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See page 24

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 - > Triangle Celius ES
 - > MonoPulse 42A
 - > B&W 805S
 - > Rega R7

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HI-FI CHOICE

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WELCOME TO HI-FI CHOICE

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

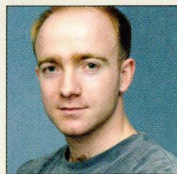


“Music digs deep into our emotional core like no other art form. It touches the soul and makes grown men weep. Hi-fi is simply a means to a musical end – it provides the conduit for its energy and detail, delivers scale and space, ensures you get closer to the tone and impact of the original performance.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



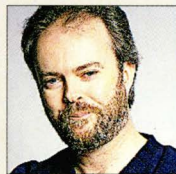
DAN GEORGE

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 loudspeakers priced from £900 to £1,600 are put before the *HFC* bench. Council begs to ask which one is the best, m'lud?

CLEARLY OPAQUE

Clearaudio's normally transparent turntables get wood. Does it stiffen up the sound?

BJÖRK SPEAKS!

Fresh from her latest venture – turning into a whale, no less – the Icelandic elf talks music

STELLO SUPERSTAR

Why Korean newcomer Stello makes one of the best DACs we've ever heard...

AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...

The next issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* is on sale 25 August. Don't miss a thing – see p80 for our latest great subscription offer!



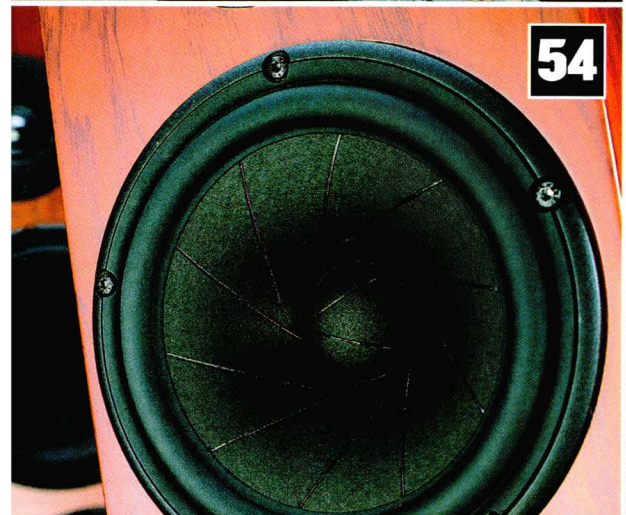
52



42



48



54



32

Contents

NEWS AND FEATURES

7 PRODUCT NEWS

The juiciest new fruit from the hi-fi tree

12 HAPPENINGS

Hot stories and events from around Planet Hi-Fi

14 DISPATCHES

Fresh opinion from the hi-fi commentators with clout

20 ESSENTIALS

Hot hi-fi accessories – tested just for you

23 INTERVIEW

Visionary Icelandic superstar Björk

24 COMPETITION

Win a complete system worth £1,500 from Micromega's lovely Minium range

26 CHOICE CUTS

New music – rated by our experts for sound and content

29 CHOICE MAIL

A selection of your letters and emails

32 BEAUTIFUL SYSTEMS

A high-end set-up of genuine sonic beauty... This issue: big-name high end from ARC, Jadis and Martin Logan

EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH PRODUCT TESTS

38 Clearaudio Ambient turntable

42 McIntosh MA2275 integrated valve amplifier

46 Dali Ikon 6 loudspeaker

48 Sugden CD21 SE CD player

52 Exposure XXXV integrated amplifier

54 Gamut L5 loudspeaker

58 Arcam CD36 CD player

61 NAD C555 turntable

63 Stello DA220 DAC

65 Pro-ject Debut/Phono SB turntable

ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

LOUDSPEAKERS £900-£1,600

68 Audio Physic Spark 3

69 B&W 805S

71 MonoPulse 42A

73 Rega R7

75 Triangle Celius ES

77 Usher Compass CP6311

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

86 CD players

88 DVD players

90 Vinyl

93 Radio tuners

94 Digital recorders

AMPLIFIERS

102 Stereo amps

104 AV amps

LOUDSPEAKERS

106 Stereo speakers

110 AV speaker packages

ANCILLARIES

113 Headphones

115 Cables

117 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

80 How to subscribe

83 Back issues

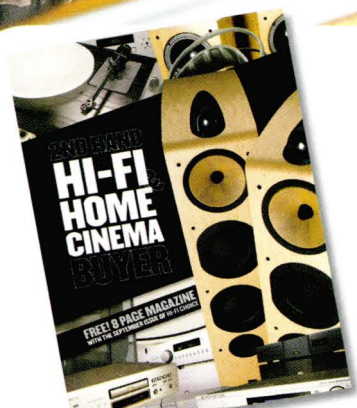
119 Glossary

121 Choice Bits accessories shop

122 Dealer Guide

128 Dealer Directory

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



FREE MINI-MAG!

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

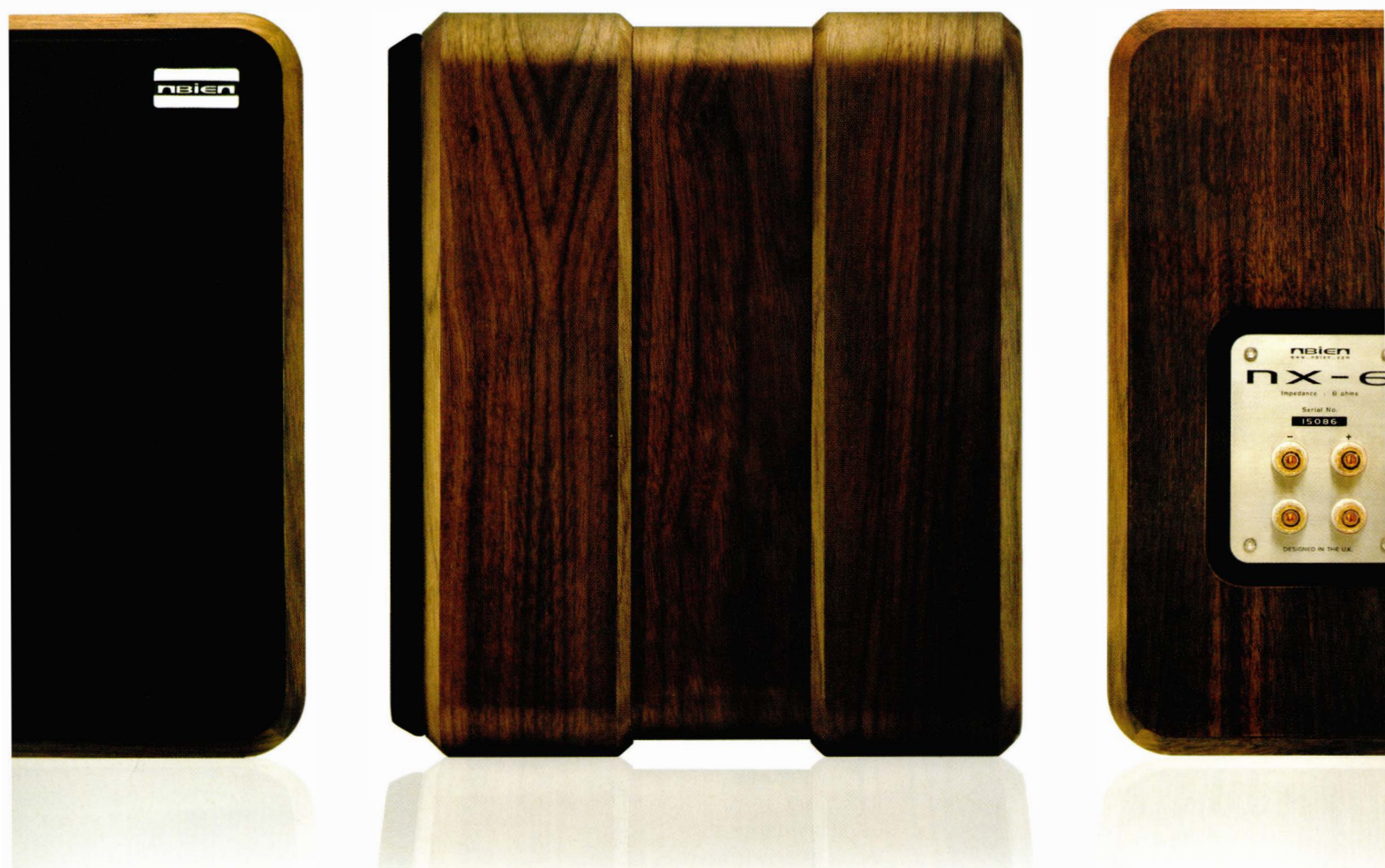
- 2 A-Z Guide to 2nd-hand kit – this issue, Mission, plus DIY tips
- 3 Trading Pages
- 7 Reader Classified

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ONKYO C-733 AND A-933 CD PLAYER AND DIGITAL AMP

Onkyo has recommitted to stereo with its cutting-edge, sub-£500 275 Series product range. Pictured is the tasty 'new generation' CD player and 80-watt digital stereo amp that Onkyo hopes will mark its successful return to affordable, high-class two-channel separates.

The compact duo measure just 275mm wide (hence the moniker) and are both wrapped in a chunky aluminium chassis that belies the price. With its new digital amp technology, Onkyo aims to eradicate signal

noise and both products also sport a host of proprietary technologies to optimise performance. Key features include Wolfson 24-Bit/192kHz DACs and a special precision loading system for the CD player, plus six inputs (including MM phono) and dual toroidal power supplies for the amp. Onkyo also offers an innovative iPod docking station allowing you to control your Apple iPod's functionality from any Onkyo remote. Cool.

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

PRODUCT Onkyo C-733 and A-933

TYPE CD player and integrated digital amplifier

PRICE (C-733) £400, (A-933) £500

KEY FEATURES (C-733) Wolfson 24-Bit/192kHz DACs • CD-R/RW and MP3 playback • Onkyo noise shaping circuit • Optical digital outputs
(A-933) 'New Generation' digital technology • 80 watts per channel • Tone controls and source direct • MM phono stage • Six line inputs

CONTACT ☎ 01494 681515 🌐 www.onkyo.co.uk

**“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 VM220

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.



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MONRIO MC207 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

▶ All the way from Italy, Monrio's MC207 amp will be competing in November's *Ultimate Group Test*, flaunting its luxurious fit 'n' finish and Italian charm.

The MC207 heads up Monrio's MC Series of integrations and is configured in dual mono for maximum isolation between the channels. The PCB is split across two boards – one for the output stage and power supply, the other for the low-level audio stage. There are also two hefty power transformers to deliver the

amp's 80-watt output, so there's plenty in reserve when the music shifts up a gear.

The Monrio lab team has made every effort to separate the signal from the source selection control circuit, with all switching done by logic-controlled relays. More immediately obvious, however, is the refreshing cosmetic design, which sets it apart from the cautious approach of its peers.

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

PRODUCT Monrio MC207

TYPE Integrated stereo amplifier

PRICE £1,195

KEY FEATURES Dual mono internal construction

- ▶ 80 watts per channel
- ▶ Five line-level inputs
- ▶ Huge twin transformers
- ▶ Remote control

NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS



ARCAM DIVA AVP700 AND P1000

Arcam's new DiVA series AV processor and seven channel power amp were officially unveiled at the recent CEDIA custom installation show in Birmingham. The new AVP700 processor and P1000 amplifier are aimed at audiophiles and videophiles alike, filling the void between the integrated AVR receiver range and the upmarket FMJ series. The AVP700 features video format up-conversion, HDMI digital video switching and full custom install connectivity. Arcam has employed cutting edge Crystal chipsets and Wolfson DACs for digital audio processing, all of which may be bypassed when using a two-channel source.

Power is rated at 7x135 watts for the DiVA P1000, which Arcam promises has "audiophile sound quality for music and movies". Further features include a multistage protection system and huge toroidal-based power supply. The two amps are available in black or silver livery.

Price AVP700 £1,400; P1000 £1,600 **Due** now
 ☎ 01223 203200 🌐 www.arcam.co.uk



LINN KOMPLEMENT SERIES

Linn's new 'modern living' Komponent loudspeakers are some of the most affordable designs the Scottish company has ever produced. The four new models, including a floorstander, a standmount, a centre/rear speaker and subwoofer, are built from extruded aluminium and are available in Linn's Aktiv configuration, where a single amp channel is dedicated to each drive unit. The main speakers have tweeters mounted in a dedicated alloy chassis, isolated from the rest of the cabinet, while the car tyre-sized subwoofer – at just 20cm tall – is small enough to go under sofas.

Price from £250 to £750 per speaker **Due** now
 ☎ 0141 307 7777 🌐 www.linn.co.uk



PIONEER EX SERIES

Pioneer is to introduce three high-end, Beryllium-equipped speakers to audiophiles across the world. Designed by TAD (Technical Audio Devices) with Pioneer experts from Japan, France and the US, the new EX Series features proprietary drivers and Beryllium tweeters, with extension up to 100kHz. Both the three-way floorstander and the matching centre speaker combine two 180mm TAD-designed units with 'Carbon-Aramid' cones, plus a concentric mid/treble unit with a 140mm magnesium cone and 25mm tweeter. The impressive new drivers are treated to a rigid, wood-wrapped cabinet, which measures up to 100mm thick in the most crucial areas. The models range from the standmount S-2EX to the floorstanding S-1EX, together with the S-7EX centre speaker.

Price from £3,500 to £4,500 per pair **Due** now
 ☎ 01753 789789 🌐 www.pioneer.co.uk



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 540A AND 640A

Award-winning 'affordable hi-fi' brand Cambridge Audio has revamped its popular Azur 640A and 540A integrated stereo amps. Eighteen months since the launch of the original Azur models, the new 'second generation' amps now feature a raft of internal changes, including more power, improved heat sinks and redesigned preamp circuitry. The improvements are claimed to deliver lower noise and offer greater transparency. While the cosmetics remain unchanged, the fascia controls have been improved to give a better feel and a new 'navigator' remote control is also supplied.

Price 540A £200; 640A £250 **Due** now
 ☎ 0870 900 1000 🌐 www.cambridgeaudio.com



T+A D10

T+A's new stereo-only SACD player has been designed with a valve-based output and filter stage. It uses 12AX7 double triode valves in the preamp stage and ECC 99 double triodes in the output stage to remove digital 'glare'. The flagship source also offers advanced digital decoding, with a "double mono quadruple DAC" (four 24-Bit/348kHz), which T+A feels is the best available today. Furthermore, the D10's signal processor is fully programmable and can be switched between oversampling algorithms to tailor the sonic output. The top-loading player weighs in at 12kg and comes with a equally hefty price tag.

Price £4,600 **Due** now

☎ 020 8901 2662 # www.taelektroakustik.de

Soundbites



NHT's new Pro M-00 active monitor is now on sale. Pictured above, this compact, wall-mountable speaker features proprietary drivers, an aluminium enclosure and a 75-watt built-in amp. It's priced at £199

(per speaker) and is suitable for use in both hi-fi and home studio applications.

☎ 0845 0255555

ROKSAN is discounting its Kandy CD player and amp when bought together. The Kandy twin pack will sell for £1,000, while the individual components remain at £650 each. ☎ 01235 511166

SENNHEISER has a new noise cancelling set of headphones called the PXC 300. The £130 folding cans weigh just 65 grams and are said to increase noise reduction over previous models thanks in part to their cunning 'closed' design. ☎ 0800 652 5002

ONKYO's new TX-SR503E budget 7.1 receiver offers a taste of surround sound for just £250. Onkyo also has a new CD/DAB micro system to rival Denon's DM31 called the CS-220UK, for just £220 without speakers. ☎ 01494 681515

MERIDIAN has unveiled two new subwoofers, with both digital inputs for Meridian controllers and active inputs on XLR. Both the SW1600 (£1,995) and SW5500 (£2,560) feature custom-made 300mm woofers, with two drivers in the SW5500. ☎ 01480 445678

PARADIGM speakers are back in the UK following a three-year absence, thanks to Anthony Gallo distributor Network. The Canadian brand's portfolio includes hi-fi and AV speakers, like the Reference Signature models pictured below, plus in-wall and outdoor models. ☎ 0870 350 1349



TEAC ESOTERIC UX-1

If money is no object, TEAC's new Esoteric UX-1 universal disc player – imported by Symmetry Systems – may offer the last word in disc replay. The latest edition to the flagship series is said to have "the world's best image and sound quality", according to a TEAC spokesman. Key features include an ultra-rigid proprietary mechanism to eliminate vibration, a highly specialised clocking system and upmarket D-to-A conversion. A comprehensive range of in/outputs is specified, including a 5.1 output for high-resolution multichannel audio.

Price £9,995 **Due** now

☎ 01727 865488 # www.teac.com/esoteric



EASTERN ELECTRIC M520

Eastern Electric's M520 Class A integrated valve amp can change from 18-watt ultralinear to 24-watt pentode mode at the flick of a switch. The new five-input amp is part of a complete range, comprising pre/power amps, a phono stage and a tube-based CD player with HDCD playback. All products are backed by a 30-day money back guarantee and are brought to the UK by Shadow Distribution.

Price £1,399 **Due** now

☎ 01592 744 779 # www.easternelectric.co.uk

KEF iQ SERIES

KEF's popular Q Series speaker range has been completely overhauled and now includes eight all-new models. The range extends from the entry-level bookshelf iQ1 to the iQ9 floorstander and effectively replaces all current Q models. KEF's proprietary tweeter-in-cone Uni-Q driver array remains but with several upgrades, including stiffer, titanium-coated long-throw cones and elliptical tweeter dome profiles. KEF claims the revisions mean greater loudness, lower distortion, better bass and sweeter treble. All models will have a nominal eight-ohm impedance for easy system matching and are offered in a choice of five finishes.

Price from £230 to £800 per pair **Due** now

☎ 01622 672261 # www.kef.com

The Insider

THIS MONTH, HFC TALKS TO...

PETER BARTLETT

Job Title: Managing Director
Company: Cyrus Audio



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

An exciting new amplifier topology to extend the X series. But this new project will remain under wraps for some months to come.

What's the most innovative product you've encountered recently?

The audio industry is at a very exciting time, as two channel audio systems come back into fashion. At every price point – from the ubiquitous iPod through to the high end of loudspeaker development – music enthusiasts have never had so many truly great sounding and well designed options to inspire them.

How are you listening to music today?

My favourite albums and downloaded music on a Linkserver media library. This has allowed me to replay music I knew I liked from years ago, but never managed to get round to play. I know many folk who think digital is bad for music but – on the contrary – I find it stimulating, in the same way portable players like iPods are.

CD or vinyl – and why?

CD and vinyl please. I am of an age where my favourite albums are mostly on vinyl and they sound amazing, so why choose? Over the years, I flip between preferring vinyl to digital and back. Right now I am playing mainly digital, but lots of stuff played at home remains LP based.

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
Manchester's home cinema expo

NOVEMBER

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

Mission goes to IAG

Loudspeaker specialist Mission has been purchased by the International Audio Group (IAG), a Chinese company that owns the Quad, Wharfedale and Audiolab brands. IAG purchased the Mission business from Fundamental E Investments and the brand name from NXT plc, which is run by Mission founder Farad Azima.

Mission has been in financial difficulties for over twelve months following a series of ownerships, including the original management buyout by Symphonix in 2000 and last year's deal with Fundamental E Investments. Mission has been up for sale since May this year.

In a statement that signalled the end of what remained of Mission's UK manufacturing, IAG MD Tim Harris said: "With full access to IAG's considerable manufacturing infrastructure (in China), Mission will now be in an ideal position to pursue – with the utmost vigour – its long-held commitment to technical innovation and product excellence."



HDCD online information

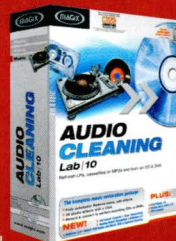
Thomas Bergman is an audiophile and a big fan of HDCD encoded CDs, but he was frustrated by the fact that there are no lists or catalogues of HDCD titles available, not even from the record companies. So he has created his own database at www.hdcc.se, where you can search for HDCD discs and add any that are not already on the site. You need to register with the site to get hold of catalogue



numbers or to enter albums onto it, but the database is free to all users and should prove handy for anyone who appreciates HDCD's improved CD sound.

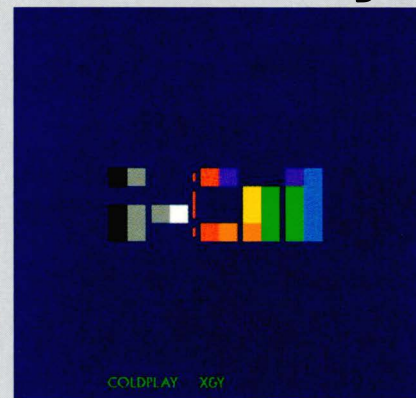
A to D with polish

Market Wire's Magix Audio Cleaning Lab 10 software is a series of PC tools for analogue and digital recording. These include automated de-hissing and



"spectral cleaning", claimed to remove background noise "without affecting the music". ACL will let you put multiple stereo albums on a DVD disc, convert stereo to four-channel surround and burn discs in 24-bit DVD-Audio format, though no oversampling rate is specified. Due for a September release, ACL 10 will cost £29.99.

Music Piracy on the wane



It would seem that the crackdown on filesharing by the BPI (British Phonographic Industry) has made an impression. A recent survey suggests that 35% of downloaders are now paying for their music, far larger numbers than in previous years. According to Russell Hart, Entertainment Media Research's chief executive: "There is a good chance that we will see legal downloaders outnumber pirates in the next six to 12 months".

To date, the BPI has taken 90 illegal file sharers to task, with many facing prosecution and hefty fines. This did not stop Coldplay's latest album *X&Y* being made available online prior to its release on June 1st, however, which suggests that either download prices will have to fall or the BPI's case file will get busier before the problem is solved.



Ozzy gets the Monster treatment

⊕ Black Sabbath frontman and TV star Ozzy Osbourne has credited Monster Cable on the cover of his new *Prince of Darkness* box set. Ozzy's studio has had the full Monster treatment courtesy of David Frangioni, "technical liaison to the stars". Frangioni installed Monster's AVS2000 voltage correcting conditioners and HTPS7000 power conditioners, the latter incorporating a balanced topology to eliminate noise. The LA studio also features extensive use of Monster Cable.

Prince of Darkness is a four-disc set, featuring material from Ozzy's back catalogue and including alternate takes, as well as collaborations with Therapy and Wu-Tang Clan among others.

JIMMY'S TWEAKS #34

HANDY HINTS FROM JIMMY HUGHES – HIFI'S SUPER TWEAKER



Human Voice Is Your Reference

With many instruments, a little tinkering of the tonal balance can offer 'improvements'. For example, a slight lift in the 3kHz Presence region can increase tonal brilliance and transient attack, giving cymbals greater immediacy, and guitar strings greater bite. Great! But then, a female voice starts to sing, and

suddenly the sound is edgy and wispy, with a rough exaggerated sibilance. On men's voices, the effect is even worse – rough and 'chesty', as though the singer had a frog in their throat. That's the problem when parts of the frequency spectrum are exaggerated. But, if you can get male and female voices sounding natural and right, everything else will sound natural... and sound right too.

TOP 10 TOP TEN BEST SUMMER ALBUMS TO KEEP YOU CHILLED

- 1 **Brian Wilson** *Smile*
- 2 **Outkast** *Speakerboxx/The Love Below*
- 3 **Various Artists** *Motown: The Classic Years*
- 4 **DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Prince** *Homebase*
- 5 **Various Artists** *Clubbers Guide Summer 2005*
- 6 **Chopin** *Nocturnes*
- 7 **Various Artists** *The Best of Café Del Mar*
- 8 **Bill Withers** *Original Hits*
- 9 **Banco de Gaia** *Last train to Lhasa*
- 10 **Jamiroquai** *Space Cowboy*



⊕ New Music

IN THE STUDIO

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



PETE DOHERTY

Title: tbc

Release date: September

Pete Doherty is currently finishing his debut album with Babyshambles. "There's a lot of really sad songs on it and it's quite hard mixing it. It's the best record I've ever made, by a long shot."



FUGEES

Title: tbc

Release date: tbc

Nine years after *The Score*, The Fugees are finally attempting a follow-up. Wyclef Jean, Lauryn Hill and Pras Michel have all pursued solo careers since 1996. Now Pras has revealed they've been laying down initial tracks, while Wyclef says: "I want the Fugee thing to happen because it's not just music. It's a movement."

up-beat, radio-slaying pop single in the classic mould, with a feisty vocal from Spiteri over a rollercoaster of pianos, guitars and electronics.

RAY DAVIES

Title: tbc

Release date: 6 September

The former Kinks leader has signed with V2 to release his solo debut. He's been unavailing material from it in recent live performances and says: "I've done lots of songs. They're all different, but they're all about me, which is quite worrying when you think about it."

SHERYL CROW

Title: tbc

Release date: 27 September

Crow recently claimed she would release two albums in 2005. "I'm writing a lot more love songs, but there's also so much stuff to write about in the world," she says. "It's a really interesting time to be an artist."

ALSO COMING SOON...

JAZZ/ CLASSICAL

David Chesky *Area 31* (Jul), **Chet Baker** *Jazz Moods* (Aug), **Anne-Sophie Mutter** *Carmen Fantasy* (Sep), **Renee Fleming** *Sacred Album* (Oct)

SACD/ DVD-A

Bizet *Carmen* (SACD, Jul), **Grieg** *Peer Gynt* (SACD, Jul), **Brahms** *Symphony No.4* (DualDisc, Jul), **Simple Minds** *New Gold Dream* (DVD-A, Sep), **The Thrills** *So Much For The City* (DVD-A, Sep)

TEXAS

Title: *Red Book*

Release date: 31 October

Sharleen Spiteri and crew return with the follow-up to 2003's *Careful What You Wish For*. *Getaway*, the first single, is an



Stuart M. Robinson

Promotional immaterial

Where did all the review copies go?

It doesn't matter who you are, getting high-resolution (DVD-A/SACD) review samples is a tough business. Some companies are great: Linn Records, Warner (US), 5.1 Entertainment, TACET, Opus3 and a few others, but most are absolutely useless. I can readily imagine the following scenario:

"Hello, this is Prince Charles. I'd like a review sample of *War of the Worlds*, please. I like Martians, met one at a fete..."

"Prince Charles? Sorry, you're not on my list."

"Try Prince of Wales."

"No, sorry. Is there anyone more senior in your organisation?"

"There's the Duke of Edinburgh."

"Like the Duke of Earl? Ha ha ha... No, he's not on the list either."

"Alright, try The Queen."

"Queen? Now you're being silly, they never officially disbanded after Freddie Mercury died. Their last album was in 1995."

"Hello, this is Prince Charles. I'd like a review sample of *War of the Worlds*, please.' 'Prince Charles? Sorry, you're not on my list.'"

"No, *The Queen*."

"Look, there was only one Queen, some tribute bands are okay, but..."

You get the picture.

First and foremost, hardly anyone in the PR business seems to know what a DVD-Audio or SACD disc is. If you ever try explaining the finer points of NICAM (near instantaneous companded audio multiplexing, best known as stereo for TV) to one of the sales drones in Dixons, the look on his or her face will be very similar and it doesn't matter how much time you spend telling them that a CD copy is about as useful as an ashtray on a motorbike, that's what they'll send all the same.

Then we've got the second group, PR organisations that are, quite frankly, useless. When Noble PR handled Warner's UK business, it somehow managed to find pre-release samples of DVD-Audio titles and failing that, advance copies of the finished article. Brilliant! But then, when their job was given to LD Publicity in early 2004, it was if Warner's DVD-Audio output no longer existed. Forget about the DVD-Audio and CD versions being confused, they weren't prepared to send either, to anyone!

Ultimately, however, the reluctance to distribute review samples without a series of blood tests and the promise of giving up one's first-born to a life of record company slavery, comes down to an underlying paranoia. Far too often, music that has only been distributed to members of the press finds its way onto Kazaa, eBay or RapidShare, and in the current climate of distrust and file-sharing litigations, that also has an impact on reputable journalists (if that isn't a contradiction in terms).

Ironically, the method of stamping out all 'dubious' activities relating to advance copies is to distribute music on either of the two most secure formats... and you guessed it, they just happen to be DVD-Audio and SACD. The high-resolution content of DVD-Audio cannot be 'ripped' and there are no computer-based consumer drives capable of reading the DSD layer of an SACD, so what more do record companies want? Many A&R staff at labels large and small have pressed for review samples to be distributed on DVD-Audio discs (which are much easier and cheaper to make in small quantities than SACDs). But this approach brings about a problem: what is the stuffy old curmudgeon at *Mozart Review* or

What *Early Music User* (both mythical titles) going to make of a DVD-Audio disc? This is the same guy who only abandoned his wax cylinder a few weeks ago.

So it's the good old chicken-and-egg/circular argument situation once again. High-resolution gets no promotion because it hasn't had enough promotion, even though DVD-Audio and SACD are the ideal promotional tools. Irony is a lost art in music PR...

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



Taking the WEEE

Who's going to pay to take away your hi-fi?

The entire electrical and electronics industry will have to start paying for its goods to be recycled from January next year, as a result of the EU WEEE Directive (waste electrical and electronic equipment). Manufacturers, distributors and retailers of all varieties will have to meet the cost of recycling the products they currently make and sell as well as the electronics components that already exist.

From an environmental point of view, this is entirely laudable. However, the way in which hi-fi companies among others are being asked to pay for tidying up the mess that is often left by defunct or no longer distributed brands is still very unclear.

I spoke to John Dawson, head of R&D at Arcam, about the likely effect on cost and while he said that it was expected to be in the region of £5 to £10 at the manufacturing level, he did not know how this figure would be treated as the product went through the distribution and retail chain; it could end up being much more. Manufacturers like Arcam are very keen to have a visible fee at the point of sale. So far, the government is refusing to make this mandatory and big retailers (Tesco, Comet and so on) feel it will upset price points. Rob Hay at BADA (British Audio Dealers Association) says most of his members would like a visible fee, but they also want the government to publicise the reasons for the fee.

At present, the onus is on retailers to provide an in-store take back service. So, if you buy a

R

RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

MCINTOSH MC275
POWER AMPLIFIER



Not many products can live up being described as legendary, but here is a rare exception. The McIntosh MC275 must surely also take the Patrick Moore's *The Sky at Night* prize for longevity, and it is renowned for its bold, spacious and open sound, which involves none of the softness and lack of incisiveness that continues to afflict many valve amps.

A stereo bridgeable valve driven power amplifier, it was introduced in 1961 and is still available today, visually all but unaltered. By hi-fi standards, this comes out of the ark, although Denon has a cartridge – the DL-103 – in constant production since 1962.

Electrically, the MC275 is clearly more than just derivative of the original. But it has not been available continuously in this period. It disappeared in favour of solid-state designs in July 1973, and reappeared in the 1990s, in the first instance with the Gordon J Gow (ex-President of McIntosh) Limited Edition. This included changes necessary for balanced mode operation, along with some high-quality passive component substitutions and other details. By this time, it was apparent what a mistake had been made. One clue that might have alerted McIntosh was that the price of second-hand samples had escalated to the point where they were changing hands for more, often much more second-hand than they commanded when new. The MC275 is now fully restored to the McIntosh lineup.

Externally, the differences are trivial. The captive mains lead has been replaced by an IEC socket, but surprisingly the antediluvian and awkward to use screw-down speaker terminals have been retained. Internally, the big change is from a largely hard-wired circuit to one based on a single monolithic PCB, which is an important factor in keeping production costs in check. It also brings the MC275 in line with modern electrical code

Everything else is much as it always was. The MC275 is a stereo power amplifier rated at 75 watts per channel (into 4, 8 or 16 ohms), which was unusually powerful when first launched, and remains an impressive figure today. Sacrifice two channel operation, and



“First introduced back in 1961, the MC275 is now fully restored to the McIntosh lineup.”

power output increases to 150 watts bridged. The MC275 is in essence the core of the power amplifier section of the MA2275 integrated amp which is reviewed on page 42, and it uses a similar valve complement including KT88 output tubes. One adjustable sensitivity line input, which allows it to be used as a rudimentary integrated amplifier for this input only, is supplemented by a balanced XLR.

Also in common with the MA2275, the MC275 uses the Unity Coupled Output Transformer (co-invented by Gordon J Gow), which in its basic form involves two bifilar wound primaries and delivers lower distortion across a wider power bandwidth. The output transformer has two side by side primary windings, which are magnetically and capacitively coupled. Each primary is connected to the plate and cathode of one of the output tubes of each KT88 output valve, essentially eliminating crossover distortion. In the MC275, this design is extended to trifilar windings, the third of which is connected to the plates of the cathode follower driver, further improving power bandwidth. The origin of the Unity Coupled circuit and the bifilar wound output transformer easily predate the MC275 itself, and was originally introduced in 1947, and used on the 50W-2, one of McIntosh's first products. **HFC**

Alvin Gold



and ill-understood audiophile, and put him together with that nice wallflower, classical music.

The first sign that the pairing is inevitable came in May of this year, with the release of three new titles on the audiophile (and distinctly classical-oriented) label Water Lily Acoustics. Kavi Alexander, the man behind Water Lily, is that rare lover of music and audio whose intellectual curiosity, inner calm and sheer sense of fun allow him to transcend both camps. Nonetheless, he has given us something we might never have hoped for. He's delivered live recordings that crackle with art's electricity, made with the kind of fidelity most have never heard.

The three new discs are the

Shostakovich Symphony No.7, the Svetlanov C minor Piano Concerto (paired with Scriabin's Symphony No.3), and the Mahler Symphony No.5. All were played by the Saint Petersburg Philharmonia and recorded in the historic Great Hall of Saint Petersburg, using a Tascam DSD recorder and a pair of Pearl microphones. Of the three, available as regular discs or true SACDs, it's the Mahler I enjoy the most. I could quibble with aspects of the interpretation – is there any truer evidence of Furtwängler's dictum against recorded music than the thought of an untrained listener in shorts and a tee-shirt, suggesting changes he might've made to a transitory work of art? – but the performance is incandescent. I love hearing Russian musicians play that Klezmeresque outburst in the first movement, and the famous *adagietto* is pure limpid calm, lacking the schmaltz of a Bernstein.

The sound is remarkable. It isn't enough to say the SACD is best appreciated on a good system. One could make the case that Kavi's Mahler can *only* be appreciated on a good system. The spatial perspective is wider than usual, and the spaces between the notes are silent. Most effective of all, this is the least compressed recording I've heard, requiring a consistently realistic playback level. (If that first fortissimo isn't loud enough to frighten you a bit, then the sound won't be loud enough for you to tell that the violins are playing *col legno* at the end of the same movement.) You'll also be compelled to play the whole thing through, every time – and Heaven knows there's nothing wrong with that.

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

“Will your local Steptoe & Son really know how to dispose of cadmium by-products?”

component, the retailer must accept anything you wish to be rid of, albeit within the range of products they sell. Alternatively, the retailer should have an arrangement with the local authority, whereby you can dump the machine with them without personal cost. But will your local Steptoe & Son really know how to dispose of cadmium by-products?

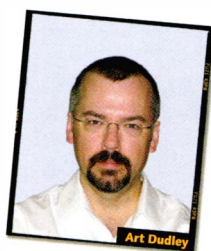
The fact that separates hi-fi is not thrown away for thirty or forty years – if ever – does not of course make much of an impression on a scheme that's designed to deal with the gamut of electrical equipment. I wrote to my local MP Norman Baker about the situation. He suggested that the public should bear the cost when they decided to dump their electronic and electrical equipment. While this makes sense, it would probably also mean rather more fridges being left in fields, or amplifiers in alleyways for that matter!

Manufacturers are joining collective schemes, to provide maximum compliance at the lowest achievable cost for its members. It's expected that recycling will cost approximately £200 per tonne, but that the historical requirement effectively doubles this burden and could add 40p per kg at factory. This is less than John Dawson's guess, but as he also said, “nobody really knows what the full implications are.”

A £40 DVD player or £150 micro system is likely to be dumped within five years of purchase, yet its low weight means that it would contribute less to overall recycling costs than a separates CD player weighing two or

three times as much but likely to remain in use for two or three times as long. Whatever happens, hi-fi is likely to get a little more expensive soon, so buy now while stocks last!

Jason Kennedy began working on Hi-Fi Choice over 15 years ago, eventually rising to the position of Editor. He's currently indulging his passion as a freelance hi-fi writer

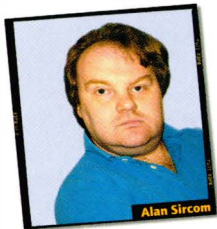


Water Lily wonders

Are these the best classical recordings ever?

For the longest time, a dear friend was stuck in a relationship with a hard-drinking viper of a woman. Getting rid of her meant changing the locks and calling the police. He was left a mess, seemingly unable to share happiness ever again. But some caring co-workers put him together with a girl who'd also had a bad time of things, and before long these two decent people were able to function as whole human beings, and more. True story.

I keep hoping that some similarly concerned support group will take pity on the overlooked



Stat attack

The numbers are in: hi-fi's back in fashion

Aside from a few days of gargling somewhere often hot and pretty (this year – Sorrento), aside even from the chance to fondle the next generation of high-quality audio products, perhaps the reason why the annual Marantz press conference is one of the most important dates in the journo's calendar is Ken Ishiwata's State of the Business Address.

You see, Ken has The Power. Specifically, the brand ambassador for Marantz has The Power of the EIAJ (Electronics Industries Association of Japan) statistics. These are usually kept a closely-guarded secret; no-one may hand out copies of this data, it's down to the individual scribe to note relevant information from Ken's Powerpoint presentation.

It shows just how dramatic trends can be from one region to another. Take TV, for example. In 2004, 147million televisions were sold worldwide (up slightly from 2003), of which 10.3million sets were LCD and plasma sets (almost two and a half times as many as in 2003). But these statistics do not reflect the market by region. The EU and China account for very similar total TV sales (28million in the EU, 30million in China), but last year LCD accounted for 2.5million sets in the EU and just 300,000 in China, yet the projection market in China (just over a million units) is three times that of the EU.

And it's not just TV. DVD shows a range of different priorities. In Japan, the DVD-Recorder is king, with more than four of the seven and a quarter million DVD machines sold there in 2004 sporting the ability to record. The rest of the world bought almost 78million DVD products last year, of which less than four and a half million represented DVD-Recorder sales.

Many pundits are depressed about the lack of growth in the pure audio market, but in fact the statistics show the world isn't quite as bad as it first seems. The hi-fi separates market is only very slightly down in performance terms, with 5,270,000 units sold in 2004, which represents 98.9% of the figure for 2003. What has occurred, however, is a shift in priorities of the purchaser, although this was not accounted for in Ken Ishiwata's sound-byte statistics. The home cinema market – judging from anecdotal evidence from dealers – has fallen flat, as people are making a stand

MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

DJ SHADOW
ENDTRODUCING



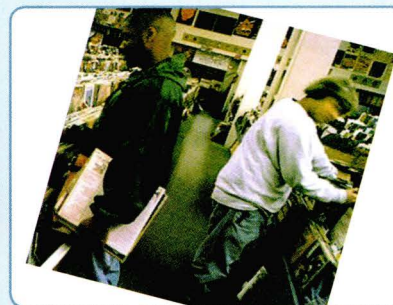
When 23-year-old DJ Shadow (aka Josh Davis) released his first album in 1996, he could have had little idea that he was

releasing a musical milestone. *Endtroducing* is a fascinating cornucopia of styles, with no real centre, but sparking off in a thousand different directions. Unlike most hip-hop albums of the time, there's very little in the way of rap, aside from a few dislocated samples and vocal quotes. There's no message, no theme, unless you count the discombobulating atmosphere of transcendence and movement. There's a distinct sense of restlessness and discomfiture, the feeling that everything's been done before, but that we're going to try and do something new anyway. Nothing fits, but in a funny kind of a way, towards the end of the twentieth century, everything does.

Virtually the entire album is pieced together from obscure vinyl sources. Showing much respect for the music, but absolutely none for genre differences, DJ Shadow pulled together a dizzying range of styles and feels, painstakingly splicing them together with the attention to detail of the habitual nerd. The overall effect is like a dream – not a nightmare exactly, but disconcerting nonetheless, with occasional blasts of almost-grasped insight and transcendence. Its constantly shifting textures of sound create an aural palace built on sand, one that moves and weaves every time you begin to think you're finding your balance.

His reverence for the material, both aural and physical, is clear and there's even a hint of the fetish in the way pops and crackles are left intact or even added for additional ambience. It gives the feeling that you've spent hours – if not days – trawling through the basement of Sacramento Records' store, where he sourced most of his prime material. Packed with teetering piles of 45s and dusty boxes, it was a favourite hang-out of the nascent Shadow, and the experience formed the basis of much of his approach to music, as his liner notes to the recently released Deluxe Edition show.

"It's a humbling experience because you're looking through all these records and it's sort of like a big pile of broken dreams, in a way.



"Packed with teetering piles of 45s, it was a favourite hang-out for the nascent Shadow."

Almost none of these artists still have a career, really, so you kind of respect that. If you're making records, you're adding to this pile, whether you want to admit it or not."

The Deluxe Edition includes a full CD of out-takes, extra tracks and works in progress that break down some of Shadow's methods. Without the benefit of modern computer equipment, all mixes were done live, pulling the records together as they played, then overdubbing scratches and textures until the tracks were completed. Therefore there are no full multi-track versions of any of the tunes; each of the cuts is a one-off deal that can never be fully replicated again. His methods are both a salute to the one-take recordings of the past and a reflection of the hi-tec reality of the present and future.

Like its title suggests, DJ Shadow's magnum opus was both the beginning and the end, and almost ten years on, he has yet to top it. But perhaps this is unfair; later albums like *Private Press* and *Preemptive Strike* are fine cuts in their own rights, except they are constantly compared to *Endtroducing*. But this was where he was first able to pull his obsessions together, and in the process make an album that probably summed up music's transition through the technical tsunami at the end of the last century better than anyone. **HFC**

Dave Oliver

against regular upgrades and having five or more speakers in their room. So, it seems likely that this almost unchanged state of play in audio represents a drop in home cinema interest, combined with a possibly concomitant upturn in two-channel sales.

One thing's clear, though. If you lump together everything traditionally audio-related, last year saw nearly 64million units sold across the whole world, again only fractionally down on the previous year. Try and match those numbers, iPod!

Alan Sircom began his journalistic career in the early 1990s. He has since become one of the hi-fi and AV industry's most respected scribes



“If it’s a really good system, you might even be able to listen to an entire late-period John Coltrane album. Although that’s pushing it!”

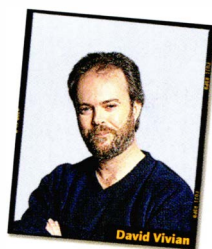
Indeed, venture beyond the relatively safe waters of funk and dinner jazz and you soon find yourself tumbling through the rapids disorientated; atonality, dissonance, horribly complex polyrhythms are commonplace. On a system that doesn't have its wits about it, this stuff doesn't just sound 'difficult' but 'impossible'. Your first and strongest instinct is to reach for the off switch. A good system, however, will make sense out of the apparent mayhem, allow you to hear structure and progression, understand why individual strands contribute to the whole. If it's a really good system, you might even be able to listen to an entire late-period John Coltrane album. Although that's pushing it!

More important even than this, however, is a jazz system's ability, when the occasion demands, to communicate a sense of fun. The bottom line is that it's got to be able to swing, lock onto the groove, get your bits moving. If it doesn't involve you on this level, it doesn't matter how deep the bass goes, you just won't get no satisfaction.

Finding a collection of components that can play quiet as well as loud, swing high and low with equanimity, provide a convincing sense of scale yet focus sharply, sound natural with acoustic instruments but appropriately 'zingy' and synthetic with those driven by electrons is no easy thing. And you thought putting a system together these days was as easy as falling off a log. The problem with jazz isn't so much the instruments the musicians use to play it but the music itself.

So what's the secret? It's almost too simple. Make friends with your nearest serious hi-fi shop and be prepared to put in what should be a good few enjoyable hours. This is strong medicine (especially if you don't like jazz). But get yourself a system that can handle jazz – all jazz – and it can handle anything.

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



Jazz pizzazz

Why smokin' jazz is the acid test for hi-fi

One of the nuggets of information most commonly volunteered by users of hi-fi magazine query pages is personal musical taste. The conceit is that the best system is the one rigidly tailored to a specific genre.

Taken to extremes, the logic of the tailored system argument is hard to resist. A pair of Quad Electrostatics, for instance, would be a perverse first choice if you wanted to play Motorhead flat out in a large room. Likewise, JBL's finest probably aren't the best speakers in the world with which to savour the delicate string tone of a solo violin.

Real life usage, of course, is nothing like this black and white. Common sense suggests that the best system is the one that's even-handed with all types of music and, given the dramatic improvement in general sonic standards over the past few years, I don't think that's too much to ask for. Then again, I don't think it's quite that simple. We still need some kind of musical benchmark, an acid test to sort the men from the boys. And jazz is just the job – so long as you first agree that it's more than three blokes belting the living daylight out of a bass, drums and piano.



Online evolution

It's early days for music downloads

The digital music revolution is opening a world where music can be acquired online more readily than ever before. Online stores have many good things to offer. Finding and hearing music – be it the latest hit or a rare catalogue recording – has never been easier. Sites such as iTunes offer a permanent easy purchase of a digital music file, while new subscription services from companies such as Napster and Yahoo! allow users to rent instant access to millions of songs.

It's easy to be enthusiastic about online music. Not all is rosy in the online music garden, however. Often consumers are getting the hard end of the deal, and the hi-fi enthusiast is especially poorly served by current offerings. Fierce competition between online rivals such as Apple, Sony and Microsoft and has led to a situation where different stores are selling music in completely different digital file formats. Buy a song from iTunes and it won't necessarily work on your PC-based music player. Buy an iPod, and no Windows-based files will work on it. Furthermore, the record companies' fear of piracy means that files bought from any online music store will come bundled with digital rights management (DRM), which places restrictions on how that music can be copied or transferred to other devices.

If you can successfully navigate your way around the file-types and DRM, there are still problems. For the hi-fi enthusiast, the biggest drawback is that the audio quality generally offered online is poor. The iPod has so far been the driver of the digital music market, and accordingly the music offered for sale online has been encoded with the iPod and other digital players in mind. Whatever the advertising may say about downloads being 'CD quality', the reality is usually a long way from the truth. The quality of online music isn't terrible – for portable devices it is generally perfectly adequate. Add a serious hi-fi to the mix, however, and music bought online struggles to compare with CD – and even that isn't quite what it used to be. With record companies such as SonyBMG and EMI increasingly insisting on the use of copy-protection on CDs, DRM is encroaching more and more on the world of 'physical' music. Expect to hear many more complaints in the next year about copy-protected CDs.

In time, online music stores will in offer a better deal for the audio enthusiast. Increasing penetration of new, faster broadband connections will make it quicker to transfer large files. Increasing hard-drive capacities mean that songs can be encoded into better quality files. Companies such as Apple, Napster and Yahoo! will also begin to use audio quality as a selling point. In these early days of the online music market, they're shouting about price. Hopefully, sooner or later, consumer demand for better quality audio will be met. In the meantime, the only way to be sure about securing the best quality audio is to hold firmly on to your existing record collection.

David Balfour started in the music business doing PR for artists including the Spice Girls and The Verve. He now edits the internet-based music trade bible www.recordoftheday.com

TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

WIRE WONDERING



So far, this column has steered clear of cables. It seems now, though, that it's time to tackle the subject, prompted not least by a discovery in *Techno's* own labs that sheds fascinating new light on wire.

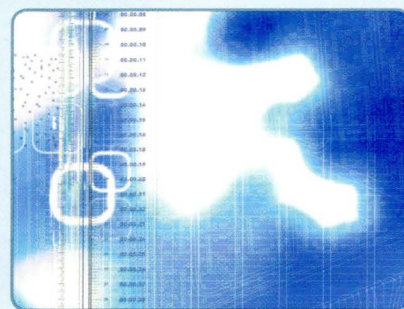
Most audiophiles believe that cables make a difference. However, most electronics engineers maintain that cable effects are restricted to small – *really* small – frequency response shifts, the kind of thing we probably can't even hear, and if we can, it doesn't matter. Cable vendors, not surprisingly, have come up with various 'explanations' for cable sound over the years, ranging from the highly fanciful to complex-sounding rehashes of bog-standard circuit theory. To be frank, none of this has got us anywhere.

With interconnects, we are largely in the dark and, even after a quarter of a century of 'cable sound', there is no convincing explanation of why the best interconnects sound any better than the stuff that comes free with most budget CD players etc. Quite sophisticated tests show no plausibly significant differences whatsoever within the audio band.

Speaker cable is different. High resistance can be shown to upset the frequency response of some speakers by a detectable amount. High inductance cable can also roll off treble very slightly; high capacitance is known to upset some amps but that's a rather different thing and basically either happens or doesn't. Still, we are a long way from understanding exactly why cables can affect the stereo imaging, for instance, of a system, and even further from proving the superiority (or otherwise) of solid-core wires, or cryogenic treatment, or special insulation materials.

But *Techno* can now reveal, in a world first, that speaker cables can cause distortion. Yes, nonlinear, harmonic and intermodulation distortion, the sort of flaw normally attributed to electronics and transducers. We're pretty sure this has never been postulated before, but we predicted it theoretically and measured it experimentally. The logic is surprisingly simple.

Conventional amplifiers are voltage-output devices. But apply a nice, clean voltage



“But *Techno* can now reveal, in a world first, that speaker cables can cause distortion.”

waveform to the terminals of a normal loudspeaker, and the current that flows will not be quite as clean. It will contain distortion harmonics: put 1kHz from a distortion-free amplifier into a speaker and the current flowing will be mainly 1kHz but with traces of 2, 3, 4 and 5kHz (at least). That's due to imperfections in the drive units, both magnetic and mechanical, and is well documented.

If the amplifier were a perfect voltage source with zero impedance at the output, the harmonic currents would just flow harmlessly. However, the amplifier has a finite output impedance which is increased by the speaker cable, so a small amount of harmonic voltage will appear on the speaker terminals, its magnitude depending on both amplifier and cable characteristics. If the cable has high resistance and/or inductance, that distortion voltage can be in the region of -70dB or 0.03%, and can in fact be higher than the distortion produced by the amplifier itself.

Does this matter? We must assume it does. The speaker itself produces far higher distortion, but if we can hear amplifier distortion at -80dB then why not cable distortion? And now we know how to minimise it too: lowest possible resistance and inductance. Goertz, Townshend, Electrofluidics and a very few others, take a bow! **HFC**

Richard Black



ESSENTIALS



SUPRA LORAD 1.5 MAINS CABLE £40 (1.0M)

⌚ We've looked at the original LoRad before, but this version has less copper – enough to handle 10A, which is adequate for all normal hi-fi products. It still has the LoRad screen, a semi-conductive plastic affair, which allows the cable to pass all the safety tests for mains cables (unlike most specialist cables). It may not have as pronounced an effect as the best of the really fancy wires, but it still confers advantages in terms of detail retrieval over freebie cables. A subtle effect, but it's always good to feel that one more veil has been lifted. The price is right, too.

☎ 01622 664070 🌐 www.supracables.co.uk

MOBILE FIDELITY ULTRADISC CD-R DISC £15 (FIVE-DISC PACK)

⌚ Compared with the cheapest data discs, these are about 15 times as expensive (four times more expensive than audio discs), but the price is still only about as much as a decent metal cassette ten years ago. MoFi's claims of higher data integrity and longer life look tempting, and there's quite a lot of research behind those claims. Cheap CD-R discs are not always very reliable, and we'd highly recommend regular use of these for anything that actually matters to you. The discs are compatible with data and audio recorders and, even if there were no audible differences, we did get one of the lowest readings we've seen on an error checker.

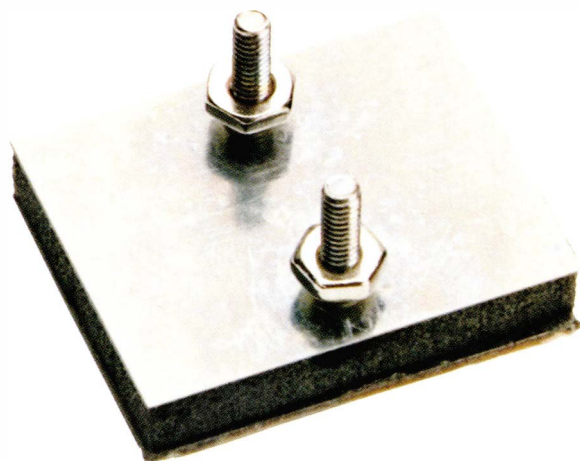
☎ 0870 240 7228 🌐 www.choicebits.co.uk



THE CARTRIDGE MAN ISOLATOR CARTRIDGE ISOLATOR £85

⌚ The idea of decoupling is to provide a suspension between cartridge and arm that is stiff enough to align the cartridge at warp frequencies but floppy enough to keep arm resonances at bay. This is a practical solution that relies on stud-and-nut fixing to the headshell and strong (but re-usable) sticky-backed material to secure the cartridge, with soft foam between. It requires substantial arm realignment after fitting – especially raising the VTA – but it's well worth the bother. Sounds open up, revealing more detail, bigger and more precise images and more delineated tonality of individual instruments. Surface noise on worn discs also drops appreciably. Cast aside preconceptions and try it.

☎ 01443 231458 🌐 www.hiaudio.co.uk



CUSTOM DESIGN VANTIGE EQUIPMENT RACK £449

⌚ Yet another outing for Custom Design's 'Acoustic Aluminium', which is used for the shelves on this smart platform. For those of a more traditional bent, glass is available as an option for around £100 less. In fact, the latest Acoustic Aluminium differs slightly from earlier outings in that the two metal sheets are of differing thicknesses, which apparently gives even better damping. And it works – they are astonishingly 'dead' when struck. Plain aluminium is not everyone's taste, but paint finishes will also be available. The side frames are of painted steel and are themselves quite resonant, which probably accounts for the slight brightness that we felt this rack added to our system. But it's not an unpleasant effect and overall we were very taken with this product. Assembly is simple and one or two shelves can be adjustable, making for considerable flexibility. An eminently sensible choice.

☎ 0191 262 4646 🌐 www.customdesign.co.uk





CUSTOM DESIGN SUPPORT CONES SUPPORT CONES £21 (ALUMINIUM) £30 (BRASS)

⊕ You can pay lots more for very similar products, and we must say straight away that these are the best-finished cones we've ever seen. In trios of either metal, they are immaculately turned and polished. They're practical, too, of sensible size and with an M5 thread in the flat face so that they can be screwed permanently to the bottom panel of your equipment if you wish. The sharp end is not so sharp as to gouge most surfaces, and ultimately that may limit their vibration-decoupling properties at high frequencies, but on the whole they do a good job both aesthetically and musically, even if we couldn't tell them apart sonically!

☎ 0191 262 4646 # www.customdesign.co.uk

ALLSOP RADIAL CD CLEANER £11

⊕ There are lots of ways of cleaning CDs effectively. This way is great because it's simple, highly effective and – call us sad – fun. Put a disc on the blue turntable (playing side up), apply a couple of drops of fluid, close the flap and spin the handle a few times. A soft pad wipes fluid and dirt off the disc, which comes out all nice and shiny. Replacement pads and fluid are available. It's especially recommended for those with small kids, who may just be persuaded to clean their own discs with it – best to give them water with a drop of a detergent like Fairy Liquid, rather than the alcohol-based 'Ultreen' solvent!

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



ETYMOTIC RESEARCH 6I ISOLATOR EARPHONES £100

⊕ Etymotic is a serious provider of in-ear transducers for musicians as well as medical and scientific research, and as such has put a lot of work into developing products suitable for both portable and home audio. These little fellers must be suitably inserted in the ear – incorrect insertion results in very poor performance – but they then produce truly holographic images that in many ways surpass both loudspeakers and conventional headphones. This version also attenuates outside noise to an impressive degree – perfect for listening on commuter trains. The whole business of sticking something right into your ear is something many folks just can't abide. But if you can, you really must try these.

☎ 0845 055 0005 # www.etymotic.com

SENNHEISER RS-130 CORDLESS HEADPHONES £100

⊕ Cordless cans are great fun, but there's inevitably a quality hit with RF types like these, which can work through walls. As usual, these suffer from a little hiss, but less than we've heard from competing models, and reception holds up pretty well – we got decent sound from three to four rooms away and out into the street. Ease of use scores highly, with the transmitter doubling as a stand and charger. Ignore the 'surround' function and be aware that the 'self-learning automatic level control' is basically a compressor, albeit one with a very slow release that's not intrusive in most music and speech. Automatic tuning clinches the deal; for casual use, these offer clear, natural and convenient sound.

☎ 0800 652 5002 # www.sennheiser.co.uk



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Björk's whale song

Björk's latest album finds her embracing traditional Japanese themes and experimental soundscapes. She also changes into a whale, as our exclusive interview reveals...

Composer, songwriter and incomparable singer Björk has never been one to stand still. Following her punk and indie origins in Iceland, her six albums under her own name (not counting remix and live albums, as well as her album of cover versions recorded when she was a schoolgirl) have seen her develop from club chanteuse through pop diva, soundtrack maverick and introspective artist.

Her latest album is another step both forwards and sideways. It's the soundtrack to a film by her boyfriend Matthew Barney, feted in the art world for his sculpture and art-themed films (DVD copies and even selected photographs from them sell for hundreds of thousands of pounds each). *Drawing Restraint 9* has virtually no dialogue, and only a very vague plot outline. The film begins with a letter of gratitude to General MacArthur shortly after World War II, when the US lifted the moratorium on whaling, and then two occidental 'guests' (played by Björk and Barney) board a Japanese whaling vessel and eventually mutate into whales. All the while, the ship fills with gallons of Vaseline...

Björk felt no pressure to deliver a chart-friendly album and was glad to try something different, experimenting with traditional Japanese music and dense sound textures. "I promised myself that I wouldn't deal with Japanese music as exotic or like a cliché or in an artificial way, I would deal with it as an equal and approach it on a more down to earth kind of level.

"I started to listen a little bit to Japanese music, and then I thought, this is not going to work. If I had three years to make this music I could spend six months of just listening and let it sink in and then write later. But if I'm listening to Japanese music and then just going into the next room and writing a song, I think it's too much eating your own tail – it would just be like imitating or copying and it's a thin line between the two.

"I found out about Mayumi Miyata, the sho player (a kind of multi-reeded Japanese flute), and she was incredible. But, I wrote pieces for her instrument that were not Japanese at all, not what that particular instrument plays usually. Usually it does really ambient, kind of liquid, atmospheric stuff. But I asked her to be quite percussive and asked her to record layers, so in a way it's kind of like a sho quintet."

As a film, albeit one that is only likely to be shown in art venues, it seems obvious that the soundtrack should appear in surround sound and Björk is excited at the prospect.

"This album is in stereo, but we worked everything with five speakers in the studio. It's a lot of fun, especially when you put the sound in circles, for example – you just write really differently than when you're writing for stereo. Later we're going to put it out in 5.1 multichannel sound, maybe in a box set so Matthew can put in some pieces of art that he's made, and I can do something more elaborate. But we just don't have time to do it right now." **HFC**

Dave Oliver

Drawing Restraint 9 is reviewed on p26

"The album is in stereo, but we worked everything with five speakers in the studio."



Out there: Björk's most unusual albums

1. *Selmasongs* (2000)

Björk's soundtrack for Lars Trier's twisted take on the musical, *Dancer In The Dark*, required music that evolved from its surroundings.



2. *Medulla* (2004)

Virtually all the instruments are the human voice (from a range of guests and Björk's own imposing talents), overdubbed to often stunning rhythmic and melodic effect.



3. *Drawing Restraint 9* (2005)

Björk's second film soundtrack combines ambient noise, traditional Japanese music and strange vocal guests to create a work that's haunting, unsettling and unique.





A FABULOUS MICROMEGA HI-FI SYSTEM WORTH £1,487!

Last month, *Hi-Fi Choice* was delighted to announce the return of Micromega. To celebrate its UK revival, one lucky reader will have the chance to win a complete Micromega Minium separates system, comprising CD player, A60 integrated amplifier and FM Tuner. The prize also includes two sets of Black Rhodium Symphony interconnects and three 1.5m Isotek Premium mains cables, to help you make the most of this cracking stereo system.

The Minium range of products is just part of the extensive range of components now hitting the UK from Micromega, thanks to the folks at Shadow Distribution. The French electronics specialist has been producing sources and amplifiers since 1987 and was famed in the 1990s for its particularly fine CD players, but latterly the brand had all but disappeared from these shores. Now it's back, with a range that encompasses CD, DVD, amps, processors and tuners, right up to the mighty Reference range. Minium is Micromega's take on neat, affordable, high-quality hi-fi – and the entire system could be yours if you answer the question below. The lucky winner will be drawn at random.



QUESTION:

What has Micromega been producing since 1987?

- A:** Sources and amplifiers
- B:** Sauces and bacon fryers
- C:** Saucers and bone china

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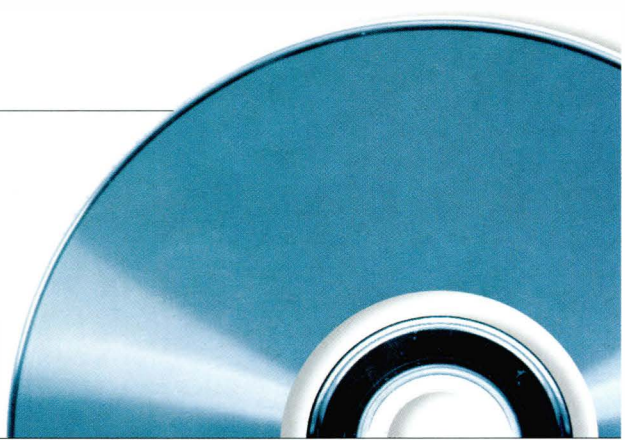
ray@rowlesmusic.co.uk www.vividspeakers.com

ChoiceCuts



This month's varied musical morsels

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



AUDIOPHILE VINYL

JAZZ ARTISTS GUILD (INC. MINGUS, ROACH, DOLPHY)

Newport Rebels

Candid/Pure Pleasure 180g vinyl

Music: Hard to believe now, but back in 1960, musicians were getting fed up with the way the Newport Jazz Festival was becoming commercialised. As a result, a breakaway group consisting of many of the biggest names of the time – such as Charles Mingus, Eric Dolphy, Max

Roach and Roy Eldridge – started their own festival at Cliff Walk Manor. This is a studio session involving those musicians playing in the same free spirit. This is one of the most upbeat and enjoyable jazz records I've encountered, with a positive, highly charged atmosphere and some superb performances. ★★★★★

Sound: Pure Pleasure has dug up the original analogue tapes and had Graeme Durham cut masters at The Exchange. This is a tonal delight, recorded in the dual-mono style, with occasional stereo instruments, but however they're recorded the tone is superb. ★★★★★ JK

SONNY BOY WILLIAMSON

The Real Folk Blues

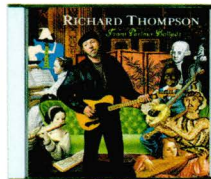
Chess/Speakers Corner 180g vinyl

Music: Aleck 'Rice' Miller – best known as Sonny Boy Williamson – was one of the most influential blues harp players ever. He recorded with everyone from Robert Johnson, Elmore James, Willie Dixon and Robert Lockwood Jr to Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page and Robbie Robertson. This compilation (originally released in 1965, the year Williamson died) includes a seminal version of Willie Dixon's *Bring It On Home* – as immortalised by Led Zeppelin – and *One Way Out*, which the Allman Brothers used to great effect. Williamson was a great singer and songwriter... and an even better harmonica player. This collection proves as much with ease. ★★★★★

Sound: As ever with Speakers Corner, the quality of transfer is first class. The vintage of these mono recordings limits their bandwidth and the bass is a little soft but this is a great sounding album nonetheless. ★★★★★ JK

These audiophile-quality LPs are available from: Vivante ☎ 01293 822186 www.vivante.co.uk Speakers Corner ☎ www.speakerscorner.de

COMPACT DISC & VINYL



RICHARD THOMPSON

Front Parlour Ballads

Cooking Vinyl

Music: With his folk roots, it comes as a surprise to discover Richard Thompson never made an acoustic album of original songs until now. Recorded in his home studio, *Front Parlour Ballads* is a collection of intimately performed songs that displays everything that's best in his writing – often dark, but witty, timeless, nostalgic and, above all, utterly English, full of evocative references to things like novelty dancers from Penge. The acoustic setting allows his voice to reverberate with striking passion and the result is probably the most concise – and potent – distillation of his art to date. ★★★★★

Sound: Uncluttered but never sparse, with restrained percussion and a splash of electric guitar, to add texture and nuance to the acoustic spine of the songs. ★★★★★ NW



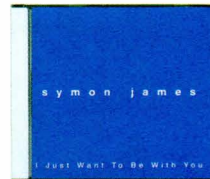
MINOTAUR SHOCK

Maritime

4AD

Music: The second album by Minotaur Shock – aka mild-mannered Bristolian knob-twiddler Dave Edwards – is a thing of rare beauty and poise. It dances a merry hornpipe around themes of seafaring, soft rock and ambient electronica, leading into accordion sea shanties and chilled funky drum breaks with washes of synthesiser. Imagine a horde of 18th Century pirates bumping into Hall and Oates. It all adds up to a feast of beautiful melodies and moments of quiet revelation – much more than techno boffins on their second album have any right to expect. ★★★★★

Sound: The recording is essentially low-fi, but since it's virtually all made by electronic instruments, the lack of dynamic range really isn't too offputting. ★★★ DO



SYMON JAMES

I Just Want To Be With You

Play List

Music: James is an up-and-coming jazzy funky singer-songwriter – on a laid-back tip, like Boz Scaggs meets Robert Palmer serenading someone on some moonlit Pacific beach. This set is thus beautifully effortless, just the right dreamy antidote for our blistering climate change summers, with songs, acoustic guitars and keyboards that wash in, over and around one's consciousness. The words aren't bad either, although Symon hasn't yet reached his full potential – as anyone who's seen him live in one of London's bluesy-folky basements can testify – but this is a pretty good start. It's the time, and the season, to get mellow. ★★★

Sound: Fairly clean, with some nice guitar and vocal recording. Only a serious headphone listen reveals the disc's limited budget. ★★★ PS



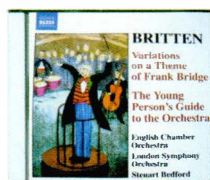
BJÖRK

Drawing Restraint 9

One Little Indian

Music: There's always been a cinematic quality to Björk's music and *Drawing Restraint 9* is her second film soundtrack, following 2000's *Selmasongs*, which she wrote and recorded for Lars Von Trier's *Dancer In The Dark*. It's Björk at her most experimental and impressionistic, taking motifs from the traditional music of Japan (where the film is set) and mixing them with her own elemental voice and everything from harpsichords to cauldrons of cutting-edge electronic noise. Perhaps it will all make more sense when we see the film, but although the soundtrack is full of some extraordinary and often very beautiful sounds, it's far from an easy listen. ★★★

Sound: Challenging it may be, but there's no question that the dense harmonics, close-miked whispers and wild, distorted howls are all recorded with a clarity that is breathtakingly state-of-the-art. ★★★★★ NW



BENJAMIN BRITTEN

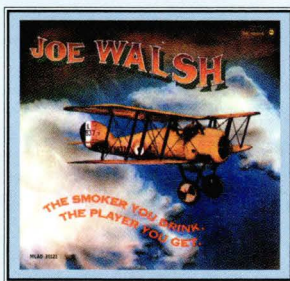
Occasional Overture, Variations on a theme of Frank Bridge Op.10 etc.

Steuart Bedford (cond), ECO, LSO

Naxos 8.557200

Music: This recording of some of the more popular Benjamin Britten works includes *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra* without narrator, but the work is divided so that the track guide shows which instrument is playing. Bedford has a strong track record with Britten, but the performances sound erratic and poorly structured. ★★★

Sound: *The Guide and Occasional Overture*, recorded in the Barbican (which is known to be a difficult recording venue) tend to glare and sound rather uneven. But the *Variations and Prelude* (recorded in All Saints Church, East Finchley) are altogether more comfortable. A mixed bag, all-in-all. ★★★ AG



THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "Among the finest albums of the genre."

JOE WALSH *The Smoker You Drink, The Player You Get* ABC Records

Music: Those of you who know Joe Walsh from The Eagles might be surprised to discover that he's been recording since the late 1960s. This 1973 album, his first solo venture, features the production talents of Bill Szymczyk and members of Walsh's previous band Barnstorm – Joe Vitale (drums, synthesiser and flute) and Kenny Passarelli (bass) with Rocke Grace joining on keyboards. The album contains nine tracks that vary from the rabble rousing

Rocky Mountain Way to the reflective *Dreams*. Walsh is a superb guitar player with a range that is rare in rock music; the quality of songs and production rank this among the finest albums of the genre. ★★★★★
Sound: Szymczyk and his army of engineers put together as good a sounding album as the technology of the time would allow. It's not as lush as *Hotel California*, but outguns it in many other respects. ★★★★★ JK



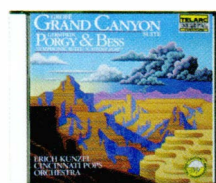
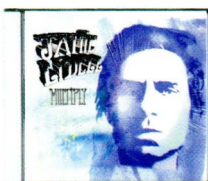
JAMIE LIDELL

Multiply

Warp

Music: Brighton's own Jamie Lidell made his name producing kooky and exploratory electronica with *Super_Collider*, but his latest solo album takes a sharp left turn into melodic pop soul, more reminiscent of Prince than Squarepusher. There are Motown samples mashed with a real band, handclaps, whooping choruses and grinding bass aplenty, in what sounds like a sincere attempt to reinvent the soul canon for the new millennium. Not as wired or as weird as his already legendary live shows (which often see him leaping manically around the stage dressed in suits made of magnetic tape) but it's most definitely destined to be a Brit soul classic, the Jamiroquai it's okay to like. ★★★★★

Sound: Despite the presence of 'real' instruments, there's still no shortage of digital glitchery. The whole album does have a bit of a shut-in quality, which might help it sound big on Radio 1, but doesn't help with hi-fi. ★★★ DO



FERDE GROFÉ, IRA GERSHWIN

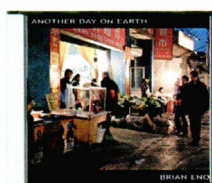
Grand Canyon suite, Porgy & Bess, Catfish Row

Erich Kunzel (cond), Cincinnati Pops Orchestra

Telarc CD80086

Music: Ira Gershwin's (brother of George) lean orchestral adaptation of the musical play *Porgy & Bess*, is combined with Grofé's *Grand Canyon Suite*, a recording five years in the making. The gimmick here is that the Cloudburst on the final track uses a real thunderstorm. This enhances a spectacular account of these familiar pieces of Americana. ★★★★★

Sound: Nicely ideomatic performances are matched to an excellent example of Telarc's sound quality. It's ultra-clean and clear, with plenty of presence and detail. It doesn't sound cluttered, and eschews obvious signs of engineering. In short, it's top class. ★★★★★ AG



BRIAN ENO

Another Day on Earth

Hannibal

Music: Harking back to 1975's *Another Green World*, Brian Eno's new album is his first pop/vocal excursion since 1990's *Wrong Way Up* with John Cale. This is luminous and liquid in character with subtle percussion, spritely keyboards and various treated guitars and synths. What's really interesting here is Eno's treatment of his own voice, changing octaves up and down to give himself a new identity. Eno has said that "the voice is the last bastion of old recording", but here he has gone beyond that bastion and made a genuine innovation in vocal music. Beguiling. ★★★★★

Sound: From the percussion of the opener *Thi* to the 'space signal guitar' of *Passing Over*, the sound of this album is ravishing. ★★★★★ MP

DVD-AUDIO & SACD

CAN

Future Days

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Mute/Spoon

Music: Buoyed by the success of their first tranche of SACD remasters, Germany's first ambient dubsters have turned their attention to more albums from the vaults.

Future Days was recorded in mid-1972 and has a distinctly summery feel, with more openness and space than average. Can's influence over bands as diverse as Ozric Tentacles and even The Orb is thanks to the remarkable rhythmic skills of drummer Jaki Leibzeit and bass meister Holger Czukay. Can are a bit like laidback Beefheart. The rhythms shift and turn and the vocals pop up when least expected, but on here there is drive and energy that stops the sound drifting into ambient gubbins. ★★★★★

Sound: This remastering was overseen by band members and retains much of the original sound. The Super Audio CD factor brings in more of the richness and depth of the analogue masters and has sensibly been kept to the standard two-track stereo presentation. ★★★★★ JK



MAHLER

Symphony No.6

Claudio Abbado (cond), Berlin Philharmonic

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

DGG 00289 477 5684

Music: It's been a pretty good month for SACD, and here's a further reminder that the format offers classical repertoire in depth that rival hi-res formats don't have a chance of matching. This is the third great Mahler 6 on the format (the others are from Benjamin Zander and Michael Tilson Thomas) and the second live recording, though you might never know it apart from the applause, and the occasional passage where a studio recording might have been more assiduously edited. Abbado's emotional intensity and clear empathy with this most personal of Mahler's symphonic works is matched by the disciplined passion of the Berlin Philharmonic. ★★★★★

Sound: Made in Berlin, this is a first rate recording which is subtle and elegant in the *Andante*, but which never gets in the way in the more agitated sections in the outer movements. It is simply a recording that doesn't cramp the action, and the SACD version is notably more layered and three-dimensional. ★★★★★ AG



RORY GALLAGHER

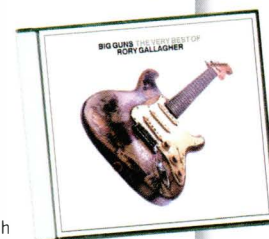
Big Guns

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

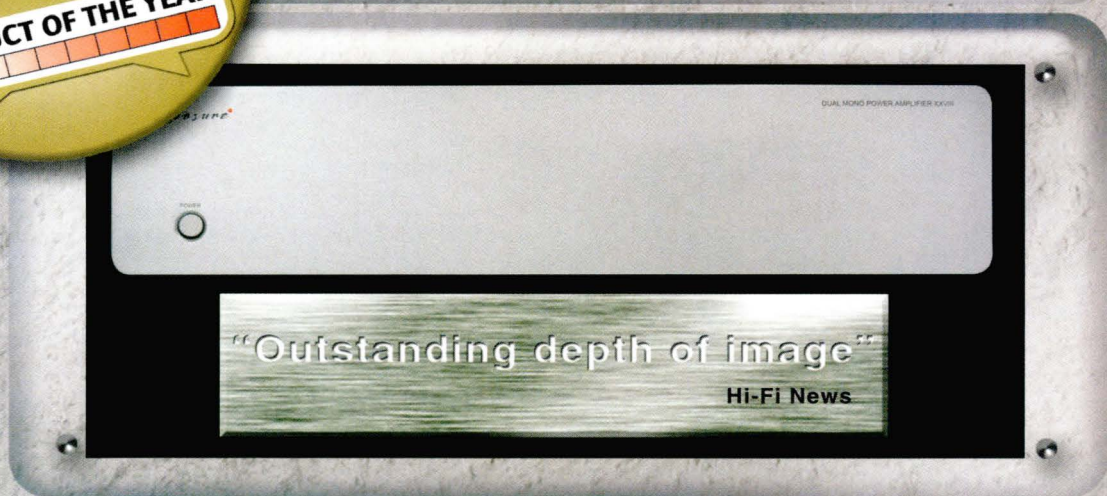
Sony BMG

Music: Rory Gallagher's legend may not have ascended to the heights of a Hendrix or a Page but, as this compilation shows, his was a talent that put him among the greats, not just in the small pantheon of Irish stars, but of the world. A back to basics man, he eschewed technical flashiness in favour of feel and emotion, though his nimble fingers could certainly tease innumerable variations out of a lick, and sprinkle some sparkling magic on what might otherwise have been fairly basic pub rock blues. This two-CD set packs in songs from throughout his short career, from the barnstorming blues rock of his original seventies band Taste, through to tracks from his posthumous 2003 acoustic album. ★★★★★

Sound: The stereo SACD mix opens up the often rather dense and murky blues rock riffing. The remastering to multichannel SACD goes further in highlighting Gallagher's innate showmanship, though it could be argued that the full effect of the music is best heard in stereo. ★★★★★ DO



Winners Breed Winners



The New Classics: Upholding an award-winning tradition

Attention to detail wins hands down. Purpose-built by hand, the new Classics from Exposure have been garnering rave reviews from hi-fi magazines far and wide; with our new Pre- and Power Amplifiers receiving the coveted Product of the Year 2003-2004 accolade by Hi-Fi Choice magazine. Adding yet again to the growing list of award-winning equipment already in Exposure's stable. And reaffirming our reputation as engineers of some of the world's finest hi-fi.

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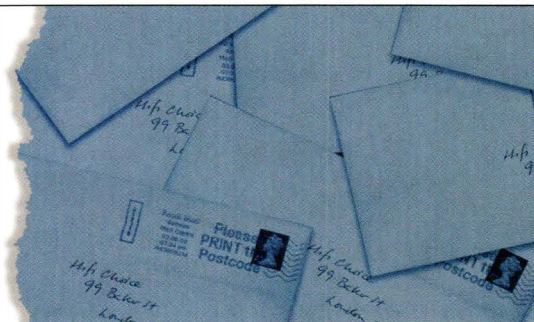
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The pick of this month's best letters

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

SEE HEAR

Sales of DVDs have recently outstripped those of CD in HMV stores. This is the first time that a video format has outsold a music format. It's also suggested that companies make as much – if not more – from DVD sales than the box office.

What's not clear, however, is how many music DVDs are being sold. The medium increasingly offers better entertainment value than CD even if audio is Dolby and DTS encoded. What next for the humble silver disc after this kicking – will HMV give shelf space priority to videos?

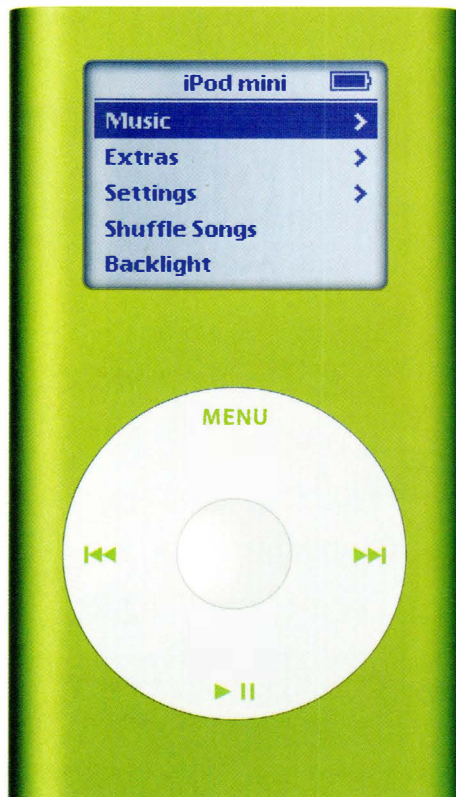
Stuart Riggs via email

HFC HMV sounds a gloomy place for CD, but what news from the other big chains and e-tailers? Much of DVD's success is due to the rapid adoption of home cinema, which our industry sources tell us has now hit a plateau.



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: Apple's iPod Mini portable player

HARD DISC HERETIC

I see that hard disc portables continue to be rammed down audiophile's throats – I've even seen a large group test in a big hi-fi and home cinema magazine rival to *Hi-Fi Choice*. Call me a Luddite, but I still don't relish uploading over 1,000 of my CDs to my PC, just so I can then shift them over to a portable. Is it really so wonderful to have your entire record collection in your pocket? Portable music devices have been around for over 20 years and have largely been the preserve of the young. I can't see anything changing with hard disc, especially considering the prerequisite for computer fluency. It's not just like inserting a CD and pressing play is it?

Paul Cunningham via email

HFC Hard disc portables are, for some people, an enticing prospect. This is despite the large amount of admin involved in playing your music. Interfaces (such as Apple's iTunes) are becoming more intuitive, however, making transferring songs across to the device much easier and, of course, you can download music direct from the web.

Whether you feel the convenience of having 1,000s

“Call me a Luddite, but I don't relish uploading over 1,000 of my CDs to my PC, just to shift them to a portable.”

of songs on one device justifies the costs and kerfuffle is personal choice. At HFC, we reckon they're great for music on the go, but our reviews will be sticking to proper hi-fi for the home. That's what you want, and that's what we're good at.

GUTTED AND GUTTED

Having recently redecorated and installed new furniture, I set up my hi-fi once more. But, imagine my dismay when the sound changed for the worse – bass booms, treble sounds bright and the overall experience is a big disappointment. I removed a few things, swapped fabric sofas for leather and made the room more minimalist. Can this alone be the cause of the drop in quality, and, if so, what can be done?

Pmac HFC online forum

HFC It's a sad fact that today's penchant for uncluttered environments does little for room acoustics. You've moved in the wrong direction, friend, and the only remedy is to 'busy up' your room with rugs and bookshelves. You need to break up bare walls with irregular-shaped objects to kill the boom and try to tame that treble with heavy fabrics and less reflective surfaces. Also, go to www.audiophysic.de and check the info pages, a useful source of practical room-tuning solutions.

VALUE ROOM ACOUSTICS

I've been looking at DIY bass traps to improve acoustics in my room and feel I can offer some good advice. I think most bass traps use Rockwool, the insulating material. You can buy it in a cylindrical bundle or sheets. I bought two of the latter measuring 50x100x20 (WxHxD) and bought some nice material to cover them. I got them home and placed them directly behind the speakers and what a difference it made. Treble was tamed, midrange had more body and bass boom was cut. Each sheet cost me about £4 and you just place them on the wall behind your speakers. As a cheap tweak, the results are surprisingly good.

Adam HFC online forum



Above: Vincent's CD-S1.1 CD player and SV-121 amplifier, as reviewed in HFC 262

PIONEER UNIVERSAL FIX

With regards to a letter in HFC 269 entitled *Play it again Sam* and in response to Professor Alan Gillies, I would not replace the Pioneer DV-565A because some discs won't play – and I have some suggestions/questions for him. Are these the first DVD-Audio discs he has tried? If so, the answer might be as simple as switching the amplifier to 'external decoder', assuming he has connected five (or six with a sub) interconnects to the analogue inputs on the amp. I found the same thing with my Pioneer DV-575A and Yamaha DSP 5, but had only forgotten to change to 'external decoding'. Hope this may be of some help.

George Mackenzie via email

HFC Thanks for the tip, George. If you're right, it'll save Professor Gillies the rouble of arranging the firmware fix that Pioneer recommended in last month's *Choice Mail*.

EAR TRICK

I learnt an interesting fact today, while supervising some first year undergraduates doing a Communications Skills course. The human brain is an amazing thing and can use a variety of different methods to distinguish where sounds originate from using the signal from both ears. However, I also learnt that if the sound is above 4kHz and emitted from behind, you can't pin-point it. Same if it is above 7kHz and above you. However, your brain can tell your ears where the sound is if you know where it is originating from (for example, your speakers) so you can overrule the signal from your ears. This explains why my hi-fi sounds worse while I am typing with my back to the speakers – I thought it was just my room!

Trizza HFC online forum

HFC Sound advice, Trizza. As long as your hi-fi isn't unspeakably ugly, there's really no excuse for not looking at it now.

“Both Eastern Electric and Vincent look to have quality products and I'm interested in hearing CD with tubes.”

VALVE-VALVE VOOM

I was looking for information on two less well-known brands – Eastern Electric and Vincent and came across their respective websites. Both look to have high-quality products, and I'm interested in hearing the CD players they have that use tubes. Can you tell me any more about them?

Anton via email

HFC Both brands are now distributed in the UK, you'll be pleased to know, Anton.

We reviewed the valve-based Vincent CD-S1.1 CD player back in the January issue (*HFC 262*) and enjoyed its smooth output and stylish looks, although it wasn't the last word in high fidelity. The brand is designed in the West but made in the East and is available through Sounds of Music on 01892 547003. Eastern Electric is a new brand to these shores and is offered in the UK by Shadow Distribution (01592 744779). Check out our news story in this issue's *AudioFile* section on p11.

IN-WALL WONDERS

A friend of mine recently moved into a new house. He sold me his old speakers, as he now has ones built into the walls and ceilings. But now my wife is wondering why we don't have in-wall speakers, too. This is the start of the slippery slope, I fear.

Rob Wilton via email

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@ ONLINE FORUM

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After finding out that Queen are releasing material in Japan in the HDCD format, I was wondering how many manufacturers have HDCD compatible machines? Is it worth having those four bits of extra data..?

Anton

There has long been a feeling that HDCD compatible players get the best from normal 16-Bit/44.1kHz Red Book CD as well as HDCD discs – Classé has long championed this, for example. So, even before you consider HDCD discs, the belief is that the Pacific Microsonics (now owned by Microsoft) HDCD filter is a good thing for normal CD.

I have a large collection of HDCDs and can say it's as good as Red Book gets on the whole.

CJ Ross

I'm very happy and have just been on my knees thanking God for reuniting Pink Floyd at the G8 concert. It was a little shaky at the beginning, but then they ended on *Comfortably Numb*, which was sharp and brilliant.

Emperor

I've just cleaned my CD player's lens and the sound has opened up a treat. I used a cotton bud dipped in Isopropyl alcohol. I tried a CD lens cleaner previously, but it didn't seem to work. It's worth a try, the results may surprise you (remember to unplug it from the mains first).

Umberto Vanni



VENTO

Perfect form and sound.

The form is artistic. Beautifully crafted like the body of a musical instrument. The sound is exquisite, and the combination of perfect craftsmanship and state-of-the-art technology is unique. This new Canton loudspeaker series represents pure musical enjoyment and timeless design. Its name is Vento.

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AUDIO RESEARCH CD3 MKII CD PLAYER | JADIS DLP-2 PREAMPLIFIER
JADIS DA-5 POWER AMPLIFIER | MARTINLOGAN CLARITY LOUDSPEAKERS | £11,686

Sonic kings

Just how good is this system from hi-fi's royalty? It's time to consider selling pets and members of your family

If we've learned anything from *Beautiful Systems*, it's that aesthetic harmony, while desirable, should never be allowed to deflect the course of true sonic beauty. And when the potential for treating your lug 'oles to the time of their lives is as massive as this, perhaps it's best just to close your eyes. We've been raising the bar in these pages in recent months, but this combo cleared it with contemptuous ease. "There's something magical about it," said Ricardo at Absolute Sounds, who supplied the system. Indeed there is.

We give you the Three Kings of the high-end: Audio Research (CD3 MKII CD player/transport), Jadis (DLP-2 preamp, DA-5 power amp) and MartinLogan (Clarity hybrid electrostatic speakers). This is one ambitious system, and hugely assured with it – one of the few things the manufacturers' countries of origin (America and France) have in common. Then again, it has a lot to be assured about. In France, tube amp specialist Jadis has attained mythic status through its almost monastic dedication to the pursuit of 'live' sound and gently acknowledges its achievement with a simple but supremely confident slogan: "the best sounding amplifiers". Reviews of Jadis kit are rare and considered to be largely redundant. Reputations simply don't come in a higher calibre. We count ourselves honoured.

No less revered, Audio Research has its own self-effacing strap line ("there is only one reference") and is virtually a synonym for American High End. This is the second outing for its remarkable £5,000 CD3 MKII and that, in itself, stokes up the feel-good factor. Few CD players are more reassuring. Anyone who thinks that CD's Red Book spec is past it hasn't heard this superfortress-build, state-of-the-art disc-spinner.

Meanwhile, the maker of some of the most deeply covetable speakers on the planet, MartinLogan, deserves every serious audiophile's heartfelt thanks for promoting the cause of the electrostatic hybrid – "real world" exotic, which makes owning a panel speaker that does bass practical and affordable – and selling more of them than anyone else. Its entry level Clarity at £2,500 is, quite simply, a phenomenal bargain.

BRUTALLY STARK

But let's start at the front with the CD3. As we've already made clear, it's no beauty contest winner. But, that uniquely stark, almost brutal functionality has its own appeal. It looks as if it means business and it does. Eschewing any kind of multiformat compatibility, the CD3 has a delightfully blinkered approach to the world of digital replay: to reproduce CDs with "maximum fidelity and full musical expression". So, there's no extra circuitry for SACD or DVD-Audio, nor any form of upsampling. AR doesn't dig it. Instead, it believes in spending money where it makes the most difference. That's why the laser mechanism is Philips' best (the Pro 2) mounted on a massive machined base for maximum rigidity and minimum jitter.

The Crystal Semiconductor 24/192 DAC was picked for its outstanding resolution and musicality when teamed with AR's fully differential, Class A J-FET analogue output stage. Enormous regulated power supplies are also key to the design; likewise the use of top flight capacitors. As well as being hand-picked, many of the components in the CD3 are tweaked to extract the best performance.

The row of six front panel buttons include a standby mode while, round the back, digital outputs comprise a

"It's no beauty contest winner. But that uniquely stark, brutal functionality has its own appeal. It looks like it means business, and it does."



Audio Research CD3 MKII CD player
£5,190

It doesn't do SACD, doesn't do DVD-A and doesn't try to seduce you with a fancy fascia. What it does do is make your CDs sound better than you ever believed possible.



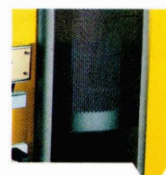
Jadis DLP-2 preamplifier
£1,799

Possibly the shiniest preamp ever made, and certainly one of the best at the price. Basic functions, no remote but, oh, the sound. Jadis ownership for under £2k. Cool.



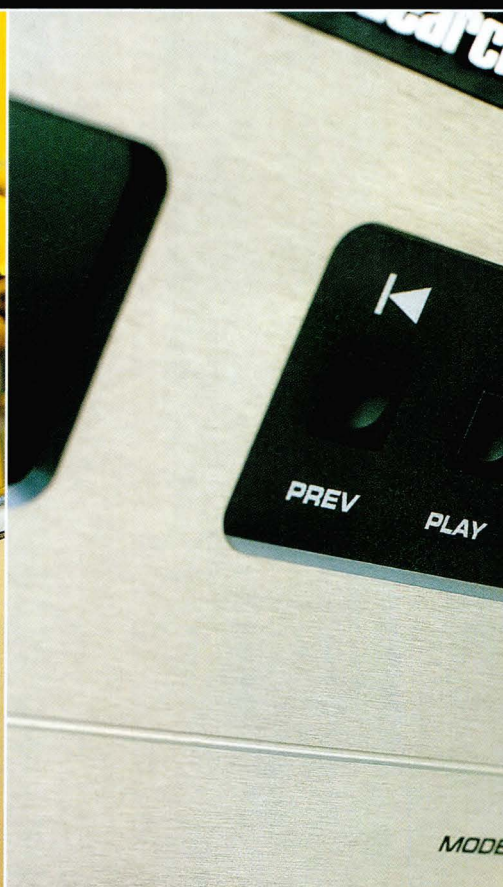
Jadis DA-5 power amplifier
£2,199

Don't let the swirly script fool you, this is no powder puff of a power amp. A quad of 6550s delivers very healthy real world speaker control but with fabulous finesse.



MartinLogan Clarity speaker
£2,498 per pair

The answer to many an audiophile's dreams – a compact yet elegant electrostatic with real bass that doesn't cost an arm and a leg. Brilliant!



balanced AES/EBU socket and BNC S/PDIF coaxial. Analogue caters for both single-ended and balanced connections.

We're going for single-ended into the almost ridiculously shiny Jadis DLP-2 preamp, and single-ended from there to the no less dazzling DA-5 power amp; connections made, as ever, with *Beautiful Systems'* resident reference Nordost Valkyrja interconnects. Like the Valkyrja speaker cable and Vishnu mains power cord we also use, these cables are colossally expensive but their phenomenal transparency and resolution allow each component to hit its maximum potential. And in the case of the Jadis amps, this is essential.

COST NO OBJECT

Jadis was started in 1983 by André Calmettes, who was driven by a dream to produce the best valve amp in the world, regardless of cost. He made the prototypes, the audiophile world sat up and listened. In awe. Already 'Jadis' and 'world's best' were being mentioned in the same sentence. Calmettes set up a factory in Villedubert and continued to pursue his goal of absolute sonic authenticity, the thing that usually differentiates live music from hi-fi. Out of the research, he decided to produce the valve amp's most important feature – its output transformer – in house, and to a much higher spec than usual. Huge,

indestructible and guaranteed for a lifetime, this output transformer, which is moulded in a special resin, has become the Jadis signature feature and is claimed to be unconditionally stable into any speaker load.

Despite being the most affordable power amp Jadis makes, the DA-5 has two of them plus a power supply transformer, and all three contribute handsomely to the DA-5's sinew-stressing 22 kilo weight. The tube complement comprises four 6550 output valves (or KT90s if you want to alter the midrange presentation and imaging) delivering a healthy 40 watts a side, while driver duties are handled by pairs of ECC82 and ECC83 (or their 12AU7 and 12AX7A equivalents). The DA-5 supplied by Absolute Sounds is running 6550s and 12AU7/12AX7As.

Although claimed to be a preamp worthy of partnering Jadis' mighty Monotriode 300B mono block power amps, the DLP-2 enjoys the same 'more affordable' design approach as the DA-5. As such, the Jadis tradition of hand wiring is reserved for the source switching controls while a printed circuit board receives the power supply and the filtering. The power supply uses a single transformer with two outputs.

Signal processing is handled by two double triode tubes (ECC82 and ECC83 or equivalents) arranged in a cathode

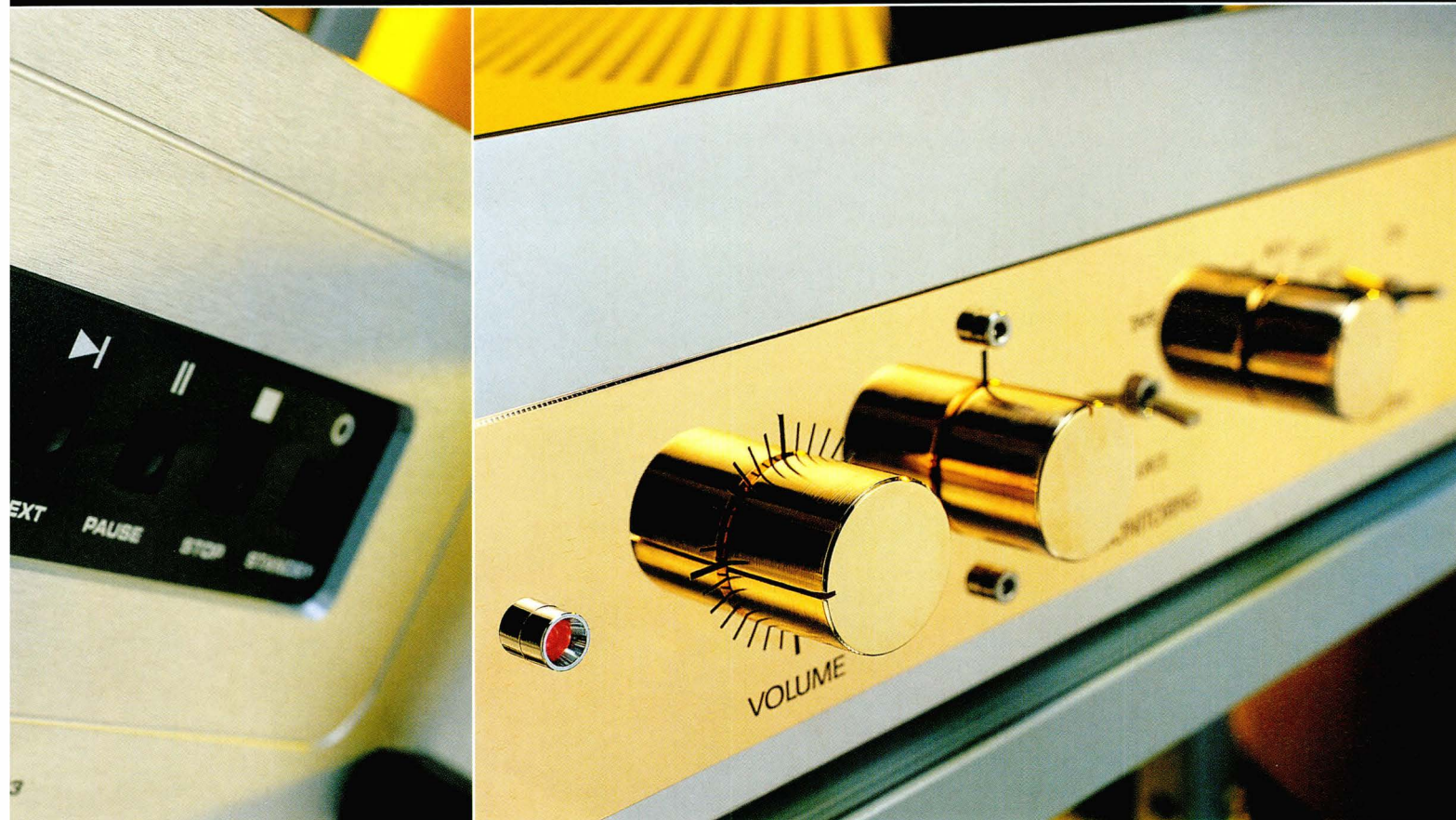
follower configuration, giving high input impedance but a very low output impedance. Jadis says the DLP-2 is compatible with all types of power amplifier, whatever its input impedance or the length of its connecting cables. It has inputs for six line-level sources – CD, tuner, three auxiliaries and a tape input/output. No remote, but then you'll have ascertained by now, that isn't where Jadis is coming from.

THE PERFECT MARRIAGE

A life equally less ordinary is lived by the folk at MartinLogan. The company is said to begin each day focused on creating the perfect marriage of unlimited performance and exquisite design. Which is good news for us because, expressed in its least wallet evacuating form, that's the Clarity. Marketed ostensibly as a multichannel home cinema speaker, the Clarity is, if anything, more impressive in stereo.

Tall, slender and frankly very gorgeous, the Clarity is most definitely a speaker of two halves. The upper portion is a neat implementation of ML's 'Generation 2' electrostatic transducer technology which uses an ultra-thin diaphragm to resolve the complexities of a fast changing musical waveform in a manner that the relatively massive cones of moving coil speakers would be very hard pushed to match. The curved shape of





“Its handling of complex musical strands and deft touch with timing – it’s sensationally fast, yet can stop on a pin-head – are matched by terrific clarity, focus and plenty of power.”

the panel helps to improve off-axis response (an electrostatic weakness) but the issue is further addressed by a pair of upward firing moving coil tweeters located on the tops of the bass unit enclosures. ML calls this Natural Ambience Compensation (NAC) and it’s chiefly to make the treble less directional and the speakers more useable in an AV set-up. For those who want the pure electrostatic experience, albeit from a restricted listening position, NAC can be switched off.

The hybrid part of the deal comes with the Clarity’s conventional, reflex loaded 200mm aluminium bass driver, which reaches down to a claimed 46Hz and hands over to the electrostatic panel at 450Hz. Sensitivity is a reasonable 89dB and nominal impedance is six ohms, with a dip to 1.1 ohms at 20kHz – not exactly the friendliest amp load but nothing the Jadis duo can’t handle.

THE BEAUTY OF CLARITY

The beauty of a well-executed hybrid like the Clarity is that it has the weight and authority of a good dynamic design,

adding significantly to the sense of scale and realism. Electrostatics are brilliantly uncoloured, fast and transparent – but they rarely do bass with body and conviction. The Clarity’s interpretation of the lower octaves as supplied by the terrifically gifted Audio Research/Jadis front end is taut, articulate and tuneful, but imbued with a wonderfully sumptuous and textured quality.

More critical with this type of design, of course, is the integration of the cone driver and the electrostatic panel. The Clarity doesn’t quite manage a seamless transition – the balance of the mid-treble sometimes seeming slightly cooler than the bass – but it’s a small point given the intensity of musical pleasure the system as a whole is capable of.

With some analytical high-end systems, the sound can seem skeletal, as if the bright light of analysis has shone almost too fiercely, allowing the structural elements of the music to dominate at the expense of tonal accuracy and timbral shading. But not here. Here you get it all in a way that sounds completely unforced and natural.

The ability to present fine detail in a musically coherent, yet uninhibited manner is a mark of true greatness and this system has it in spades. Its handling of complex musical strands and deft touch with timing – it’s sensationally fast, yet can stop on a pin-head – are matched by terrific clarity, focus and plenty of power. This isn’t a system for headbangers, but you’d be amazed how vivid, dynamic and muscular 40 Jadis valve watts can sound. And how un-valve like. Joe Sample’s spectacular two-fisted keyboard runs on the classic track *Carmel* sounded cleaner and crisper on this system than many a recent solid state high-ender. Same thing with Amy Whitehouse singing *F**k Me Pumps*: fantastic focus and clarity but, more importantly, she sounded more aerobically charged, more in-the-room.

Hear this system. It might make you re-evaluate your whole take on music and its part in your life. It might stretch your overdraft to snapping point. But you will only feel regret if you don’t make the appointment. **HFC**

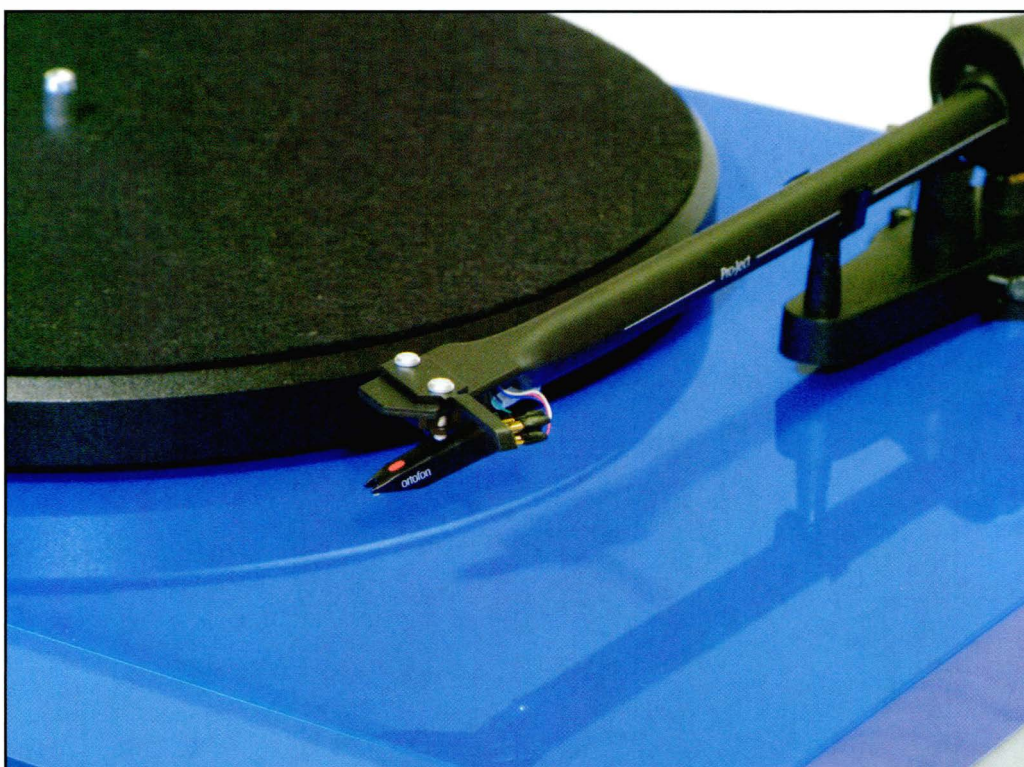
David Vivian



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.

EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

- 38 Clearaudio Ambient turntable
- 42 McIntosh MA2275 integrated valve amplifier
- 46 Dali Ikon 6 loudspeaker
- 48 Sugden CD21SE CD player
- 52 Exposure XXXV integrated amplifier
- 54 Gamut L5 loudspeaker
- 58 Arcam CD36 CD player
- 61 NAD C555 turntable
- 63 Stello DA220 DAC
- 65 Pro-Ject Debut/Phono SB turntable



ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

LOUDSPEAKERS £900-£1,600

- 68 Audio Physic Spark 3
- 69 B&W 805S
- 71 MonoPulse 42A
- 73 Rega R7
- 75 Triangle Celius ES
- 77 Usher Compass CP6311



OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

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

Our overall conclusion

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

VERDICT

SOUND >> 83%

FEATURES >> 85%

BUILD >> 85%

VALUE >> 85%

CONCLUSION

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 84%

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...



Wooden it be nice?

Adding bullet-proof wood to its traditional acrylic, does the Clearaudio Ambient live up to its name?

PRODUCT Clearaudio Ambient

TYPE Turntable (reviewed with Satisfy Carbon Directwire tonearm and Concerto moving coil cartridge)

PRICE £2,285 (plus arm £555, cartridge £1,230)

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 53x15x33cm
● Weight: 3.8kg ● Syncro power re-generator ● AMG Panzerholz construction ● Concerto output: 0.7mV

CONTACT ☎ 01252 702705 🌐 www.clearaudio.de

The Clearaudio brand is synonymous with transparent acrylic turntables – the German company's name even suggests as much. So, when we came across the new and rather less than transparent Ambient

turntable, we were surprised to find that it was made by Erlangen's finest. With the Ambient, Clearaudio has replaced acrylic with what it calls its 'AMG' plinth. This is a sandwich of precision-machined aluminium around a wooden laminate, which Clearaudio dubs 'Panzerholz' – a 70 layer engineering plywood that is very high in density and apparently bullet-proof. This is not a feature one would hope to have to take advantage of, though it may prove useful to gangsta rappers.

According to Clearaudio, Panzerholz is "acoustically dead" – a term that really needs some qualification, because it cannot be dead

at all frequencies. Rather, it is extremely stiff and dense, remaining inert at high frequencies and should offer good self-damping.

One thing that's not in question is the gorgeous appearance of the AMG approach. Apparently, it's not limited to the Ambient and is now available as an option with many of Clearaudio's turntables, including the mighty Master Reference we reviewed last year. It tends to add a premium, of course – the price of the Master Reference goes up by £2,500 for AMG in place of acrylic.

The Ambient features a "maintenance free main bearing" consisting of a hardened steel

shaft running in a polished sintered bronze precision cap, the combination requiring only a small amount of oil to run freely. This supports a 40mm thick acrylic platter, which is driven by a silicon belt from a motor mounted in a separate AMG type slab (this should be positioned 3-6mm away from the main plinth). The combination makes the deck a substantial 53cm wide, which just about fits on a standard equipment rack because the silicone tipped feet sit inboard a little. The motor unit shares its space with a "custom" (read that as "cut down") version of Clearaudio's Syncro power regenerator and the on/off and speed change switches. The latter sit next to an LCD speed display and are very nicely engineered and easy to use, which is handy because use of the Clever Clamp record clamp means turning the drive off and on for every LP.

The arm supplied for this review is the new carbon fibre tubed version of the Satisfy arm we tested on the Emotion turntable last year. This is a fairly simple gymbal bearing design with chunky aluminium parts and a magnetic bias compensation system that sits so far from the moving parts that it looks as if it couldn't work, but the cartridge sits happily enough in the groove. The vertical bearing runs on sapphire watch jewels, while the horizontal runs on ceramic. This is claimed to deliver long life and extreme precision. Cartridge alignment can be adjusted using just one bolt that is fixed to a plate to which the cartridge is attached using nylon fixings. This makes what can be a tricky job rather easier; when combined with the long cantilever of the Concerto, it's almost a breeze.

The Concerto itself is the first of a new range of moving coils that are set to replace the existing models from Clearaudio and which all feature a flower shaped top plate. The idea

behind the twelve "fingers", as its maker calls them, is that because each is a slightly different shape they will control resonance produced by the stylus/groove interface. The Concerto is

"Clearaudio has replaced acrylic with what it calls its AMG plinth – a sandwich of aluminium around a wooden laminate."



Q & A

Robert Suchy, Clearaudio's owner and designer, discusses the unusual technical solutions developed for the Ambient turntable and Concerto phono cartridge



HFC: Is the Panzerholz wood a solid block or is it a frame?

RS: It's solid, with cut-outs for the arm and bearing. If we had wanted a frame, we could have used ordinary wood.

You describe the AMG design as being acoustically dead, but surely it must resonate at some frequencies?

It resonates at very high frequencies that are not audible and much higher than acrylic. Sonically, it's very neutral, balanced and musical. Acrylic is also good in these respects but this material gives more rigidity to the complete soundstage.

What type of support do you recommend for this turntable?

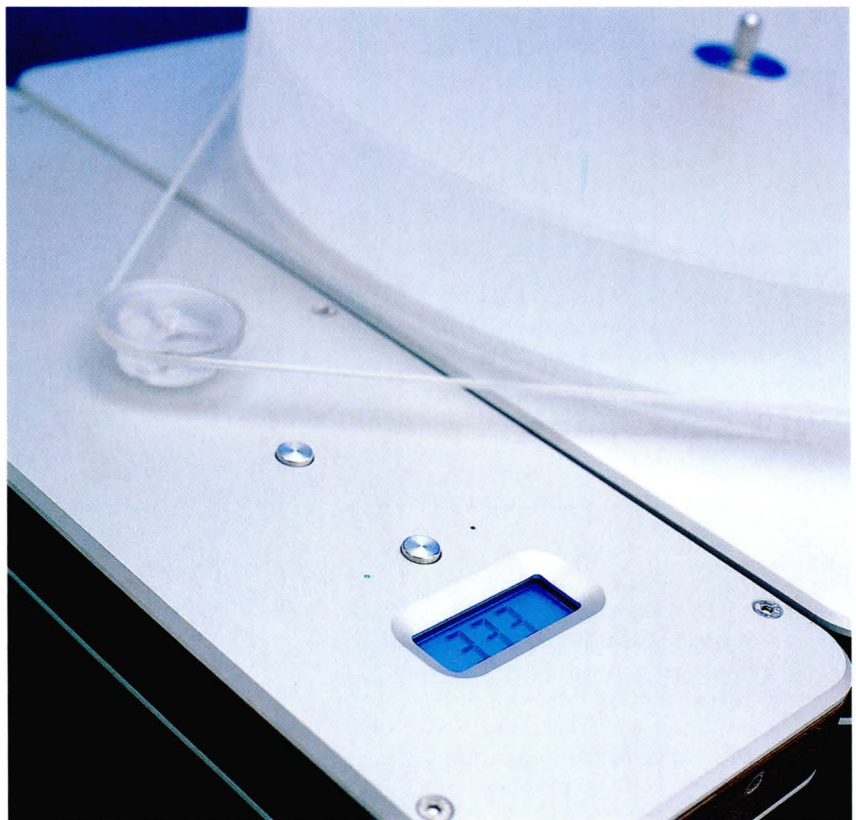
It just needs a solid base made from either thick hardwood or thick Perspex plate. The design of the supporting structure is not so important – it needs to be solid and not prone to shake. We wouldn't recommend an Ikea Lack table for instance!

How do the fingers on the Concerto act to defeat resonance?

It's very similar to speaker design, when you try not to have parallel walls (to avoid standing waves). The idea is the same with the cartridge: we are stopping the resonances bouncing in the cartridge body. The shape is very important.

Why have you decreased the size of the stylus on these new cartridges?

Our new generation of cartridges have huge dynamic range – the Concerto has 95dB and the Goldfinger and Titanium give you 100dB. The stylus is a new micro high-definition design that gives more contact area and sits deeper in the groove to get more information. It has a greater contact area than previous designs, because the flank is a different angle and shape, but it is still lighter and so has lower moving mass. The cantilever is shorter and lighter, which reduces mass again and we have a new magnet design which surrounds the coil completely from each side. This results in the wide dynamic range and the relatively high output.



“The transient response is lightning quick, which makes for entertaining listening and an ability to cut through the grunge.”

◀ the least expensive of four new models and has a satinee hardwood body, 24ct gold coil wire, a boron cantilever and a stylus profile that is five times smaller than that used in the brand's previous flagship, the Insider Reference. This cartridge also uses twice as many magnets as existing Clearaudio cartridges, giving it a 30 per cent increase in output, and it tracks at a high 2.8g.

SOUND QUALITY

Clearaudio turntables and cartridges have always had a leaner than average balance and the Ambient is, if anything,

slightly more that way inclined than usual. This could be the AMG factor: the hardwood and metal sandwich undoubtedly makes a stiffer plinth than acrylic. 'Lean' in this instance also means 'fast'. The transient response is lightning quick, which makes for highly engaging listening and an ability to cut through the grunge that smothers some recordings. It doesn't mean that the bass is light, however, rather that the upper bass lacks a degree of warmth and suits some albums better than others. It also suits lower level listening better than higher levels, when that lack of warmth can make the mid and top seem rather too exposed with some records. But this depends on personal taste and, of course, the rest of the system – so long as its partners are not over-bright, the musical results with this turntable are often thrilling. It will always reveal the drive and energy in an album, thanks to an ability to extract the dynamics of a recording, however well hidden they are in the mix. For instance, the Mahavishnu Orchestra's live album *From Nothingness to Eternity* is frankly a poor recording with little apparent contrast or variety, yet in this



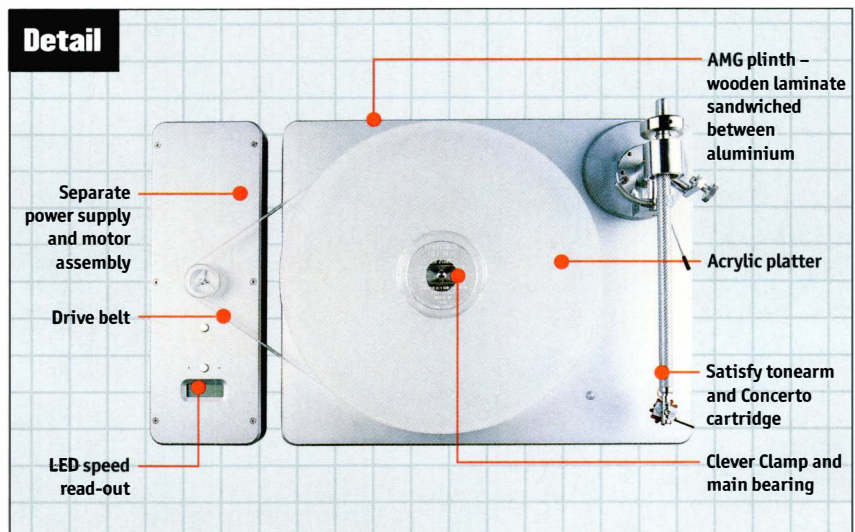
turntable's hands it gives up plenty of the power that this band can deliver, even if the drum kit has distinct 'biscuit tin' qualities (the fault of the recording, not the deck). And sometimes, the way that the Ambient highlights the mix on two adjacent tracks can be so different that one sounds tinny and the next fantastic, Hendrix's *Cross Town Traffic* and the live *Voodoo Chile* on *Electric Ladyland* being a good example.

But the Ambient only slightly exaggerates the way things are, and with many albums, its ability to turn on something far smaller than a dime makes for utterly compelling vinyl entertainment. Bass is particularly nice – the articulation and speed that it can extract is very appealing, and while you don't get the full bass weight that a heavier turntable can deliver, the payoff is that you don't get the overhang either. Part of the reason for this is the impressive definition of leading edges that comes from the quality of higher frequency resolve; another part could be that it doesn't reach down so far into the bass and therefore makes it easier to bring out the texture and variety of low notes.

Solo piano is extremely solid and three dimensional. You can hear the character of the instrument and the quality that the instrument's dense hardwood brings to it. The appeal for us is at its height when the pianist sticks to the left hand keys – the higher notes on the right have a brightness than is sometimes less comfortable, though it may be possible to ameliorate this with careful impedance matching for the cartridge. Clearaudio's Robert Suchy recommends a 400ohms loading as optimum for this cartridge, but we only had 100ohms or 1 kohm loadings available on our preferred Trichord Delphini phono stage. Usually you can smooth a cartridge's treble by dropping the arm base a little but this had only a slight effect with the Concerto.

Next to Townshend Audio's TA 565 CD universal player – one of our reference digital disc spinners – the Ambient showed a slight shortfall in bass depth and not quite so much image precision, but produced a more vibrant sound that was strong on spatial rendering. The balance was pretty much the same, which suggests a high degree of neutrality on its part and infers that our reference might be a little on the warm side rather than vice versa. The super-fine stylus is not very easy to please when it comes to vinyl, however – surface noise makes itself heard on all but the finest and best kept records. It makes you realise why the Germans are so keen on audiophile pressings.

Out of interest, we installed a van den Hul Condor XCM (£2,500, reviewed in *HFC* 265) in place of the Concerto to see how much of the sound is down to the cartridge. Its higher compliance is less well suited to the arm, but the result was gripping nonetheless. Dynamics increased and the bass built up some more body, thanks in part to the greater density of



detail being extracted by this rather more expensive needle. The lean balance of the turntable was not significantly altered, however, and transient response remained in the Formula One league!

This is an entertaining and exciting turntable, with very high quality of build and great looks. You'll be hard-pressed to find a dust cover for it, especially with the outboard power supply, but a little bit of cleaning is a small price to pay for such gramophonic elegance. Ambient may seem an odd name for such a forthright design, but even at background levels this turntable reveals all the detail, energy, character and atmosphere that makes good vinyl great – real ambience indeed. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

VERDICT	
SOUND >> 92%	PRO Exciting sound that digs oodles of energy out of the groove and presents it with considerable precision. AMG construction looks fabulous.
FEATURES >> 85%	
BUILD >> 92%	
VALUE >> 85%	
CON Balance a little lean side for some, decent isolation is a must and if your vinyl is not pristine, it will tell you.	
CONCLUSION This is a lean, mean vinyl-scouring machine that pulls music from the grooves in thrilling fashion. The high quality of construction and great ergonomics make a highly desirable deck for anyone with a penchant for musical speed and energy.	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 89%	

Big Mac magic

McIntosh beefs up its amps with this integrated tubular belle. Can it capture that ol' Mac magic?

PRODUCT McIntosh MA2275

TYPE Integrated stereo valve amplifier

PRICE £5,400

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 45x25.7x47.5cm

• Weight: 35kg • Five line-level inputs plus MM phono
• Remote control • Tone controls • 75 watts per channel into two, four or eight-ohm taps

CONTACT ☎ 01977 798844

🌐 www.mcintoshlabs.com

M McIntosh is now part of the burgeoning D&M Holdings empire, which also includes Denon, Marantz and most recently Boston Acoustics. Yet McIntosh is a company with a long and

celebrated hi-fi history, and is responsible for some true classics since the brand first appeared way back in 1949. Ironically, McIntosh's biggest rival in the early days is now its closest relative – Marantz. But the intervening half century or so has seen considerably less change in McIntosh's profile. The brand has always been best known for its high-end products, and its reputation is near unassailable in the USA. After a lean period in the 1990s, during which the company dropped much of its valve heritage (and suffered the consequences), the company backtracked and now appears to have acquired a second wind.

The recently introduced MA2275 is a valve-based integrated amplifier with a strong retro appeal and roots that date back much of the way to the dawn of high fidelity. It is essentially a one-box combination of a simplified C2200 component preamp and a reborn MC275 power amp (see this month's *Retro* on p15), which is close to the original 1961 model in many respects, but updated – for example, PCBs are used instead of point-to-point hard wiring. Unlike many of today's valve amps, though, it is not a single-ended Class A design, and it is not exactly hairshirt. Rated at 75 watts per channel into two, four or eight-ohm taps, the MA2275

EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE
magazine





is equipped with five line-level inputs, one with balanced XLR sockets alongside regular single-ended RCAs. A moving magnet phono input is also fitted, together with tape monitor switching and a stereo/mono selector – a comparative rarity these days. The preamp and power amplifier sections are coupled together with externally accessible links.

Unusually for a valve design, the MA2275 includes respectable support for simple multiroom operation. A second preamp output is available to drive a power amp in a remote location, and two triggers are available to switch external components – a disc player and that external amplifier for example. There is also an input for an external remote control sensor.

Tone controls are provided along with a tone bypass facility, which has settings that can be stored for each input. As usual with McIntosh, there's a pair of large 'blue eye' power meters, with 'peak hold' and a 'lights off' setting. The panel is evenly backlit using fibre optics. The feature count is completed by a system remote control, which includes most of the native front panel feature set, though for some reason channel balance has been excluded. The relatively long list of controls could have made for a messy user interface, but the design has been handled with the clarity typical of the brand, and the controls have a naturally tactile feel, including tone control detents for the central neutral position.

So much for the external trappings. Internally, this is a Class AB design using a pair of KT88 valves for each channel, in a circuit that is also compatible with 6550 tubes, for those who

“There is plenty of power available, even for relatively low sensitivity speakers in moderately large listening rooms.”

fancy the prospect of fine tuning. Air-pipe cooling of the output valve sockets helps keep a more than respectably powerful amplifier street legal and extends valve lifetime. Bias is set automatically, which is one factor that makes this a very easy amplifier to live with. The gain stages are built around 12AX7 double triodes and 12AT7s.

One of the most striking features of the amplifier is the unity-coupled output transformers, which are built in house by McIntosh. These transformers use two bifilar wound primaries, where the secondary windings are mixed in with the primaries, one of which drives the high voltage plates and the other the cathodes (most valve amps draw current from the plates). The McIntosh scheme helps reduce output distortion, improve frequency response uniformity and widen power bandwidth, a weakness of many comparable valve-powered designs.

SOUND QUALITY

Loosely speaking, system building is about sympathetically matching components to one another, though words like 'matching' and 'sympathetic' can cover a multitude of synergies and ambiguities. To this end, we tried the MA2275 with a broad spread of speakers,

from a pair of new MartinLogan Summit hybrid electrostatics, which were wired back to the amplifier's four-ohm output taps, to more conventional 'cone and dome' Opera Divina Callas and Focal-JMLab L+R speakers.

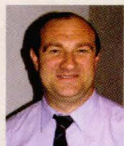
I confess, I was not really expecting what I heard from the McIntosh. While well aware of the brand's reputation, the only hands-on contact I have had with McIntosh equipment was with an early multichannel amplifier, which turned out to be – in straight audio terms – not a great success. With the MA2275, I was surprised in the first instance how far it is from the common stereotypes of valve amplifiers. It is genuinely muscular and powerful, with a solid, well-projected midband, an extended and no less powerful bottom end along with a treble that is clean and open. By the way, user concerns that the power meters show quite high deflections at only moderately high volume levels should take into account their logarithmic scaling, which makes the readings somewhat deceptive. There is plenty of power available, even for relatively low sensitivity speakers in moderately large listening rooms.

There is no hint of the wishy-washy colour and recessed, distant or just plain soggy sound that is endemic with less savoury valve amps. In short, there is nothing prissy about the ▶

[Review] McIntosh MA2275 integrated valve amplifier

Q & A

We spoke with Andy Davison, managing director of Audio Solutions, UK distributor of Thorens and Opus 3 as well as McIntosh, about the return of the Mac



HFC: What are the key features of the MA2275?

AD: It is the first all-valve integrated from the company – a combination loosely based upon two products, built onto one chassis. Following on from McIntosh's solid state integrated units, the philosophy is to give as much of the sound quality as is possible from a pre/power combination but with less of the user features. This was carried over into the MA2275.

Can you detail the history that led to the development of the MA2275?

McIntosh had only recently returned to valves with the company's 50th anniversary MC2000 and C2200 combination – in the year 2000, of course. The MC2000 was a limited edition, so the MC2102 was developed. The C2200 remained in the line up and, in combination with the power amp section from a classic MC275, was made into the MA2275 integrated. The new MC275 that has recently been added to the line came a little later.

What are the specific goals addressed in the design, and how are they met?

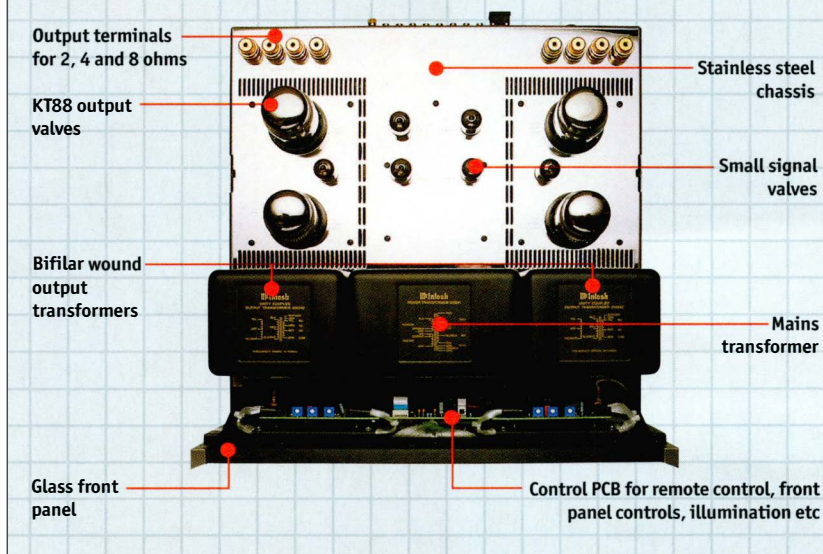
McIntosh designs aim to give sonic neutrality and long term stability. This is achieved, in part, by never operating any electronic component near its working limit. All switching of signals is done near the input terminal and all contacts are operating in an inert gas and so should, in theory, never wear out. The unity coupled transformers also allow the valves to produce good power levels without strain or excess heat.

To what do you ascribe the improving status of McIntosh in recent times?

McIntosh's recent rise in the US and the rest of the world can be attributed to changes that took place after the change of ownership from Clarion to D&M Holdings (Denon, Marantz, Rio and so on), when a long-term employee from the engineering department was made president of the company. (Yes, a technical man!) The whole focus of the company started to change along with a more team-spirited workforce, who tell tales of times when production deadlines are tight and the president can be seen on the shop floor with his sleeves rolled up, putting products together!



Detail



❑ MA2275, which is a clean and muscular amplifier that takes no prisoners, and which deserves to be compared on equal terms to the best solid-state competition. If this is the sound that McIntosh was able to deliver from its amplifiers in the 1960s (it's a hell of a big 'if'), it speaks volumes for what has been achieved sonically in the interim. The MA2275 isn't necessarily better than contemporary solid-state amplifiers, but it isn't worse either, and there is very little that gives away the fact that it is valve powered, other than the reassuring sight of the glowing bottles glinting from behind the mesh cover.

There is something different about the sound of the MA2275, but it's not easy to say quite what. It has an almost deliberate quality, as though the music is being laid out for examination, though it stops a long way short of stridency. It is not excessively warm-sounding, but it has a rich tonal palate. I have heard the MA2275 described as lacking sparkle, though I'm not sure I experienced this, or that I could even explain what the phrase means in the context of this design. What I did hear, however, was a broad soundstage with very strong left/right discrimination (it is a mystery why amplifiers should differ in this respect, but they often do) and with a large image scale.

There is also something else about the MA2275 that sets it apart from most others, and that is its consistency, by which is meant its dynamic consistency. Over a wide volume range, or at a fixed volume playing music that covers a wide dynamic range, the sound stays completely consistent. This kind of consistency is not exactly common, but when it is present, it tends to lead to a sound that is very easy on the ear, and musical reproduction that is easy to follow. There are a number of amplifiers that are at least as transparent and as uncoloured

as the McIntosh, but few that sound as smooth, as natural or are as comprehensively comfortable within their limits as this one.

McIntosh has successfully produced a contemporary combination of two classic products in the MA2275, which turns out to be supremely well conceived, and which (especially in the case of the power amp section) in no way betrays its relative antiquity on audition. In years to come, the MA2275 is sure to become a collectors item. But for now, it is one of the few integrated valve amplifiers that is both easy to listen to and musically informative, and which in practice should never sound out of its depth. **HFC**

Alvin Gold



VERDICT	
SOUND >> 93% [Progress bar]	PRO Muscular and yet refined, this is a valve amplifier that makes a strong and dynamic case for its chosen core technology. Makes many contemporary valve designs sound underpowered by comparison.
FEATURES >> 85% [Progress bar]	CON Arguably not quite as transparent as the very finest in class. The logarithmic meter action may deter some.
BUILD >> 92% [Progress bar]	
VALUE >> 83% [Progress bar]	
CONCLUSION A vindication of everything that McIntosh is commonly held to stand for, this is an engaging and musical design which is also genuinely powerful, and which by valve amp standards has an unusually degree of flexibility and practicality.	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 88%	

Changing TacT

Since 1998, TacT Audio products have been synonymous with state-of-the-art digital amplification and room correction receiving numerous awards worldwide.

Now Peter Lyngdorf, co-founder of TacT Audio, is to set a new level of performance and value. Substantial investment in R&D has enabled us to include even more groundbreaking ideas and technologies, enhancing and extending our current range of products.

The long-awaited versatile CD player will join the range later this year, as will the room correction module to include within the scalable TDA2200 amplifier.

TacT Audio Europe is transitioning to Lyngdorf Audio. A new marque. A new reference.



Our recently launched products have already set new standards - some review comments are included below.

SDA2175 – 200W Semi Digital Power Amplifier.

"Supremely smooth and well balanced in every respect, this amplifier starkly shows what other solid-state does wrong. Brilliantly engineered, it's nothing less than an epoch-making product.

VERDICT – Outstanding."

Hi-Fi World, June 2005

TDA2200 – 200W Integrated True Digital Amplifier - Our most advanced amplifier to date.

"The TDA2200 is a technological triumph ... TDA2200 is not just another amplifier but a digital tool to solve practical reproduction problems. To say the TDA2200 sounds open is a huge understatement. The TDA2200 excels with details. The loudspeakers disappear completely and the soundstage is spreading to record levels. Localization is super-precise and the holography is close to incredible."

DVD and Home Cinema, Norway, May 2005



SDA2175, 200W Power Amplifier £775

SDAi2175, 200w Integrated Amplifier £1095

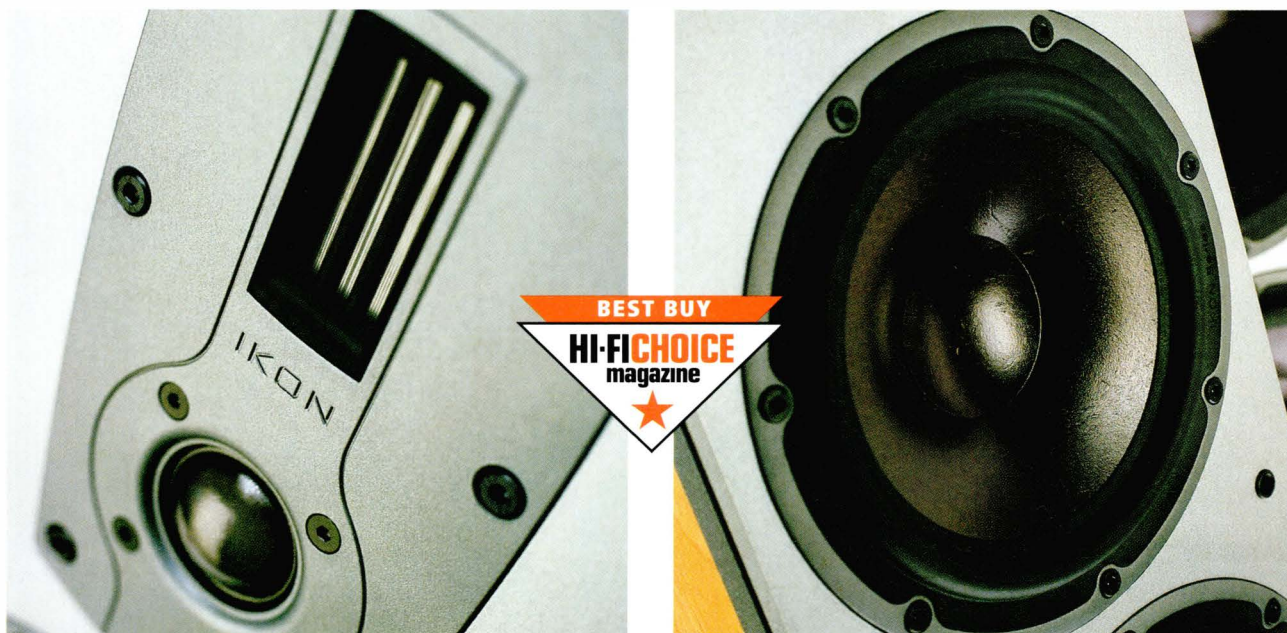
TDA2200, 200W Integrated True Digital Amplifier.
DSP crossovers, extensive inputs/outputs.
Parametric and voicing equalizers. £2150

Millennium Mk3 Digital Amplifier £5750

Digital Speakers from £3200 pair

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Muhammad Dali

Weighing in near the top of Dali's latest range, the Ikon 6 floats like a butterfly, stings like a bee

PRODUCT Dali Ikon 6

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £899 per pair

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 18.8x100x33.2cm

◊ Weight: 18.6kg each ◊ Hybrid dome/ribbon tweeter
 ◊ Two 160mm main drivers ◊ Sensitivity/impedance:
 91.5dB/6 ohms (nom) ◊ High-quality vinyl wrap finish

CONTACT ☎ 0845 6443537 🌐 www.dali-uk.co.uk

Dali's new Ikon is a mid-market, high-value range that draws on technology developed for the Danish brand's senior lines. The Ikon name, in its original meaning, is suggestive of "...a person or object regarded with particular admiration or as a representative symbol" as Dali's press material helpfully reminds us. So will the Ikon prove iconic?

The Ikon 6 is not a cost-no-object speaker, so it is no surprise to find that the enclosure is a conventional rectangular MDF box with a sandwich construction baffle, though it is equipped with discreet screw-on outrigger feet, made from neat alloy die-castings. It is a generous size box, however, and the design is anything but routine.

The drivers operate in a two-and-a-half-way configuration, with one bass unit filling in below 200Hz and a second identical-looking unit covering the same bottom end, while also extending the response to 3.2kHz. In Dali's description of the Ikon 6, the tweeter is treated as a single driver, but in fact it's a hybrid unit. This was evolved from a more costly hybrid, originally used in the upmarket

Euphonia and Helicon ranges (see issues 260 and 264 for reviews of the Helicon 300 and 400 respectively). The upper-mid to high frequencies are covered by a 28mm soft dome tweeter that has a response range covering everything above the 3.2kHz limit defined by the crossover. This is allowed to roll out naturally with no active crossover to attenuate its output at the high frequency end.

This fluid-cooled unit, which is fitted with a lightweight doped diaphragm and works in a carefully damped cavity, is said to extend beyond 20kHz, but probably at a reduced level. It is supplemented by a 17x45mm ribbon, which is rolled in at 10kHz, reaching full output by 14kHz, and with a response said to extend to

“The Ikon 6 is one of the finest-grained, most exquisitely detailed loudspeakers we’ve encountered at anywhere near its price.”

well beyond 30kHz. The coverage available from this compound unit is achievable with a dome tweeter, but only with considerable difficulty, and usually at the cost of various in-band resonances and narrow directivity (assuming a standard 25mm dome). The Dali hybrid unit is built on a common baseplate, with the narrow ribbon oriented vertically, to give an extended upper frequency response and a much greater dispersion than usual in the horizontal plane.

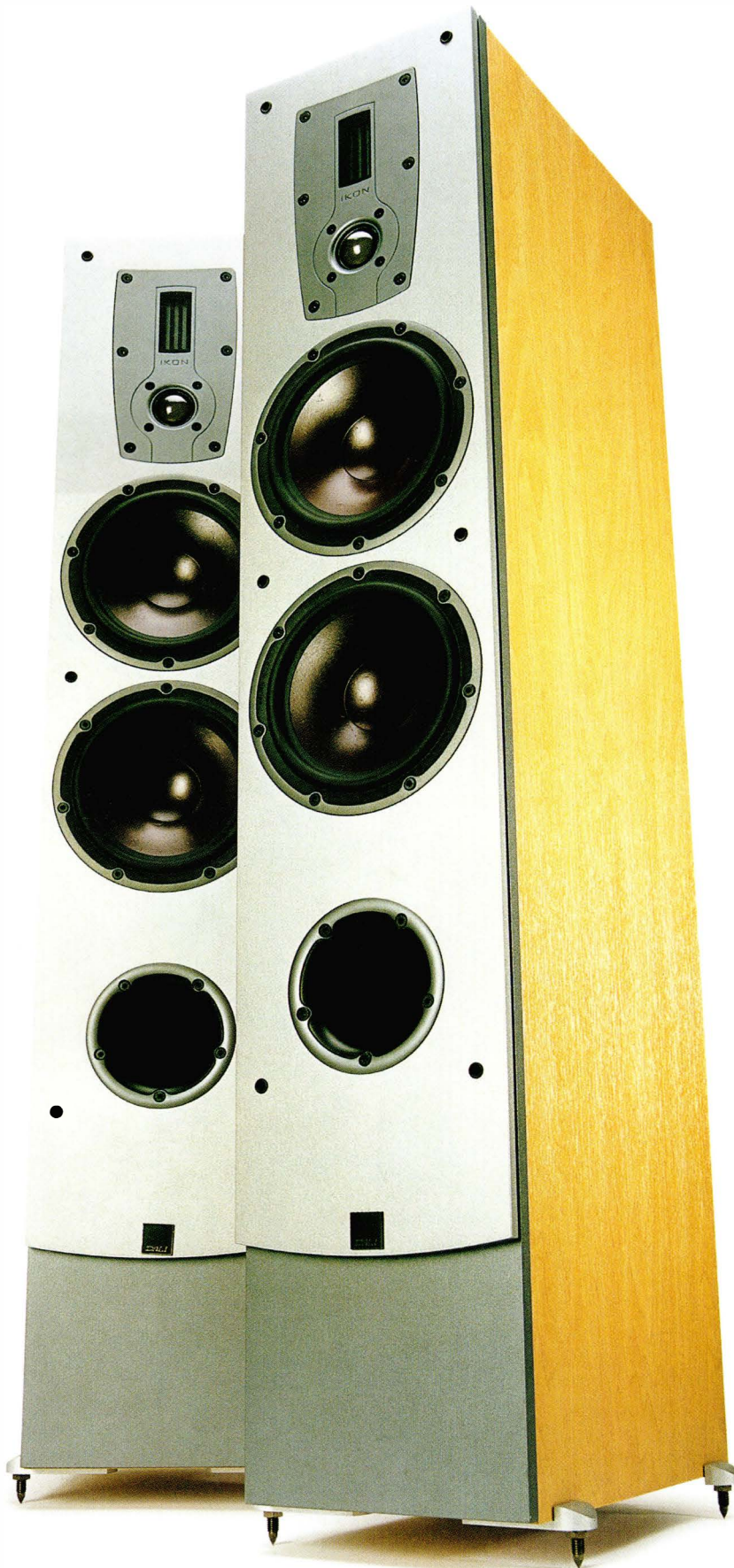
There is nothing much that could be described as off the shelf about the rest of the design either. The bass/mid units are designed in house, and feature 160mm cones made from a mix of paper and wood fibres. This provides a strong claimed combination of stiffness, low mass and damping, built into a die-cast alloy chassis with particular attention having been paid to effective cooling and low aerodynamic loading. The voice coil is wound onto a 25mm former and is equipped with dual magnets to improve magnetic uniformity in the gap, and to provide a measure of magnetic shielding. The unit is anchored to the front baffle with seven screws in an attempt to ensure the baffle acts as an effective

mechanical earth. The crossover is hard wired, and a twin set of solid cable terminals facilitate bi-wiring or bi-amping.

SOUND QUALITY

Instead of the usual moderate toe-in, the Ikon 6 is designed to be heard from a little off-axis, with the speakers pointing directly down the room. The reason is that the tweeter tends to sound a little too bright on its main axis, and

Dali Ikon 6 loudspeaker [Review]



Dali's suggested positioning will ensure that a centrally placed listener hears a near neutral balance. This worked well in practice, but we also found it effective to toe the speakers in sharply so that their axes crossed well in front of the listening plane – this scheme benefits stereo imaging and may be fine-tuned (by adjusting toe-in) to find the most effective tonal balance.

When treated in this way, and kept well clear of walls, the result is a speaker that is unusually clean, agile and, above all, highly detailed. The Ikon 6 is one of the finest-grained, most exquisitely detailed speakers we've encountered at anywhere near its price. The interplay of percussion can be thrilling in its complexity, and the Ikon imbues music of all

kinds with a tremendous close-up presence. Nothing is allowed to escape notice, but the ability of the Ikon 6 extends well beyond sharpening the focus on treble rich sounds. The sense of detail is apparent with music, with human voice and indeed with a broad range of instrumental material. The unusual resolving quality is tied to a powerful sense of speed, of lightning reflexes and a quick release once the moment had passed. There's nothing sluggish about this loudspeaker, and imagery is also precisely defined, though the balance tends to dictate an image that is relatively far forward, usually in front of the loudspeakers, and relatively lacking in a sense of depth.

The downside of such a transparent transducer is that it can sound too analytical for comfort. Some will certainly react against a speaker that can be too hard and insistent, and which tends to emphasise any negative qualities in the rest of the system. This is, in fact, a moderately priced loudspeaker that needs the finesse that high-end electronics bring to the party. On the other hand, the high sensitivity means power demands shouldn't be an issue, and we found that Primare's new entry-level I21 integrated amp was a capable match, with plenty of power for the job (75 watts per channel), combined with the required speed and finesse.

The bass output of the Ikon 6 is fast, tuneful and well integrated into the fabric of the sound, and although well extended it's not excessively powerful in feel. The bass here is more about speed and articulation than it is about weight and power, but this is a substantial loudspeaker, full size in anyone's terms, and it is far from being a lightweight.

Principally, Dali's Ikon 6 a fast, agile and highly detailed loudspeaker that is explicit, regardless of its price. It can sound bright, but is well integrated through the frequency range, though it requires a little more care and attention to positioning and system set-up than some. It is a conspicuous bargain by any reckoning, as well as being a loudspeaker that will cause some who have dismissed the brand in the past to sit up and take notice. **HFC**

Alvin Gold

VERDICT	
SOUND >> 87% [Progress bar]	
EASE OF DRIVE >> 84% [Progress bar]	PRO Transparent and detailed almost to a fault, this is a no-nonsense, high-resolution, full-bandwidth loudspeaker at a bargain price.
BUILD >> 84% [Progress bar]	CON Although sensitive enough to cope with modestly powered amplifiers, the Ikon 6 is qualitatively demanding.
VALUE >> 90% [Progress bar]	
CONCLUSION A loudspeaker of exceptional resolve for the money, the Ikon 6 will show what has been recorded in exquisite detail and with pin-sharp precision. But it is unforgiving and needs careful qualitative system matching, plus a lot of care in installation.	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 88%	



Northern lights

Sugden has updated its CD21 player to match the gorgeous A21SE amp – is it a worthy companion?

PRODUCT Sugden CD21SE

TYPE CD player

PRICE £1,395

KEY FEATURES Size (HxWxD): 11.5x43x31 cm
● Weight: 8.5kg ● Single-ended phono analogue outputs ● RCA phono electrical digital output ● Philips DAC 7 D-to-A converter

CONTACT ☎ 01924 404088/089
Ⓜ www.sugdenaudio.com

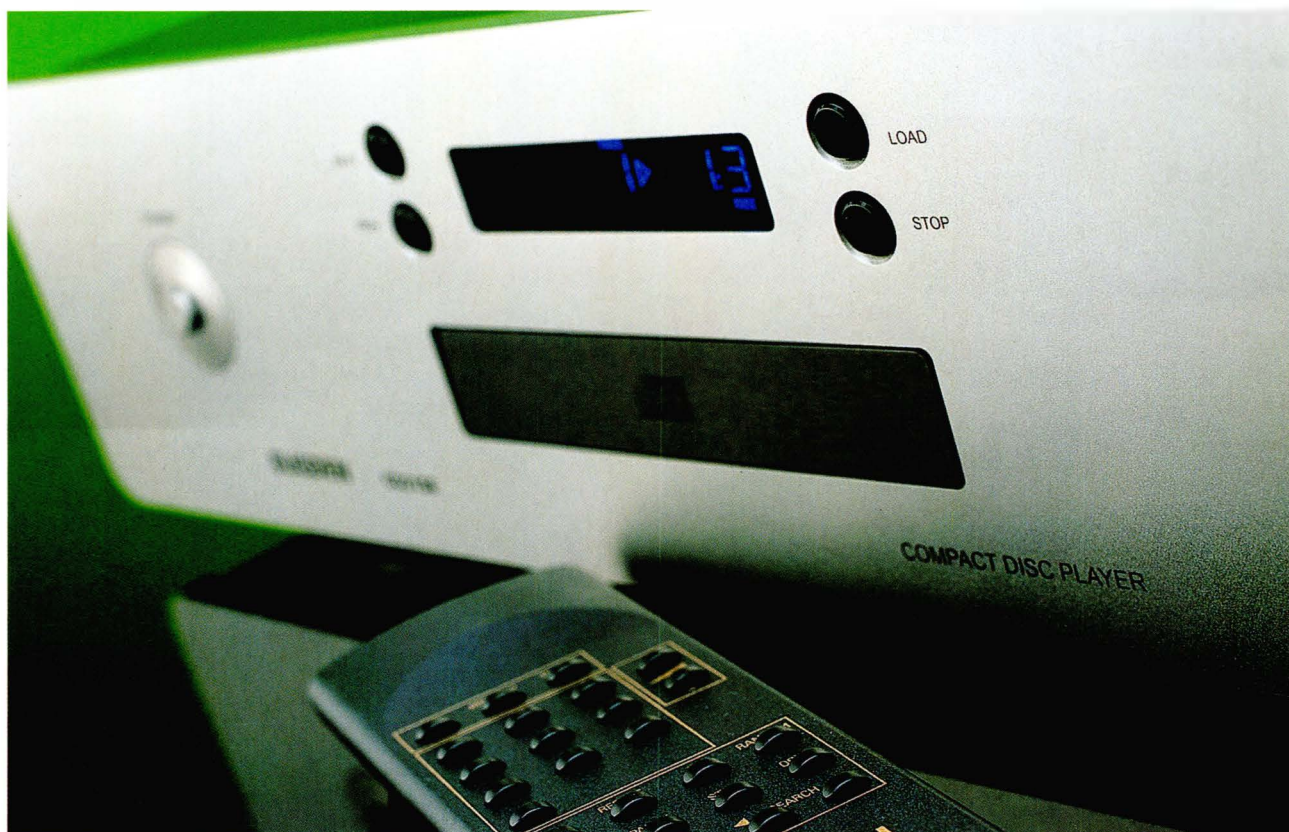
Heckmondwyke's finest and one of the longest running hi-fi brands in the business, Sugden is not a company to rush into things; this is only its fourth CD player. Mind you, the company didn't exactly rush headlong into the digital format in the first place, and it would seem that there's a lot to be said for the steady approach if long term success is the goal.

The CD21SE has been created to match the very impressive A21SE integrated amplifier that we reviewed in *HFC 268*, a design that is so smooth that many fail to realise that it's actually a highly revealing and very low-distortion device that produces 30 of the finest Class A watts in solid state electronics. So, a matching CD player has a lot to live up to. Frankly, we were surprised that the price is so affordable – after all, the standard CD21 is over a grand and the A21SE nearly £2,000.

While it's based on the still-current CD21, the SE is rather more than a cosmetic makeover of the least expensive model in the company's four strong range. It uses a Philips L1210 transport mechanism and VAM1202 laser assembly, a dedicated CD device rather than the CD-ROM and DVD drives that are common these days. Sugden has mounted this drive in a

separate 'bucket' on anti-vibration gaskets and doubled the thickness of the chassis' top and base plates to further reduce resonance.

For a change, this is not a 196kHz oversampling player – its digital-to-analogue conversion is courtesy of a classic DAC 7 hybrid single/multi-bit integrated circuit. This is an old school, 16-bit, four-times oversampling device that used to be popular with Marantz, among others. The CD21SE's output is buffered by a dual bipolar J-FET op-amp that Sugden describes as a low-noise, high-speed device with a high input impedance. This buffer stage bolsters the signal before the final output stage, a fully discrete circuit that uses selected transistors rather than those of an 'off the shelf' variety. Sugden designed and manufactured all the digital filtering, noise shaping and D-to-A



circuit boards in order to maintain maximum control over the final result. The analogue output stage is a development of the company's Masterclass preamplifier, with a low-impedance cascode current circuit that doesn't use feedback.

This circuitry is fed by a total of seven separate power supplies and these are split for analogue and digital applications. The transformer is a custom-designed, low-flux audio transformer with multiple windings.

The casework is what you first notice when comparing standard and SE CD21s and it looks like all the extra money has gone into the sumptuous front plate with buttons to match the A21SE. But somehow the company has found the money to upgrade the insides as well, and the ability to produce components with this standard of finish is a testament to Sugden's in-house manufacturing capabilities. Two finishes are available: the sample supplied is titanium, while there is a darker option called graphite for those who need to match black ancillaries.

The remote, which operates both amp and player, is not the best example of the breed but there is an 'open' button – something that's a rare luxury on decent CD players. So its small graphics and use of words instead of symbols are forgivable. Just.

SOUND QUALITY

As the CD21SE was created to partner the A21SE, and we recently reviewed that amplifier, Sugden was very keen that the two should be auditioned together for this



“This CD player has a relaxed and naturalistic presentation, with superb tonal colouring and an almost analogue treble.”

assessment. It's not hard to hear why: apart from any notion of synergy, the A21SE is a very fine amp indeed. Paired with the right speakers, it has the ability to knock dearer pre/power combinations for six when it comes to musical engagement. And when the two Sugden products are used together, you forget the rather clunky nature of the CD player's drawer mechanism and get pulled into the intricate musical web that they spin.

Like the amplifier, this CD player has a relaxed and naturalistic presentation, with superb tonal colouring and an almost analogue treble quality. By the standards of

some competing players, this means a slightly subdued performance – treble detail is more obvious on a Cyrus CD8x, for instance, but not necessarily more convincing. It all depends on whether you like your details to be etched into the aural picture or to be more organic. But, take your hi-fi hat off and replace it with one for enjoying music and you might find it's worth giving up a little precision of detail for this tonal warmth and beauty.

The area where the player really excels is solidity of image. The CD21SE produces highly convincing three-dimensional instruments and voices in an open and spacious soundstage. ▶

Q & A

We spoke to Sugden designer Tony Miller about the development of this 'SE' version of the established CD21



HFC: Does the CD21SE replace the CD21?

TM: No. The CD21 cosmetically is a match for the amp and the A21 for whatever reason is the bottom of our range, but still people consider it a luxury at a thousand pounds!

How do the two CD21 models differ?

The CD21SE uses an upmarket emitter follower configuration, which we use in quite a lot of our preamps. We do the buffering and we increase the current with an emitter follower so we get good drive conditions with it, which makes for a cleaner output stage.

Why use custom components?

The components we use are not custom made but are very difficult to trace. We have some very peculiar habits here; we listen and we can demonstrate the difference with transistors. We find that with certain types, when the dies get spent and somebody like Toshiba discontinues the component, it sells the dies to somebody in South America. The same component stays on the market, but with a different manufacturing base, and they sound completely different. We search out the original components and the ones that sound good, keeping them carefully and using them properly.

Why did you select an antiquated DAC like the Philips DAC 7?

We chose it because we got the best musical performance out of it. A lot of DACs have a phase lock loop and the DAC 7 develops its own locking system so you don't need the lock coming out of your unit. Which means things are simplified.

Why no oversampling in the DAC?

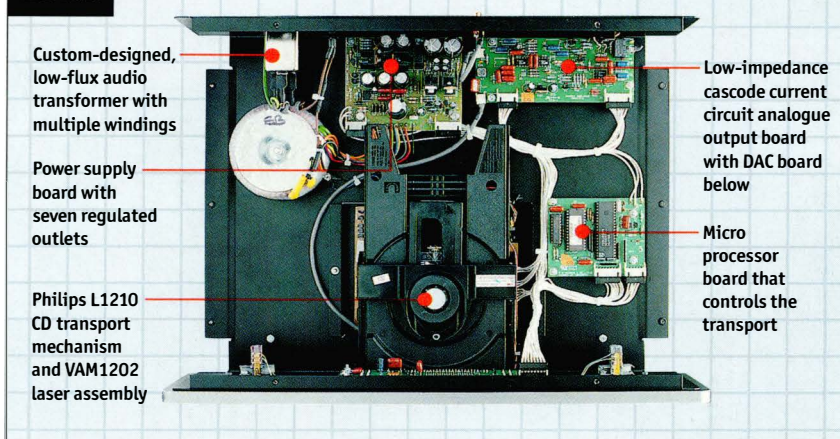
Is oversampling correct? We are not necessarily subscribers to the fact that oversampling always gives the best sound, it tends to be a bit too processed. We're old-hat people – we prefer to listen to music and not to sound effects.

What is a transport bucket?

If you look underneath it, there's a projection and extension of the case which we call a bucket; a separate compartment. It only isolates from carrying high frequencies.



Detail



Custom-designed, low-flux audio transformer with multiple windings

Power supply board with seven regulated outlets

Philips L1210 CD transport mechanism and VAM1202 laser assembly

Low-impedance cascode current circuit analogue output board with DAC board below

Micro processor board that controls the transport

that stretches remarkably far, considering the relaxed nature of the treble. In fact, you begin to wonder whether the Sugden take on high frequencies might be a truer reflection of the disc than with most players. After all, you can hear what's going on up there and there's plenty of 'air' in the soundstage.

Bass is not as weighty as you'll find with some of the competition, as it doesn't stamp its authority on proceedings and is comparatively light. However, put on Adem's *Homesongs* and the grumble of the opening synth line is deep and full-bodied. Meanwhile, the hammered strings above it have a realism and presence that makes you feel that you can reach out and grab them. This doesn't happen with genuinely bass-light players.

The light-footed nature of the bottom end also means that complex bass lines remain nimble and dynamic. With less energy at the very lowest octaves, the player's life (and that of the associated system) becomes a lot easier, but the extra sense of articulation that this nimble nature brings is most welcome. With a relatively low-powered amp (like the A21SE), you are going to need very efficient and for that matter large loudspeakers to appreciate this aspect of the sound. But, if you select a system carefully, this articulate nature means you are in for some of the most realistic renditions of recordings you'll ever enjoy in your listening room. This becomes all the more noticeable with live recordings – the sense of immediacy combined with substantial scale produces a sensation of being right there at the musical event. Suddenly, that light-footed bass has an energy that's right on the edge of

what most rooms can take. But combine this player with a different amp and you'll have a different story...

We investigated that story with our reference Bryston BP25 preamp/ATC SCM150 ASL system, in order to establish how well this player might fly in a more powerful set-up. The answer is that its relaxed nature at the bandwidth extremes became more apparent. However, combine this with a generally relaxed demeanour, and you have a sound that is remarkably reminiscent of analogue for the price point. The competition here includes the likes of the CD8x and Exposure XXII, of which the latter is closer in style to the CD21SE. The Cyrus has a more grounded and immediate sound but arguably not quite so much musical charm.

This Sugden represents an interesting option at a reasonable price, given the quality of build and potential to beguile the listener. While its character is clearly well suited to its stablemate amplifier, it will also win friends among those who have yet to be seduced by Sugden's lovely Class A approach. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



VERDICT

SOUND >> 89%



FEATURES >> 62%



BUILD >> 90%



VALUE >> 85%



PRO

Highly engaging and natural sound that comes closer to 'analogue' than most at this price. We like the strong sense of imaging and appreciate the 'open' button on the remote!

CON

The relaxed balance gives the impression of roll-off at frequency extremes and the remote labelling is not for late night, low-light listening.

CONCLUSION

The CD21SE is designed to partner the A21SE Class A amp and it does indeed sound superb in that company, but it also delivers its particularly musical touch in less sympathetic surroundings and warrants the attention of all true music lovers.

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



ProAc
perfectly natural

**Debut performance
for superb new ProAc
floor standers**

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

For more information about ProAc speakers and details of where to hear them for yourself visit www.proac-loudspeakers.com or call 01280 700147



When in Rome...

It's back to Roman numerals with Exposure's New Classics range. But is this latest amp up to date?

PRODUCT Exposure XXXV

TYPE Integrated stereo amplifier

PRICE £1,599

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 44x11.5x30cm

• Weight: 11.5kg • Six line inputs (inc. tape loop)
• Optional phono stage • Two preamp outputs • Twin speaker terminals • Remote control • 80 watts per channel (eight ohms)

CONTACT ☎ 01273 423877 🌐 www.exposurehifi.com

The Roman numerals in Exposure's latest model number are much more appropriate now than 30 years ago, when the company was launched. Now, they imply something a little 'olde worlde'. Well, olde worlde inasmuch as the 'New Classics' range harks back to the company's origins, with all-UK construction, minimalist features and a firm emphasis on good old-fashioned sound.

There's plenty of modernity here, though, and close inspection suggests that little more than those Roman numerals connects this model to the well-loved Exposures of yore. The circuit, for a start, is pretty much based on the recent 3010 integrated, while modern components of uniformly excellent quality ensure that said circuit works to its utmost ability. Design and assembly are pure 2005 too, with red LEDs mounted inside volume and selector knobs, and a very smart front panel.

In its standard form, the XXXV is a six-input, line-only integrated, but it can be upgraded with an MM/MC phono board and can also be used in bi-amped or indeed tri-amped systems thanks to two sets of preamp outputs at the rear. Despite its fairly generous bulk, it's not enormously powerful by modern standards at a rated 80 watts, a rating comfortably met in practice. It also meets the claim for its power to double effortlessly into four-ohm loads.

Under the hood, the transformer accounts single-handedly for the unit's height. It's truly monstrous, getting on for 1kVA rating and as such unlikely to prove a limiting factor unless you try to do something ridiculous like driving multiple parallel ribbon speakers. As for the power transistors, inspection reveals two pairs per channel of high-power Japanese parts, which will give a good safety margin when driving awkward loads. These are mounted on a substantial heatsink.

On first inspection, there's not much inside the amp fully to justify its price, but craftily concealed beneath the main circuit board is a subsidiary board carrying quite a lot of the circuitry. This appears to be a complex amplifier, but before anyone cites that as unfavourable evidence, we should point out that apparently complex circuits are often among the simplest in terms of concept and operation. The

measurements we obtained from the XXXV suggest that its performance has been carefully and sensibly honed in line with current trends. For instance, distortion is low, though not quite vanishing (but as far as we could see completely devoid of crossover artefacts), while noise is very low and frequency response extremely extended in the bass (to around 2Hz) but attenuated in the treble, in classic Exposure manner, by 3dB at about 45kHz.

We also noted with interest that the amp's damping factor is amazingly high, even at high frequencies, varying from around 300 (at 20kHz) to over 600 (midband), among the highest we can recall seeing. Given low-impedance speaker cable, this should help maintain consistent performance into almost any loudspeaker load.

Remote control operation is effected by means of a motorised volume control and selector switch, a scheme which avoids possible ill effects of electronic attenuators and retains completely traditional control from the front panel. The amp is nice to use and proved free of spurious noises throughout.

SOUND QUALITY

Concerned that prior acquaintance with the amp's beefy build (just its weight gives that away!) might colour expectations, we arranged



for a brief – but telling – ‘blind’ session with a couple of familiar references. This confirmed that the XXXV’s sound really is quite remarkably solid and, well, weighty. It likes nothing better than to get properly stuck into some really hefty bass and deliver it with both aplomb and finesse.

And yes, it does definitely do ‘finesse’, and very well, too. With suitable music, it can slide so effortlessly into the ‘aplomb’ part of the deal that the listener does not immediately notice just how much welly is assaulting the eardrums. This is all good stuff, and we’ve probably said enough already to interest lovers of large-scale music in this amp. Okay, it doesn’t go *quite* as loud as more powerful models, but as we’ve pointed out on many occasions before, doubling an amp’s power only makes it slightly louder, and the difference between this and a model of say 120 watts is barely more than a couple of degrees’ rotation of the volume control.

Lovers of subtler stuff should take note, too, because alongside the finesse at high levels is a good dose of subtlety with quieter music. Imaging is precise and believable, with depth that yields just a little to upmarket pre/power separates but is pretty much state of the art for sensibly priced integrated models. Meanwhile, tonality is pretty much neutral, the confidence with bass not extending to over-emphasis, while the treble is ever so slightly softened compared with amps that lack the XXXV’s ultrasonic rolloff – a familiar result for that kind of very subtle tailoring.

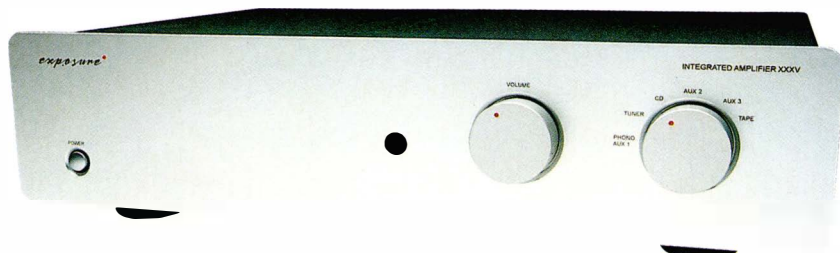
“The XXXV likes nothing better than to get properly stuck into some really hefty bass and deliver it with both aplomb and finesse.”

Some possible evidence of another kind of tailoring makes itself heard in a sweetening of some musical textures, particularly those containing many different instrumental sounds (such as orchestras or large bands). This is one of those effects about which it is hard to be dogmatic, as its extent is such that conscious attempts to pin it down often lead one to wonder whether it wasn’t after all imagined. But we repeatedly felt that the sound was just slightly ‘prettied up’ compared with amps of known rigorous accuracy.

Not that we’re necessarily complaining. This is almost the best of both worlds, the precision of the best solid state design combined with just a touch of the qualities for which valves are renowned, and the end result is often that music is particularly pleasing to the ear where before it was perhaps just a shade harsh. One might say that a few rough edges are just slightly smoothed off – not to the extent that the character of the music is altered, but enough to add some rounding-out to certain sounds. Male vocals seemed a case in point, the resonance of the voice seeming more evident while breathy sounds were less distracting. Enjoyable stuff!

Once again, this is a question of taste. But, along with the admirable low-frequency confidence, it defines the amp’s character and that character is very well adapted to the long-term and profound enjoyment of music, especially for the attentive listener – the sort of person, indeed, who’s prepared to countenance over one and a half grand for an amp. In terms of analysis there may be alternatives on the market that can better this one, but for just sitting down and really getting properly involved in some music, the Exposure XXXV looks like a very good choice. **HFC**

Richard Black



VERDICT	
SOUND >> 92% [Progress bar]	PRO Very musically involving, with superbly assured bass – powerful yet tuneful and controlled all at once. Very high damping factor means any speaker partner will be solidly in its thrall.
FEATURES >> 75% [Progress bar]	CON Not the last word in sonic analysis, and treble is very subtly curtailed. Not for those with slavish accuracy needs.
BUILD >> 90% [Progress bar]	
VALUE >> 88% [Progress bar]	
CONCLUSION The XXXV is very clearly a music-lover’s amplifier first and foremost. Its sound may be a touch tailored, but it’s been done in such a way as to maximise connection with the music, without losing detail or imaging – definitely Best Buy material.	
HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 90%	

The full Gamut

By adding speakers to its existing range of electronics, Gamut completes its component range

PRODUCT Gamut L5

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £5,990 per pair

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 20x115.8x43cm

• Weight: 39kg • 32mm ring radiator tweeter

• Two 180mm sliced paper cone bass/midrange units

• Sensitivity/impedance: 86dB/2.8 ohms (minimum)

CONTACT ☎ 01252 702705

🌐 www.gamutaudio.com

Last year, Ole Christensen – the owner and founder of Danish audio electronics specialist Gamut – sold his company to fellow Dane Poul Rossing. Rossing then took the bold step of branching into loudspeaker making – bold because it enters an already full-to-bursting speaker market. But given that Rossing subsequently sold half of his new company to a speaker designer with 17 years experience, it might not seem so bold after all.

Lars Goller bought into Gamut in March this year and has an impressive CV. He has worked in R&D for Vifa, Dali, Scan-Speak and latterly as director of R&D at Danish Sound Technology – a merger of Vifa, Scan-Speak and Peerless. With that sort of experience, speaker manufacture was clearly a logical progression for Gamut.

The L5 is the middle model in a three strong range which starts with the L3 standmount

and ends in the larger L7 floorstander. All three share the same drive units, adding an extra 130mm unit as the price goes up. On the front baffle of this two-and-a-half way is the most frightening looking tweeter in the business, a Scan Speak Revelator ring radiator with a distinctive phase spike. This driver features a very shallow neodymium magnet, which is said to avoid the Helmholtz resonance found in conventional high frequency drivers. More drastically, it has a claimed upper extension of 60kHz, which is radical for any drive unit and unheard of with non-metal types. You've heard of super-tweeters, this is a mega-tweeter!

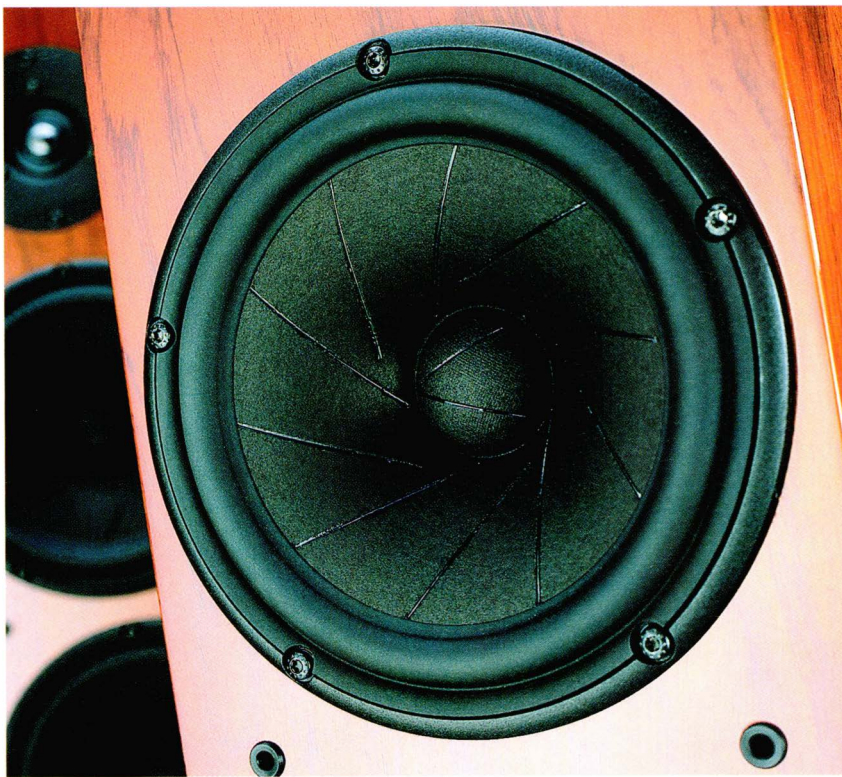
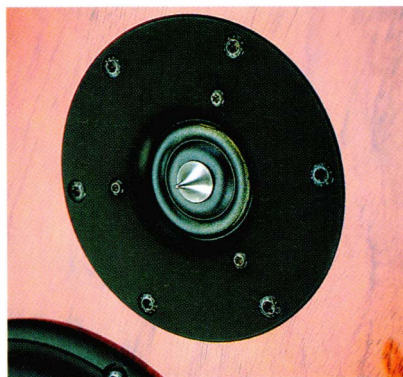
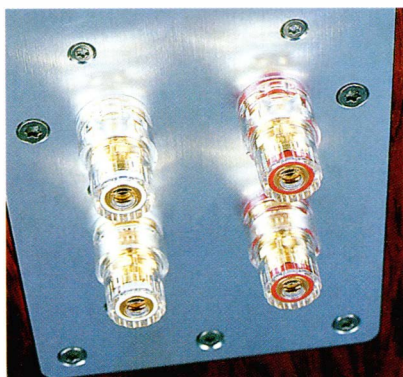
The two main drivers have 130mm cones that have been sliced and bonded in an effort to reduce coloration – according to Gamut, these drivers work by trapping energy. Because the slices are the softest point in the cone structure, this is where it will bend most easily. By carefully designing the positioning and dimension of these slices and the glue that

closes them, you can avoid stressing the individual segments of the cone.

The suspension on these drivers is also unusual as it works constantly rather than progressively, as is the norm, and allows for more excursion below resonance. The magnet system is unusual in that it compensates for overload by increasing inductance when the voice coil moves out of its optimum position, thus providing magnetic resistance.

To the eye, the resulting composition is a substantial but elegant looking loudspeaker, with attractively curved side panels and a sumptuous finish of deep lacquer on its real wood veneered cabinet. In this case, it's a rosewood veneer, matched across the pair's front baffles. Below this, a veritable armoury of metalwork raises the speaker a minimum of 65mm above the floor on some of the biggest stainless steel spikes in the business. These have 12mm threaded studs that screw into stainless outriggers attached to the speaker

“Tilting the cabinets increased the level of detail from what were already extremely revealing and explicit loudspeakers.”



Gamut L5 loudspeaker [Review]

and effectively widen its footprint to provide a greater stability. If you don't fancy loading your floor with the speaker's 39 kilos via four sharp points, Gamut provides conical point stops that you can place under each spike for a more surface-friendly option.

The stainless steel theme continues on the back of the speaker, where a large multiple bolted panel holds two pairs of WBT terminals on the outside and the crossover on the inside. The inside of the cabinet itself is thoroughly braced, but does not divide up the internal space into separate enclosures. It also uses only the minimum of damping because of energy storage problems inherent with its comprehensive use. Here, the damping is placed in the middle of the cabinet where the air velocity is highest and where it will produce the greatest benefit.

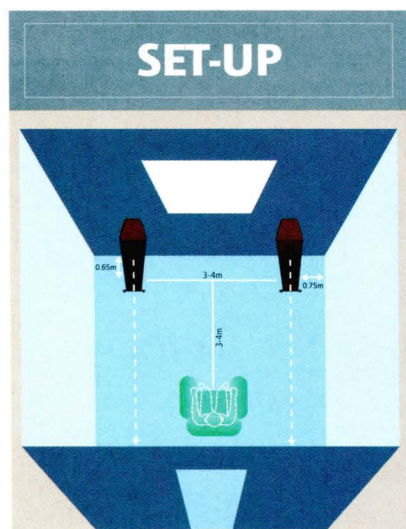
Lars Goller is keen to emphasise that, while he comes from an engineering background, he has always used music rather than test tones as his reference point in the design process. As he headed up the team that designed both the drivers in this speaker, Gamut is in the unusual position of having full control over the entire speaker design, something that's usually the preserve of large companies alone.

SOUND QUALITY

As we use a Gamut D200 power amp as one of our reference components, it made sense to partner it with these speakers; a more up to date MkIII version of the amp might have been more appropriate, but the original has a similar character and plenty of power. Listening commenced with the spikes set so that the speaker top was level. This produced an appealingly open and large scale soundstage, with the speakers proving remarkably good at vanishing acoustically when a great recording was played. The manual suggests that if you sit with your ears below the tweeters, it is beneficial to tilt the speakers up at the back so that they fire slightly downward. But, as the L5 is designed to be listened to off-axis (see set-up box), this doesn't mean that high frequencies are directed at your ear.

Tilting the cabinets increased the level of detail from what were already extremely revealing speakers. We're talking explicit detail here – even the very low-level speech samples on familiar records such as Steely Dan's *Show Biz Kids* are verging on the intelligible! Image depth resolve is also stunning, producing a cavernous ecclesiastical acoustic in the SACD of Arvo Pärt's *De Profundis*. Here, the purity of the soprano's voices could be, for once, fully appreciated. Instruments likewise are presented with a solidity which is rare, the piano on the new *In The Country* album standing four square between the speakers with no sense that the sound was emanating from them, unless the production placed a sound solely in one channel. ▣





POSITIONING

The manual for the L5 suggests firing the speakers parallel to the room sides (like the Dali Ikon 6 reviewed on page 46), assuming you have a regular shaped room. The two speakers need to be oriented so that their axes form parallel lines – in other words, fire them down the room with no toe-in at all. This is because they are designed to be listened to off-axis, where diffraction effects caused by cabinet edges and so on are asymmetric. Gamut considers symmetrical diffraction to be the most offensive. It also believes that driver distortion is at its worst on axis and thus has balanced its speakers so that they work best when not pointing at the listener. Only if the room has highly reflective surfaces on the side walls is a small amount of toe-in recommended.

It is also recommended that the tweeters are at the same height or a little below your ears when you are listening – as these are tall speakers, you may well need to tilt them up at the back to achieve this. Fortunately, the big spikes help here.

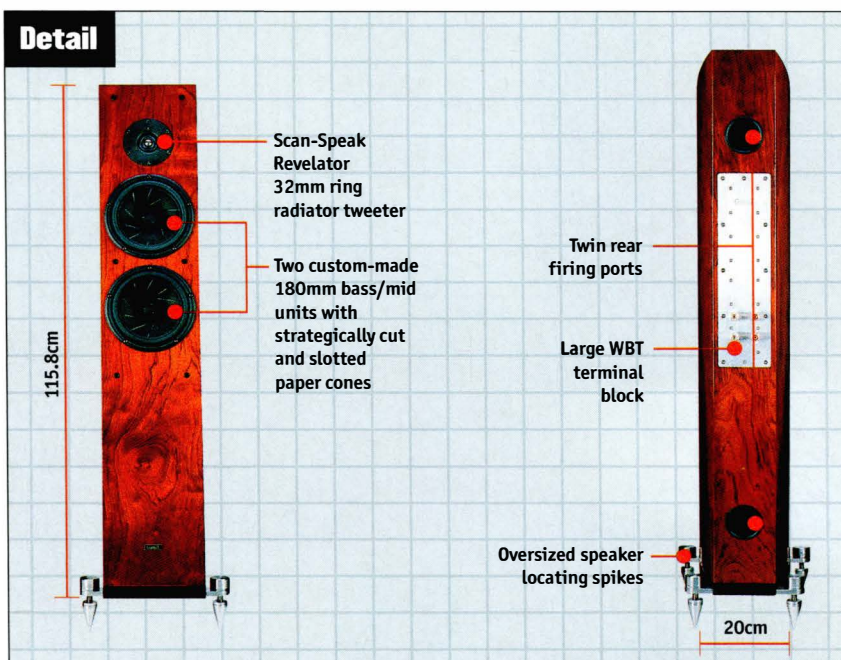
As for positioning, it is recommended that you sit at least 3m from the speakers and have a minimum distance to the side wall of 75cm and at least 65cm to the rear wall. Moreover, these are big speakers and would look titanic in a room where these placement recommendations are not possible. If you want to maximise imaging, keep the speakers as far away from walls as possible; if this reduces bass too much, try placing a damping or diffusing surface on the side walls to cut down reflections instead.

SYSTEM MATCHING

As with any highly-revealing loudspeaker, the Gamut requires clean, high-quality power. Its 89dB sensitivity at four ohms, which equates to 86dB at eight ohms, coupled with impedance drops to 2.8 ohms, means it needs plenty of power, too. As Gamut makes its own amplification, this is a logical place to start – we used a D200 stereo power amp but one of the brand's monoblocks would undoubtedly bring further delights. Otherwise, you'll need at least 100 watts of refined, nimble and dynamic power to get the most out of the L5. This means it's not a speaker that's suited to valve amps, unless you own the hernia-inducing variety.



Detail



❑ In the past, speakers that have produced images of this quality usually needed setting up so that their axes cross in front of the listener, which tends to limit stage width. The L5s with their parallel axes produce both width and depth to an uncanny degree, thanks presumably to the ultra high extension of the tweeter – though quite why this should work with regular CD as well as higher resolution formats is less easy to answer.

All this detail and imaging is fantastic but we were looking for a bit more bass grunt, something that was achieved by removing the spikes and placing the speakers on a pair of Townshend Seismic bases. You get much the same increase in bass energy if the speaker is put straight on the floor but as we use these bases with our regular speakers too, it kind of evened the playing field. What resulted certainly did the trick, removing a slight sense of glare from the midrange and bolstering the bass to produce a rock solid balance that could be played louder and longer. This process may well have brought the balance to the same point it would have arrived at after the 100 or so hours of use required to run the speaker in, a sonic shortcut in other words.

Now you could tell when a kick drum had been recorded in mono on one channel; rather than producing a boom, the system dug deep and recreated a solid and shapely kick that had real speed and weight. The system still imaged like a good 'un, the speakers revealing the character of the venue and the full breadth of the piano in Keith Jarrett's *Bremen Lausanne* album. This recording also ably demonstrated the L5's impressive grasp of dynamics both large and small – it revelled in the nuances that the Townshend TA 565 CD universal

player was finding on this and other discs, revealing both the great sense of timing and the phenomenal resolve on offer.

What was most exciting about this speaker, however, was its ability to rejuvenate overplayed albums such as EST's *Seven Days of Falling*. Somehow this review-worn disc came alive for the first time in what seems like a year or more. By the standard of the competition at this price point, the L5 is a remarkably transparent speaker yet not one that sounds bright. It manages to avoid the sense of exposure that some super-tweeters can produce, though the energy in the treble can be a little strong if your ear is in a direct line with the tweeter – keep it off-axis and it's very fine. An ATC SCM50 would give you more low frequency gravitas, but there are few better speakers in other respects.

The L5 is a tremendously revealing, low-distortion loudspeaker. Perhaps cutting up your cones and gluing them together is a worthwhile pursuit after all – so long as you've had 17 years' worth of practice! **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

VERDICT

SOUND >> 93%

EASE OF DRIVE >> 57%

BUILD >> 93%

VALUE >> 83%

CONCLUSION
 Impressive build and sophisticated driver design make the L5 a stunning speaker. This level of transparency is rare at any price and the treble extension makes the most of high-resolution ancillaries. Timing, imaging and tonality are all top notch.

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 88%



emotion

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painting with music

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Special reserve

Like a fine wine, Arcam's new flagship CD player is cultured and refined. But is it too 'nice'?

PRODUCT Arcam FMJ CD36

TYPE CD player

PRICE £1,400

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 43x8.5x29cm
 • Weight: 6.5kg • CD and CD-R/ RW compatible
 Supports CD-Text • Two analogue outputs • Optical and electrical digital outputs

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

On the whole, we've had good experiences with Arcam's CD players over the years. So, when the firm announces a new range-topping player, we're all agog. Its appearance, coming just a month after our experience with a batch of similarly-priced CD players in last issue's *Ultimate Group Test*, should make for interesting comparisons, not least with competitors from the Far East, land of low wages and major economies of scale. Can Arcam keep its British-made end up?

At first glance, there's little enough to get excited about. But excitement isn't everything and in terms of basic usability, this player scores very highly. A nice clear display, complete with a calendar-style read-out of remaining tracks, and legibly-marked buttons (including search – joy!) are partnered with a smart front panel. This is cunningly angled just enough to help

make it legible when the player is mounted below eye level, but not enough to make it look strange from across the room. It's very nice indeed, with a high standard of finish and a smartly contrasted top panel in mid grey.

Inside the player, the immediately striking features are a pair of pretty substantial mains transformers and a large aluminium plate, beneath which hangs the main audio circuit. Said plate is part of Arcam's comprehensive shielding strategy, intended to keep signals free from contamination. Also assisting this aim is some 'Stealth Mat' material, developed "from stealth fighter technology" – basically a metal-fibre mesh which provides a continuous screen between upper and lower casework sections, a well-proven technique.

The circuit itself is based round a combination of Analog Devices' latest sample-rate converter, which provides the first stage of digital filtering and justifies the 24-bit/192kHz claims, and a bunch of top-grade DACs from Wolfson, four of them in parallel to keep intrinsic noise to a minimum. Analogue components are also first-rate, and their signal appears on twinned output sockets. You'll also find both kinds of digital output and remote control in/out sockets.

Sound may be the final arbiter, but we would be ungracious if we failed to compliment Arcam on one of the best measured performances we've ever seen from a CD player. Distortion is comfortably below -100dB (0.001%) under practically any conditions, and noise is significantly below the noise floor of most CDs. Hum vanishes into the noise floor too, and jitter is around or below the measurement limit of 100ps. The only thing that's not great, in common with almost every CD player going, is frequency response in the 20kHz to 25kHz band. Response should ideally be flat to 20kHz and attenuated to nothing before 22kHz, but here it's only slightly attenuated by 22kHz and as a result there's enough aliasing to cause audible 'alias-intermodulation distortion' in practical situations with HF-rich discs. We documented this in a *Digitalia* column way back in *HFC* 253 (and it wasn't new then) and it's a little disappointing that almost no one seems to have addressed the problem.

From an ergonomic point of view, this is a nice machine all round. It loads discs swiftly and responds quickly and logically. As with a few we've used recently, though, it makes a lot of mechanical noise – a rather irritating tuned

hiss which is audible over surprisingly loud music if the listener is in close proximity and the player is exposed. Annoying in a £200 machine, this is (or should be) unacceptable in anything at this kind of price.

SOUND QUALITY

We really enjoyed our extended sessions with this player. Not for the first time in recent memory, it called to mind the word 'civilised', adding to that 'sophisticated' – and of course a variety of more common audiophile terms.

It has perfect manners and breeding and knows what is appropriate in a given situation. Sometimes it is appropriate to be controlled, sometimes spontaneous, and as long as it's there on the CD, that's pretty much what you'll get from the CD36. It's likely that some listeners, encountering this player for the first time, will find it dull and uneventful with certain discs. If your taste (or chance) has led you in the past to hi-fi that tends towards excitement as a prime characteristic, you'll almost certainly miss some of that in discs which are not in themselves immensely lively. But put on something that really has a bit of pizzazz encoded in the polycarbonate and your opinion is apt to change rather rapidly.

Take that old audiophile favourite, *Dark Side of the Moon*, for instance. A lot of the guitar work is surprisingly clean for a rock 'n' roll production and you may be used to hearing it subtly 'dirtied up' by your current CD player. Lacking that, it can sound disconcertingly like bad reproduction. But played on the CD36, the multiple alarm clocks will make you jump several feet in the air if you're not ready... which is obviously what was intended.

At the same time, ingeniously layered sonic productions reveal more of the art and craft that went into their making when heard through as detailed a player as this one. Be it multi-tracked pop or naturally-miked opera, if the engineers and producer have done their job well, you'll appreciate it as never before. If they've messed up, well, at least you'll be all the more certain that there's nothing you can do to salvage things.

We're not in a position to waive all criticism. The bass can seem shy, minutely undermining the impact of deep percussion, double bass and so on, and the treble is not quite the purest we've heard. Very bright recordings are for the most part clean and clear, but there's sometimes a touch of harshness that we've known to be absent when playing the same tracks on reference equipment.



“This player absolutely deserves to be heard by anyone seriously considering spending a grand or more on CD-only replay.”

As often happens, some musical styles work better than others. We were pretty much entirely delighted with the CD36's outlook on classical music, and jazz and 'art rock' almost as much so. Synth-based pop, hmm, hard to say – on the whole it often seems that a little replay-stage roughness is almost assumed in the production of some albums, so it rather depends on your tastes and what you expect. But then it's hardly Arcam's fault if someone has deemed less-than-perfect replay to be part of the mastering process!

At the very least, we'd say that this player absolutely deserves to be heard by anyone seriously considering spending a grand or more (possibly even quite a lot more) on CD-only replay. The CD-only aspect may be a no-no for some, but Arcam's belief that plenty of folks own little music on newer formats, and don't

trust universal players to do full justice to a fine CD collection, is one it would be hard to argue with. As such, we're happy to give a nearly unqualified recommendation to this finely conceived and engineered bit of kit. **HFC**
Richard Black



VERDICT

SOUND >> 90% [Progress bar]	PRO Truly excellent neutrality, effortless extension and above all a high degree of refinement make this a very revealing and musically involving player.
FEATURES >> 86% [Progress bar]	CON Mechanical noise really needs sorting. The minutest degree of bass softening and treble harshness are the only sonic flaws worth mentioning.
BUILD >> 89% [Progress bar]	
VALUE >> 88% [Progress bar]	

CONCLUSION
This player really tells you what is on the disc, and while that can sometimes be surprising, even disappointing, long-term exposure is likely to build on the fine initial impression which this player makes with well-recorded material.

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

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Move over P2

NAD joins Goldring in offering a replacement for the classic Rega P2 budget turntable

PRODUCT NAD C555

TYPE Turntable, arm and cartridge

PRICE £250

CONTACT ☎ 01908 319360 # www.nadelectronics.com

Rega's shock announcement that it would be ceasing production of its long running P2 (*née* Planar 2) turntable must have sent ripples of alarm out to everyone saving up for their first proper turntable. Panic not – the P2 lives on, and this new NAD is one of the three turntables it has reborn into, the others being Goldring's GR1.2 and GR2. These turntables are made by Rega as OEM (original equipment manufacturer) and are based on the P2 design. While the C555 and GR1.2 bear a strong family resemblance, NAD claims that the C555 is a refined version of Goldring's base model.

The C555 is based around a solid plinth, which supports itself on three flexible but non-adjustable rubber feet. The degree of isolation these feet offer is therefore limited and anyone seeking to get the best out of this or any other P2-based turntable should invest in decent equipment support.

The MDF platter is driven, via an O-section belt, by an AC synchronous motor that's fixed to the plinth. Next to the motor is a subplatter, which sits on a steel bearing shaft that itself rests on a hardened steel ball and rotates in a sintered brass sleeve.

The tonearm is the base version of Rega's classic cast aluminium design with a plastic three point mounting instead of the large nut that locks the more costly RB250 in place. The

arm comes fitted with a Goldring Elektra moving magnet cartridge, and a reasonably well aligned one at that if this sample is anything to go by.

All of which makes this a decent turntable, albeit one whose value is undermined by Goldring's GR2 (tested in *HFC* 266), which offers a proper RB250 arm, plus a cartridge that retails for £58 more than the Elektra. Yet the difference in price between the two decks is only about the cost of one decent vinyl LP.

SOUND QUALITY

Using a good support – like Rega's clever three-cup wall bracket – really is vital. Aside from levelling the deck and preventing footfall turning into phonographic earthquakes, a good shelf removes coarseness from the sound and lets the deck create a coherent and homogenous soundstage that proved engaging and revealing.

This is not the most sophisticated of turntable/cartridge combos. Nonetheless it has a good sense of timing and an open sound that – thanks to good dynamics – undermines some CD players costing twice as much. Bass is not particularly deep nor treble especially extended, but an entry-level deck sporting what is essentially a £32 cartridge inevitably has its limits. Fortunately, the bass and treble that you do get are articulate and, at the lower end, remarkably shapely.

This all means Jeff Buckley sounds as angelic and transfixing as ever, when he keeps things chilled, but as tracks like *Mojo Pin* build up the turntable's ability to keep its cool is undermined (this is a fairly stern test for any

affordable turntable, however). Perhaps best of all, though, the NAD is tonally very agreeable, revealing the lovely woody character of the original instruments of Jean-Claude Malgoire's La Grande Ecurie orchestra and the spirited nature of the music they play.

This is a easy product to love. It comes fully set up and ready to roll – just add amp or phono stage and set the counterweight and anti-skate. And it sounds extremely open and alluring in the way good vinyl always manages to. It doesn't have the specification-to-value ratio of the Goldring GR2, but that may not matter. This will be the turntable of choice for the legions of NADders out there... and it's a good choice, too. Those saving their pennies for a Rega P2 needn't worry – Goldring and NAD have got it covered. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

VERDICT

SOUND >> 77%



FEATURES >> 66%



BUILD >> 82%



VALUE >> 88%



PRO

Well set up and built with an open and engaging sound that delivers the classic vinyl qualities with ease. High quality tonearm, too.

CON

Needs plenty of isolation for best results, cartridge lacks refinement, Goldring GR2 is even better value for money.

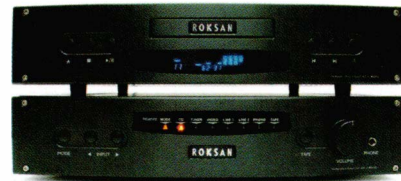
CONCLUSION

The similarly priced Goldring GR2 may be slightly better overall, but this remains an impressive budget turntable with plenty of potential for cartridge upgrades and a pleasing ability to show a clean pair of heels to budget CD or DVD players.

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

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WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION **October 2003**

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Kandy CD
Five Stars

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION **March 2000**

TWIN PACK
TWIN PACK
TWIN PACK
TWIN PACK
TWIN PACK

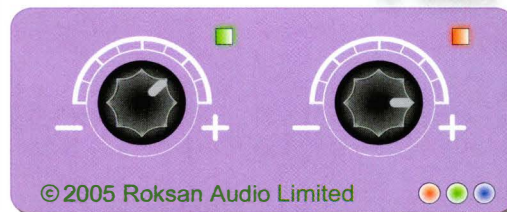
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NHB-108 model one B power amplifier



NHB-18 NS preamplifier (available shortly)



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All will be revealed shortly...



MARTIN LOGAN

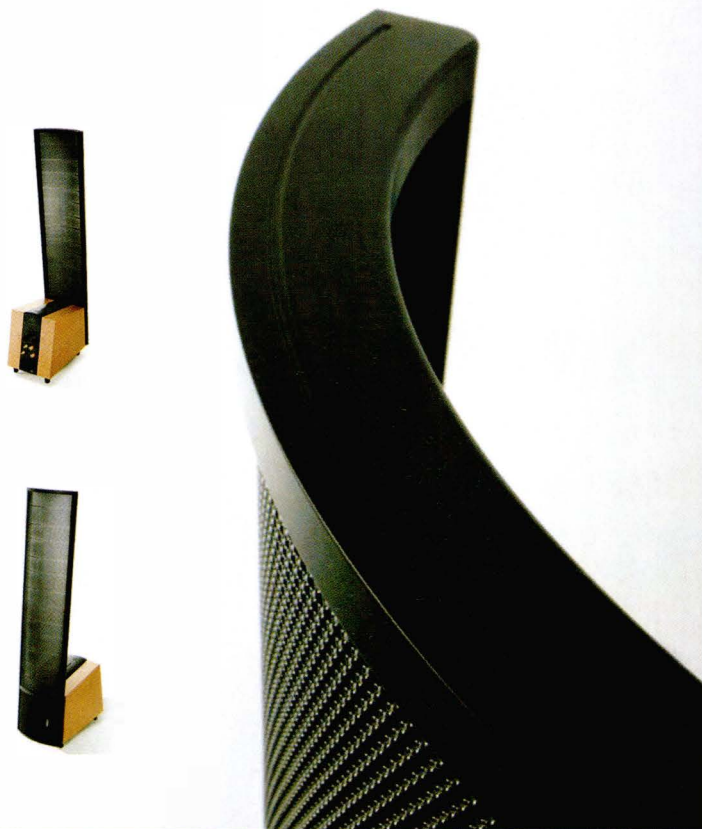
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Vinyl addition

Pro-Ject has upped the budget vinyl ante by adding a phono stage to its popular Debut deck

PRODUCT Pro-Ject Debut/Phono SB

TYPE Turntable, arm, cartridge (with built-in phono stage)

PRICE £180

CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166
 🌐 www.project-audio.com

Pro-Ject has been stirring up the budget turntable market with considerable success over the last few years. In fact, it's thanks to this particular Czech-built brand that this sector is now so competitive.

This latest version of the company's entry-level Debut model has that extremely rare feature: an onboard phono stage. Turntables produce a low-voltage output that requires equalisation, which means you can't just plug one into a spare input on your amp. You need a phono stage to add the gain and do the EQ. These used to be standard fare on amps, but are increasingly rare – so much so that standalone phono stages are the norm from the middle market upwards.

One advantage of building a phono stage into the turntable itself is that the tiny signal produced by the cartridge does not have to travel far prior to amplification and thus will suffer minimal degradation. The drawback is that you are stuck with the fitted stage and have no means of upgrading. This is less of an issue with fit-and-forget budget decks, of course, which is why Pro-Ject has added this feature to the Debut.

The other change is the addition of electronic speed change, so you no longer have to fiddle with the belt to play your 45s; if you don't

mind moving the belt, you can even play 78s. Otherwise, the Debut has a pressed steel platter and felt mat, rubber decoupled motor, MDF plinth and flat drive belt. The tonearm is aluminium with gimbal bearings and a nice chunky cable, the latter exiting the phono stage, of course. Its gold plated connectors come complete with a 3.5mm mini jack adaptor for easy hook up to a computer or mini system. The ready-aligned cartridge is an Ortofon OM5e, which normally retails for around £25 and can be upgraded with a number of alternative styl.

SOUND QUALITY

This Debut is a pretty smooth operator. Inevitably, it doesn't extract the last ounce of detail from a vinyl LP, but it gives a good impression of pulling quite a lot of what counts out of the groove. It is inherently laid back – a bonus with budget decks, as they rarely have the sort of isolation that's required to do the job well on a basic stand or shelf. A deck that doesn't attempt to sound lively will keep some of the distortion that vibrating supports can produce largely at bay.

It produces a warm, but surprisingly smooth sound, and with a good vinyl pressing, bass is well extended and doesn't want for too much in definition. High treble, on the other hand, is notable by its absence, though this is only drawn to one's attention when making direct comparisons with other decks. The midrange does a good job of delivering well-rounded vocals and wide – if not particularly high – images, and depth resolve is pretty good, too.

Dynamics are not a strong point, but with a cartridge like this we're hardly surprised. What's more gratifying, though, is the way it deals with relatively complex material without sounding brash or edgy – a common failing with sub-£200 decks.

It's only when you bring in something like a Goldring GR1.2 turntable, assisted by a decent standalone phono stage, that its limitations become apparent. Inevitably, though, such a combination ends up costing more than the Debut.

If you are after a genuine fit-and-forget product, this version of the Debut is hard to beat. It's not the last word in sound quality around the £200 mark, but it's clearly capable of entertaining results. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

VERDICT

SOUND >> 73%



FEATURES >> 82%



BUILD >> 74%



VALUE >> 90%



CONCLUSION

This is a very neat solution for those looking for a decent turntable that they can plug straight into virtually anything as easily as a CD player. It's not the last word in sound per pound but does make a good fist of all things vinyl.

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

GROUP TEST & LAB REPORTS: PAUL MESSENGER

LOUDSPEAKERS

Luxury without high-end price tags – does this sextet have the performance to match?

The six loudspeakers assembled for this test group all cost much less than what is regarded as high-end in today's inflationary marketplace. They're by no means inexpensive, but do incorporate plenty of interesting – and costly – luxury touches.

Five are floorstanders, and four have a real wood veneer finish. But, what really distinguishes this group is just how much variety there is among the different models. The simplest and smallest is also the most costly, but that's because B&W's 805S is the least expensive model in that company's most upmarket 800 Series range. In complete contrast, Triangle's four-driver Celius ES is one of the largest in that company's least costly range.

Like the little B&W, both the Monopulse 42A and Usher Compass CP6311 are simple two-way designs, though both stack the bass/mid driver with generous port-loaded floorstanding enclosures. The Rega R7 and the Audio Physic Spark 3 are two-and-a-half-way configurations, where a two-way is

supplemented by an extra bass-only driver, with the obvious advantage here of keeping the front view attractively slim. Whereas the Audio Physic's bass is loaded by a rear port, the Rega has a larger, side-mounted bass driver coupled to a folded transmission line. The much larger Triangle is a full three-way design, with twin bass drivers loaded by its generous ported enclosure.

One major bonus with these models is that all five floorstanders take plenty of trouble to ensure good floor coupling, by locating their spikes directly into metal feet or a plinth. This not only extends the footprints beyond the confines of the cabinet to ensure good overall physical stability – essential for the Usher and Audio Physic models, both of which opt for enclosures that are built to tilt backwards, purely in the interests of time-alignment – it also guarantees fine spike-coupling integrity. This is a regular weak spot with budget floorstanders.

It's good to see such a wide choice in presentation too, from the shiny lacquer of the Usher via a variety of real wood

veneers to the polished steel or CFC (carbon fibre composite) of Monopulse. The spice of life indeed. **HFC**

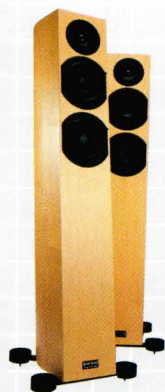
EQUIPMENT USED

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

MUSIC USED

- Ⓢ Alabama 3 *Exit on Coldharbour Lane*
- Ⓢ Alison Krauss + Union Station *Live*
- Ⓢ Nitin Sawhney *Beyond Skin*
- Ⓢ Chemical Brothers *Push the Button*
- Ⓢ Laurie Anderson *Life on a String*
- Ⓢ LSO Rostropovich *Shostakovich: Symphony No.11*
- Ⓢ BBC Radios 3 and 4 were also used throughout the test

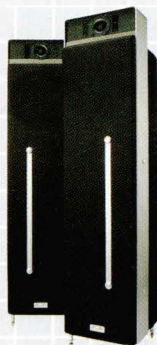
ON TEST



Audio Physic Spark 3
£1,499



B&W 805S
£1,600



Monopulse 42A
£995



Rega R7
£1,498



Triangle Celius ES
£1,395



Usher Compass CP6311
£1,500

LISTENING TESTS

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

LAB TESTS

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

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

LAB REPORTS: THE BAR GRAPH

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

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

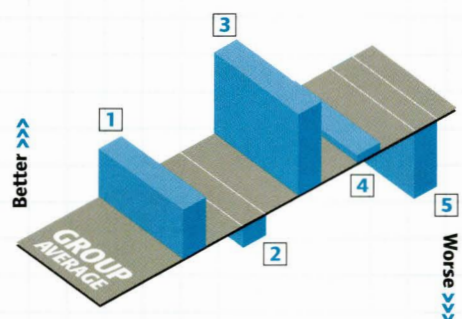
2] Bass extension: A speaker's bass is heavily modified by the room. To replicate 'real world' conditions, our figure represents the averaged bass roll-off frequency at -6dB with reference to the broad midband, measured across the far field for a stereo pair in a 4.3x2.6x5.5m room.

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

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

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

OUR BAR GRAPHS: AN EXAMPLE



£1,600 01903 221500 www.bwspeakers.com

B&W 805S

Gorgeous entry-level speaker from B&W's latest flagship range

Reviewed in considerably greater length and detail in *HFC 266*, it seemed worthwhile to subject this classy standmount to the rather more rigorous examination that an *Ultimate Group Test* involves. In outline, this is a compact two-way standmount, but since B&W is the leading brand in hi-fi loudspeakers worldwide with extensive research facilities, and since the 800 Series is its top range, this £1,600 per pair 805S baby uses some very classy ingredients.

It looks very like its Nautilus 805 and Signature 805 predecessors, and certainly the configuration is the same as previous models. Minor changes involve the grille, the top surface, the location of the tweeter, and the centre of the main drive unit cone. Looks can be deceptive though, as the company claims that the vast majority of the components have been developed and changed.

The top D-suffixed models among the new 800s feature costly diamond tweeter diaphragms, but the S-suffix on this model refers to a more conventional 25mm aluminium dome tweeter. However, a new surround has lowered its fundamental resonance, allowing a simpler crossover filter with a more gentle slope. This tweeter is mounted externally, and loaded by a tapered tube that acts as a transmission line to absorb (rather than reflect) the rearward output.

Its curved enclosure cabinetwork avoids parallel sides, and is exceptionally rigid. The sides and back are formed from a single piece of veneered plywood, and

the whole is further strengthened by an internal 'honeycomb' matrix that braces the box at many points and in every direction. A total volume of around 11 litres is loaded by one of B&W's distinctive 'Flowports'.

The bass and midrange is supplied by the latest and most refined incarnation of its 165mm cast-frame main driver, equipped with a 120mm woven Kevlar/polymer cone. The magnetic motor features the latest 'balanced drive' metalwork, and a large 'bullet-shaped' phase compensating dust dome covers the voice coil. Twin terminal pairs permit bi-wired or bi-amped operation.

SOUND QUALITY

This standmount is the smallest – and the most costly – model in our group, and these factors are reflected in the sound quality of the speaker. The inevitably small size of a standmount – especially one, like the 805S, that's aligned for free space sitting – is bound to restrict the absolute bass extension somewhat, compared to larger floorstanders and that, indeed, is the case.

The plus side is that this model is part of a top-of-the-line range, is therefore built using the very finest ingredients. This translates directly into a sound quality that is unusually subtle and sweet, with a notably wide dynamic range. The shaping and matrix stiffening clearly contribute to a remarkable freedom from boxiness, which is comfortably better than the standards achieved by floorstanders, and contributes to the fine image precision and out-of-the-box airiness.

The slight lack of bass weight is certainly audible, but it isn't that great a handicap, and a major strength is its accuracy, coherence and dynamic range through the upper bass and lower midband. The upper mid and presence might be a little too laid back for some tastes, but it doesn't seem to hamper intelligibility unduly, and does help avoid aggressive tendencies, even with poorly recorded material. The spacious imaging and freedom from heaviness and thickening effects brings a lightness of touch that is utterly delightful, while at the same time the sound is notably free from any unpleasant effects. **HFC**



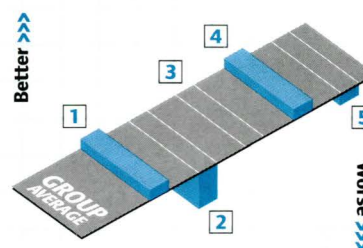
LAB REPORT

Our latest samples of the 805S recorded essentially the same results as the examples we tested earlier in the year, which is encouraging from the point of view of production consistency.

The 805S has a different bass alignment from its Nautilus and Signature 805 predecessors, sacrificing some ultimate bass extension to achieve a free-space alignment that will minimise midband coloration. That said, it still delivers decent bass down to 40Hz.

The overall far-field in-room balance is a little mid-forward, and could have been smoother. The top end above 800Hz rolls off very gently and quite smoothly, albeit with a slight presence notch centred on 3kHz, around the crossover point. The impedance stays respectable throughout, recording an average above 8 ohms, with minima of around 5 ohms. Sensitivity is a healthy 88-89dB, and current demands should not be excessive.

HOW IT COMPARES



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

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	88dB	89dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/3.7 ohms	7/4.5 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	42Hz	40Hz

VERDICT

SOUND >> 91%

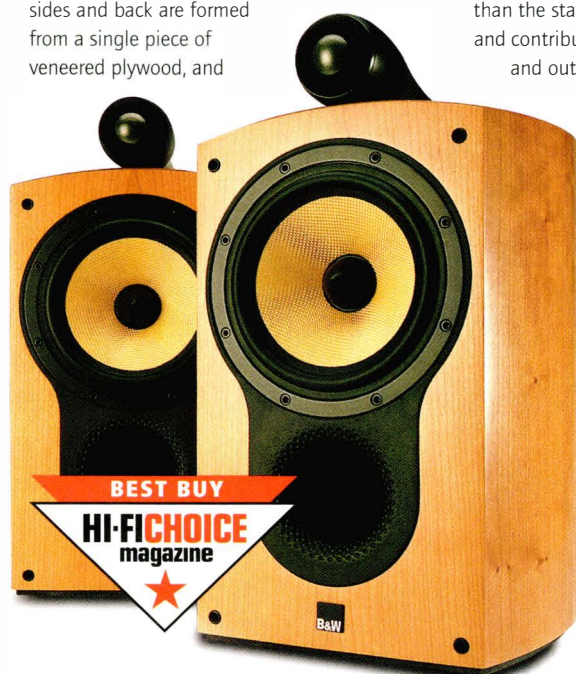
PRACTICALITY >> 88%

BUILD >> 93%

VALUE >> 86%

It could sound smoother and bass is limited, but this classy speaker shows the benefits of a high-quality standmount with excellent coherence, wide dynamic range, fine imaging and freedom from boxiness.

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



BEST BUY

HI-FI CHOICE
magazine





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JAS Audio Speakers (www.jas-audio.com)

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Orsa (£1,399.00) - top left

This 2-way speaker has a distinct twin cabinet design. This vertically vented speaker has venting ports between the upper and lower cabinets, which produces a 360 degree sound field that give rise to excellent 3-D soundstage.

Description	2 way vented, twin cabinet, 2 units
Frequency Response	40 Hz - 60 kHz
Dynamic Range	10W-200W
Impedance	8 Ω
Nominal Power	150W
Sensitivity	88dB
Drive Units	5" twin ribbon tweeter 6" DPC cone midrange/bass
Crossover Frequency	2400Hz
Dimensions (cm)	W 23 x H 42 x D 34
Weight	11kg/pc
Finishes	variety of 14 coat piano lacquer finishes

Orior (£2,299.00) - top right

Smooth, precise and powerful! Never has a 2-way speaker sounded so big and with such details in its sonic reproduction. The quick and agile bass region goes below 30Hz, easily outshining many large floor standing speakers at any price range.

Description	2 way vented, 2 units
Frequency Response	29 Hz - 60 kHz
Dynamic Range	10W-200W
Impedance	8 Ω
Nominal Power	130W
Sensitivity	88dB
Drive Units	5" twin ribbon tweeter 7" ceramic cone midrange/bass
Crossover Frequency	2200Hz
Dimensions (cm)	W 24.5 x H 39.5 x D 35.5
Weight	14kg/pc
Finishes	variety of 14 coat piano lacquer finishes

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MONOPULSE 42A

Unusual in every respect, does MonoPulse challenge stereotypes?

A relatively new name on the scene, MonoPulse loudspeakers were conceived and created by hi-fi enthusiast Allan Hendry, who spent much of his professional life working on pulsed, phased-array radar systems. That experience made him particularly conscious of the importance of phase relationships, and he's subsequently applied that know-how to the integration of bass/mid driver and tweeter through the crossover region. The result was the creation of a range of MonoPulse loudspeakers.

We reviewed the first of these, the MonoPulse 32, in *HFC* 245 two years ago, and with very positive results. So this time we're checking out the top-of-the-line 42A/AB, a radically styled 40-litre two-way floorstander that comes in a wide range of colours and finishes. The base version tested here uses a steel wrap and costs £995 per pair, while a luxury 42AB model costing £1,395 replaces the steel with a carbon fibre composite. These two versions are said to be sonically identical.

The styling is certainly very original and striking. The thick and wide wrap, in whatever

material, forms a tall inverted-U, covering the sides and top, and is firmly bolted onto the outside of a wood-composite enclosure that's wide enough to accommodate the relatively large 210mm paper-cone bass/mid driver.

A reflex port is fitted into the base of the enclosure, firing downwards and held about five centimetres off the floor by some very well founded and purposeful spikes. The enclosure is roughly the same depth as its width, so the footprint is quite modest, but the hefty 28kg weight of the steel version seems to confer good physical stability (The 42AB version is some 10kg lighter).

As part of the time alignment, the two drivers are mounted on separate baffles, so the bass/mid driver fixing is nearer listeners than the 25mm soft dome tweeter. This also provides some mechanical and acoustic isolation between the drivers. The two separate grille cloths are available in a variety of colours, the larger, lower one adorned with an offset metal strip that seems to be purely decorative. Connection is made via twin terminal pairs, allowing for bi-wiring or bi-amping.

SOUND QUALITY

MonoPulse refers to a concept it calls 'transient synchronism' as the key ingredient that distinguishes its loudspeakers from its rivals. And as soon as the speakers were connected up, it was immediately obvious that they offer something very special in the way the leading edges of voices and musical instruments are defined. As a direct consequence, music is delivered with a dynamic vividness, integrity and sheer excitement.

'The shock of the real' is perhaps an overworked phrase, but it's the one that came immediately to mind here. This speaker falls somewhat short of its peers in terms of tonal neutrality and overall smoothness, both of which leave some room for improvement. Direct comparison with other speakers reveals some midband forwardness alongside a treble that's altogether too restrained, and there is a touch of 'shout' and nasality about the way it handles speech.

The lack of top end does somewhat hamper low-level speech intelligibility, but the extraordinarily fine midband coherence provides more than fair compensation. The outstanding transient integrity and freedom from time-smear bring great dynamic expression, giving thoroughly enjoyable results, when used with a low power valve amplifier or smooth, Class A transistor design. **HFC**

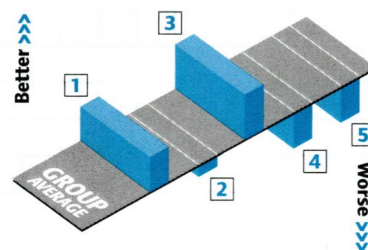


LAB REPORT

The 42A delivers a thoroughly impressive combination of high sensitivity (92dB), good bass extension (-6dB @ 28Hz in-room) and an easy-to-drive impedance that stays above 7 ohms throughout. However, if that's the good news, there's also a down side in the overall tonal balance, which is rather too strong through the upper midband (500Hz-2kHz), and altogether too weak in the treble, especially around 6kHz, where there's a dip nearly 10dB below the upper mid level. Note that the crossover here occurs at a relatively high 4kHz – unusually high for a 210mm main driver – while the impedance trace reveals an obvious resonance at 190Hz.

The bass decade is smoother and more even than most when the speakers are sited well clear of walls, but it's also a little lightweight, averaging some 5dB below that strong upper mid. This means it's worth trying out positions closer to the wall.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> +30%
- 2] Bass extension >> -10%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +40%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> -30%
- 5] Response smoothness >> -30%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	92dB	92dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	-	8/7 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	-	28Hz

VERDICT

SOUND >> 85%



PRACTICALITY >> 88%



BUILD >> 85%

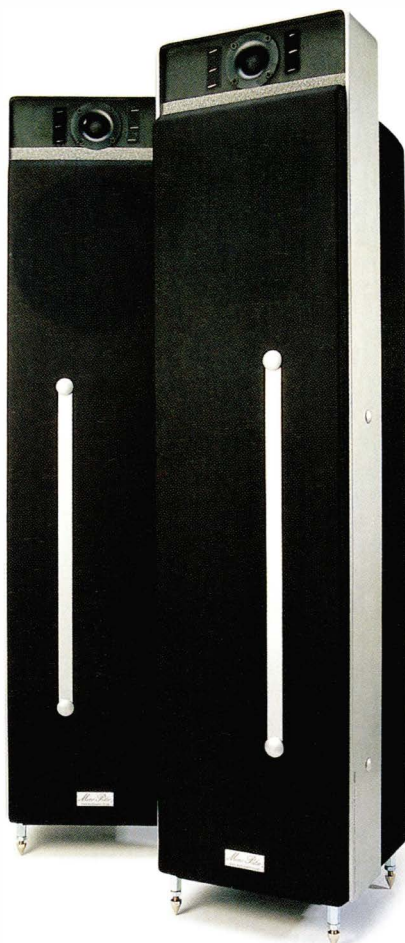


VALUE >> 85%



A speaker that looks and sounds very different from the norm. Midband time-coherence is quite magnificent, though it's also rather forward and the treble is too restrained. A fine match for valve amps.

HI-FI CHOICE
OVERALL SCORE **85%**





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REGA R7

Rega packs plenty of innovative engineering into this slim design

Rega has matured into one of Britain's longest-established and best-regarded hi-fi brands, and if the company is still best known for its redoubtable turntables, the electronics and speakers have also been very well received in the marketplace.

That particularly applies to the relatively new R-series loudspeakers. Three of the five models have undergone *Hi-Fi Choice* scrutiny over the past year or so, with very impressive results. One notable exception is this £1,498 R7, which features much of the engineering we found in the 'flagship' R9, yet sells for £1,000 less.

Finished in high-quality real wood veneer, the front view of this stylish speaker is exceptionally slim, with sections of the front edges scalloped away. By way of compensation, it's also unusually deep. Fore 'n' aft stability is therefore excellent, while neat cast alloy outriggers improve the lateral stability and also provide genuinely secure spike fixing.

The three drive units are configured as a two-and-a-half-way, the bass-only driver operating alongside the bass/mid driver,

which then hands over to the tweeter at around 3kHz. To keep the front slim, the 165mm bass driver is mounted on the side, and the speaker pair is mirror imaged, so you can choose to point them in or outwards. This bass driver has a high-inductance voice coil, avoiding any need for crossover components, and is loaded by a folded quarter-wave transmission line, which exits next to the driver.

The small bass/mid driver has a 130mm frame and 90mm paper cone, and is loaded by a sealed section at the top of the enclosure, just above the 19mm soft dome tweeter. A decorative black Perspex panel covers up the front driver mounting hardware, while on the rear, you'll find twin terminals fitted. These are conveniently close to the floor, feeding separate crossover boards sited in the voids outside the shaped transmission line.

SOUND QUALITY

Measurement suggests the R7 might be best sited in free space, but in practice a little extra bass reinforcement was felt preferable, and the speakers were placed with their backs 50cm from the wall, and with the bass drivers directed inwards.

Under these conditions, the speakers delivered a beautifully smooth and well-balanced sound, albeit with an overall character that is significantly brighter than the norm. This ensures plenty of subtle fine detail is clearly audible, but it is better suited to clean, high-quality recordings than the aggressive, edgy material that is all too common – the Chemical Brothers' *Push the Button* wasn't too pleasant when played loud, whereas Laurie Anderson's *Life on a String* sounded beautifully sweet and open.

The broad midband is a shade understated here, though beautifully smooth, unusually open, and free from any obvious colorations. Speech sounds just a little understated perhaps, but the extra top end detail helps maintain good intelligibility even when playing the system very quietly, and boxiness is under pretty good control.

Bass is particularly impressive. Though not unduly massive, it shows great dexterity and agility with unusually good discrimination of tonal colours, ensuring an exceptional ability to communicate the key musical information, free from unwanted thickening or resonance. At the time of writing, Rega is struggling to meet demand for this attractive and sonically impressive loudspeaker – they say that good things are worth waiting for. **HFC**



LAB REPORT

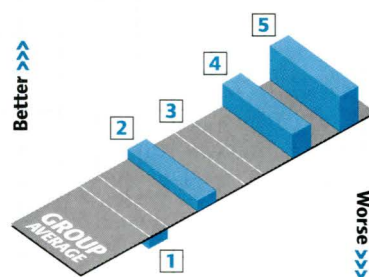
Inwards or outwards? Our in-room measurements clearly favour directing the bass drivers inwards. Bass output is a little dry when the speakers are sited in free space, but can become too strong and also a little detached if the speakers are too close to a wall – experiment *in situ* for best results.

From 500Hz upwards, the balance is unusually and exceptionally smooth and flat – though 'flat' is neither the norm nor necessarily the ideal. There's no trace of the usual presence/crossover 'dip' here, which is no bad thing, though the upper mid and treble are a little restrained.

The upper treble (9-12kHz) is 2-3dB stronger. Lower down, there's also a rather obvious peak centred on 300Hz.

Sensitivity is around 88dB, bass extension is pretty solid down to 24Hz (in-room), while the impedance seen by the amplifier looks relatively easy, never falling below four ohms.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> -10%
- 2] Bass extension >> +10%
- 3] Ease of drive >> 0%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> +20%
- 5] Response smoothness >> +30%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	89dB	88dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	6/- ohms	6/4.5 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	-	24Hz

VERDICT

SOUND >> 90%

Practicality >> 84%

Build >> 89%

Value >> 90%

Super-slim floorstander has a super-smooth sound. The bass is agile and informative and the top-end is brighter than average, giving plenty of fine detail, though it can also sound a little exposed with some recordings.

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



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EASTERN ELECTRIC

www.easterelectric.co.uk

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.

The rest as they say, is history..... and the results speak for themselves. A range of products that set new standards and a level of performance way beyond its price-point.

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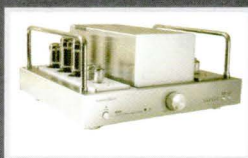
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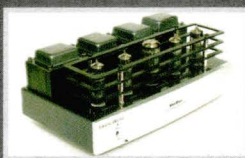
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TRIANGLE CELIUS ES

Can the Celius ES justify its price premium over the Antal ES?

Triangle is a distinctive and individualistic French brand that has enjoyed considerable success in recent *Hi-Fi Choice* reviews. However, among the company's budget range, the most costly Celius variants seem to carry a hefty price premium over the very similar Antals. With just a modest increase in the size of enclosure and drive units, how come the £1,395 per pair Celius ES costs £420 more than the Antal ES? The main justification is that the senior model has real wood rather than vinyl woodprint finish, but that still seems a hefty premium.

Even with wood veneered finish, it's not the prettiest of speakers, with a convex black painted front panel, surrounded and backed by rather prosaic veneers in Bordeaux, Champagne and Cognac colours. An elaborate damped metal plinth provides a combination of stability and tripod spike-coupling, the latter centred on a large central pointed cone that specifically grounds the front panel.



A full three-way design, the Celius ES combines a pair of port-loaded 165mm bass drivers, each with 120mm doped paper cones, operating in tandem up to 300Hz. A rather different 165mm midrange unit covers the frequency range from 300Hz to 3kHz, and then hands over to a new tweeter with a substantial cast alloy horn. Horn loading acts on sound in rather the same way that a lens operates on light. Among other things it increases perceived sensitivity and headroom, but Triangle's main justification is that matching its mouth diameter more closely to the midrange cone gives a smoother energy transfer through the crossover zone.

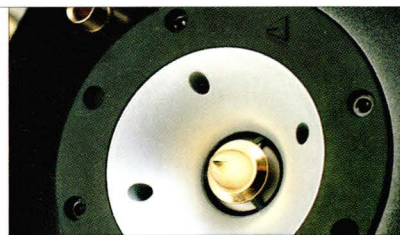
All the frame drivers are Triangle's own, using cast alloy chassis' and paper cone diaphragms throughout. Whereas the two bass drivers have normal synthetic rubber surrounds, the midrange driver has a pleated, damped cloth surround – a technique favoured because it has lower energy storage than rubber. The rear panel carries twin terminal pairs, and a flared front port reflex-loads the bass enclosure.

SOUND QUALITY

One might have expected that such a large, multi-driver three way would need to be kept well clear of walls, but in fact such siting led to a rather thickened sound with little bass authority. Moving the speaker closer to the wall, so that the front panel is about 50cm out, seemed to get the tonal balance just about right, delivering an impressively even, wideband sound with ample low bass, and vigorous dynamic expression.

Although the Celius ES was undeniably effective at delivering plenty of detail with some authority, the sounds it creates also lack sweetness. There's a matter-of-fact quality about this speaker that is unquestionably informative, but which is not particularly inviting at the same time. There's also a certain amount of midband coloration, adding a pinched quality with some nasality to voices, and there's a degree of hardness at the top end, too.

The mid and treble drivers here sit quite high off the ground, adding to the overall impression of scale, and helping to supply precise imaging. But there's also a slight impression of detachment between the bass end and the rest here, rather in the manner of sub/sat systems. The net result is that the overall sound lacks a little of the top-to-bottom coherence that simpler speaker systems seem to achieve. **HFC**



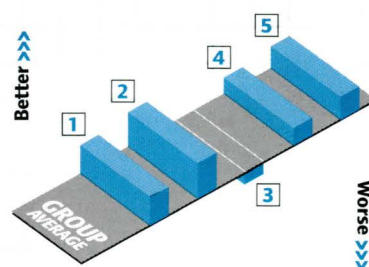
LAB REPORT

Lots of drivers usually means the speaker will be possessed of good sensitivity, but this is alongside a necessarily current-hungry amplifier load, and the Celius ES is no exception. Sensitivity is 91-92dB here, but that generous figure is compromised by an impedance that dips down below 4 ohms at 120Hz and 850Hz.

In free space, the bass region (below 80Hz) is a little shy, and best results were found with the back of the speaker around 30cm from the wall. This gave a very good in-room balance; just a shade strong below 100Hz, and a little lean through the upper bass (100-250Hz).

The broad mid and treble are smooth, flat and very well ordered, with just a modest 2dB downward step 1.5-2kHz. As with other Triangles that use the same horn loaded tweeter, there's a pronounced (+4dB) peak at the edge of audibility, centred on 16kHz.

HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> +25%
- 2] Bass extension >> +30%
- 3] Ease of drive >> -10%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> +15%
- 5] Response smoothness >> +20%

SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	92dB	91dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/4 ohms	4/3.3 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	45Hz	20Hz

VERDICT

SOUND >> 83%

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

PRACTICALITY >> 79%

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

BUILD >> 83%

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

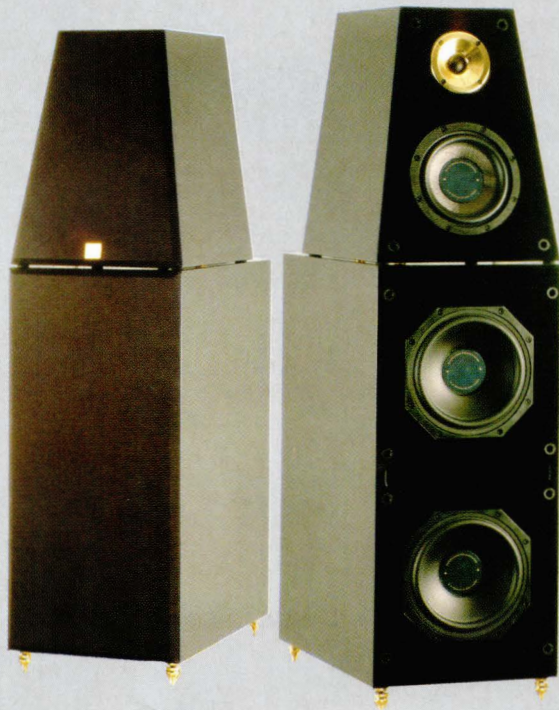
VALUE >> 80%

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □



This tall, floorstanding three-way delivers a well balanced, wide-bandwidth sound with fine neutrality and good dynamics, but there's also some hardness here, and overall coherence could be improved.

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



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No matter what your expectations are, nothing will prepare you for your first encounter with the Hyperion 938 loudspeaker.

The beautiful piano high gloss finish and attention to detail can hardly fail to impress but its the noise this speaker makes that will leave most speechless. Listen to other speakers and in most cases you'll find one aspect, one area that you wish you could change to create that perfect loudspeaker. Listen to the Hyperion 938 and the first thing you'll ears will tell you is just how balanced the 938 is. You really cannot fault its performance in any area.

A duo-cabinet design has been created for this full-range 3-way speaker. With a dedicated cabinet for the bass, two 8" S.V.F. woofers are used instead of a larger size woofer for truly amazing bass speed, resolution, coherence and impact. The New HPS-938 is your answer to a new level of audio experience.

The piano high gloss black version sells for £3,750 and birds-eye maple version for £4,500. Reviewers/customers are comparing the Hyperion 938 to speakers costing three or four times the price.

This high-efficiency loudspeaker (90db) can be driven by both valve and solid-state amplifiers with ease. Contact Shadow Audio for more information and to arrange an audition of these next generation loudspeakers!



*conditions apply

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Gill Solus	£295

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NEW IsoTek NOVA

(shown on the right)

Following the renowned Titan mains conditioner, comes the new **NOVA**.

Similarly styled to the Titan, the **NOVA** is intended primarily for lower power source components. Like the Titan it has high current capability (3860 watts). This makes it suitable to run complete modestly sized systems. Each of the six outlets has individual filtering. **Adaptive Gating** senses components power requirements and adjusts filtering and power to suit.

*conditions apply

Gill Solus



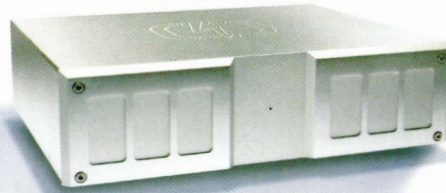
Gill Minisub



Titan



NOVA



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CONCLUSIONS

The challenges of design still account for much of the sound quality, even at this price point

This is an interesting and very varied group of speakers, amply illustrating the fact that their designers have had to make choices between conflicting requirements, even at these quite serious prices.

Five of our six are floorstanders, so to provide interesting contrast and comparison we've also included B&W's 805S, the luxury two-way standmount we covered in much more detail in *HFC* 266. There's plenty of variety in the widely differing approaches to styling and finish, though, even before the obvious difference

between standmount and floorstander are taken into account. The B&W and Audio Physic stand out with their compact dimensions and high-class, attractively curved, real-wood cabinetwork, elegantly combining tradition and fashion.

The little Audio Physic Spark 3 is also very unusual in adopting a pronounced backwards tilt, although this a trait it shares with Usher's Compass model. This not only makes them look distinctive, but also provides a measure of physical time alignment between the drive units. Careful fore 'n' aft

driver positioning in the interests of time alignment is also featured in the B&W, with its external tweeter, and in the MonoPulse, which has arguably the most unusual styling of all with its steel or carbon fibre wrap. Combine this with the gloriously coherent midband, which helps bring a shocking realism to human voices, and it's clear the MonoPulse brand is going places.

Rega scores styling points with a design that is attractively slim, thanks to the use of a side-mounted, transmission line loaded bass driver. The Triangle is

the most conventional – though also the most speaker – for the money in this group, with a cleverly executed plinth arrangement.

For sheer sonic neutrality and delicacy, the B&W and Audio Physic both earn Best Buy honours, with finely judged tonal balances that should suit the widest range of material and ancillaries.

For rather different reasons, the Rega has a lot going for it, too. The R7's brightness and bass agility combine to deliver exceptional musical detail, while staying on the right side of brashness. As such, it also receives a Best Buy. **HFC**

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AMPLIFIERS

ARCAM FMJ A32 £1,200

A very civilised all-rounder with a revealing and thoroughly musical sound.

AUDIO NOTE OTO LINE SE £1,599

Very limited power, but a delightful example of a single-ended valve amp.

CD PLAYERS

MYRYAD MXC6000 £1,400

A high degree of detail and insight, combined with great 'listenability'.

NAIM CD5X £1,450

Simple player with grip and coherence; engaging and musically involving.

HINTS AND TIPS

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

>> Finding the right place to put the loudspeakers acoustically is very important. Do take the time and trouble to experiment.

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

>> Expect speakers to improve steadily over the first 100 hours or so.

>> Use decent speaker cable, if you want your system to perform at its best.

LOUDSPEAKERS AT A GLANCE



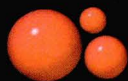
MAKE MODEL	Audio Physic Spark 3	B&W 805S	MonoPulse 42A	Rega R7	Triangle Celius ES	Usher CP6311
PRICE	£1,499	£1,600	£995	£1,498	£1,395	£1,500
SOUND						
PRACTICALITY						
BUILD						
VALUE						
OVERALL						
CONCLUSION	This beautiful little floorstander is well balanced with a delicate, smooth and slightly understated sound.	High-class standmount has superb dynamic range and very fine coherence, though deep bass is inevitably lacking.	Unusual styling alongside magnificent midband coherence, but the balance is a little wayward and treble is lacking.	Super slim floorstander delivers superior detail with a bright yet smooth top end and notably agile bass.	Bulky three-way has fine balance and dynamics but lacks some coherence and sounds a little hard.	Unusual styling and finish, but the sound lacks output through the upper bass and lower midband.

KEY FEATURES

SIZE (WxHxD)	15x98x22cm	24x42x35cm	26x110x25cm	17x98x35cm	20x112x34cm	35x110x65cm
DRIVER CONFIG	2.5-way	2-way	2-way	2.5-way	3-way	2-way
MAIN DRIVER SIZE(S)	2x150mm	1x165mm	1x210mm	1x130mm, 1x165mm	3x160mm	1x180mm
STAND/ FLOOR?	Floor	Stand	Floor	Floor	Floor	Floor
CABINET FINISH	Real Wood	Real Wood	Steel/ CFC	Real Wood	Real Wood	Lacquer
BI-WIRE?	Np	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

LAB CONCLUSIONS E = EXCELLENT • G = GOOD • A = AVERAGE • P = POOR

SENSITIVITY	90db G	89db A	92db E	88db A	91db E	87db P
EST. BASS EXTENSION	30Hz A	40Hz P	28Hz A	24Hz G	20Hz G	25Hz G
IMPEDANCE (NOM/ MIN)	7/5 ohms A	7/4.5 ohms A	8/7 ohms E	6/4.5 ohms A	4/3.3 ohms P	6/4 ohms A
OVERALL FREQ. BALANCE	+30% G	+10% A	-30% P	+20% G	+15% A	-50% P
RESPONSE SMOOTHNESS	+20% G	-10% A	-30% P	+30% G	+20% G	-50% P

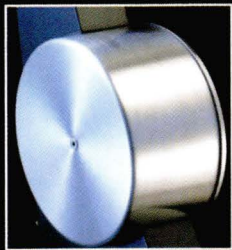


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nonconformist

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

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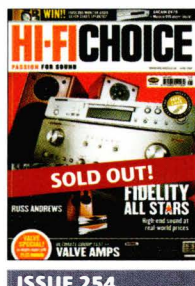


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ISSUE 253



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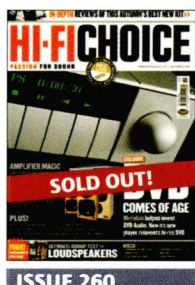
ISSUE 257



ISSUE 258



ISSUE 259



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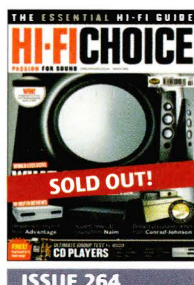
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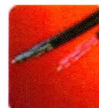
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HI-FI CHOICE BUYER'S BIBLE



Welcome to the *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible* – the ultimate guide to the very best high performance hi-fi and multichannel gear you can buy. Here, you'll find our favourite current products listed under easy to use categories, plus useful information on what to look for and how to get the most from your components.

Reviews you can trust

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

How to use this guide

The *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible* is the best way to make a shortlist of components for your system. Pick the ones that best suit your taste and budget, then use our *Dealer Classified* section to find specialist outlets where you can audition these components with your favourite discs.

Products that score more than 80 per cent overall are automatically featured in the *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible*. Any Best Buy or Editor's Choice Badges awarded are also displayed.

SOURCE COMPONENTS

- 86 CD PLAYERS
- 88 DVD PLAYERS
- 90 VINYL
- 93 RADIO TUNERS
- 94 DIGITAL RECORDERS

AMPLIFIERS

- 102 STEREO AMPS
- 104 MULTICHANNEL AV AMPS

LOUDSPEAKERS

- 106 STEREO SPEAKERS
- 110 MULTICHANNEL SPEAKER PACKAGES

ANCILLARIES

- 113 HEADPHONES
- 115 CABLES
- 117 STANDS AND SUPPORTS

GLOSSARY

- 121 CHOICE BITS ACCESSORIES SHOP

DEALER CLASSIFIED

- 122 DEALER GUIDE
- 128 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

BB BEST BUY **EC** 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											
BB	Arcam DIVA CD73T	400	Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic – a finely judged balance for budget to mid-price systems	●	●	●	●				247
BB	Arcam DIVA CD192	850	Beautifully built, well featured player with clear, open and involving sound	●	●	●	●				264
BB	CambridgeAudio Azur 640C	250	This elegant little player can hold its own in very elevated company – a budget system will barely do it justice	●	●	●					249
BB	Consonance CD120	795	Fine performance in all areas with the possible exception of slight treble harshness	●	●	●			●		269
BB	Cyrus CD8x	1,000	Impressive mix of detail, musicality, analysis and appearance. Even better with the PSX-R power supply (£400)	●	●	●					270
BB	Exposure 2010 S	599	Highly communicative sounds with good bass, though not always the most analytical	●	●	●					264
BB	Marantz CD7300	350	Astonishingly capable sub-£500 player with effortless bass, detailed mid and treble and vast soundstages	●	●	●	●		●		250
BB	Naim CD5i	825	As idiosyncratic as ever, but sonically the CD5i is the definitive player at the price	●	●	●	●				259
BB	Quad 99 CD-P	1,000	Good but not outstanding player that also doubles as a preamp, with digital inputs and volume controls	●	●	●					259
BB	Roksan Kandy MkIIID	650	Clean, tidy and expressive player – a more than worthwhile improvement on previous versions	●	●	●	●				259
BB	Sony SCD-XA3000ES	800	A revised and refined version of the SCD-XA333ES that provides almost holographic sound	●	●	●	●	●	●		248
ABOVE £1,000											
BB	Audio Analogue Maestro	1,650	The new Maestro 192/24 delivers a sound that's slightly rosy yet always musical and thoroughly enjoyable	●	●	●			●		257
BB	Audia Flight CD One	4,500	Sumptuously built toploader capable of real world dynamics with great recordings. Two digital inputs	●	●	●			●		269
EC	Ayre CX-7 CD Player	2,950	Superbly built and natural sounding player that will win you over with its range of capabilities and transparency	●	●	●			●		251
EC	BAT VK-DSSE 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
BB	Copland CDA823	1,750	Its ability to resolve micro dynamics and acoustic space is second to none.	●	●	●			●		267
BB	Hegel CDP2A	1,500	A technically proficient and masterly-sounding player built by people who clearly know what they are doing	●	●	●			●		252
EC	Krell SACD Standard	4,244	A landmark SACD player and an excellent CD player at what by Krell standards is a relatively affordable price	●	●	●			●		251
EC	Lindemann 820	6,999	Stereo SACD player with sumptuous build and sound, onboard analogue volume control and multiple digital inputs	●	●	●			●	●	262
BB	Marantz SA-11S1	2,000	A stereo player for audiophiles – lack of DVD and multichannel SACD lead to subtle, highly focussed sound	●	●	●	●	●	●		265
BB	Meridian G07	1,595	Immaculately conceived and executed player with a softly-spoken voice. Needs careful system matching	●	●	●			●		259
EC	Meridian 808i Signature	8,250	Stunning CD player with added preamp functions. Versatile and quite delightful	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	263
BB	Myryad MXC6000	1,400	A highly listenable player with excellent tonal balance and very fine detail	●	●	●					270
BB	Naim CD5x	1,450	A genuinely engaging CD player with remarkable musical grip and coherence	●	●	●					264
EC	Naim CDX2	2,700	Fine quality one-box CD player, but its best feature is upgradeability via outboard XPS supply	●	●	●			●		238
BB	Orelle CD100evo2	1,299	Relaxed, but strong on refinement and detail. An intelligent choice, particularly strong with acoustic music	●	●	●					259
BB	Primare CD31	1,500	A well made player that may not appeal to timing freaks but does lovely things with large musical forces	●	●	●			●		270
EC	Resolution Audio Opus 21	2,850	Dynamic, well timed and 3D performance with an analogue volume control and digital input for a second source	●	●	●			●	●	244
BB	Shanling CD-T100	1,650	Stunning-looking player that offers various operating modes: in any, sound is clear and assured	●	●	●			●	●	270
EC	Wadia 302	3,999	A dynamic and gripping player, with bass to die for and resolution to change your listening habits	●	●	●			●	●	253
EC	Wadia 861se	9,999	Stunning player with a full digital preamp and an all-revealing sound that'll keep you up all night	●	●	●			●	●	256

SPECS KEY **SACD COMPATIBLE** Plays high-resolution SACD discs in multichannel and/or two-channel mode. **ELEC DIGITAL OUTPUT** Electrical coaxial output for digital connection to a DAC or digital recorder. **OPT DIGITAL OUTPUT** Optical Toslink output for digital connection to a DAC or digital recorder. **CD-RW COMPATIBLE** Will play CD-RW (rewritable) discs, most CD players can cope with CD-Rs. **CD TEXT** Will display album and track titles from inserted disc. **BAL ANALOGUE OUT** Balanced XLR output connections for similarly equipped amplifiers. **HEADPHONE SOCKET** Quarter inch (6.3mm) headphone jack fitted to the CD player. **VARIABLE OUTPUT** Player features both fixed level and variable, volume adjustable outputs.



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

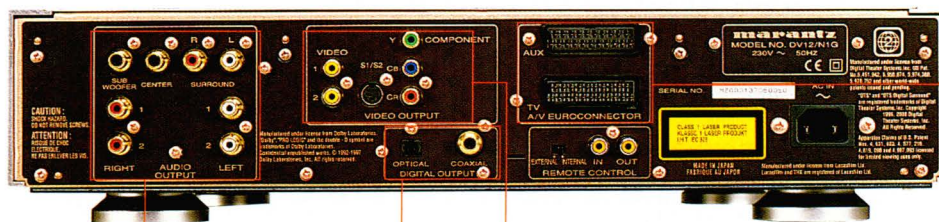
DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player.

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

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Audio/Video disc players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					ISSUE NUMBER
				DVD-A COMPATIBLE	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	
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 CD	3,000	A universal machine that excels with music and is quite exceptional with good ol' stereo CD						270

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

TOP BUYS



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



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



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

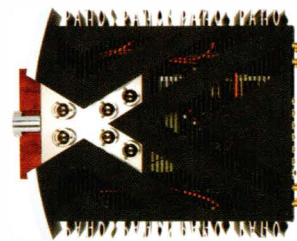
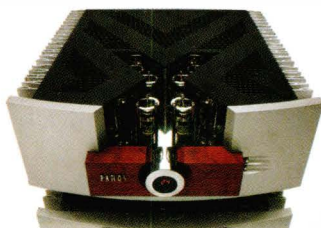


Townshend Audio TA 565 CD £3,000
Others may have the edge with video, but sound is extraordinary for a multiformat player.

"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." Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi Choice, Summer 05

EDITOR'S CHOICE
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine

"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." Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi Choice, Summer 05



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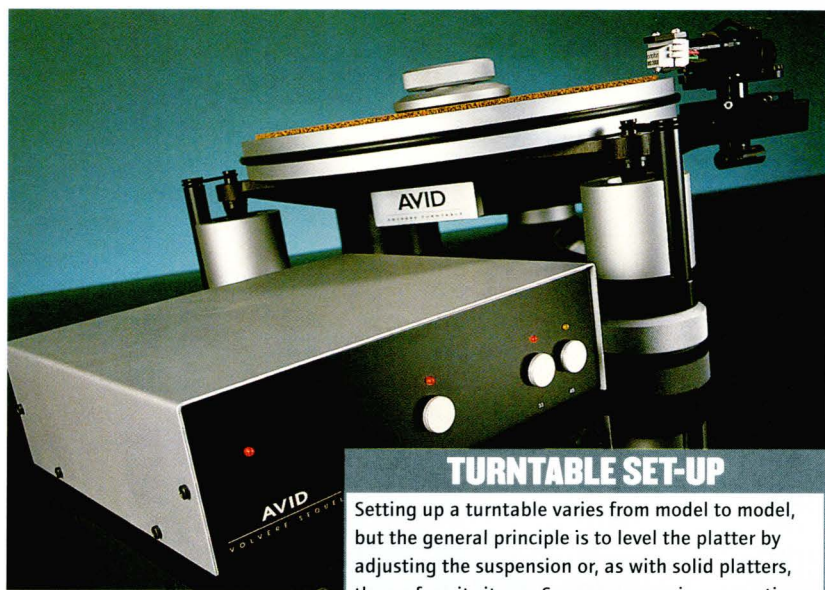
Turntables, cartridges and phono stages



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				ISSUE NUMBER
				SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	
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 V/309 hybrid arm	33/45	●	●	●	195
EC	SME Model 20.2A	5,274	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	33/45/78	●	●	●	186
EC	T+A G10R/PH-G10MC	2,550	Style meets substance in a highly credible complete package, with integral phono step-up	33/45		●	●	261
EC	Townshend Rock Anniversary	8,000	If you want to get to the meat and bones of the music this is a great tool for the job (price inc. Excalibur arm)	33/45	●		●	259

Our favourite BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

PHONO CARTRIDGES

MM and MC cartridges

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			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
	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 Spec Evo III	239	High output MC with refinement at high frequencies and a nimble, articulate and revealing sound		●		270
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	AU GAIN	AU IMPEDANCE	
	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

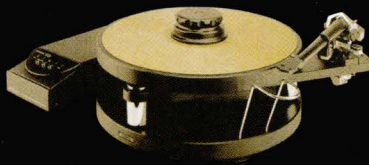
CARTRIDGE SPECS KEY **MM** Moving magnet cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type. **MC** Moving coil cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type

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

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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

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

FM & DAB HI-FI SEPARATES

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER
FM TUNERS										
BB	Creek T50	499	Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics	FM,M,L	128	●	●	●	●	251
BB	Denon TU-260L II	130	The return of the all-time favourite, now enhanced with RDS and sounding as fine as ever	FM,M,L	40	●			●	193
EC	Magnum Dynalab MD 90T	1,195	No remote or presets as standard, manual everything and valves... but its sound is simply sublime	FM	opt		opt	●	●	257
EC	Magnum Dynalab MD 102	2,200	Superb remote control analogue FM tuner delivers a superbly transparent sound that makes radio fun	FM	5		●	●	●	241
BB	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity	FM,M	30	●		●		250
BB	NAD S400	600	One of the best around – bass and treble are both well extended and detail is excellent	FM	30	●	●	●		230
BB	Primare T21	600	Identical to NAD S400 and likewise a very fine tuner	FM	30	●		●		230
BB	Rega Radio 3	398	Unpretentious unit which does what it claims, very well. Unusually fine FM sound in all areas	FM,M	20		●			242
	Rotel RT-02	279	A highly competent tuner which always sounds appealing and fuss-free	FM,M	30	●	●	●		242
DAB TUNERS										
BB	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
BB	Cambridge Audio DAB500	150	Very good sound, plus optional response tweaks, and slickest operation yet	DAB	10		●	●	●	248
	Cambridge Azur 640T	200	Slightly ahead of the pack in DAB performance, though FM is never better than decent	DAB,FM	60	●		●	●	260
	Pure Digital DRX-701ES	250	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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SIM2

HT300 E-EVOLUTION DLP PROJECTOR



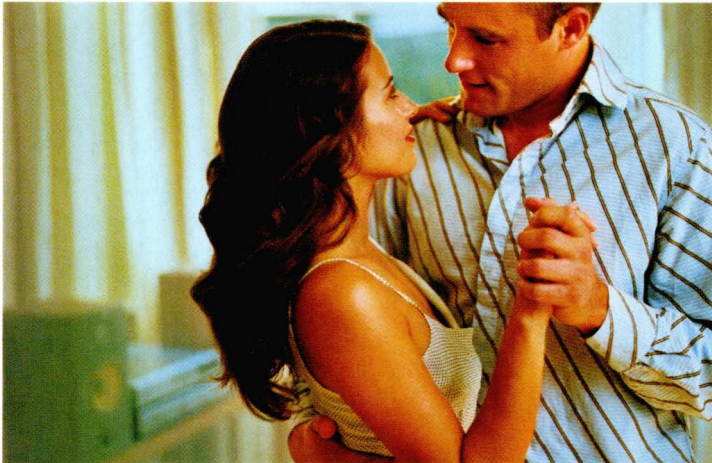
£5999 SAVE £2000
FREE 7" MOTORISED SCREEN WORTH £930 (NICWAOO)*

FREE QED SPEAKER CABLE OR INTERCONNECT CABLES WORTH AT LEAST £50

when you purchase selected Speakers or CD/Amplifier combinations. Ask in-store for details.

Some products/brands are not available at all stores. Please call to confirm or see the brand locator on our website before travelling.

*Added Value Offers - From range available in-store. Not in conjunction with any other offer (NICWAOO). Advert valid until at least 27/08/2005, E&OE.



Arcam

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



NEW ARCAM SOLO ALL-IN-ONE MUSIC SYSTEM

SOLO: A sleek, easy-to-operate system. Featuring an audiophile CD player, a 50 WPC amplifier combined with a DAB digital radio and a high quality FM tuner, the SOLO music system will captivate all who listen.

- DIVA SERIES INCLUDES**
- A65 PLUS AMPLIFIER
 - A80 AMPLIFIER
 - A90 AMPLIFIER
 - CD73T CD PLAYER
 - CD192 CD PLAYER
 - T61 TUNER
 - DT91 DAB TUNER
 - DV78 DVD PLAYER
 - DV79 DVD PLAYER
 - AVR250 A/V RECEIVER
 - AVR300 A/V RECEIVER



Cyrus

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

- RANGE INCLUDES**
- CD6 & CD8X CD PLAYERS
 - 6VS & 8VS AMPLIFIERS
 - PRE X VS PREAMPLIFIER
 - DAC-X DAC & FM X TUNER

LINKSERVER SOLO

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

Specialist hi-fi

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



Rotel

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

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

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

ROTEL RA-03 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

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



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
FINISHES 27TH AUGUST 2005



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

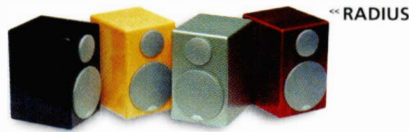
Caspian M SERIES
CD PLAYER
AMPLIFIER
PREAMPLIFIER
STEREO POWER
MONOBLOC POWER

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2004
BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £199.000
Roksan Kandy MKIII

Monitor Audio

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

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



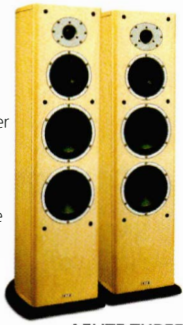
MODELS INCLUDE
BRONZE B2, B2 AV, B4 AV
SILVER RS1, RS6, RS8
GOLD REFERENCE 10 & 60



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

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.



"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.



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.



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



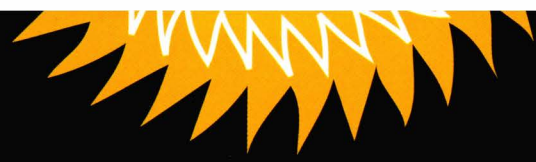
Musical Fidelity

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."

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."



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 AV receivers, amplifiers, and DVD players plus the innovative YSP-1 virtual surround speaker (pictured right).

MODELS INCLUDE

AV AMPLIFIERS

DSP-AX757SE & DSP-Z9

AV RECEIVERS

RX-V557 & RX-V1500

DVD PLAYERS

DVD-S557 & DVD-S1500



NEW YSP-1
Digital Sound Projector



Arcam

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

DVD PLAYERS

DV78, DV79

FMJ DV29

A/V RECEIVERS

AVR250, AVR300

A/V PRE/PROCESSOR

AV8, AVP700

MULTICHANNEL POWER

P7, P1000



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SUMMER EVENT
FINISHES 27TH AUGUST 2005

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
AUGUST 2004



WHAT HI-FI
FIT
Product
of the Year
2005



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
FIT
AWARDS 2004
BEST HOME CINEMA IN A BOX OVER £1000
KEF KIT 100



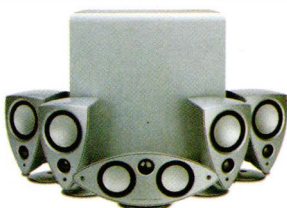
KEF KIT100 Home Cinema System

"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."



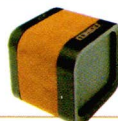
WHAT HI-FI
FIT
AWARDS 2004
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
CONCEPT DESIGN PRICING
MORDAUNT SHORT GENIE

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
FIT
AWARDS 2004
BEST FULL SIZE SPEAKER PACKAGE OVER £1000
Mission Elegante e82

WHAT HI-FI
FIT
AWARDS 2004
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
FIT
AWARDS 2004
BEST SUBWOOFER
REL Stampede

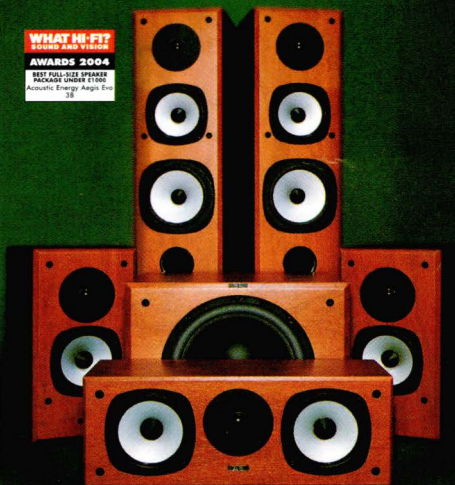
Q400E

WHAT HI-FI
FIT
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

WHAT HI-FI
FIT
AWARDS 2004
BEST FULL-SIZE SPEAKER PACKAGE UNDER £1000
Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo



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	£229.95
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
Teac RANGE	£ 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
Teac RANGE	£ 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
Panasonic 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

AV 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-AX7575E AV Amplifier	£399.95
Yamaha RX-V357 AV Receiver	£149.95
Yamaha RX-V557 AV Receiver	£299.95

AV 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	£ CALL
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 R242PX11 42"	£1399.95
LG RANGE	£ CALL
Panasonic TH37PV500 (Wal) 37"	£1999.95
Panasonic TH42PV500 (Wal) 42"	£2299.95
Panasonic RANGE	£ CALL
Pioneer PDP435XDE 43" .FROM	£2499.95
Pioneer PDP505XDE 50" .FROM	£3599.95
Pioneer RANGE	£ CALL

LCD TV

Hitachi RANGE	£ CALL
LG R232L250 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 XV291E	£799.95
Sharp RANGE	£ CALL
Sim 2 RANGE	£ CALL
ThemeScene RANGE	£ CALL

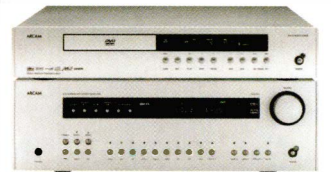
ROKSAN KANDY MKIII CD & AMP



£999 CLAIM FREE
QED CABLE WORTH £100 (NICWAOO)*

ARCAM

DV79/AVR300 DVD/AV RECEIVER



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

SCREENPLAY

5700 DLP PROJECTOR



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

MARANTZ

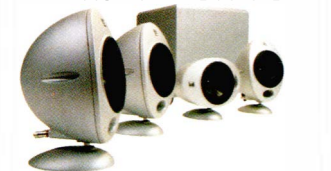
DV6500/SR5500 DVD/AV RECEIVER



£599 SAVE £250 (NICWAOO)*

KEF

KHT2005.2 SPEAKER SYSTEM



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

*NICWAOO - NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION

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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

PLYMOUTH 01752 226011

• 107 CORNWALL STREET

POOLE 01202 671677

• LATIMER HOUSE, 44-46 HIGH STREET

PRESTON 01772 825777

• 40-41 LUNE STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

READING 0118 959 7768

• 3-4 KINGS WALK SHOPPING CENTRE

SEVENOAKS 01732 459555

• 109-113 LONDON ROAD

SHEFFIELD 0114 255 5861

• 635 QUEENS ROAD, HEELEY *OPEN SUNDAY*

SOLIHULL 0121 733 3727

• 149-151 STRATFORD ROAD

SOUTHAMPTON 023 8033 7770

• 33 LONDON ROAD

SOUTHGATE 020 8886 2777

• 79-81 CHASE SIDE

STAINES 01784 460777

• 4 THAMES STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

SWINDON 01793 610992

• 8-9 COMMERCIAL ROAD

SWISS COTTAGE 020 7722 9777

• 21 NORTHWAYS PDE, FINCHLEY RD *OPEN SUNDAY*

TUNBRIDGE WELLS 01892 531543

• 28-30 ST JOHNS ROAD

WATFORD 01923 213533

• 478 ST ALBANS ROAD

WEYBRIDGE 01932 828525

• 43 CHURCH STREET, THE QUADRANT

WITHAM (ESSEX) 01376 501733

• 1 THE GROVE CENTRE

WOLVERHAMPTON 01902 312225

• 29-30 CLEVELAND STREET

YEOVIL 01935 700078 **OPENING SOON*

• 14 SILVER STREET **SUBJECT TO LEGAL COMPLETION*

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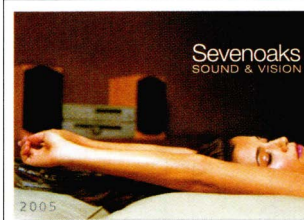
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Established as Sevenoaks Hi-Fi in 1972, we have grown steadily onto one of the leading independent home entertainment specialists in the UK, earning a reputation for outstanding service, choice and value for money. In 1995, reflecting our commitment 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.

How to shop at Sevenoaks

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

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

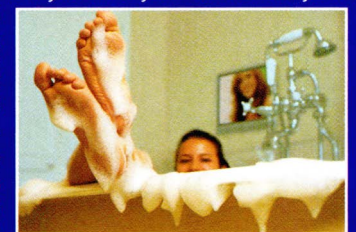


Hi-Fi & Home Cinema Guide - 2005 Edition

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www.ssav.com

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 STEREO AMPLIFIERS

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

Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000									
BB	Arcam DIVA A65 Plus	370	Highly articulate and fluent, offers unusual insight for its price	5	●	●	●	40	232
	Arcam DIVA A80	600	Arcam's most successful mid-range amp to date – sophisticated control system and crisp, detailed sound	6	●	●	●	90	251
BB	Arcam DIVA A90	850	Enhanced replacement for A85, convertible to 7.1 sound with the addition of an add-on module and extra P90 power amps	6	opt	●	●	90	250
BB	Audio Analogue Primo	475	Small, stylish amp with a smooth and beguiling sound. Makes a fine partner for AA's equally compact Primo CD player	5	opt	●		70	255
BB	Cambridge Audio Azur 540A	200	A well built and fully featured amplifier that costs this little should not sound this revealing	6	opt	●	●	50	255
	Cambridge Audio Azur 640A	250	Cambridge has a powerful weapon in the battle for budget amp supremacy, it's a lot of musical entertainment for the money	5	opt	●		65	250
	Cyrus 6vs	600	Best seen in a Cyrus rack but capable of sweet sounds elsewhere too. Impressively clean and agile but lacking musical grunt	7		●	●	40	262
	Cyrus 8vs	800	Slightly inferior to Cyrus 6vs, but the tables are turned with the add-on PSX-R power supply – in that form it's a real Best Buy	7		●	●	70	261
EC	Electrocompaniet ECI3	999	Large and fairly powerful, with individual looks and very refined sound	6		●		70	262
BB	Exposure 2010 S	599	Beneath the unassuming exterior lurks a very capable performer that's passionate about music	6	opt	●		75	262
EC	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
EC	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
EC	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
EC	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 VSi55	2,895	Superb all-rounder provides the delights of valve amplification without sacrificing convenience	5		●		50	254
EC	AVI Laboratory Series	1,399	Terrific power, control and resolution – effortlessly musical and fine value	6	opt	●		200	241
EC	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
EC	Primare I30	1,500	A smooth, sophisticated yet agile performer, and beautifully built too	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 STEREO AMPLIFIERS

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

Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
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
EC	Densen Beat B-250/B-350	8,200	Upgradeable to surround, with sweet preamp and slightly coloured power amp, but sound is big and assured	●	●	6		●	125	270
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	Up-rated entry-level Naim pre/power is a master of musical communication	●	●	6		●	50	262
BB	Quad 99/909	1,650	Well thought out and well executed, with good strong sound and just a little veiling	●	●	5	●	●	136	256
ABOVE £2,000										
EC	Border Patrol P20	6,750	Muscular 300B push-pull design with fluidity and dynamics to match the best	●	●				20	231
	Bryston BP25/4BSST	4,000	Extremely transparent, high-power combo, you'll listen louder and longer because you can	●	●	8	opt	●	300	241

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

Our favourite **STEREO AMPLIFIERS** continued

Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				PREAMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)
EC	Chapter Preface/II+	9,800	Among the finest amps available, the resolution of this preamp and power amp challenges the best at any price	●	●	6	●	300	249
EC	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
	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
EC	Primare PRE30/A30.2	2,400	Smart kit that lives up to the visual promise with gorgeous sound – a really musical performer	●	●	7	●	128	256

AV AMPLIFIERS

Surround sound amps for music and movies

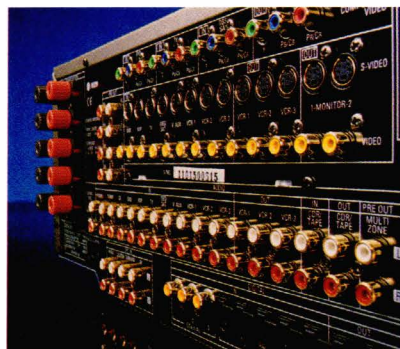


The multichannel, surround sound or AV amplifier is a popular option, thanks to the success of the DVD player and home cinema. Now you can buy five channels or more of amplification for the price of two. Now that multichannel music is also on the agenda, there's a lot to be said for a good AV amp or 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	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	257
	Denon AVR-2803	650	Merely 'average' sound but it's impossible to argue against the flexibility and value of its engineering	●	9	251
BB	Denon AVR-3805	1,000	Upgraded sound, new processing algorithms and a great remote control make this a superb mid-market multichannel buy	●	120	256
EC	Denon AVC-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	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	252
	Marantz SR-12S1	3,000	A multichannel amp that can be taken seriously in stereo too. Resources are in the engineering rather than the gimmicky	●	3	255
EC	Pathos Cinema-X	4,750	No processing, just sexy Italian style, a sextet of valves and the chance of 450 watts in stereo! Cultured sound, too		5	270
BB	Pioneer VSA-AX5i	1,200	Standard setter in its price category, with i.Link digital interface and MCACC auto set-up	●	11	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	260
BB	Sony STR-DB795	300	A superb value little amplifier, well appointed technically and successfully tuned for UK ears	●	7	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	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
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
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		236
	Cyrus AV8/3x Smartpower	2,900	Classic Cyrus sound translated to a multichannel arena, limited features and power, but civilised sound	3		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
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	●	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	●	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	●	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
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Astonishing £2,650/pair

Wadia
Model 861 & 302 (shown)
Ground breaking £3,999

Prima Luna
3 NEW ProLogic Models in-stock
Three £949, Four £699 & Five £949

Hyperion
NEW 938 Speakers
A must hear floorstander £3,750

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STEREO SPEAKERS

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS		
				SIZE (WxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000						
BB	Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo 1	180	An unusually classy and sophisticated performer for the price; laid-back sound and good looks too	19,36,24	A 30	226
BB	ATC SCM12	999	Magnificent main driver confers great authority, grip and smoothness, though upper bass a little lean	22,39,26	A- 55	253
BB	AVI Neutron IV	499	A great example of what can be done with a genuinely small speaker, but the warts-and-all balance won't suit all	15,27,21	A- 65	260
BB	B&W DM303	180	Chunky looking and lively sounding, with deep bass, a fine midband and a restrained top end	20,33,23	A 23	226
BB	B&W DM602 S3	300	Old-fashioned size/shape, but this timeless design has a rare combination of grip, authority and headroom	24,49,29	A 25	234
BB	B&W DM603 S3	600	Excellent all-rounder, smooth for its price with fine bass and mid, though top might be more refined	20,91,29	● A- 25	231
BB	B&W 705	900	Deft, delicate and delightful, if a little bass light, with clever enclosure and driver engineering	22,42,29	A 35	253
BB	Castle Richmond 3i	320	Does most things well and the most important thing - musical communication - remarkably well for the price	17,33,23	A 60	260
BB	Castle Conway 3	930	Lovely real wood finish and a beautifully balanced sound, fine dynamics and transients, but might have more 'air'	22,91,27	● A+ 30	237
BB	Castle Harlech S2	1,000	Improved Harlech is slightly aggressive, but lots of fun, and very good-looking too	20,96,33	● A 50	219
BB	Dynaudio Audience 42	400	An aristocrat of the vinyl-covered miniature breed. A terrific small speaker for the price	17,29,24	A 40	215
	Dynaudio Audience 52	557	Brilliant neutrality, though a little understated dynamically (wood veneered version, as tested – £647)	20,33,26	A- 30	250
	Dynaudio Audience 62	729	Pricy but cute vinyl floorstander that is a class act sonically – lightweight, but clean and dextrous	20,86,26	● A 30	231
BB	Enos FI S3	200	Few affordable speakers sound as clean and convincing while taking up so little real estate	18,27,19	A- 60	241

STEREO SPEAKERS

Speaker pairs for stereo sound

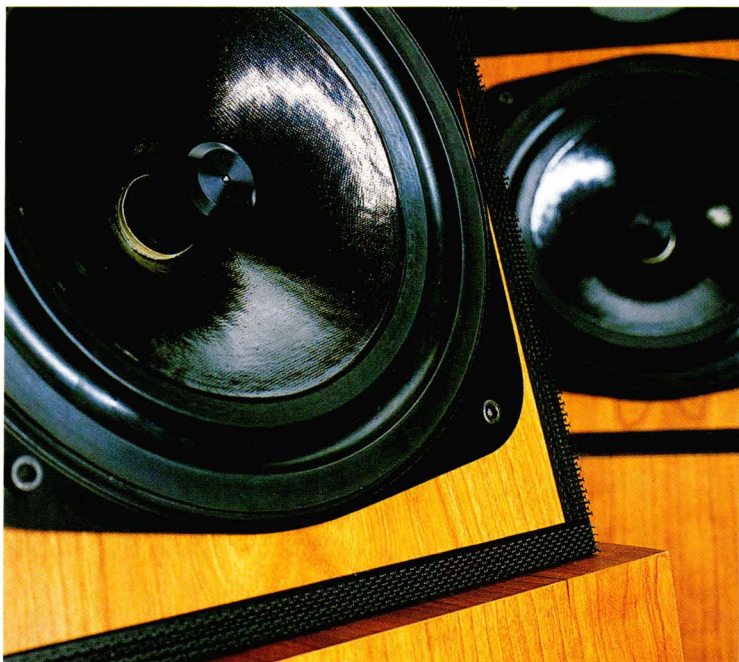


While loudspeakers are relatively straightforward in construction, they have one of the most difficult jobs in hi-fi – turning an electrical signal into an acoustic one. Most consist of two or more drive units in a box that usually has a port in it to make life easier for the cone in your mid and/or 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 position



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,

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

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ELS Subwoofer
5 Star rating

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Epos M22 Speaker
5 star rating

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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	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
BB	Denon AVR-3805	1,000	Upgraded sound, new processing algorithms and a great remote control make this a superb mid-market multichannel buy	●		● 120	256
EC	Denon AVC-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
EC	Pathos Cinema-X	4,750	No processing, just sexy Italian style, a sextet of valves and the chance of 450 watts in stereo! Cultured sound, too		5		110 270
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
EC	Meridian 861	9,833	Powerful surround processor with flexible modular construction, marvellous versatility to drive any speaker configuration	6	●		230
	Naim AV2/NAPV175/NAP150	4,175	First truly credible multichannel system from Naim is idiosyncratic but offers excellent basic sound with modest spatial steering	5	●	50	238
EC	Parasound Halo C1/A51	8,500	Powerful and flexible processor/power amp combo with impressive sound. Excellent value – processor includes onboard screen	11	●	250	243
BB	Primare SP31.7/A30.5	4,200	Great all-round system which brings the qualities of good stereo high fidelity to a multichannel world	5	●	120	238

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

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grado
harmonic

hyperion
jadis
koetsu
krell
magnum dynalab
martin logan
goldring
myryad

opera
pathos
prima luna
qed
sonus faber
stands unique
sunfire
r+a

Wadia
Model 861 & 302 (shown)
Ground breaking £3,999

Prima Luna
3 NEW ProLogue Models in-stock
Three £949, Four £699 & Five £949

Hyperion
NEW 938 Speakers
A must hear floorstander £3,750

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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.

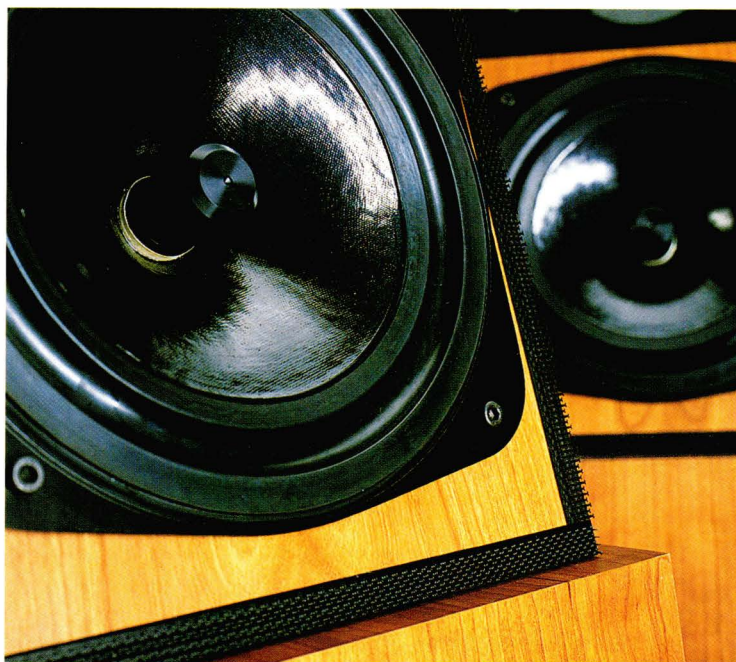
Box speakers are either designed to stand on the floor (floorstanders) or on a stand (stand or shelfmounts). Floorstanders have greater internal volume which can translate into greater efficiency and/or bass extension, but less substantial designs also introduce cabinet resonance and thus distortion. 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.

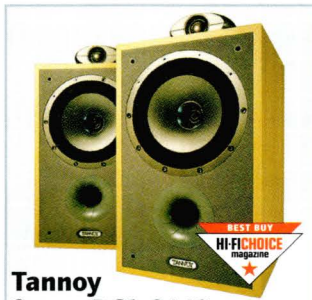
WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR BIG ROOMS?

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 STEREO SPEAKERS

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000										
BB	Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo 1	180	An unusually classy and sophisticated performer for the price; laid-back sound and good looks too	19,36,24		A	30	●	●	226
BB	ATC SCM12	999	Magnificent main driver confers great authority, grip and smoothness, though upper bass a little lean	22,39,26		A-	55		●	253
BB	AVI Neutron IV	499	A great example of what can be done with a genuinely small speaker, but the warts-and-all balance won't suit all	15,27,21		A-	65	●		260
BB	B&W DM303	180	Chunky looking and lively sounding, with deep bass, a fine midband and a restrained top end	20,33,23		A	23		●	226
BB	B&W DM602 S3	300	Old-fashioned size/shape, but this timeless design has a rare combination of grip, authority and headroom	24,49,29		A	25	●		234
BB	B&W DM603 S3	600	Excellent all-rounder, smooth for its price with fine bass and mid, though top might be more refined	20,91,29	●	A-	25	●		231
BB	B&W 705	900	Deft, delicate and delightful, if a little bass light, with clever enclosure and driver engineering	22,42,29		A	35	●		253
BB	Castle Richmond 3i	320	Does most things well and the most important thing - musical communication - remarkably well for the price	17,33,23		A	60	●		260
BB	Castle Conway 3	930	Lovely real wood finish and a beautifully balanced sound, fine dynamics and transients, but might have more 'air'	22,91,27	●	A+	30	●		237
BB	Castle Harlech S2	1,000	Improved Harlech is slightly aggressive, but lots of fun, and very good-looking too	20,96,33	●	A	50	●		219
BB	Dynaudio Audience 42	400	An aristocrat of the vinyl-covered miniature breed. A terrific small speaker for the price	17,29,24		A	40	●		215
	Dynaudio Audience 52	557	Brilliant neutrality, though a little understated dynamically (wood veneered version, as tested - £647)	20,33,26		A-	30	●		250
	Dynaudio Audience 62	729	Pricey but cute vinyl floorstander that is a class act sonically - lightweight, but clean and dextrous	20,86,26	●	A	30	●		231
BB	Epos ELS3	200	Few affordable speakers sound as clean and convincing while taking up so little real estate	18,27,19		A-	60	●		241
BB	Epos M5	349	Gorgeous miniature works well close to wall. Could be smoother but communicates with authority	18,33,21		A-	40		●	269
BB	Epos M12.2	450	A true classic stand-mount with lovely presentation, fine sound balance, superior coherence and low coloration	20,37,25		A-	40	●		265
BB	Focal-JMLab Chorus 707 S	350	The size and shape might be unfashionable, but this is an outstanding all-round performer at a very sharp price	24,49,30		A	25	●		251
BB	Focal-JMLab Chorus 716 S	550	Not the smoothest around, but combines coherent voicing with fine dynamic expression and real authority	22,95,30	●	A	20	●		250
	Focal-JMLab Chorus 726 S	780	Big generous sound with good dynamic freedom, hampered by some voice-band congestion	22,100,32	●	A+	55	●		253
BB	Focal-JMLab Cobalt 816 S	999	Great all-rounder - lively and dynamic, smooth and neutral, marred only by a slight treble 'sting'	22,98,31	●	A-	25	●		242
	Harbeth NRG2	650	Strikingly styled standmount majors on dynamic excitement at some expense in smoothness and coloration	19,34,29		A+	42		●	263
	KEF Q4	400	Beautiful, bijou three-way floorstander lacks some bass weight but has a lovely midband with low coloration	18,82,25	●	A	38		●	255
	Leema Xen	1,000	A true micro-mini-monitor with remarkable powers of analysis and great musical insight, if a touch forward	14,22,23		A-	50		●	245
	Monitor Audio Bronze B2	200	A lively and entertaining speaker with tight, controlled bass and a pronounced midband	19,35,25		A	42		●	238
BB	Monitor Audio Bronze B4	350	A beautifully balanced loudspeaker with fine overall dynamic range and good imaging	19,85,26	●	A	23	●		255
	Monitor Audio Silver S8	800	A thoroughly impressive all-rounder, notable for its wide dynamic range, excellent imaging and fine neutrality	19,90,27	●	A	20	●		237
BB	Mordaunt-Short Avant 906	350	Capable and engaging, this neat design will complement the majority of sub-£500-per-component systems	18,85,27	●	A	45	●		254
BB	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
	PMC TB2+	795	This fine allrounder has a lovely laid-back neutrality, fine transparency, low coloration and a sweet treble	20,41,31		A	30	●		261
BB	PMC GB1	995	Ultra-compact floorstander is beautifully clean, articulate and free from boxiness, with a notably delicate top end	16,92,24	●	A+	30	●		257

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

Just what you would expect from

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Style, Quality & Power



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Epos M5 Speaker
Supertest Winner

★★★★★ June 2005 What Hi-Fi

Epos M22 Speaker
5 star rating

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M12.2 Speaker
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Our installations range from the invisible to the dramatic and we aim to provide something that is both beautiful to the eye and the ear.

From a single component to a complete system, Oxford Audio Consultants have the answers and just as important, the solutions.

Sonus Faber Stradivari > pictured right

Very rarely have we laid eyes on such a beautiful loudspeaker, with a purity and depth of sound that makes the walls of any listening room simply disappear before your very eyes/ears.

The Stradivari is Sonus Faber's ultimate loudspeaker statement and without question, one of the best speakers in the world to ever grace our listening room. £22,000 really doesn't seem like a lot when you consider that true musical enjoyment is after-all - priceless !

Jon Harker, Oxford Audio.



Oxford Audio Consultants Ltd

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(closed thursday)
sat: 10am - 5pm

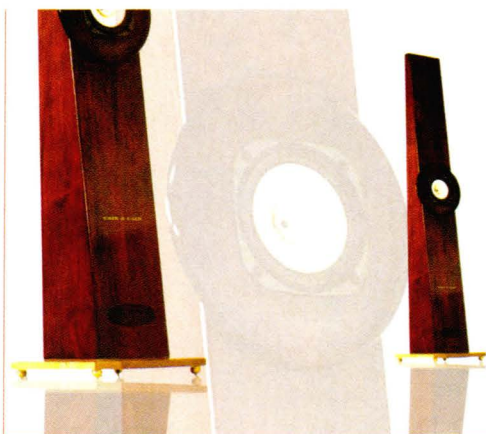
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the latest information on
new/used equipment)

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

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				SIZE WxHxD (cm)	FLOORSTANDER	EDGE-OF-DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
BB	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
BB	Quad 21L	695	Elegant lacquer finish floorstander has a smooth, well balanced sound, even bass and good detail projection	21,80,26	●	A+	25	●		263
BB	Rega R1	298	Cute baby sounds busy, coherent and involving, if a touch thin. Sweet and delicate treble with even bass	15,32,24		A	50		●	269
BB	Rega R3	448	Discreet, pretty and fine value. A little lightweight but impressively open, it delivers music with great agility	20,76,28	●	A	40		●	265
BB	Tannoy Fusion 4	350	This big d'Appolito twin two-way has fine coherence and dynamics. A neutral and even all-rounder	21,97,29	●	A	20	●		255
BB	Tannoy Sensys DC1	449	Modest sensitivity but beautifully balanced with fine authority at a very realistic price	21,41,29		A	40		●	245
	Tannoy Eyriss 1	600	Pricy but very cute standmount miniature; oddball, but has marvellous midband subtlety and delicacy	17,35,26		A+			●	227
	Tannoy Sensys DC2	649	Has impressive scale and weight with fine stereo imaging, but is also rather laid back, lacking easy agility	21,97,29	●	A	20	●		250
	Tannoy Eyriss 2	999	This super-slim and cutely different-looking floorstander is very communicative, despite weak treble	17,91,26	●	A	20	●		231
BB	Triangle Antal ES	975	Neither pretty nor smooth but a very exuberant and involving communicator, with plenty of scale and expression	20,108,34	●	A	20		●	263
BB	Triangle Titus ES	370	Not pretty but busy, coherent and involving, if a little thin. Sweet and delicate treble with even bass	18,37,30		A-	40		●	269
BB	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										
BB	Acoustic Energy AE1 MkII	1,690	Luxury miniature has a laid-back but bouncy sound, a marvellous dynamic range and very superior imaging	19,31,25		A-	30			251
	Acoustic Energy AE3 MkII	4,490	A beautifully neutral speaker with very wide dynamic range and superior imaging, plus lovely Art Deco styling	19,99,29	●	A	20	●		251
BB	Anthony Gallo Nucleus Ref	2,400	Occasionally raw, but engaging and capable beyond its physical stature	20,89,41	●	A	34	●		257
	ATC Active 10	1,269	Stylish, active powerhouses with plenty of subtlety when required (balanced connection only)	23,39,31		act	45			221
BB	ATC SCM35	1,999	If you want to hear the uncoloured truth about your record collection in all its glory, this is a speaker to treasure	23,88,30	●	A-	48	●		250
BB	Audio Note AN-E/LX	2,650	Though not very pretty, this is a thoroughly entertaining speaker with great dynamic subtlety and integrity	36,79,27	●	A+	22		●	256
BB	Audiovector Mi 3 Signature	2,320	Smooth and beautifully balanced with superb neutrality, wide dynamic range and a warm, sweet character	20,100,29	●	A-	24	●		260
BB	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
BB	Aurum Cantus Leisure 3SE	1,200	Fabulous lacquer finish and a classy ribbon tweeter. Sounds smooth and sweet, if a touch laid back	25,40,30		A	28	●		263
BB	B&W 704	1,400	Cleverly tapered enclosure and external tweeter delivers superior bass and treble, with a laid-back midband	22,96,32	●	A	20	●		257
EC	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
BB	B&W 805S	1,600	A wonderfully communicative, entertaining and subtle speaker, despite some lack of tonal richness	24,39,33		A	25	●		266
BB	B&W 703	2,000	Bass is immensely powerful and even, and the overall sound is lively and dynamic, though not overly smooth	23,101,36	●	A-	20	●		260
BB	BC Acoustique ACT-A1	1,195	Exceptional focus, dynamic coherence and expression through the voice band, but bass could be more even	21,90,33	●	A+	25	●		257
	Beaumont B2.2 Revelation	3,984	Magnificent midband and fine overall balance but limited bass is best with small-scale material	34,130,75	●	A+	80		●	244
EC	Bosendorfer VC 7	4,745	Unique design delivers superior dynamics that sound particularly convincing with acoustic and classical music	19.5,135,40	●	A	37	●		265
BB	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
EC	Dali Helicon 400	3,300	Advanced drivers and enclosure give a generous sound with wide dynamic range and no boxiness	22,103,46	●	A	20	●		264
BB	Dynaudio Audience 82	1,460	Bulky, with vinyl finish, but offers exceptional neutrality, bass extension, power handling and loudness potential	22,106,36	●	A	30	●		229
	Dynaudio Contour S 1.4	1,850	Sound has fine mid-to-treble coherence and neutrality, though port tuning was ill-suited to our room	19,40,36		A-	28	●		260
	Eclipse TD Lulét 307/316	1,250	Extraordinary satellite plus sub solution sounds a cut above other sub/sats. Can be expanded to multichannel	12,16,16		act	40	●		247
	Elac FS 607 X-Jet	5,000	Highly revealing and capable, the mid/tweeter provides impressive detail and depth of soundstage	29,108,33	●	A	28	●		269
EC	Focal-JMLab Micro Utopia Be	3,500	New 'Be' version is clearly an exceptional standmount, capable of revealing the innate quality of the music	25,42,5,38		A	50	●		245
EC	Focal-JMLab Diva Utopia Be	7,599	Lovely slimline speaker combines remarkable transparency with fine dynamics and gorgeous bass	25,110,53	●	A+	30	●		255
EC	Focal-JMLab Alto Utopia Be	11,000	Attractive and beautifully balanced, with fine bass alignment and focus, low coloration and very clean top end	37,121,53	●	A-	20	●		248
	Harbeth Super HL5	1,699	Looks old-fashioned, but classic monitor combines authority and transparency with good neutrality	33,64,31		A	30	●		233



The Beautiful Abby from Cain & Cain



Introduction

The openness and transparency that the Abby speaker delivers, combined with excellent tonal balance (in addition to high efficiency and dynamics), has made Abby "annoyingly good sounding" as one dealer remarked.

This annoyingly good speaker has seen fit to be driven in systems with analog front ends costing twenty times as much as the Abby.

The Abby is a true introduction into high efficiency speaker systems of simple yet refined design. That

pays tribute to "classic" forms and re-interpret them with current thinking. The result is that Abby has succeeded and found a soft spot in audiophile's ears, hearts and homes all across the world.

A superb matching subwoofer called the Bailey is also available.

Specifications:

Abby (from £1,399)
Dimensions (mm):
228W x 228D x 1778H
Sensitivity:
95db~1Watt~1meter

Frequency Response:
<50Hz ~ 17kHz (+/- 4db)
Minimum / Nominal Impedance:
8 ohms

Bailey Subwoofer (from (£1,399))
250 Watt internal Amplifier.
Adjustable Crossover 50Hz-8 Plus
High Pass
High and low inputs:
10" SEAS driver from Norway.
20Hz FS ported

Very special loudspeakers at very sensible prices !!

Further information contact : AngelSound Audio • 01923 352 479 • www.angelsoundaudio.co.uk

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

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (WxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EDGE 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
EC	Living Voice Avatar OBX-R2	4,000	Has Dynamics, tonal colour, detail, space and time resolution in spades. External crossovers require extra cabling	22,100,27		A+	35		244
	MartinLogan Mosaic	1,799	Curious hybrid construction marries many panel speaker-like attributes with moving coil simplicity	24,102,30		A-	46		257
BB	MartinLogan Clarity	2,498	Relatively affordable and easy to live with electrostatic hybrid with class-leading resolving power	26,135,31		A-	46		245
EC	Mordaunt-Short Perf 6	3,500	Revolutionary enclosure design and aspirated tweeter make for a fast, hi-res ride	24,121,37		A-	35		264
	Naim Ariva	1,275	Cute and discreet floorstander has superb bass and a wide dynamic range, but it could be smoother and sweeter	23,88,31		A	25		259
EC	Naim SL-2	4,995	Delivers magnificent musical analysis and communication skills in a notably discrete physical package	28,103,33		A-	20		232
	Neat Elite SE	1,499	Smooth and natural performer with notably expressive midband. Fine voice articulation and unusual sweetness	20,90,18		A	25		267
EC	Neat Ultimatum MFS	2,995	Wonderful five-driver standmount sounds bigger than it looks. Very spacious and informative	22,38,37		A+	25		241
BB	PMC FB1+	1,625	Nicely proportioned floorstander has a sweet top and a beautifully natural, open and restrained midband	20,100,30		A	20		260
	PMC OB1	2,450	Genuinely deep bass and lovely overall neutrality, though mid could have more tension and bass more punch	20,103,33		A	20		243
EC	PMC IB2	6,150	Stunning in an understated way, this speaker creeps up on you and hooks you with its transparency and power	33,74,47		A-	25		237
EC	ProAc Response D25	2,995	The traditional ProAc high-end detail mixed with greater efficiency and more pace - a splendid speaker	22,107,25		A+	20		254
BB	Rega R9	2,498	This subtle, laid back but very informative performer has a very superior dynamic range, especially in the bass	17,103,39		A	20		256
EC	Revel F32	3,200	Meticulously balanced, tonally neutral design makes for a taut, well disciplined sound	22,105,39		A	30		265
BB	Ruark Talisman III	1,499	No bass demon, but a sophisticated and agile speaker epitomising Ruark's design ideals	22,84,31		A	22		259
EC	Sonus Faber Concerto Domus	1,799	Great choice, especially for acoustic material, which performs significantly above its price level	21,99,31		A	35		270
BB	Sonus Faber Cremona A.	2,149	Standmount 'Auditor' version of the Cremona makes a soundstage bigger and better than its size suggests	19,35,32		A	48		246
	Spendor S6e	1,495	Combines deep, powerful bass with an attractively open midband, but perhaps too much restraint up top	30,88,19		A+	23		257
	Spendor S9e	2,895	An improvement on the original S9 - very entertaining at high levels with a fabulously open and weighty bass	24,101,38		A+	40		256
EC	Tannoy Dimension TD8	4,000	This stylish speaker is a splendid all-rounder, with fine dynamics, precise imaging and minimal coloration	31,86,30		A-	25		240
BB	Totem Forest	2,390	Low sensitivity but wonderfully open neutrality, at heart a beautifully communicative and musical loudspeaker	20,90,27		A	25		247
	Triangle Naia	1,900	Exciting, vivid and communicative, but also a bit untidy and uneven, the Naia is a whole lot of fun	23,119,32		A-	25		247
EC	Triangle Magellan Concerto	9,995	Scintillating midrange and treble, with tuneful, well-timed bass - a thoroughly engaging musical ride	28,149,34		A	35		262
BB	Usher Compass CP-6381	2,500	Lots of speaker for your money, with plenty of deep bass, unusual styling and massive build	35,127,65		A	20		270
EC	Vivid Audio B1	6,590	Impressive cabinet design combined with hi-tech drivers to make truly world class speaker	27,110,38		A-	40		261
EC	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,000	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package	23,91,37		A	28		254
EC	Wilson Benesch 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 BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE AV SPEAKER PACKAGES

Multichannel speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				EASE OF DRIVE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	BASS FROM (H/Z)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
BB	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
BB	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
BB	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
BB	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 BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE SUBWOOFERS

Bass speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				SIZE (WxHxD) (CM)	POWER (W)	BASS FROM (H/Z)	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
BB	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
BB	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.

AUDUSA




Acoustic Solid
One to One turntable

Limited time offer - free MC Cartridge worth £300 to £800 with certain TT / Arm combinations.

WTB 213 Tonearm

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. One to One - with a cast resin base



Bosendorfer Loudspeakers, by the company who make, arguably the best pianos in the world. certainly the oldest piano maker - 1828

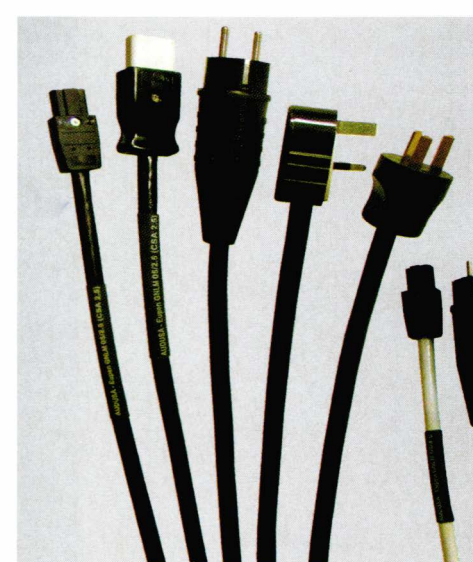
EDITOR'S CHOICE
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine
★

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 Bosendorfer loudspeakers had the finest reproduction of piano music that I have ever heard. Seeing the quality of the piano in the same room as the loudspeakers, I was impressed, but not surprised. They obviously knew what they were doing when they built these beauties.....*



AUDUSA EUPEN

The world's only true Ferrite technology cables - a high quality ferrite is extruded over the conductor strands. Power Cords - GNLM 5/2.5 (CSA 2.5) and GNLM 05/04. From £48 for a 1m cord terminated with an IEC and MK tough plug. Also available are the CMS Analog, Digital and Video Interconnects with RCA, XLR or BNC connectors

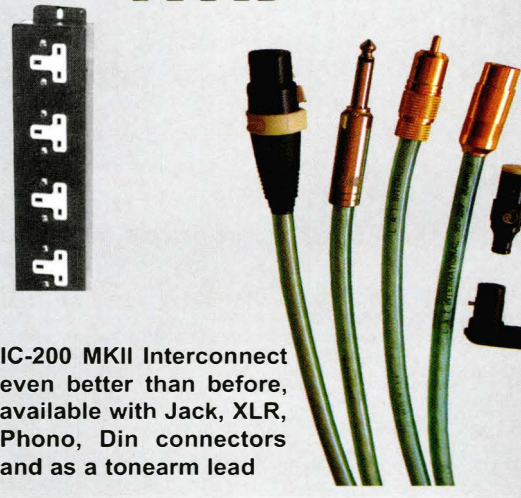
LAT INTERNATIONAL - USA
Power, Analogue, Tonearm, Digital, Video interconnects and single and biwire speaker cable.

Silverfused wire technology.

NEW FOR 2005
IC 300 Analog and DI-30 Digital Interconnects, AC-2 MKII Power cord, SS800 and SS1000 MKII Speaker cables.



LAT AC-2 MKII Power cord compare with products costing ten times as much, then decide



IC-200 MKII Interconnect even better than before, available with Jack, XLR, Phono, Din connectors and as a tonearm lead

AUDUSA OOM products include ceramic speaker cable isolators from the USA, MK Tough plugs, IEC's, Wattgate 320L IEC and USA Plugs with silver plated contacts. Locking banana and RCA connectors with silver plated pins. New in stock are 13 amp fuses with silver plated end caps.

LAT International Maintenance products - Contact Cleaner, Record Cleaning solution, CD/DVD disk cleaning solution **Enhancement** products - Vibra Killers, C Diamond, Once & Done and Green Line

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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

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

Stereo headphones

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					ISSUE NUMBER		
				ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK		WEIGHT (g)	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR
SB	AKG K44	20	Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed: a bargain			●		●	190	●	219
SB	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
SB	Beyerdynamic DT990	160	Impeccable balance, very extended bass and treble, and bags of detail place this model ahead of the pack			●	●		250	●	245
SB	Grado SR-60	90	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste		●		●		200	●	194
SB	Grado SR325i	300	Highly sophisticated and detailed sound with great extension: check for comfort		●		●		200	●	270
SB	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.

Harmonic Technology award winning cables are now available for sale in the UK.

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Michael Fremer, *Stereophile*, April, 2003

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North midlands-Acoustica (Stafford) 01785 258 216

Midlands-Griffin Audio (Birmingham) 0121 224 7300

S.W London-Infidelity (Kingston upon Thames) 0208 943 3530

Bucks.- Hazlemere Audio (High Wycombe) 01494 865 829

Surrey-Guildford Audio (Guildford) 01483 537 577

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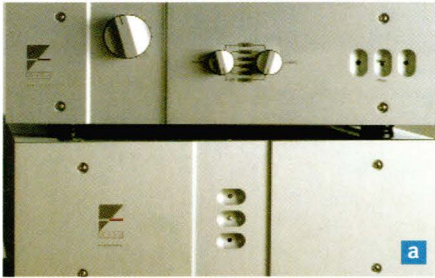


Naim 5 pin available from stock

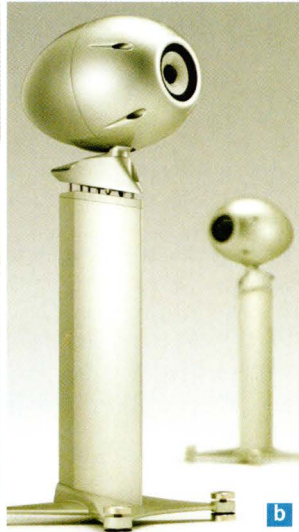
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a Ayre Acoustics K-1 and V-1. This pre-power combination offers an exceptionally high level of transparency and deep soundstage for the price. With a characteristically sharp focussed image, the fully balanced circuits offer a very neutral tonal balance. On a par with the best amplifiers we have heard. K-1 pre-amplifier £4995. V-1 power amplifier (200wpc) £6495.



b Eclipse-TD 7122. These unusually shaped loudspeakers produce imaging and soundstaging that can equal that achieved with the best speakers costing several times their price. Very sharp focus, very fast and probably the best transients we have heard. Virtually no colouration, a most revealing loudspeaker. With their custom stand £4000 a pair.



c Conrad-johnson ACT 2 and Premier 350. This combination offers an exceptionally transparent and natural sound producing a very 3 dimensional, large soundstage. A reference system. ACT 2 valve pre-amplifier £13000. Premier 350 power amplifier (350wpc) £8000.

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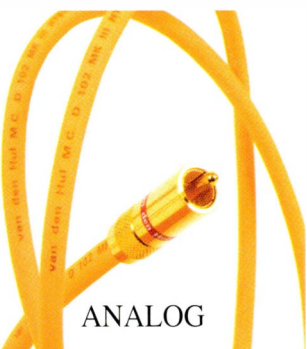


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CABLES



Wires to hook your system together



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

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

be fitted with screw or solder-on types.

Choosing cables is not quite as straightforward as it might seem. One problem is that components interact with the cables you use and this often results in audible effects, but there are few cables that are fundamentally incompatible with any components, and we recommend the advice of a good dealer. In any case, you should look to spend as much as you can afford.

Digital cables come in two flavours: electrical and optical. In most instances electrical varieties sound better than optical, given the choice, but optical cables may be a better bet over long runs (10m+). Optical inputs/outputs usually use Toslink connectors, while most electrical types use RCA plugs, but some opt for BNC connection instead – check your components before you buy.

Our favourite CABLES

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

				SPECIFICATIONS					
				STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIGITAL CABLE TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS						
ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS									
	Black Rhodium Illusion	77	An upfront, lively, exciting cable which still manages subtlety when needed. Slight coloration though		●	●			248
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chord Company Chorus	200	Very even-handed balance with notably extended bass	●		●			259
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kimber Timbre	83	Typical Kimber construction with ditto sound – clean, extended and detailed	●		●			248
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Monster Interlink 400 Mk2	70	Really lively and enjoyable sound at a sensible price	●		●			224
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Townshend DCT100	100	Unusual construction with copper strip conductors, giving very detailed sound, but just an occasional hint of hardness		●	●			241
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Townshend Isolda DCT	300	Unusual construction and cryogenically treated too: whatever the reason, a remarkably capable wire		●	●			234
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	van den Hul The Bay C5	45	Terrific detail, nice balance – a great cable	●		●			224
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	van den Hul D102 Mk III	79	Hybrid conductors (carbon and copper) and intelligent construction give strong bass and excellent detail	●		●			234
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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									
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Black Rhodium Polar Scherzo	135	Highly detailed sound with notably solid and stable stereo imaging	●		●		E	270
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kimber Select KS2020	629	Provides a subtle but rewarding lift in musicality with any DAC, justifying the price		●	●		E	260
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	QED Qunex Signature 75	80	First-rate balance and imaging – ever so nearly as good as it gets at any price			●		E	265
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	QED Qunex SR75	50	Lots of bass and good clear midrange and treble at a sensible price	●		●		E	234
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Supra ZAC	32	High grade fibre and quality plugs add up to a noticeable improvement over giveaway optical leads					O	259
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Electrofluidics 20/20	45	Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere – one of the best all-round cables available		●	●			241
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kimber 8VS	18	Beautifully full, open and transparent sound right across the board	●		●			227
	Kimber 8PR	21	Bass very full, just occasionally a touch flabby, but detailed and sweet upper frequencies make this a good value cable	●		●			241
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kimber 8TC	39	Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass. Price for 5m terminated pair	●		●			203
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	QED Silver Anniversary	5	A few minor flaws, but overall performance is very assured for this price	●		●			192
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	QED X-Tube XT300	10	A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems		●	●			234
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wireworld Terra 5	5	Deep powerful bass, clear treble and very solid imaging add up to above-class performance	●		●			261
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wireworld Solstice 5	20	Unfriendly to handle, but makes up for it with very assured sound – heaps of bass and great insight	●		●			248
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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.

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

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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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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.

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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
	Aavik Furniture A4	350	Good sound and stylish Scandinavian looks at an affordable price
	Alphason A5-G	399	Nice looking, very solid and practical with a pretty well balanced sound, but lacks a little detail
	Atacama Equinox	280	Stable, modular design with style. Excellent bass transients and a fresh design concept
	Audiophile Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities – a worthy upgrade
	Avid Isosshelf	1,100	An enthusiast's equipment support stand free from coloration, if a little fiddly to set up
	Clearlight Audio Aspekt	600	Stunning neutrality and detail from a well-damped design. Its performance makes the price tag good value
	Custom Design Aspect 650	270	Smart looks and practical thanks to adjustable shelves. Sound is fair with some loss of detail
	Custom Design Icon 400	599	Beautifully built, conveniently adjustable and with little sound of its own, a very classy rack
	Custom Design Concept 400	700	Slightly drab looks, but great sound and efficient use of space ('Acoustic' version tested – standard version £300)
	Naim Fraim	1,825	Pricey but very classy looking and sounding, with modular flexibility
	Isoblu 'The Stand'	460	Attractive modular design that's as easy on the ear as on the eye
	Quadraspire Q4 Reference	480	Excellent performance from the school of wobbly racks. Natural sounding and plenty of detail
	Russ Andrews Torlyte Rack	988	Attractive modular system made of very light Torlyte: a touch of added warmth is its only vice
	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!
	Townshend Seismic Stand 2/5	1,100	Multi-shelf air-suspension support which isolates like few others. Recommended

SPECIFICATIONS					
HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
80.5	47		4	MDF	193
80	66,46		5	Glass	247
81	50,50	●	4	Glass	217
82	43		4	MDF	193
87.5	48		5	MDF	193
75	53,5,45		4	MDF	217
66	46	●	4	Glass	206
75	57, 41		5	Glass	263
74	48,40		4	Metal	247
96	45,34		5	Glass	232
47	48,40		4	MDF	247
51.5	49,39.5		4	MDF	217
68	54,49		4	Torlyte	240
92	50,40		5	Glass	217
92	58, 45		5	MDF	240

Our favourite SPEAKER STANDS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Speaker stands

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS
	Atacama Nexus 6	60	An excellent all-round performer and a genuine hi-fi bargain
	Custom Design RS 300 MkII	100	A solid stand improving on the original, with better focus and detail
	hne Cableway	395	Looks great, sounds great, so start saving! Clean and sweet, and neutrality is exceptional with orchestral material
	Kudos S50	159	Formidable bass with real authority, and a wide dynamic range across a broad bandwidth
	Partington Ansa 60	90	Elegant flat-packer 'disappears' sonically; restrained but neutral and coherent
	Partington Dreadnought	100	Fully welded high-class engineering gives a very clean, open sound at a sharp price
	Sound Organisation Z522	95	Very hefty build for the price helps to deliver a solid sound with good authority and drive
	Townshend Seismic Sink	499	Unique inflatable plinth that works wonders with decent floorstanders, as well as standmounted speakers

SPECIFICATIONS					
HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF LEGS	ISSUE NUMBER
60,50	14,5,18	●		3	202
61,56,51	16,5,18	●		2	202
63	17,20	●		1	220
61	15, 20	●		1	220
62	18,15	●		4	232
61	17,15	●	●	5	220
60	16	●		4	220
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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THETA CARMAN CD/DVD TRANSPORT MINT/BOXED.....	£1695
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MUSICAL FIDELITY A-370 MK2 MINT.....	£1295
ARCAM A-85 MINT.....	£495
THORENS 2000 PRE PHONO/POWER AMPS MINT.....	£695
AVI M-2000S PRE/SYSTEM REMOTE MINT/BOXED.....	£395
AVI 2000M MONOBLOCS MINT/BOXED.....	£695
AVI STEREO POWER AMP MINT.....	£425
BARTOLOMEO TRANSPARENZA VGC.....	£795
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C. JOHNSON PFR.REMOTE PRE MINT/BOXED.....	£1795
ALOIA PST11 01 PRE/PSU EXCLT.....	£1395
NAIM 42.5/140/NAT 101/SNAPS MINT/BOXED.....	TBA

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A. INV1000 MKIII MONO'S B.PATROL MOD. MINT/BOXED.....	£1250
AUDION RESEARCH S-845 INTEGRATED MINT/BOXED.....	£1595
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JADIS JPS-2 (WAS £8000) EXCLT.....	£2995
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EPOS ES-14 & STANDS MINT.....	£375
TRIANGLE TITUS (1 WEEK OLD) BOXED.....	£275
PROAC RESPONSE-3 BOXED.....	£1595
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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 inaudible 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.

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.

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.

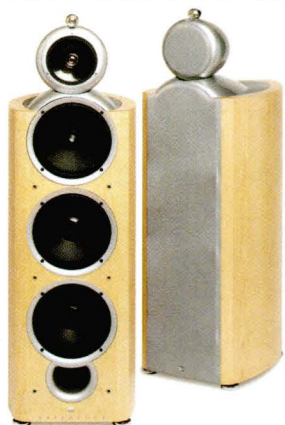
PRESENCE A sense of an instrument or voice occupying a place in the listening room.

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.

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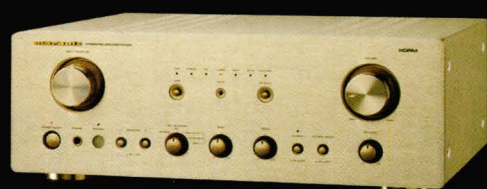
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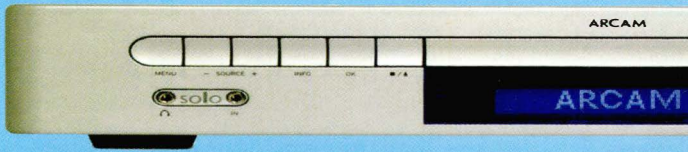
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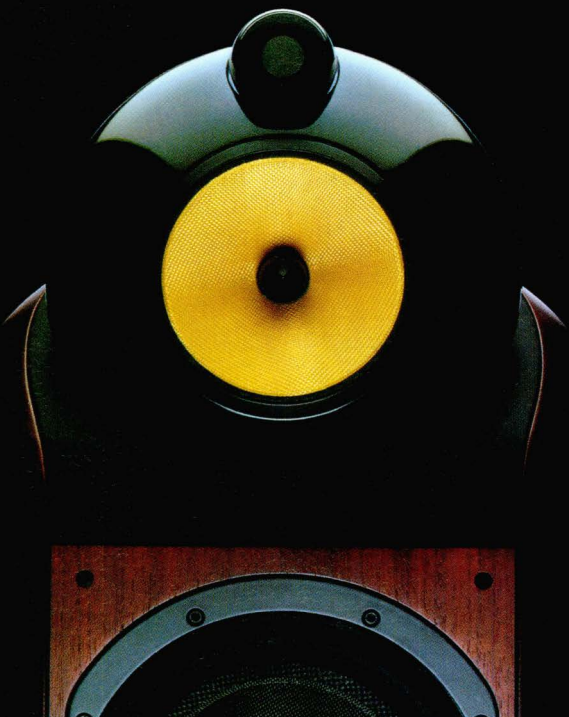
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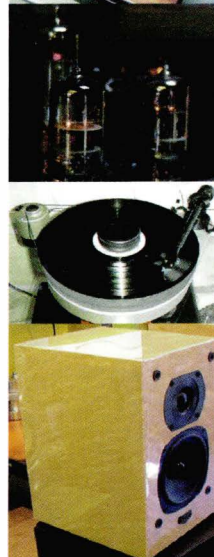


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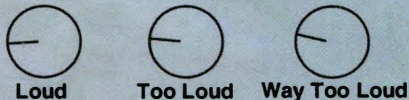
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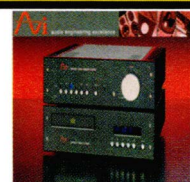
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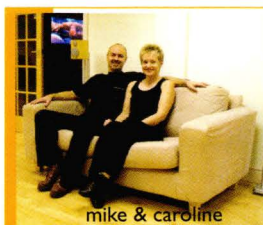


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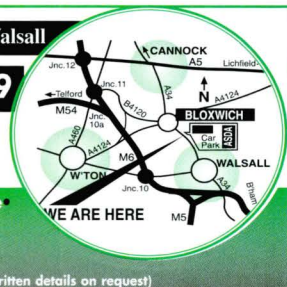
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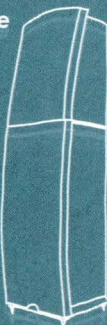
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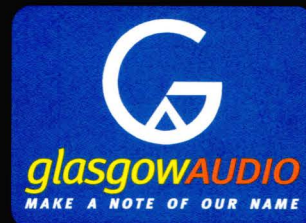
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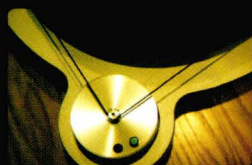
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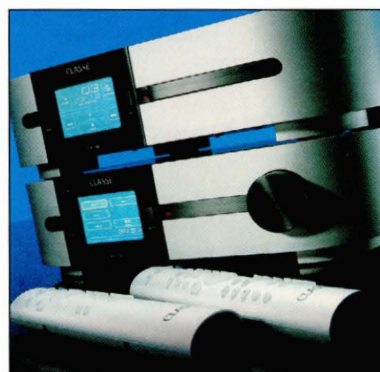
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A-Z GUIDE TO SECOND-HAND KIT

#13 MISSION

Few speaker manufacturers have the brand recognition of Mission. The fact that Mission has been the top seller for years and the products are generally robust means Mission speakers are plentiful on the second-hand market. As a rule, they tend to suit rock and pop and have been pitched at the bottom end of the price scale, but there have been some exceptions, and these are what we're going to take a look at here.

Launched in late 1993, the 752 floorstander pioneered the use of HDA (High Definition Aerogel) in an affordable speaker. The material in question formed the bass cone and made the 752 one of the most transparent and detailed speakers of its time. Priced at £500, many reviewers called it one of the finest transducers at under £1,000 and, although the matching metal dome tweeter could sound a

upright front baffle and a new chamber design known as DCTT (Double Chamber Triple Tuned). Once again the 752 received glowing reviews and remained a firm favourite with both the press and public alike until its replacement in 2000 by the 77-series.

Of the two, the more integrated sounding 752 Freedom is the one to have, but don't expect such sonic excellence to come cheap. Although only £580 new, second-hand 'F' versions go for a hefty £300-£400. Still, it's a price worth paying; as well as excellent sound quality, durability is to Mission's usual high standards. Parts aren't a problem, but damage that expensive HDA woofer and expect a steep £74 bill, even before fitting. If you can't stretch to a 752F, the standard version is still worth having and will set you back a more modest £200-£275.

“This £250 compact standmount had many of the beguiling characteristics of the 752.”

little detached and peaky, with the perspective of time, we'd generally say they were right. This compact floorstander has stood the test of time and, even today, still sounds remarkably fresh and modern. Not content with something of an icon on its hands, in late 1996, Mission redesigned the 752 to make the 752 Freedom. The £80 price rise bought about a smoother and more expensive silk dome tweeter, an

Another Mission favourite of ours is the 750LE. This was produced as a limited edition to celebrate Mission's 20th birthday and, as such, only produced from 1997 to early 2000. A bargain new, this £250 compact standmount had many of the beguiling characteristics of the 752 – hardly surprising when it also used a HDA woofer. The tweeter was a cheaper, fabric design and cheap to



Above: Mission's 750LE standmount loudspeaker

replace (£15.40 plus fitting), but this is not quite as silky smooth as its more expensive brother. As a speaker I used myself for some time, it's a design that comes highly recommended. Examples aren't as numerous as other Mission standmounts, but persevere and you should be able to pick up a pair for £80-£125. Incidentally, both models come in a range of real wood veneers so if you're not a fan of 'boring black' or 'retro rosewood', then carry on looking until you find a finish that suits. Although perhaps not the greatest bargains within these pages, a pair of 750LE or 752(F)s is one of those purchases that few will regret. Buy with confidence. **HFC**

Dominic Todd
Next month: Meridian

DIY CORNER SPEAKERS

Part 13 Diaphragms part four

One of the most interesting drive unit cone materials involves creating a sandwich of more than one layer of different materials. It's by no means a new idea; British brands such as Leak, Celestion and KEF were applying it way back in the 1960s. However, the technique fell out of favour.

Recently, French maker Focal has been using a combination of woven glassfibre either side of a structural foam in its W-sandwich cones. Something broadly similar in outline (though not in detail) is the Rohacell sandwich cones used in recent B&W bass drivers.

Making a cone thicker will enhance its stiffness, but adding layers of thin fabric either

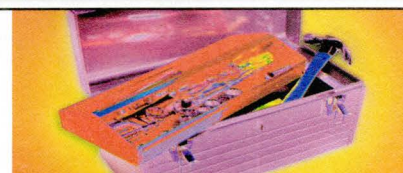
side of a foam core will increase this stiffness still further. This increases the bandwidth over which it will operate as a pure piston, but the stiffer the cone, the more violent its ultimate break up behaviour is likely to be.

This is where sandwich construction offers potential, as its characteristics can – in theory, at least – be varied in order to combine high stiffness with good self-damping. Achieving such ideal behaviour is not easy in practice, though engineers are learning how to make the most of the available materials.

It's best to use a drive unit only over the range in which its cone behaves pistonically, and try and control the ultimate break-up

modes above the nominal operating band. The simpler the network, the more gradual the filter slopes, and the wider the bandwidth over which good behaviour is necessary. **HFC**

Paul Messenger



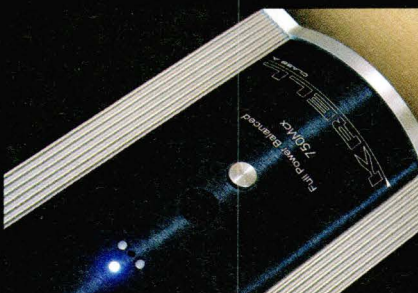
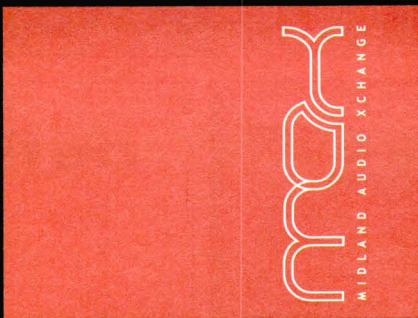
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NEXT MONTH: Tweeter diaphragms



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Hovland HP200 + phono stage (£7325)	£4995
Audio Analogue New Maestro (£1750)	£1255
Audio Analogue Primo Setanta	£395
Unison Research SR 1	£895
Musical Fidelity A308 Power amplifier	£995
Musical Fidelity A308 Pre amplifier	£995
Roksan Kandy MKIII (silver or black)	£450

Loudspeakers

Living Voice Auditorium mkII speakers (£1900)	£895
Diapason Karis III speakers + matching stands	£1095
Ref 3a Dacapo I, maple (£2700)	£1650
Living Voice Avatar II speakers in Maple (£2700)	£1850
Audio Note ANJ speakers, black+stands (£2000)	£495
JM Lab Cobalt 816s (£999)	£595
Triangle Heliaide, Champagne finish (£595)	£395
Triangle Naia (£1995)	£1195
ATC SCM 50ASL Yew (£7947)	£4995
Wilson Benesch ARC's with stands (£2500)	£1699
Soundlab Millennium M3+optional Toroidal Transformers+bi-wire (£10k)	£3995
Triangle Australe in cherry (£3300)	£1995
Living Voice Avatar OBX-R in Cherry	£2695
Wilson Benesch Discovery (£5700)	£3895
Quad 989 ESL Vintage, new £5000	£3600
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 Tempo3i SE, Cherry/light maple	£1799
Audio Physic Virgo III, Cherry	£2895
Wilson Benesch ACT 1, Cherry	£3595
Triangle Antal ES	£595

Analogue

Linn LP12, Naim Aero tonearm, Armageddon PSU, Cirkus bearing, excellent cond (£4000+)	£1595
SME 10, boxed AS NEW (£2800)	£1895
Audio Synthesis Passion Phono stage MM/MC	£795
Linn LP12 + Ittok LVII and Valhalla PSU	£795
SME 20/2a + SME V tonearm (£5695)	£3695
Wilson Benesch Full Circle+Ply Cart (£2100)	£1495
Musical Fidelity M1 turntable, boxed as new	£1990
Project 2.9 wood + Ortofon 510 cartridge	£350
Michell Orbe SE boxed as new	£1595
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

Stax SRS-4040 tube system	£595
ISOL-8 2k Qube2 mains conditioner (£1500)	£995
Townshend Super Tweeters in Titanium matt	£650
Stax SRS-4040 tube system - boxed unused with Stax stand+cover	£795

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Sale of part exchanged and ex-dem items

	Sale	New
Living Voice Avatar 1 - cherry	£1900	£2700
Living Voice Auditorium - cherry - bruised but nice	£800	£1700
Living Voice Auditorium - maple - 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
AudioNote (UK) Ltd P.Zero pre + monos	£500	
Audio Reseach Reference 600 monos - very powerful and very heavy	£10000	£30000 ^{sh}
Nottingham Analogue Space Deck + Living Voice Mystic Mat	£700	£1080
Nottingham Analogue Interspace + RB300 + Living Voice Mystic Mat	£500	£860
Ruark Crusader II - black - OK condition - tweed jacket style	£800	£1900
Sugden Masterclass integrated - nearly new	£2500	£3300
AVI S2000 M1 integrated amp	£400	£1000
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 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
Cyrus CD8 CD Player - 2 years old	£600	£1000
Cyrus DAC X - 1 month old - perfect	£900	£1100
Cyrus PSX - Black - 1 month old - 2 pieces	each £300	£400
Monitor Audio Studio 15 in rosewood (Sept 93)	£500	£700
Chord DAC 64	£1100	£1900
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
Audio Innovations 2nd Audio 2A3 Monos - a classic	£1000	
Kimber Select inter-connect - 0.75m - new - in elaborate plastic box	£250	£500

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Arcam	CD72T - nr mint, remote	199
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Marantz	CD17 KI - nr mint, due in	129
Meridian	208 - ex, built with preamp stage and 209 remote	349
Meridian	200 transport - ex, excellent	249
Meridian	508/20 - nr mint, remote	699
Micromega	Stage 1 - ex, smooth sound on a budget	179
Micromega	Stage 3 - nr mint superb od player	279
Micromega	T-drive and T-dac - vgc, remote, superb sound, £1000s new	799
Micromega	Duo CD3/BS2 - nr mint, fully boxed, beautiful sight and sound	899
Micromega	Optic - nr mint, budget intro to the delights of Micromega	129
Myryad	T20 - black, nr mint, boxed, remote, bargain!	249
NAD	C541i - nr mint, boxed with remote	199
NVA	The Transparent Statement - vgc, crated, ...ultimate NVA	1749
Pass Labs	D1 DAC - rave item at \$5000, due in	Call
Philips	CD100 - ex, the first player!	149
Pioneer	PS-S904 - ex, boxed, stable platter mech	199
Quad	99CDP - nr mint, boxed, remote	699
Quad	67CD - nr mint, c/w remote	479
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QUAD	67/66/66/606 - ex, CD/Tuner/Pre/Power with system remote	1449
QUAD	34/306 FM4 - ex, cute combo	499
TEAC	A1/D1/T1 - Amp as reviewed in Hi-Fi World 08/05, CD and Tuner, nr mint	449

Amplifiers

Adcom	GTP500II PreTuner and GF4545II Power - bargain!	399
AMC	2445 - ex, well reviewed weighty poweramp	199
Arcam	A85 - nr mint	419
Arcam	A75+ - nr mint, boxed	249
Audio Analogue	Puccini Settanta - ex dem as new	749
Audiolab	8000S - nr mint	299
Audiolab	8000Ms - nr mint monoblocks	799
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 - nr mint	699
AVI	S2000 - gc, integrated	249
AVI	S2000MP - ex, line level pre	279
AVI	S2000MM - ex, pair monoblocks	699
AVI	S2000MP/MM - ex, pre and 2x mono combo as above	899
Creek	4330MK2R - nr mint, remote, Fantastic little integrated	249
Crimson	510/520 - nr mint boxed, cute blast from the past	199
Crimson	610C/630D - nr mint, pre and monos, we love these to bits	599
Croft	Linestage - nr mint, one pot special, superb	499
Cyrus	7 - ex, black, boxed	429
Cyrus	3 - ex, black, boxed	229
Lumley Reference	ST70 - nr mint stereo valve power	699
Magnum	MP300/MP125 x2 - ex, pre and monoblocks	599
Magnum	MA120 - ex, integrated, bargain!	149
Marantz	PM66Se Ki Sig - nr mint, lovely amp	199
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Mission	Cyrus One - from	70
Musical Fidelity	Rainbow - nr mint pre with phono stage	119
Musical Fidelity	Typhoon - nr mint power	149
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NAD	912 - good, monoblockable stereo power (2 available)	119
NAD	C320BEE - nr mint, remote	129
NAIM	62/140 - nr mint, 1988 chrome bumper combo	299
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Rotel	RB981 - ex, black powerhouse	279
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Sumo	Andromeda - ex, US monster bargain	299
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TagMcLaren	60P - nr mint boxed	449

Speakers

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Acoustic Energy	Aelite 3 - vgc, dem pair in cherry	549
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B&W	602S3 - nr mint boxed Sorrento	249
B&W	801S3 Matrix - ex, walnut	1999
Castle	Chester - good condition, mahogany	199
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JPW	204 - new, great floorstander save proverbial shedload	599
KEF	Reference 104/2 - ex, rosewood	599
KEF	C10 - nr mint, boxed	89
Meadowlark	Sheanwater Hotrod - nr mint boxed	999
Mission	753 - nr mint, multidriver, bargain!	349
Monitor Audio	Studio Centre - vgc, boxed	199
Monitor Audio	Silver S8 - new sealed box	599
Monitor Audio	Silver S5 - new sealed box	349
Monitor Audio	Silver B1 - ex, cherry	349
Mordant Short	912 - ex display, boxed	149
NEAT	Petite Mk2 - ex, boxed latest LF drivers fab monitor	249
NEAT	Petite Mk3 - nr mint, current model, stunning	399
NHT	VT2 - ex, piano black monster floorstand with sidefire bass driver	449
PMC	FB1 - ex, cherry boxed	799
QUAD	ESL63 - unused since coming back from Quad	1299
QUAD	12L - nr mint, boxed, birds eye maple	449
QUAD	12L - nr mint, boxed, ebony	399
QUAD	11L - nr mint, boxed, birds eye maple	299
QUAD	11L - nr mint, boxed, yew	299
QUAD	11L - nr mint, boxed, piano black	349
REL	Q50 - ex, black	199
Rogers	Studio Monitor - Original vgc, with stands - suit valve amps	199
Ruark	Templar - ex, boxed	199
Tandberg	Studio Monitor - Ex, large standmount	399
TDL	Studio 1 - vgc, wood finish transmission line	119
Triangle	Titus 202 - good, boxed	199
Triangle	Antal ES - ex dem, in champagne beautiful well reviewed floorstander	749
Vienna Acoustics	Strauss - ex, stunning floorstanders in beech	1999

Tuners and Tape

Arcam	T61 - nr mint, boxed	159
Creek	4030 - ex, great FM quality on a shoestring!	99
Denon	DRS810 - nr mint, boxed, 3 head drawer opener, very cute and capable	99
Myryad	T30 - nr mint, boxed	199
Nakamichi	BX125 - ex, boxed	99
Quad	FM2 vgc, just back from QUAD	149
Quad	66FM - nr mint	379

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FOR SALE

ACCUPHASE CD DP67

integrated amp E408, JM Lab Micro Utopia speakers and stand. Utter support stand, Siltech Classic leads, £11,000 will split. Mint, boxed, manuals. 0113 2523244 or email Markjappleton@hotmail.com (Leeds).

ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE2 high gloss piano black on AE1 stands, showroom condition in original packaging, can be auditioned, (£3,200) £2,000. Steven 07733 333229 (Kent).

ARCAM A65+ amplifier, black, brand new, £270. Arcam CD82, black, £280 perfect. B&W CM2 speakers, £250. Norman 07957 650274 or 020 8318 0665 (S.London).

ARCAM ALPHA 8 CD player, instructions, boxed, immaculate, (£450) £150. Yamaha KX580 cassette deck, Dolby B,C,S HX Pro. Boxed, hardly used, (£250) £30. Trevor 02476 842117 or 02476 319920 (Warks).

ARCAM T61 FM tuner, mint, boxed, silver, with RDS and full remote. Well reviewed, excellent sound, (£230) £120. 01323 486216 (East Sussex).

ATC SCM7 speakers, cherry, £250. Pure DAB tuner DRX-701ES silver, £150. Musical Fidelity X-10V3 tube buffer, £200. All boxed and mint. 07941 174804 (Berks)

AUDIO NOTE P2 SE power amp, recently serviced, excellent condition, £650. Paul 01225 481155 (Bath)

AUDIO RESEARCH Classic 120 monoblocks excellent condition. Fantastic sound. Black fascia and spare silver, (£8,000) £2,600ovno. 029 2023 5881 or 029 2077 7156 (Cardiff)

AUDIONOTE PRE ZERO. Zero monoblocks, CDT Zero, DAC Zero, ANZ speakers, all cables, £1,800ovno (Herts).

AURUM CANTUS leisure 2SE speakers in rosewood, boxed, not even run in yet, (£900) £525ono. Townshend Audio Seismic Sink three-tier isolation rack, silver, boxed, mint, (£670) £500ono. Matt 020 7708 0500 (London).

AVI SYSTEM Pro Nine Plus speakers, 150 watt amplifiers, preamp and CD player. Manuals, boxes, (£4,200) £1,650. Usher CP6311 speakers, diamond white, unused still in boxes, £925. 01455 212362 (Warks).

B&W CDM1 quality monitor speaker, excellent sounds. Red ash, Audioquest type 4 biwire cable with gold banana plugs, all in mint condition. Boxed for last three years. Simon 020 7679 5888 or 07952 257335 or email uctprec@ucl.ac.uk (London).

B&W CDM7NT speakers in cherry with manuals, (£1,250) will accept £500 ono. Robert 01234 214169 (Beds)

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO Discmagic 1 transport and WED Digitdac/positron PSU. Both excellent condition, £120. 01384 237584 (W.Mids)

CARDAS Power Cord, 1.5m £155 inc. p&p. Pro-Ject Phono Box SE, mint, boxed, manual, five hours use, £75. 01234 302769 (Beds)

CASTLE SEVERN 2 floorstanding speakers. Yew wood finish with Chord Legend cables and gold plugs included. Excellent condition, £250. Peter 01832 735521 (Northants).

CUSTOM MADE six-tier isolation equipment rack, spiked top plate and feet in oak, (£760) £230ono Andy 0115 9126424 (Mids)

CYRUS CD8x silver, £725.

Audioquest Type 4 bi-wire speaker cable terminated (2.5m), £95. Pair 0.5m Russ Andrews select 1121 phono cable with factory fitted WBT phonos, £175. 028 417 64088 (N.Ireland)

DYNAUDIO 62s excellent condition, 14 months old. Can audition, maple finish, offers over £400 07977 930377 (Wilts).

ELECTROCOMPANET AW120 DMB power amp fully balanced 2x120 watts. Latest model in mint condition, £1,200. Cardas Cross power chord 1.5m, £140. Sonic Link/Black Rhodium XLR 0.5m and two Sonic Link power chords. 01234 302769 (Beds).

EXPOSURE 23 preamp (£1,400) black, mint as new, boxed. XLR interconnects, instructions. MC phono stage. Can demo to buyer. Superb preamp with Exposure or other classic powers. Best buy, £895 0131 538 0013 (Mids)

HARMAN KARDON system – HK6550 integrated amplifier, TD4200 cassette deck, TU9200 AM/FM tuner, HD4750 CD player, solid twin bass subwoofer. Solid speakers 150 watts into 8ohms, Dual turntable CS435. 0161 6335088 or 07715 274518 (Lancs). 

WANTED

GRADIENT EVIDENCE Mk11 floorstanding speakers and Celestion Ditton 66 studio monitors. Must be in excellent working order and condition 01622 692636 or 07801 25816 (Kent).

MARANTZ CD63 MKII KI Signature, fully functioning, black, made in Japan and in excellent working condition. Will pay reasonable price. Please call 07875 092215 (W.Yorks).

MUSICAL FIDELITY A308CR power amp and Clearlight Audio Aspekt rack four tier or Finite Element pagode E14 four tier. For more info call Andy 0115 9126424 (Mids)

NAIM NAIT 2 Rega Kyte speakers. Linn Kans. All in good condition please. 07810 103908 (W.Yorks).

RDC ASPEKT rack. Please call with details on 01766 781211 (Porthmadog).

ROYD MINSTREL loudspeakers any finish considered but must be in perfect working order. Alternatively, new main driver units welcome. John 0161 439 5122 (Stockport).

BUYING TIPS

Buying second-hand can be a great way to pick up a bargain. A formerly expensive second-hand component might well prove a better long-term bet than a brand-new product if the price is right.

Do some research on which brands have a good service back-up, so if something does go wrong, you can get it fixed. Unless you purchase from a dealer, you're unlikely to get any warranty, so it's up to you to ensure the fitness of any gear that you buy.

Usually, speakers should be less prone to breakdown than amps, and amps should be more reliable than CD players. But any abused component could be trouble – have a proper dem, and judge the seller as well as the goods!

FOR SALE

☑ **IMF T1550** transmission line floorstanding loudspeakers. Adjustable crossover. 38x89x36 (WxHxD). Can demo, £120. 020 7209 4786 (London)

KRELL KAV 300i mint, £1,000. Sugden A21a amp black, mint, £500. Both, £900. Tom Evans Groove phono, mint, £1,100. All boxed, manuals. Call 0161 226 6125 or 07961 427777 (Manchester).

LOTH-X AMAZE speakers, cherry veneer with custom stands. Ideal partners for valve amps, £450. 020 8572 2504 (Middx)

MARANTZ CD7 CD player. Beautiful sound and build quality, balanced and phono outputs. Three digital inputs so can be used as a DAC. Boxed, in perfect condition, £2,100ono. 01634 712273 (Kent)

MARK LEVINSON 331 power amp, 95 model, 100 watts, vgc, manual but no box, £750. Craig 020 8905 1621 (Herts).

MICHELL GYRO SE turntable AC powered, SME armboard, clamp, mint condition, boxed, one owner, can demo, £500. 07786 555430 or email gchampides@hotmail.com (London).

MICHELL GYRODEK £550. SME IV, £595. Michell Alecto stereo, £550, Orca, £695. Musical Fidelity X-Can V3, (£250) £120. Nordost Blue Heaven 0.5m, £50 Red Dawn 1.0m, £140. 01202 381413 (Bournemouth).

MISSION 752F speakers. Rosewood, £325. DNM speaker cable, £20. Good condition. 01582 724414 (Beds)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A3.2CR power amp, £550. X-Ray V3 CD player, £600. PMC FB1 black, £750. Terry 020 8482 0363 (Enfield)

MUSICAL FIDELITY TRI-VISTA 21 tube DAC. As new, upsamples to either 96 or 192kHz 24-bit, £900. 01963 363341 (N.Dorset), **NAD C320BEE** amplifier, £90. C451 CD, £145. C422 tuner, £80. Unused, all boxes as new. Terry 01279 651860. (Herts).

NAIM CD53/ XPS 2 CD player, few months old, three year guarantee, boxed instructions, excellent condition, offers around (£7,244) £5,500. 01623 740872 or 07816 063648 (Wilts).

NAIM CD5i 12 months old, with two year guarantee, box, remote, as new, £799ovno. 020 8558 3364 or 07956 858426 (Leyton).

NEAT MF9 and MFC, Naim 82/250, Nordost cables, Pioneer PD95+ DVL919E. Audiomagic ST1s, Audiophile Base rack, Isotek leads, Kuban 400 CD cabinet. Offers 01423 566916 Eves and w/ends (North Yorks).

NEAT PETITE 3 cherry ash. Mint, (£850) £370. 01244 812306 (Flintshire)

NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN interconnects RCA 1m and 0.6m, £60/£50. LAT international mains leads 1.2m and 0.9m, £60/£50. 0121 601 0325 (W.Mids).

PROAC RESPONSE 3.8 yew finish, excellent condition, superb sound, original boxes and manual approx five years old. Comes with additional granite bases, £1,950ono 020 8868 7835 (Middx)

PS AUDIO P300 Powerplant inc. PS Audio Minilab power cable, excellent condition, box and instructions. Pure regenerated mains power, (£1,600) £695. 01625 537630 (Cheshire).

QED SILVER anniversary, 3m pair, £15. Mitchell rewirable gold phono plugs (4), £6.50. Apollo Olympus stands, £39. 01766 781211 (N.Wales)

QUAD 405-2 amplifier, boxed, £200. Clive 01732 882530 (Kent)

QUAD 99/ 909 pre/power amps including manuals, boxes and Quadlink. Excellent condition, £1,100. Steve 020 8789 0817 or 07905 762363, or email sappleby@powelltuck.co.uk (London).

ROKSAN KANDY MK3 amp and CD player, black. Wharfedale Pacific Evo60 mahogany. QED X-tube 350 (bi-wired cables) QED Airlocked plugs, QED silver spiral i/cs, £1,400. 07789 813560 (Merseyside).

SDL speakers, £100. Musical Fidelity MX pre-remote power supply MM and MC, P270 power amp, £250. Volt 250 bass units, new unused, £95. Audioquest concentric helical array cable, 27ft pair. 07748 107206 (Essex)

SENNHEISER HD580 headphones, (£200) mint condition, £70. Pioneer 505 Precision CD player, (£460) mint condition, boxed, £160. Could post. 01278 782622 (Somerset).

SENNHEISER MD250II linear closed back headphones, (£170) £75. Two months old. Pioneer F-204 RDS tuner FM/AM (£140), £30. 07891 533084 (Swansea)

SPENDOR S3E speakers, rosenut, (£795) £485. Samuel Johnson ppa 100 and pca 100 pre/power amps, (£5,700) £1,695 the pair. Pathos TT integrated hybrid amp with phono section, (£3,250) £1,895. Wadia 301 CD player, (£3,650) £2,250. 01202 767873 (Dorset).

TAG MCLAREN Aphrodite with Calliope speakers, £2,000. Nordost Solar Wind speaker cable, £250. Velodyne SPL Mk2 subwoofer, £650 and a Blue Note subwoofer, £200. Will sell separately. All items one year old. 07909 610033 or email rowlerson@yahoo.com (Sussex).

TAG MCLAREN AVANTGUARD silver, 100x4 power amp, mint, £1,100. Ideal for biamping. Carver C1 preamp and 32 power amp, £500 the pair. Just serviced. 01639 774144 (Aberavon).

TANDBERG 10XD reel to reel tape recorder 15, 7 1/2, 3 3/4 tape speeds 1/4 track Dolby. With 10 and 7 inch reels and tape. 01978 757177 (Wrexham).

VTL IT-85 integrated valve amp. Mint with box, remote and manual, 500 hours on the valves, (£2,250) £1,350 ono. Chris 01892 547003 (Tunbridge Wells).

YAMAMURA CHURCHILL interconnects ONC 0.5 metre pair with phonos, £190. +00 3531 459 1432 (Dublin).



Above: Cyrus CD8x CD player

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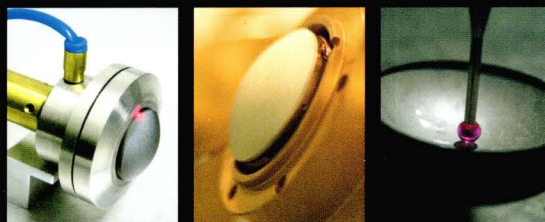


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