

Other

Music: Blind husband and wife duo Amadou & Mariam from Mali have long been favourites with the world music audience. But, with Manu Chao in the producer's chair, *Dimanche à Bamako* should be the crossover album that finds them a broader audience. The duo's earthy sound remains intact, but Chao has given them a dramatic makeover through his own flair for a pop melody. The irresistibly catchy *Senegal Fast Food* finds him taking the lead vocal and is the most immediate track, but the entire record brims with winning tunes. ★★★★★

Sound: Anyone who bought Chao's *Clandestino* album will love this, as he brings the same thrilling sonic audacity to a production that sparkles with rule-defying invention. ★★★★★ NW

DVD-AUDIO & SACD

PORCUPINE TREE

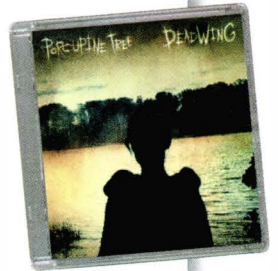
Deadwing

DVD-Audio (24/48 surround, DTS 5.1, PCM stereo)

DTS Entertainment

Music: Porcupine Tree are a British band, but sound American enough to enjoy most of their success over there. A four piece rock band with keyboards in place of a second guitar, their influences would appear to be a mix of Rush, Muse and the likes of Stone Temple Pilots. Theirs is a small niche in a big field, but the use of light and shade marks them out from the competition... and makes for atmospheric listening of the sort that's well suited to the multichannel experience. Described by some as prog-rock, *Deadwing* has variety if not quite the originality of early prog, but it does not lack in power and energy and is not unafraid to show its more sensitive side. ★★

Sound: All three versions of this album are 24-bit/48kHz and thus don't really push the envelope of fidelity, but the production is very slick and the surround mix opens things up to good effect. ★★ JK



SCHUBERT

Octet in F Major: Op Poth. 16

Camerata Freden

DVD-Audio (24/96 surround)

TACTET DVD D133

Music: If you don't know the great Schubert *Octet*, here's a safe home for your money – a glowing performance in superb surround sound. The music is unfailingly song-like, with a richness of thematic content and development, in a work apparently inspired by Beethoven's *Septet*. Scored for string quartet and reinforced by a double bass, clarinet and horn, the textures are as light and as open as air, while the structure hints at the symphonic skills that he was honing on his way to being the composer of the great *Symphony in C*, the 9th. Camerata Freden approach the work with freshness and vitality, and consummate musicianship. ★★★★★

Sound: Schubert's *Octet* is a great subject for TACT's Real Surround process, which places the instruments around the listener, whose viewpoint is directly in the centre. The effect is analytical in a positive sense and also instructive, making it very clear how the work is put together. ★★★★★ AG



JOEY RAMONE

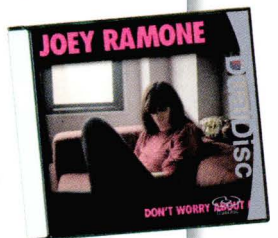
Don't Worry About Me

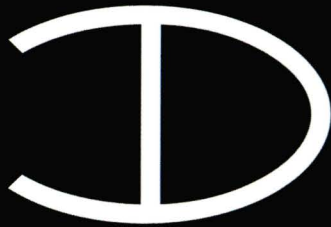
DualDisc (one side CD stereo, the other side multichannel DVD-Audio)

Silverline

Music: Bass thumping Dee Dee may have been the punk heart of the Ramones, and guitarist Johnny the blurred fingers behind their raw power, but it was singer Joey who gave them their pop appeal. His impossibly gawky frame hunched over the microphone, it was his love of pop and surf tunes that gave the band their melodic hooks and raised them from yet another nascent New York punk band into one of the greatest rock bands ever. His only solo album was released shortly after his death from cancer in 2001 and is a bracing batch of punk-pop covers and original songs, including the heartbreaking anti-cancer anthem *I Get Knocked Down (But I'll Get Up)* and a punked up but successful cover of *What A Wonderful World*. ★★★★★

Sound: With echoes of legendary producer Phil Spector's work on the Ramones' *End Of The Century*, the album has a big, broad sound a world away from da bruddas' early output. The surround mix offers a more luxurious alternative without over-egging the pudding. ★★ DO





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Practical Hi-Fi, Warrington, Tel. 01925 632179, **Sound Seduction**, Sevenoaks, Tel. 01732 456573 - **VideoTech**, Huddersfield, Tel. 01484 516670

Densen products are in a minimalist Scandinavian design, which are made of 100% non-magnetic aluminium, making the casing slim and sexy like none other. No visible screws make the cabinet look like one slab of aluminium.

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"The absolute reference or simply an exceptionally transparent electronics, opinions differ, but results endure: a profound respect for the modulating signal and the musical message which should delight the most sharpened ear".

MANUFACTURE - 5 out of 5 stars
MUSICALITY - 5 out of 5 stars
QUALITY/PRICE - 5 out of 5 stars
Review of the B-250 pre amp
By Haute-Fidelite (France)



Though design is important, music is what is really close to our heart. Our philosophy is that music must be engaging to listen to, and we are not satisfied until you feel like standing up, playing the Air-Guitar and forgetting ALL about Hi-Fi. After all a good hi-fi system is a tool to enjoy and discover music !

Having taken so much care in designing and producing our products, we naturally back it up with a decent warranty, so we give a lifelong warranty to the first owner. As we believe audio equipment should be a worthwhile investment, we try to design our products so that they can easily be upgraded in the future.

Densen products are ready for the future. For example you can upgrade the CD players and add external power supplies to pre-amps and the tuner. Upgrade your system from being a dedicated stereo system to a high-end surround system. Upgrade the power and integrated amplifiers with electronic crossovers for active systems. Our own Denlink system provides multiroom capability, and even the possibility to dim the lights in your room.

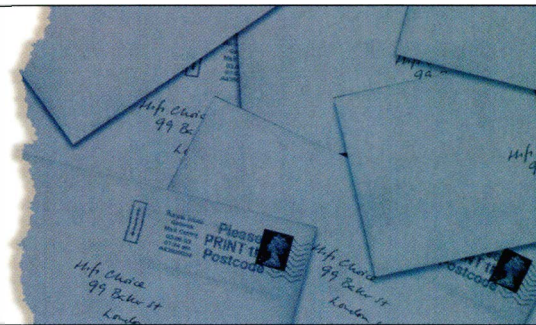


ChoiceMail



The pick of this month's best letters

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



★ LETTER OF THE MONTH

BOX OF DELIGHTS

I enjoyed the review of the Arcam Solo CD receiver in *HFC* 268 and it got me thinking. Both Linn and Arcam have all in one CD/amp/tuner combos, so why not an all-in-one box but with universal disc replay... a kind of UniClassik or UniSolo? Can you imagine it? Audiophile performance, all of the formats and just one box. If it were modular, consumers could add features as they desire – such as a 5.1 card, DAB module etc. I think this could turn the John Lewis shoppers into audiophiles!

Mike Taylor via email

HFC It could just happen, and we like the idea. It depends on demand for an all-format player outside of hi-fi circles. When you consider the current level of interest in DVD-Audio or SACD among audiophiles, it's hard to imagine a more mainstream universal version being made. But, we shall see!



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: Linn LP12 turntable

CRIED OFF

I read with interest the comments by Sevenoaks Sound and Vision managing director Paul Lee Kemp, in *Choice Mail* (*Suffer The Consequences*, *HFC* 268). I think he should spend more time watching what's going on in his shops, rather than crying over a few people who demo kit and then don't buy. Women go into many shops trying on shoes and not buying – and you never hear shoe shops crying.

Dave Whitter via email

HFC We wouldn't say women never buy shoes, however, there are many businesses that experience consumer 'browsing' before seeing a purchase – magazines being both the biggest victims and the biggest beneficiaries of browsing. There are two sides to this debate, though. It would be sad to see high street retailers disappear, as we would all suffer but equally, consumers are acting just like many businesses do – sourcing the cheapest supplier. As long as you're under no illusion about the level of customer care you get from the best dealers, you pay your money etc...

LAZY SUNDAY AFTERNOON

I recently grabbed the June issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* (*HFC* 267) and powered up the hi-fi before trying to read the *Ultimate Group Test* on £1,000-£1,500 loudspeakers. Getting half way through each article, I kept losing my place – I've heard *Money for Nothing* a thousand times, but when the drumbeat kicks I have to pay attention! Here's a simple test you can do at home – if you can read a whole article (of anything) whilst playing music, there must be something wrong with your system. Anyway, my system is old and a bit neglected. My LP12 must need a service by now, the cartridge is eight years old, but,

“My LP12 must need a service by now, the cartridge is eight years old, but I blow on it now and again.”

I do blow on it now and again if there is a big clump of fur visible. All this in a smallish lounge, at low volume and I am in hi-fi heaven. I am sure there are better systems out there, but I work all day and would rather just sit back and listen. Eugene Tan hit the nail on the head in *Choice Mail* (*Beautiful Surprise*, *HFC* 267) – a great deal of enjoyment can be had with a VW Golf, but don't stop writing about the Ferraris – who knows, someday I might be able to afford one! Keep up the good work.

Gavin via email

PUKKA

A couple of things have made me think about hi-fi now and in the future. Jamie Oliver has been talking food to children and apparently held up a carrot and asked, "What's this?" to a reply of "Onion? Potato?" etc. The children had no idea. What has this to do with hi-fi? I'll get to that in a moment. The second thing was Natasha Beddingfield's recent concert, which was broadcast to mobile phones where the MC stated that music lovers no longer had to go to concerts to experience them. These two things have got me worried for the future of hi-fi. If a child doesn't know a carrot from a potato what chance have they knowing the difference between a guitar and a piano, yet alone a clarinet and an oboe? If ☐



Above: Denon DVD-2900 universal disc player

their only association with live music is through a mobile phone, how would they know what an instrument should sound like? Therefore, why would they want to spend money trying to replicate the sound in their homes? What effect is this going to have on the future hi-fi buying public?

Paul Delarue via email

HFC The same worry was expressed at the start of the Walkman age, and look how many cassette buyers now own a CD player? But, perhaps children don't want CD players, amps and large speakers anymore – everything can run from a PC and music can be downloaded. At least, that's one opinion. We maintain that there will always be music lovers and for those that truly love music, hi-fi will continue to be the means to maximising pleasure. As long as CDs and vinyl are still in circulation in 15 years time we should still have some kit available to play it on.

R.I.P. HIGH RESOLUTION

The tide has turned on DVD-Audio and SACD, it seems. Sentiment has turned sour and a lot of people are giving the formats a kicking. Perhaps they are simply tired of being told what they should be buying and listening to? Don't the music companies and

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YOU DO WHAT YOU LOVE WHAT YOU DO WHAT YOU LOVE WHAT YOU DO

“High-resolution hi-fi gear should have been marketed as two channel – it's too late now, we've moved on.”

manufacturers get it? No one wants 5.1 speakers in their home. This is not America – we don't have entertainment rooms. We have pre-war terraces, flats and ever decreasing room sizes in new build housing. Music from behind your listening position – so what? High-resolution hi-fi gear should have been marketed as two channel – perhaps then audiophiles would have given a monkey's. It's too late now, we've all moved on.

Mr Walker via email

HFC Moved on where? So long as the major labels back the formats, universal players have a chance. With a universal player, you can always configure in two channel mode anyway, enjoying CD along with high resolution formats. We're still amazed at the lack of promotion behind both formats, however. Let's see if DualDisc gets a bigger push...

CHOICE CUTS

Some of your SACD/DVD-A disc reviews are a bit obscure. I couldn't find the EST *Viaticum* SACD anywhere and retailers were drawing blanks. How about printing contact numbers?

Mike Devonshire via email

HFC Although the CD is widely available, the SACD of *Viaticum* is an import, but it can be bought from www.actmusic.com and Amazon Germany – www.amazon.de. Also, try ACT's UK distributor, Proper Music Distribution, on 020 8676 5190 or email sales@proper.uk.com.

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I am considering used electrostatic speakers but I'm a little concerned about being able to judge their condition. Can anyone suggest what to look out for..?

Pmac

I've just had some Quad ESL-57s refurbished and experts in all things Quad can be found at the following Yahoo! Group: quadhifi@yahoo.com.

Still Tones

I was surprised when unpacking my new Quad 11Ls to find a pair of white gloves included. Maybe I can use them to start a career as a snooker referee..?

Fatsculler

Does it void the warranty if you don't wear the gloves..?

Alladinsane

I've had free CDs, T-shirts, badges and mouse mats, but never gloves. I also once got a briefcase with a MC cartridge!

DaveWhit2

Anyone got any ideas how to dust equipment racks without moving the boxes..?

Michael

There is a special tool for this problem – it's flat duster with a handle. Hopefully one of the lads will know what its name is.

Razz

Surely you mean one of the lads' wives/girlfriends/partners will know?

Tazz

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Body and soul

Some hi-fi is faster than a Ferrari and thinner than Jodie Kidd. This beefcake combo restores a sense of proportion

To the best of my knowledge, no hi-fi reviewer at the sharp end of the business has ever employed the phrase 'a lovely tone' to describe the sound of a hi-fi component. Tonality is a valid enough subject that allows any number of descriptive possibilities in pursuit of subjective precision: fat, thin, warm, cold, strident, mellow, smooth and coarse are merely the cruder examples. But 'lovely' tone? No.

Pity. My grand-dad, long since passed on, frequently used to comment that his Grundig Yacht Boy – a monster of a portable radio back in the days when Grundig was a quality gig, with more bands at its disposal than Bob Geldof – had a lovely tone. I was just a kid – yet to thumb through the my first hi-fi magazine – but I knew exactly what he meant. It meant just right. Neither too fat nor too thin, too warm nor too cold. The sound had legs beyond the leading edge, a depth, a substance and a complexity of texture that was both inviting and reassuring. Male voices sounded golden, massed strings romantic, brass bands brassy.

Rose tinted? Quite possibly, especially by the standards of what followed. Speed, resolution and rhythmic alacrity made quite a splash in the 1970s and 1980s and attracted a following that still marches to a snappy beat. Especially here in Blighty – we got into the rhythm method even more than a brace of popes. It was an important development that pushed audio designers in the right direction. By the same token, there were those who felt left behind, who felt that they were being short-changed and who, to be blunt, yearned for the return of tone controls, so that they could fashion their own 'lovely tone'. One theory is that the high-end, in at least one of its more multi-faceted guises, has grown up to meet that demand.

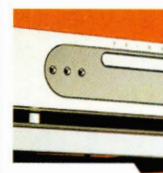
Of course, the truth of it is that tone controls aren't the answer and never have been. A little treble cut and bass boost can warm things up and give you a rough approximation of what some people call the 'radiogram sound', but for it to have real body, weight, control and that elusive 'human quality' – as well as the pace, transparency, clarity and detail vital for true high-fidelity reproduction – it needs the inner structure and solidity only a seriously capable (read big and expensive) system can give.

BIG IS BEAUTIFUL

And here it is. Big and expensive is comfortably handled by the hugest and heaviest speaker yet to grace the pages of *Beautiful Systems* – though, at £6,000, not quite the priciest. Hailing, perhaps unsurprisingly, from Southern California in the USA, the F50a is the top model in Revel's more 'affordable' Performa range. It's a lofty beast, but elegantly narrow and its five drivers are deployed in the all-important quest of delivering a genuinely wide bandwidth. The complement comprises a trio of ceramic composite 165mm cone woofers, which are said to reach all the way down to the lowest octave with the help of a large, rearward-firing reflex port. A 135mm ceramic composite cone driver gets the critical middle frequencies all to itself. Finally, the F50a's 25mm titanium dome tweeter claims a frequency response extending far beyond the audible spectrum (ideal for SACD) and allied to wide dispersion characteristics.

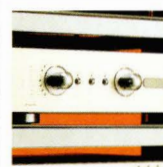
Two sets of high-grade terminals for bi-wiring or bi-amping are provided, but more unusual is the tweeter output level control that allows a one decibel boost or cut (in 0.5 dB increments) to compensate for room acoustics and loudspeaker placement. Constructed from what Revel calls "specially

"For sound to have real body, weight and control, it needs the inner structure and solidity only a seriously capable system can give."



Primare CD31
CD player
£1,500

New flagship disc spinner from Primare combines spare, clean-cut looks and fortress build with state-of-the-art internals and a big sonic performance.



Primare PRE30
preamp
£1,200

A peach of a preamp, the PRE30 delivers purist sonics but doesn't stint on facilities. Cool 30-series design and excellent build are major attractions.



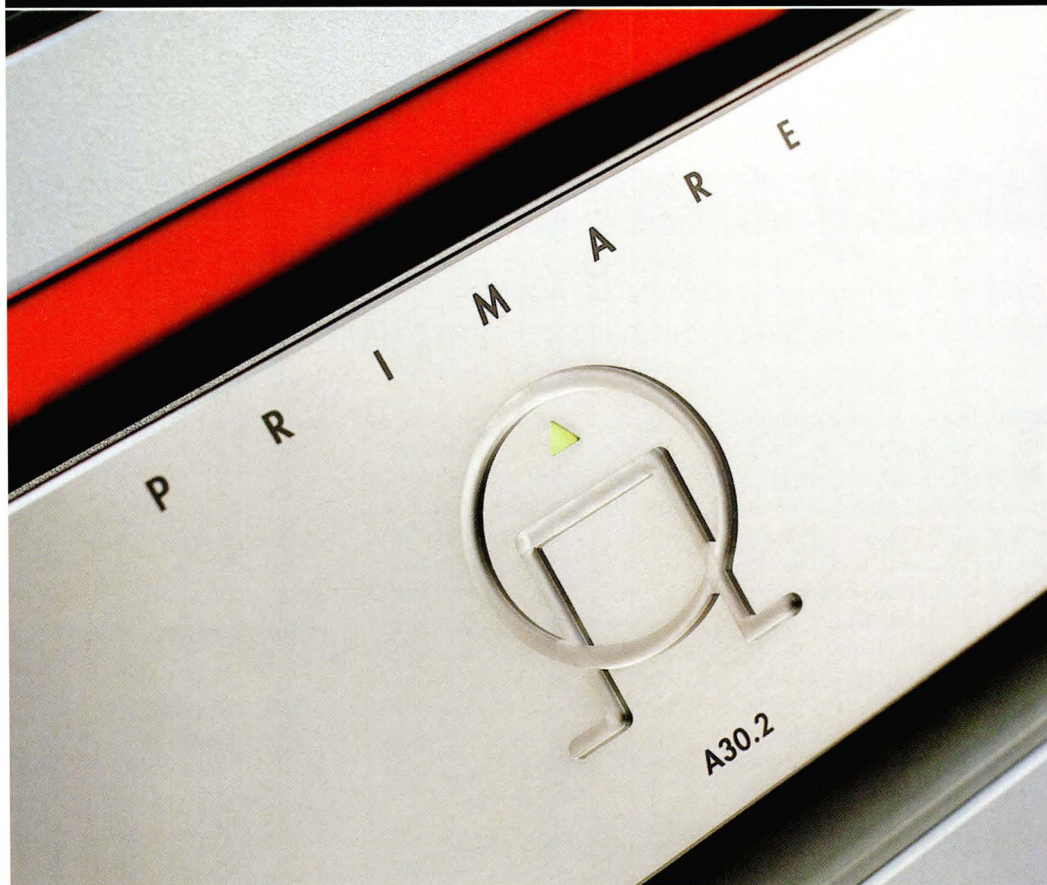
Primare A30.2
power amplifier
£1,200

Back-strainingly heavy, the A30.2 doesn't disappoint when it comes to taking control of big, complex speakers. Serious grunt meets grace and finesse.



Revel F50a
loudspeaker
£6,000 per pair

True wide bandwidth performance in typical Revel style. Brings music to life with an unforced delivery that simply sounds more real.



braced composite material" and finished in real wood veneer, the F50a's cabinet isn't exactly a thing of vanishing subtlety, but it is a satisfyingly understated piece of woodwork that's less imposing in situ than it is wrestling it out of its transit carton. Interfacing options with the floor include reversible spike feet to accommodate installations on carpet, tile, or hardwood. In addition to the maple finish of the supplied pair, it can also be had in equally pretty natural cherry or black ash finishes. The full-size black front detracts slightly, but the whole finish is extremely classy.

SWEDISH SOPHISTICATION

The latest disc spinner and pre/power amp combo from Sweden's Primare – a company, like Revel, with a reputation for concentrating on the whole performance envelope rather than just tunes and timing – make an arresting partnership with the speakers, sharing a similar solidity of architecture and simplicity. The sophistication is all on the inside. The stated aim of its CD31 CD player (an evolution of the highly regarded D30.2) is to "extract the last elusive nuance from CD and shrink the noise-floor almost to zero". At least according to Primare's blurb.

The new player uses high grade discrete circuit components and fully balanced low-noise topology

throughout, matching a high-quality 24-bit DAC (for 96kHz sampling) with a high-performance 24/96 filter, and an ultra-low noise, high-speed output stage with the aim of preserving every musical nuance. Multiple isolated low noise power supplies are said to keep the musical signal free of electrical interference and to exploit the full potential of the CD31's balanced design.

Attention to detail is typically meticulous, down to the gold-plated analogue, digital and balanced outputs. The weighty robustness of the heavy steel casing inspires confidence, too, as well as matching Primare's other 30 Series designs.

Not least the PRE30 preamp, designed by Mike Bladelius (of last month's *Beautiful System* fame). Under the cool Scandinavian lid is a new Class A coupled (single-ended type), discrete and fully-balanced design. The input stage comprises J-FET input devices coupled in a fold back cascade for maximum transient speed. All stages are current loaded and the current source is thermally compensated, (no DC servos are needed). The output stage uses MOSFET devices.

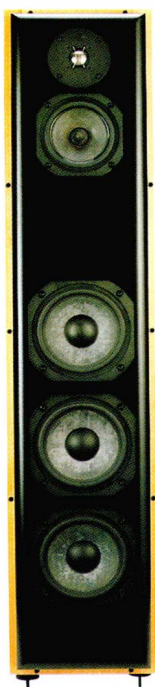
For the power supply, a custom-made 100VA toroidal transformer and double active regulators are teamed with local regulators to ensure that all stages in the design receive the current needed for

optimum performance. And the shunt to ground type volume control is usually found in much more expensive products, according to Primare.

The preamp offers full remote control of all functions, including switching for its seven inputs (two sets of balanced and five sets of unbalanced). It also provides individually adjustable input sensitivity for all inputs and a surround processor throughput, allowing the listener to use the PRE30 in a home cinema application.

Talking of home cinema, Primare has a reputation for high-quality multichannel components that only a handful of European brands can match. But this system is all about glorious, three-dimensional stereo, so the task of driving the big Revels is undertaken by the brand's chunky A30.2 power amp. A dual-mono design delivering 120 watts a side – each channel has its own identical, dedicated mono amplifier incorporating a heavy-duty, custom-made toroidal transformer and low noise regulated power supplies – the A30.2 uses four ultra-fast bi-polar output devices in a push-pull configuration. Each employs a low level of negative feedback – crucial, says Primare, to the reproduction of music if it's to sound natural.

Like much of the Primare range, the A30.2 is a weighty piece of kit constructed from 2mm thick steel. The





“If your idea of the high end is sound that’s faster, grippier and more agile than a Caterham Seven, this system might seem a tad dull. But we guarantee it will only seem so initially.”

back plate features seriously heavy-duty gold-plated loudspeaker terminals along with gold-plated RCA and XLR inputs.

MORE MUSCLE, MORE MUSIC

As with big American cars, so with big American speakers: there’s no substitute for cubic inches. The big Revels have so much grunt, grip and grace you have to steel yourself from winding up the wick until the walls start to ripple Matrix-like. If you feel inclined to listen to Eric Clapton live at close to stadium levels without a bead of sweat rolling those towering baffles, they’ll happily oblige.

Their sound is lushly detailed and insightful yet never forced or spot-lit. They’re strong at the frequency extremes (especially bass) and beautifully voiced in the middle. They image in 3D, they’re fast and they rock. They go loud effortlessly yet stay smooth and refined yet deeply dynamic. Most remarkably of all, they create the almost tangible presence of real musicians in the room. That elusive sense of ‘body’ I mentioned earlier.

All the better, then, that the amplification isn’t in any way bright or

lean. If you thought the archetypal smooth, laid-back, full fat West Coast sound was a thing of the past, think again; this system delivers a particularly polished version. In fact, if it were any more West Coast, it would turn The Prodigy into The Eagles every time you play a disc. Fortunately, the amplification isn’t *that* laid-back.

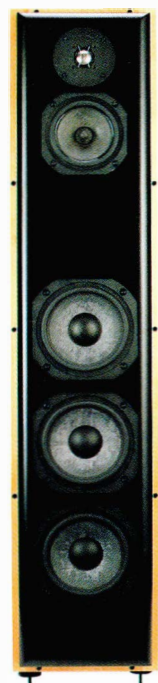
It isn’t just that the bottom end has satisfying weight, power and extension; mid-range and treble are wholesomely natural and full, too. True, this isn’t the airiest sounding system you’ll ever hear, but neither does it want for delicacy, detail or atmosphere. Not that your attention is constantly drawn to such things. The bigger picture is far more enthralling – it’s effortlessly musical and deeply enjoyable, especially when the sound is delivered in such a supple, loose-limbed manner.

So, if your idea of the high end is sound that’s faster, grippier and more agile than a Caterham Seven, this system might seem a tad dull. But we guarantee it will only seem so initially. After a while, you’ll find yourself

connecting more with the music and thinking less about the hi-fi. Yes, it’s smooth... but only inasmuch as it doesn’t draw attention to any particular area of the frequency range. More importantly, it successfully captures the structure and timing of a performance and, again, does this without undue emphasis or exaggeration. Too many timing-oriented systems deliver a perfect beat at the expense of the rest of the performance, and even the most potent ambassadors of timing (such as Naim Audio) have, of late, racked back a touch to produce a more balanced overall sound.

The Primare and Revel combination can project an expansive soundstage and image convincingly. And it can be subtle and seductive, too. It can even keep a beat. But best of all is the way this system brings a natural harmonic richness to instrument timbre and the emotion it can pull from a simply sung song if it’s there on the recording. The result is, of course, a hi-fi experience of the very highest order – but one most memorable for its lovely tone. **HFC**

David Vivian



The colouration's in the finish



Not in the music



REVIEWS



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

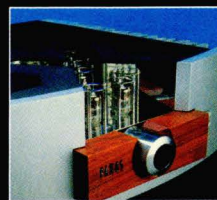
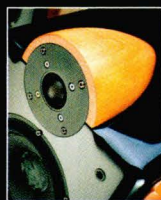
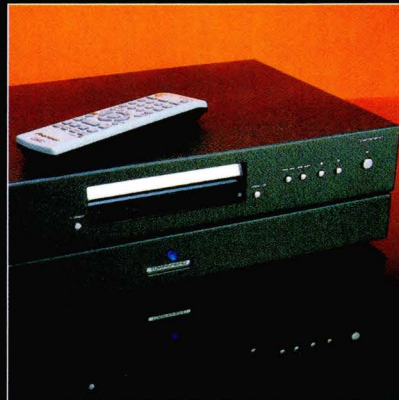
ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

CD PLAYERS £900-£1,700

- 64 Audio Analogue Paganini 192/24
- 65 Consonance Reference CD2.2
- 67 Cyrus CD8x
- 68 Myryad MXC6000
- 69 Primare CD31
- 71 Shanling CD-T100C

EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

- 40 Pathos Cinema-X integrated multichannel amp
- 44 Sonus Faber Concerto Domus loudspeaker
- 48 Townshend TA 565 CD universal disc player
- 50 Densen Beat B-250 preamp and B-350 monoblocks
- 54 Usher Compass CP-6381 loudspeaker
- 56 Phonosophie Impuls 1.5 CD player
- 59 Sumiko Blue Point Special Evo III phono cartridge
- 61 Grado SR325i headphones



OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

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

Our overall conclusion after a livelier... through. The Siemens-equipped player has an snappier sound with better timing that es with dense material with remarkable 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

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...

The eXorcist

Pathos lays the ghost of cold, brittle multichannel amps to rest with the mellifluous Cinema-X

PRODUCT Pathos Cinema-X

TYPE Integrated multichannel amplifier

PRICE £4,750

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 42x19x52cm

• Weight: 33kg • Valve preamp stage, MOSFET power amp stage • Five channels, grouped in stereo mode • 5x110W or 2x450W • 5.1 input • Stereo inputs: One balanced (XLR), four RCA phono plus tape loop

CONTACT ☎ 01753 652669

🌐 www.pathosacoustics.com

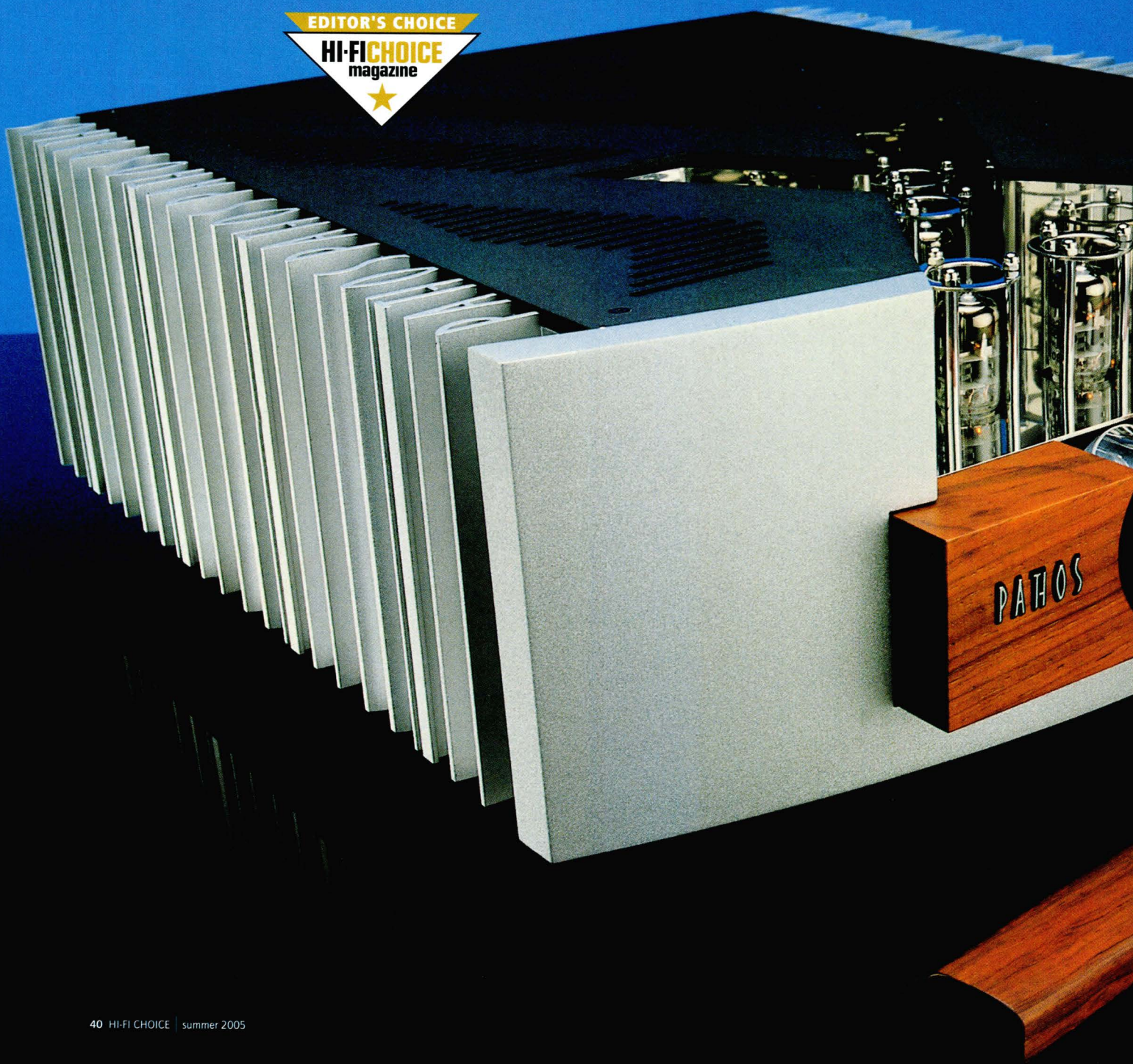
Let's start by getting the negatives out the way first, shall we? What kind of name is Cinema-X? It hardly engenders this fine amplifier to the hi-fi fraternity and, worse still, makes Pathos' ground-breaking slab of audio engineering sound like it's some kind of dodgy 1970s brit-porn. Okay, we can understand why it's an apt name – the Cinema-X can be used as an integrated multichannel amp (as well as

stereo) and the sextet of valves are arranged in a pretty X-shape, but we still can't help thinking about gussets and wah-wah pedals...

This has to be one of the biggest and boldest multichannel statements yet reviewed by *Hi-Fi Choice*, in part because it's one of the least multichannel of multichannel products. There's no fancy digital signal processing in the Cinema-X, at all. Instead, you have five

EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE
magazine



identical 110-watt solid-state MOSFET power amplifier boards fed by a valve preamplifier which is, in turn, driven by whatever DVD decoder you choose. There's no internal decoder whatsoever, although the individual channels can be adjusted for volume level in the installation stage. Given that this is likely to be partnered with a 'universal' DVD player, and given that all universal disc players have processors built in, this seems like an exercise in smart thinking on Pathos' account. There is no extensive video switching either... so yet another chance to ruin the sound of the system is left well alone.

There's just the one 5.1-channel analogue audio input (with a matching composite video input) into which your multichannel component of choice may be plugged. This is joined by a single balanced stereo input with

XLR connectors, two stereo inputs with accompanying composite video sockets, two RCA phono line-only/audio-only inputs, one tape loop and outputs for composite video, a subwoofer and up to five speakers. In a way, composite video is too limiting for videophiles, who prefer component video, perhaps S-Video or even new interfaces like HDMI. This means those who care about such things will likely by-pass the perfunctory video switching inside the Cinema-X, and this will help improve the amp's sonic potential significantly.

What's really clever, though, is what happens when you switch from 5.1 to one of the stereo inputs. The power amp stages are automatically grouped together for two-channel sound, no longer delivering a healthy 110 watts per channel, but an insane 450 watts – times two!

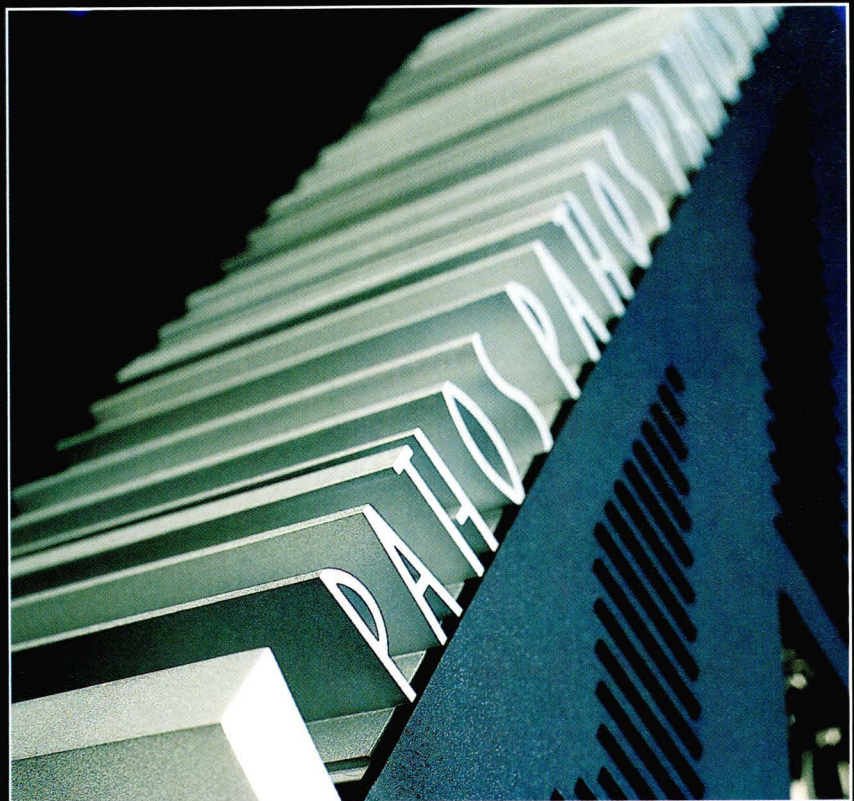
This is a valve/transistor hybrid design. Each channel of the preamp stage – including the subwoofer section – has its own ECC88 double triode valve, and this means the preamp operates entirely in Class A, while the power amp stages are solid state. Being Italian and stylish, Pathos doesn't just keep the fancy design on the inside; the Cinema-X makes the most bold design statement you'll ever see on a multichannel amplifier. The valves are entirely external, encased in chrome-plated

guards. These are arranged in an X-shape – hence the name – and this is surrounded by the black top cover of the electronics. Cleverly, the walls of the top cover are chrome plated too, meaning that looking from the front, the Cinema-X looks like it has dozens of valves, in a sort of *Enter The Dragon*/circus mirror effect. Add in the big centre volume control with LED readout built in, the wooden front panel and the heatsinks that read 'PATHOS' and the whole package isn't one for shrinking violets.

Of course, design can go too far. The beautiful wood and metal remote control has just four press-studs with no markings, and the minimalist fascia controls are just as oblique. Okay, the manual describes their use and familiarity soon makes it easy to understand, but that familiarity takes time – some writing on the product would be nice! Also, the sheer size and weight of the amp, and those almost impossible to hold heatsinks, mean you should be very careful during installation.

Once installed, of course, the amp is a complete doddle to use. You can set up individual channel levels, or remove channels if needed, indicated by the six LEDs inside the volume control. Then, when powering up after set-up is done, that centre LED block shows you a big red 'P' when warming up for the ▶

“From the front, the Cinema-X looks like it has dozens of valves, in a sort of *Enter The Dragon*/circus mirror effect.”



Q & A

Gianni Borinato, co-founder, designer and chief of R&D at Pathos Acoustics, discusses the hybrid nature of Cinema-X and what goes into a good amp design, multichannel and stereo



HFC: Why choose a hybrid system?

GB: We have always developed hybrid circuits, believing that the vacuum tube is the best component to amplify the audio signal in terms of voltage, while solid-state components are better able to supply high current to the load. Thus, it seems obvious to design hybrid circuits. However, some hybrid circuits that have been designed seem to sum the respective drawbacks of the two worlds. Our challenge at Pathos is to try to sum the respective advantages.

What makes Pathos' hybrid design unique?

We acknowledge that there are excellent all-tube and excellent all solid-state amplifiers on the market. However, like every designer, we have our beliefs and we stick to them. Tube amps deliver low current at a very high impedance, so that they need an output transformer to be able to drive the speakers. This is an extremely critical component that has a heavy influence on the sound. OTL (output transformerless) technology resolves this issue – however, we think a tube is not the best component to drive current directly to the load.

On the other hand, solid-state components represent an ideal driver of the load. However, these are normally subject to some distortion of the odd harmonics, something to which the human hear is quite sensitive.

Pathos was founded on the solid basis of a technological innovation, the INPOL circuit, which has been designed to overcome the above mentioned limitations. With this technology – which is implemented in the Pathos TT, InPower and Inpol² amps – the tubes amplify the signal while the solid-state electronics only provides current to adequately drive the speakers.

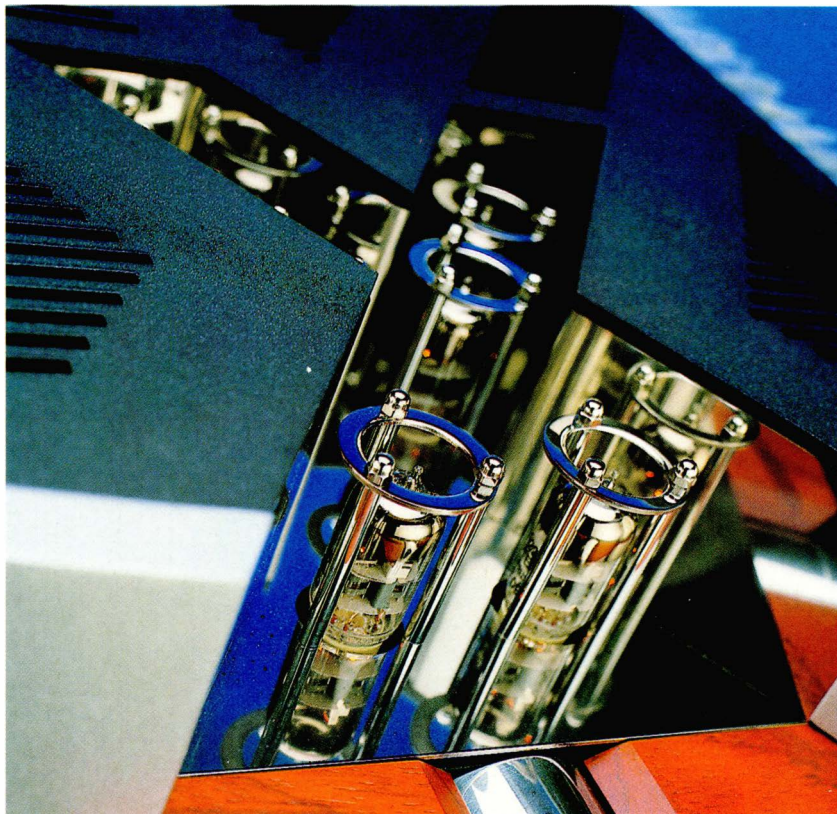
As with every solution, INPOL is not free from drawbacks: a high intrinsic cost (huge inductors, selection of components...) and some limitations in the output power, since the circuit is pure Class A and therefore develops high heat. So we later designed another group of power amplifiers—which are implemented in the Pathos Classic One, Logos, and Cinema-X – where we make use of MOSFET power stages in Class A/AB so that we can achieve high power at reasonable costs.

Is multichannel a problem for hybrid designs?

There are not too many problems, besides the usual issues of microphony and diaphony.

Why have you avoided the use of DSP?

The Cinema-X has been conceived as a no-compromise audio machine that provides the audio enthusiasts the flexibility to watch movies without scarifying the sound and without needing another piece of equipment in their living rooms. With this purpose in mind, we did not feel the need to include digital signal processing.



“The idea of switching from 110 to 450 watts may put the willies up some... but the extra power means more grip and headroom.”

▣ first 15 seconds, the volume level when raising or lowering the gain, the input when running through source selection and two little dashes when in muted mode. The great thing is, though, you don't need to actively switch between multichannel and stereo modes – as you rack through the sources, so it changes from two to six-channels automatically.

SOUND QUALITY

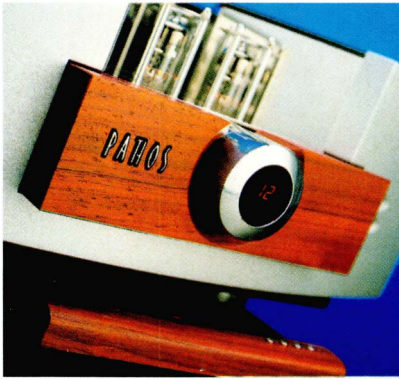
The idea of switching from 110 to 450 watts may put the willies up some listeners, expecting blown drive units every time stereo is selected. Don't worry, there's no dramatic increase in volume level. The extra power comes across as more grip and headroom and – unless you choose to experiment with how long it takes to turn your speakers into a smoking ruin – the two channel mode is just as well behaved as the multichannel.

But it's still a big sound. Big in 110 watts mode, bigger still when there are 450 watts up your speaker terminals. There is a sense of scale that is almost alpine; an orchestra is pulled wide of the speaker boxes, and the speakers themselves seem to have been given a size upgrade. There is considerable depth and even some genuine height to the sound, too. The combination of depth, width and height makes the sound seem huge, perhaps

too huge: a solo voice can sometimes seem as if it's about five metres tall and four metres wide!

There is a good, natural sense of dynamic scale, too. It's not the most obviously dynamic amplifier ever made and the American penchant for microdynamics – the dynamic envelope of a single note – is an element that's largely underplayed. But instead, dynamic shading is entirely right-sounding. Often, those amplifiers that concentrate on the tiny changes in dynamics of an individual instrument miss out on the bigger picture. Here, the Pathos concentrates on the whole sound, perhaps at the expense of some of the smaller things, but this gives a great feeling of an overall performance on a natural scale.

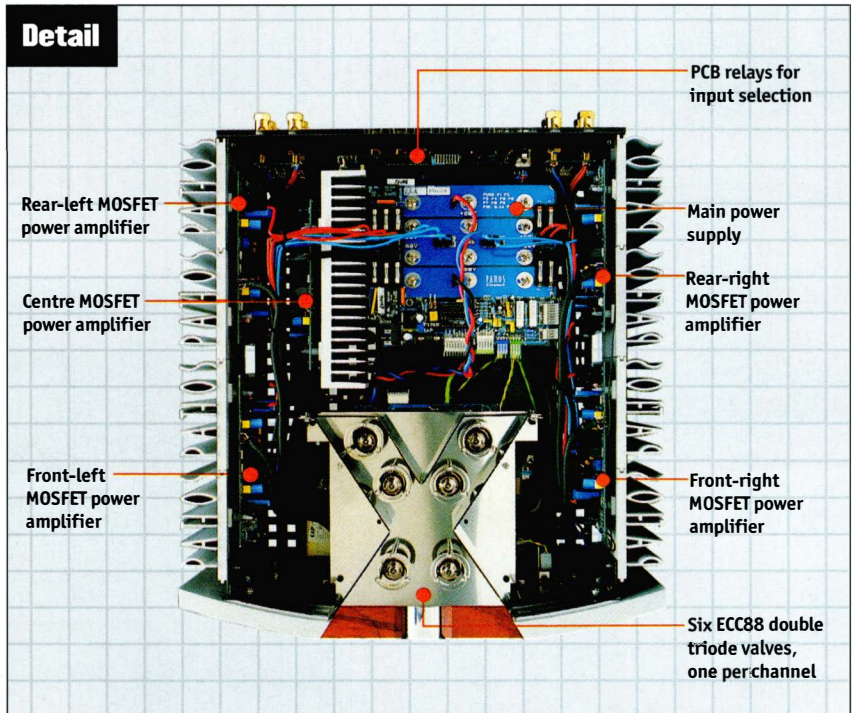
A more pressing criticism is in the rhythm department, but whether this is a deal breaker depends on your perception of the importance of 'timing'. Those who can hear the timing changes in an alarm clock will find the Cinema-X hard to stomach, but those who aren't so obsessed by the pace of the sound will find the amplifier perfectly acceptable. In short, if your last amplifier was a Naim, your next one will not be a Pathos. But, those who rejected the rhythmic sound of many Brit-fi amps for being too forward and almost fascistically controlling the beat, will grow to love the Cinema-X for its big, easy and dynamic performance.



There is a common sound to Italian amplifiers, it seems. They are almost unilaterally warm and slightly romantic sounding. Perhaps they're not as snappy and rhythmic as some, but the sheer beauty of the sound wins many over. There are precious few amplifiers that sound this smooth, relaxed and... well, *creamy*, especially the sort of amplifiers that can pump out nigh on half a kilowatt. You can almost imagine this amplifier crooning out *O Sole Mio* on a balmy night in Venice, even when you are playing Schoenberg. Of course, if the words 'rose tinted' are simply not in your vocabulary, move on. But, those who like some warmth to their sound will warm to the Cinema-X... and there's a secret bonus for five-channel listeners.

This warmth is not that uncommon among stereo hi-fi amplifiers, but is almost unheard of in multichannel. Even high-quality multichannel audio is almost pathologically connected to clean, sharp, solid-state impact, and for some hi-fi aficionados this sound is simply too sterile. There's worse to come from home cinema, as most amplifiers in this category sound untenably brittle to those who like the classic sound of valves. The Cinema-X is an extraordinary alternative – a refreshingly mellifluous integrated multichannel amplifier.

Not much has been made of the detail so far, but again it falls into the 'big, but natural' camp. There is a touch of veiling that stops the instruments from taking on holographic qualities, but this matters less when the Pathos



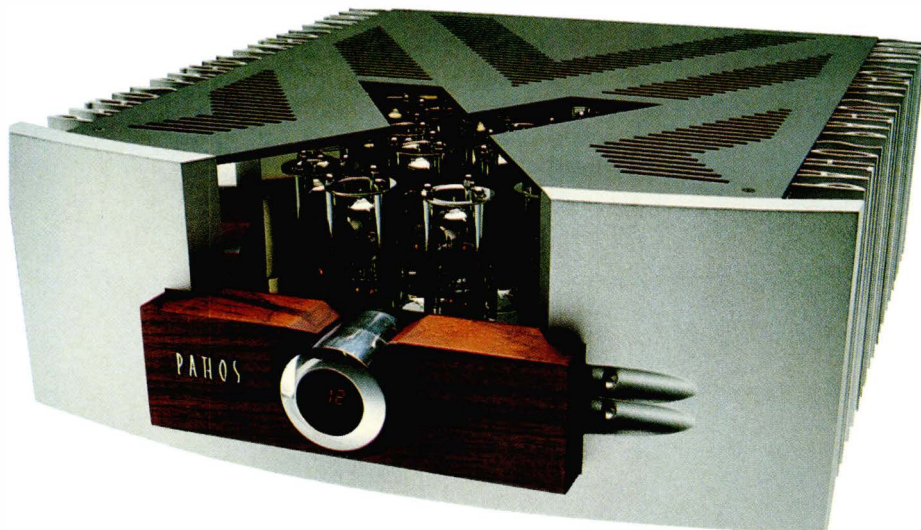
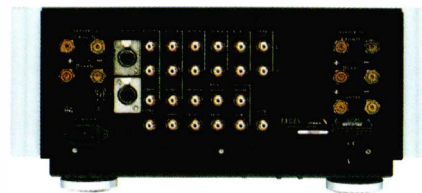
delivers the sort of image size that is big enough to give your room the TARDIS treatment – it expands the performance beyond the limits of the walls of your room and makes things sound wonderful, if not strictly neutral in tone.

VIDEO PERFORMANCE

There really isn't much video processing on tap, with only a handful of composite video inputs. These drag down the quality of video signals to a lowest common denominator, something that the audio never does. But in the end it doesn't really matter – it's best to overlook the video switching altogether if you want to optimise this amp's audio quality. With video signals connected, the sound seems to be that bit more grainy and diffuse. Pop 'em out of the equation and the sound tightens up and seems more extended and grain-free, especially in the treble. Leave the amp to pure audio, then, and route any video signals elsewhere.

We are prejudiced against pretty audio, especially in England. Unless it looks like it was built with hammers and a cold chisel, we think too much money has been spent on the looks and not enough on the audio circuit. But the Pathos Cinema-X is strikingly beautiful – and has a big, elegant sound to match. Some will think its character too rich and opulent, while others will bask in its generous, ear-hugging majesty. Most of all, though, anyone who fancies having their multichannel music and movies delivered with lashings of Italian romance should park their ears here. **HFC**

Alan Sircom



VERDICT

SOUND >> 89%
 >> SUB RATINGS
 STEREO 87% MULTICHANNEL 91%

FEATURES >> 70%

BUILD >> 92%

VALUE >> 85%

CONCLUSION
 A fine solution for the multichannel-meets-stereo system. With pretty looks and an equally pretty sound, this big hybrid amp is not the quickest, the cleanest or the most detailed, yet its big, mellifluous sound is marvellously entertaining.

PRO
 A beautiful looking product with a sound to match, one of the most ear-pleasing ways to unite stereo and multichannel amplification in a single box.

CON
 Rose-tinted sound doesn't major on fine detail. Too esoteric and minimalist for mainstream home cinema.

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 87%

Homely honeys

The new Sonus Domus range includes a revised Concerto, to prove that home is where the heart is

PRODUCT Sonus Faber Concerto Domus

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £1,799 per pair

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 20.5x99x31cm

◉ Weight: 23.3kg each ◉ 25mm ring radiator tweeter

◉ 180mm bass/mid drive unit with coated paper cone

Sensitivity/impedance: 88dB/4 ohms (nominal)

◉ Finishes: combination of black leather and teak or

black piano lacquer

CONTACT ☎ 020 8971 3909 # www.sonusfaber.com

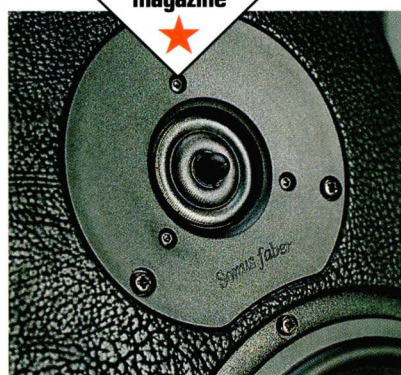
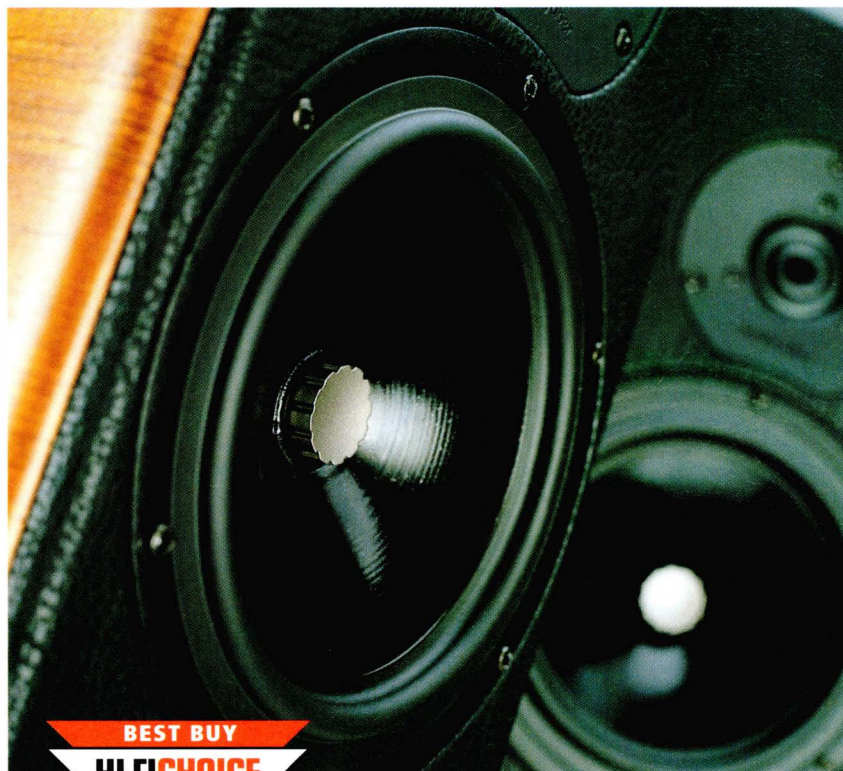
Sonus Faber, unarguably Italy's premier speaker brand, draws on a rich Italian vein of superb craftsmanship in wood. The company often designs enclosure shapes inspired by musical instruments, and the new Concerto Domus ('Domus' is 'home' in Latin) is suggestive of the cross-section of a lute.

Like a lute, the back panel of the speaker effectively disappears in this design – only a very narrow strip remains externally, through which the single-wire speaker terminals are attached. This leaves a front panel wide enough to accommodate the bass driver, a reflex port and two converging curved side panels. These help to reduce and disperse cabinet resonances, and ameliorate the effect of internal standing waves.

You might suppose this is very much the kind of thinking that a musical instrument maker would employ to conceive a loudspeaker. In Sonus Faber's own words, taken from a recent email conversation, "our lute-shape designed cabinets have the important feature of minimizing the negative effects of standing wave resonances, partly due to the virtual absence of the rear panel".

Compared to its immediate predecessor, the Concerto, the Domus presents a number of enhancements, only one of which is the acoustically improved enclosure shape. An even more obvious change comes from stretching the previous standmount enclosure all the way to the floor, partly to achieve "more impressive bass" and also because the designer considered that "spending money on an increased internal volume would mean a greater performance boost than spending a similar sum on a good stand" – but this rather invites the question of what the Concertino Domus (essentially a pint size, standmount Concerto Domus) is all about.

Other design features have also been changed. The customised Vifa 180mm bass/mid driver is fitted with a new basket intended to reduce compression (Sonus Faber doesn't specify, but this is presumably thanks



“This is very much the kind of thinking that a musical instrument maker would employ to conceive a loudspeaker.”

to reduced aerodynamic loading) and it also boasts a new, solid phase plug instead of a conventional dust cap. The cone material is a surface treated pulp, chosen for the particular application. The Vifa tweeter is also new, a ring radiator unit, again customised for its role, which was chosen for its dynamics and the linearity of its frequency response. Both units,

and therefore the system as a whole, are magnetically shielded, although as we move out of the time of CRT television screens, shielding becomes less and less important.

The crossover is set at 3.6kHz, and has compound slopes – low order (6dB/octave) near the crossover point, increasing to higher order further away to avoid energising out of

band driver resonances unduly, and to reduce overlap. With a nominal system impedance of four-ohms, sensitivity is 88dB/Watt @ 1 metre. The latter figure seems a little optimistic to us, as does the rated 200-watt unclipped power handling ability. It certainly doesn't seem that sensitive, and clean power handling is probably a little less than the raw number implies.

As with all Sonus Faber models, the standard of presentation and finish is something truly special. Not as special as the much more costly high-end models from the same marque, but the combination of horizontal wood veneers on the decoupled (for resonance control) side panels, and leather on the baffle and top, along with very impressive attention to detail – for example, the high-quality 4mm binding posts attached directly to the back panel rather than the usual plastic moulding – combine to produce a loudspeaker that looks nothing less than superb. The only note that might seem discordant to some, though not to readers of *HFC*, is the steel overhanging baseplate which is fitted with spikes in each corner. Of course, something of the sort is clearly necessary to ensure stability, but does the plinth have to look so brutally utilitarian?

SOUND QUALITY

A little scene setting is in order as a prelude to the comments that follow. First and foremost, if you're looking for a loudspeaker that tells the literal unvarnished truth, what is often described as a 'maximum information' design, the Concerto Domus is probably not for you. Even some less costly models, such as the soon-to-be-tested Dali Ikon 6, come closer to this kind of ideal. The Sonus Faber is arguably not a particularly convincing rock 'n' roller either, lacking the precision and power of the best in this respect. In fact, its bass is notably deep and impressive, but it doesn't go particularly loud before it gives up the ghost under pressure, first compressing, and finally entering a region of clear distortion. At moderate volume levels this is not an issue, but one of the qualities of this speaker is that its sound is so easy on the ear that the temptation is to turn the volume up, and to keep on turning.

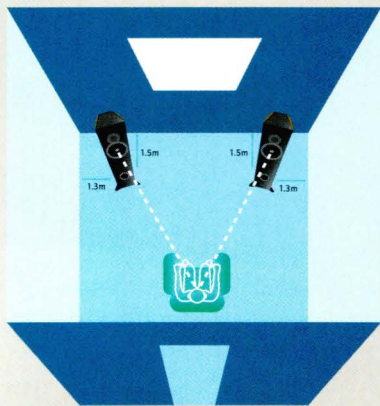
Don't take the above as any kind of direct criticism of Sonus Faber. It's just that the Concerto Domus is far from being all things to all men. It is a very particular kind of loudspeaker, one with a very obvious character, but also a thoroughly musical and enjoyable sound that stops just short of 'colored'. It is an exquisitely refined and musically expressive loudspeaker, one that presents music in an organic and measured way, one with a top to bottom coherence and consistency that is genuinely quite rare.

The *quid quo pro* is that the Concerto Domus needs to be handled carefully, particularly if the bass is not to sound overcooked. This is addressed overleaf in the *Set-Up* side bar, but the speaker's natural ▶



[Review] Sonus Faber Concerto Domus loudspeaker

SET-UP



POSITIONING

Positioning the Concerto Domus successfully is a matter of attending to three major parameters – space, space and space. The idea is to avoid exciting room resonances associated with the major room dimensions, and in practice, this means placing the speakers away from the back wall – by as much as a meter and a half in the test room – and from the side walls, ensuring that the distance from the front panel to the two walls is dissimilar.

The Concerto Domus is not a tall loudspeaker, but it is tilted slightly back, so as long as you don't sit too close, the tweeter will point more or less directly towards the ear in the vertical plane, which is precisely what is required. If you find yourself sitting uncomfortably close, the speaker's vertical orientation can be adjusted slightly by differentially adjusting the front and rear spikes.

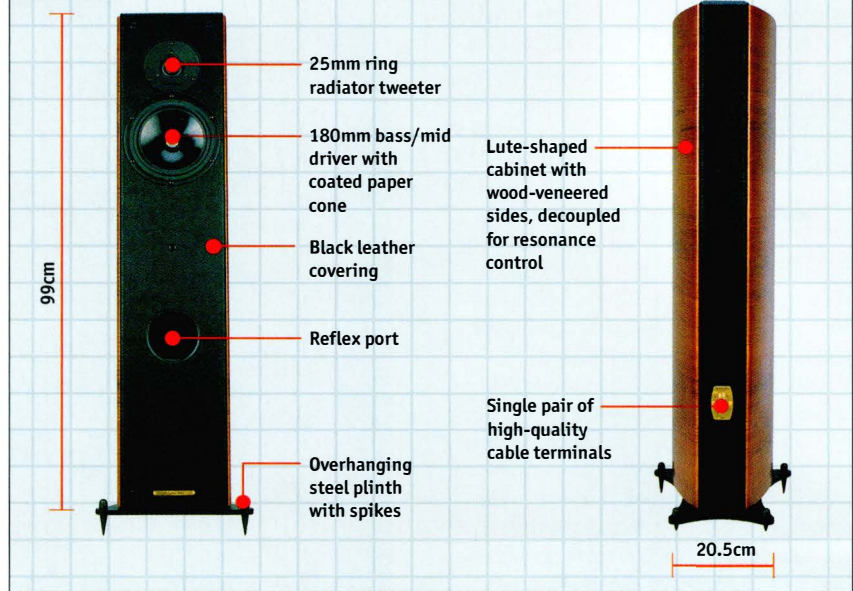
By the same token, you will achieve the best results when the speaker is toed in just enough to point directly towards the ears in the lateral plane too. Place it too close to side walls, or use a room that is too cramped, and the speaker doesn't 'breathe' properly, and the sense of wide dynamic swings in the music tends to be suppressed.

SYSTEM MATCHING

The Concerto Domus gives no obvious indication of being an electrically difficult load, and because its presentation is not as razor sharp as some, it ought to be an easy amplifier match. In practice, however, this is not strictly the case. The four-ohm impedance makes it somewhat current hungry, despite the optimistic sensitivity figure. This is a loudspeaker that thrives on relatively meaty, powerful amplifiers, even if it isn't going to draw fully on their output stages. It is also a good choice for use with (reasonably powerful) valve amplifiers, judging by the comfortable results it produced with a Macintosh MA2275 stereo integrated amp that happened to be available during the test period. However, the nature of its bass suggests that it won't be an appropriate match for some of the less well disciplined valve amps – this means most of them, in reality.



Detail



tendency is to sound warm – generally a touch too warm and full to be completely believable, though there is something about the grace and sheer euphony with which the Concerto Domus goes about its job that this and other departures from neutrality fail to hurt. This is always a thoroughly enjoyable loudspeaker, undoubtedly better than the old Concerto, and its departures from the straight and narrow, such as they are, do nothing to soil the very real pleasures inherent in a well-captured musical performance. Part of its secret is its consistency – the way that the bass fits with the smooth, layered midband and the ultra-refined treble.

One particularly enticing feature of the Concerto Domus is the way it projects a stereo image that's rich in depth cues. It favours longer than normal listening ranges, but repays the investment with an unusually rounded and three-dimensional soundfield, which has palpable depth and weight, and which provides a strong sense of presence. It holds up pretty well off-axis too, the imaging anchoring itself in space to roughly the same location as that from a pair of speakers toed in conventionally by, say, 15 degrees. In a similar way, the

Concerto Domus makes a good fist at living with listening room acoustics. Where other speakers produce a perceptibly hard or detached reverberant soundfield, this one almost seemed to revel in the structure that the listening room provided, and it appeared to bolster the three-dimensional nature of the speaker's sound, too. In some ways, this came as a surprise given the high crossover frequency, but low rate crossover slopes may be a factor.

Fluid, organic musicality is what the Concerto Domus is all about. It is a loudspeaker that is demanding in



positioning, and the quality of the equipment further back up the hi-fi chain, and its particular areas of musical competence lie in the acoustic and classical, or 'unplugged' rock idiom. Within these limits, though, you should find that this is a loudspeaker that can ignite a real passion for listening in depth and at length. We did not enjoy the act of parting from this particular model, and that's high praise indeed. **HFC**

Alvin Gold

VERDICT

SOUND >> 88%



EASE OF DRIVE >> 75%



BUILD >> 94%



VALUE >> 89%



PRO

Refinement and sophistication personified, this compact floorstander has musical stature well beyond the norm at this price.

CON

Doesn't have the authority or raw power to deal convincingly with high octave rock, dance music and other electronic material.

CONCLUSION

Less 'wooden' and more fluid sounding than its predecessor, this is a superb musical instrument (literally as well as metaphorically) that is optimised for the reproduction of acoustic material at low to medium volume levels.

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

Caspian M series Caspian M series

The **M-series**, twenty years of **pedigree** combined with **passion**,
design **integrity**, copious hours of listening and refinement, **intelligent** application of
technology and **Flawless** implementation of design make the **M series**
an unparalleled **experience**. The very best of audio **performance** with system
upgradeability. **Enjoy** true **musical** performance with **style**

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Henley Designs Ltd
01235 511166
www.henleydesigns.co.uk

Back in black

Townshend's super-player has been improved... again. The new black finish is only the start

PRODUCT Townshend TA 565 CD

TYPE Universal disc player

PRICE £3,000

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 42.8x11.5x28.3cm
• Weight: 9kg • Plays CD, SACD, DVD-Audio and DVD-Video discs • Based on Pioneer DV-565A player, heavily modified and upgraded • Pure Audio stereo outputs • Coaxial digital output • Video defeat switch

CONTACT ☎ 020 8979 3787

🌐 www.townshendaudio.com

Townshend Audio is a bit of a maverick. The standard practice within this industry is to design a product and put it into production; if the designer discovers a means of improving that product, that modification is usually stored up for a MkII model a year or two later. Townshend Audio can't wait that long: despite the TA 565 universal disc player being launched just over a year ago, it has gone through no less than four stages of evolution in that time. Townshend Audio can do this because the player is not made by the thousand on a production line... well, at least not once it has got to Townshend Audio. As the name suggests, this machine started life as a modestly priced Pioneer

universal player, but in Townshend's hands it has become a hand re-built and extensively modified giant-slayer in black crackle-finish stainless steel armour.

The TA 565 was originally built to try and discover the potential of the high-resolution SACD and DVD-Audio formats. With their extra data, so the logic follows, the new formats should be significantly better, and that's largely borne out in listening tests. But, in the process of trying to make a better high-resolution audio player, Townshend Audio also ended up making a better CD player, one that ultimately questions if the old 16-bit/44.1kHz format is the limiting factor after all.

Externally the latest TA 565 looks pretty similar to its predecessors, although the sprung cradle base, designed to offer maximum energy rejection, has now been integrated into the four sprung feet on the bottom of the large power supply that the player sits on. When you look at the back panel, though, there is a change. Townshend has made its own panel that eliminates the SCART sockets and replaces them with a dedicated 'pure audio output' on rather more substantial phono sockets than the standard Pioneer ones. It is still a multichannel

machine, but as most of the work Townshend has done is focused on the stereo channels, this is where the benefits will be most clearly felt.

What you get with the TA 565 CD – over and above the mods in its predecessor, the TA 565 Evo 2 – is a revised power supply with extra filtering, to remove the last vestiges of RF (radio frequency) noise, and extra voltage regulators downstream of those put in for the clock and DAC. This is because it was discovered that the clock signal was being corrupted by the distribution gates that followed it. By replacing the op-amp from the output stage with transformers and a simple filter, Townshend has managed to remove nine out of ten transistors in the signal path. And by employing JFETs instead of BJTs (bipolar junction transistors), it was possible to remove the two remaining capacitors in the signal path, too. The use of zero-offset JFETs ensures there is no sonically degrading DC in the transformer secondary. These coupling transformers use enhanced deep cryogenically treated (DCT) wire, a process of extreme cooling and heating that Townshend has found to be highly beneficial in cables.

The transformer output goes via a simple filter to the analogue output with or without a

EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE
magazine



muting stage – the chunky outputs thus emit a small noise every time the player switches between SACD and CD or DVD (there is no noise if the original outputs are used). One of the criticisms of transformers is that they shift phase as bandwidth increases, but the ones here are claimed to have only two degrees of phase shift at 88kHz and 90 degrees at 250kHz. In other words, this isn't an issue, and neither is low frequency response – the transformers can handle 10volts peak-to-peak at 5Hz (the maximum CD signal is 3V peak-to-peak).

SOUND QUALITY

We'd been warned that this new player opened the window all the way on CD and that this might reveal shortcomings on favoured discs that had never previously been apparent. In practise, what it does is highlight the differences between discs to a greater degree than previously encountered. Some of our discs sounded a little hard at the top end, but most of them sounded far better than we expected... and some were a real revelation.

The biggest surprise was provided by the Third Face CD *Topics in Practical Science*, which generally sounds good but, via the TA 565 CD, gave up shocking amounts of detail and depth. In particular, the articulation heard in the recording's samples suggested considerably greater complexity than is usually apparent. The 565 CD exposes all aspects of the sound, but one area where it does so more ably than most is at high frequencies. If there is a sense of room acoustic or reverb on a disc, it will dig it out in no uncertain terms. This means that you get a phenomenal sense of space with many discs and near holographic imaging – Andre 3000's voice on the intro to Outkast's *Love Below*, for instance, sounds so 'in the room' you feel like you can reach out and touch it.

The key to this player's ability to differentiate so clearly between recordings lies in its lightness of touch. There is never any sense of the digital or electronic and, as a result, timing is perfect. When there's a fast bass line, for instance, other players seem to have a slight lag that the 565 CD avoids; the bass line is as nimble and well articulated as the disc dictates, and if the recording delivers, say, a grungy, heavy bass line that is precisely what you get.

This is not a lightweight sounding machine – let's not forget, it comes from the brand that brought the Rock turntable to the world, a deck that was so called because of the solidity of its bottom end. The 565 CD can turn its hand to bone crunching bass with ease, if you give it a disc like Peace Orchestra's eponymous album. Stick on *Who Am I* and you feel as much of the earth move as your amp and



“The articulation heard in the recording’s samples suggested considerably greater complexity than is usually apparent.”

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

speakers will allow – we've rarely heard this track conveyed with so much articulation and variety in the depth plumbing department.

Another telling indicator of the reduction in distortion is that you can play louder than usual without any sense of fatigue. Billy Cobham's *Spectrum* on DVD-Audio has never quite matched the vinyl before, in part because the older format is more relaxed. But, in the 565 CD's hands, the contest is considerably closer and in many ways the extra precision brought by the DVD-A version puts it in the lead. Through this player, you quickly and viscerally experience the sheer power and speed of Cobham's drumming – on other machines it can sound impressive yet anodyne, here you're left startled and amazed at how anyone can keep a kick drum going at that velocity.

VIDEO PERFORMANCE

As the majority of the work done on this player has been to the audio circuits, the only factor that affects video results are the improvements to the power supply. Nonetheless, the picture has a smoothness and calmness you won't find with the original Pioneer. It might not be up there with the very best, yet its colour, depth and detail are all highly respectable.

This, though, is a distinctly audio-focused machine, and it's in the playback of music from SACD, DVD-A and especially CD that its price is most fully justified.

Sonically, the TA 565 CD is a very unusual player – it digs deep into every disc you spin and delivers the musical nuggets without adding any character of its own. This may seem underwhelming at first; it's not like the muscle of a Wadia or the smoothness of a Lindemann. Instead, it's a pure reflection of the disc and if that disc has its shortcomings, these will be audible as too. Fortunately, the problems on most recordings are rarely unpleasant. Rather, the discs fail to take advantage of the medium.

While SACD and DVD-A both sound superb through the TA 565 CD, it's their rather more popular predecessor that really shines. It would seem there is significantly more to the humble CD than anyone had imagined – all you need is a stonking player like this to reveal it. If the TA 565 CD had battleship build and a five figure price tag it would be considered a world beater, but it wouldn't sound any better, which makes this player a *bona fide* bargain. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



VERDICT

SOUND >> 94%
 Excellent sound quality that reflects the source more closely than the competition. Should be considered for its CD sound alone – the other formats are a bonus!

VISION >> 82%

FEATURES >> 82%

VALUE >> 90%

CONCLUSION
 The original TA 565 was a class-leading audio product and this new version is even better. Its greatest talent is two-channel sound, and with CD it's superb, but multichannel playback sounds terrific too. DVD-Video compatibility is just a bonus!

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 92%





Danish bakin'

We get some hot cookin' sounds from this top-of-the-range Scandinavian threesome

PRODUCT Denon Beat B-250 and Beat B-350

TYPE Preamplifier and monoblock power amplifier

PRICE (B-250) £3,000, (B-350) £5,250 per pair

KEY FEATURES (B-250) Size (WxHxD): 44x6.4x31cm

• Weight: 9kg • Six line inputs • two tape outputs

• four preamp outputs • (B-350) Size (WxHxD): 44x6.4x31cm

• Weight: 15kg • 125 watts (eight ohms)

CONTACT ☎ 01732 451938 🌐 www.denon.dk

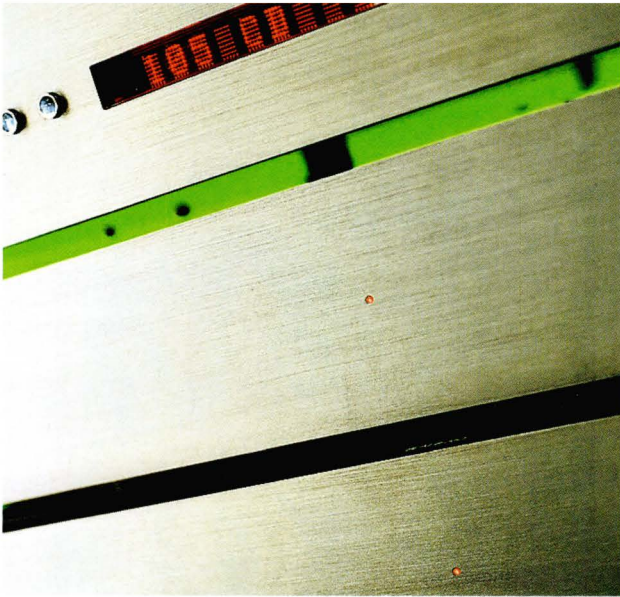
Denon's most widespread product is probably the DeMagic demagnetising disc. Through it, however (since its accompanying booklet is also a full-line Denon product catalogue), many music-lovers will be familiar with the sleek, square, black lines of the company's range of amplifiers. The products come from Denmark, home to many a high-end

brand (think Copland, Thule, Bang & Olufsen...) and seem typically Danish in their espousal of original thinking, both electronic and stylistic.

The basic claims made for these models, Denon's range-toppers, are not so surprising. The preamp offers six line-level inputs (including internally-convertible ones for phono and a multichannel processor) and rather more outputs than usual, with two tape, one processor and four preamp outputs, while the power amp is in essence a simple 125-watt monoblock with the luxury of switchable gain ('high' gain being compatible with passive preamps for lovers of electronic simplicity). However, there is unusual flexibility built in with the aim of providing a low-pain upgrade path to surround sound, active loudspeaker

amplification and round-the-house installation. Denon's SAXO electronic crossover, suitably tailored by the company for your particular loudspeaker model, allows operation with pretty much any speaker, though of course you'll end up with rather a lot of B-350s floating around!

As for surround sound, that requires add-on boards for the B-250, which can then cater for 5.1 or 7.1-channel setups (again with a hefty investment in power amps). Denon is justifiably proud of this upgradability, which is indeed an excellent way of utilising existing resources when converting from stereo to multichannel. Even the remote control (the smart and slick 'Gizmo', a £150 optional extra) stays the same. It's also possible to add boards to the B-250 to handle phono inputs, by the way.



“Where it seems most successful is playing music with a pronounced beat – it seems the name of the range was not given in vain!”

Component quality throughout is excellent and build quality likewise. The preamp uses relay switching of inputs and an electronic volume control, built from scratch, using high precision metal film resistors and relays to give 200 steps from silence to full output. Apart from anything else, this does not restrict headroom in the way that most IC solutions do, but it shares their ability to maintain precise, and precisely balanced, volume steps down to very low levels. In this case, the steps are approximately 0.5dB, which should be fine enough for any listener.

Most of the audio components in the B-250 are contained within metal screening cans soldered to the circuit board, while power comes from three mains transformers and a substantial bank of capacitors. At the rear, prodigious quantities of phono sockets cater for six line inputs, two tape outputs (buffered) and four outputs, while a D connector carries data to facilitate remote operation.

The inside of the B-350 is dominated by a huge toroidal transformer, which justifies Densen's claim that the amplifier can properly double its rated output in four ohms. Again, plenty of reservoir capacitance helps with transient power requirements. Interestingly, the output is handled by a single pair of output transistors, particularly beefy types designed specifically for audio. Each is mounted on its own heatsink on opposite sides of the case and given the generous heatsink dimensions, it seems most unlikely that high temperatures will ever be a

problem. Densen claims that the circuit uses neither local nor global feedback, unusual in a solid-state power amplifier, especially one that claims low distortion as this does.

We weren't able to confirm Densen's distortion figures, obtaining results around the 0.1%-0.2% range for high power into normal loads. That's not remarkably high but far from the claimed 0.005%, and likewise we found the amp's bandwidth to be more like 150kHz rather than the claimed 400kHz. Some figures exceed the stated specification, though, including power which we measured as 180 watts (305 watts into four ohms) and bandwidth of the B-250, which at 2MHz (at least) is enough to amplify both LW and MW radio signals. Bass response of the B-250 is unusual in rising by 3dB at 10Hz to a maximum of 12dB at 2Hz, which could precipitate loudspeaker overload with some analogue sources.

SOUND QUALITY

There's no denying that these units work well together to give an authoritative, detailed and full-bodied sound that's capable of revealing

considerable musical subtlety. The B-350s drive loudspeakers with aplomb, while the B-250 performs its tasks of level matching and source selection with impeccable manners and no obvious side effects.

What we couldn't describe the amplifiers as offering, though, is absolute neutrality. Persistently throughout a lengthy auditioning period, with various sources and loudspeakers, plus a wide variety of music, we felt there was a degree of character to the sound which is not necessarily unpleasant, and is certainly distinctive, but which ultimately does detract from the amplifier's 'success' (if you choose to judge it that way) as a 'straight wire with gain'.

Exactly how you perceive that character will, not surprisingly, depend not least on the type of music you like listening to. Where it seems most successful is playing music with a pronounced beat – it seems the name of the range was not given in vain! Rock, dance, energetic pop and up-tempo jazz all benefit, subtly but effectively, from a very slight lift in the energy of the music which 'improves' the timing and puts the percussion just slightly in the spotlight.

Classical music can also sound very lively, but where texture is more important than rhythm there is sometimes a veiling of detail and a slight loss of stereo focus. This, mind you, is in the context of generally very good detail and of stereo images which are quite exemplary in L/R stability and only slightly less good in terms of depth. In addition, and very

much in Densen's favour, the sound does have that special high-end quality that can really draw one into a performance. Indeed, that particular sonic trait persists under pretty much any conditions and is probably the Densen combination's trump card. It would be nice to be able to hear slightly further into the mix if one wants to, though. ▣



Q & A

Thomas Sillesen, chief designer and founder of Densen describes the methods used to give preamps and power amplifiers a good, strong Beat and how the world is not round... but oval!



HFC: The B-350 is an amplifier without feedback. How do you solve the problems of linearity and output impedance?

TS: Classically amplifier design is done with local and global feedback. Feedback tries to 'hide' imperfections 'beneath the skin' and improve measurements. But, unfortunately, two wrongs don't make a right!

We use neither global nor local feedback loops. We use resistors connected to the individual transistors to define gain and thereby get the linearity right (and other parameters), but they are in no way comparable to a local feedback loop.

What are the advantages of not using feedback in an amplifier of this nature?

Feedback introduces time related distortion that is not reflected by traditional measurements. The feedback takes a couple of milliseconds, and signals are altered due to this delay. The delay also explains why measurements like output impedance cannot be compared directly between feedback and non-feedback amplifiers. Further, the start of the transient determines the perception of it, and even a few milliseconds delay will reduce the grip of the bass (and all other transients).

Audio measurements go in and out of fashion, but we feel that competent design is done by valuing all measurements, and combining them with extensive listening to get both sound and measurements right.

We noted with interest the upgrade path to multichannel: is this where the future lies, or will stereo continue to satisfy music lovers?

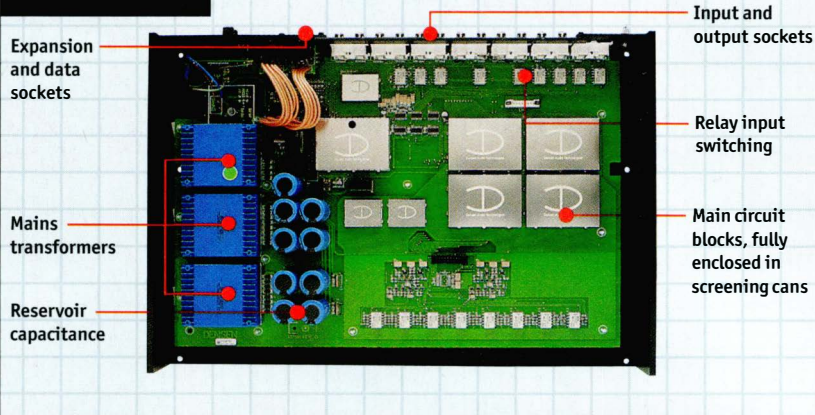
We think stereo is still the main source for playback, and as such the core of any good hi-fi system. Naturally, listeners may wish to expand into surround, active systems and multiroom, hence our new products have these options, but the core is still music.

Given that the B-250 and B-350 are the top of your range, what sonic advantages do they offer over your cheaper models?

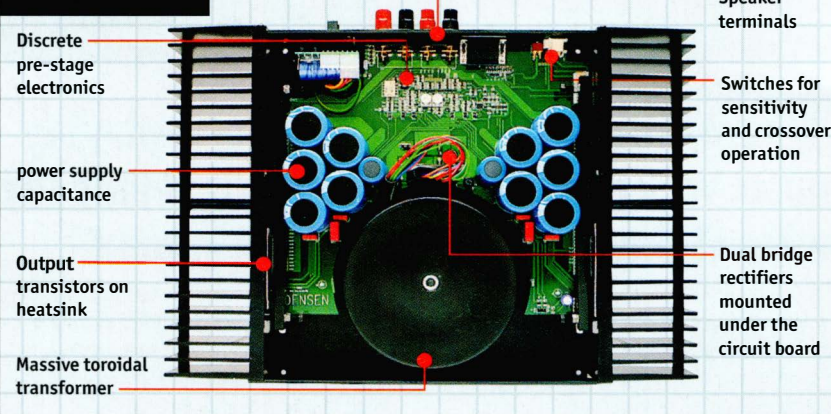
Comparing the B-250/B-350 to their smaller siblings, it is clear that all our products sound the same! The difference is 'only' that you get more of the qualities each time you step up, and as such the B-250/B-350 is the ultimate Densen experience. We believe the world is oval, meaning both musical and technical parameters should be good, and get better, the more money you invest in your system.



Detail – B-250



Detail – B-350



Separating the pre and power amps and substituting familiar references suggested that the character of the two is on the whole evenly matched. The preamp has a very slight sweetening effect but delivers good transparency and excellent extension in both bass and treble, while the power amp also slightly modifies the sound, not exactly sweetening it, but adding a touch of colour especially in busy music. Again, there is no restriction at the frequency extremes.

These amplifiers are beautifully made and in many ways very capable. The upgradability is, in today's world, a major plus (the more so from a manufacturer that seems both inclined and capable to stay the course). The sound is big and bold and such character as it has is likely to please many listeners. Indeed, the excellent punch and timing will probably make some very quick sales in well-conducted demonstrations; if those characteristics are important to you, you should definitely hear these units. Perhaps hoping for excellence on those grounds and also on grounds of ultimate transparency is asking for the moon on a stick, but we did feel that other amps we've heard, including some at less than Densen's fair but substantial price, offer a closer approach to the latter goal, albeit often at the expense of a tight and ordered timing. This demonstrates that the 'all things for all people' product remains elusive, even at this elevated price tag. Nevertheless, we're

more than happy to give these amps a big, bold and perfectly-timed recommendation for lovers of musical vivacity. **HFC**

Richard Black



VERDICT – Beat B-250

SOUND >> 89%

FEATURES >> 88%

BUILD >> 90%

VALUE >> 80%

CONCLUSION

A well specified and highly upgradable preamp with terrific extension and a slight sweetening of the sound that many listeners will love. Great ergonomics too!

HI-FI CHOICE >> 87%

VERDICT – Beat B-350

SOUND >> 88%

FEATURES >> 85%

BUILD >> 90%

VALUE >> 75%

CONCLUSION

Powerful and big, confident renditions of large-scale music in any style, with admirable timing. Just a hint of coloration and some slight veiling occasionally detract.

HI-FI CHOICE >> 84%

Exclusive Brands to Shadow Audio Consultants:

Full-range available for demonstration.



ART Audio
Designed and hand-built in England by Tom Willis, ART Audio Amplifiers are not

just beautiful to behold, but beautiful to listen to as well.

ART Audio Amplifiers can be tailor-made to suit your exact requirements.



Border Patrol
Valve amplifiers that combine superb sound quality with clean retro visuals.

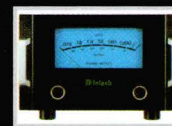
The elegant hardwood plinths house modern, state of the art triode valve circuitry that use the latest high performance modern components.



GamuT
A range that consists of CD Players, Pre and Power Amplifiers. Each and every

product is scrutinised down to the very last detail and the result?

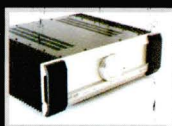
Products that reproduce the entire range of musical notes...



McIntosh
A laboratory is not a factory; it is a place where people search for ways to improve

the quality of life, where things are designed and built to an ever-higher standard, instead of a price.

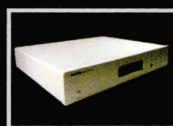
By design... there is nothing like a McIntosh.



Musical Fidelity KW Series
The themes underlying Musical Fidelity's progress

have been value for money, sonic excellence and beauty of design and build.

Much admired by the Press and Customer alike!



Stello
Sophisticated audio components require an experienced and

passionate team.

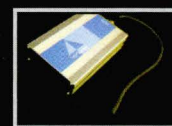
From engineers to chassis designers, every one of April Music's technical staff is an artisan who in most cases is a musician as well.



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True Room Correction and Digital Amplification.

Pushing the limits of technology to bring you the best and most lifelike listening experience possible.

Products that synergistically combine numerous technological innovations to the full!



Vertex AQ cables

"Listen up, and don't skip this section," cos I'm about to reveal the best improvement in my hi-fi system for a decade." - Paul Messenger, Hi-Fi +.

Our favourite range of cables, which have to be truly heard to be believed !! Arrange an audition today.

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

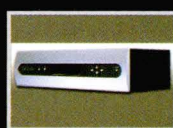
Full-range available for demonstration.



ART Loudspeakers
Based in the west coast of Scotland, ART Loudspeakers are

a company specialising in the design and manufacture of domestic two channel and home theatre speakers.

Speakers that very simply - produce music as it is !



Bel Canto
High-end audio equipment that brings you closer to the music, reproducing

sound so precisely you'll think you're at a live performance. Bel Canto puts you inside the sound stage during recording and brings music and movies to life in your own home.



IsoTek
The Titan (£1425) has been designed specifically for high current applications,

especially power amplifiers. Titan is so powerful in terms of transient ability that it is only limited by the network it is plugged into.

Incredible!



Resolution Audio

By moving the power supply and display of the Opus 21 CD Player to a second chassis, the critical audio circuitry is free to bring out more detail than ever before.

Audition the Opus 21 CD Player and experience the results for yourself !!



Shanling
A range of very distinctive, beautifully built and superb sounding valve

based products from China.

Full-range available for demonstration including the very limited edition SCD-T300. Be very quick if you want one !



Unison Research
Throughout the history of Unison Research, the company has

always demonstrated its mastery of both pure valve amplifiers and hybrid designs.

Why not audition the stunning new Performance Integrated Amplifier?



Wadia
Design true State-of-the-art CD Players.

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Rediscover your entire CD collection today!



Wilson Benesch

The name Wilson Benesch is synonymous with innovative design and advanced materials technology.

They set the standards by which others are judged.

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Come with **FREE** delivery, **FREE** Isol8/Isotek mains cable **worth £49** and a **30-day** money back guarantee.

News & Announcements

Throughout 2005, Shadow Audio will be holding a series of very special Music Evenings.

Why not join us for an evening of music with friends!

Each Music Evening will focus on a specific product or system.

Experts will be on-hand at all times to give advice and answer any questions that you may have.

Please register your interest as early as possible to avoid disappointment.

Places are limited and by appointment only.

We look forward to seeing you !!

Web Site

Shadow Audio Consultants has one of the most comprehensive and informative web sites in the world.

You will find detailed information, images, and reviews for every product that we represent.

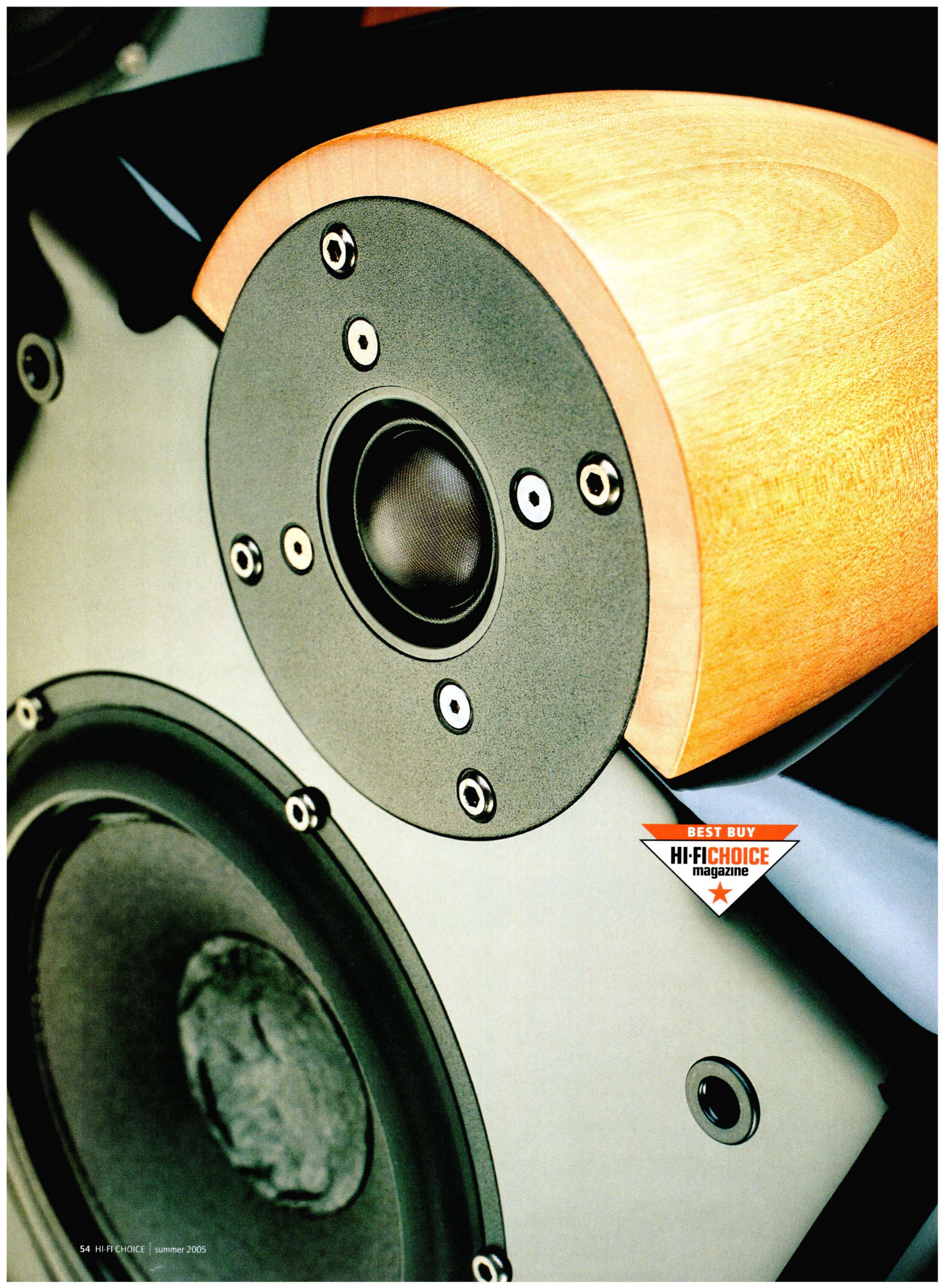
Our web site changes daily, so make sure that you visit regularly.

www.shadowaudio.co.uk

Best Part-Exchange Prices

For full details of our extremely comprehensive range of products, our extensive used listing, links to reviews, technical information and much more, visit www.shadowaudio.co.uk





BEST BUY
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine
★

Orienteering

Usher's Compass points to a huge sound from a big speaker that's full of Far Eastern promise

PRODUCT Usher Compass CP-6381

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £2,400 per pair

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 35x127x65cm

⊙ Weight: 58.5kg ⊙ Three-way design ⊙ Backward tilted time-aligned drive units ⊙ 25mm fabric dome tweeter ⊙ 125mm midrange driver ⊙ 215mm bass driver ⊙ Sensitivity/impedance: 92dB/8 ohms (nom)

CONTACT ☎ 01443 231458 🌐 www.usheraudio.com

Usher might well be a new name to most readers, but this Taiwanese company started over thirty years ago, although it only started looking towards international markets in 2001. Usher has brought in legendary speaker engineer Joe d'Appolito to act as its acoustic design consultant, and imbue the brand with extra credibility.

Although Usher makes a full range of components, loudspeakers are the main stock in trade, and the Compass series is just one of several ranges in the portfolio. For all its very considerable bulk and mass, this CP-6381 is not the top model among the Compasses, and looks exceptional material value for money at £2,400 per pair.

The enclosure alone is a large and massive affair, weighing some 45kg even before the 13.5kg base and mass-loading ballast are added. It's tall, deep, and wide enough to accommodate a good size bass driver, yet it doesn't follow the regular rectilinear shape. Though the front, back, top and base are all rectangular, the sides form parallelograms, so that both the front and back panels are tilted backwards quite dramatically, an arrangement which should help to time-align the drivers.

The enclosure proper is attractively finished in a high-gloss 'piano black' lacquer – seven coats are used, silver or white are alternative options – and all the edges are softened by heavy post-forming. Internal bracing is also used, and two large, thick panels of solid beech are bolted in place to reinforce the top third of each side. Two small optional grilles just cover up the drive units.

The whole thing is mounted on a substantial crackle-finish cast metal plinth

with an enormous stability footprint, and this sits on large, attractive if rather pretentious brass spikes. Sadly, there's no lock-nut provision for added rigidity. The very bottom of the enclosure consists of a separate six-litre compartment for adding ballast.

This is a full three-way design, with nominal crossover points at 323Hz and 2.6kHz. The bass is supplied from a large rear-ported enclosure, driven by a 215mm driver with 155mm paper cone, the latter being deliberately very coarsely textured to help break up standing waves. The midrange driver has a 125mm paper cone and 170mm frame, and is set high up near the top of the cabinet, a little above head height, in its own smaller rear-ported section of the enclosure. The 25mm fabric dome tweeter is set higher still, so that half of this unit protrudes above the top surface, protected by a little semicircular hardwood mounting nacelle. Twin terminal pairs allow optional bi-wiring or bi-amping.

SOUND QUALITY

The specification claims just 87dB alongside an eight-ohm load, which seems unduly cautious. Using our usual far-field in-room averaged technique, the sensitivity registers a much higher 92dB, which is particularly impressive in view of the eight-ohm load it presents to the amp, and a fine bass extension that records -1dB at 20Hz under in-room conditions.

Indeed, the low bass is perhaps too strong, in part because the port is tuned to deliver its maximum output at 29Hz, but the overall balance is very well ordered above that point, with just a slight lack of output in the region around the lower crossover, and slight

unevenness and excess in the upper midband. The treble is very smooth, if a shade stronger than average.

The 6381 has a punchy, lively and dramatic sound, and its massive bass weight brings considerable scale to the proceedings. It might not be the last word in smooth sophistication, but it does drive the music along with plenty of enthusiasm, while also staying largely free from unwanted bass boom or thump for a big design.

Paper cone drivers have a certain character that doesn't lead to the tidiest or most controlled sound around, but they do also offer a fine sense of immediacy, with vigorous dynamics and good communication skills. Voices sound open, speech has fine expression and intelligibility, and even the applause accompanying radio broadcasts sounded very convincing. Stereo images are precisely defined and focused, free from boxiness and develop good depth perspectives, and this was particularly noticeable with orchestral material.

By chance, the Usher followed a pair of B&W 802Ds into the listening room, and despite their very different physical appearances and engineering, the overall in-room tonal balances of the two models turned out to have a lot in common. And, although the big B&W has obvious advantages in smoothness and sweetness, the Usher still did a remarkably good job considering it costs less than a third of the price of the 802D.

Judged by these high standards, the 6381's top end is a shade obvious, and even sometimes coarse in texture, while the midband shows some nasality and hollowness, with slight 'cupped hands' coloration. The bass might be on the cool side too, but it's also notably agile and authoritative. Adding the supplied ballast further tightened up the bass end, reducing cabinet coloration and 'thickening' effects.

Speaker design is all about compromise and balance; while 'cleaning' up the bass region is a mostly positive move, it does also leave the mid and top sounding a shade more exposed. But, such balances are to be expected when you successfully build so bold a speaker statement at this kind of price. **HFC**

Paul Messenger



VERDICT

SOUND >> 89%



PRO

Fine material value for money. Sound has massive weight, fine balance, wide dynamic range, strong imaging and impressive midband articulation.

EASE OF DRIVE >> 90%



BUILD >> 91%



CON

Very bulky, backswept tilt can look strange. Mid and treble have some nasal, hollow colorations, and could sound sweeter and more discreet.

VALUE >> 87%



CONCLUSION

If the sheer bulk is acceptable, this speaker offers a fine all-round performance at a relatively modest price, considering the finish and engineering. It could sound cleaner and sweeter, but is fundamentally involving and informative.

HI-FI CHOICE
OVERALL SCORE



88%



Acting on Impuls

Germany's answer to Naim turns its turntable wisdom to digital audio with this upgradable player

PRODUCT Phonosophie Impuls 1.5

TYPE CD player

PRICE £3,675

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 44.7x7x34cm

• Weight: 7kg • Upgradable design • BNC electrical digital output • RCA phono or DIN analogue outputs • High quality mains lead • Variable output

CONTACT ☎ 01730 261924

Ⓜ www.phonosophie.co.uk

This distinctive looking CD player is one of four by Hamburg-based Phonosophie.

The company name being a combination of 'phono' (as in 'turntable') and 'sophia' (which is Ancient Greek for 'wisdom'), perhaps it's no surprise the brand's first products were extensively modified variations on the Thorens turntable theme.

In 1986, Phonosophie became the first Naim distributor in Germany, then later branching out and making its own extensive range of hi-fi electronics. Recently, Phonosophie started to build its own Impuls CD players of which the 1.5 is the second one up in a range that reaches its apex with the £12,725 Impuls 3.

Those seven years with Naim left their mark. The Impuls players broadly follow the Naim creed – each can be upgraded to the next

model in the range, either by manufacturer mods or by adding external power supplies. All four players share the same back plate, which features a power supply socket, but only the top two models are able to use an external supply without modification. The Impuls 1.5's back panel is unusual in other ways, too. There are both DIN and phono socket outputs – the latter featuring WBT Nextgen connectors – a BNC digital output and a pair of phonos for wired remote operation.

A number of extras are included with this player, the most unlikely of which is a selection of Haribo sweets. Less likely to make the player sticky are a DIN-to-DIN interconnect, a copper mains lead and a silver BNC blanking plug to screen the digital output when not in use. As Phonosophie goes along with Naim, DNM and a few others in espousing the wonders of DIN connections, it also supplied its own £125 PK2 DB52 DIN-to-phono lead for the purpose of the review. Unusually, this interconnect does not go straight from DIN to phono plugs but terminates in BNCs, which have adaptors to phono attached. This is because the company suggests that impedance matching issues with this approach are more effective than going straight to phono plugs. Intriguing...

The Impuls 1.5 itself uses a Philips transport mechanism and what is rather vaguely described as a one-bit digital-to-analogue converter. It differs from the Impuls 1 (£2,675) in having faster and higher grade voltage control circuits for both current and filter stabilisation. Not a great deal else is said about the internals of Impuls players, save that they have a custom made toroidal transformer that's "built like a sports car: as powerful and fast as possible".

The unusual casework is an aluminium clamshell that's deliberately kept light and thin to avoid resonance problems, because the lighter something is, the less energy it can store. Phonosophie makes equipment supports that follow the same ethos. The front panel illumination can be instructed to stay on or off, but it's recommended that you use the sleep mode. This dims first the display and then the button legends ten seconds after use. It looks nice as its happening and removes a potential source of interference from the player, but it does leave the thing looking almost dead (the brand name remains alight) and makes it hard to find the flat keys in low light. All you have to do is stab at the front panel in approximately the right place and they all light up. With



“It makes you appreciate the actual musical and lyrical content of an album, as well as any manipulation of sounds in space.”

practise, you can hit the eject button without illumination, but sadly it's not an option on the rather busy system remote.

SOUND QUALITY

With its supplied copper mains cable and DIN-to-phono lead (it turns out that the phono outputs themselves are not actually connected unless you request as much), the Impuls 1.5 proved a highly engaging musical experience. It has a distinctly reticent top end that doesn't do much for the reproduction of 'air' and upper harmonics but seems to do plenty for resolving fine detail and untangling dense mixes. It has what could be described as a modest balance, as dynamics are not all that distinct and the bass is tuneful and weighty without being overtly muscular. As a result, first impressions tend not to be very inspiring, but after a while you find that you are being drawn into the music in no uncertain terms.

This result can be achieved by focusing on the midband and not bothering much about transparency, but the Impuls is a revealing player. In fact, whatever you stick in its tray gives up its inner detail as well as it delivers the fundamentals. The Impuls doesn't let an album wash over you or let you drift away from paying attention to the music; instead, it makes you appreciate the actual musical and lyrical content of an album, as well as any manipulation of sounds in space. Radiohead's *Kid A* demonstrates this perfectly: the producer clearly went to some effort to create a full-scale musical event with samples and instruments positioned very specifically, and this is not something all players will tell you.

The restraint at high frequencies has two effects – the positive one is that recordings with harsh top ends, like Outkast's *Love Below*, are rendered more smoothly, so that one's attention can focus on the music and not the

production. On the flip side, there's some loss of soundstage depth, and orchestras don't fill the room as well as they might. Yet surprisingly – and this is where one begins to question the nature of high frequencies from other players – there's plenty of detail in the treble department. We can hear reverb on instruments that don't usually reveal as much and tremolo on voices that seem quite straight on other players. The degree of compression used in recordings is also quite clear, perhaps more so than usual, which suggests that it is a dynamically accurate rather than enthusiastic player.

As our reference Resolution Audio Opus 21 CD player also uses a DIN output, we swapped players over. The PK2 cable put in an impressive performance with the Opus 21, sounding vivacious and three dimensional. Maybe there's something in those BNC adaptors after all.

We also tried the silver mains lead that can be had for an extra £60, if purchased instead of the copper one. It wasn't a big change, but this brought a slight improvement in the treble extension and extracted more fine detail out of the mix.

The Impuls treads an unusual but ultimately successful line. It may not appeal to the out and out hi-fi buff, but the music lover will find it difficult to fault. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

VERDICT	
SOUND >> 89%	<p>PRO High resolution in all but the highest frequencies, plus a clear and almost ecological upgrade path. It's extremely engaging and musical, too.</p> <p>CON Looks damn weird and the flat keypad will not be to all tastes. DIN or phono out but not both, plus busy remote.</p>
FEATURES >> 85%	
BUILD >> 85%	
VALUE >> 79%	
<p>CONCLUSION An engaging and resolute player that takes time to get under your skin, but once there simply refuses to let go. Some will prefer a more 'open' sound, but it presents music so effectively that such considerations may become irrelevant.</p>	
<p>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 85%</p>	



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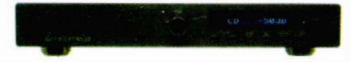
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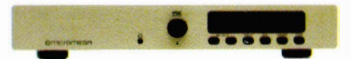
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PRODUCT Grado SR325i

TYPE Headphones

PRICE £310

CONTACT ☎ 01279 501111 @ www.gradolabs.com

The Grado SR325i is an improved (hence the 'i' suffix) version of the original SR325. In recent years, there has been a veritable surge in headphone development from all the major players, with fine new models from all the leading manufacturers upping the ante across the range of prices. Part of this developmental shift is due to the iPod generation demanding ever better headphones as replacements for Apple's standard white in-ear models.

Changes to the SR325i's driver design promise lower 'transient distortions' and the housing is now gold in honour of Grado's 50th anniversary – congratulations! It's immediately recognisable to aficionados, though, as a member of the Grado Prestige series, with a distinctively simple construction based on an open-back driver that sits on top of the ears, cushioned by a black foam pad and suspended from a simple sprung headband.

Comfort is a significant factor in choosing headphones and no make or model will ever suit all listeners in this regard. Grado uses a moderately hard foam in the earpads which can sometimes become a little uncomfortable on the ears after half an hour or more. Sometimes, simply tweaking the headband to reduce the spring force can help, though if the headphones are too loose bass response will suffer. However, we've used similar models for extended periods without discomfort and there exists a large and loyal Grado following who report similarly.

SOUND QUALITY

These headphones need to be comfortable in the long term, because we expect they

will see a lot of action, as these are very capable transducers indeed. If you're at all used to good headphones, you won't be surprised to learn that the level of detail you can hear is superb, with fantastic extension in the treble. This makes the top end sound effortless and as clean as a whistle. Bass is good, too – obviously, headphones don't really hit you in the solar plexus but the Grados are rather good at making you think they can. Again, it's very clean and the absence of distortion can at first make one think the bass is light, the false impression dissipating rather quickly in the presence of really strong low frequency sounds.

Tonal balance is subtly different from other top models we've heard recently, from other leading brands like Beyerdynamic and

Sennheiser. It's an effect that's sufficiently small to make it hard to put a finger on, but just occasionally we found ourselves thinking that the Grados were a little heavy on the upper midband/lower treble.

To put this in context, though, it's no more worrying an effect than the way the voice of a close friend changes depending on the room in which you hear it – you notice a difference, but after seconds it ceases to matter. What does matter is that the degree of insight these headphones offer into sounds – both familiar and unfamiliar – is really very impressive.

Indeed, it can sometimes be quite amusing to listen to familiar recordings on headphones like these and play 'spot the edit' – or the extraneous noise or chair creak. It's not that one wants to hear them of course, but the realisation that so much was previously hidden from aural view underlines how informative these headphones are. Accordingly, music becomes more involving and even if you still ultimately prefer loudspeakers, you may be surprised how hard it is to switch off and go to bed at the end of a listening session.

Grados also seem particularly good at stereo imaging, a weak point with headphones mainly because most recordings are mastered for loudspeaker listening where stereo works differently. This is known as 'lateralisation' and it's where you get that odd sensation of having sounds generated in-head. You'll need a bit of imagination for three-dimensional sound, but something about the Grado sound seems to compensate, to some extent, for the departures from expected loudspeaker imaging. This is high-quality music reproduction, thoroughly deserving of serious attention. **HFC**

Richard Black



VERDICT

SOUND >> 92%



COMFORT >> 80%



BUILD >> 87%



VALUE >> 88%



PRO

Excellent resolution and clarity, with real listener involvement and surprisingly convincing bass.

CON

Design won't suit all ears. Slight emphasis on upper mid can be briefly disconcerting.

CONCLUSION

If you've yet to be convinced of the virtues of true high-end headphones, these could be just the job. If you're already a believer, you owe it to yourself to hear these. Grado has a reputation for good cans, and it's clearly richly deserved.

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

GROUP TEST: RICHARD BLACK LAB REPORTS: RICHARD BLACK/PAUL MARCHANT

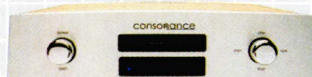
CD PLAYERS

CD remains the major format for high-quality music distribution worldwide, so what better than a dedicated player to make the most of all those discs?

ON TEST



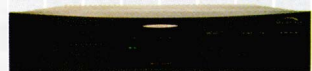
Audio Analogue Paganini 192/24
£950



Consonance Reference CD2.2
£1,295



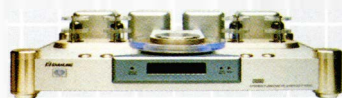
Cyrus CD8x
£1,000



Myryad MXC6000
£1,400



Primare CD31
£1,500



Shanling CD-T100C
£1,650

Six issues ago, we introduced a similar group by commenting that CD replay continues to exercise the minds of equipment designers despite the established presence of high-resolution (SACD/DVD-A) discs. Since then, poor sales of high-resolution audio have prompted questions about the necessity of these formats in today's hi-fi and CD still reigns supreme. We had little trouble finding six suitably capable players in our target price bracket – in fact, we initially found some others which for various practical and logistic reasons failed to materialise in time for review. Plenty to choose from.

But, is it actually a critical choice? Is a typical thousand-pound CD player in any danger of being a weak link in the reproduction chain? As with most simplistic questions in the wonderful world of hi-fi, that's open to various answers depending on your viewpoint and terms of reference. It's completely unarguable that the measured performance of any CD player on the market – except the cheapest, nastiest portable audio models – beats that of even the fanciest loudspeakers into a cocked hat. The facile answer then is that no, the CD player is so far from limiting the system that it makes no sense to spend more on it than is dictated by features and visual styling.

But as you probably expect, we're about to argue against that hypothesis. As you'll be aware if you've read this magazine (or, frankly, any other reputable hi-fi journal in the world) in the last couple of decades, it's almost universally agreed that while measurements can be informative and illuminating, they never tell the whole story even when expertly interpreted. This applies universally, but especially for CD. Player distortion specifications, for instance, may better those of speakers by a factor of a thousand or more, but it consistently proves possible to

differentiate between CD players when listening via conventional speakers.

If it is possible to differentiate, there is clearly sense in establishing a rating between CD players. That will be to some extent personal and it will depend inevitably on partnering equipment, but the important thing is that differences are audible and, even if a particular pair of CD players sound indistinguishable in a particular situation, there will in general be something to be gained by auditioning different models.

Experience shows that quality is roughly proportional to price (admitting the law of diminishing returns), and we heard some very high-grade sounds from all of the following half-dozen. But it is surely significant that, in carefully conducted unsighted listening, none of our listeners found themselves unable to distinguish between players. Nor, we'd bet, will you. Enjoy what follows vicariously, then happy listening! **HFC**

EQUIPMENT USED

- ⊕ Electrocompaniet EC13 integrated stereo amplifier
- ⊕ EAR 802 preamplifier/519 monoblocks
- ⊕ ATC SCM20 loudspeakers
- ⊕ Kimber, Furukawa and Bespoke Audio interconnect and speaker cables

MUSIC USED

- ⊕ Pink Floyd *Dark Side of the Moon*
- ⊕ Dick Hyman *Dick Hyman plays Fats Waller*
- ⊕ Guzmán *Ambrosio*
- ⊕ The Mavericks *Trampoline*

EARS USED

As ever, gratitude is due in bulk to the following industry stalwarts for giving up their time to listen 'blind' to the players:

- ⊕ Steve Harris (Audioplus)
- ⊕ Steve Reichert (Armour Home Electronics)
- ⊕ Ed Selley (Cambridge Audio)



STRUCTURED LAB AND LISTENING TESTS

Each of the players in the group was subjected to a rigorous programme of listening and laboratory tests. Measurements were made using a combination of custom-made CD-Rs, generated specifically for these tests, and a high-quality ADC, which converted the analogue output of each player back to digital for analysis by PC. A variety of additional lab instruments were employed during the course of the test, including the Audio Precision System One, a Hewlett Packard 3561A Dynamic Signal Analyser, a Neutrik Digilyser and a Kikusui KJM6135 Jitter Analyser. Our methodology provides a searching analysis of a multitude of aspects, the most important of which are summarised in the bar graphs (with other significant findings mentioned in the text).

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

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

LAB REPORTS: THE BAR GRAPH

Our 3D bar graphs are a simple way of showing how the products compare across five key technical measurements. A percentage is given that falls above or below the group average.

1] Total harmonic distortion: The classic distortion criterion, measured as the purity of a single sine wave at various frequencies and levels.

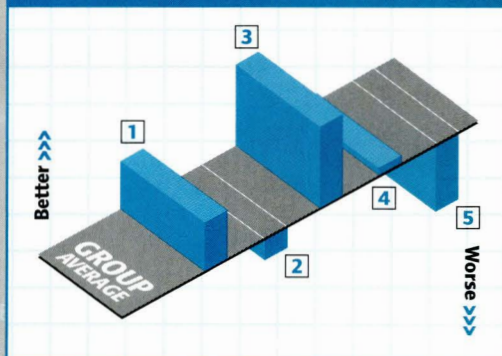
2] Jitter: A measure of how stable the timing clock is. Measured at the analogue output, this distortion shows up as increased noise and/or low-level interfering frequencies that can contribute to sonic 'grunge'.

3] Linearity: How accurately the output level behaves at very low levels. Poor figures can lead to distortion rising considerably in quiet musical passages.

4] Dynamic range: This is effectively the same as signal-to-noise ratio, the difference between full output and the practical noise floor of each player.

5] Digital filtering: Frequencies above half the sampling frequency should be efficiently filtered off. The filter is tested by playing a 20kHz tone and looking for ultrasonic spurious signals that accompany it.

OUR BAR GRAPHS: AN EXAMPLE





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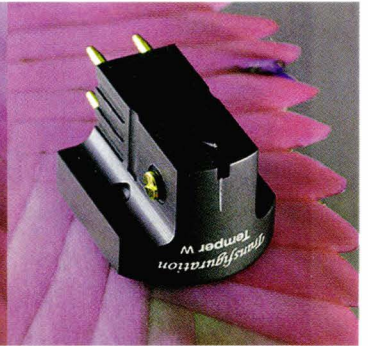
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Spirit III £950



Temper V £2250



Temper W £2250

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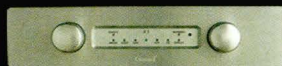
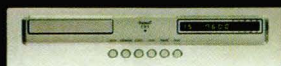


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CYRUS CD8X

Already a winner, can it hold its own against dearer competition?

This player was top dog in a previous *Ultimate Group Test* in HFC 264, so we've included it again to act as a point of reference. This time it's facing an even stiffer task, since it's far from the most expensive player in the group. Of course, it could be argued that since it is so very much part of the complete Cyrus system concept, it hardly stands comparison with other, more conventionally shaped, players, but then why not? Thanks to careful design it needs no apology in terms of features or construction and it looks smart in or out of a Cyrus rack.

Actually, the CD8x is one of the best specified units here. Twin outputs, system remote, optional PSX-R power supply upgrade, both flavours of digital output and even separate buttons on the front panel for track skip and fast forward/reverse, plus a nice display and rapid disc handling, all make for a practical and user-friendly unit. Construction is excellent too, though don't even think of buying one as a basis for tweaking – there's not much room left to play with inside!

Good quality electronic components abound under the lid, with a well specified power supply benefiting from two toroidal transformers. Unusually for a modern player, it is possible to invert phase (polarity) on the outputs, which is a useful feature with certain recordings that show a strong preference for one particular setting. Cyrus claims great things for the technical performance, which indeed notably impressive.

SOUND QUALITY

Our 'blind' listeners were not *completely* convinced about this one, but all found things they liked. One thing they did seem to agree on was that there is something not absolutely perfect about the midrange. One found it slightly shouty, another thought there might be a suckout (frequency response dip) somewhere, and those two could well be related, as could comments on the forward presentation of high



notes from the orchestra. Despite that, the imaging and sense of drama that this player produced were praised, as was its tendency to swing and its ability to make sense of the tune and structure of a piece of music.

Bass seemed to divide opinion, though again there could after all be a common thread to comments. One listener thought that the heartbeats at the start of *Dark Side of the Moon* were the best of the day, while another thought the bass a little soft. But 'soft' here matters little, as those heartbeats are not typical of bass from musical instruments. In fact, taking these comments with later listening findings, we'd suggest that the bass is not as tight as some but is very well extended. Indeed upper bass, the frequencies where percussion has the most effect, is well balanced and superbly timed, but really low-frequency events seem somehow a little behind the beat. It's not necessarily bothersome but it can make thickly-textured music sound a little bass-light, in contrast to simple sounds where there's no such tendency.

In the end, this player's sins are minor and it's worth reiterating that alongside less costly players, it came across as particularly neutral and revealing. It's a good musical communicator and deserves to be recommended. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >>> 87%



FEATURES >>> 86%



BUILD >>> 87%



VALUE >>> 89%



Batting against some stiff competition, this player scores a little lower than last time out but that doesn't make it any less competent in its own terms. Deserves to be heard in, or outside, a Cyrus system.

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 88%



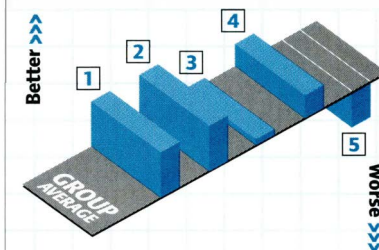
LAB REPORT

This is the latest incarnation of Cyrus' CD player, and shows some evolution from the earlier incarnations – for example, silver alloy screening on the inside of selected parts of the casing to improve screening and RFI rejection, and an 11-rail power-supply, each rail individually regulated to feed differing parts of the player without interference from within.

The clock stability of this machine is excellent – thanks in part, perhaps, to the robust power-supply design – showing an overall accuracy of 0.1 Hz (that's an error of only 2.2 parts per million). Jitter performance is very good too, measuring right on the limit of resolution at around 100ps.

Signal-to-noise ratio is fine, measuring in at 105dB, the discrepancy with the specification arising due to weighting curve differences. There's a little aliasing of audio-band frequencies, due to a relatively slow filter roll-off in the near-ultrasonic frequency region.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >>> +40%
- 2] Jitter >>> +40%
- 3] Linearity >>> +5%
- 4] Dynamic range >>> +20%
- 5] Digital filter >>> -30%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Maximum output level	2.2V	2.20V
Total harmonic distortion	0.002%	0.0007%
Signal-to-noise ratio	120dB	105dB



£1,400 ☎ 01279 501111 🌐 www.myriad.co.uk

MYRYAD MXC6000

Black, solid and smart – and very, very listenable!

Myrriad's current MX series of products seems to manage the impressive trick of making what is, after all, a black box look distinctive and 'now'. It seems simplistic to say that all it takes is that rather tasteful dipped chamfer on the top edge of the front panel and the silver strip at top-centre but, well, what else is there? It is very smart, though, and feels comfortingly solid and stable when handled. Clearly labelled buttons and a slick transport add to the pleasure of use.

That silver strip, by the way, is actually the standby switch and it's not just touch-sensitive, it's proximity sensitive. It can be a little disconcerting now and then to have the machine switch itself on or off, just because a stray hand went within a few millimetres of the switch, but one gets used to avoiding it. Otherwise features are a lot more conventional. There's an electrical digital output and connections for the 'My-Link' remote control system on the back, but not much else.

Internal construction is excellent, with the power supply contained within its own steel case as a belt-and-braces measure against interference. The circuit board features some particularly high grade components too, including a notably expensive op-amp and generous power supply capacitance. The D-to-A converter chip is from Crystal and, as with most current chips, is capable of higher performance than CD-format digital demands. The lid is slightly resonant though, despite the use of a piece of damping material on its underside, and might benefit from something on top of it.

SOUND QUALITY

As with some of the others, the Myriad divided our panel, but there was a pretty clear pattern to the comments. Basically, this is a refined sound – if you don't like refined, you may prefer an alternative model. But whatever your tastes, there's no denying the knack this player has of finding everything within a recording and bringing it out to face the light of day.



Perhaps the most significant comment was the very first thing written about this player by one listener, "warmer and calmer". There's no obvious change in tonality when moving from any of the other players to this one, but something about its presentation seems more intimate and also less fussy. That kind of change makes for strong reactions, so perhaps it's no surprise that one listener got off to a bad start with the Myriad and never really found much right later, even while grudgingly acknowledging its "superficial" openness and transparency. But others were much more impressed, finding nothing superficial and enjoying a sequence of well-timed and detailed performances with good imaging and tonal balance.

Post-listening panel, we tended towards the favourable interpretation of this player's characteristics. It proved the most listenable of the bunch in the long term, though with the proviso that its mechanical hiss can be audible if it's close to the listening seat, a minor irritation during quiet passages. That apart it is clear, involving and, yes, refined... and there's no point apologising for that. It's a question of taste and, as such, a decision for designer and purchaser alike. If you go along with it, you'll be rewarded with some revealing insights and much pleasing music. A confident Best Buy. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >>> 89%



FEATURES >>> 84%



BUILD >>> 90%



VALUE >>> 88%



Perhaps not the most exciting, but certainly one of the most listenable players we've come across, and one with plenty of detail and insight on offer. Built like a tank and a pleasure to use too.

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



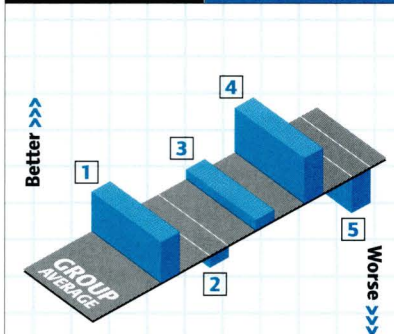
LAB REPORT

On balance, this was perhaps the best overall performer on the test-bench this session, with one of the lowest distortion figures, the lowest noise and excellent linearity (every extra dB on the signal-to-noise ratio makes linearity easier to measure with certainty).

Jitter is also very good, the apparently 'poor' showing on the comparison graph merely reflecting the very high standards of the group, most of which approach measurable limits.

The digital processing within the player may not be quite perfect, as there are some odd components to the distortion spectrum (such as a curious seventh harmonic which is not commonly seen on CD players at all) that seem to persist at quite low levels, but this is probably no more than an academic curiosity as absolute distortion levels are below -100dB under practically all conditions – an excellent result.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >>> +35%
- 2] Jitter >>> -10%
- 3] Linearity >>> +10%
- 4] Dynamic range >>> +40%
- 5] Digital filter >>> -30%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Maximum output level	2.3V	2.32V
Total harmonic distortion	0.0018%	0.0008%
Signal-to-noise ratio	112dB	106dB



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PRIMARE CD31

Great connectivity, but the sound divided our panel members

A recent newcomer from Swedish high-end specialist Primare, the smart and rather vast CD31 is particularly well equipped on the connections front. Balanced and unbalanced audio outputs are joined by not only electrical and optical S/PDIF digital outputs, but also AES/EBU balanced digital on an XLR socket, making connection to professional DACs a simple matter. A RJ45 phone-style 'data' socket is "for use with future products", while an RS232 socket allows integration with home automation systems. Absolutely up to the minute!

Also up to the minute is the inclusion of a DVD-ROM transport. Trouble is, it takes aeons to load a disc compared with a dedicated CD audio drive and makes a quiet – but not completely inaudible – ticking noise while reading. Rapid loading is not helped by the fact that the same front panel button serves for 'stop' and 'eject', as is common, but here requiring a particularly long press to activate 'eject', an annoyance we could have done without. Oh, and the player switches to standby if not used for a while, which is admittedly energy-conscious but again frustrating at times.

Construction is good inside and out. It sports a circuit board generously loaded with high grade digital filters, DACs (four chips) and op-amps, plus evidence of substantial power supply decoupling. The mains transformer is a Far East-style round-core type.

SOUND QUALITY

Some of the comments from different listeners are flatly contradictory and apparently irreconcilable. One found it smooth, another bright. One thought it had little body in its piano sound, another exactly the opposite.

In the end, we came up with rather a lot of respect for this player and, yes, some love too. Most fascinating was the realisation that it can sound both smooth and bright – in other words, it has really good treble extension but it



is just very, very clean. It's a bit hard to justify this objectively, but subjectively it seemed a consistent finding.

As for the question of body, that seems to be related to a rather individual view of timing. The clue to this was in the comment of one listener who felt that the pianist's hands were slightly out of time with each other, the same listener who least liked Primare's notion of 'body'. It sometimes seems that the treble arrives a little ahead of the bass (again this can't be justified scientifically!) and that can come across to some listeners as thin, harsh sound. Others, however, find it extremely detailed and involving and completely miss any trace of harshness.

And in fact, if that particular characteristic doesn't put you off you may well agree with our most favourably impressed listener, who enjoyed the player's sense of scale and the way it presented a choir, for instance, as a unified organism rather than a jumble of individuals. The same listener praised the CD31's body in the Mavericks track. We would add that, as with one or two others here, if you like the sound from the outset you'll probably end up loving it, and long-term listening is very gratifying. Definitely one to audition before purchase, then, but it'll win some hearts. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >>> 87%

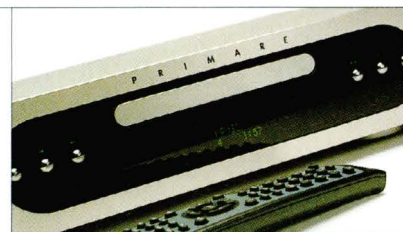
FEATURES >>> 87%

BUILD >>> 89%

VALUE >>> 83%

Well made and well featured, but with a skewed outlook on the business of musical timing. Confident and natural handling of massed forces may prove an excellent compensation for many, though.

HI-FI CHOICE
OVERALL SCORE 85%



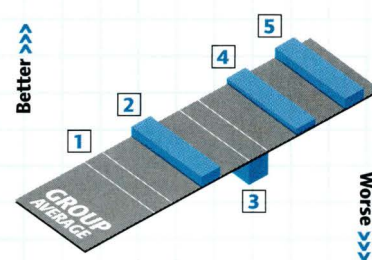
LAB REPORT

This substantial machine sports four Burr-Brown PCM1704 digital-to-analogue conversion chips, in common with other models in this group test.

The sample-rate conversion is conducted by the DAC chips' sibling, the DF1704, which ingests 16-bit/44.1 kHz data, and regurgitates it as a 24-bit/96kHz output to feed the DACs with. This seems to have given rise somewhere along the way to very slightly higher jitter than several of the others, but the figure of 200ps is still very good.

The stopband is largely clean, though there are a few very low-level spikes which may be symptoms of something potentially audible. This was the only player in the group with a linearity error (measured at -100dB) high enough to be measured with confidence, and then only just. That this is the only model in the group that comes close to having a significant measurement in this respect shows how high the technical standard really is.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >>> 0%
- 2] Jitter >>> +10%
- 3] Linearity >>> -20%
- 4] Dynamic range >>> +5%
- 5] Digital filter >>> +10%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Maximum output level	2.0V	2.08V
Total harmonic distortion	0.01%	0.002%
Signal-to-noise ratio	105dB	104dB

EASTERN ELECTRIC

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A Brief Introduction

Eastern Electric is a joint venture between **US-based Bill O'Connell** and **Hong Kong-based electrical engineer Alex Yeung** which began when O'Connell met Yeung in the cyber world and eventually ordered one of his 5wpc MA-1 amps with RGN2504 rectifier and 6L6 output tubes.

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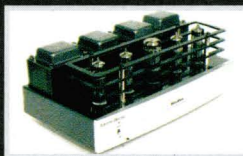
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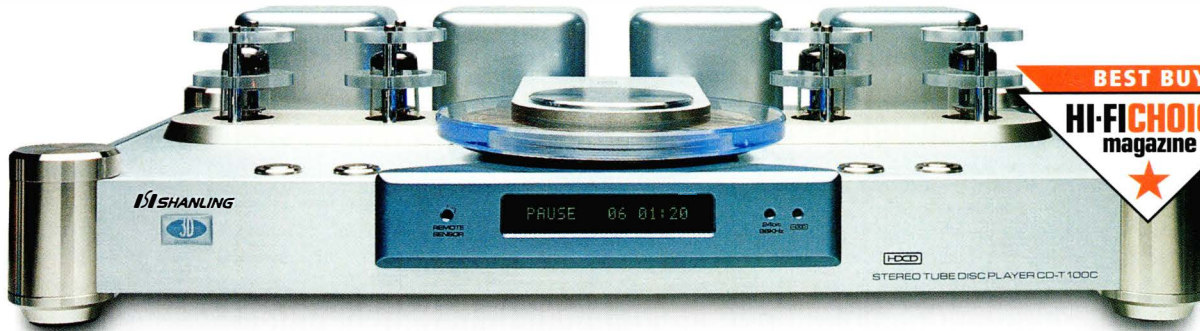
Carefully selected components housed inside its perimeters are second to none. Each unit is burned in for 48 hours to assure quality control before it even leaves the assembly plant.

The MiniMax Amplifier extols the recorded performance as it was meant to be heard. Singling out each instrument in its space and note duration of its tone and pitch. Why settle for anything less? Affordable High-End was our goal with customer satisfaction being its priority.

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SHANLING CD-T100C

A stunning looking player – but is its beauty only skin deep?

Not much danger of mistaking this player for any of the others. Even if you don't like the looks (and we think they're fantastic), you'll have to admit they're distinctive. The flip-up, top-loading mechanism is a pleasure to use and a delight to behold, bathed as it is in blue light, and the valves are nicely shown off. Those four lumps behind the valves apparently contain transformers and, to judge by the number of wires coming out, at least one inductor. They're beautifully finished, as indeed is the rest of the unit. All in all, we've nothing but praise for it as an *objet d'art*.

There's far more to it than looks, though, for this is a remarkably versatile player. No, it doesn't play DVDs or SACDs, but it is in a sense four CD players in one, plus a passive preamp and headphone amplifier. You see, there are pairs of sockets for 'direct' and 'tube' coupled outputs, and it is possible to switch between upsampled and non-upsampled operation. There's a digital volume control, and on the side you'll find a headphone socket.

The player is HDCD-equipped and in non-upsampled mode uses the HDCD chip as the digital filter, giving results that on purely technical grounds are actually rather better than via the upsampling filter. It's very well provided for inside, with high-grade DACs and op-amps, and the four identical 6N3 valves are used as simple buffers on the 'tube' outputs and (separately) the headphone output. Assembly is good and the remote is a high-quality item too – no skimping here!

SOUND QUALITY

This was one of the most applauded players in the group, though there was the odd mild criticism. No listener thought it the most engaging or involving player, but they all rated it highly on that score and each named several specifics that this Shanling seemed to do very well. Notably, it received more praise for timing than any other, and the dynamics were felt to be good. Its clarity and openness were liked,



while stereo imaging was described as clear and quite precise but not as deep as some.

There may be some slight problems in the high treble. A few comments relate to a small degree of harshness and a slight synthetic quality, both with treble-rich sounds including The Mavericks and some close-miked piano. That would probably also explain why it was the Mavericks track in particular that brought forth concerns over lack of 'swing' and involvement – it's a very lively track in every sense. All the same, in that track as in the others, the player was thought to give a lifelike presentation and a generally enjoyable and detailed sound.

The panel heard this player non-upsampled through the tube outputs, but both before and after the panel session, we sampled all four combinations. We felt that non-upsampled offered the best combination of long-term listening comfort, detail and lively sound, but comparisons were not entirely clear-cut. For example, 'Direct' does seem slightly cleaner but lacks some musicality, while oversampling subtly changes the presentation towards something more instantly engaging, but less detailed and ultimately less gratifying. It's clear, though, that this is a more than competent player and for its combination of great looks and fine performance is a deserving Best Buy. **HFC**

VERDICT

SOUND >> 89%



FEATURES >> 90%



BUILD >> 89%



VALUE >> 85%



Beauty is more than skin deep here, and the Shanling offers real subjective sonic prowess in any of the various operating modes – good timing, detail and imaging, with just a touch of treble hardness at times.

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

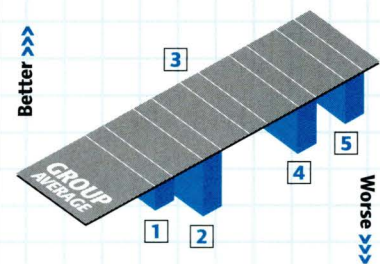


LAB REPORT

The CD-T100 sports a Philips CD mechanism, top-loading, with Philips supplied servo-drivers keeping the disc spinning and the laser in focus. The data read by the laser is processed by means of a Pacific Microsonics PMD200 HDCD pre-processor, from which the digital data finds its way into a Crystal Semiconductor sample upconverter, and then into multiple 24-bit Burr-Brown PCM1704 D-to-A converter chips.

Not surprisingly, there are measured differences in many parameters between the various operating modes, with distortion climbing to about 0.25% via the 'tube' output. The relatively high noise level doesn't seem to be much affected by mode. Aliasing is slightly higher in oversampled mode, but this mode does give better jitter figures – but not vanishingly small and reflecting discrete-tone patterns rather than the noise-like jitter of the non-upsampled scenario.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >> -20%
- 2] Jitter >> -50%
- 3] Linearity >> 0%
- 4] Dynamic range >> -40%
- 5] Digital filter >> -35%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Maximum output level	2.2V	2.22V
Total harmonic distortion	0.002%	0.003%
Signal-to-noise ratio	100dB	97dB

CONCLUSIONS

Differences abound at the start of the high end, but does 'different' also mean 'better'?

This group was interesting in that it showed how differences can affect individual listeners. The scores for the players are not very widely spaced, reflecting that although some players received markedly favourable or unfavourable comments from some listeners with some music, none received only praise or only blame. The scores are also quite high, which should be taken in the context of our accumulated years of testing CD players across the board.

That said, averaging the comments does allow one to form useful and reliable conclusions,

reinforced by our experiences with the players, both subjective and technical. So, what marked out the 'best' from the 'worst'?

Both the Primare and the Audio Analogue machines produce very likeable sounds. The Primare seems to have a bit of a problem with timing, which can upset some listeners. Others will find plenty to praise, however, so it's well worth a listen – but do also watch out for mechanical noise, which we're finding to be a common problem with current CD players. It's a very soft hissing and clicking but despite its low level, it can seem to follow you round the room.

The Audio Analogue suffered from a spot of mechanical noise too, but its main problem seems to be that it's a bit bland. The basics are there, but the sound doesn't really reach out to the listener. It seems not unreasonable to expect a little more at this kind of price, even though it is the cheapest in the group... just.

The Consonance, with its lone valve in the output, does seem to have been engineered for delivery of 'character'. That can sound great, but can just as easily add artefacts that one doesn't necessarily want to hear. Granted a little coloration is not such a

serious crime, but it's something to be aware of when auditioning.

The players from Cyrus and Myryad don't necessarily go head to head; prices differ substantially and each is part of a distinctive system. All the same, they share many sonic virtues, including good listenability and clear, solid sound. Either is worthy of a home in a fine CD-based system. Finally, Shanling's distinctive baby justifies its relatively high price not least on grounds of flexibility and appearance but also offers very clean-sounding music with good body and timing. A taste, if you like, of the true high end. **HFC**

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HINTS AND TIPS

» When auditioning CD players, be aware that output levels are not always perfectly matched – louder often sounds 'better' in quick-fire demonstrations.

» CD players aren't particularly microphonic, but any problems can be minimised by putting them out of the

direct line of fire of the speakers. Keeping them out of earshot helps too.
» Keep discs clean and don't forget to use a lens-cleaning disc occasionally – it can make all the difference.
» Try switching off the CD player's display if you can. It sounds better.

CD PLAYERS AT A GLANCE



MAKE MODEL	Audio Analogue Paganini 192/ 24	Consonance Reference CD2.2	Cyrus CD8x	Myryad MXC6000	Primare CD31	Shanling CD-T100C
PRICE	£950	£1,295	£1,000	£1,400	£1,500	£1,650
SOUND						
FEATURES						
BUILD						
VALUE						
OVERALL						
CONCLUSION	Smart looking but not so user-friendly, and a little bland sounding, too.	Inviting and clear, can be magical, but a little coloured at times.	Clear and communicative sound with very fine treble but bass seems less extended than some.	Very listenable, with excellent detail and insight, plus impressive build quality.	Great with large musical forces, but timing seems a touch odd on occasion.	Lovely looks and good basic sound, with enough options and variables to suit any taste.
KEY FEATURES						
ELEC DIG O/P	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
OPT DIG O/P	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
CD-RW	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
CD TEXT	No	No	No	No	No	No
BALANCED O/P	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
LAB CONCLUSIONS E = EXCELLENT • G = GOOD • A = AVERAGE • P = POOR						
DISTORTION	0.002% G	0.02% A	0.0007% E	0.0008% E	0.002% G	0.003% G
JITTER	0.12ns E	0.1ns E	0.1ns E	0.15ns E	0.2ns G	0.5ns A
LINEARITY	0.1dB E	<0.1dB E	<0.1dB E	<0.1dB E	0.2dB G	0.1dB E
S/N RATIO	104dB G	103dB G	105dB G	106dB E	104dB G	97dB A
STOPBAND REJECTION	>110dB E	-100dB G	-82dB A	-100dB G	-100dB G	-81dB A

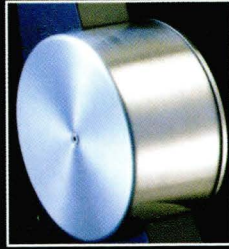


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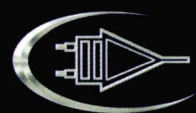
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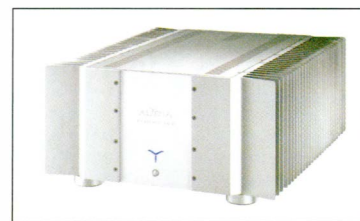
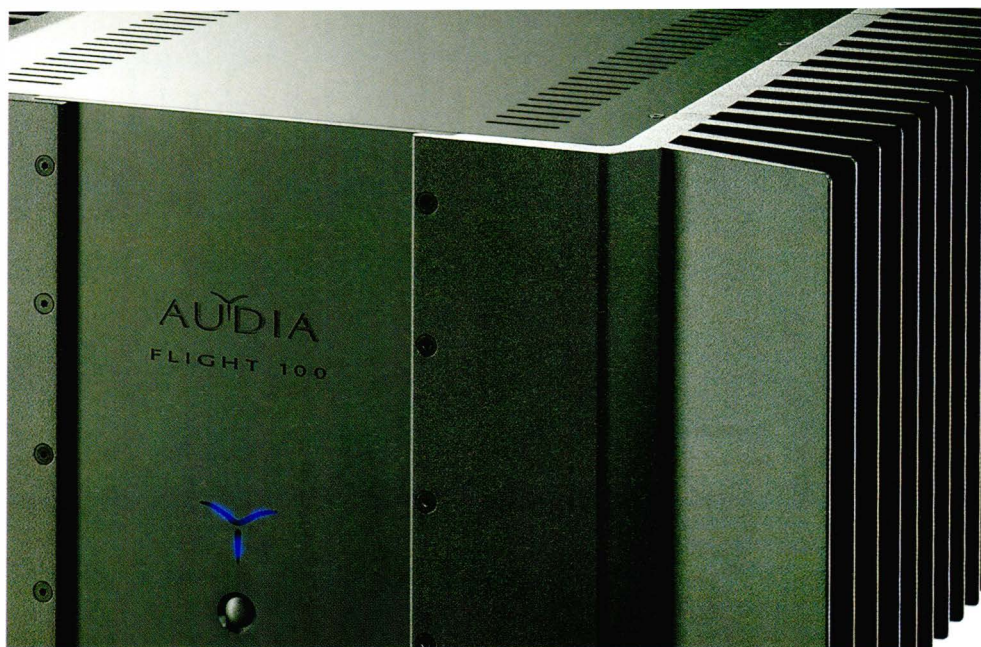
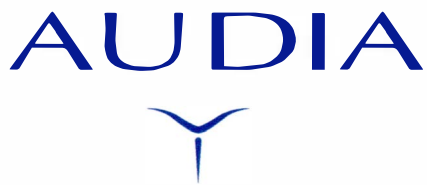


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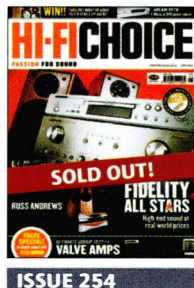
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ISSUE 252



ISSUE 253



ISSUE 254



ISSUE 255



ISSUE 256



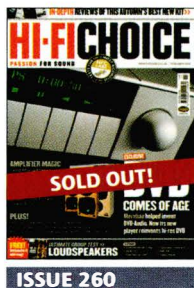
ISSUE 257



ISSUE 258



ISSUE 259



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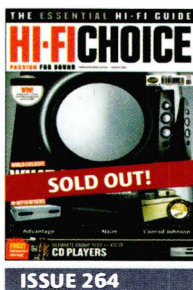
ISSUE 261



ISSUE 262



ISSUE 263



ISSUE 264



ISSUE 265



ISSUE 266



ISSUE 267



ISSUE 268



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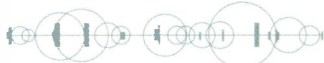
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The Michell Odyssey 2004 Limited Edition Turntable

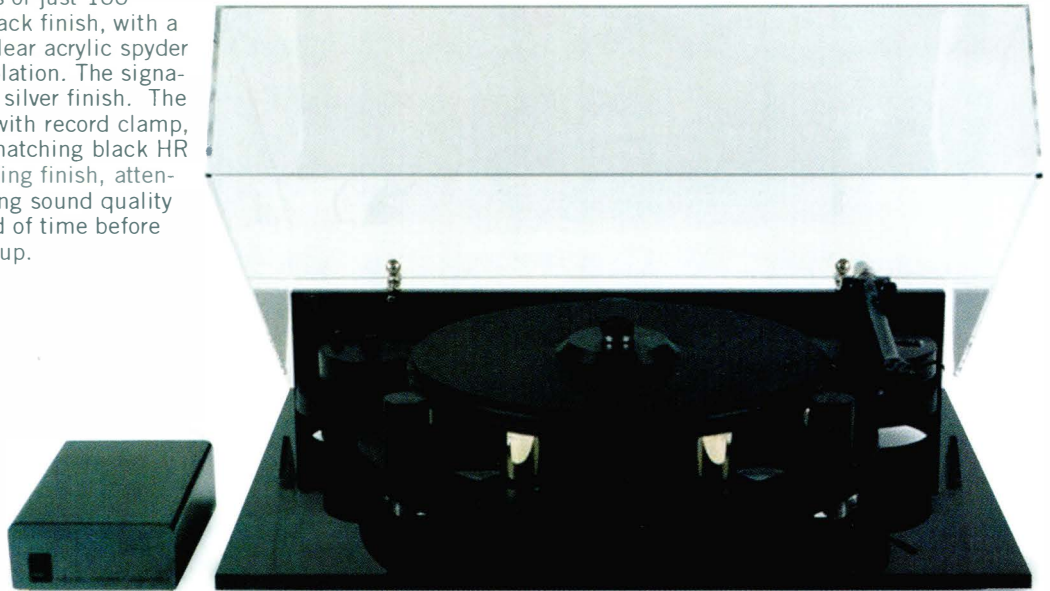
Based on the classic Gyrodec, the Limited Edition Michell Odyssey 2004 will be produced in a numbered series of just 100 pieces supplied in an all black finish, with a black acrylic base, added clear acrylic spyder to give a second level of isolation. The signature weights are in a nickel silver finish. The turntable comes complete with record clamp, black TecnoArm "A", and matching black HR Power Supply. With its striking finish, attention to detail and outstanding sound quality it will only be a short period of time before the 100 units are snapped up.



MICHELL ENGINEERING

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Sawbridgeworth: Audiofile Objective, 01279 724024

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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.

80
82
84
87
88

SOURCE COMPONENTS

CD PLAYERS
DVD PLAYERS
VINYL
RADIO TUNERS
DIGITAL RECORDERS

96
98

AMPLIFIERS

STEREO AMPS
MULTICHANNEL AV AMPS

100
104

LOUDSPEAKERS

STEREO SPEAKERS
MULTICHANNEL SPEAKER PACKAGES

107
109
111

ANCILLARIES

HEADPHONES
CABLES
STANDS AND SUPPORTS

113
115

GLOSSARY

CHOICE BITS ACCESSORIES SHOP

116
120

DEALER CLASSIFIED

DEALER GUIDE
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

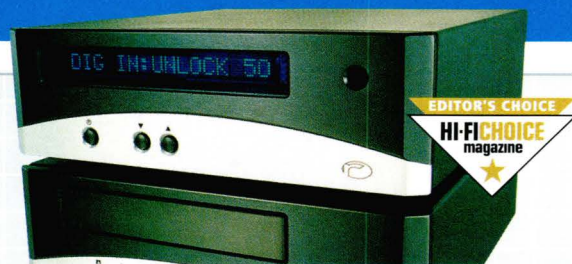
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS							ISSUE NUMBER
				SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	CD-RW COMPATIBLE	CD TEXT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	
UP TO £1,000											
BEST BUY	Arcam DIVA CD73T	400	Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic – a finely judged balance for budget to mid-price systems	●	●	●	●				247
BEST BUY	Arcam DIVA CD192	850	Beautifully built, well featured player with clear, open and involving sound	●	●	●	●				264
BEST BUY	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
BEST BUY	Consonance CD120	795	Fine performance in all areas with the possible exception of slight treble harshness	●					●		269
BEST BUY	Cyrus CD8x	1,000	Impressive mix of detail, musicality, analysis and appearance. Even better with the PSX-R power supply (£400)	●	●	●					264
BEST BUY	Exposure 2010 S	599	Highly communicative sounds with good bass, though not always the most analytical	●	●	●					264
BEST BUY	Marantz CD7300	350	Astonishingly capable sub-£500 player with effortless bass, detailed mid and treble and vast soundstages	●	●	●	●		●		250
BEST BUY	Musical Fidelity X-Ray ^{v3}	900	Think of this as an A3.2 CD player in a smaller, cheaper box. Great, earthy CD sound for the money	●	●	●					255
BEST BUY	Naim CD5i	825	As idiosyncratic as ever, but sonically the CD5i is the definitive player at the price				●				259
BEST BUY	Quad 99 CD-P	1,000	Good but not outstanding player that also doubles as a preamp, with digital inputs and volume controls		●	●					259
BEST BUY	Roksan Kandy MkIIID	650	Clean, tidy and expressive player – a more than worthwhile improvement on previous versions	●	●	●			●		259
ABOVE £1,000											
BEST BUY	Audio Analogue Maestro	1,650	The new Maestro 192/24 delivers a sound that's slightly rosy yet always musical and thoroughly enjoyable	●			●		●		257
BEST BUY	Audia Flight CD One	4,500	Sumptuously built toploader capable of real world dynamics with great recordings. Two digital inputs	●					●		269
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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
BEST BUY	Copland CDA823	1,750	Its ability to resolve micro dynamics and acoustic space is second to none.	●					●		267
BEST BUY	Hegel CDP2A	1,500	A technically proficient and masterly-sounding player built by people who clearly know what they are doing	●			●		●		252
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Lindemann 820	6,999	Stereo SACD player with sumptuous build and sound, onboard analogue volume control and multiple digital inputs	●	●	●			●	●	262
BEST BUY	Marantz SA-11S1	2,000	A stereo player for audiophiles – lack of DVD and multichannel SACD lead to subtle, highly focussed sound	●	●	●	●	●			265
BEST BUY	Meridian G07	1,595	Immaculately conceived and executed player with a softly-spoken voice. Needs careful system matching	●	●	●	●	●			259
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Meridian 808i Signature	8,250	Stunning CD player with added preamp functions. Versatile and quite delightful	●	●	●	●	●		●	263
BEST BUY	Naim CD5x	1,450	A genuinely engaging CD player with remarkable musical grip and coherence				●				264
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Naim CDX2	2,700	Fine quality one-box CD player, but its best feature is upgradeability via outboard XPS supply				●				238
BEST BUY	Orelle CD100evo2	1,299	Relaxed, but strong on refinement and detail. An intelligent choice, particularly strong with acoustic music	●	●	●					259
BEST BUY	Primare CD31	1,500	Fresh clean sounding player, with well designed control system and support for custom installation.	●	●	●			●		267
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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
BEST BUY	Roksan Caspian M Series	1,100	An enjoyably dynamic-sounding player featuring a positively unique choice of digital components	●			●				252
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Wadia 302	3,999	A dynamic and gripping player, with bass to die for and resolution to change your listening habits	●	●	●			●		253
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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

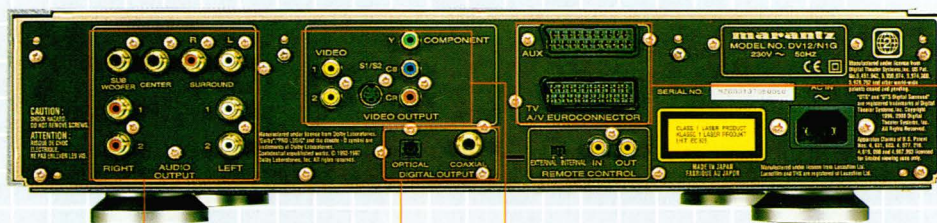


DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player.

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



ANALOGUE AUDIO OUTPUTS: For stereo and multichannel connections, use these for best results with DVD-Audio, SACD and CD.

DIGITAL OUTPUTS: For Dolby Digital, DTS and PCM audio bitstreams.

VIDEO CONNECTIONS: Yellow sockets are composite; red, green and blue sockets are for component which gives best results, while the black multipin socket is S-Video, which sits qualitatively between the two.

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

Our favourite DVD PLAYERS

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

Audio/Video disc players

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

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

TOP BUYS



BEST BUY
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine

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



BEST BUY
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine

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



BEST BUY
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine

Arcam FMJ DV29 £1,600
Arcam's best DVD player yet – a world-class, HDMI-equipped audio/video feast.



EDITOR'S CHOICE
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine

Townshend Audio TA 565 Evo 2 £2,995
This player builds on Pioneer essentials to deliver breathtaking sound across all formats.

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VINYL

Turntables, cartridges and phono stages

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

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

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



TURNTABLE SET-UP

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

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

TOP BUYS



Pro-Ject
1 Xpression £210
The latest model from Czech turntable specialist Pro-Ject is remarkable value for money – an Ortofon OM10 cartridge and carbon fibre arm are included in the price.



Michell
Tecnodec £767
A distillation of all the good things from some of Michell's past masters, all knitted together beautifully. Understated looks and a full-bodied sound make this a star.



Clearaudio
Champion £1,475
Current king of acrylic, the Clearaudio deck, arm and cartridge combination turns in a beautifully well-balanced delivery, but choose your support wisely.



Avid
Volvere Sequel £3,500
Avid has been one of the most impressive exponents of the vinyl arts in recent years, and this mid-range deck is a stunning example of analogue engineering.

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

TURNTABLES

Record players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	SUPPLIED WITH CART	ISSUE NUMBER
BB	Avid Diva	1,100	A solid and powerful sounding deck with fine build, requires a smooth, relaxed cartridge for best results	33/45	●				247
EC	Avid Volvere Sequel	3,500	Heavyweight turntable that will deliver more of what's in a vinyl groove than most of the competition	33/45	●	●			229
EC	Avid Acutus	6,000	Extremely capable design with no apparent shortcomings. Don't sell your vinyl 'til you've heard it on this!	33/45	●	●			194
BB	Clearaudio Champion	1,475	Smart, practical and good-sounding, with impressively 'dead' arm. Isolation recommended	33/45			●		268
BB	Goldring GR2	265	Nicely finished Rega-manufactured deck with RB250 arm and an open, engaging sound quality	33/45			●	●	266
BB	Michell Gyro SE	1,058	New DC motor-equipped Gyro offers great looks and even better sound. Price includes RB300 arm	33/45	●		●		239
EC	Michell Orbe SE	2,015	A superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price. Now features new DC motor	33/45	●				235
BB	Michell Tecnodec	767	Simple and smartly understated, performs above expectations – full-bodied and highly detailed	33/45			●		268
BB	Nottingham Analogue Horizon	529	A fluid midrange and nimble but rich bass are two of the many attributes of this bargain deck (price inc RB250 arm)	33/45			●		253
BB	Pro-Ject 1 Xpression	210	Well designed and executed budget deck with an entertaining and revealing sound	33/45			●	●	248
BB	Pro-Ject RPM 9 X	1,250	Can extract sounds from the vinyl you didn't know were there, and it looks the absolute business!	33/45			●		268
BB	Rega P2	198	Updated Planar 2: just as much fun as ever and now even better value as the competition falls away	33/45			●		214
	Rega P3/RB300	298	Updated Planar 3, building on the strengths of the P2 with added subtlety and detail	33/45			●		214
BB	Rega P5/RB700	698	Combines a great sense of timing with market-leading resolution and a phenomenal tonearm – a hard act to beat	33/45			●	opt	257
BB	Rega P7/RB700	1,298	A highly capable player that could hold its own in the most exalted company – a vivid and natural performer	33/45			●	opt	257
EC	Rega P9/RB1000	2,498	Exceptionally elegant hi-tech player with complex outboard supply, ceramic platter and wonderful RB1000 tonearm	33/45		●	●		228
BB	Roksan Radius 5/Nima	850	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation (acrylic version tested)	33/45	●		●		248
EC	Roksan TMS2/Artemiz	7,500	Typical Roksan sound, but better: pitch-accurate, lean, detailed and controlled, without the 'bloat' of lesser designs	33/45	●	●			246
EC	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V309 hybrid arm	33/45	●	●	●		195
EC	SME Model 20.2A	5,274	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	33/45/78	●	●	●		186
EC	T-A G10R/PH-G10MC	2,550	Style meets substance in a highly credible complete package, with integral phono step-up	33/45		●	●	●	261
EC	Townshend Rock Anniversary	8,000	If you want to get to the meat and bones of the music this is a great tool for the job (price inc. Excalibur arm)	33/45	●		●		259

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

PHONO CARTRIDGES

MM and MC cartridges

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

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

PHONO STAGES

Phono stages

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				
				MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	ADJ GAIN	ADJ IMPEDANCE	ISSUE NUMBER
	Clearaudio Smart-Phono	250	Minute and very practical unit with slightly bright, but very detailed and low-noise, sound	●	●			268
BB	NAD PP2 phono stage	50	A fine buy for turntable users on a tight budget – open tonality and clarity is distinctly impressive for the money	●				245
BB	Tom Evans Microgroove	400	For dynamics and real bass extension with good tonal colour this is the one to beat. The Plus version (£700) is even better!		●			234
EC	Tom Evans The Groove	1,800	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for maximum information retrieval off any LP	●				201
BB	Trichord Dino/Dino+	498	Relaxed yet resolute with very good image depth and natural balance, not to mention great flexibility	●	●	●	●	234

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

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

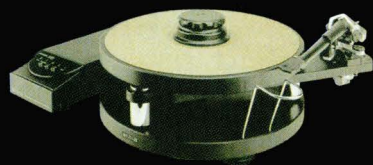
CARTRIDGE SPECS KEY **MM** Moving magnet cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type. **MC** Moving coil cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type.

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

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Model 20/2



Model 30/2



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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 for details.

TOP BUYS



Denon TU260L II £130

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



Cambridge DAB500 £150

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



Creek T50 £499

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



Magnum Dynalab MD 90T £1,195

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

Our favourite TUNERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

FM & DAB HI-FI SEPARATES

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER
FM TUNERS										
	Creek T50	499	Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics	FM,M,L	128	●	●	●	●	251
	Denon TU-260L II	130	The return of the all-time favourite, now enhanced with RDS and sounding as fine as ever	FM,M,L	40	●			●	193
	Magnum Dynalab MD 90T	1,195	No remote or presets as standard, manual everything and valves... but its sound is simply sublime	FM	opt		opt	●	●	257
	Magnum Dynalab MD 102	2,200	Superb remote control analogue FM tuner delivers a superbly transparent sound that makes radio fun	FM	5		●	●	●	241
	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity	FM,M	30	●		●		250
	NAD S400	600	One of the best around – bass and treble are both well extended and detail is excellent	FM	30	●	●	●		230
	Primare T21	600	Identical to NAD S400 and likewise a very fine tuner	FM	30	●		●		230
	Rega Radio 3	398	Unpretentious unit which does what it claims, very well. Unusually fine FM sound in all areas	FM,M	20		●			242
	Rotel RT-02	279	A highly competent tuner which always sounds appealing and fuss-free	FM,M	30	●	●	●		242
DAB TUNERS										
	Arcam DiVA DT91	450	As good as any on DAB, with serviceable FM, this one-box solution offers good build and value	DAB,FM	16		●	●	●	269
	Cambridge Audio DAB500	150	Very good sound, plus optional response tweaks, and slickest operation yet	DAB	10		●	●	●	248
	Cambridge Azur 640T	200	Slightly ahead of the pack in DAB performance, though FM is never better than decent	DAB,FM	60	●	●	●		260
	Pure Digital DRX-701ES	250	A good introduction to DAB – fine value and simple to use	DAB	99		●	●	●	234
	Pure Digital DRX-702ES	330	Very flexible DAB (inc L-band) and FM tuner. DAB is good, FM a touch disappointing	DAB,FM,M	99	●	●	●	●	242
	Sony ST-SDB900	200	Nicely designed UK-tuned model is a touch bright with both DAB and FM but generally insightful and clear	DAB,FM,M	60	●	●		●	259

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

DIGITAL AUDIO RECORDERS

CD, MiniDisc and hard drive recorders



MiniDisc

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

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

Recordable CD

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

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

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

Hard drive

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

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

TOP BUYS



Philips CDR802 £300

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



Marantz DR6000 £400

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



Yamaha CDR-HD1300 £600

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



Imerge S2000 £1,599

Impressively flexible hard disk music server for multiroom applications.

Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

DIGITAL RECORDERS

CD-R/RW, MD and HDD recorders

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				DECKS	HD CAPACITY (GB)	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS
CD-R/RW RECORDERS							
	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
MD RECORDERS							
	Pioneer MJ-D508	200	Well equipped, but musically sleep-inducing player that receives its Recommendation owing to the price	1		● ●	205
	Sony MDS-JE480	130	Straightforward and effective, but the three real killer features are price, price and price	1		●	233
HDD RECORDERS							
	Imerge S2000	1,599	Intended as the centrepiece of a multi-room installation, this three-output server combines flexibility with good sound	2	80	● ●	243
	Yamaha CDR-HD1300	600	Superb combination of high-speed CD-RW drive and hard disk, adding editing flexibility to CD recording	2	80	● ●	243

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

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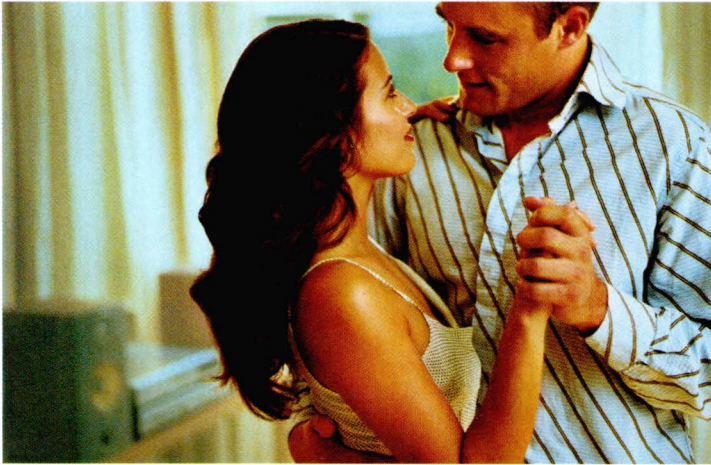


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A Cyrus CD Player with built in 80Gb hard disk drive. Keep all your favourite music instantly accessible in a single, easy to operate component.



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



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
2 XPERIENCE TURNTABLE (PICTURED RIGHT)



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 & DM602 S3
700 SERIES INCLUDES
705 & 703
FPM SERIES INCLUDES
PV1 SUBWOOFER



SUMMER EVENT

At least **10% off our normal selling prices** on a wide range of products. For our latest prices call your local store or visit www.ssav.com

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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SUMMER EVENT



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

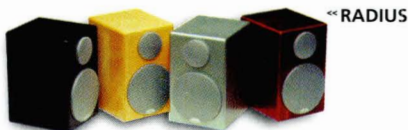
Kandy
KA1 MKIII AMPLIFIER
KD1 MKIII CD PLAYER

Caspian M SERIES
CD PLAYER
AMPLIFIER
PREAMPLIFIER
STEREO POWER
MONOBLOC POWER

Monitor Audio

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

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



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



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

Acoustic Energy

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.



AE1T THREE

"The legendary AE1 lives on in this groundbreaking new version... It sets a new standard for small speakers."

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

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.



FREE QED Essential Accessories

FREE QED SPEAKER CABLE worth at least £50 when you purchase selected Speakers over £200. Ask in-store for details. (NICWA00)*

FREE QED INTERCONNECT CABLE worth at least £50 when you purchase selected CD and Amplifier combinations. Ask in-store for details. (NICWA00)*



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."



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



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

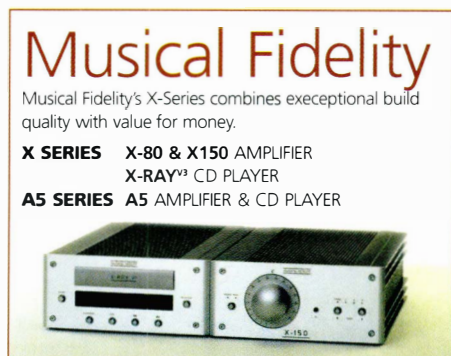


Musical Fidelity

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

X SERIES X-80 & X150 AMPLIFIER
X-RAY³ CD PLAYER

A5 SERIES A5 AMPLIFIER & CD PLAYER





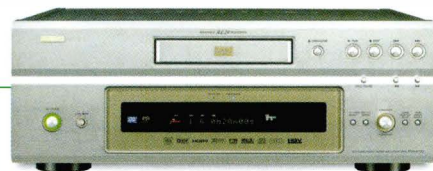
Specialist home cinema

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 astonishing piece of kit that has no equals. Prepare to be astounded."

HOME CINEMA CHOICE • AWARDS 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."

AWARDS 2004

BEST MULTICHANNEL RECEIVER £200-£750

Denon AVR-2805

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."



AWARDS 2004

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEM

DENON DHT-500SD

Pioneer

MODELS INCLUDE

A/V AMPLIFIER VSA-AX10Ai

A/V RECEIVERS VSX-D814 • VSX-2014i • VSX-AX5Ai

UNIVERSAL DVD PLAYERS DV668Av • DV868Avi



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



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

Yamaha

Yamaha is recognised as a world leader in the fields of musical instruments and audio equipment, and in more recent years, home cinema. New models for 2005 include upgraded A/V receivers, amplifiers, and DVD players plus the innovative YSP-1 virtual surround speaker (pictured right).



NEW YSP-1
Digital Sound Projector

MODELS INCLUDE

A/V AMPLIFIERS

DSP-AX757SE • DSP-Z9

A/V RECEIVERS

RX-V557 • RX-V1500

DVD PLAYERS

DVD-S557 • DVD-S1500



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.

Arcam

DVD PLAYERS

DV78, DV79

FMJ DV29

A/V RECEIVERS

AVR250, AVR300

A/V PRE/PROCESSOR

AV8, AVP700

MULTICHANNEL POWER

P7, P1000

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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

NEW DMR-ES10 (MULTI-FORMAT)

HARD-DISK MODELS (HDD)

NEW DMR-EH50 80GB (MULTI-FORMAT) • 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

BEST What Video BUY

BEST What Video BUY



Product of the Year 2003



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

KEF KHT

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

MODELS INCLUDE

KHT1005 • KHT2005.2
KHT5005 • KHT9000ACE

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2004



KEF KIT100 Home Cinema System

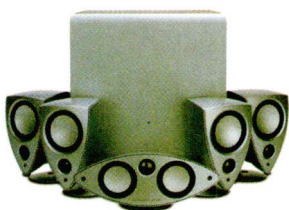
"Why take five speakers into the living room when you can use just two? Creating a virtual surround sound experience has never been simpler or more effective, thanks to this two speakers plus subwoofer concoction from KEF."



Mordaunt Short

Genie

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



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2004

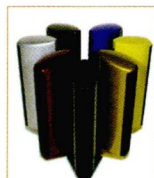
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

COMPACT SPEAKER PACKAGE

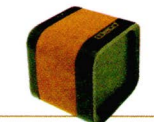
REMARKABLE SOUND QUALITY

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."



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2004

BEST SMALL SPEAKER PACKAGE OVER £1000

Product of the Year 2003

WINNER

★★★★★



REL Subwoofers

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



WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2004

BEST SUBWOOFER £300-£400

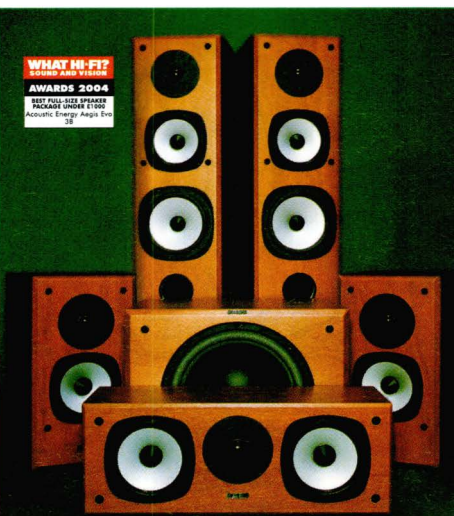
REL Stampede

Q400E

Product of the Year 2003

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

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



Product Selection

Some products/brands are not available at all stores. Please call to confirm or see the brand locator at www.ssav.com before travelling.

TURNTABLES

Goldring GR1	£ CALL
Linn RANGE	£ CALL
Michell RANGE	£ CALL
Project RANGE	£ CALL
Roksan Radius 5	£ CALL

TUNERS

Arcam RANGE	£ CALL
Cyrus FM X	£ CALL
Denon TU260L MKII	£99.95
Harman Kardon RANGE	£ CALL
Linn RANGE	£ CALL
Marantz ST4000	£99.95
Pure DRX-701ES DAB	£179.95
Pure DRX-702ES DAB/FM	£269.95
Rotel RANGE	£ CALL

CD PLAYERS

Arcam RANGE	£ CALL
Cyrus RANGE	£ CALL
Denon DCD485	£119.95
Linn RANGE	£ CALL
Marantz CD5400	£119.95
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL
Musical Fidelity RANGE	£ CALL
Quad RANGE	£ CALL
Roksan RANGE	£ CALL
Rotel RANGE	£ CALL

CD RECORDERS

Yamaha CDR-HD1500	£469.95
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AMPLIFIERS

Arcam RANGE	£ CALL
Cyrus RANGE	£ CALL
Denon PMA355	£159.95
Linn RANGE	£ CALL
Marantz PM4400	£139.95
Marantz PM7200	£239.95
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL
Musical Fidelity RANGE	£ CALL
Quad RANGE	£ CALL
Roksan RANGE	£ CALL
Rotel RANGE	£ CALL
Yamaha AX396	£169.95

SPEAKERS

Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo One	£119.95
Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo Three	£229.95
Acoustic Energy Aelite RANGE	£ CALL
Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII	£ CALL
AVI Neutron IV	£ CALL
B&W RANGE	£ CALL
KEF RANGE	£ CALL
Linn RANGE	£ CALL

Meridian RANGE	£ CALL
Mission m30i	£89.95
Mission m31i	£119.95
Mission m33i	£199.95
Mission m34i	£269.95
Monitor Audio GR10	£599.95
Monitor Audio RANGE	£ CALL
Quad RANGE	£ CALL
Ruark RANGE	£ CALL
Wharfedale RANGE	£ CALL

HI-FI SYSTEMS

Arcam Solo Ex Speakers	£ CALL
Denon 201 Ex Speakers	£469.95
Denon DF101 Ex Speakers	£289.95
Denon DM31 Ex Speakers	£179.95
Linn Klassik Music Ex Spks	£ CALL

DVD SYSTEMS

Denon DHT-500SD Inc 5.1 Spks	£429.95
Denon DHT-550SD Inc 5.1 Spks	£599.95
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 RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Cyrus RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-1710	£99.95	£109.95
Denon DVD-2910 Universal	£489.95	£499.95
Denon DVD-3910 Universal	£699.95	£719.95
Denon DVD-A1xv	£ CALL	£ CALL
Harman Kardon RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Marantz RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer DV370	£59.95	£69.95
Pioneer DV575A Universal	£119.95	£129.95
Pioneer DV668Av Universal	£469.95	£479.95
Pioneer DV868Avi Universal	£799.95	£819.95
Samsung DVD-HD945	£139.95	£149.95
Toshiba SD350	£79.95	£89.95
Yamaha RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL

DVD RECORDERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Panasonic DMR-ES10	£199.95	£209.95
Panasonic DMR-EH50	£339.95	£349.95
Pioneer DVR-320	£299.95	£309.95
Pioneer DVR-420H	£349.95	£369.95
Pioneer DVR-520H	£399.95	£419.95
Pioneer DVR-720H	£469.95	£489.95
Pioneer DVR-920H	£999.95	£1029.95

A/V AMPLIFIERS RECEIVERS & PROCESSORS

Arcam RANGE	£ CALL
Cyrus RANGE	£ CALL
Denon AVC-A1XV AV Amplifier	£ CALL
Denon AVR1705 AV Receiver	£199.95
Denon AVR1905 AV Receiver	£229.95
Denon AVR2805 AV Receiver	£549.95
Denon AVR3805 AV Receiver	£799.95
Harman Kardon RANGE	£ CALL
Lexicon RANGE	£ CALL
Marantz RANGE	£ CALL
Onkyo RANGE	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-1014s AV Receiver	£429.95
Pioneer VSX-2014i AV Receiver	£549.95
Pioneer VSX-AX5Ai AV Receiver	£799.95
Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai AV Amplifier	£1999.95
Rotel RANGE	£ CALL
Yamaha DSP-AX757SE AV Amplifier	£399.95
Yamaha RX-V357 AV Receiver	£149.95
Yamaha RX-V557 AV Receiver	£299.95

A/V SPEAKERS & PACKAGES

Acoustic Energy RANGE	£ CALL
Artcoustic RANGE	£ CALL
Audica RANGE	£ CALL
B&W RANGE	£ CALL
B&W Mini Theatre RANGE	£ CALL
KEF KHT1005	£299.95
KEF KHT2005.2	£599.95
KEF Q7 AV	£ CALL
M&K RANGE	£ CALL
Mission M Cube	£849.95
Mission Elegante RANGE	£ CALL
Monitor Audio RANGE	£ CALL
Mordaunt Short Genie	£649.95
Quad L-Series	£ CALL
Wharfedale Diamond 9 HCP	£ CALL
Yamaha YSP-1 Sound Projector	£ CALL

SUBWOOFERS

B&W RANGE	£ CALL
M&K RANGE	£ CALL
MJ Acoustics RANGE	£ CALL
Monitor Audio RANGE	£ CALL
Quad L Series	£ CALL
REL RANGE	£ CALL
Wharfedale Diamond SW150	£ CALL

PLASMA

Fujitsu RANGE	£ CALL
Hitachi 42PD5200 42"	£1699.95
Hitachi RANGE	£ CALL
LG RZ42PX11 42"	£1399.95
LG RANGE	£ CALL
Panasonic TH37P500 (Wal) 37"	£1999.95
Panasonic TH42P500 (Wal) 42"	£2299.95
Panasonic RANGE	£ CALL
Pioneer PDP435XDE 43"	£2699.95
Pioneer RANGE	£ CALL

LCD TV

Hitachi RANGE	£ CALL
LG RZ32LZ50 32"	£999.95
LG RANGE	£ CALL
Panasonic RANGE	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos LC26GA5E 26"	£699.95
Sharp Aquos LC32GA5E 32"	£949.95
Sharp Aquos RANGE	£ CALL
Toshiba 32WL56 32"	£999.95
Toshiba RANGE	£ CALL

PROJECTORS

Optoma H27 DLP	£ CALL
Screenplay RANGE	£ CALL
Sharp XVZ91E	£799.95
Sharp RANGE	£ CALL
Sim 2 RANGE	£ CALL
ThemeScene RANGE	£ CALL

PIONEER
PDP435XDE PLASMA TV

£2699 SAVE £300 (NICWADO)*
PRICE EXCLUDES SPEAKERS

ARCAM
DV79/AVR300 DVD/AV RECEIVER

£2299 CLAIM £400
TOWARDS THE SPEAKERS OF YOUR CHOICE (NICWADO)*

SCREENPLAY
5700 DLP PROJECTOR

£1999 CLAIM £300
TOWARDS THE SCREEN OF YOUR CHOICE (NICWADO)*

MARANTZ
DV6500/SR5500 DVD/AV RECEIVER

£499 SAVE £250 (NICWADO)*

KEF
KHT2005.2 SPEAKER SYSTEM

£599 CLAIM FREE
SPEAKER STANDS WORTH £80 (NICWADO)*

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SUMMER EVENT

Nationwide Store guide



ABERDEEN 01224 252797

• 57 CROWN STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

BEDFORD 01234 272779

• 29-31 ST PETERS STREET

BIRMINGHAM 0121 233 2977

• ARCH 12, LIVERY STREET

BRIGHTON 01273 733338

• 57 WESTERN ROAD, HOVE

BRISTOL 0117 974 3727

• 92B WHITELADIES ROAD, CLIFTON

BROMLEY 020 8290 1988

• 39A EAST STREET

CAMBRIDGE 01223 304770

• 17 BURLEIGH STREET

CARDIFF 029 2047 2899

• 104-106 ALBANY ROAD

CHELSEA 020 7352 9466

• 403 KINGS ROAD

CHELTENHAM 01242 241171

• 14 PITTVILLE STREET

CRAWLEY 01293 510777

• 32 THE BOULEVARD *OPEN SUNDAY*

CROYDON 020 8665 1203

• 369-373 LONDON ROAD

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

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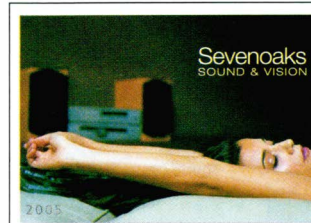
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Established as Sevenoaks Hi-Fi in 1972, we have grown steadily onto one of the leading independent home entertainment specialists in the UK, earning a reputation for outstanding service, choice and value for money. In 1995, reflecting our commitment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

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

- **ESTABLISH YOUR AIMS** - Are you tweaking an existing system to improve sound or picture quality, or are you looking for a more fundamental and comprehensive upgrade?
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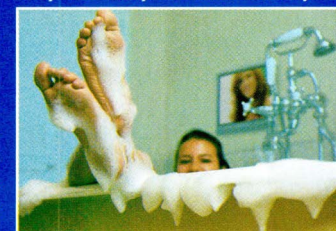


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www.ssav.com

SEVENOAKS

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 BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

STEREO AMPLIFIERS

Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	SCALE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000									
BB	Arcam DIVA A65 Plus	370	Highly articulate and fluent, offers unusual insight for its price	5	●	●	●	40	232
	Arcam DIVA A80	600	Arcam's most successful mid-range amp to date – sophisticated control system and crisp, detailed sound	6	●	●	●	90	251
BB	Arcam DIVA A90	850	Enhanced replacement for A85, convertible to 7.1 sound with the addition of an add-on module and extra P90 power amps	6	opt	●	●	90	250
BB	Audio Analogue Primo	475	Small, stylish amp with a smooth and beguiling sound. Makes a fine partner for AA's equally compact Primo CD player	5	opt	●		70	255
BB	Cambridge Audio Azur 540A	200	A well built and fully featured amplifier that costs this little should not sound this revealing	6	opt	●	●	50	255
	Cambridge Audio Azur 640A	250	Cambridge has a powerful weapon in the battle for budget amp supremacy, it's a lot of musical entertainment for the money	5	opt	●		65	250
	Cyrus 6vs	600	Best seen in a Cyrus rack but capable of sweet sounds elsewhere too. Impressively clean and agile but lacking musical grunt	7		●	●	40	262
	Cyrus 8vs	800	Slightly inferior to Cyrus 6vs, but the tables are turned with the add-on PSX-R power supply – in that form it's a real Best Buy	7		●	●	70	261
BB	Electrocompaniet EC13	999	Large and fairly powerful, with individual looks and very refined sound	6		●		70	262
BB	Exposure 2010 S	599	Beneath the unassuming exterior lurks a very capable performer that's passionate about music	6	opt	●		75	262
BB	Marantz PM4400 OSE	250	Highly competent and well specified – a lively performer that makes great music	5	●		●	50	256
BB	Marantz PM7200	330	High power, plenty of features and remarkably clear and informative sound with lots of impact	6	●	●	●	105	248
BB	Musical Fidelity X-80	600	The entry-level to Musical Fidelity's amplifier range sounds both powerful and refined	4		●		55	255
BB	NAD C352	350	Dynamic and musical sounding update on what was already a star product	7		●	●	80	253
BB	Naim Nait 5i	699	A trade-off of more power and better connectivity against less inputs works surprisingly well in a grunty, musical manner	4		●		50	252
	Rega Mira 3	598	Lively sound with good timing and frequency extension, if not quite as detailed as some	5	●	●	●	60	262
BB	Rotel RA-03	499	Gutsy amp that's equally happy belting out anthems and whispering romantic secrets. Good phono stage too	5	●	●		70	265
BB	Rotel RA-1062	595	A great value amp with a detailed and engaging sound, and the ability to drive almost any speaker in its path	5	●	●		95	251
BB	Sugden A21a	899	This single-ended, Class A transistor amp has exquisite resolving ability and presence – an authentic classic	5				25	224
ABOVE £1,000									
BB	Arcam FMJ A32	1,200	Ultra-civilised amp with plenty of features that's also highly revealing and musical	7	●	●	●	100	266
BB	Audio Note Oto Line SE	1,599	Single-ended valve amp lacks power but sounds remarkably delicate and coherent	5	opt			10	254
BB	Audio Analogue Maestro S.	1,750	The beautifully made Maestro Settanta sounds fast, deep and very smooth, though perhaps not the most dynamic	5	●	●		70	257
BB	Audio Research VS155	2,895	Superb all-rounder provides the delights of valve amplification without sacrificing convenience	5		●		50	254
BB	AVI Laboratory Series	1,399	Terrific power, control and resolution – effortlessly musical and fine value	6	opt	●		200	241
BB	Copland CSA29	1,900	A hybrid valve/solid state amplifier that gets close to offering the best of both worlds	6	opt	●		85	255
EC	Krell KAV-400xi	2,698	The best integrated Krell yet is quick, agile, solid and finely detailed	5		●		200	247
BB	Marantz PM-11S1	2,500	A good-looking, well-endowed, high-quality amp that's a great match for the impressive SA-11S1 stereo CD/SACD player	6	●	●	●	100	265
BB	Moon i-3	1,595	Powerful Canadian amp whose lively presentation is particularly suited to big-scale music	6		●		100	265
BB	Primare I30	1,500	Definitive at the price, this is a smooth, sophisticated yet agile performer. Less custom install features than CDP however	6			●	100	267
EC	Sugden A21SE	1,995	Hot-running Class A amplifier that sounds more delicious than most. A definite step up from the classic A21a	4		●		40	268
BB	Unison Research Unico 200	3,000	Hybrid integrated with high power/quality low power modes combines much of the best of solid state and valve design	5			●	200	269

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

STEREO AMPLIFIERS

Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				PREAMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	SCALE NUMBER
UP TO £2,000										
BB	Arcam FMJ A32/P35	1,980	One of the few correctly matched integrated/power combinations, the sound has real gravitas and sophistication	●	●	7	●	●	100	227
EC	Cyrus DAC XP	2,200	A knockout DAC/pre with naturalness and resolution to die for and six digital inputs for signals up to 96kHz	●		2		●		266
	Densen Beat 200/300	1,985	Classy jet black cast boxes pack plenty of punch with good total musical coherence (remote £300 extra)	●	●	6	opt	opt	100	216
BB	Exposure 2010 S Integrated/Power	1,098	Bi-amping with the additional power amp increases the musical communication of an already fine integrated	●	●	6		●	75	264
BB	Naim NAC 112x/NAP 150x	1,475	Upated entry-level Naim pre/power is a master of musical communication	●	●	6		●	50	262
BB	Quad 99/909	1,650	Well thought out and well executed, with good strong sound and just a little veiling	●	●	5	●	●	136	256
ABOVE £2,000										
EC	Border Patrol P20	6,750	Muscular 300B push-pull design with fluidity and dynamics to match the best	●	●				20	231
	Bryston BP25/4BSST	4,000	Extremely transparent, high-power combo, you'll listen louder and longer because you can	●	●	8	opt	●	300	241
EC	Chapter Preface/II+	9,800	Among the finest amps available, the resolution of this preamp and power amp challenges the best at any price	●	●	6		●	300	249

SPECS KEY **LINE INPUTS** Input sockets for source components with a line level output: CD players, DVD players, tape decks, tuners, phono stages etc. **PHONO INPUT** Input sockets and onboard phono stage for a cartridge. Either MM (moving magnet) or MC (moving coil), occasionally both. **REMOTE CONTROL** A remote control is supplied with the amplifier. **HEADPHONE SOCKET** To drive your cans with. **POWER OUTPUT** Manufacturer's rated output in watts per channel.

Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE
STEREO AMPLIFIERS continued

Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
EC	Chord Prima/Mezzo 140	6,100	Small, muscular, beautifully made and styled and sounds like a dream	●	●	5		●	120	269
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
EC	Hovland HP-100/RADIA	12,745	Uncommonly musical valve/transistor hybrid transcends stereotypes, one of the genuine high achievers	●	●	9	opt		125	250
EC	Krell FPB 700cx	14,998	Reference class amplifier may represent overkill in many systems, but when no compromise is called for, this is it		●				700	234
EC	Linn Klimax Kontrol	6,000	Beautifully executed example of Scots audio art, sounds as clean as it looks and is a lot more transparent than most	●		4		●		238
	Naim NAC 202/NAP 200	2,720	More sophisticated than its forebears with a fleet-footed sound that draws you into the music	●	●	8		●	70	241
EC	Naim NAP 500	11,875	Wonderful neutrality, bandwidth and dynamic range, plus Naim's traditional leading-edge definition		●				140	208
EC	Naim NAC 552	12,100	Extremely expensive preamp, but still solid value. Magnificent sound with fine flexibility and convenience	●		6		●		233
	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

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 is 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, such as i.Link connectivity.



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

Our favourite AV AMPLIFIERS

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

Multichannel amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				
				RECEIVER	LINE INPUTS	7.1 COMPATIBLE	5-CHANNEL POWER (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
MULTICHANNEL INTEGRATED AMPS								
BB	Arcam AVR300	1,300	Cracking all-round music and movie ability sets the Arcam apart from the AV crowd	●	8	●	100	257
	Denon AVR-2803	650	Merely 'average' sound but it's impossible to argue against the flexibility and value of its engineering	●	9	●	130	251
	Denon AVR-3805	1,000	Upgraded sound, new processing algorithms and a great remote control make this a superb mid-market multichannel buy	●		●	120	256
EC	Denon AVC-A1XV	4,000	Inelegant, but powerful and effective tool with excellent auto set-up and capable of driving two 5.1 systems simultaneously			●	170	266
EC	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
	Marantz SR9300	2,000	Not a high flyer, just a thoroughly enjoyable, warm and attractive sounding receiver with music and film soundtracks alike	●	8	●	105	252
	Marantz SR-12S1	3,000	A multichannel amp that can be taken seriously in stereo too. Resources are in the engineering rather than the gimmickry	●	3	●	160	255
BB	Pioneer VSA-AX5i	1,200	Standard setter in its price category, with i.Link digital interface and MCACC auto set-up	●	11	●	100	248
EC	Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai	3,200	State of the art one-box amplifier with enhanced sound quality, auto set-up and other enhancements		10	●	150	260
BB	Sony STR-DB795	300	A superb value little amplifier, well appointed technically and successfully tuned for UK ears	●	7	●	100	260
EC	Sony TA-DA9000ES	2,600	Arguably the first convincing fully digital amplifier, an excellent match for players with i.Link encrypted outputs	●	10	●	200	253
MULTICHANNEL PREAMPS/PROCESSORS AND POWER AMPS								
BB	Arcam A90+7.1 mod, P90/3	1,920	Add Arcam's multichannel module and a P90/3 power amp to the A90 stereo integrated and you've got got superb purist 5.1		8	●	90	250
EC	Arcam AV8/P7	5,750	State-of-the-art processor (£3,150) and seven-channel power amp (£2,600). An excellent fusion of stereo and surround sound		7	●	180	235
EC	Copland CVA306/CVA535	3,748	Tube analogue six-channel pre transforms multichannel audio from a novelty into a genuine advance for the high fidelity art		5		125	236
	Cyrus AV8/3x Smartpower	2,900	Classic Cyrus sound translated to a multichannel arena, limited features and power, but civilised sound		3		105	238
EC	EAD TheaterMaster 8800	4,500	One of the most 'musical' sounding AV processors to date – great with the matching PowerMaster 8300 multichannel power amp		9	●		242
	Linn Exotik	1,750	Is hi-fi ready to make the jump to multichannel music? Linn think so with this musical preamplifier		4			260
BB	Marantz PS-17/2x SM-17	3,400	Classy and capable system, great steering, warm solid sound and high detail resolution, and some great gadgets		10	●	60	238
EC	Meridian 861	9,833	Powerful surround processor with flexible modular construction, marvellous versatility to drive any speaker configuration		6	●		230
	Naim AV2/NAPV175/NAP150	4,175	First truly credible multichannel system from Naim is idiosyncratic but offers excellent basic sound with modest spatial steering		5	●	50	238
EC	Parasound Halo C1/A51	8,500	Powerful and flexible processor/power amp combo with impressive sound. Excellent value – processor includes onboard screen		11	●	250	243
BB	Primare SP31.7/A30.5	4,200	Great all-round system which brings the qualities of good stereo high fidelity to a multichannel world		5	●	120	238

SPECS KEY RECEIVER Integrated multichannel amp with built-in radio tuner. **LINE INPUTS** Input sockets for source components with a line level output: CD players, DVD players, tape decks, tuners, phono stages etc. **7.1 CHANNEL COMPATIBLE** The amp either has seven-channel in and outputs or in some instances is equipped with seven channels of amplification. **5-CHANNEL POWER (W)** Power output in watts per channel of all channels driven by the amp.

audio analogue
audio research
copland
dream vision
ecs
epos
grado
harmonic

hyperion
jadis
koetsu
krell
magnum dynalab
martin logan
goldring
myryad

opera
pathos
prima luna
qed
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stands unique
sunfire
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theta
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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 BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO SPEAKERS

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
UP TO £1,000									
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	ATC SCM12	999	Magnificent main driver confers great authority, grip and smoothness, though upper bass a little lean	22,39,26	A-	55	●	253	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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
BEST BUY	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
BEST BUY	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
BEST BUY	Epos ELS3	200	Few affordable speakers sound as clean and convincing while taking up so little real estate	18,27,19	A-	60	●	241	
BEST BUY	Epos M5	349	Gorgeous miniature works well close to wall. Could be smoother but communicates with authority	18x33x21	A-	40	●	269	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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
BEST BUY	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	
	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	
BEST BUY	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
BEST BUY	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
BEST BUY	Naim n-SATS	695	Very discreet and informative, if a bit lean and forward. Just add an n-SUB for excellent all round results	20,29,21	A	50	●	268	
	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	PMC GB1	995	Ultra-compact floorstander is beautifully clean, articulate and free from boxiness, with a notably delicate top end	16,92,24	●	A+	30	●	257

SPECS KEY **SIZE WxHxD (CM)** Width, height and depth of one cabinet in centimetres. **FLOORSTANDER** Speakers that don't require stands. **EASE OF DRIVE** How much power the amplifier needs (approximately) to drive the loudspeaker effectively. **A+** 25 watts plus **A** 50 watts plus **A-** 100 watts plus **ACT** Active - the speaker has its own in-built amplifier. **BASS FROM** How low the speaker goes - the smaller the number the deeper the bass. **FREE SPACE** The speakers work best away from wall(s). **CLOSE TO WALL** The speakers will work best when up against a wall (but avoid corners).



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CD Players / CD-R Recorders / Hard Disc Recorders

Arcam FMJ CD33 CD Player (Silver)	1349.90	999.00
Arcam Diva CD93 CD Player (Black & Silver)	979.90	750.00
AVI Lab Series CD CD Player	1400.00	1150.00
Quad 99 CD-P Upsampling CD/DAC	1000.00	749.00
Wadia 861 CD CD Player /Digital Pre (Black)	7950.00	6350.00

Amplifiers

Arcam FMJ A32 Amplifier (Silver)	1199.90	950.00
Classé CAP151 Amplifier	2195.00	1695.00
Classé CA201 Power Amplifier	3195.00	2500.00
Cyrus Smart Power Power Amplifier (Black)	600.00	480.00
Cyrus Q Power Power Amplifier (Black)	500.00	380.00
Samuel Johnston PPA100 Power Amplifier	2585.00	1450.00
Cyrus PRE & MONO Power Amps (Black)	3400.00	2700.00
Meridian G51 Stereo Receiver	1995.00	1596.00
Quad 99 Pre & Power	1299.98	1000.00

Tuners

Arcam T61 FM /AM Radio(Silver)	229.90	179.00
Arcam DT81 DAB Digital Radio (Silver)	649.90	400.00
Cyrus FMX FM Tuner (Black)	500.00	400.00

Loudspeakers

Dynaudio Audience 42W Wall Mount Speakers	500.00	350.00
Cyrus CLS70 & Stands Loudspeakers /Stands	900.00	700.00
Mission 782SE Loudspeakers	899.90	750.00
Quad 12 Loudspeakers (Birdseye Maple)	499.95	425.00

DVD Players

Cyrus DVD7 DVD Player (Silver)	1000.00	500.00
Denon DVD-A1 DVD Audio/Video Player	2499.99	1249.99
Harman Kardon DVD 2550S DVD Player(Silver)	350.00	250.00
Harman Kardon DVD 506 LE DVD Player(Silver)	350.00	250.00
Pioneer DVD565 DVD Player (Silver)	249.99	149.00
Pioneer DVD656 DVD/DVD-A/SACD (Silver)	399.00	185.00
Pioneer DVD 747 DVD/DVD-A/SACD (Silver)	950.00	500.00

AV Amplifiers, Receivers & Processors

Denon AVC-A11SR A/V Amplifier (Gold)	1799.99	999.99
Denon AVC-A1SR A/V Amplifier (Gold)	2999.99	1999.99
Harman Kardon AVR 4550 A/V Amplifier (Black)	800.00	575.00

Audio Visual Loudspeakers

Mission V6c Centre (Cherry)	199.90	150.00
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Mains Conditioning

Isotek The Qube 2K 2 Way mains conditioner	1495.00	1150.00
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Home Cinema Projectors

Sim2 HT200 DLP Projector with Iscan Pro Scaler	4700.00	2500.00
Yamaha LPX500 LCD Projector	3300.00	2500.00

Secondhand

Classe CAP151 Integrated Amp	2195.00	1200.00
Seleco SDV-100 DLP Projector	1200.00	1200.00
Meridian 588 CD Player	2100.00	1100.00
Meridian 502 Pre-Amplifier	1470.00	800.00
Meridian M33 Active Speakers	1560.00	850.00
Meridian 504 Tuner	795.00	450.00

Ex display

CD Players / CD-R Recorders / Hard Disc Recorders

Quad 99 CD CD Player	650.00	485.00
Quad 99 CD-P Upsampling CD/DAC	1000.00	749.00
Roksan Caspian CD Player	995.00	595.00
Yamaha CDR-HD1300 mk2 CD Recorder HDD	600.00	499.00

Amplifiers

Cyrus Pre X Preamplifier (Silver)	1000.00	745.00
Meridian G51 Stereo Receiver	1995.00	1596.00

Loudspeakers

Castle Harlech S2 (Maple) Floorstanding	1000.00	699.00
Castle Howard S3 (Cherry) Floorstanding	1350.00	949.00
Meridian DSP5000 Mk2 (Rosewood)Digital Active	4540.00	3750.00
Rega Alya Floorstanding Loudspeaker (Cherry)	525.00	325.00

Subwoofers

REL Q400 Subwoofer (Maple)	1100.00	749.00
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Turntables

Project RPM 4 Turntable (Black/Silver)	325.00	245.00
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Televisions

Loewe Aconda 40 LS + C31 Stand 40" Widescreen	1950.00	1950.00
Loewe Aventos 3981ZP P 32" Widescreen CRT	1340.00	999.00

DVD Players

Arcam DV 88 DVD Player (Silver)	1000.00	549.00
Cyrus DVD 7 Upgradeable DVD Player (Silver)	1000.00	649.00
Harman/Kardon DVD 21 DVD Player	250.00	175.00
Harman/Kardon DVD 2550S DVD Player	350.00	249.00
Harman/Kardon DVD 30 DVD Audio	450.00	345.00
Meridian G91DH DVD Audio AV Controller	3895.00	3116.00
Pioneer DV-656A DVD Audio Player (Black)	530.00	400.00

AV Amplifiers & Receivers

Arcam AVR 200 DD/DTS AV Receiver (Black)	800.00	449.00
Cyrus AV8 DD/DTS AV Processor (Silver)	1100.00	850.00
Denon ADV-1000 DD/DTS AV Receiver /DVD	700.00	449.00
Denon AVR 3802 DD/DTS AV Receiver (Black)	850.00	499.00
Harman/Kardon AVR 5500 DD/DTS AV Receiver	750.00	395.00
Harman/Kardon AVR 5550 DD/DTS AV Receiver	900.00	699.00
Harman/Kardon AVR 130 DD/DTS AV Receiver	350.00	279.00
Harman/Kardon AVR 230 DD/DTS AV Receiver	500.00	399.00
Harman/Kardon AVR 330 DD/DTS AV Receiver	600.00	479.00
Harman/Kardon AVR 430 DD/DTS AV Receiver	800.00	639.00
Harman/Kardon AVR 630 DD/DTS AV Receiver	1000.00	749.00
Meridian G68ADV Surround Controller	4995.00	3996.00
Rotel RB 985 Mk 2 5 Channel Power Amplifier	700.00	450.00

Home Cinema Projectors

Sim2 Domino 20 DLP Projector (Black)	3750.00	2900.00
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Secondhand

Cyrus Pre X Preamplifier (silver)	595.00	595.00
Meridian 208 CD Player	250.00	250.00



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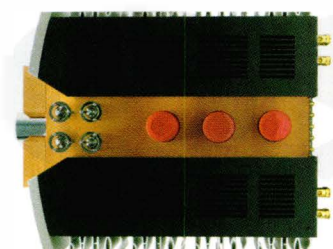
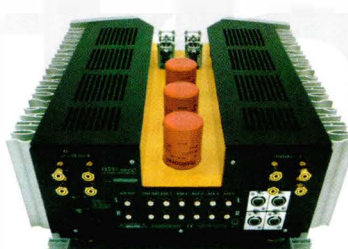
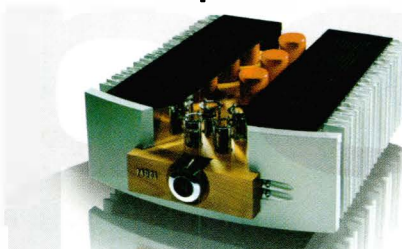
Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

STEREO SPEAKERS continued

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				SIZE (WHD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	FACE-OF-DRIVE	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
BEST BUY	ProAc Tablette Ref Eight	699	Stunning standmount with electrostatic-like imagery. Its Signature brother costs £200 more and is even better!	15,27,23		A+	40		267	
BEST BUY	Quad 21L	695	Elegant lacquer finish floorstander has a smooth, well balanced sound, even bass and good detail projection	21,60,26	●	A+	25	●	263	
BEST BUY	Rega R1	298	Cute baby sounds busy, coherent and involving, if a touch thin. Sweet and delicate treble with even bass	15x32x24		A	50	●	269	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	Triangle Titus ES	370	Not pretty but busy, coherent and involving, if a little thin. Sweet and delicate treble with even bass	18x37x30		A-	40	●	269	
BEST BUY	Triangle Comete ES	500	Bulky standmount lacks style but delivers engrossing musical coherence and vivid dynamics	20,42,34		A	40	●	265	
ABOVE £1,000										
BEST BUY	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 MkIII	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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	
BEST BUY	B&W 805S	1,600	A wonderfully communicative, entertaining and subtle speaker, despite some lack of tonal richness	24,39,33		A	25	●	266	
BEST BUY	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	
BEST BUY	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	
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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	
BEST BUY	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	
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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	
BEST BUY	Dynaudio Audience 82	1,460	Bulky, with vinyl finish, but offers exceptional neutrality, bass extension, power handling and loudness potential	22,106,36	●	A	30	●	229	
	Dynaudio Contour S 1.4	1,850	Sound has fine mid-to-treble coherence and neutrality, though port tuning was ill-suited to our room	19,40,36		A-	28	●	260	
	Eclipse TD Lulét 307/316	1,250	Extraordinary satellite plus sub solution sounds a cut above other sub/sats. Can be expanded to multichannel	12,16,16		act	40	●	247	
	Elac FS 607 X-Jet	5,000	Highly revealing and capable, the mid/tweeter provides impressive detail and depth of soundstage	29,108,32.5	●		28	●	269	
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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	
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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	
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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	

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Our favourite  BEST BUY  EDITOR'S CHOICE

STEREO SPEAKERS continued

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE W/H/D (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE-OF-DRIVE	BASS FROM Hz	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
	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
	MartinLogan Mosaic	1,799	Curious hybrid construction marries many panel speaker-like attributes with moving coil simplicity	24,102,30		A-	46		257
	MartinLogan Clarity	2,498	Relatively affordable and easy to live with electrostatic hybrid with class-leading resolving power	26,135,31		A-	46		245
	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
	Naim SL-2	4,995	Delivers magnificent musical analysis and communication skills in a notably discrete physical package	28,103,33		A-	20		232
	Neat Elite SE	1,499	Smooth and natural performer with notably expressive midband. Fine voice articulation and unusual sweetness	20x90x18		A	25		267
	Neat Ultimatum MFS	2,995	Wonderful five-driver standmount sounds bigger than it looks. Very spacious and informative	22,38,37		A+	25		241
	PMC FB1+	1,625	Nicely proportioned floorstander has a sweet top and a beautifully natural, open and restrained midband	20,100,30		A	20		260
	PMC OB1	2,450	Genuinely deep bass and lovely overall neutrality, though mid could have more tension and bass more punch	20,103,33		A	20		243
	PMC IB2	6,150	Stunning in an understated way, this speaker creeps up on you and hooks you with its transparency and power	33,74,47		A-	25		237
	ProAc Response D25	2,995	The traditional ProAc high-end detail mixed with greater efficiency and more pace - a splendid speaker	22,107,25		A+	20		254
	PSB Platinum M2	1,600	Chunky stand-mount with cast alloy cabinet creates exceptionally clean bass and impressive overall neutrality	24,39,33		A	25		266
	Rega R9	2,498	This subtle, laid back but very informative performer has a very superior dynamic range, especially in the bass	17,103,39		A	20		256
	Revel F32	3,200	Meticulously balanced, tonally neutral design makes for a taut, well disciplined sound	22,105,39		B	30		265
	Ruark Talisman III	1,499	No bass demon, but a sophisticated and agile speaker epitomising Ruark's design ideals	22,84,31		A	22		259
	Sonus Faber Cremona A.	2,149	Standmount 'Auditor' version of the Cremona makes a soundstage bigger and better than its size suggests	19,35,32		A	48		246
	Spendor S6e	1,495	Combines deep, powerful bass with an attractively open midband, but perhaps too much restraint up top	30,88,19		A+	23		257
	Spendor S9e	2,895	An improvement on the original S9 - very entertaining at high levels with a fabulously open and weighty bass	24,101,38		A+	40		256
	Tannoy Dimension TD8	4,000	This stylish speaker is a splendid all-rounder, with fine dynamics, precise imaging and minimal coloration	31,86,30		A-	25		240
	Tannoy Dimension TD12	6,500	Art Deco-inspired style, plus magnificent headroom and genuine monitoring neutrality - a tour de force	42,126,41		A-	23		225
	Totem Forest	2,390	Low sensitivity but wonderfully open neutrality, at heart a beautifully communicative and musical loudspeaker	20,90,27		A	25		247
	Triangle Naia	1,900	Exciting, vivid and communicative, but also a bit untidy and uneven, the Naia is a whole lot of fun	23,119,32		A-	25		247
	Triangle Magellan Concerto	9,995	Scintillating midrange and treble, with tuneful, well-timed bass - a thoroughly engaging musical ride	28,149,34		A	35		262
	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
	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,000	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package	23,91,37		A	28		254
	Wilson Benesch ACT	8,400	Superb enclosure gives uncanny freedom from 'boxiness'. Well balanced, but top end might be sweeter	23,108,36		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.



Naim
n-SAT/CENT/SUB £3,385
Five n-SATs, and n-CENT and an n-SUB make a highly engaging and (for Naim) discreet multichannel package.



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 BT BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

AV SPEAKER PACKAGES

Multichannel speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				EASE-OF-DRIVE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
BT	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
BT	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
EC	Linn Akurate (242/212/225/221)	13,750	An extremely capable system that offers new insights into the potential for multichannel audio	A-	6	18	●		253
	Mirage Omni 2	2,650	Dark tonality, but superb imagery makes this an excellent all-round choice	A	5	30	●		232
BT	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
BT	Naim n-SAT/n-CENT/n-SUB	3,385	Priced here as a 5.1 package, Naim's neat n-SATs and matching sub/centre make an exceptional compact ensemble	A	6	20		●	268
	Tannoy Arena	1,200	Fabulously stylish sub/sats with Dual Concentric drivers. Unusually revealing for the breed, but sub lacks refinement	A	6	29			269

SPECS KEY **EASE OF DRIVE** How much power the amplifier needs (approximately) to drive the loudspeaker effectively: **A+** 25 watts plus **A** 50 watts plus **A-** 100 watts plus.
NUMBER OF SPEAKERS The amount of individual loudspeakers in the package. **BASS FROM** How low the speaker goes, the smaller the number the deeper the bass.
FREE SPACE The speakers work best away from wall(s). **CLOSE TO WALL** The speakers will work best when up against a wall (but avoid corners).

Our favourite BT BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

SUBWOOFERS

Bass speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				SIZE WxHxD (CM)	POWER (W)	BASS FROM (HZ)	ISSUE NUMBER
	B&W PV1	950	Gorgeously styled sub shakes the air but not the floor, delivering a very clean sound with negligible coloration	29,34,35	500	20	259
EC	B&W ASW850	2,000	Does all the things subwoofers should do with music and movies alike, but transparently and seamlessly	53,56,52	1000	18	246
	Monitor Audio ASW100	300	For the price, this compact subwoofer performs particularly well	32,32,34	120	27	225
BT	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
BT	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
EC	REL Stadium III	1,500	It's a bulky piece of furniture, but offers superior filtering as well as an ability to delve deep into the bass nether regions	59,56,39	200	16	217
	Titan Saturn	800	Very bulky sub has curious styling, but decent filtering gives good weight and headroom	72,48,72	200	20	239

SPECS KEY **SIZE WxHxD (CM)** Width, height and depth of one cabinet in centimetres. **POWER (W)** How many watts the onboard amplifier of active models delivers.
BASS FROM How low the sub goes, the smaller the number the deeper the bass.

High End Cable



Stereovox SEI 600II Reference interconnects



Stereovox HDXV Digital interconnect



Chord Signature Digital



Chord Signature interconnects



Chord Signature speaker cables



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HEADPHONES

For your ears only



Headphones come in several varieties and some are designed for particular usage. The majority of 'cans' use dynamic cone and coil-type drive units and can be used with anything from a personal stereo to a dedicated amplifier.

Other types also exist, most significantly electrostatics that use a charged panel membrane to produce a distinctly refined sound. These are supplied with their own dedicated amplifiers, which tends to increase the price.

Cans are split into several types. There are open and closed-back designs, the latter being best for noisy (or noise sensitive) environments as they minimise leakage and intrusion. Open-back types tend to have a more open, less 'in-head' sound. There are also three variants of earpad design: circumaurals enclose the ear and press on your head, supra-aurals press on

the ear and intra-aurals sit in the ear and are particularly popular with personal stereo users.

Getting the best from your cans

Getting a good result with headphones is not quite as straightforward as it should be. Merely plugging them into the output on your CD player or amp will not give particularly engaging results unless you are very lucky. If you are planning on serious listening, invest in a dedicated amp – the increase in dynamics is not in the least bit subtle. A variety of models are made and prices start at around £80 for a QED, a little more for designs from, say, Creek or Musical Fidelity. And if you're really into cans, look up the valve-powered Earmax.

Our favourite HEADPHONES

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

Stereo headphones

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT (g)	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR
BB	AKG K44	20	Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed: a bargain						190	219
BB	AKG K270 Studio	129	Pro oriented design which is very transparent and great with acoustic material						270	230
EC	AKG K1000	600	Neutral, analytical and completely out of the head sound, suitable for connection to speaker outputs only						270	244
	Audio Technica ATH-D40fs	105	Detailed and involving sound with a professional 'studio' quality appeal						250	194
BB	Beyerdynamic DT990	160	Impeccable balance, very extended bass and treble, and bags of detail place this model ahead of the pack						250	245
BB	Grado SR-60	90	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste						200	194
BB	Grado SR-80	110	Not perhaps as neutral as some but they communicate well and that's the point of the exercise						200	230
BB	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
EC	Sennheiser HD650	300	Astonishing resolution and hardly less impressive tonal balance make this a true hi-fi experience						260	252
EC	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
EC	Stax SR-001 Mk II	239	Expensive and power hungry, but this electrostatic drags personal stereo into the world of high fidelity						280	268

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

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CABLES



Wires to hook your system together



Hi-fi cables come in two varieties: interconnects and speaker cables.

Analogue interconnects come in preset lengths, generally with RCA (phono) plugs attached, though some equipment uses XLR connectors for balanced connection – this can be sonically advantageous, especially over longer runs. Speaker cable is commonly sold by the metre and can be used without plugs or can

be fitted with screw or solder-on types.

Choosing cables is not quite as straightforward as it might seem. One problem is that components interact with the cables you use and this often results in audible effects, but there are few cables that are fundamentally incompatible with any components, and we recommend the advice of a good dealer. In any case, you should look to spend as much as you can afford.

Digital cables come in two flavours: electrical and optical. In most instances electrical varieties sound better than optical, given the choice, but optical cables may be a better bet over long runs (10m+). Optical inputs/outputs usually use Toslink connectors, while most electrical types use RCA plugs, but some opt for BNC connection instead – check your components before you buy.

Our favourite CABLES

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER	
				STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER		DIGITAL CABLE TYPE
INTERCONNECTS AND SPEAKER CABLES									
ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS									
	Black Rhodium Illusion	77	An upfront, lively, exciting cable which still manages subtlety when needed. Slight coloration though		●	●			248
	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
	Kimber Timbre	83	Typical Kimber construction with ditto sound – clean, extended and detailed	●		●			248
	Monster Interlink 400 Mk2	70	Really lively and enjoyable sound at a sensible price	●		●			224
	Townshend DCT100	100	Unusual construction with copper strip conductors, giving very detailed sound, but just an occasional hint of hardness		●	●			241
	Townshend Isolda DCT	300	Unusual construction and cryogenically treated too: whatever the reason, a remarkably capable wire		●	●			234
	van den Hul The Bay C5	45	Terrific detail, nice balance – a great cable	●		●			224
	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
	van den Hul D102 Mk III	79	Hybrid conductors (carbon and copper) and intelligent construction give strong bass and excellent detail	●		●			234
	Wireworld Solstice 5	70	A cable with all-round appeal – treble is slightly 'dark' but bass is excellent and the overall balance very good indeed	●		●			259
DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS									
	Kimber Select KS2020	629	Provides a subtle but rewarding lift in musicality with any DAC, justifying the price		●	●		E	260
	QED Qunex P75	25	A superbly capable interconnect that's highly detailed and well balanced			●		E	207
	QED Qunex Signature 75	80	First-rate balance and imaging – ever so nearly as good as it gets at any price			●		E	265
	QED Qunex SR75	50	Lots of bass and good clear midrange and treble at a sensible price	●		●		E	234
	Supra ZAC	32	High grade fibre and quality plugs add up to a noticeable improvement over giveaway optical leads					O	259
	van den Hul Optocoupler II	49	Noticeably has the edge over other optical leads, but still second best to electrical types					O	234
SPEAKER CABLES PRICE PER METRE									
	Black Rhodium S300	18	Tight, precise and extended bass makes this a great cable for rock 'n' roll	●		●			241
	Chord Company Signature	117	Dynamic, solid sounding cable, but it's bulky and not very tractable	●		●			255
	Ecosse Reference MS2.3	23	Favours excitement over refinement: can be slightly bass-shy, but plenty of life	●		●			227
	Electrofluidics 20/20	45	Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere – one of the best all-round cables available		●	●			241
	Kimber 8VS	18	Beautifully full, open and transparent sound right across the board	●		●			227
	Kimber 8PPR	21	Bass very full, just occasionally a touch flabby, but detailed and sweet upper frequencies make this a good value cable	●		●			241
	Kimber 8TC	39	Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass. Price for 5m terminated pair	●		●			203
	QED Silver Anniversary	5	A few minor flaws, but overall performance is very assured for this price	●		●			192
	QED X-Tube XT300	10	A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems		●	●			234
	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
	Wireworld Terra 5	5	Deep powerful bass, clear treble and very solid imaging add up to above-class performance	●		●			261
	Wireworld Solstice 5	20	Unfriendly to handle, but makes up for it with very assured sound – heaps of bass and great insight	●		●			248
	Wireworld Oasis 5 Biwire	38	Full-bodied and precise sound across the board – an excellent performer in bi-wire or single-wire mode	●		●			262

SPECS KEY **STRANDED** Cable has a number of (usually) twisted strands to conduct the signal. **SOLID CORE** Cable has one or more individually insulated strands to conduct the signal. **COPPER** Material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **SILVER** Alternative material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **DIGITAL CABLE TYPE** E – electrical, O – optical. Cables are one metre length unless otherwise stated.

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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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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STANDS AND SUPPORTS

Equipment racks and speaker stands



If you want to get the most from your source and amp components, it's important to consider good quality support. Dedicated equipment supports are racks and tables made specifically to hold hi-fi gear, and the best can have a profoundly positive effect on sound

because, for example, they can help to isolate kit from ground-borne vibrations and mechanical or electrical interference. Equally, if you own a pair of small 'bookshelf' or 'standmount' speakers, it's important to place them on good quality, purpose-built speaker stands.

Our favourite EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Equipment supports

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
	Avak 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
BEST BUY	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
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Clearight 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
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Custom Design Icon 400	599	Beautifully built, conveniently adjustable and with little sound of its own, a very classy rack	75	57, 41		5	Glass	263
	Custom Design Concept 400	700	Slightly drab looks, but great sound and efficient use of space ('Acoustic' version tested – standard version £300)	74	48,40		4	Metal	247
EDITOR'S CHOICE	Naim Frain	1,825	Pricy 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
BEST BUY	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!	92	50,40		5	Glass	217
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Speaker stands

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF LEGS	ISSUE NUMBER
BEST BUY	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
EDITOR'S CHOICE	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
BEST BUY	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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Arcom DT81 DAB Digital Tuner (2 Yr G/tee)(649.00) £349.00	Naim CDX CD Player S/H (1Yr G/tee)(2470.00) £1395.00
Arcom FMJ CD33 CD Player (2Yr G/tee)(1349.00) £945.00	Naim NAP 180 Power Amplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee)(1200.00) £695.00
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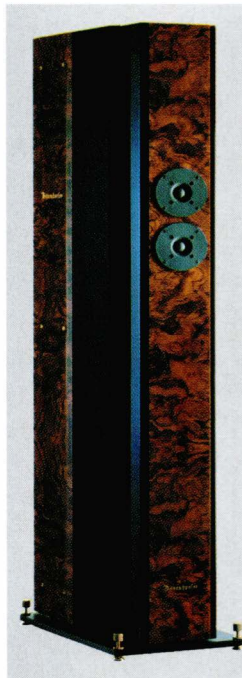
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ACOUSTIC SOLID Small Royal Turntable hand polished aluminium finish with 60cm aluminium platter, topped with a 6mm acrylic platter and leather mat. Features a near zero tolerance bearing. Nylon thread belt - weight 25kg, shown with Type Two stand. Available in a mat finish. One of a range of turntables made by Acoustic Solid - Germany.



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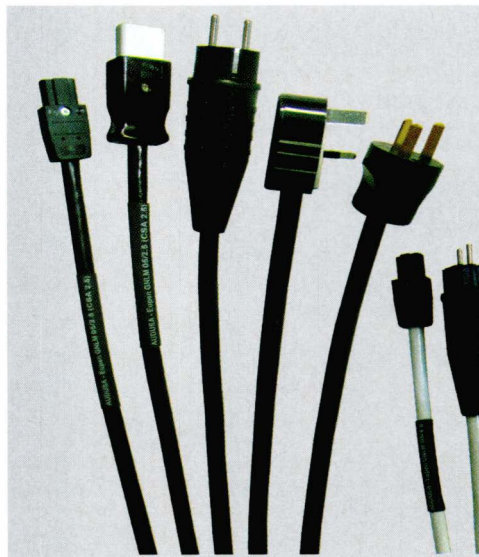


HiFi Choice April 2005

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.....*



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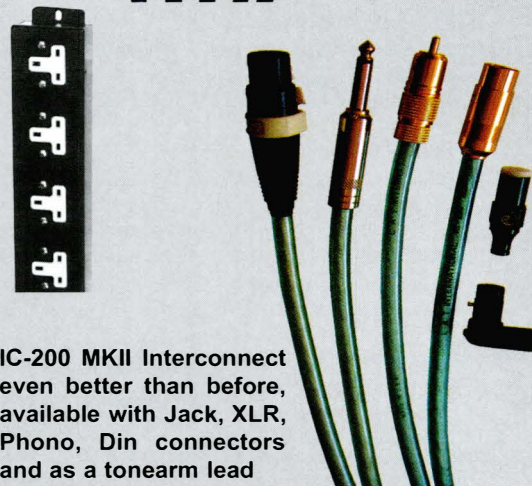
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GLOSSARY

TECHNICAL TERMS

5.1-CHANNEL AUDIO Six discrete channels, typically front left and right, centre, surround left and right, and LFE (Low Frequency Effects) for a subwoofer.

BALANCE Most loudspeakers have a characteristic frequency balance resulting from emphasising parts of the audio range and/or de-emphasising others.

BASS The lowest three octaves of the audio band – 'low bass' refers to the bottom octave (20-40Hz), 'mid-bass' the middle octave (40-80Hz) and 'upper bass' the top octave (80-160Hz).

BI-AMP (sometimes tri-amp). Loudspeakers equipped with separate access terminals to each drive unit can be driven by separate (matching) power amplifiers for each driver.

BI-WIRE (sometimes tri-wire). Loudspeakers with separate access terminals to each drive unit can be driven by separate cable runs between the amp and each driver.

CD-R Recordable CD that cannot be erased, though discs that have not been completely filled can have tracks added until the disc is finalised.

CD-RW Re-writable or re-recordable CD, incompatible with older CD players.

CLASS A The operation of an amplifying stage or device in which current always flows, as opposed to Class B, where some of the devices are effectively turned off some of the time. Class A tends to have the advantage of offering lower distortion, while Class B tends to generate less heat.

CLASS AB Most practical amps operate in Class A for the first fraction of a watt and Class B thereafter.

CLIPPING An amplifier's output waveform is 'clipped' if the volume is advanced too far and no more 'volts' are available to sustain ever-increasing power levels. Distortion increases dramatically at this point.

CLOCK Any electronic oscillator that is used to generate a timing reference signal. Used to synchronise the data being taken from a disc.

CROSSOVER A simple electrical network which divides the full bandwidth signal received from the power amplifier, apportioning appropriate parts of the spectrum to the various drive units.

DAB (digital audio broadcasting). Digital radio using frequencies in the 217.5-230MHz band. Broadcasters use varying degrees of compression and offer a broad range of programming.

DAC or Digital-to-Analogue Converter. The stage in any digital component at which incoming digital data is used to reconstruct a recognisable analogue (music) waveform.

DOLBY DIGITAL A compressed digital audio format that typically contains five or more entirely discrete channels, eg 7.1 EX where side and rear channels are used.

DOLBY PRO-LOGIC, DPL Forerunner to DD that 'steers' information to the front L/R, centre and mono surround channels via an analogue matrix.

DRIVE UNIT/DRIVER A transducer which converts electrical energy into acoustic energy, eg bass driver, tweeter.

DSD (direct stream digital) The coding format used for SACD offers a frequency response of over 100kHz and a dynamic range over 120dB. It has over four times the data capacity of CD.

DSP (digital signal processor). Integrated circuit that handles the decoding of digital audio streams. In 5.1 processors, it separates the left from right and front from rear, while managing the various bass options.

DTS or Digital Theatre Sound. Competitor to Dolby Digital with a reduced 4:1 compression ratio that, ostensibly, promises higher quality.

DVD-AUDIO High-resolution variant on DVD offering up to 192kHz bandwidth and 24-bit dynamic range. Discs are compatible with standard DVD players.

ELECTRICAL DIGITAL Any digital connection that uses an electrical cable rather than optical. Includes the balanced ('AES/EBU') interface.

FILTERS Filters are intrinsic to digital audio, both analogue and digital. These are often very sophisticated in design, and in total they probably have rather more to do with the 'personality' of CD player sound than most other factors.

FREQUENCY RESPONSE The range of frequencies, from low to high, which a loudspeaker will reproduce.

IMPEDANCE With speakers, the complex electrical load that a loudspeaker presents to the amplifier driving it.

JITTER An insidious distortion specific to digital audio caused by imprecision in the clock, used to regulate the conversion of data into analogue audio.

KBPS (Kilobits per second) Digital data rate measurement system used primarily with highly compressed formats such as MP3, DAB etc. The higher the amount, the better the quality.

LINE LEVEL Practically every modern source component (except phono cartridges) gives an output in the region of 1-2V, referred to as 'line level'. It follows that all inputs labelled 'CD', 'tuner', 'aux' or 'tape' are designed for this input level and are thus interchangeable.

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

LOSSY COMPRESSION Reduction in data density by recourse to a complex psycho-acoustical model that predicts what is, and what is not, 'audible' within a sequence of music.

MIDRANGE The middle three or so octaves of the audio band, where the ear

is most sensitive, covering the approximate frequency span from 160Hz up to 3kHz.

MP3 (MPEG layer 3) Lossy compression format for digital audio that drastically reduces data content in order to squeeze music through internet connections or allow hundreds of CDs to be stored on a hard disc.

OUTPUT IMPEDANCE A measure of resistance to alternating current, a source with low output impedance (below 100 ohms) helps ensure compatibility with most amplifiers, even with long interconnect cables.

PCM (pulse code modulation) The digital coding system for analogue waveforms used for CD and DVD. Quality is limited by the oversample and bit rates used – CD is 44.1kHz/16-bit while DVD-A is capable of 192kHz/24-bit.

PRESENCE BAND Critical section of the audio band at the point where midrange and treble meet.

QUANTISATION NOISE A form of distortion or noise resulting from errors in the description of the musical signal by the digital code.

SACD (Super Audio CD) was launched in 1999 and is a Sony/Philips format based on DSD coding that offers high resolution stereo and multichannel sound from hybrid discs that can also be played on ordinary CD drives.

SAMPLE RATE The rate at which the musical waveform is sliced up into discrete chunks. For CD, this is 44.1kHz or once every 0.023msec. DVD will also support 48kHz and 96kHz.

SENSITIVITY The relative loudness that a speaker generates for a specific voltage input. Expressed in decibels per watt (dB/W), measured 1m from the speaker.

THX Standards system for home cinema set-ups which includes amplifier power and speaker dispersion characteristics. The latest THX Ultra 2 standard is more stringent than THX Select.

TOSLINK The proprietary name given by Toshiba to the optical fibre signal transmission system it invented for consumer applications.

TRANSISTOR/MOSFET The two main types of power semiconductor used in solid state amplifier output stages.

TREBLE High frequencies, the top end of the audio band, ie above 3kHz.

TWEETER Treble driver.

TWO/THREE-WAY Loudspeaker crossovers split the signal into two or three frequency bands, a two-way speaker can have more than two drive units.

WATTS (per channel) The watt is the unit of electrical power and the WPC rating is the maximum average undistorted power that an amp can deliver to a typical speaker. However, speaker sensitivity variations can make more difference than amplifier output.

WOOFER Bass driver.

DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

AGGRESSIVE Forward and bright sonic character.

AMBIENCE The impression of an acoustical space, such as the performing hall in which a recording was made.

ANALYTICAL Highly detailed.

ARTICULATE Intelligibility of voice(s) and instruments and the interactions between them.

ATTACK The leading edge of a note and the ability of a system to reproduce the attack transients in music.

BALANCE Essentially tonal balance, the degree to which one aspect of the sonic spectrum is emphasised above the rest. Also channel balance, the relative level of the left and right stereo channels.

BODY Fullness of sound, with particular emphasis on upper bass. Opposite of thin.

BOXY The sound of a loudspeaker with audible cabinet resonances.

BRIGHT A sound that emphasises the upper midrange/lower treble.

DARK A tonal balance that tilts downwards with increasing frequency. Opposite of bright.

DECAY The fadeout of a note, it follows the attack.

DEFINITION (or resolution) The ability of a component to reveal the subtle information that is fundamental to high fidelity sound.

DEPTH (of image) The perception of music being reproduced behind the loudspeakers and inhabiting a reproduction of the acoustic space of the original recording.

DETAIL The most delicate elements of the original sound and those which are the first to disappear with lesser equipment.

DRY A sound that is devoid of 'juice', which usually comes across as fine-grained and lean. Also a loss of reverberation as produced by a damped environment.

DYNAMIC The suggestion of energy and wide dynamic range. Related to perceived speed as well as contrasts in volume both large and small.

EUPHONIC An appealing form of distortion that generally enhances perceived fidelity, often ascribed to the harmonic elaborations of some valve amps.

FAST Good reproduction of rapid transients which increase the sense of realism and 'snap'.

FOCUS A strong, precise sense of image projection.

FORWARD(NESS) Similar to an aggressive sound, a sense of the image being projected in front of the speakers and of music being forced upon the listener.

GRAINY A slightly raw, exposed sound which lacks finesse.

GRIP A sense of control and sturdiness in the bass.

GRUNT See grip.

HARD Uncomfortable, forward, aggressive sound with a metallic tinge.

HARSH Grating, abrasive.

IMAGING (stereo) The sense that a voice or instrument is in a particular place in the room.

JUICY Sound that has joie de vivre, energy and life.

LOW-LEVEL DETAIL The quietest sounds in a recording.

MUSICAL or musicality. A sense of cohesion and subjective 'rightness' in the sound.

NATURALNESS Realism.

OPAQUE Unclear, lacking transparency.

OPEN Sound which has height and 'air', relates to clean upper midrange and treble.

PACE Often associated with rhythm, a strong sense of timing and beat.

PRESENCE A sense of an instrument or voice occupying a place in the listening room.

PRESENCE RANGE The upper midrange.

SEISMIC Very low bass that you feel rather than hear.

SIBILANCE An emphasis of the 'S' sound, often heard on radio.

SNAP A system with good speed and transient response can deliver the immediacy or 'snap' of live instruments.

SPEED A fast system with good pace gives the impression of being right on the money in its timing.

STURDY Solid, powerful, robust sound.

THICK A lack of articulation and clarity in the bass.

THIN Bass light.

TIMBRE The tonal character of an instrument.

TIMING A sense of precision in tempo. See speed and pace.

TRANSIENT The leading edge of a percussive sound. Good transient response makes the sound as a whole more live and realistic.

TRANSPARENCY, TRANSPARENT A hear-through quality that is akin to clarity and reveals all aspects of detail.

TWEAK To tune a system or component in an attempt to get the best performance from it.

TWEAKER Someone who enjoys this process.

VEILED Loss of detail due to limited transparency.

WARM A fullness in the lower midrange/upper bass.

WEIGHT A sense of substance and underpinning produced by deep, controlled bass.

HEAR! HERE!



KEF



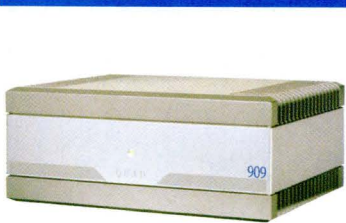
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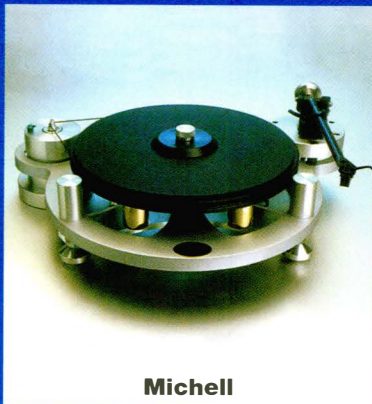
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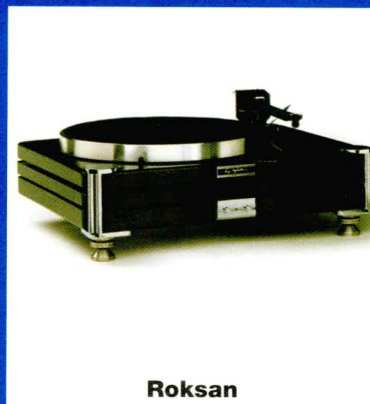
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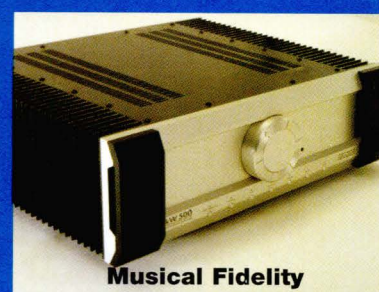
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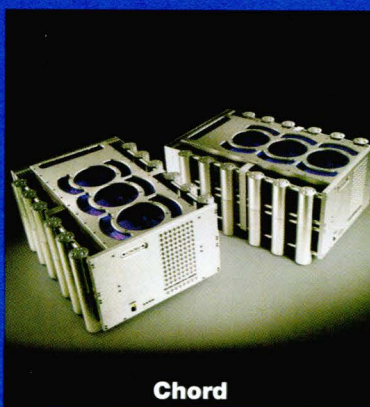
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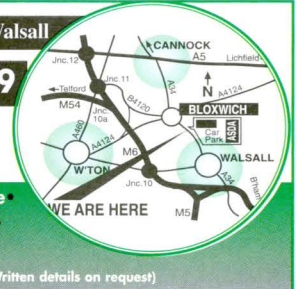
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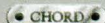
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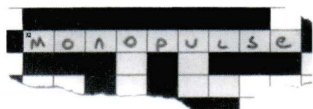
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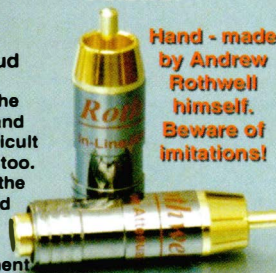
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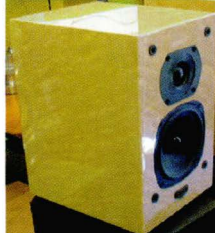
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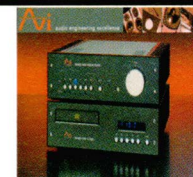
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A-Z GUIDE TO SECOND-HAND KIT

#12 MARANTZ

Although Marantz has made excellent amps, tuners, cassette decks and even turntables in its time, for many it's the company's CD players that define the brand. Picking out specific Marantz CD models isn't especially easy as, by and large, they are all generally very good, if not exceptional. You can pay as little as £20 for an old timer like one of the early 1990s CD40s (one of the last of 16-bit players) and, so long as you don't expect miracles of longevity, it should serve you well. Most SE (Special Edition) models are worth having over non-SE versions and that OSE (Original Special Edition) is the name given to later SE models. There are also KI Signature versions of some of the players that are the most special of the lot, featuring intensive tuning by Marantz's technical genius, Ken Ishiwata. The CD17 KI Signature is probably the best all-rounder. Priced at £1,300 new (1997), the CD17 KI Signature not only scooped all the prizes going, but also set the standard for what was to be expected from a one-and-a-bit thousand pound CD player. The standard CD17 was already a pretty fine player, but the addition of an upgraded discrete output stage (HDAM), a UK-designed toroidal PSU, an OFC mains lead and an abundance of copper shielding, made this something special. Its key skill was the ability to blend precision with a valve-like smoothness and transparency; until this point, these qualities had been the preserve of far more expensive machines. Thanks to the thorough engineering little goes

wrong but, even if it does, parts are still available and reasonably priced. A laser assembly, for example, costs the trade a shade under £25, so by the time VAT, fitting, and delivery are taken into account, the final bill should come to around £80-£100. For the very best examples, expect to pay around half of its new value (£650), but get someone really keen to sell and you could be lucky enough to pick one up for just £400. As well as CD players, Marantz has also produced some pretty fine CD Recorders in its time. With the exception of the disappointing, and none too reliable, DR4050 twin deck, all Marantz CD-R's are a good bet. Our choice would be the DR17. Costing around £1,500 at launch in 1999, it never sold in huge numbers, but if you're a CD-R fan, then few machines will meet up to this. For a start, it's built like no other, with a chunky metal fascia and weighty

power supply. Unusually it's also got HDCD compatibility and, to cap it all, even sounds decent as a playback machine – very rare for most CD-R's. While being extremely well built and, from what we can gather, reliable, it's worth being aware of the spares situation. Marantz's spares supplier indicated that, while not impossible, spares such as a laser mechanism are hard to come by. If you're paying good money for one, then look for one with very little use. Otherwise, a receipt to show the recent fitment of a new laser is always a good thing. Prices are hard to predict, as the DR17 is rare and, thanks to the explosion of hard disc recorders, unfashionable. Use this to your advantage and you could be looking at as little as £200 for an early one, with the very best fetching around £500. **HFC**
Dominic Todd
Next Month: Mission

“Its key skill was the ability to blend precision with a valve-like smoothness.”



Above: Marantz CD17 KI Signature CD player

DIY CORNER SPEAKERS

Part 12 Diaphragms part three



A diaphragm made from only one material has relatively simple and predictable behaviour. More complex diaphragms offer some interesting alternatives. Take Kevlar, for example; a woven polyamide fibre with high tensile strength, developed by DuPont. B&W brought Kevlar to the attention of hi-fi speaker builders many years ago. Other woven materials include carbon and glass fibres, and in all cases the woven fabric is sealed by and held within a plastic matrix. The stiffness of such a diaphragm varies according to whether it is measured along the lines of the fibres (the warp and weft), or across the diagonals (or bias). But ultimately,

radiating out from the centre of the cone, there are four stiffer sections, interspersed with four that are less stiff. As the frequency feeding a drive unit cone rises, so the edge of the cone starts to struggle to keep up with the voice coil driving the centre. With a woven cone, the stiffer sections hang on longer than the less stiff sections of the cone, so a sort of ripple effect occurs at the edge of the cone. The ripples are out of phase, so these cancel each other out, while the inner portion of the cone continues to operate pistonically without cancellation or break up. The whole process operates gradually and progressively, leading to a more gentle

ultimate cone break-up, and also creating a source that shrinks in effective diameter as frequency rises, maintaining good dispersion consistency. **HFC**
Paul Messenger

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NEXT MONTH: Yet more about diaphragms

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www.shadowaudio.co.uk

Our list of pre-owned equipment is changing all the time so you really should visit www.shadowaudio.co.uk whenever you can - you never know, you might just pick up a bargain or two!

Digital

- Micromega CD132 (£700) **£350**
- BAT VK5 DSE CD player (£5495) **£2895**
- Marantz SA-1 SACD player (£5500) **£2695**
- Gryphon Tabu (£3800) **£1795**
- RARE OPPORTUNITY Roksan DP1 transport, Atessa DS5 PSU, Atessa DA2 DAC, new in excess of £3700.00 - be quick! **£995**
- Wadia 270 Transport (£8499) Current Spec. **£3950**
- DCS Verdi La Scala Transport (£9499) **£6995**
- Shanling CDT-100 (3D accoustics) £1600 **£995**
- Audio Analogue Paganini 24/192 (£950) **£795**
- Musical Fidelity A308CD player **£995**
- Audio Analogue Primo Setanta CD+Amp **£650**
- Roksan Kandy MKIII silver/black ex-dem **£450**
- Audio Analogue Paganini **£475**
- Audio Analogue Maestro, ex-dem **£950**
- Musical Fidelity NuVista CD **£1695**
- Musical Fidelity A3.2 CD player **£549**

Amplifiers

- Musical Fidelity A3.2 Integrated (£995) **£595**
- ES Lab DXS4 digital amplifier (£2600) **£1295**
- Mark Levinson 28 pre-amplifier (£3900) **£995**
- Mark Levinson 27.5 power amplifier (£4595) **£1995**
- Moon i5 integrated amplifier (£2695) **£1695**
- ART Diavolo power amplifier (£5402) **£2695**
- Croft TSI with Epoch Pre (£3000) **£1995**
- Roksan Caspian M Series pre+monos (£3400) **£2295**
- Musical Fidelity A3.2 (£975) **£495**
- ART Conductor Pre-amp **£1595**
- Pathos Logos integrated (£2750) **£1995**
- Pass Labs X350 (£9900) **£3995**
- Conrad Johnson 16LS pre-amp (£8000) **£3750**
- Audio Analogue Puccini Settanta (£950) **£790**
- Musical Fidelity A3 pre amp **£475**
- Musical Fidelity A3 power amplifier **£475**
- Sugden Masterclass Mono blocks (£6300) **£4290**
- Sugden Masterclass Pre-amplifier (£2300) **£1299**
- Audio Note Soro SE + built in phono stage **£1495**
- Krell FPB300 power amp. (£10990) **£4995**
- Graaf GMS0, KT88 valve amp, black. (£4000) **£2990**
- Audio Research VT200 mkII (£10,000) **£5995**
- Musical Fidelity X-150 v3 (£799) **£650**
- Howland HP100 pre+ built in phono stage **£3995**
- Howland Radia Power amplifier (£7995) **£6495**
- Howland HP200 + phono stage (£7325) **£5995**
- Quad four forty valve pre/power £4000 **£2995**
- Audio Analogue New Maestro (£1750) **£1255**
- Audio Analogue Primo Setanta **£395**
- Unison Research SR1 **£895**
- Musical Fidelity A308 Power amplifier **£995**
- Musical Fidelity A308 Pre amplifier **£995**
- Musical Fidelity A3.2 **£695**
- Roksan Kandy MKIII (black or silver) **£450**

Loudspeakers

- B&W 704 speakers in Rosenut (£1400) **£895**
- Triangle Heliade in Champagne (£595) **£1395**
- Triangle Naia (£1995) **£1195**
- ATC SCM-50ASL finished in Yew (£7947) **£4995**
- B&W Nautilus 801 spk. upgraded to 800 spec **£4500**
- JM Lab Micro Utopia be with stands (£4795) **£2395**
- Wilson Benesch ARC's with stands (£2500) **£1799**
- Soundlab Millennium M3 + optional Toroidal Transformers and bi-wire. (£10k) 2 mnths old **£3995**
- JM Labs Electra 905 in cherry, boxed as new (£1295) **£599**
- Triangle Australe in cherry (£3300) **£1995**
- Living Voice Avatar OBX-R in Cherry **£2695**
- Wilson Benesch Discovery (£5700) **£3895**
- Martin Logan Ascent i (new £4330) **£2995**
- Quad 989 ESL Vintage, new £5000 **£POA**
- Quad 988 ESL in Nouveau, cost new £3750 **£2999**
- Audio Physic Spark3, Cherry or light maple **£1250**
- Audio Physic Tempo 3i, Cherry or light maple **£1395**
- Audio Physic Tempo 3i SE, Cherry/light maple **£1799**
- Audio Physic Virgo III Cherry **£2895**
- Wilson Benesch ACT 1 in Cherry **£3595**
- Triangle Antal ES **£595**

Analogue

- Pathos IN The Groove MKII (£1200) **£695**
- Michell Orbe Millennium, one of only 50 ever made. Inc SMEV Tonearm (£5500) **£2895**
- Wilson Benesch Full Circle + Ply cart (£2100) **£1495**
- Musical Fidelity M1 turntable, boxed as new **£1990**
- Sugden Masterclass Phono Stage (£1299) **£595**
- Pro-ject 2.9 wood + Ortofon S10 cartridge **£350**
- Michell Orbe SE boxed as new **£1595**
- Tom Evans 'The Groove' phono stage (£1900) **£1250**
- SME 10A, boxed **£2495**
- Nottingham Analogue Spacedec **£695**
- EAR 834P de-luxe phono stage **£250**
- Ortofon Jubilee - very low hours **£795**
- Trichord Dino - silver front **£199**

Misc

- Totem Beaks acoustic resonance tuner, try them you won't believe what they can do for your speakers - work with any flat top floor stander or bookshelf (£150) **£69**
- ISOL-8 2k Cube mains cond (£1500) **£995**
- Townshend Super Tweeters (£800) **£650**
- Stax SRS 4040 tube system **£795**

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Sale of part exchanged and ex-dem items

	Sale	New
Living Voice Avatar 1 - cherry	£1900	£2700
Living Voice Avatar OBX-R2 - maple - 11 months	£3000	£4000
Living Voice Auditorium - cherry - Bruised but nice	£800	£1700
Living Voice Auditorium - cherry - 12 months	£1100	£1700
Art Audio Quintet integrated - 6 months - hair-shirt, single input joy	£2400	£3100
Art Audio Concerto power (6550) - old bird but serviced and happy	£1600	£3800
Art Audio PX25 - 5watts - Single ended flea power for the sensitive type	£3000	£4000
Eastern Electric Mini Max pre-amp - new, boxed - compact, quality cutie	£400	£800
Van den Hul Collibri - 4mv - new, boxed - beguiling and charming	£1900	£3000
Van den Hul Grasshopper - very nearly new - spunky and determined	£1600	£2600
AudioNote (UK) Ltd P.Zero pre + monos		£500
Audio Reseach Reference 600 monos - very powerful and very heavy	£10000	£30000 ^{est}
Ruark Crusader II - black - OK condition - tweed jacket style	£800	£1900
Sugden Masterclass integrated - nearly new	£2500	£3300
Border Patrol P20 - mahogany - power amp - 6 months	£5900	£7300
Border Patrol S20 - mahogany - power amp - 6 months	£5900	£7300
Border Patrol P21 - mahogany - integrated - 11 months	£3800	£4800
Canary 608 (blue) line integrated - great sound for low dough	£1900	£3000
Canary 608 (champagne) line integrated + Border Patrol power supply	£2800	£4000
Canary 303 [110v] - new - fillet mignon	£3800	£7200
Canary 309 - very nearly new - beef wellington	£4800	£10000
Canary 801 [110v] line pre-amp - lemon torte	£2500	£4500
Nottingham Analogue Interspace with RB300	£470	£770
Aloia pre-amp - very new - very good condition - beautifully made - OK	£1000	£2800
Thomas Sheu turntables (80mm platter with 12" arm)		ring for details
(50mm platter with 9" arm)		
Sugden A21a - titanium - classic integrated	£600	£1050
Sugden P21a - titanium - power amp version of above	£400	£700
Audiolab 8000 CD player - black - boxed - bargain	£370	£1000
Kimber Select inter-connect - 0.75m - new - in elaborate plastic box	£250	£500

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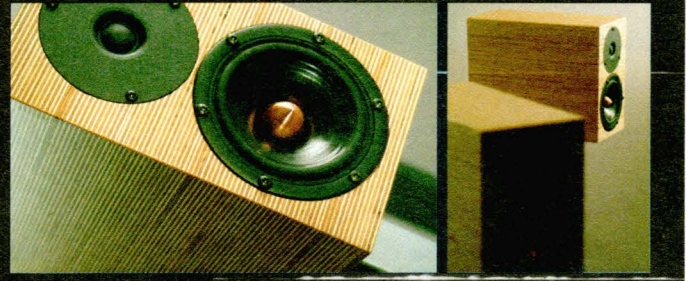
Just In

BAT VK3i PREAMP WITH REMOTE	£900	£2,300
CANARY AUDIO CA303 MONOBLOCKS	£2,950	£8,000
CARY CAD300 SIGNATURE SE AMPS	£1,900	£5,500
CARY SLP 50 PREAMP	£700	£2,500
KRELL FPB400CX	£6,000	£11,000
MERIDIAN DSP5500 SPEAKERS	£POA	£N/A
MERIDIAN DSP5000C [CENTRE]	£POA	£N/A
MERIDIAN 500 TRANSPORT	£450	£900
QUAD 67 CD PLAYER	£600	£1,200
QUAD 66 FM TUNER	£300	£N/A
QUAD 606 POWERAMP	£400	£N/A

Current

AIRTIGHT ATM-2 [SUPERB AMPLIFIER]	£3,250	£8,000
ALON MK4s	£1,200	£3,500
APOGEE DUETA SIGS	£1,500	£N/A
AUDION QUATRO VALVE MONOBLOCKS[4BOX]	£1,800	£5,000
AUDIO RESEARCH CLASSIC 120 MONOBLOCKS	£2,400	£8,000
AUDIO RESEARCH VT 150 MONOBLOCKS	£2,995	£14,000
AUDIO RESEARCH REFERENCE 600 MONOBLOCKS	£9,995	£38,000
AUDIO RESEARCH LS25 MK2	£2,700	£5,995
AUDIO RESEARCH VT100	£2,000	£6,000
AUDIO STÄTIC 5s [new]	£3,250	£5,550
AUDIO STÄTIC 4s ELECTROSTATICS	£1,500	£4,000
AUDIO SYNTHESIS DESIRE DECADEAMP	£1,200	£3,000
AUDIO SYNTHESIS DAX DECADE[DAC PRE]	£1,100	£3,000
AVID DIVA/RB300[MINT BOXED]	£850	£1,400
B&W NAUTILUS 801s	£3,750	£8,500
BAT VK 60	£1,700	£4,500
BEARD P35 MK2 POWERAMP	£450	£N/A
BEARD CA35 PREAMP	£300	£N/A
CADENCE ANINJA SPEAKERS[NEW]	£1,900	£4,500
CAT JL-1 MONOBLOCKS	£6,995	£30,000
CAT ULTIMATE PREAMP	£6,500	£2,995
CAT ULTIMATE PRE	£2,950	£6,500
CLASSE CAV 150 6 CHANNEL POWERAMP	£1,500	£3,600
CLEARAUDIO MASTER REFERENCE/MASTER TQ1 ARM	£6,000	£14,000
CONRAD JOHNSON 16LS PREAMP	£2,850	£8,000
CONRAD JOHNSON PREMIER 8A MONOS	£7,995	£16,000
EXPOSURE SUPER 15 INTEGRATED	£295	£800
GAMUT CD2	£1,500	£3,000
GOERTZ AG3 DIVINITY SPKR CABLE 4metres X2	£1,000	£5,000
GRAHAM MODEL 2 TONEARM[boxed as new]	£1,100	£1,900
INNERSOUND M300 POWERAMP	£1,500	£3,500
JM LABS COBALT 807 SPEAKERS	£350	£700
JEFF ROWLAND CONCENTRA MK2[BOXED AS NEW]	£3,500	£7,500
KRELL FPB300	£3,400	£8,000
LINN SONDEK LP12/TTOK/ASAK	£625	£N/A
LINN SONDEK LP12/TTOK/KHARMA	£595	£N/A
LINN SONDEK LP12/BASIK PLUS	£450	£N/A
LUMLEY ST70 VALVE POWERAMP	£650	£2,450
MARANTZ CD23[VERY RARE]	£1,900	£5,000
MARANTZ MA23 MONOBLOCKS @PRE[BOXED AS NEW]	£1,500	£3,500
MARANTZ MA24 MONOBLOCKS	£1,200	£2,800
MARANTZ CD12	£1,200	£N/A
MARK LEVINSON ML380 PREAMP	£1,700	£4,500
MC INTOSH MA 6850 INTEGRATED	£1,500	£3,500
MUSE 18 SUBWOOFER[with active cards]	£1,500	£3,500
MUSICAL FIDELITY DVD 1	450	£1,500
NAIM NAP90/NAC62K PRE/POWER	£295	£1,200
NAIM NAIT 3 INTEGRATED	£325	£N/A
NAIM 101/SNAPS PSU	£495	£N/A
PASS LABS ALEPH 4 POWERAMP	£1,995	£5,500
PASS LABS X150 POWERAMP	£1,800	£3,750
PLINIUS ODEON 5 CHANNEL AMP	£3,200	£4,000
PS AUDIO CLASSIC 250 POWERAMP	£1,800	£4,500
QUAD 989	£2,995	£5,500
REFERENCE 3A ROYAL VIRTUOSOS	£2,200	£4,400
SIMON YORK MODEL 8	£2,995	£4,250
SONIC FRONTIERS CD1 TRANSPORT	£2,500	£7,000
SONUS FABER MUSICA INTEGRATED AMP	£1,500	£2,995
SPENDOR LS35A SPEAKERS[15 OHM]	£550	£N/A
SP ALBA TURNTABLE	£7,000	£15,000
TOM EVANS THE VIBE/PULSE PSU	£3,250	£4,800
TRANSPARENT ULTRA 6M PAIR	£1,000	£3,200
VTL 85 VALVE POWER AMP	£1,850	£1,850
WADIA 789 CD TRANS AND DAC[4 BOX PLAYER]	£5,995	£24,000

EX DEMO AND SECONDHAND ITEMS



	Was	Now
Accuphase DP77V CD/SACD player x-demo	7600	4999
Audio Synthesis DAX Decade 2Bit Single Ended S/H	3920	1499
dCS Elgar 24/192 1998 Version (non-firmware) S/H	8500	3299
dCS Verona 6 months old S/H	3999	2499
dCS Werdli Transport latest software S/H	7999	7999
Denon Beat400+ x-demo	1295	979
Mark Levinson 31.5 2K & 2 Box Ultimate CD S/H	2250	1899
Mark Levinson M3000 DAC S/H	2600	12499
Meridian G88 CD S/H	7500	2999
Naim Audio CD2 S/H	580	449
Sony SACD 777ES S/H	1750	950
Primare V10 CD/DVD Player x-demo	795	499
Sundun CD21 Graphite S/H	1099	649
TAG Metaram CD120R Transport S/H	1500	749
Theta Generation V Balanced S/H	6200	1999
Theta Pro Basic II DAC with Oscom/Balanced S/H	2990	995
Clearaudio Accurate MC x-demo	2800	1699
Clearaudio Victory MC New/Boxed	1030	699
Dynavector DY12 2000s S/H	2900	1699
EAR The Head MC Transformer S/H	N/A	399
Graham Slee ERAGold V MM Phono stage S/H	460	299
Head Quasar 2 box MC/MM Phono stage new	750	395
Krell KPE Reference+ PSU S/H	2487	1759
Kreisel Szabi/Stogi S Turntable New/B, Boxed	N/A	1399
Project Tube Box Valve Phono stage S/H	300	179
Project 2 Turntable S/H	299	99
Rolsan Veres XPS I/Alphason HRS100 S/H	N/A	599
SME 20 Turntable (No Arm) S/H	2682	1599
SME 20/2A Turntable S/H	5537	1799
SME 30A Turntable S/H	12905	7999
Triplanar Series VI Tonearm S/H	3500	1999
Transfiguration Tompey MC 6000s S/H	1900	799
Tesserae Taada MM/MC Phono Stage S/H	1199	499
Audio Analogue Bellini Remote Preamp X-demo	625	499
Audio Research LS16 Preamp	2999	1799
ATC SC42 Preamp S/H	4000	1999
Bryston BP25 Preamp, balanced, silver, remote	1800	695
Convergent Audio Technologies E1 Reference S/H	1200	1799
Howland HP100MC Preamp S/H	5495	2999
Krell KCT Preamp S/H	9989	5998
Naim Supercap Power supply 1995 S/H	7290	1750
Mark Levinson M3000 Preamp S/H	4999	2499
Rega Cona Preamp Black x-demo	425	425
Spectral DMC 30 Reference Preamp S/H	7600	4999
Spectral DMC 15 Preamp S/H	4800	3250
Audio Analogue Donizetti Mono Power Amplifiers X-demo	1050	729
Audio Research VT20 Re Valved S/H	1999	999
Audio Research VT200 MKII Valve Power Amplifier S/H	9998	6999
EAR 509 MK1 (huge amount spent) S/H	N/A	1799
EGS EA1 Mono Amplifiers (pair)	1600	1299
Jeff Rowland Model10 Power Amplifier S/H	7300	3299
Lumley Reference 120 Valve mono Blacks S/H	3517	1999
Musical Fidelity A1000 S/H	1500	849
Krell FPB750mc Mono Amplifiers S/H	28900	17995
Naim MAB B1H	1185	999
Red Rose Spirit Integrated x-demo	1000	649
Rega Main Power amplifier Black x-demo	548	399
Sirius D200 Power Amplifier S/H	3299	1299
ATC Active 10 SL x-demo	1650	1199
ATC SCM7 Cherry x-demo	499	375
ATC SCMD0 ASL Active Loudspeakers Birds Eye Maple S/H	399	399
JM Lab Micro Utopia Anigre with Stands S/H	3999	3999
JM Lab Mini Utopia Centre Anigre S/H	1999	999
JM Lab Sib Xs Grey S/H	1000	650
Lumley reference2 Signatures Mahogany S/H	4500	1499
Martin Logan Prodigy Hybrid Electrostatic S/H	875	299
Naim Audio Intro Black Ash S/H	7500	5799
Peak Consult Incognito Rosewood x-demo	595	299
Proke CCI Response Centre Speaker Black Ash S/H	N/A	1499
Quad ESL 63 Brown just serviced with stands S/H	749	749
Rega ELA Cherry x-demo	1200	799
Spendor SP1 with Stands Walnut S/H	5398	3495
Sonus Faber Guarneri Homage S/H	1750	950
Sonus Faber Signum Stonewood Stands S/H	599	420
Sonus Faber Concertino Home, Walnut x-demo	999	899
Sonus Faber Concerto Home, Walnut x-demo	480	339
Sonus Faber Ironwood Stands, Walnut, adjustable x-demo	310	220
Sonus Faber Leather Stands, fixed height, x-demo	800	579
Townshend Maximum Super tweeters S/H	220	99
Airpod APT1 Set of 3 S/H	820	99
Airpod AP2 Set of 3 S/H	360	149
Alphason Concept 3 tier Rack S/H	N/A	149
Alphason Concept 4 tier rack S/H	N/A	179
BASE platforms (Slightly marked) S/H	68	23
Cardas Neutral Reference 1m RCA-BNC S/H	420	375
Cogan Hall Intermzzo EMD 0.75m RCA S/H	N/A	199
Madrigal MDC1 1m AES/EBU 110ohm Digital Cable new boxed	550	399
Mama Acoustics Add on Table S/H	300	179
Mama Acoustics Reference Table S/H	500	349
Mandrake 1, 0m Silver/Gold RCA Interconnect S/H	1250	399
Nordost SPW 2x2m Speaker cable Bi-amped S/H	2170	1125
Nordost SPW 2x2m Speaker cable Biwired S/H	1999	799
Nordost Valhalla 2x5m Speaker cable Biwired S/H	8600	4999
Sehnheiser HD650 Headphones S/H	2199	99
Siltech HFG3B AES/EBU digital 1m S/H	230	169
Tina Labs RSC 1800 Prime 2x2m Speaker cable Bi-wired	1500	499
SoundFactory tripod system 6 tier modular S/H	400	129
Spectral MH-750 10ft Speaker cable x-demo	369	149
Spectral MH-750 20ft Speaker cable x-demo	1050	599
Spectral MI-130 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA x-demo	2100	1199
Spectral MI-130 3ft Interconnect RCA-RCA S/H	800	499
Spectral MI-330 3ft Interconnect RCA-RCA S/H	500	329
Spectral MI-250 15ft Interconnect RCA-RCA x-demo	1400	799
Target TT2 Turntable Stand S/H	N/A	99
Transparent Audio Music Wave + Bi wire 2x8ft S/H	769	429
Vdh CD12MKII 2x2m balanced S/H	169	99
Wireworld Equinox 3+ 3m pair speaker cables S/H	1199	399
Alwa F770 3 head cassette deck S/H	N/A	99
Magnum Dynalab MD106T 4 months old	3600	2999
Moth Record Cleaner MK1 (cover and case included) S/H	599	250
Nakamichi CR7E 3 head cassette deck S/H	1750	649
Rega radio 3 Silver X-demo	398	279
Tice Solo Powerline Enhancer S/H	N/A	799
Tice Solo AV Power Conditioner S/H	N/A	299
	398	279

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Rogue Audio | S.P. Record Players | Transfiguration | Vincent

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turntableworld! has selected demonstration items from:

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Clearaudio - including the Emotion package and Champion 1
Dynavector - including the D17 Mk2
Tom Evans Audio Design **NEW!**

Golding

Grading

Graham Slee - including the Era Gold and Elevator combination
G F C Hadcock

Lyra - including the Argo

Michell Engineering - the full range

Moth - accessories and cleaning machines

Nottingham Analogue

Origin Live - tonearms and decks

Ortofon - including items from the Kontrapunkt and Rondo ranges

Project

Roksan - including the Radius 5 **NEW!**

SME - all tonearms

Sumiko

Transfiguration

Trichord Research - full range of phono stages and supplies

Whest Audio - the fantastic phono stage **NEW!**

Wilson Benesch - the Circle and both tonearms

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Here's a selection of current used stock...

Alchemist Bragi phono stage and Forseti p/s - vgc, superb flexible stage	399
Audiolab 8000PPA phono stage - vgc, flexible stage, rare	449
EAR 834P - fair, mm/mc switchable version	379
Chord Phono stage - ex, stunning	999
Heybrook TT2 - ex, boxed	149
Kinshaw Perception - nr mint, 2 box Phono stage, rare and superb	479
Linn Troika - vgc, boxed	279
Linn LP12/Lingo/IttokLVIII/Asaka - nr mint, boxed	1199
Linn LP12/Armageddon/Aro - nr mint, black, boxed	1599
Linn LP12/Lingo/Ekos - ex, black, boxed	1499
Linn LP12/Valhalla/Akito - ex, afromosia, boxed	649
Linn LP12/Valhalla/Akito - fair, afromosia, no lid	399
Linn LP12/Valhalla/IttokLVII - ex, afromosia	699
Linn LP12/Armageddon/RB300 - vgc, black	979
Linn Basic, Akito - vgc, black	229
Linn Axis, Akito - vgc, black	299
Linn Ittok 12" - ex, black, apparently one of only 20 made	999
Logic Tempo/Datum - ex, wood finish	149
Michell Gyrodec - ex, export spec (black/bronze) no arm	699
Michell (Transcriptors) Reference hydraulic - ex, fluid arm	799
Michell (Transcriptors) Reference electronic/ SME3009 - ex,	599
Michell Prisma/AT arm - ex/ex	999
Michell Focus One/Focus arm - ex,	379
Mission 774 - ex, fab 80s tonearm	159
MTM The Source - ex, mahogany	499
Notts Analogue Spacedeck - ex, Tom Fletcher masterpiece	649
Notts Analogue Hyperspace/Mentor - Due in	Call
NEL DAIS - good condition, superb sound and looks	419
Odyssey RP1-XG - ex, the prettiest arm ever?	499
Pink Triangle LPT/RB250/Reson - ex/ex,	379
Project Xpression 1 - nr mint, boxed	179
Rega Phono box LE - ex, in presentation case with certificate	59
Rega Planar 2/RB250 - ex/ex	149
Rega Planar 2/RB250 - as good as you will ever see	179
Rega Planar 3/RB300 - vgc/ex	179
Rega Planar 78/RB250/Mono Cart - ex/ex	175
Roksan Xerxes/Tabriz Zi - ex, black	449
Roksan Radius 3/Tabriz - ex, lovely	429
Roksan Radius 5/Nima - nr mint, boxed	549
SME 309 - ex, boxed	499
Thorens TD160b - ex, c/w Mission 774	249
Transcriptors Skeleton/Vestigal - ex/ex	799
Transcriptors Saturn - fair	199
Voyd Valdi/Helius Scorpio or RB300 - vgc, black, off board p/s	599
Wilson Benesch Act/Act 2 - the best ever? Rare as...	2499
Zeta Zeta - ex mega arm, VdH cable	449

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Arcam	CD827 - nr mint/boxed	379
Arcam	Alpha8 - nr mint, remote	199
Arcam	CD727 - nr mint, remote	199
Audiolab	8000DAC - ex, boxed	259
Audiolab	8000DAC - ex, boxed, one input down	199
Audiolab	8000 Transport and DAC - ex, remote	779
Audio Synthesis	DXA2 - nr mint/boxed	499
AVI	S2000Reference - ex, boxed	449
Classe	D1 DAC - due in	Call
Cyrus	DAD1.5 - nr mint, remote boxed	199
DFA	Renaissance - nr mint, boxed	299
Marantz	CD80 - ex, boxed fantastic 80s heavyweight	199
Marantz	CD45 - black remote	429
Marantz	DV4100 CSE - nr mint, remote, boxed	129
Meridian	200 transport and matching dac - ex, supercombination	399
Meridian	208 - ex, with built in pre-amplifier and 208 remote	349
Meridian	200 transport - ex, excellent	249
Meridian	509/20 - nr mint, remote	699
Micromega	Stage 1 - ex, smooth sound on a budget	179
Micromega	Stage 3 - nr mint superb cd player	279
Micromega	T-drive and T-dac - vgc, remote, superb sound. E1000s new	799
Micromega	Duo CD88S2 - nr mint, fully boxed, beautiful light and sound	899
Micromega	Optic - nr mint, budget intro to the delights of Micromega	129
Mission	PCM7000 - Fabol' thing	99
Musical Fidelity	X Act - nr mint, boxed	119
Musical Fidelity	X24 - nr mint, very rare	199
Myriad	T20 - black, nr mint, boxed, remote, bargain!	249
NAD	C541 - nr mint, boxed with remote	199
NVA	The Transparent Statement - vgc, crated, ...ultimate NVA	1749
Pioneer	PS-S904 - ex, boxed, stable platter mech	199
Quad	99CDP - nr mint, boxed, remote	699
Roksan	Casplan M series - ex dem, save £350!!!	749
Rotel	RDD980/RDP980 - nr mint, transport and dac very rare with remote	449
Rotel	RC091AE - nr mint, boxed	399
SAT	CDFix - nr mint, boxed, dedicated remote, superb	699
Sony	MDP8500 - nr mint, laserdisc, VCD, CD, PAL, NSTC	499
Sony	SCD-XA77ES - fully boxed with remote	1199
Sony	XA20ES - ex, boxed, remote	179
TEAC	DV50 - new sealed box - SAVE £200!!!	2499
Wadco	CD3200T transport - remote, bargain entry to Wadco sound	649
Amplifiers		
Adcom	GTP500/PreTuner and GP450/HiPower - bargain!	399
AMC	2445 - ex, well reviewed weighty poweramp	199
Arcam	A85 - nr mint	419
Arcam	10P - nr mint	449
Audiolab	8000S - nr mint	299
Audiolab	8000Ms - nr mint monoblocks	899
Audiolab	8000P - nr mint, boxed	429
Audiolab	8000A - ex, boxed, grey, mm/mc	199
Audion	Silver Knights - Stunning boxed valve monoblocks	1199
Audio Research	LS7 - due in	Call
AVI	S2000 - ex, integrated	949
AVI	S2000MP - ex, line level/pre	279
AVI	S2000MM - ex, pair monoblocks	699
AVI	S2000PRM - ex, pre and 2x mono combo as above	849
Creek	4330Mk2R - nr mint, remote, Fantastic little integrated	299
Cyrus	S105/20 - nr mint, boxed, subtle bias/trimming past	199
Crinson	610C/630D - nr mint, pre and mono, we love these to bits	599
Croft	Linestage - nr mint, oneopt special, superb	499
Cyrus	7 - ex, black, boxed	429
Cyrus	3 - ex, black, boxed	229
Lumley Reference	ST70 - nr mint stereo valvepower	699
Magnum	MP300MF125 - ex, pair monoblocks	599
Magnum	MA120 - ex, integrated, bargain!	149
Marantz	PM66Se KI Sig - nr mint, lovely amp	199
Marantz	PM6010DSE - nr mint, boxed champagne	179
Meridian	605s - ex, boxed pair monoblocks	799
Meridian	505s - ex, boxed pair monoblocks	899
Mission	205s - ex, pair monoblocks	599
Mission	Cyrus One - from	119
MusicalFidelity	Rainbow - nr mint pre with phono stage	70
MusicalFidelity	Typhoon - nr mint, boxed	149
MusicalFidelity	Rainbow plus 2k/Typhoon - nr mint fab powerhouse	379
NAD	912 - good, monoblockable stereoamp (2 available)	119
NAD	C320BEE - ex, remote	129
NAIM	62140 - nr mint, 1988 chrome bumper combo	249
NAIM	Nai 3 - ex, boxed	599
Pinnacle	A20 - nr mint integrated	379
Quad	405 - ex	179
Quad	33303 - nr mint	199
Quad	500 - good, pair monoblocks	249
Quad	66 - ex pre with system controller	299
Quad	77 - nr mint integrated	299
Quad	605 - ex power	499
Roksan	Casplan M Series - ex dem, pre and monoblocks - stunning	249
Rotel	RC95 - nr mint remote	Call
Rotel	RB981 - ex, black powerhouse	225
Shearme	Phase 2 - nr mint, boxed, blue marblestyling	329
Shearme	Phase 2 Reference - as above, withphono stageetc	279
Suggden	Alu1 pre/power - ex, black	499
Sumo	Andromeda - ex, US monster bargain	299
Sumo	Andromeda II - nr mint, boxed	399
TaghM,Arari	60P - nr mint/boxed	449
Speakers		
AcousticEnergy	AE1 - ex, black grille	399
AcousticEnergy	AE1mk3 - nr mint, our dem pair in Piano black	649
AcousticEnergy	Aelle 3 - vgc, dem pair in cherry	649
AcousticEnergy	AE2 - ex, AE1 on steroids!	549
AcousticEnergy	AE2 - ex, c/w dedicated stands	549
AcousticEnergy	AE505 - nr mint, boxed rosewood	349
Amphion	Xenon - nr mint, boxed, stunning!	1399
B&W	380 - vgc, black floorstander	149
B&W	602S3 - nr mint/boxed Sorrento	249
B&W	801S3 Matrix - ex, walnut	1999
Castle	Isis - good condition, pretty miniature	69
Castle	Chester - good condition, mahogany	199
Clelliston	5000 - vgoribon standmount	199
Epos	M15 - vgc, light cherry, boxed	279
Epos	ES14 - ex, walnut, dedicated stands	249
Epos	ES11 - boxed, stands	Call
Heybrook	HB100 - vgc, superb vfm	79
JPW	200 - new, baby bookshelf, save	799
JPW	204 - new, great floorstander! save proverbial shedload	269
KEF	Reference 104/2 - ex, rosewood	599
KEF	Q10 - nr mint, boxed	89
KEF	Coda 9 - ex, rosewood	129
Meadowlark	Shearwater H	reduced to 999
Mission	70 centre - ex display, boxed	69
Mission	77c - ex display, boxed	99
Mission	771 - nr mint, boxed, rosewood	79
Mission	772 - ex, rosewood	99
Mission	753 - nr mint, multitoneal bargain!	349
Mission	Studio Centre - ex display, boxed	299
Monitor Audio	Silver S8 - new sealed box	549
Mordant Short	912 - ex display, boxed	149
NEAT	Pette Mk2 - ex, boxed latest LF drivers fab monitor	239
NHT	VT2 - ex, piano black monster floorstand with sidefire bass driver, amazing value	1499
PMC	FB1 - ex, cherry, boxed	799
QUAD	ESL63 - just back from Quad	1299
QUAD	11L - nr mint, boxed, birds eyemake	299
REL	Q50 - ex, black	199
Rogers	Studio Monitor - Original vgc, with stands - suit valve amps	199
Ruark	Templar - ex, boxed	79
Spendor	Prelude - good	79
Tandberg	Studio Monitor - Ex, large standmount	399
TDL	Studio 1 - vgc, wood finish transmission line	199
Triangle	Titus 202 - good, boxed	119
Vienna Acoustics	Strauss - ex, stunning floorstanders in beech	2249
Wharfedale	Pacific P30 - nr mint, boxed, light cherry, excellent	299
Tuners and Tape		
Creek	4030 - ex, great FM quality on a shoestring!	99
Cyrus	Original Mission tuner - vgc	99
Denon	DRS810 - nr mint, boxed, 3 head drawer opener	99
Myriad	T30 - nr mint, boxed	199
Nakamichi	BX125 - ex, boxed	99
Nakamichi	CRAE - vgc, black	429
Quad	FM2 - vgc, just back from QUAD	199
Quad	66FM - nr mint	279
Quad	RT02 - ex display, boxed, silver	199
Sugden	DTFM - gc, rare, matches A48mk3 etc	179
TEAC	X-1000R - nr mint, beautiful reel to reel engineering at its best	599
Technics	ST11000 - ex, v rare DSD tuner	399
Systems, cables and miscellaneous		
Audio Analogue	Phno - CD and Amp, ex dem	649
AVI	2000 series - ex, Ref CD, line preamp and pair monoblocks - awesome!	1279
Beyer	DT880 - ex dem	149
JPW	204/200/208 - S.1 speaker package new bargain, save over £200!	399
QUAD	3303/3FM3 - nr mint, Quad sleeve	299
QUAD	6766/66/606 - ex, CD Tuner/Pre/Power with system remote	1449
QUAD	6766/66/606 - as above nr mint, fully boxed	1599
QUAD	6766/66/606 - as above nr mint, fully boxed	1599

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FOR SALE

ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE101, Aegis 3, Evo 3, REL Q200e £500. Pioneer DVD 717, multichannel amp (E08), Phillips CDR775, £500. 020 8539 4441 (London).

AMPHION valve monoblocks 6C33C, 12 AX7, 12 AU7. Class A, 12 wpc, gold, chrome and glass. Spare valves, boxed, superb, £1,250. 01202 481386 (Dorset).

ARCAM A85 with phono stage, £475 plus P85 power amp, £325. Both black and in excellent condition. Buy together, get free 0.5m Straightwire Rhapsody II interconnect plus eight metre Chord Odyssey speaker cable. Steve 01928 716035 (Cheshire).

ARCAM A85 integrated amplifier, silver, boxed, one year old, mint, £425 ovno. 01803 873070 daytime or 01803 400708 evening (Devon).

ARCAM CD7SE slight display fault, £80 only. Denon DM31 with Tanoy M2s, mint, £150 or sell separately. Mr Walker 020 8352 0653 or 020 8411 6711 (North London).

AUDIO RESEARCH LS3 preamp black, boxed, manual, (£2,000) £550. Meridian 566 24-bit DAC, balanced, phono, boxed, manual, (£1,300) £550. Both in great condition. Henry 07710 382582 (Middlesex).

AVI S2000 MC CD player, good condition boxed, remote, £400 ono. Please call 01782 397971 (Staffs).

AUDIONOTE ZERO preamp, CD transport, DAC, monoblocks, AZ two floorstanders, cables etc, (£3,000) £1,700. 01992 300713(Herts)

AVI BIGATRON RED spot speakers, superb sound, mid range as to ESL 63. Mint, cherry, boxed, serial nos 533/534, £280. 01903 247779 (Sussex).

B&O TEAK and silver units, all as new. Beogram 1102 turntable, £40. Beocord 1101 cassette recorder, £40. Pair S35 speakers, £40. Pair S50 speakers, £50 or £150 the lot. Plus Technics CD player as new, model SL-P202A, £75. 020 8868 3103 (Middlesex).

BEL CANTO DAC 2, true 24-bit/192kHz upsampling, zero jitter, Wadia sound without Wadia price, £520 ono. 07979 903989 (Bristol).

CELESTION 9 speakers, £60. Technics 8077k amp, £60. Monitor Audio 852MD speakers with stands, £150. Aiawa F640 three head cassette, £50. 01708 457691 (Hornchurch).

CYRUS CD6 silver, Oct 2004, boxed, manuals, receipt and remote, (£600) £450. Julian 01132 933478 (Leeds).

CYRUS CD8X £750. ProAc 2.5 speakers, cherry, £1,200. Both excellent condition, collect only 028 4176 4088 (N.Ireland)

DNM interconnects, plus Chord and QED. Mint, bargain prices.

Sennheiser HD540 reference headphones, mint, £60. 07801 931940 (Kent)

DYNAUDIO BARGAINS! Special 25, new in Masser Birch, £2,000. 1.4s new, £1,000. Also Audience 42s,52s and 82s. 01732 741883 (Kent).

ELECTROCOMPANIE AW120 DMB power amps (two of), dual mono, balanced, Class A, 2x120 watts/eight ohms. Excellent condition, latest models, £1,350 ono or both, £2,500. 01234 302769 (Beds)

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).

JOHN BOWERS ACTIVE ONE active monitors. 300 wpc (Swiss amplification). Just serviced, technically and sonically stunning. P/ex Vintage Chapman amplification). Serious offers only. Buyer collects. Scottie 07762 021618 after 4pm (Hove).

JMLAB ELEKTRA 905 speakers three-way standmounts, cherry, bi-wirable, 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 DMF-9020S Minidisc deck. Russ 07883 008986 (Mid Glam, S. Wales).

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 (Camps).

MUSICAL FIDELITY A308CR power amp and Clearlight Audio Aspekt rack or Finite Element pagode E14 four tier. Andy 0115 9126424 (Mids)

MITCHELL GYRODEC or SE. Good condition please. Mr Hartley 01469 540255 (North Lincolnshire).

ROYD MINSTREL loudspeakers, any finish, but must be in PWO. Alternatively, new main driver units. John 0161 439 5122 (Stockport).



Above: Cyrus CD8x CD player

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 40B subwoofer 150w amplifier, (£750) accept £300. 01245 381810 (Essex).
KEF Q35 speakers (black), Rotel RA971 amp, Rotel RT850 AC tuner, Denon DCD435 CD player. All in excellent condition, £450 the lot. 01702 554670 or 07779 660289 (Essex)
KRELL 300iL amplifier, very good sound and condition, £1,800. Ruark Talisman III speakers still in box, £1,000. John 07881 525577 (Essex).
KRELL KSL preamp. Excellent condition, classic preamp. Can be seen working. Bargain for a Krell at £450. Call Ken on 07917 021328 (Cambridgeshire).
LFD integrated amp. Priced to sell at £200. 01438 743807 (Herts)
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).
MANA five tier amplifier stand, £300. Buyer collects. 020 8365 3622 (North London)
MANTRA/ MUSICIAN/ ORTOFON turntable, black, boxed, little used, offers. George 01400 281206 (East Midlands)
MARANTZ CD17 MkII, two years old, mint, black, box, manual. Genuine reason for sale. Excellent sound, (£800) £465ono. 07816 853331 (Worthing).
MARANTZ PM30SE amplifier (no tone controls) Technics CD

player, Mission 760 speakers, Target wall mount speaker stands, all immaculate condition with instruction manuals and good quality interconnects, £150 01444 241350 (West Sussex)
MARANTZ PM8200 amp, (£500) £200. Prestige condition and genuine bargain 07903 6133418 (London).
MERIDIAN DSP5000 Mk1 loudspeakers also Meridian 500 transport system. All with original boxes, instructions, cables, and remote. Genuine enquiries only 01383 413695 or 07971 632162 (Dunfermline).
MONITOR AUDIO GR10 two months old, boxed, just run in, perfect oak speakers, (£800) £625. Tony 07921 871575 (Durham).
MORDAUNT-SHORT speakers MS510, black, very good nick, (£120) £50ono. TAG McLaren Avant Garde 100x4 in silver, mint, great for biamping £1,200 ono. CARVER preamp C-1 in silver and Carver TFM-42 power amp in black, £500ono. 01639 774144 (Port Talbot)
MUSICAL FIDELITY X-80 integrated amplifier, brand new, boxed, unused, £260. Also an X-A1 Musical Fidelity integrated amplifier with manual, lovely sound. Please call Rob, 01743 344212 after 6pm (Shrewsbury).
MUSICAL FIDELITY A3 integrated, excellent condition, boxed, £250. Dave 01932 851751 (Surrey).
MUSICAL FIDELITY A5 integrated amplifier, 250wpc, boxed, mint, little used (£1,500)

£1,150 ono. Excellent review HFN Jan 05 01257 415541 eve or 07985 870560 day (Lancs)
MUSICAL FIDELITY The Pre Amp II and two Typhoon power amps, 140 watt monoblocs, £250ono. Denon DCD-S10 II CD player (£1,350) £350. Chord Chorus 0.5m interconnects £90ono. 01582 758049 (Luton)
MUSICAL FIDELITY X Cans V2, (new valves) with XPSU. Excellent, boxed, £150. AMC CVT3030 classic valve/mosfet amplifier. Boxed as new £250 01708 344334 (Romford, Essex).
NAD 350 amp (unused), £150 Rotel TR-850 AL tuner, £50. Marantz CD-73, £50. KEF Cadenza speakers, £50. 0121 3547261 (Sutton Coldfield),
NAD C352 amp, £250. Katana CD, £500, both new. 2x3 metres QED silver anniversary bi-wire £30. 01189 860951 (Reading).
NAIM NAIT 3 £250. Naim 3.5 CD player, £500. Castle Severn 2 speakers, £250. Complete system for £850 with receipt, manuals, remote and cables included. Can demo Peter 01832 735521 (Northants)
NORDOST VISHNU power cable, two months old, just burnt in, (£450) £350. Tony 020 8374 9788 (London)
NOTTINGHAM ANALOG Hyperspace, white, with new RB250, £949. Townsend Rock with lid/plinth, new RB250, £425. Both good condition and great sound. Can email pics. Phil 020 8991 2911 or email p.hodsman@demcointeriors.com or (Ealing).

ONIX INTEGRATED amplifier (OA21) excellent condition, £90, will post for £10. 01782 785734 (Staffs)
PMC FB1 speakers, black ash, £750. Musical Fidelity X-ray V3 CD player £600. A3.2CR power amp, £550. Terry 020 482 0363 (Enfield)
PMC TB2 speakers in oak with stands, £700. Sugden A21 Class A amp, £350. 01487 814015 (Camps)
PROAC RESPONSE 1SC cherry, boxed and in excellent condition, (£1,199) accept, £650 Steve 01282 475167 days or 01457 876570 after 6pm (Saddleworth, Lancashire)
QUAD 11L new 2005 model, Rosewood, boxed, guarantee, £275. Quad 34 grey, phono, late, mint, £195. Quad 66 CD top case scratched, serviced. 01332 528632 after 6pm (Kent)
QUAD 12L hi-fi speakers, maple birds eye lacquer, deluxe finish, boxed, mint, (£500) £350. 07891 533084 (Swansea).
QUAD 306 power amp and 34 preamp 20-150 watt. Great British amp, looks superb, vgc. 01453 762290 (Gloucs)
QUAD 405-2 amplifier, boxed, £200ono. Clive 01732 882530 (Kent)
QUAD 606 power amp in immaculate condition with manual, leads and original packaging, £295. Andy 01280 703433 or email andy.lamb@dsl.pipex.com (Northants).
RUSS ANDREWS 2x3ft Reference Powercord, perfect condition, £120. Michael 01772 752379 (Preston).
SENNHEISER HD580 headphones, very little use, (£200). Mint £70 01278 782622 after 7pm (Bridgwater).
TEAC HI-FI system amplifier AH500, TH500 tuner, RH500 cassette RH500, CD PDH500 plus Mission 731 speakers. £295 Tony 07957 354064 or 01277 633660 (Brentwood)
WHARFEDALE DIAMOND 7 speakers, £70. Yamaha NS-C80 centre speaker, £25, processor DSP-E390, £120. MS815 speakers, £100. Technics ST-CT350 tuner, £30. Nick 01223 413614 (Cambridge).



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