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# THE HI-FI AWARDS 2005

The year's  
best gear revealed...



THE UK'S MOST RIGOROUS  
HFC  
LABS  
TESTS THE UK'S MOST RIGOROUS  
HI-FI

PLUS! In-depth tests of the hottest new kit

- >> Denon DAB/FM tuner
- >> Focal-JMLab speakers
- >> Sony DVD/SACD player
- >> Cambridge Audio CD player
- >> Revel speakers
- >> Audio Analogue amp
- >> Marantz universal disc player
- >> Philips DVD/SACD player

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2nd hand hi-fi  
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+ BUYER'S BIBLE  
World's best hi-fi rated







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For more than 20 years Classé has been designing and manufacturing extraordinary audio equipment for enthusiasts who demand nothing less than the very best. Our engineers have a passion for what they create and it shows: engineering, style, user-interface, product reliability and performance are all second to none. The new Delta series is an inspired statement about the art of high performance design. Visit us at [www.classeaudio.com](http://www.classeaudio.com) or experience the product range at one of the following authorised retailers.

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[sales@roberttaussig.co.uk](mailto:sales@roberttaussig.co.uk)

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

# CLASSE



Welcome to the issue...

## HI-FI CHOICE DECEMBER 2005 ISSUE 274

Future Publishing Ltd, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP ☎ +44 (0)20 7317 2600



As you'll no doubt have gathered from our gilded cover, this is a very special edition of *Hi-Fi Choice*. It's special because it contains *The Hi-Fi Awards 2005* – the only annual awards to focus solely on high-performance audio replay across a multitude of price points, from the best budget kit to the true high end. It's also the only such awards with a shortlist derived from *Hi-Fi Choice's* rigorous test programme, and compiled via democratic vote by our highly experienced team of reviewers – so these really are the awards you can trust. Quite simply, if you're thinking about buying a hi-fi component in 2005/2006, this is one issue you need.

Of course, you should never buy a component based solely on the recommendation of a magazine – even one as highly regarded as *Hi-Fi Choice*. Instead, use our recommendations to make a shortlist and then take the time to audition the equipment thoroughly at a reputable dealer, using your own discs. Only then can you be sure you've made the right decision.

What *HFC* can do though is guide you in the right direction, and our impartial, in-depth tests ensure we give you the most reliable advice around. So, peruse *The Hi-Fi Awards 2005* (from p52) at your leisure – we hope you find them useful. But before you do, why not check out our regular mix of news, views and in-depth component reviews over the preceding 48 pages... Until next time, happy listening!

Tim Bown

Tim Bown Editor

## WHY WE'RE NO.1 FOR HI-FI...

- Since 1975, *Hi-Fi Choice* has delivered the world's most thorough, no-nonsense guide to buying high-performance hi-fi.
- We now publish 13 issues a year, including two special editions: *The Collection*, an issue dedicated to the finest high-end components, and *The Hi-Fi Awards* – the most important annual awards in the hi-fi calendar.
- Every issue contains a potent mix of the latest hi-fi news, views, music, interviews and in-depth tests, brought to you by a prestigious team of expert writers from the UK and around the world.
- We only review the most interesting and worthy new hi-fi components – high-performance audio products across a wide range of price points. We obtain more genuine hi-fi exclusives than any other magazine – if it's worthy of your attention, you'll read about it first in *Hi-Fi Choice*.
- Our tests are the most rigorous in the business, conducted by the UK's most experienced team of hi-fi reviewers.
- Alongside in-depth component reviews and accessory round-ups, every regular issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* features an *Ultimate Group Test* on a core hi-fi product category – from source components to amps and speakers.
- Each *Ultimate Group Test* is conducted using a uniquely thorough three-step test regime. This consists of carefully controlled 'blind' and sighted listening sessions, a full set of laboratory tests and extended 'hands on' testing by the primary reviewer. No other magazine goes to such lengths to ensure accurate comparative reviews.
- Components that best meet our exacting standards are listed in the *Buyer's Bible* section – the world's most reliable reference guide for the hi-fi buyer.
- That's why *Hi-Fi Choice* is...  
The Essential Guide To Audio Excellence In The Home

Beautiful in-house photography, so you see the product in all its glory

Cherry-picked kit – only the most worthy components make it into *Hi-Fi Choice*

Comprehensive in-depth reviews – we give you the full story



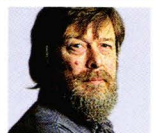
Annotated shots show you what's really going on inside

Interviews with designers give you extra background information

Carefully considered verdict scores, so you really know what we think of a product



## THIS ISSUE'S WRITERS AND REVIEWERS INCLUDE...



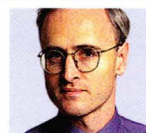
**PAUL MESSENGER**

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 scribes and probably the UK's foremost loudspeaker reviewer.



**DAN GEORGE**

Dan is a 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 interesting products make it into *HFC*.



**RICHARD BLACK**

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



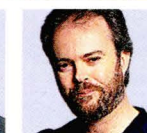
**JIMMY HUGHES**

Jimmy got 'into' hi-fi in the 1960s and after ten years in retail, his first article was published in 1979. He's an avid tweeker and his 'firsts' include solid-core cables and, er, listening to your speakers back to front – you can't win 'em all...



**ALVIN GOLD**

Alvin 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.



**JASON KENNEDY**

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



**ALAN SIRCORN**

Alan began his journalistic career in the early 1990s. Now a successful freelancer, you too can benefit from his extensive hi-fi knowledge, from purist two-channel stereo to the latest multichannel gear... and beyond.

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.





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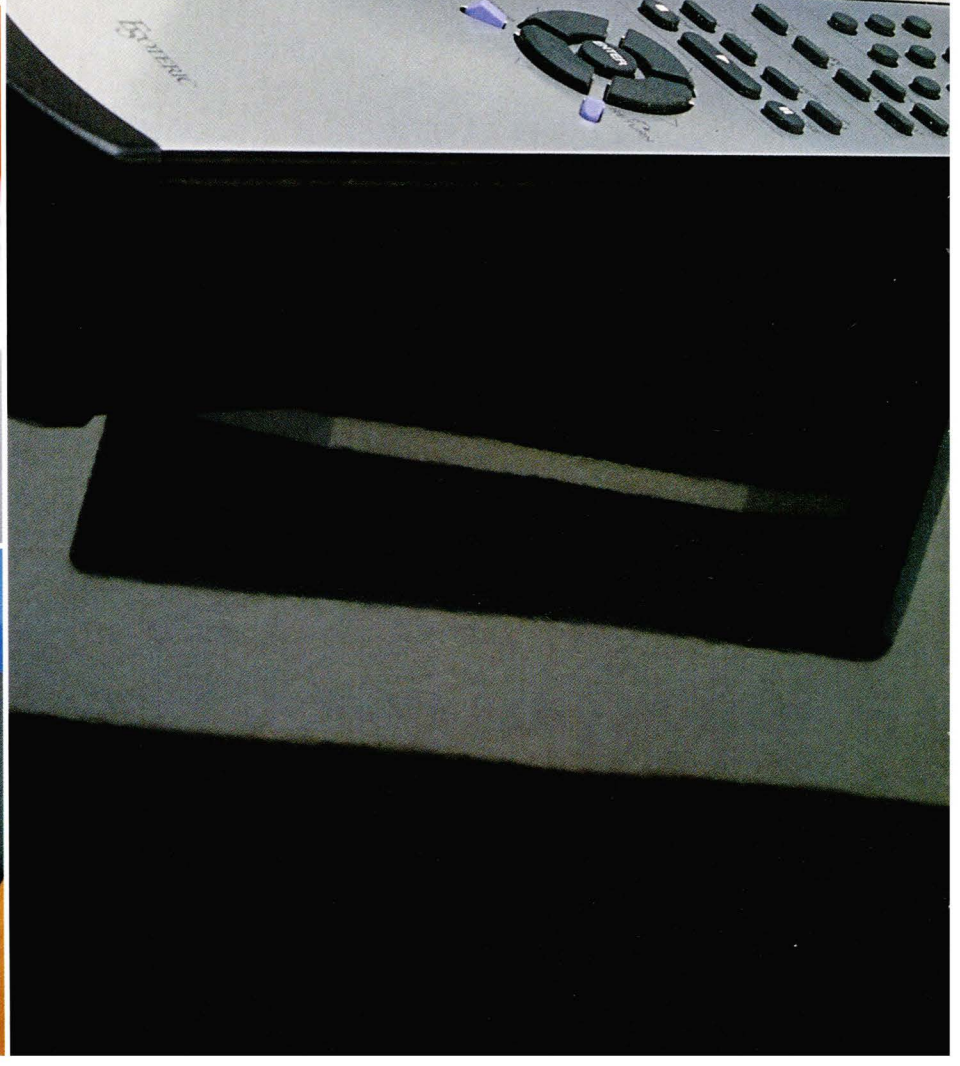
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## FREE MINI-MAG!

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

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





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LOUDSPEAKER

Classic Walnut



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Hi-Fi & Home Entertainment Show 2005, London, Heathrow.

To experience how we can enhance your listening pleasure, visit your nearest dealer.  
Details can be found on our website : [www.nbien.com](http://www.nbien.com) or you can email us at [info@nbien.com](mailto:info@nbien.com).





## WEGG3 STELAR 1 LOUDSPEAKER

▶ Never heard of WEGG3? What if we told you this exciting new brand is the brainchild of William Eggleston III of EgglestonWorks fame? Now departed from Memphis, Tennessee and EgglestonWorks, his new range of radical, high-end loudspeakers has a distinctive aesthetic and some clever engineering within. This particular model forms the loudspeaker complement of Ricardo's Studio, a new back to basics sub-set of Absolute Sounds.

The bulk of the WEGG3 range will likely remain Stateside, but Ricardo's Studio is strongly behind WEGG3 and the Stelar 1 in particular, the first speaker from the new Usonian series. It's a 'compact', three-way floorstander with a broad frequency response and extension down to a teeth-rattling 28Hz, it's claimed. It'll sing up to 30kHz too and has an exotic driver compliment, including a super-fast metal bass unit to serve up the low stuff.

Perhaps the most alluring aspect of this curvaceous new model, however, is that WEGG3 claims it compares favourably to its flagship Andra loudspeaker – a large and legendary box that uses a single midrange cone to deliver the full frequency range, without a crossover.

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

**PRODUCT** WEGG3 Stelar 1

**TYPE** Floorstanding loudspeaker

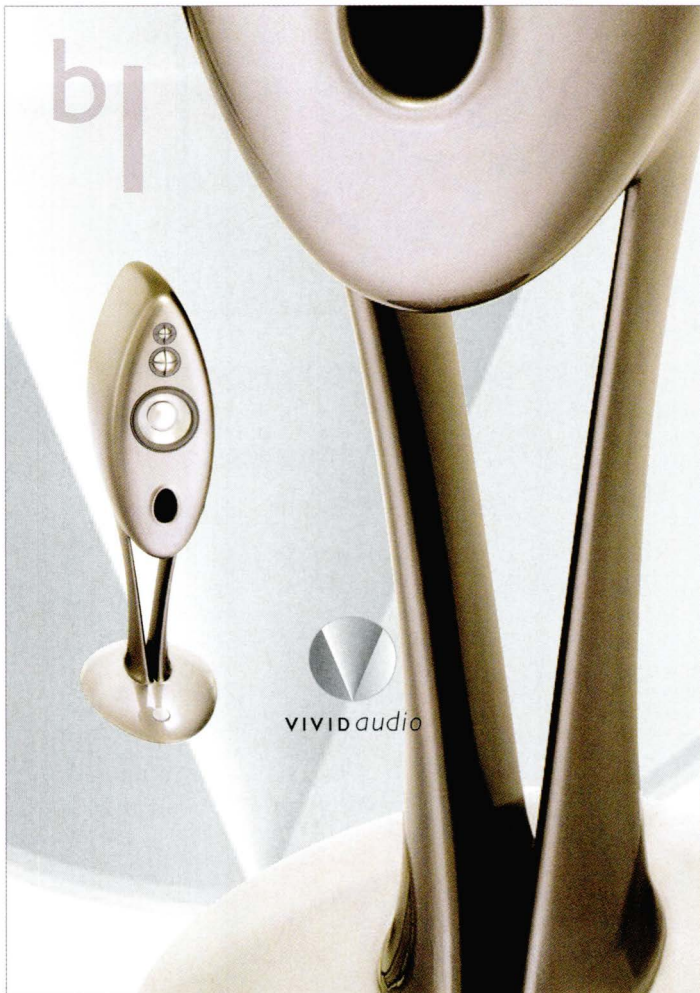
**PRICE** £4,990 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Frequency response to 28Hz  
● 87dB sensitivity ● Six-ohm impedance

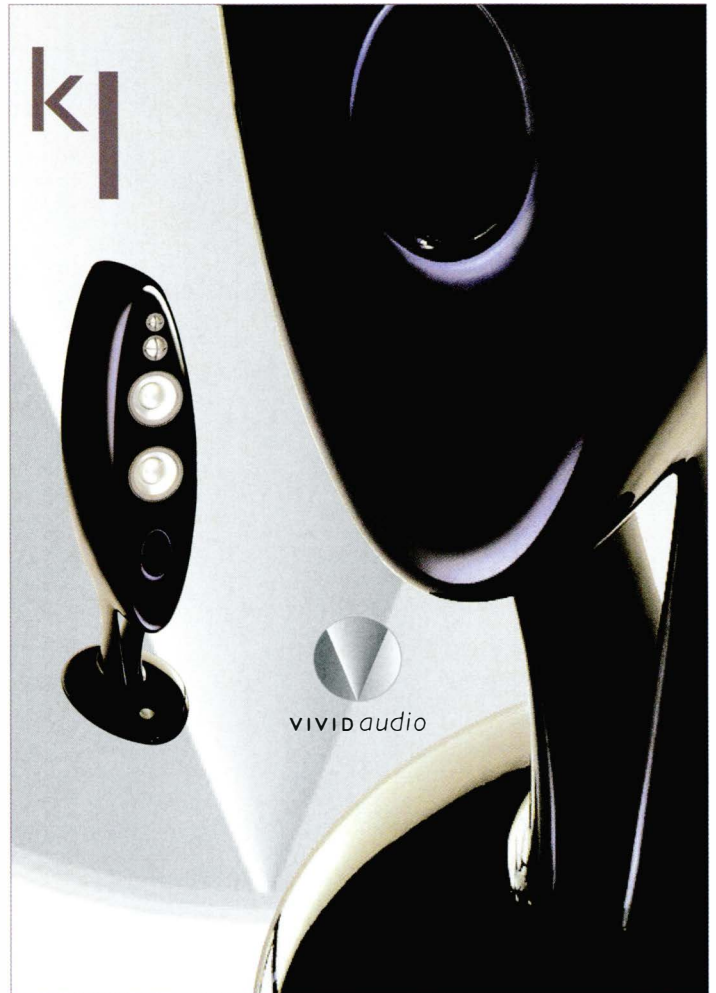
**CONTACT** ☎ 020 8971 3909 🌐 www.wegg3.com



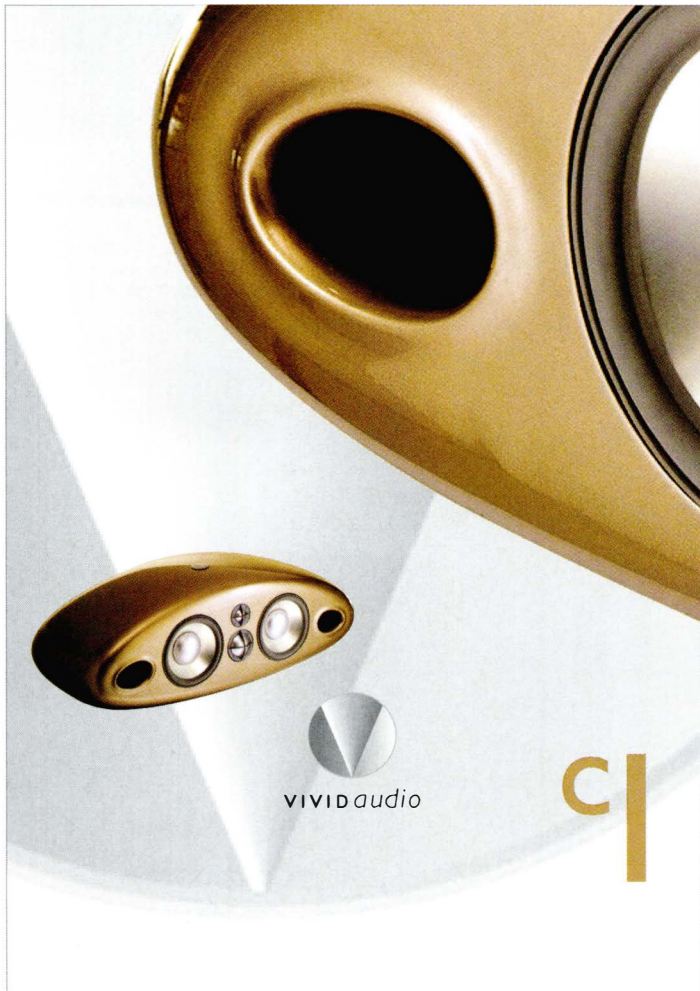
b1 shown in Silver (metallic) finish



k1 shown in Graphite (piano) finish



c1 shown in Sahara Beige finish



# Vivid Audio

think outside of the square box

see website for new arrival:  
v1 floormount, v1 wall mount, v1 centre channel.

Dealer enquiries very welcome

" An extremely revealing and genuinely neutral loudspeaker with dynamic range, timing and imaging to die for.

A true world class loudspeaker from a brand that knows how to get results. "

Jason Kennedy, Hi-Fi Choice



Rowles Music Limited

For more information:

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Mob 07950 274224

ray@rowlesmusic.co.uk

www.vividspeakers.co.uk

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home cinema choice  
**Gold Star**  
Reference Status  
Guarantee

**hi-fi+**  
Product Discovery  
Of The Year  
Annual Award 2004





# DENON DCD-2000AE AND PMA-2000AE CD/SACD PLAYER AND AMPLIFIER

**▶** Fresh from Denon's Advanced Evolution range, this player and amp combination is further evidence of the current two-channel resurgence. The DCD-2000AE is a highly sophisticated two-channel CD/SACD player packed with Denon's latest know-how, including its AL24 Processing Plus technology, developed for the flagship DCD-SA1 player. It uses a proprietary drive mechanism and loader, plus a high-end DAC master clock to keep jitter in check.

Equally well endowed is the matching 80-watt integrated stereo amplifier, which at 24kg houses new ultra-high-current single push-pull circuitry plus a high-quality phono stage. The chassis is also rather special – it's separated into six distinct blocks to maximize signal purity and minimise distortion. Tone controls and full remote control are also thrown into the mix.

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

**PRODUCT** Denon DCD-2000AE and PMA-2000AE

**TYPE** CD/SACD player and integrated stereo amp

**PRICE** £1,100 each

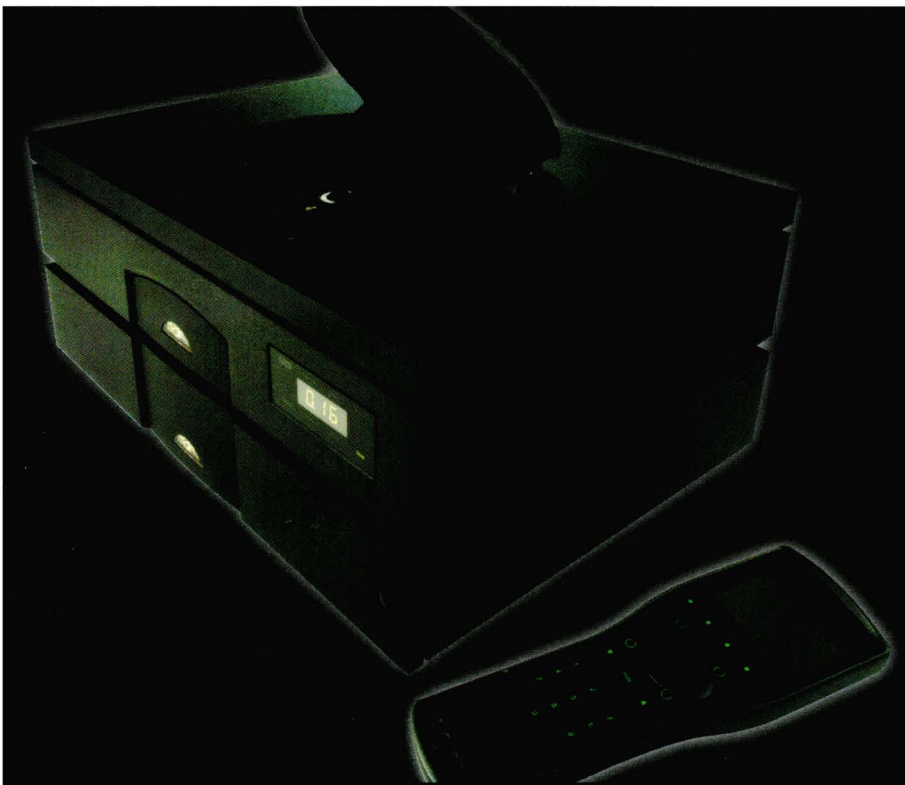
**KEY FEATURES** (DCD-2000AE) AL24 Processing

- ▶ Original drive mechanism
- ▶ DAC master clock design
- ▶ (PMA 2000-AE) 80 watts per channel
- ▶ UHC-MOS single push pull circuit
- ▶ Separate preamp and output stage

**CONTACT** ☎ 01234 741 200 🌐 www.denon.com







### NAIM CD555

Naim has a new reference quality CD player. It's called the CD555 and is "the best CD player ever" – according to Naim, at least. The top-loading flagship has a separate power supply (555PS) and is based around the Philips Pro CD mech.

It includes a number of key design features including a machined, high-mass transport tray and a heavy brass sub-chassis, separated for digital and analogue electronics. Power supplies are heavily regulated to isolate the supply to various parts of the circuit and further tweaks include mounting the DACs in a "quiet room" – a shielded enclosure to isolate the chips from external influences.

The player also boasts high-mass casework, a motorised door for the top-loading configuration, plus a low infrared reflective coating around the CD loading area to reduce interference and noise. Naim has paid particular attention to jitter with a separate low-jitter clock circuit with its own multi-stage regulated power supply and an additional de-jitter filter that aims to eliminate the digital distortion.

**Price** £15,000 **Due** early 2006

☎ 01722 332266 # www.naim-audio.com

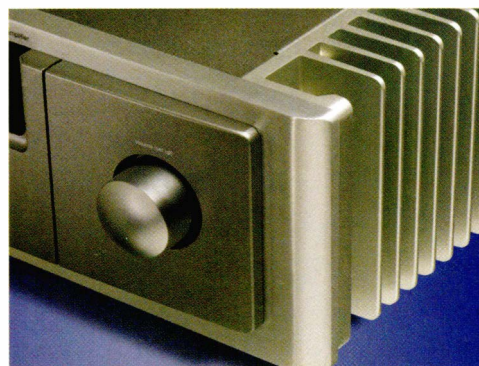


### ACOUSTIC ENERGY LINEAR 3

Acoustic Energy has introduced time-aligned technology into its new mid-range Linear Series loudspeakers. The models use a sculpted baffle and precisely inset tweeter to achieve perfect in-phase frequency response, it is claimed. The flagship Linear 3 floorstander is a three-way design with a sizeable 160mm bass driver said to extend to 30Hz. The ported cabinet design implemented across the entire Linear series is also said to be highly efficient. Expect a review of the Linear 3 in *HFC* soon.

**Price** £500 per pair **Due** now

☎ 01285 654432 # www.acoustic-energy.co.uk



### NAD MASTERS SERIES

Best known for its high-performance, high-value hi-fi components, NAD is about to unleash an all-new and rather delicious-looking high-end range upon an unsuspecting public. The Masters Series swings into action just before Christmas, with the first phase comprising an upmarket universal disc player, dual mono amplifier (pictured), processor and power amp. Details are limited at this time, but all Master Series products will use extruded aluminium and 2mm steel casework, with vibration damping feet and high-current circuits. Expect more details soon.

**Price** from £1,299 to £1,999 **Due** December

☎ 01908 319360 # www.nadelectronics.com



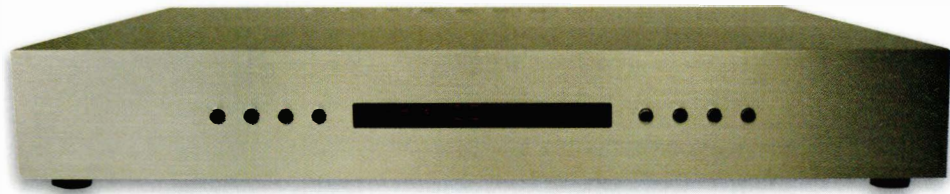
### DENON DVD-1920

Denon's new DVD-1920 universal disc player offers HDMI connectivity at a real world price, with high-resolution audio thrown in, too. Replacing the DVD-1910 and adding DVD-Audio and SACD playback, the new player boasts 11-bit/216Mhz video DACs and DiVX compatibility. Its HDMI connection is HDCP enabled for the latest generation of display panels and projectors. Expect an in-depth review soon.

**Price** £250 **Due** now

☎ 01234 741200 # www.denon.co.uk





## DENZEN B-150

➤ Danish hi-fi specialist Denzen has launched a new high-end integrated stereo amp that draws heavily on its B-250 preamp and B-350 power amp. The new 100-watt B-150 has an entire preamp stage based on the B-250 reference preamp and uses a microprocessor-controlled attenuator for the volume control. All of the amp's circuits are zero feedback designs and the first 15 watts of power are delivered in pure Class A. Consumers can add an optional MM/MC phono board, a SAXO electronic crossover, or bi-amp the unit using the twin preamp outputs at the back. The amp can be expanded with a 7.1 board, effectively turning it into a multichannel preamp, and may be improved further with the forthcoming DNRG external power supply. The B-150 even comes with a lifetime warranty.

**Price** £3,000 **Due** now ☎ 01732 451938 🌐 www.denzen.com



Lowery & Wilkins

## B&W CM1

➤ At last, B&W has a new speaker for the 'affordable' market. The CM1 is a compact, two-way standmount with a simple crossover network akin to the 805 – a speaker integral to its development. It uses a tube-loaded, 25mm Nautilus-style tweeter with a tapering tail to disperse excess sound plus a 130mm Kevlar bass/mid drive unit. The wood-wrapped, 6.5-litre cabinet is made in B&W's Danish factory and has been designed for use in free space, although it is equally adept with close wall placement. B&W's research into the latest laser interferometry-based measuring techniques means the drive units have been designed for optimum linearity.

**Price** £500 per pair **Due** November/December ☎ 01903 221500 🌐 www.bwspeakers.com

## OPERA TEBALDI

➤ Hi-fi meets high art with Opera's new flagship speaker, the Tebaldi. The new Cross-Link-Dipole (CLD) design has four rear-mounted tweeters to form a dipole, with side-mounted bass and mid drivers for easy room placement and minimal boundary reflections.

The curvaceous, wood-wrapped cabinet is divided into sections – two for the bass drivers, one for the bass/mid unit and a fourth for the connections. At just 16cm wide, the leather-finished front baffle minimises unwanted reflections and houses the front drive units.

**Price** £9,995 per pair **Due** now ☎ 01753 652669 🌐 www.ukd.co.uk



## DCS P8i

➤ DCS has launched its first integrated SACD player, the P8i. This stereo player also offers upsampling of CD data to DSD. The analogue output delivers both DSD and PCM datastreams, with further connections including a PCM digital output plus two auxiliary digital inputs. There's also the new Verdi Encore SACD transport, which has built-in DSD/PCM upsampling and two digital inputs. Digital DSD data is outputted via encrypted IEEE1394 (FireWire) ports.

**Price** P8i £6,500; Verdi Encore £9,500 **Due** now ☎ 01799 531999 🌐 www.dcsLtd.co.uk

## Soundbites

PMC has a new range of on-wall and in-wall speakers called Wafer. It uses PMC's own technology to develop a shallow H-shaped version of the transmission



line system and twin tweeters with steerable imaging to allow for horizontal and vertical placement. There are two models for both the on-wall and in-wall flavours. Prices start at £1,100.

☎ 0870 444 1044

DSKIN is a new protective product for 12cm discs that's optically clear and acts as a 'skin', guarding against scratches. The skin acts as a barrier to stop discs getting scratched, therefore extending the disc's life. A five pack of skins costs £6.

🌐 www.dskin.net

PURE's latest DAB portable is the Evoke-3, a feature-equipped radio that's said to be the most advanced yet. It includes ReVu digital rewind technology, SD-card recording and Tri-band reception. There's also the ability to upgrade the device via USB, while the Electronic Programme Guide offers the latest in radio technology. The radio also has a large, six-line LCD screen and costs £200.

☎ 01923 260511

CASTLE's new Compact Column speaker (CCC), unveiled this month, forms part of the Compact range. The floorstander is fully braced and sports two 112mm Klippel-optimised bass/mid drivers. The hand-finished, real wood cabinets are made in Castle's Skipton factory. Expect to pay £500 a pair.

☎ 01756 795333

NBIEN is a speaker specialist that's new to these shores, with a new entry-level standmount speaker called the DX-5. Using drivers and cabinets developed in-house, this £350 two-way speaker has a sloping cabinet profile and is available in real cherry veneer or a luxurious graphite metallic paint. A matching centre speaker is also available.

☎ 029 2064 1005



### The Insider

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

##### ROY GANDY

**Job Title:** Chief designer  
**Company:** Rega Research



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

A range of CD players using a totally new chipset that has been designed in England. Rega is the sole specialist user and the chipset has around ten times the processing power of those used by other manufacturers. These players will be the first to process music according to the original Red Book CD specification without compromise and therefore, should considerably exceed the performance of other CD players. However, we are probably too late to make a significant impact on CD sound. And of course a good turntable is still better!

##### DVD-Audio or SACD – and why?

Neither has flourished commercially. Although both may have technical advantages, neither format has exceeded the sound quality of a good CD. Last year I believe that worldwide vinyl sales were six times higher than the sales of SACD and DVD-A combined. Maybe this puts these unnecessary formats in perspective.

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

I've just finished recording an album for Christine Collister...

##### Who do you think is the leading hi-fi designer right now?

Modesty forbids me!

### Hi-Fi Diary

#### OCTOBER

29-30 Home Entertainment Show  
Renaissance Hotel, Manchester  
01206 391001  
*Manchester's hi-fi and AV expo*

#### NOVEMBER

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

#### FEBRUARY

24-26 Sound and Vision 2006  
Bristol Marriot  
www.bristolshow.co.uk  
*Arguably the UK's best-loved hi-fi show, back for its 19th year*

## HD surround sound

Dolby has announced a new lossless surround sound system for next-generation audio/video formats called TrueHD.

Dolby's Craig Eggers (pictured right) claims the technology means "viewers can experience multichannel surround sound that fully complements the detail and fidelity of the high-definition picture."

TrueHD builds upon the MLP Lossless codec used in DVD-Audio by incorporating higher bit rates, additional channels, enhanced stereo mix support and features such as dynamic range control and dialogue normalization. TrueHD is already mandatory for the forthcoming HD-DVD format and is an optional feature for its Blu-ray rival.

HD-DVD, which has been seen as trailing the next-gen format field so far, has received a major boost thanks to the backing of Microsoft and its close ally Intel. Until now, the technological advantages of Blu-ray combined with broad industry backing has suggested that it is the stronger format. But, with Bill Gates' help, all that could change.



## Sony cuts its workforce



Sony is to cut 10,000 jobs worldwide, a figure that represents seven per cent of its workforce. Sir Howard Stringer (pictured left) – Sony's first non-Japanese chairman – cited decisions taken 10 years ago, which were having consequences today in a

global economy. A total of 650 jobs are to go at the Bridgend and Pencoed sites due to the drop in demand for CRT televisions.

We asked a Sony UK spokesman if these cuts would affect Sony's hi-fi separates division, but his comment that "a number of businesses have been identified as ones that we want to withdraw from but we've no idea what they are" suggests it's too early to say.

## High-end megastore

Sounds of Music has opened what might well be the biggest high-end store in the country. Owner John Jeffries has re-located Sounds of Music from its Tunbridge Wells to a single story facility in Heathfield, East Sussex. The new shop has seven listening rooms and some of the most lavish kit in the business with over 100 brands including Rockport, Inner Sound, Krell, MBL and Boulder available for audition.



## Apple bites back

Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple has criticised the music industry for considering increasing the price of downloads. Jobs said: "If they want to raise the prices, it means that they are getting greedy". He also suggested that: "If the price goes up, they (consumers) will go back to piracy and everybody loses".

iTunes prices are currently set at 79p per song (99¢ in the US), but record companies are said to be rethinking pricing before the next round of negotiations with Apple.

Meanwhile, Apple's latest portable audio player, the iPod Nano, has been beset by widely-reported suggestions that its polycarbonate screen is easily scratched or broken. Apple's Phil Schiller issued a statement declaring that the problem affects "less than one-tenth of one per cent" of all the units shipped thus far and that broken screens would be replaced under warranty. This would not, however, apply to players with scratched rather than broken screens.





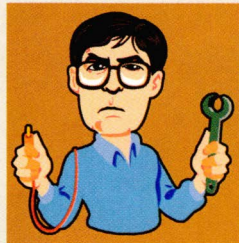
# Experiments on vinyl

Leftfield Japanese brand 47 Laboratory has come up with a total re-think of the belt drive turntable with its 4724 prototype design, as seen at this year's Heathrow hi-fi show. Eschewing convention as ever, 47 Laboratory's turntable uses a single O-section belt to drive two platters, one counter-rotating below the other. The belt drive is achieved with two pulleys either side of the platter and the idea is that the counter rotation balances out vibration due to gyroscopic effects. It also has the advantage of minimising bearing wear and the drag effect of the stylus in the groove. The equally extreme tonearm is still undergoing revision and uses Teflon damping. The turntable and arm are expected to retail for between £12,000 and £15,000.



## JIMMY'S TWEAKS #37

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



### Leaving Kit Permanently Running

Most hi-fi systems require a 'warm-up' period before they sound their best. Usually this takes around ten to fifteen minutes, but with some items there can be further improvements after several hours. Switching products on and off is stressful to internal components – the sudden surge of voltage can cause failure.

I tend to keep my CD player and DAC permanently switched on, and the preamp too. The power amp I always switch off – it's safer. With valve equipment, there's the added concern that all tubes deteriorate with use – some very much so – which means that leaving items permanently running could lead to replacing valves every few months or so... expensive! Really, it boils down to how much better your system sounds after it's been running for a while.



## TOP 10 UNSUNG HEROES, NARROWLY MISSING AN AWARD THIS YEAR

1	Triangle Magellan Concerto	Speaker	£9,995
2	Chord CD One	CD player	£2,995
3	Exposure 2010 S	Integrated amp	£599
4	PMC GB1+	Speaker	£1,145
5	McIntosh MA2275	Valve amp	£5,400
6	Rega P7	Turntable	£1,298
7	Audio Analogue Maestro	CD player	£1,650
8	Lindemann 820	SACD player	£7,000
9	Wilson Benesch Curve	Speaker	£5,000
10	Michelle Orbe SE	Turntable	£2,015

## New Music

### IN THE STUDIO

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



#### FLAMING LIPS

**Title:** *At War With The Mystics*

**Release date:** early 2006

"We've found some guitar-rock things that we're freaked out about. People will see that some of it has gone more weird," says Lips frontman Wayne Coyne of the follow-up to 2002's *Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots*. He also revealed the album will address the current political situation.



Tracks include one song in Japanese and several in a language she apparently invented. Ethereal indeed...

#### THE STROKES

**Title:** *First Impressions Of Earth*

**Release date:** 23 January 2006

"It's kind of about how someone from outer space would objectively view things happening on earth," says the band's Julian Casablancas. "It sounds fuller, bigger, and louder." Titles confirmed include *Vision Of Division*, *Razor Blade*, *Juicebox*, *You Only Live Once* and *Ask Me Anything*.

#### BELLE & SEBASTIAN

**Title:** *tbc*

**Release date:** early 2006

The Scottish band has been working on the follow-up to 2003's *Dear Catastrophe Waitress* in LA with Beck producer Tony Hoffer. "It's all new songs – 18 of them – so it's very current," says singer Stuart Murdoch. Titles include *Song For Sunshine*, *Funny Little Frog*, and *A White Collared Boy*.

#### RADIOHEAD

**Title:** *tbc*

**Release date:** 2006

Thom Yorke and crew have begun work on their seventh studio album in August and all is "fun and well", according to Johnny Greenwood. Radiohead fulfilled their EMI contract with their last album *Hail To The Thief* and are rumoured to have been in talks with Warner Music.

#### ALSO COMING SOON

##### JAZZ/ CLASSICAL

**Jools Holland** *Swinging The Blues* Dancing The Ska (Nov); **Diana Krall** *The Christmas Album* (Dec); **Billie Holiday** *Complete Verve Studio Masters* (Nov); **Ann Netrebko** *La Traviata* (Nov); **Bryn Terfel** *Simple Gift* (Nov)

#### ENYA

**Title:** *tbc*

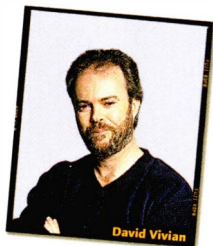
**Release date:** late November

The ethereal Irish singer sold 13 million copies of 2000's *A Day Without Rain*. The follow-up is still awaiting a title. Her label hadn't heard a note at the time of writing, but insist it will be out for Christmas.

##### SACD/ DVD-AUDIO

**Talking Heads** *Brick* (DualDisc, US-only, Oct); **Roger Waters** *Ca Ira: There Is Hope* (SACD, Oct); **Crowded House** *Crowded House* (DualDisc, Oct); **Brimstone** *Butterfly* *Normality Killed the Cat* (DualDisc, Oct); **The Byrds** *Mr Tambourine Man* (SACD, Oct)





David Vivian

## Tomorrow's world

*The shape of awards to come*

I don't wish to rain on anyone's hi-fi parade, but the future of entertainment in the home is shaping up... and it doesn't appear to include either CDs or DVDs. And, whereas today's home entertainment necessarily involves bundles of wires and cables, usually trailing into and around one room in the house, tomorrow's world will be wireless, releasing it from the shackles that currently confine it. Downloading will become easier as broadband gets fatter and faster. Studios will release movies, music and videogames directly to the consumer. The search technologies for organising it all are already in place and improving. And the various screens on which to watch all this are getting bigger, clearer and cooler. The upshot of all this is that the home will increasingly become a surrogate cinema and concert hall, but the experience won't be

**“Appearing to float in mid-air, these projection screens will be placed throughout the house, even in busy areas like hallways.”**

limited to one or two rooms. There will be multiple 'venues' where individual members of a family can do their own thing. Here's a taste of what to expect from the *Hi-Fi Choice Awards*, come 2025:

**Best Downloadable Movie Site.** Once we can download first-run movies at home and play them on wall-size TV screens, who's going to bother buying DVDs or, indeed, bother going to the movies any more?

**Best Patio Screen.** Why confine TV to the house? Monster 5x4 metre inflatable screens will let you create a movie theatre in your back yard. Already available with built-in DVD players, tomorrow's models will connect wirelessly to online video streaming sites.

**Best PC TV.** Users will be able to watch their favourite TV programs on desktop or laptop computers from anywhere in the house or, indeed, the world.

**Best Media Server.** The hub of the home entertainment universe. Right now, 31 million hours of new TV shows are produced each year (most featuring Jade Goody). As their distribution shifts to the Web, a vast hard drive

will let users store them all. Or archive thousands of movies, songs and games. Intel's forthcoming Viiv (no relation) home-media systems will help make it easier to build home media hubs.

**Best Connectivity Hardware.** The future of entertainment in the home depends on easy and reliable wireless connectivity. The Wireless Host Controller Interface being developed by a consortium that includes Microsoft, Philips and Intel will likely provide it. When it makes its debut next year, WHCI will replace a potential rat's nest of cables with high-speed wireless USB connections.

**Best 3-D Screen.** Appearing to float in mid-air, these projection screens will be placed throughout the house, even in busy areas like hallways and door openings.

**Best Holo-Screen.** Twin holograms will let two people watch two different programs on the same screen, even if they sit next to each other on the sofa.

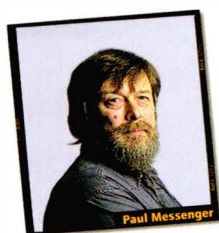
**Best Satellite Link Hardware.** Using the new MPEG-4 compression format, giant high-definition files will be downloaded to your media server in minutes.



**Best Hybrid.** Hand-held devices will continue to evolve in unexpected ways. Sony's next PlayStation Portable, for instance, will almost certainly include GPS and a keyboard.

**Best Turntable.** To remind those who care what real home entertainment is all about.

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



## Big is beautiful

*Huge speakers rule the Messenger roost*

**A**wards, like celebrities and moral panics, seem to lurk around every corner these days. But they provide a welcome opportunity to log our hi-fi highlights of the last year.

The top speaker was unquestionably B&W's magnificent 800D, flagship model in the new 800-series, and the first since JBL's wonderful K2 S9800 three years ago to get me really covetous and excited. It might look very like an 802D, but the sonic improvement is a bit like fine-tuning a high-performance car engine. The dynamic grip, punch and range is a revelation, and the sweetness and delicacy of the diamond top end quite delicious.

Two other very different speakers also deserve honourable mention. Baby brother of the Yorkminster (reviewed in *HFC* 255), Tannoy's Kensington has similarly retro styling and alnico dual-concentric driver, but half the volume and cone area. It lacks the massive low bass of its bigger brother, but combines wonderful agility with that magical midband transparency characteristic of alnico magnets.

Arguably even less conventional are the Bosendorfer speakers, which combine simple driver and crossover arrangements with 'controlled resonance' woodwork. Siting requires great care and experimentation to attain optimum results, but if this is achieved, the speaker offers superb dynamic realism and a natural realism that's particularly persuasive with classical material. I reviewed the top VC-7 model in *HFC* 265, and have also tried the smaller VC-1 with similarly impressive results.

Although my reviewing concentrates on speakers, that doesn't mean I don't take an interest in the rest of the chain. Even the

# R

## RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

### MONITOR AUDIO STUDIO 10 LOUDSPEAKER



The year was 1991, the company was Monitor Audio and the product was the Studio 10: a derivative of the R852MD

loudspeaker, the first of a radical new breed of speakers that featured tweeters with an aluminium diaphragm. Other tweeters at the time were invariably made from a treated fabric or polymer, as most tweeters still are today.

Few people have much recollection of the R852MD, and it's hard to even track down much useful information, but it is at least arguable that it has a true claim for classic status. There was a great deal of interest in metal tweeters domes from Celestion and Wharfedale around the same period, but it was Monitor Audio that pushed the technology hardest, and that helped put the aluminium dome tweeter on the map.

There's lot of info about the Studio 10, though. It hit the streets in 1991. In many ways, it was quite conventional: a reflex loaded, two-way compact standmount. Its build and finish immediately set it apart. The wood veneered finish was superb, and it was also available in a piano gloss version of the enclosure with smoothly radiused edges and corners. It looked a million dollars in that form, a really extravagant piece of work, and from memory this version sold for the princely sum for the time of £1,500. Not bad for a 'bookshelf', as we called them back then.

The main 165mm bass/midrange driver used a ceramic sandwich metal cone bass driver, which was dropped into a massive diecast chassis. The cone was produced in what was described as a three-stage drawing process, with stress relief after each stage. The final 100 micron-thick structure was then covered with a ceramic damping layer 50 microns thick on each surface. The unit was said to have a first break up mode at 6.2kHz, and a controlled and consistent roll-off thereafter, though with such a stiff construction, the latter claim is at least questionable. The cone was not just stiff, however; it formed part of the thermal management of the system, by acting as a heatsink for the potentially hot running vented coil motor system.



**"It could handle plenty of power without showing strain and its bass response was impressive."**

The tweeter was an aluminium dome, as described earlier, but always on the lookout for design details to help lift them above the crowd, the dome was anodised with a gold surface treatment. Short of using a lightbulb around the dome (and this has been done, by Wharfedale), it is hard to think of a more striking looker from the period.

And it sounded great. Although not high in sensitivity (about 88dB/watt/meter), it could handle plenty of power without showing strain, and its bass response was impressive from such a compact box, delivering 40Hz at -3dB, despite reasonably small dimensions of 20x40x25cm (WxHxD). Most of all, though, it was a coherent, smooth and highly detailed design, but with a soft centred quality that allowed music to sing.

Other speakers followed where the R852MD and especially the Studio 10 blazed a trail. The Studio series went on to be some of the most successful high-end speakers in England of the early 1990s and formed 'reference' speakers for at least one magazine at the time. None of which would have been possible were it not for the Studio 10. If it wasn't the first loudspeaker to sport the technologies described, it was certainly the loudspeaker that 'made' Monitor Audio as a respected brand. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*



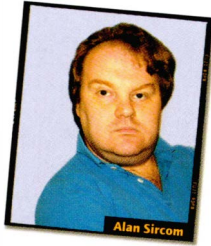
best speakers can only sound as good as the signal that is feeding them, and the better my system sounds, the more I enjoy my music, and the easier speaker reviewing becomes – a double motivation.

I've stuck with Naim electronics for more years than I care to remember, and while I continue to use these basic components, the peripherals have recently been rapidly evolving, bringing their own very cost-effective contributions to the party.

The Vertex AQ platforms, cables and mains absorbers have been particularly effective at expanding system dynamic range, by reducing the interaction between components and improving low level resolution. And a mains distribution device called a Powerigel, from Naim's German distributor Music Line, has considerably improved the overall coherence and transient integrity.

The latest piece in the system jigsaw has been the discovery that a new design of phono plug – called the Next Gen, from WBT – seems to offer a significant improvement over those I've tried previously. Despite their inconvenience, Naim has always favoured DIN plugs and sockets over phonos, and has only recently offered the latter as an option. I've hitherto preferred the sound of the DIN connection with Naim kit, but the Next Gens could well put the boot on the phono foot, and have also made me suspect that the plugs (and sockets) may well be rather more important than the cable that connects them.

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



### Heaven can wait

*Hi-fi's back in fashion, but for how long?*

It might be CD's own Gettysburg, the high water mark as the war turns in favour of online sales. Nevertheless, this is the year we took back audio.

Sales of everything have been very poor this year. Yet, if a trend can be predicted from so flat a market, the trend is back to two-channel. Companies that had more or less written off hi-fi as a subset of the Great Multichannel Experience started releasing CD players and stereo amps again.

Although few of these returning products were sonically groundbreaking, the move back to stereo by the likes of Denon and Onkyo must be welcome news to those who remained steadfast when the rest of us were swayed by DVD and surround sound.

This year in particular, I discovered my *Little Slice of Heaven* system, one that works well in

any small room and is entirely made up of new(ish) products. It comprises a Townshend Audio TA 565 CD player, Sugden A21SE integrated amp and ProAc Tablette Reference Eight Signature speakers, resting on a Townshend VSSS equipment support and filled Kudos S50 speaker stands. Factor in a brace of out-the-freezer Townshend cables and a Isotek GII for the mains (not needed for the player) and you have a system that will make stunning sounds in small rooms. At a pinch, you could replace the player with something less 'exotic', like a Copland, Primare or even the matching Sugden CD21SE.

I also discovered the *Big Slice of Heaven* system. The closest to real-world pricing was an Audio Research CD3 MkII into the Jadis DA88 Signature amp and a pair of Sonus Faber Amati Anniversari. Likely cable choices here include Cardas and Transparent and equipment supports from Finite Elemente or BCD. This is the sort of system that simply exudes musicality and *joie de vivre*. Plus, it's a great way to lose weight; see how light your wallet feels after losing nearly £30k of unsightly hard-earned on CD replay, but compare that with the sheer pleasure you get. There are other slices of wonderment, but even the fantasy world has its limits. I have to save up my dreams before I can afford to fantasise about the likes of Zanden or Wilson Audio equipment, unless those six numbers come up

**“It might be CD's own Gettysburg, as the war turns in favour of online sales.”**

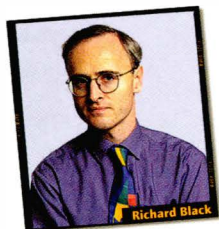




or my part-time career as a forger and blackmailer really hits pay dirt.

What I'm missing is the *Tiny Slice of Heaven* system – the system that costs somewhere between one and three grand that really cuts the musical mustard. I suspect it lies somewhere within page 52 and page 99 of this issue. Let's hope next year fills in the blanks, but I suspect next year might also see more of a shift away from all sorts of discs as the carriers of music. Shame.

*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



## The future's bright?

*Sales of hi-fi aren't as poor as some think*

The hi-fi market is not what it was. That's no secret... sales of high quality stereo equipment are simply not at the levels they enjoyed a decade or so ago. Inevitably, there will continue to be hand-wringing about this from some folks. But as we dedicate this issue to celebrating and rewarding the great and the good of domestic sound, it seems appropriate to take a look at the positive state of the stereo market.

Positive, that is, in quality and value terms. It's a commonplace to observe that most stuff in the electronics world gets better and cheaper year on year. Now, audio equipment, which is the oldest and most mature area of domestic electronics, can't be expected to show the astounding price/performance gains of computers but the trend still holds, in general. Personally, I've been in the reviewing game for a little over 15 years and I can think of many specific examples to illustrate the fact that the performance of CD players and amps in particular have improved in practically every area while prices declined in real terms.

Why are people missing out on the opportunity this creates, then? A large part of the problem is simply that the market is reaching saturation. Not everyone, now or at any time, wants quality music reproduction in the home – poor, benighted souls, we'd say, but that's another story. Of those who do, many already have some very nice kit which looks good, sounds more than satisfactory, and trucks on and on for years. Yes, reliability is a problem for manufacturers, but happily the

# MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

THE STOOGES  
FUNHOUSE



In 1970, the Stooges could have broken big. Crazy frontman Iggy Pop was making a name for himself and they'd had celebrity endorsements from the likes of the Velvet Underground's John Cale, Miles Davis and David Bowie. If they'd concentrated on regulation riffing, catchy hooks and toned down Iggy's persona just a tad, they could have morphed into a sort of new Doors and world domination could have been theirs.

But for four young white trash smackheads from the trailer parks of Detroit, a career in music wasn't ever really the gameplan. Along with producer Don Gallucci (former keyboard player with one-hit trash wonders The Kingsmen), they chose to follow up their back to basics, self-titled debut with a sprawling, open wound of an album that only increased the filth, disillusion and hedonism of the first.

Except this time they could play better, and had heaps more confidence and energy. Essentially it's an album of two halves. If you want primal rock attack, it's here in spades. Iggy's feral growls and yelps over the ominously chugging guitar chords at the beginning of opener *Down On The Street* may seem comic now in light of Iggy's reformed character, but back in 1970 they were a statement of intent. Anything can happen in the next half hour, and it probably will...

*Loose* is a balls out, filthy garage rocker *par excellence*. That obscene riff, howling guitar and Iggy's exhortations to "stick it deep inside" still pack a potent punch, leaving the listener cleansed, yet somehow in need of a damn good shower.

But that's still rock'n'roll, albeit of a fierce and feral kind. It's the extended funk up bad craziness of the title track, guitarist Ron Asheton scrapping for supremacy with visiting sax player Steven Mackay along with the unhealthy grind of *Dirt* and the atonal shriekout of *LA Blues* that prove this is a record that comes from the heart. And that heart's as black as a junkie's dead veins. The excursions into electric mayhem and noise would have a profound influence on the punk, new wave and grunge rock movements of later decades.



**“Essentially it’s an album of two halves. If you want primal rock attack, it’s here in spades.”**

It feels wild, raw and even dangerous, a group barely holding it together. The Stooges debut may have set the scene, their third and last album *Raw Power*, produced by David Bowie, may have gained more attention, but *Funhouse* is where the Stooges really found their level – tough, uncompromising gutter rock with few ambitions beyond getting wasted, pissing off parents and having a good, cheap time. Pretty much the preoccupations of every teenager since, in other words.

For all its roughness, bum notes and wanton noise, this is a visceral record that pumps the blood at a primary level. And despite their diet of junk (of the food and chemical varieties), the band actually worked hard to get it sounding just right. Now released as a two-CD Deluxe Edition along with *The Stooges*, the album has now been remastered and augmented with a feast of outtakes and demos – interesting to listen to the evolution of songs that try very hard to sound like they've been made up on the spot.

One listen to *Funhouse* and it's clear where the Sex Pistols, Ramones, and a host of punks, grungers and more the world over copped their licks, sound and attitude. Others may have reaped the glory and the lucrative contracts, but nobody's ever done wasted youth better than the Stooges. **HFC**

Dave Oliver



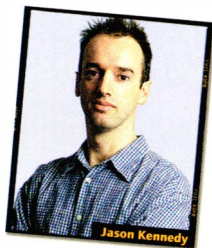
hi-fi makers seem to have steered well clear of the cynical policy of built-in limited life that plagues some high-tech areas.

Despite declining overall sales, we get plenty of new kit to look at and there are plenty of shops around to buy it from. Even pitched against downloaded music, CD is still the medium of choice for almost all music issuers and buyers. Despite CD's high-resolution 'successors', both recordings and replay equipment continue to evolve – if only subtly – to extract more performance from the system.

But never mind CD, there's still sales of LP! LP was in its death throes in the mid 1990s, and now it's almost as prevalent as twenty years ago. The fact that the new Paul McCartney album is coming out on LP as well as CD must say something. Say what you like about sound, an LP is without doubt a nicer artefact than a CD, not so?

I think it's a symptom of a return to hi-fi's roots as something esoteric but fun. Basic audio is a commodity, but real hi-fi, surely epitomised by the high-end turntable, goes beyond that to be a joy in itself. And why not?

*Richard Black is a professional musician, recording engineer and a highly knowledgeable hi-fi analyst to boot. He writes about hi-fi exclusively for Hi-Fi Choice*



### Home invasion

*Oh, for the patter of tiny speaker spikes*

Over the last year, there has been a bit of a loudspeaker invasion *chez* Kennedy. The hallway has been all but impassable for the stacks of beautifully veneered cabinets with their child tempting reflex ports and vulnerable fleshy parts. Still, it doesn't compete with the days when Paul Messenger's capacious foyer housed up to twenty pairs of the things and a blind listening test was a two-day affair.

It is entertaining and educational to review a lot of speakers. They always have lots of character, which often enhances one aspect of the sound or another, but not unduly distort any of it. Often, it's the most colored or characterful speakers which give you the greatest musical thrills when you accidentally put on a record that needs that specific emphasis to bring it to life. One such incident occurred with some Coincident Super Eclipse



## “The hallway has been all but impassable for the stacks of beautifully veneered cabinets with their child-tempting reflex ports.”

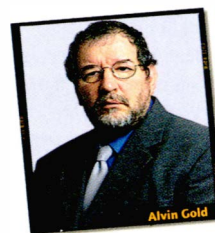
III speakers, which are high in both sensitivity and impedance thanks to big volumes and plenty of drive units. They have a slight extra edge in the treble that makes them a little more lively than neutral. But this has its advantages, especially with live recordings of the plugged rather than unplugged variety. One perfect live recording for this speaker turned out to be David Thomas and the Two Pale Boys' *Meadville* album, which was literally electrified by the Coincidence speakers. It was as if the concert was in the living room, the atmosphere charged and the performance as convincing as the real thing. It's not just tonal balance: this is a highly efficient speaker, so dynamics are – as our own Richard Black would put it – 'righteous', which helps create the realism in no small part.

Some of the best live albums I own have this same essentially aggressive balance. In fact, they are borderline uncomfortable when played at appropriate levels. If you remember AC/DC's live *If You Want Blood...* from the Bon Scott era, you might recall a lively ditty called *Problem Child*. This sounds thin and bright, but it comes so close to the live sound of the time that it is explosive in its impact. But this album, combined with the Coincidents, would have been too much of an abrasive thing.

More recently, the fabulous B&W 802Ds have taken up residence in my listening room. Getting their 80kgs up the stairs was well worth the effort, and the weeks in traction. I was rather amused to discover that Steve Pearce – who arguably has B&W's most golden

ears – was stunned at how good vinyl sounded through these speakers. This despite the fact that B&W's specially-made listening room has the finest disc spinners and amplification going. What really spooked him was the difference between the vinyl and CD sources, but this was exaggerated by the quality of Keith Jarrett's *Changes* LP, which is unusually high. It did get him thinking about visiting SME to see if a turntable could be borrowed, however. Such are the joys of working in Steyning, the most hi-fi hamlet in the world.

*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*



### Disc dual

*SACD remains the audiophile choice*

In Week Two of 2005 at the CES show in Las Vegas, apparently well-informed rumours emerged of the putative imminent demise of SACD. However, the strongest rumours were coming from sources very close to the DVD-Audio establishment, and the stories



never quite held true. However, there were times during the year when SACD did indeed look like a busted flush.

But when it came time to thrash out the list of nominations for the *HFC* Awards, it was clear that the SACD category was surprisingly healthy. There were no problems finding suitably qualified nominees, only whittling them down to a manageable list. Another surprise to me was how the DVD-A vs SACD battle for supremacy battle was being played out in a quite unexpected way.

The principal development on the SACD side was a rash of mostly mid- to high-end introductions. In some cases, two-channel only, but with some superb leading-edge multichannel SACD players, like the new Krell SACD Standard and the Teac Esoteric X-01 with its optional external clock. There was another nomination in the same vein, the stereo-only Marantz SA-11S1. There were also a few DVD-cum-SACD players, and a smaller number of universal DVD-Audio/Video/SACD players for which a compelling case can be made, such the Marantz DV7600, which is based on a tuned and modded Pioneer OEM platform. This is not the last gasp of a dying format: significant newcomers are also due to be released shortly and SACD replay will be supported as standard in the upcoming PlayStation 3 specification.

Overall, activity on the SACD front has been quite lively this year, much more so on the whole than for DVD-Audio. On balance, I am inclined to the proposition that DualDisc (the DVD/CD hybrid) and to an extent the parent DVD-Audio format address a quite different set of market requirements for an enhanced multimedia experience, and in the case of DualDisc, replay possibilities on different types of player. It certainly has a quite different appeal to SACD, which is relentlessly music only, a true high end carrier.

In the last couple of months, other parts of the jigsaw have been falling in place, with the introduction of Denon Link in DSD compatible form, and now HDMI has belatedly been mandated for DSD (version 1.2). Next time someone tells you with smug self-assurance that SACD is a dead duck, explain that yes, it is a niche format and perhaps always will be (real hi-fi has always been of niche interest, of course), but that it is now a fully fledged format of importance to anyone who really cares about sound quality. Its complete failure would have incalculable consequences for our industry as a whole, but thankfully that prospect appears to have been avoided.

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

# TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

OUR (UNOFFICIAL)  
TECHNICAL AWARDS



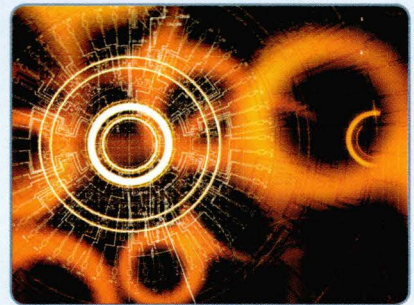
Since this is the *Hi-Fi Choice* Awards issue, it seems appropriate to look for possible candidates for a technical award.

Now, this is probably going to land us in hot water from the outset, but *Techno* has no fear of controversy and this award is more about the taking part than the winning.

First, we must set out some ground rules. For a start, only the (admittedly narrow) selection of products reviewed in the *Techno* labs is eligible, simply because suitable data for judgement aren't available on others. And the award is going to be given for all-round excellence, so the best jitter measurement we've ever seen, for instance, doesn't win it if some other facet seems flawed.

There's more than one way to approach this. Measurements are not everything and it seems fair to include advances in areas such as design efficiency (in every conceivable sense) and the application of technology to ergonomics. On that basis, there would be something to be said for giving the award to the iPod or one of its rivals, because in many ways those devices offer nicer operation than conventional hi-fi. But there's still room for improvement in their ergonomics and the idea of giving the prize to a product so deeply involved with lossy compression seems just too bizarre. For the moment, the entire breed of hard disc and flash memory players receives a (literal) mention in dispatches for general high-tech'ery, but no gong.

Instead, we're going to put most of the emphasis on audio performance. We've devoted many column inches to lamenting the absence of any truly hard and fast correlations between individual measurements and 'sound quality', but at the same time we've never lost faith that, given enough measurements, quality can indeed be quantified. We have expanded our measurement routine from issue to issue, including recently measurements not yet generally understood in our quest for better interpretation of performance. At the same time, we've adopted almost impossibly tough criteria for 'acceptable' performance by standard rubrics such as noise and distortion.



**“Standards of measured performance of amps have really come on significantly recently.”**

All this has been necessary principally because so many current products give performance that appears to be comfortably better than the ear could find fault with, and yet our blind listeners consistently distinguish two or more such products from each other. Obviously, then, the ear's requirements are tougher than at first appears. Looking back at CD players, for instance, very few we've seen recently produce more than about 0.02% distortion of any kind at any frequency or level, and that's worst case.

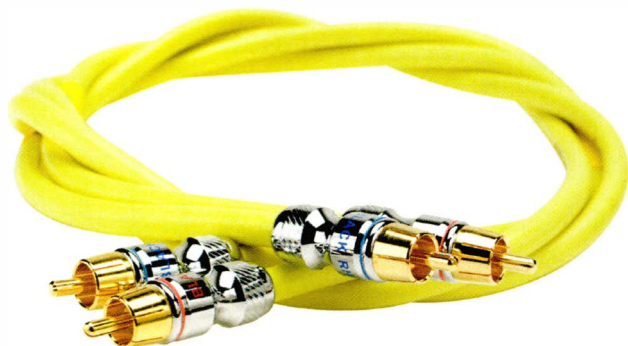
We're inclined to give the award to an amplifier, though, not least because standards of measured performance of amps have really come on significantly in recent years. Several models – none costing more than £1,500 – have turned in performance figures beyond the ability of high-end products of not many years back. But the real star of the last twelve months, we feel, is an Arcam: the FMJ A32. Its measured performance is excellent across a range of tests, with distortion of every kind (not just basic harmonic distortion, but all deviations from perfection) kept impressively under manners. In addition, its use of technology to improve its operation, user interface and display is apt and helpful. Technology in the service of music – isn't that what it's all about? **HFC**

*Richard Black*





## ESSENTIALS



### BLACK RHODIUM RHAPSODY ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT £30 (1M PAIR)

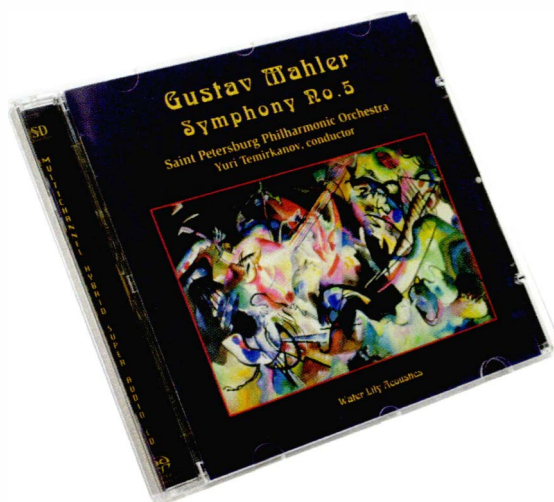
⊕ This normal-looking interconnect uses silicone rubber insulation, which makes it admirably flexible. It's unscreened and the conductors run parallel and not twisted within each yellow sheath. In theory, that could make it more interference-prone, but we found no evidence for it. Sonically it's not completely neutral, its slightly 'dark' tonality reminding us of other BR cables that also use silicone. However, it is fast-paced and detailed with it, maintaining a depth of stereo image that would not disgrace a cable at twice its price. A hint of upper-midrange congestion is about the only real flaw we could identify and it's a small enough transgression for a budget interconnect.

☎ 01332 342233 🌐 www.blackrhodium.co.uk

### WATER LILY - MAHLER: SYMPHONY 5 SACD £18

⊕ It may seem perverse to feature a music recording as a hi-fi accessory, but no technical test disc will tell you half as much about your system's imaging as this superb release. This is Mahler's most tuneful symphony and a very fine performance, either you're already a Mahler fan or you may soon become one! The St. Petersburg Philharmonic recording was made with a lone pair of microphones, which in reality is capable of imaging the like of which you don't hear with more complex recording styles. Excellent dynamics, too. An overused term, but this really is a reference. The Shostakovich and Scriabin recordings in the same series are just as good.

🌐 www.waterlilyacoustics.com



### BLACK RHODIUM DISCO LOUDSPEAKER CABLE £4 PER METRE

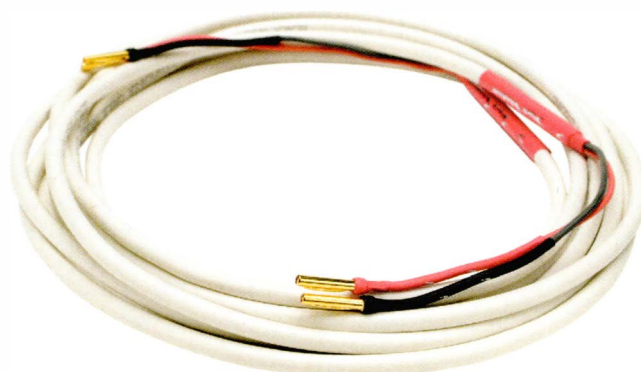
⊕ One might be forgiven for thinking that this cable is identical to the Rhapsody interconnect, apart from terminations and colour. It shares the parallel-pair construction and silicone rubber insulation. It's on the thin side for a speaker cable too, and might not be the best choice for very long runs, but we got perfectly acceptable results over five metres. The sound is a touch bass-light and not as open in the treble as some, but admirably lively and communicative despite that. An interesting alternative to models from the main-stream – it seems to us to trade some detail for better performance in the rhythm and pace department.

☎ 01332 342233 🌐 www.blackrhodium.co.uk

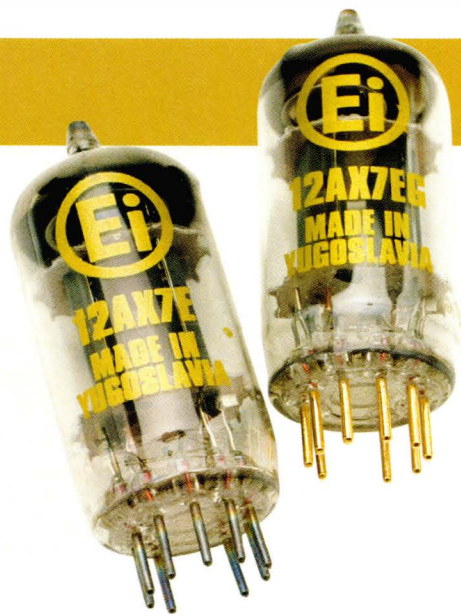
### IRIVER N10 PORTABLE AUDIO PLAYER £100 (256MB FLASH MEMORY - HIGHER CAPACITIES AVAILABLE)

⊕ It's hard not to be impressed by this tiny jewel. It weighs under an ounce, has no moving parts and stores about four hours of 128kbps MP3 files and/or regular computer data. The ultra-cool blue graphic display helps make it delightfully simple to use. It comes with integrated neckband and earphones and it connects to a computer via USB. The supplied earphones are fine, if spitty, but with good headphones, the sound is at the upper end of what we've heard from MP3/WMA portables: clear, full-bodied and remarkably clean. Oh, and it's a voice recorder, too... brilliant!

🌐 www.iriver.com







## EI ELITES SMALL-SIGNAL VALVES FROM £6.50 EACH

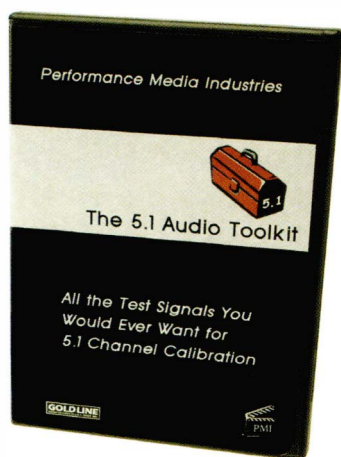
⊕ Not all valves are created equal, but EI and other manufacturers offer premium valves and claim enhanced performance. We tried two common types, the ECC83 and ECC88. Measured parameters do seem to adhere pretty closely to nominal data sheet specifications, indicating good quality control. Also, neither microphony nor distortion seem markedly better (or worse) than with other currently available types. However, the acid test of listening suggested that these valves do work well in a variety of circuits and applications. The ECC83s were clear and powerful in both phono and line-level stages, while the ECC88s were particularly open-sounding. No wonder they are the tubes of choice for legendary British guitar amp manufacturer Marshall.

☎ 0870 922 0404 🌐 www.tube-shop.com

## GOLDEN DRAGON VALVE DAMPING RINGS FROM £11 EACH

⊕ Microphony is a well-known nemesis of valves. It's caused by relative movement of the component parts, which minutely affects the electrical characteristics. Those parts are inaccessible inside the glass envelope, but are strongly affected by resonances within and so damping is no bad thing. Various devices on the market claim to damp the glass sleeve and most of them work to some degree, but this is one of the most effective we've seen. Better yet, the white Teflon ring is completely impervious to valve heat and won't melt, crack or harden in use, while the titanium spring maintains constant pressure. Sophisticated and effective.

☎ 0870 922 0404 🌐 www.tube-shop.com



## 5.1 AUDIO TOOLKIT TEST DVD £110

⊕ Designed by home THX pioneer Anthony Grimani, one of the principal aims of this disc is to help sell Goldline's range of test equipment to engineers and installers. It's all very nice equipment too, but few home cinema enthusiasts can justify such an expense. All the same, many of the test tones on offer here can be used without any test equipment at all and with the addition of the most basic sound level meter this does indeed qualify as a 'toolkit'. Good setting up is essential for any system and the more channels there are the more variables to set, especially in a THX-certified system. It's all there, sines, wide- and narrow-band noise, subwoofer calibration. If you're techno-savvy and find Video Essentials a bit limiting, you'll find a use for this disc.

☎ 01727 756999 🌐 www.audiotoolkit.com

## WIREWORLD ORBIT 5 ANALOGUE INTERCONNECT £50 (1M PAIR)

⊕ Yet another of Wireworld's Symmetricoax cables, this one being a straightforward and practical interconnect of moderate capacitance and good general build quality. It's fitted with Wireworld's latest phono plugs that provide good contact, are easy to grip and for once, fit side by side in standard-spacing phono sockets. All of which makes this a natural for basic upgrade duty, as befits its price. Its sonic abilities more than justify such a role, with good imaging and some very nice detail indeed. We were particularly taken with the way it preserves acoustic decay, a frequent weakness in budget interconnects.

☎ 020 8991 9200 🌐 www.wireworldaudio.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

### LIGHTNIN' HOPKINS

Lightnin' In New York

Candid/Pure Pleasure

180g vinyl

Music: Pure Pleasure continues to mine the musical gems from Nat Hentoff's Candid label with a 1960 recording by bluesman Sam 'Lightnin' Hopkins. A native of Houston, Texas, Hopkins started his career in 1920 and achieved considerable success in the

post-war years. By the late 1950s, his style was considered too folksy for the rock'n'roll era, though he continued to record until the early 1980s. This session finds him with an acoustic guitar and occasional piano playing what he knew best, country blues with genuine feeling and depth. His style was always natural and honest, the guitar or piano forming a second voice to tell the story when it gets too hard to be sung. ★★★★★

Sound: This is a remarkably good recording for its vintage. A live natural acoustic fleshes out the sound and makes the most of the glorious timbre of voice and instruments. ★★★★★ JK

### BENNY CARTER AND HIS ORCHESTRA

Further Definitions

Impulse/Speakers Corner

180g vinyl

Music: Benny Carter was an alto sax player and composer in the classic post-war style, with an upbeat sound that fits alongside Charlie Parker and Duke Ellington. This 1961 Bob Thiele recording sees him gathering an orchestra that

combines jazz figureheads Coleman Hawkins and Jo Jones with the hot new talents of Charles Rouse (tenor), Phil Woods (alto), Jimmy Garrison (bass) and Dick Katz (piano). The playing and the liner notes on the gatefold sleeve suggest that everyone had a ball at this session, there is a real joy and swing in the music that makes it irresistible. ★★★★★

Sound: While the recording reveals its age to an extent, this is a big-boned, timbrally strong album with plenty of energy and scale but no brashness – Speakers Corner has done a fantastic job, all in all. ★★★★★ JK

These LPs were supplied by Speakers Corner and Pure Pleasure and can be purchased from Vivante.

☎ 01293 822186 🌐 www.vivante.co.uk

## COMPACT DISC & VINYL



### SALIF KEITA

M'Bemba

Emarcy

Music: Back in 1987, Malian singer Salif Keita released a groundbreaking album called *Soro* that dragged African music into the high-tech era. Yet in recent years, he's returned to his roots and *M'Bemba* continues the process, using traditional rhythms and acoustic instrumentation to create a hypnotic collection of West African dance tunes. It doesn't really matter whether he chooses to accompany himself with synths and drum machines or koras and balafons, for his golden voice will shine in any context. By some way the African album of the year. ★★★★★

Sound: For the first time in 20 years, he's recorded at home in Africa rather than Europe, and the setting lends a suitably fitting atmosphere to the proceedings without any loss of technical quality. ★★★★★ NW



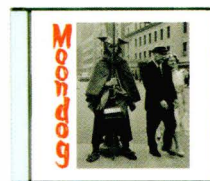
### BOB DYLAN

No Direction Home (The Bootleg Series Volume 7)

Columbia

Music: From Hibbing to Manchester, folkie to electric Judas, the 28 tracks of this soundtrack to Scorsese's documentary nimbly sum up Dylan's most creative years to 1966. You will hear the version of *Tambourine Man* which birthed folk-rock and the incendiary rock music of Newport 1965 that today will still drop your jaw. What's most revealing about the *Bringing It All/Highway 61/Blonde On Blonde* tracks is the intensity of the proceedings. ★★★★★

Sound: Mastered to give us the full tenet of Dylan's "wild mercury sound", there are many sonic delights to savour including Bruce Langhorm's liquid guitar on *She Belongs To Me* and Bloomfield's clipped riffing all over the album. ★★★★★ MP

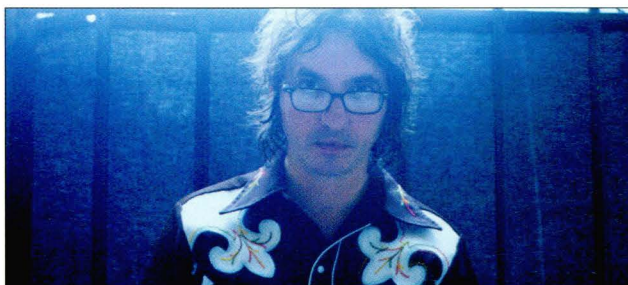


### MOONDOG

The Viking Of Sixth Avenue

Honest Jon's

Music: The extraordinary Moondog (aka Louis Thomas Hardin) was a blind, itinerant New York musician and composer. He combined jazz and indigenous Native American rhythms with classical composition to produce otherworldly records that sound like nothing else to this day. Recording erratically from the late 1940s to the early 1990s he went from primitive live recordings right through to modern electronic samplers. ★★★★★  
Sound: Alongside the modern stuff, some tracks here were culled from Moondog's early 78 recordings, which featured rudimentary overdubbing with two tape recorders. Honest Jon's has done a tremendous job of balancing the disparate sources to produce a coherent record of the musical vision of a very strange man. ★★★★★ DO



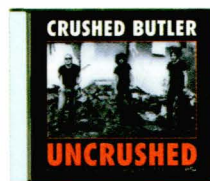
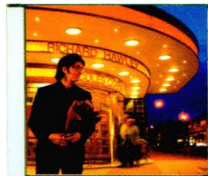
### RICHARD HAWLEY

Coles Corner

Mute

Music: The one-time Pulp guitarist has recently been quietly making a big name for himself in fairly small circles as Sheffield's finest Scott Walker/Roy Orbison impersonator and the two sides to his muse are brought together in gorgeous, expansive, hopelessly romantic fashion on this late night gem of a record. Highlights abound: *The Ocean* is a deep, lush, rolling expanse of strings and twangy guitar while the title track a lament both for a lovers meeting place in Sheffield and a paean to loneliness in the midst of a city. The Orbison-flavoured numbers include some lovely touches, such as Hawley's rich baritone evoking the emptiness of the working musician's lot in *Born Under A Bad Sign*. ★★★★★

Sound: Much of the sound harks back to the cinematic sixties of John Barry or the textured country soundscapes of Lee Hazlewood. As such, it's the sort of record that immerses you in a warm, melancholic glow. ★★★★★ DO



### CRUSHED BUTLER

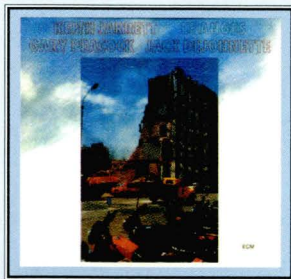
Uncrushed

Cherry Red

Music: In 1969, while Iggy Pop was inventing the US end of what became known as punk, Crushed Butler were doing the same for the UK. Darryl Read's manic drumming, Butler's by numbers bass and Jesse Hector's blues hollers – and slashing guitar – combine to make one glorious racket. Proto-punk meets pre-glam glam. They only recorded eight tracks in their 1969-71 heyday and seven of them are here – of which *It's My Life* and *Factory Grime* are the most memorable. It's all still wonderfully raw. ★★★★★

Sound: This is modern musical archaeology really but these are more than listenable – *It's My Life*, thanks to compression from the BBC's Neil Sedgwick, could have been cut yesterday. ★★★★★ PS





## THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "One of the best sounding live albums ever."

### KEITH JARRETT Changes ECM

**Music:** This is not only one of the best sounding live acoustic albums ever, it also contains some of the finest material that Jarrett has made. Recorded in 1983 at the Power Station in New York, it features Gary Peacock on bass and Jack DeJohnette on drums and a highly vocal Jarrett at the piano. There are only three tracks over the two sides and two of them have the same title, *Flying* – this is clearly how Jarrett felt at the time and it's how he can make the listener feel as

well. Jarrett has remained a mainstay of the audiophile fraternity since the *The Köln Concerts* lofted him to the front rank of hi-fi stars (it's also one of the biggest selling jazz albums ever), but this album is the real deal. ★★★★★ **Sound:** All of ECM's live recordings sound good, even when the piano sounds bad (*The Köln Concerts*) but here the instruments are solid and real in as open a soundstage as you'll hear. ★★★★★ JK



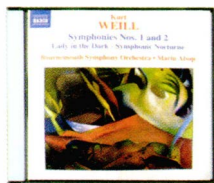
### BB KING AND FRIENDS

80

Universal

**Music:** The success of superstar guest albums is dependent upon the quality of the collaborators, but as you might imagine, the best of the cream of the *crème de la crème* were queuing up to work with veteran bluesman B.B. King on his 80th birthday album. Highlights include some thrillingly improvised vocal exchanges with Van Morrison while a moody take on *The Thrill Is Gone* with Eric Clapton reprises the success of the duo's recent Grammy-winning *Riding With The King* album. Surprises include a jumpin', rock 'n' roll outing with Elton John and a brace of male-female duets which find poor Sheryl Crow woefully out of her depth but Gloria Estefan revealing previously unknown qualities as a blues diva. ★★★

**Sound:** King's guitar oozes class with every note and he's in decent voice, too. Few of his collaborators are rude enough to try to out-sing him; he might not be that energetic these days, but it never shows in King's performances. A fine recording of some of the best musicians around today. ★★★★★ NW



### KURT WEILL

*Symphonies 1 & 2, Lady in the Dark, Symphonic Nocturne*  
Marin Alsop (conductor), Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra  
NAXOS 8.557199

**Music:** The *2nd Symphony*, which opens this disc, was written after Weill was exiled to Paris during the rise of the Third Reich, and it more than hints at the turmoil of the period. This music hints at the worlds of Hindemith and Bartok. The *1st* is a juvenile work, rarely performed. *Lady In The Dark* is on more familiar Broadway territory, but musically it does little as an orchestral arrangement, and is best regarded as a second-rate filler. ★★★

**Sound:** Recorded at the Lighthouse Concert Hall in Poole, the recording is bold and clean, and well able to demonstrate the passion in the performances. ★★★★★ AG



### ARVO PÄRT

*Da Pacem Domine, Lamentate*  
The Hilliard Ensemble, Alexei Lubimov (piano), Andrey Boreyko (conductor), SWR Stuttgart Radio SO  
ECM 1930

**Music:** Arvo Pärt seems to carry the weight of the world on his shoulders. These are deep, meditative and compelling works, and are superbly performed on this disc. *Lamentate* is billed as a lamentation for the living. The short but striking *Da Pacem Domine* is sung a *capella* by the Hilliard Ensemble. ★★★★★

**Sound:** ECM is a consistently excellent record label, which can be relied on for an eclectic repertoire of interesting music, which is invariably recorded to the highest standards. *Lamentate* is an object lesson in clean, unmanipulated sound. By the way, the disc has some excellent deep bass. ★★★★★ AG

## DVD-AUDIO & SACD

### HUBERT SUMLIN

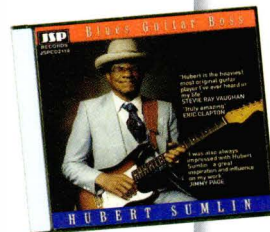
#### Blues Guitar Boss

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

JSP Records

**Music:** Hubert Sumlin must be one of the most influential yet obscure bluesmen in the business. His pivotal period was the era of electric blues, when he made so many stonking records with Howlin' Wolf, playing guitar that rather more successful artists like Jimmy Page and Eric Clapton found so inspiring. This remastered recording from 1990 features the vocal talents of Richard Studholme and Sumlin himself, who has a surprisingly good voice for someone who didn't actually sing on record in his heyday. He may be past his best here, but it's well recorded classic blues with some very nice picking, and clear to see where so many got their inspiration. ★★★

**Sound:** This disc has a lush, open sound with plenty of bandwidth and energy. It's unusual to hear this style of music with this degree of sound quality, and that's partly because most blues recordings are so ancient but also a positive reflection on the album itself. ★★★★★ JK



### WORLD ORCHESTRA FOR PEACE

#### Solti/Gergiev

Valery Gergiev and Sir Georg Solti (conductors)

CD/DVD (2-disc set: stereo CD, DVD-Video – DTS 5.1)

Philips 475 6937

**Music:** Founded in 1995, the World Orchestra for Peace, was set up by Solti under the aegis of the UN. The DVD of this two-disc set includes Rossini's *William Tell Overture*, Bartok's *Concerto For Orchestra* and Beethoven's *Fidelio Act II Finale*. Following Solti's death, the reins passed to Valery Gergiev, who conducts the works on the CD, including Mendelssohn's *Scherzo (A Midsummer Night's Dream)*, Debussy's *La Mer* and Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*. As a programme, the set plugs a lot of gaps for standard repertoire with excellent performance that have a real frisson that comes from the nature of the enterprise. ★★★★★

**Sound:** The DTS recording from the DVD offers a more congenial and focused sound than the CD, though it doesn't rival the latter for detail or dynamics. But these are all excellent recordings and performances, captured live. A thoroughly enjoyable two-disc set. ★★★★★ AG



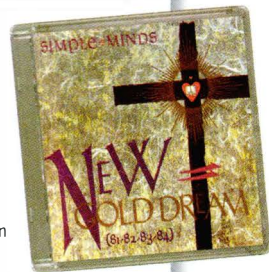
### SIMPLE MINDS

#### New Gold Dream

DVD-A (24-/96 surround, DTS 5.1, PCM stereo)

EMI

**Music:** It seems hard to remember now, but at one point in the early 1980s, the band once known as Johnny And The Self Abusers had become the biggest thing to come out of Scotland since the Bay City Rollers. They'd found the knack for combining the newly popular synthesizers with stadium-friendly dynamics and a big, bombastic sound, from which U2 would later learn much. Alongside Springsteen's *Born in the USA* and U2's *The Joshua Tree*, *New Gold Dream* pretty much defined the anthemic, stadium sound of the 1980s. There were a few cracking tunes too, as this high water mark from their 12-album catalogue ably demonstrates. The title track, along with *Someone, Somewhere In Summertime*, *Glittering Prize* and *Promised You A Miracle* recall that as Britain stumbled through economic recession, not everything was grim in 1982. ★★★ **Sound:** The trebly production is very much of its time and perhaps sounds best when listened to with rose-tinted earshells. The DVD-Audio track does something to round this out but it's still something of a period piece. ★★★ DO





# TRUST YOUR SENSES



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*"This DALI speaker is brimming with talent and seduction."  
"A new candidate in the world of top-of-the-range speakers  
at competitive prices."*

Robert Lacramp & Jean Hiraga | Revue Du Son & Home Cinema | '04



Golden Eye Award - 2004  
The Perfect Vision

*"In stereo configuration, the Helicon 400 ascended to the top  
of a very short list of premium \$4k-per pair floorstanders."*

Neil Gader | The Perfect Vision | Nov/Dec '04



Golden Ear Award - 2004  
The Absolute Sound







*"Imaging is superbly spacious and "out of the box",  
with precise focus and good depth layering."*

Paul Messenger | Hi-Fi Choice | March '05

*"While this speaker's alluring good looks might make even  
a super model green with envy, its sound is better still."*

Neil Gader | The Absolute Sound | Dec '04/Jan '05

## FEATURES

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# ChoiceMail



The pick of this month's best letters

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



## ★ LETTER OF THE MONTH

### STEREO RETURNS

I'm really glad to see evidence of the two-channel revival happening at last. I wonder if we'll see a bit of spurt from the UK stalwarts too? We've all noticed a lack of CD players and amplifiers at under £600. This used to be real enticing territory that propelled people into hi-fi, but now it seems a bit neglected. How can we entice people into hi-fi when gear seems either super-budget or 'entry-level' at £800 per piece?

**Carl Horn** via email

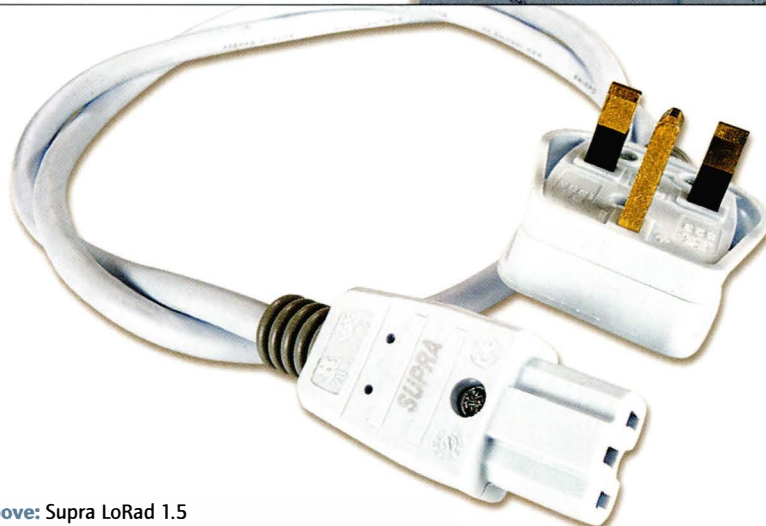
**HFC** There has been a shortage of new kit in the crucial sub-£600 arena recently. Manufacturers say this simply reflects falling sales – they claim virtually no-one is buying at this price point today. CD players have been particularly badly hit, not helped by universal disc player sales and the popularity of hard disk audio.



Russ Andrews  
www.russandrews.com

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: Supra LoRad 1.5

### LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

With a new power lead coming onto the market virtually every month and the debate still raging as to whether these leads make a difference or not, would it be possible for *Hi-Fi Choice* to do a group listening test on power leads? I'm sure this would be of great assistance to readers who are contemplating (and are trying to justify) an upgrade from the freebie cables that came with their kit.

**Dave Gould** via email

**HFC** We're aware that the mains lead debate is a hot topic judging by our postbag and the related threads on the *Hi-Fi Choice* Forum. While it's our job to uncover the truth about mains products, an entire *Ultimate Group Test* dedicated to mains leads might over-state their importance, compared to CD players, amps and the like. We will continue, however, to bring you definitive and reliable tests in our *AudioFile: Essentials* pages, and bring you a full critique of the more expensive filtration systems in our *Reviews* section.

### ECO WARRIOR

I am the project director of an environmental social enterprise based in an ancient woodland. I am constructing an autonomous log house, which will be 12 volt only, with two wind turbines and photovoltaic panels. I have a very old set-up, all classic stuff but not energy efficient and no longer suitable for the new house. I have made some enquiries to hi-fi manufacturers to see if they could modify equipment to run off 12 volt, but not had much luck. If I have an inverter to get AC out of my DC, I then have two inherent inefficiencies in running my hi-fi. The only solution I have is a car stereo! We do not have a television but watch movies, listen to a wide range of

**“I'm sure this would be of great assistance to readers who are contemplating an upgrade from freebies.”**

music, spend a lot of time outside and the nearest neighbour is about 1,000m away. Could you influence any companies to put their toe into low energy operation?

**Nigel Lowthrop** via email

**HFC** Short of using portable audio equipment, the nearest hi-fi oriented option is the battery-powered Final high-end preamp and power amplifier from Japan. But, as these eat through 64 zinc-carbon dry cells at a stroke, this is more environmentally unfriendly than mains-driven equipment. According to leading UK specialist Arcam: “Some equipment is designed for boats, but these are mainly fed by on board generators at 120/240V. In any case, 12V is not an efficient way of distributing power around a house. This is because cable losses (energy lost in the cable due to internal resistance) are much greater when using a low voltage/high current supply, in fact they rise by the square of the voltage reduction.”

### POINT...

Regarding the letter on myths – *Fighting Talk* (*Choice Mail*, HFC 272) – I can empathise with some of the writer's viewpoints. Take the Linn LP12 from the





Above: Zanden Model 2000/Model 5000 Signature

❑ late 1970s. Magazines and reviewers promoted this product and would have you believe that all else was gaslight back in those days. And regarding cables, I am very careful and smile to myself at the prices some purveyors ask. In my opinion, money is far better spent upgrading some of the cheapo components some manufacturers stick inside so-called high-end products. As for paying £31,500 for a CD player (Zanden Model 2000/Model 5000 Signature)... someone's having a laugh aren't they?

**Mike Booth** via email

**...COUNTERPOINT**

I find 'Still Tones' comments – *Fighting Talk* (Choice Mail, HFC 272) – to be unfortunately commonplace. I have a good, high-end system that cost many thousands of pounds. It was built up over the years and it – along with a large vinyl and CD collection – is my passion. I also know just how much care and attention went into selecting every component, including the cables and equipment supports. Most people who hear the system – even those who would ultimately choose a different sound – are deeply impressed by its performance... except for penny-pinching hi-fi buffs. I think that, because they cannot afford either the price or the dedication required to build such a system, their jealousy makes them deride it. I cannot afford a Ferrari, and that makes my Renault 'better' for me because I can own it. But, does that make a Renault 'better' than a Ferrari in every respect? Should I stop day-dreaming of driving a Ferrari Enzo? Of course not!

**'Sapere Aude'** via email

**HFC** Clearly, there's no easy answer to this. Are audiophiles being duped by high-end manufacturers, or is the only way to audio nirvana through exotic equipment? Let us know.

**“When it comes to paying £31,500 for a CD player... someone's having a bit of a laugh, aren't they?”**

**A400 BYPASS TO PLEASANTVILLE**

David Vivian's Pioneer A400 *AudioFile*: *Dispatches* column from *The Collection* (HFC 272) is 100 per cent correct – this has got to be the best budget amplifier, ever. Having used Quad, Tandberg and Leak over the years, I always go back to using the A400. I would like to see in future reviews the A400 amp against some modern day competition to see how it would fair. I have been reading your mag since the mid 1970s and would like to see a little more budget equipment reviewed, around the £300-600 mark. Thanks for a great mag and keep up the good work.

**Lawrence Crowley** via email

**HFC** There's no doubt the Pioneer A400 amplifier is a legend and we get lots of communication praising this little fella. Unfortunately, we cannot reference historic products against modern ones, simply because there are so many historic benchmarks; we would spend more time assessing the sound of the past products than rating the performance of the new ones. To address you're point on budget equipment, we are at the mercy of manufacturers who simply aren't making as much stereo gear at this level. Rest assured, however, the key kit at this price point will always make it into *Hi-Fi Choice*, the UK's only growing hi-fi magazine.

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**@ ONLINE FORUM**

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

My dealer tells me that my newly-acquired Linn Troika is too 'mature'. Apparently, the rubber suspension will have deteriorated and I'd do better with a mid priced new one...

**Analogue-addict**

...I have cartridges at 20 to 30 years old and, apart from a Shure V15 being down on one channel, I have never experienced any loss in quality.

**Icehockeyboy**

I'm a little puzzled that a lot of brands like Linn, Naim, Rega, Exposure, and Creek do not offer a DAB tuner. Are they burying their heads in the sand..?

**Paularcher**

...When I used DAB, the signal used to break up, and the sound was equal to listening to music on a telephone. Still, as long as the PR is good, people will believe the hype.

**Sir\_Franc**

With regards to *The Collection*, I would like to know how many of us will invest over £30,000 for a Zanden Audio CD player, £20,000 for Burmester's pre/power or £40,000 for the Wilson Maxx 2...

**Mert Tetik**

...In last year's *The Collection* I had two or three of the items reviewed, one forum user had more. Between us all on the forum, most were covered, apart from a couple that needed a lottery win to buy!

**DaveWhit2**



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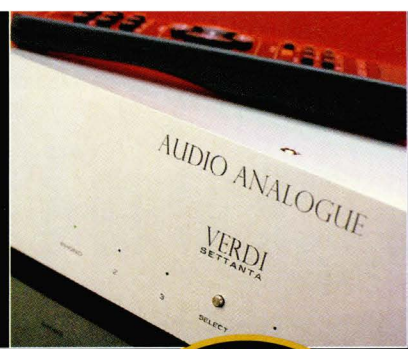
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# REVIEWS

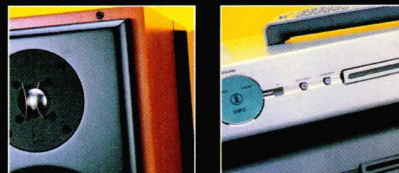


Welcome to the HFC hardware reviews section – the only place for definitive tests of the latest hi-fi components. Our unique combination of extensive listening, unsighted comparisons and scientific lab reports, conducted by the UK's most experienced set of reviewers, ensures you're holding the most comprehensive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



## EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

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## OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

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

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

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

**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 83%**

**FEATURES >> 85%**

**BUILD >> 85%**

**VALUE >> 85%**

**CONCLUSION**

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

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

**CON** Extremely it's a CD00 Marantz – no bad thing in itself, but it's hotter than it looks!

The things we like most about the product

The things we think could be better

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

## OUR AWARD BADGES EXPLAINED



**Best Buy**

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



**Editor's Choice**

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

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



# Revel with a cause

*This extraordinary standmount is one of the best compact speakers we've ever heard*

**PRODUCT** Revel M22

**TYPE** Standmount loudspeaker

**PRICE** £1,700 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 21.9x36.8x30.2cm  
Weight: 10.8kg • 165mm Organic Ceramic Composite cone bass/mid unit • 25mm titanium dome tweeter  
• Sensitivity/impedance: 85dB/4.8 ohms (minimum)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01423 359054 🌐 [www.revelspeakers.com](http://www.revelspeakers.com)

**A**lthough Revel has been a high-end loudspeaker company since its inception in 1996, it doesn't have the restrictions of scale that usually apply to such organisations. That's because it was created as part of the Harman Group to produce speakers

that make the most of electronics from the Harman-owned Lexicon and Mark Levinson brands. As such, it shares facilities with major speaker marques like JBL and Infinity. This gives Revel a significant advantage over most of the competition, because it has at its disposal a veritable army of engineers to take care of designing and engineering its loudspeakers – men like Floyd Toole, whose work with Infinity has been featured in *HFC* in the past.

Revel is run by Kevin Voecks, a speaker designer who formerly worked with Snell and Mirage. Voecks takes a highly scientific approach to the job – in fact, his is the only company we are aware of that has so openly set out how it goes about designing a speaker.

In Voecks' words, this involves making "the right tradeoffs with your entire spectrum of objectives firmly in mind". Revel has a list of loudspeaker qualities which, in order of priority, are: timbre, directivity, resonance, audible distortion, dynamics (variations in timbre with volume), phase and waveform preservation.

It's surprising to see directivity so high up this list of design priorities, but Revel's research suggests that the off-axis response is audible in any room. At the other end of the scale, phase is surprisingly low, the answer on this occasion being: "as soon as you put (a loudspeaker) in a room, it's phase soup". Kevin lives in California. Maybe phase soup is a delicacy there...






The company uses extensive listening tests to establish what it should be trying to measure – hopefully, this is true of all well-organised hi-fi manufacturers, but Revel is keen to publicise its methodology. Critical to this is a remarkable double-blind listening facility, designed to establish what can be heard without the listener's eyes being able to guide his or her opinions. Harman's Los Angeles premises contain a room built for this purpose, with automated speaker switching to allow a single listener to audition a number of speakers without seeing them or having to move them. Revel's assertion that variations are more pronounced when there's only one speaker being used makes switching a little easier, of course, but there's no doubting the very impressive results we obtained when sampling this facility during a visit earlier this year.

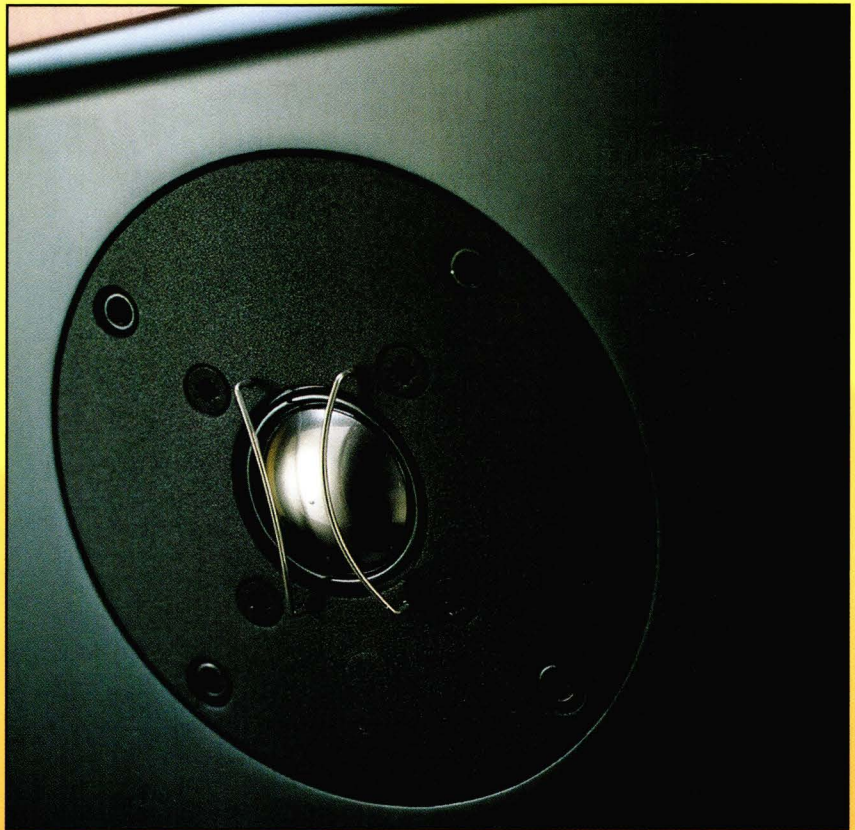
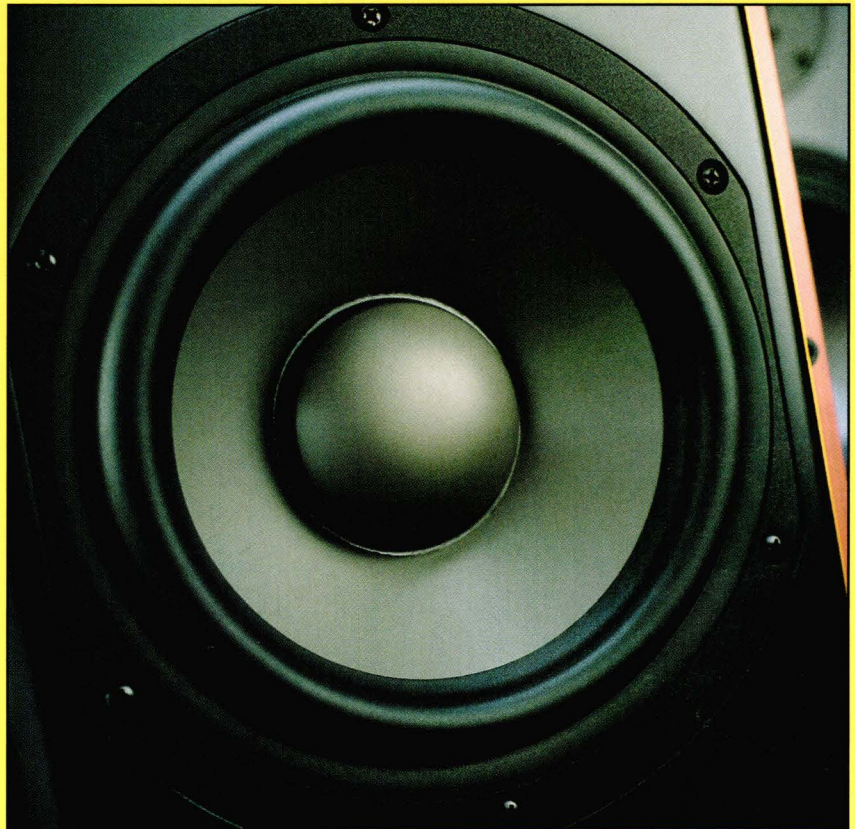
The M22 is the sole standmount in Revel's Performa series, a range that slots between the Ultima line-up that started the company and the recently launched mid-price Concerta models. The M22 shares many of the engineering solutions found in the Ultima Studio that we reviewed in *The Collection* two issues ago. Its main driver has a 114mm organic ceramic composite cone in a 165mm chassis and is driven by an edge-wound 51mm diameter voice coil. The latter – along with the use of neodymium magnets in a cone driver – is common to the Ultima series, as is the use of high-order crossovers. This is because Revel believes that low-order filters cannot control out-of-band energy, but this can cause problems in two-way speakers like the M22 because the main driver's dispersion tends to beam with increasing frequency. This, presumably, is why the crossover point is at a low 2.2kHz.

The tweeter has a 25mm titanium dome with a co-polymer surround and claimed true pistonic behaviour "beyond the limits of human hearing". The super-tweeter approach favoured by some of Revel's European competitors does not seem to have taken root in any of its designs.

The cabinet was designed using laser interferometry to establish precisely where to place bracing for maximum effect. The single wire connections sit beneath switches for treble level and boundary compensation, with options for stand- or shelf-mounting – a popular option for home cinema installations.

#### SOUND QUALITY

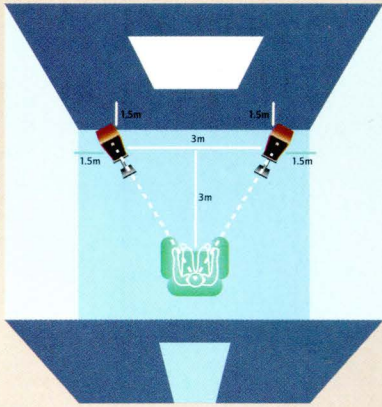
Listening to the M22, it would seem that Revel has achieved the goals that it prioritises. Timbral resolution is excellent: everything from double bass to trumpets and cymbals sound spot on. This speaker also has impressive low frequency extension for its size, going down low enough for one not to yearn for a bigger box. It produces both the weight and the power of bass notes in a remarkably convincing manner for a compact standmount; it needs good, spiked stands to keep the bass tight, but once this is achieved, you can crank it to great effect. 



**“The cabinet was designed using laser interferometry to establish precisely where to place bracing for maximum effect.”**



## SET-UP



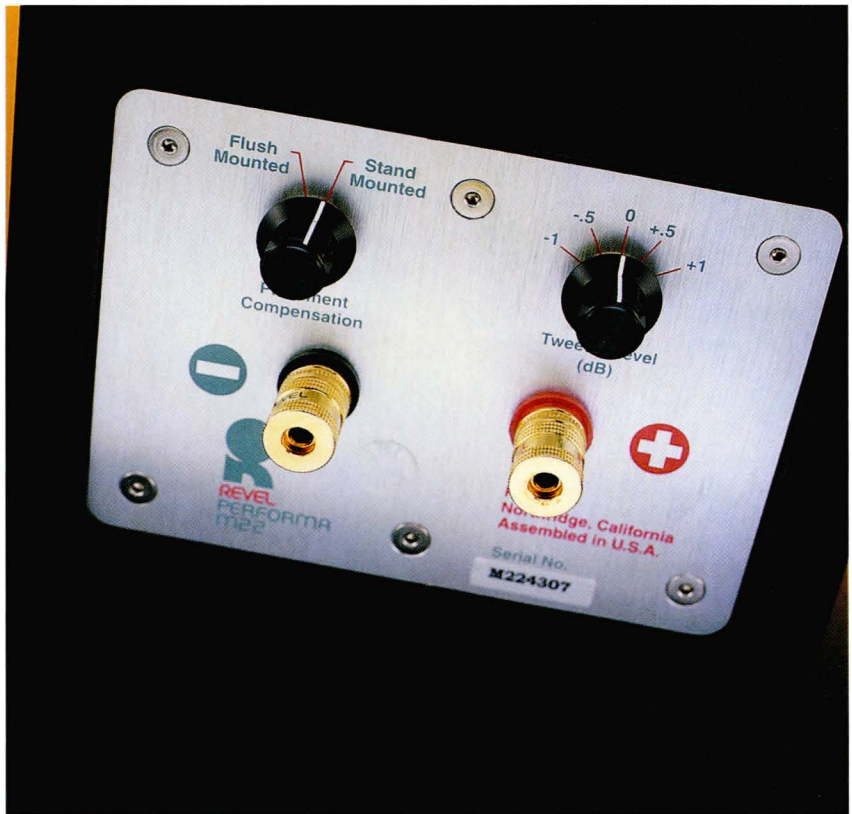
### POSITIONING

The M22 is unusual in that it is designed to be used in either free space or soffit-mounted in the wall, the boundary compensation switch tailoring the crossover to suit either location. Revel's extensive owner's manual points out a few fundamental considerations including "Remove all obstructions between the M22 and the primary listening position"... can't argue with that one!

Revel also suggests placing the speakers at equal distances from the listener and side walls and for optimal stereo imaging "point the M22s directly toward the primary listening position. The toe-in angle can be reduced to widen the soundstage". We found the treble level a shade too high with this set-up so turned it down a notch (-0.5dB), which was enough to give a smooth, even balance. These speakers seemed to need more space around them than average for their size; this may be because they are made for the more expansive and softer walled environs of an American home, we put about a metre between them and the wall which seemed to be necessary to get good even bass.

### SYSTEM MATCHING

As far as partnering amplification goes, you'll need a decent chunk of power – at 85dB, this is not what you'd call an overly sensitive speaker. Its impedance drops no lower than 4.8 ohms though, so it's not as bad as it first seems and in practice the volume knob only needed a small tweak to match the output of the 89dB Focal-JMLab Profile 908. But, if you want to play at decent level, 100 watts would seem to be a good place to start. If you don't want to raise the dead, the M22s would be happy with a stiff 65 watts or thereabouts. The issue here is one of quality: this speaker is revealing and will let you know if the partnering source or amplifier are letting the side down rather clearly, so the amp needs enough power not to be struggling and the source needs to be clean and preferably capable of supplying a high resolution signal.



What first strikes you about the M22 is a sensation of the noise floor having been lowered, something that a loudspeaker can't really do on its own. We suspect that this is related to the third and fourth priorities on Revel's list: resonance and audible distortion. Resonance control is clearly very successful. You get a sense that overhang and box coloration have been effectively eliminated, to the extent that

distortion is reduced by an order of magnitude compared to most loudspeakers. What this means in musical terms is greater resolution and clarity, whatever the content. In fact, the more dense the material, the greater one's appreciation of how crisp and clean this



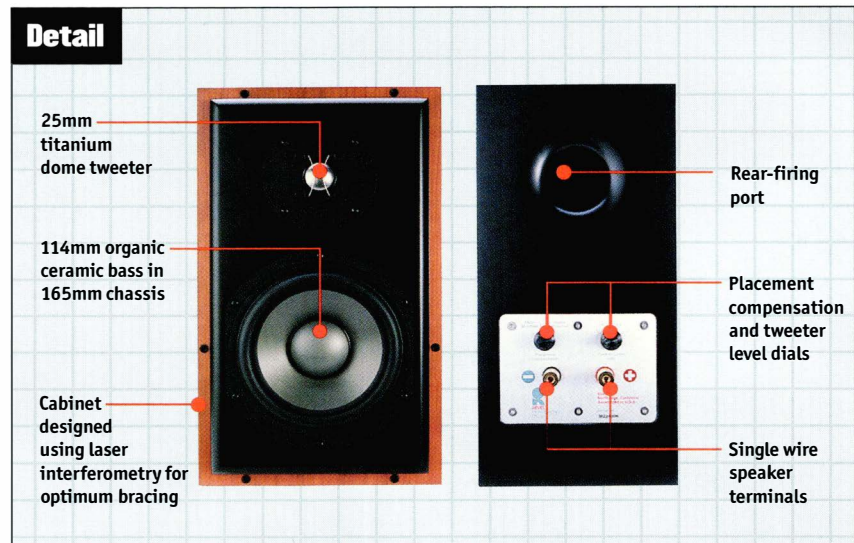


speaker sounds. There is no sense of blurring of leading or trailing edges and never any sense of congestion in its delivery.

The limitation that the size of both driver and box place on performance is in terms of energy. This speaker will not play as loud as its lack of distortion would suggest. It is inevitable with sensitivity this low and internal volume this small that this factor would suffer; it doesn't suffer very much and probably not at all compared to similar sized boxes, but it is so good in pretty well all other respects that one's expectations are raised and the volume with them. It's an easy trap to fall into when you are used to bigger loudspeakers – if you want to play loud rock you need a big, sensitive speaker. But fortunately Revel make these as well.

When it comes to what Revel describes as variations in timbre with volume (more commonly referred to as 'micro-dynamics'), things are rather more spectacular. We had thought the Focal-JMLab Profile 908 (reviewed on p42) might better the M22 in some respects, but a quick comparison revealed that – in this respect at least – the quality gulf was substantial. The way this speaker reveals the precise level of each note is remarkable, as it brings life and energy out of a recording that many speakers simply smooth over.

This is an extremely revealing loudspeaker, so changes to fundamental and ancillary components are immediately obvious... as are differences in recordings. One record can make the speaker seem hard and aggressive while



**“The way this speaker reveals the precise level of each note is remarkable, as it brings life and energy out of a recording.”**

another will make it seem sweet and luxurious. Good recordings such as Neil Ardley's *Kaleidoscope of Rainbows* (Pure Pleasure vinyl) sound superb – on test, the gorgeous tones of the various instruments in Ardley's progressive orchestra emphasised just how remarkable the M22's timbral capabilities are. There is a loud

minority that suggests that good tonal resolve can only be achieved with paper cones, and this is something that is indisputably disproved by the ceramic driver on this and presumably other Revel speakers.

We are sold on Revel's set of design priorities, and as such, the M22 is one of the most convincing compact speakers we've heard to date. It gives the sense that what you hear through the speaker is closer to the original signal than the competition, because the perception of distortion is almost non-existent.

This result would suggest that Harman's comparatively vast resources confer a significant advantage for Revel and that attention to detail can bring sonic glory if you know which details warrant the most attention. If you value micro-dynamics and low-distortion design over brute force volume, the M22 is an intelligent winner. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 92%</b> 	<b>PRO</b> Extremely high-resolution, low-distortion small speaker with great build quality and useful balance and placement adjustment onboard.  <b>CON</b> Limited absolute energy and volume level due to the speaker's size and sensitivity. You have to wonder: would it sound better without the switches. And it's not cheap...
<b>EASE OF DRIVE &gt;&gt; 61%</b> 	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 92%</b> 	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 85%</b> 	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> A remarkably clean and revealing speaker with superb tonal and microdynamic capabilities that will keep you up all night replaying your record collection. If your musical tastes are more cerebral than visceral, the M22 is a must-listen.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 89%</b>	





# Music with vision

*Sony's new upmarket DVD/SACD player aims to please both audiophiles and videophiles*

**PRODUCT** Sony DVP-NS9100ES

**TYPE** DVD-Video/SACD/CD player

**PRICE** £1,000

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 43x12.5x 39cm

- Weight: 9.5kg • CD/DVD-V/SACD text display
- Digital outputs include i.Link and HDMI • Precision Cinema PAL/NTSC progressive scan video

**CONTACT** ☎ 08705 111999 🌐 www.sony.co.uk

**T**he DVP-NS9100ES looks like a timely follow-on to the SCD-XA9000ES that was released about two years ago, but the similarity is entirely superficial. Though both play CDs and SACDs, in fact the two are independent, will run concurrently and the new model is in no way a replacement for the classic CD/SACD player. The DVP-NS9100ES starts life as a DVD-Video player, while the SCD-XA9000ES remains a dedicated audio player. The new model also costs less than the

audio player, though it still qualifies as 'high end' by DVD player standards, and it has a full roster of the latest digital interfaces.

The '9100ES can play a wide variety of 12cm discs, the main omission being DVD-Audio. A pair of i.Link terminals with HDCP copy protection are provided for digital audio transmission, including high-resolution audio data from SACD in native DSD form. When coupled to a compatible amplifier/receiver input, Sony's well-established HATS (High-quality digital Audio Transmission System) strategy helps mitigate the pernicious effect of jitter. This uses variable speed signal transmission, which involves a feedback system to control the flow of data into the receiver, and buffer memory in the receiver, from which the audio stream is fed out under the control of an accurate master clock.

The player also includes an HDMI digital link, which carries low-resolution audio

alongside digital video, supported by upsampling of 480i/576i video off-disc to 480p, 576p, 780p and 1080i for delivery to an HDMI-enabled display. The digital processing is performed with 10-bit precision by a Silicon Images SiI9030 chip. The audio carried via HDMI is data compressed rather than full-bandwidth multichannel from SACD, which is why i.Link was also included. As Sony points out, standards for transmitting SACD sound with HDMI have yet to be finalised.

The new Sony player is also rich in the area of progressive scan, or I/P (interlace to progressive scan) video processing. This is a tricky process that can be performed in various ways, but it's also worth noting that any bit-addressable projector (DLP, LCD) will always perform I/P conversion before displaying images.

Interlaced video works fine with static images, but introduces 'zipper' like patterns (Sony's description, but an apt one) on the





edges of moving objects when the two fields of alternate numbered lines are combined into a complete frame. The Sony performs I/P conversion of PAL and NTSC material, with auto-detection and processing algorithms optimised for films and video material using its own powerful silicon – this is designed to work seamlessly even where film is intercut with video, or where they are displayed simultaneously, for example with some subtitles. ‘Staircasing’ often seen on diagonals is also addressed by the Sony’s Vertical Edge Compensation algorithm, although this artefact is minimised in progressive scan replay anyway. Nevertheless, this is a useful method of keeping a problem at bay, and many projector owners will be very thankful.

Other highlights include an Analogue Devices ADV7324 14-bit video D-to-A converter, which multiplies the number of grey scales and uses appropriate interpolation of the original eight-bit data to increase chrominance and luminance channel data.

One more feature of the Sony’s video processing demands attention. In contrast to some well-regarded high-end DVD players, but in common with some decidedly low-spec models, the Sony allows the gamma curve to be set so that the black level can be set below pluge (the standard reference level for a black signal). Fortunately, the Sony allows the level to be calibrated with some precision.

With so much attention heaped upon hi-tech video, what of audio? Well, importantly, the

**“With a player as technically well-endowed as this one clearly is, there is an expectation that it will perform well.”**

audio section has its own master clock adjacent to the D-to-A converter. The latter is a Sony part, at the centre of which is a multi-level DAC – in effect, a number of one-bit D-to-A converters operating in parallel – which is said to combine the best attributes of one-bit and multibit converters. Bass and speaker management settings are stored separately for DVD-Video and SACD discs, and both video and display off options are available.

**SOUND QUALITY**

With a player as technically well-endowed as this one clearly is, there is an expectation that it will perform well. In many respects, this is the case here and – certainly as a video player – the Sony is nothing less than superb. But as an audio player, it didn’t always manage to press all the right buttons. This is a criticism levelled not at the i.Link outputs – where the Sony is essentially transparent, as far as can be determined – but at the analogue outputs.

The problems are not severe, but they are enough on balance to place the Sony a little behind the less costly Marantz DV7600 universal player (reviewed on page 46), notably when used in its CD playing role. Our

listening notes consistently point to a sound that errs in the direction of lumpiness, and which lacks the easy, sweet-toned quality of the Marantz. In many respects it’s a perfectly respectable CD player, with a bold and powerful presentation when the occasion demands, yet it’s also smooth and easy on the ear. But a lack of transparency shows up in various (mostly subtle) ways, principally a loss of very fine detail and fluidity, and a hint of smearing, not just with complex full orchestral recordings, but also well recorded solo, instrumental and chamber material. The sound is consistently just slightly out of focus. It is a good player, but without sounding actively synthetic, it just doesn’t sing.

SACD replay is a notably better, effectively closing the gap with the Marantz, and better of course than CD. But it failed to pull convincingly into the lead, and it certainly doesn’t live up to the very high standards set by the SCD-XA9000ES CD/SACD player (though the difference in price provides ample excuse for this). Nevertheless, the DVP-NS9100ES remains a very capable SACD player in both multichannel and stereo form, and this at a time when there have never



**Q & A**

We spoke to Eric Kingdon, Sony's UK and European technical marketing manager for its Home Audio/Video Division, to discuss the technology behind the new Sony player



**HFC** Given that Sony BMG is releasing DualDiscs, why not include compatibility for DVD-Audio?

**EK** We decided to incorporate playback capability for what we believe to be the best audio carrier. The large range of Super Audio CD titles (check out www.SA-CD.net) meant incorporation of this technology was essential.

**What was the preceding model, and how is the new one better?**

The preceding model was the DVP-NS999ES and it was quite different in a variety of areas. Here are just a few: mecha-deck, chassis construction, circuit architecture, power supply, D-to-A converters, progressive scan processor, HDMI, i.Link, RS232 port... Shall I go on?

**Why is it called the '9100ES, given obvious possible confusion with the SCD-XA9000ES?**

You would not believe the discussion that sometimes goes into the selection of a model number or name! We decided to maintain the 9000 series pedigree which represents our current top single-box proposition.

**Can you discuss some of the key component choices?**

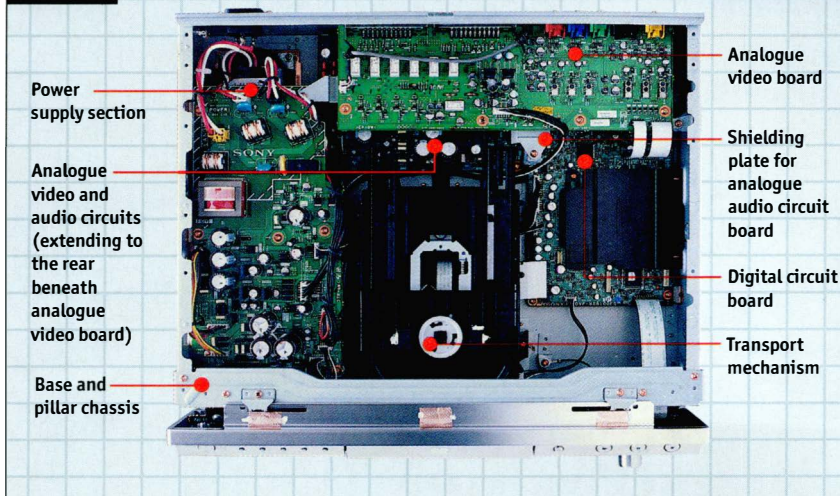
The video DACs merit a special mention. Early on, we started to use 10-bit, then 12-bit and for the previous model, a 14-bit DAC. For the 9100, we chose a 14-bit video DAC with 216MHz sampling. The move from 12 to 14-bit has an obvious improvement to grey scale rendition, but the shift to 216Mhz brings further improvement and some challenges. The analogue filter can have a more relaxed and milder slope, video noise is suppressed, picture detail and clarity are optimised for progressive output. As well as noise shaping video circuitry, we use a sub alias filter for both luminance and colour difference channels. On the audio side, the DACs are uniform for every channel and are from our pure audio ES range.

**Are aftermarket cables and other accessories useful additions for this player?**

Absolutely, hence the decision on all ES models to offer an IEC-type mainslead. We plan to introduce this further down the range, too. Cables can make a big difference and it is equally important to consider them for both audio and video applications.



**Detail**



been more high-quality SACD players around, many costing far more than this Sony.

One point that was noted in the test, and this despite the apparently very good build quality of the player, was the improvement shown when the player was well-damped. Using multiple layers of steel and soft rubber pads to provide constrained layer damping both below the player and also on top made a surprising difference for the better. It effectively calmed the sound, and even improved resolution. We had been alerted to this by trying the same thing with the excellent SCD-XA9000ES, and reaped exactly the same benefits with the new player.

**VIDEO PERFORMANCE**

As a video player, the Sony is easily on top of its game. Using the HDMI output to a suitably equipped projector delivers the best performance, but the component output is not far behind. In both cases, picture clarity is nothing less than superb, with detail visible in the excellent Silicon Optix test disc – blades of grass in a landscape, for example – that lesser DVD players smear into a near-uniform mass of grass with little discernable structure. It did this without false sharpening of edges between areas of contrasting colour, and the picture remained beautifully smooth and largely free of video noise.

The Sony also deals very effectively with motion artefacts that give many players such a hard time. There are very few of the telltale serrated diagonal edges, and the level of detail in areas of the picture that are moving stays unusually high.

This player attempts to be both a high-end audio *and* video player. On balance, its audio performance is merely respectable for the money, though it does act as a good showcase for SACD. If it's used with a high-quality amp with i.Link inputs, it represents a superb buy, but via its own analogue outputs, it's just a little too lacking in resolution to be fully convincing. As a high-fidelity video player, however, the Sony is nothing less than superb. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*

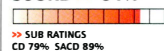
**FORMAT COMPATIBILITY**

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



**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 84%**



**VISION >> 92%**



**FEATURES >> 87%**



**VALUE >> 80%**



**PRO**

Well engineered player with good sound via i.Link and a particularly well endowed video section. DVD picture quality doesn't get much better than this.

**CON**

Sound quality through the analogue output is a little flat and lacking in resolution. Lack of DVD-A compatibility may limit its appeal.

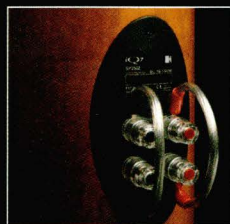
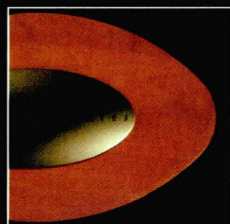
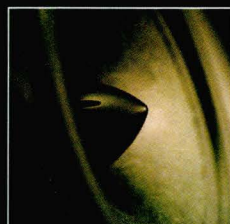
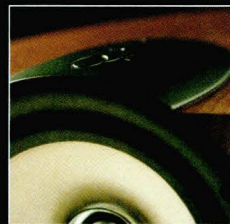
**CONCLUSION**

As a player designed to appeal to audiophiles and videophiles alike, the results are a tad uneven, mostly favouring the video. But if used with a high-grade multichannel amplifier with i.Link connectors, it's a much better balanced proposition.

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



# KEF®



*“They produce stunning scale and authority”*



## Q SERIES Acoustic intelligence

You don't have to be a genius to understand why the new Q Series speakers sound so good. The clue's in the name: iQ.

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# Italy on a budget

*Valve/transistor hybrid exotica for just £850! Not your average mid-market stereo amp, then...*

**PRODUCT** Audio Analogue Verdi Settantà

**TYPE** Integrated stereo amplifier

**PRICE** £850

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 45x8x38cm

• Weight: 9kg • Power: 70W per channel (8 ohms)

• Inputs: five line, phono • Outputs: tape, speaker

**CONTACT** ☎ 01753 652669

🌐 [www.audioanalogue.com](http://www.audioanalogue.com)

**A**udio Analogue has made a name for itself as a purveyor of quality audio electronics, its combination of sonic excellence and super-smart (but never flashy) looks impressing us and many others. The company is built upon delivering good, innovative electronics without massive price tags: its signature product for many years was the Puccini SE integrated, and the new Verdi Settantà integrated is also designed to deliver the goods for under a grand. There's even a matching CD player (see box).

So can the Verdi really compete, all round, with products from the Marantz, Rotel and Harman-Kardons of this world – to say nothing of the Arcams? At first, the answer is certainly 'yes'. External appearance loses nothing in comparison with established AA models, including the nicely finished aluminium

casework with a thick front panel and metal volume control knob. Actually, the volume control is electronic and the knob twists a little way left or right to nudge the control up or down, with level indicated by green LEDs arranged around the knob: more LEDs indicate the selected source. They're viewed through rather tiny holes and are not always easily visible, but they don't glare.

Inside the unit are the usual fair-size toroidal transformer and couple of heatsinks and... two valves. Yes, not only is AA attempting to storm the mid-price amp market, it's doing it with a hybrid model. The most important clue, however, to its modest cost is revealed on closer inspection of the power devices clamped to the heatsinks, which turn out to be integrated circuits. These are basically complete power amps on a chip, two per channel. Devices like that used to be synonymous with tacky offerings from the less distinguished mass-market names, but nothing stands still in electronics and these days there are some very capable integrated circuits out there. They still require a handful of external components and the usual power supply gubbins, but the best such beasts can offer good performance with substantial savings in parts and assembly cost.

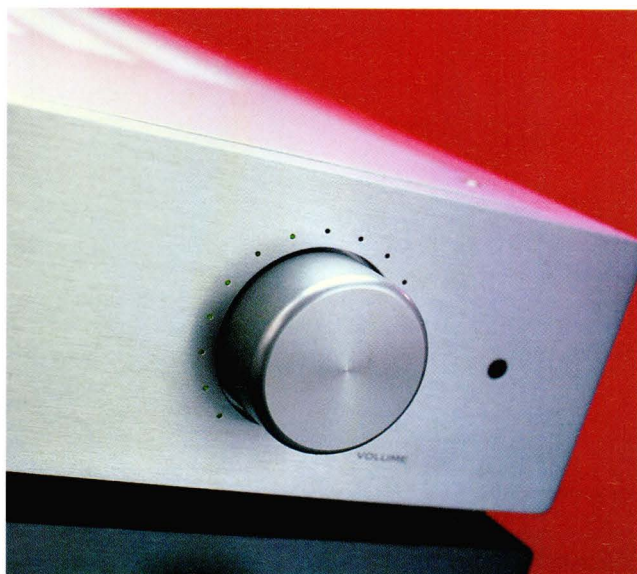
AA has not wasted the savings, putting the budget towards the valves (one 6DJ8 – equivalent to an ECC88 – per channel) and the rest of the uniformly high grade components found alongside. Power is rated at 70 watts per channel; the integrated circuits are only good for about 40 watts each, which is why two are used, bridged. That in turn means the black output terminal is not an earth terminal, something that is not an issue in normal use but can catch out the unwary repairman. Worse, if you fancy a spot of tweaking, this could prove a dangerous confusion.

There's even a phono stage, simple but effective and suitable for MM or MC cartridges, though noise is barely adequate with the latter. All round though, a nicely conceived unit. We've one small operational gripe: volume steps are coarse around normal levels, the more so when using the front panel control which tends to induce double-or triple-step changes, unlike the remote.

## **SOUND QUALITY**

Preconceptions are always dodgy, especially when so much could ride on them – the price issue, the valves, power integrated circuits in general... So we arranged a thorough 'blind' listening session for this amp, comparing it





**“The tonality of the Verdi is clear and open up to the highest octaves, complementing the agility with nicely natural voicing.”**

with a handful of broadly comparable old favourites. What follows is the result of that session, combined with subsequent sighted listening in the light of notes taken the first time round.

What's perhaps most immediately striking about this amplifier is that it's agile and light on its feet. It cheerfully follows the twists and turns of any musical style and never sounds bogged down or stodgy. There is admittedly something of a flipside too, which is that the bass is slightly light; it isn't as fully extended as some and lacks tunefulness. The extent of those omissions depends, as often happens, on the circumstances – isolated bass does relatively well. Most obviously compromised is gentle but deep bass in the presence of a wide range of frequencies from other instruments, plucked double bass being one of the commonest examples. The best amplifiers around, even at £500, will let one hear distinctly the pitch and decay of each note, but this one tends a little towards a dull thud.

Bass apart, the tonality of the Verdi is clear and open up to the highest octaves, complementing the agility with a nicely natural approach to voicing. Saxophone, an instrument uncommonly sensitive to coloration, sounds properly live and real, while human voice is clear and communicative.

In terms of detail, there is arguably some way to go for this amp to catch up with the best in its class. As with the bass, this depends on material, but thickly scored music is exactly where strong detail resolution is most important. We have to say that there was consistently some veiling in busy passages of rock, classical, jazz and pop alike. It's not a gross veiling, but it's the kind of thing that requires more concentration from the listener to work out exactly what's happening in the middle of the mix, or at the back of the stereo image, and that in turn has an impact on listener fatigue. In extreme cases, one simply can't pick out very subtle details that more insightful amps reliably reveal.

Accordingly, stereo image width is pretty good – just a fraction curtailed at the edges – but depth is noticeably reduced and precision around the centre likewise. Still, the image is solid and doesn't seem to wander around the way it occasionally can on some rivals.

All in all, the Verdi deserves a qualified recommendation. Its agility makes for generally enjoyable listening. It also does a very good job of playing in the semi-background when one is engaged in something else, the music finding its way to the mind most efficiently – in such circumstances, finer details are not really germane.

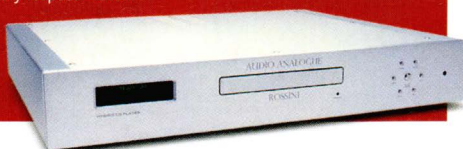
Ultimately, though, we would really have appreciated just a little more of the traditional hi-fi virtues, particularly in the bass and detail departments. This is a decent enough amp and a perfectly practical proposition in many ways, but for sheer sound it doesn't set the cat among the pigeons in the way Audio Analogue doubtless hoped. **HFC**

*Richard Black*



## AUDIO ANALOGUE ROSSINI CD PLAYER

Along with the Verdi, Audio Analogue sent us a new, matching valve/solid-state hybrid CD player, the £850 Rossini. It looks a million dollars, the same slick alloy styling and elegant lines making it potentially a perfect natural match for the Verdi Settanta. But we were perplexed by the sound, which left us distinctly wanting more in almost every department. On investigation, we found that the internal CD-ROM drive was feeding – from its *analogue* output, no less – a buffer consisting of a single valve, and thence the outputs. Not surprisingly, the measured performance is poor in every respect – even speed accuracy is no better than most decent LP players and many external DACs would refuse to accept the player's digital output. Unless you must have matching kit, look elsewhere.



VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 77%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>PRO</b> Lively, agile and adaptable, this amp makes no bones about following the ins and outs of any musical style with alacrity and verve. It's also enjoyable for valve lovers on a tight budget!
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 79%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>CON</b> Bass is attenuated and lacks resonance, and detail is not what it might be, with some veiling and confusion.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 88%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 77%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> The Verdi Settanta is a solid and attractive amplifier at what appears a tempting price, given the standard of build. However, though its sound is enjoyably agile, it lacks the detail and precision to match to best-sub-£1,000 amps.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 77%</b>	



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Sonus Faber **Grand Piano Domus**



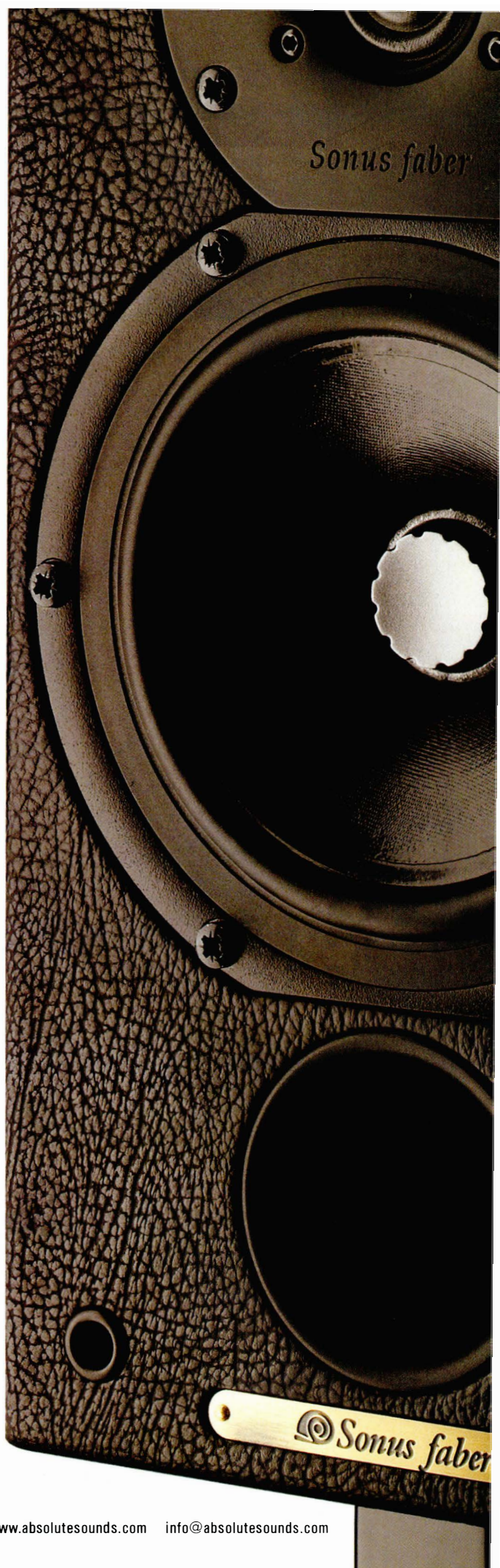
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# SACD + HDMI = FAB

Philips' new sub-£500 multiformat player uses acronyms to impressive effect

**PRODUCT** Philips DVP9000S  
**TYPE** DVD-Video/SACD/CD player  
**PRICE** £400  
**CONTACT** ☎ 0870 900 9070 🌐 www.philips.co.uk

Loosely speaking, the Philips DVP9000S is the replacement for the well-liked, two year old DVD963SA. The new player keeps to the same basic groundplan – CD and DVD-Video replay, together with stereo and multichannel SACD – but it has been extensively updated and improved.

The video subsection is equipped with HDMI v1.0, which means full compliance with HD video displays up to 1080i (subject to the limitations of DVD source material), with video-noise reducing upscaling. This uses algorithms built into the Faroudja FLi2300 DCDi motion adaptive deinterlacer and image enhancer. There is no high-resolution digital audio output from SACD, which requires a later version of HDMI, or other connections like i.Link. However, audio and video output are available from HDMI, including component outputs in both NISTC and PAL progressive.

Proprietary TrueLife technology applies what is described as 2D non-linear enhancement “to guarantee spatial image quality, boosting contrast and colour intensity, while remaining free of the artefacts that mar some sharpening algorithms” (mainly overshoot, presumably). Colour, saturation, contrast, brightness and sharpness levels can be adjusted independently. Upsampling of CD data is to what Philips inexplicably describes as 24/192 DSD, but there is no explanation of what this means. The feature set includes standard Dolby Digital and DTS decoders.

High-quality internal components include well-specified op-amps and Nichicon FG caps,

and an ‘audio direct’ function shuts off video processing. Bass management is available separately for CD and DSD, the latter after conversion to PCM, unlike its much more expensive near-namesake from Sony (see p34). Philips have also taken the opportunity to redesign the casework, which is solid and contemporary looking, and the remote control, which is a much more substantial item.

## SOUND QUALITY

Building on the reputation of its predecessor, the DVP9000S turns out to be a very creditable CD player, and an even better SACD player. In both cases, the sound is characteristically lean and clean, capable of pulling plenty of detail from discs and presenting it within a large-scale space. To this heady mix, SACDs provide a clear improvement, with a more organic, progressive quality and greater transparency, along with a welcome touch of warmth and grace. In Jennifer Warnes *The Well*, vocal quality of the DSD layer is more beautiful, measured and expressive, and this proved typical.

It is not beyond reproach, though. Judged against the £600 Marantz DV7600 (reviewed on p46), the Philips was wanting in absolute consistency. The player modulates recorded dynamics a touch, in a way that points the finger (though not definitively) at the power supply. It tracks the changes in typical music recordings well enough, but through very powerful passages (for example in a recording of Messian's *Turangulila* from multichannel SACD) the sound lacks a little grip.

## VIDEO PERFORMANCE

The Philips is a very accomplished video player. It's crisper and sharper than most of the direct competition, and colour reproduction is subtle

and well saturated. There's a stability in the reproduction of fast moving scenes that helps the picture to flow in a more natural way.

DVD players are changing – anything above supermarket fodder is acquiring all kind of accoutrements. The Philips DVP9000S is an object lesson in how advanced technology can be harnessed to a powerful end result, even at relatively modest price levels, and SACD replay is the icing on the cake. **HFC**

Alvin Gold

## FORMAT COMPATIBILITY

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

## VERDICT

### SOUND >> 82%

▶ SUB RATINGS  
 CD 78% SACD 86%

### VISION >> 88%

▶ FEATURES >> 87%

### VALUE >> 89%

### PRO

A well-appointed player that is both flexible and a class all-round performer. Like the DVD963SA before it, this giant-killer challenges more expensive kit.

### CON

Upsampling doesn't deliver significantly better sound. Lack of DVD-Audio replay, or digital output from SACD, may prove limiting to some.

### CONCLUSION

A classy, mid-price DVD-Video player that also performs extremely well as an SACD and CD player. It's a cost-effective solution for the audiophile who also wants good quality video at a reasonable price, and isn't afraid to sacrifice DVD-A.

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





# The right profile

France's biggest name in the speaker game strikes a pose for high-end, high-profile standmounts

**PRODUCT** Focal-JMLab Profile 908

**TYPE** Standmount loudspeaker

**PRICE** £1,300 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 23x39x27.5cm  
Weight: 8.5kg • 25mm inverted dome tweeter  
• 165mm bass/mid driver • Sensitivity/impedance:  
89dB/3.7 ohms (minimum) • Boat-tailed cabinet

**CONTACT** ☎ 0845 660 2680 # www.focal-uk.com

Focal-JMLab's new Profile range consists of three stereo models: the 908 standmount featured here and two floorstanders, the two-and-a-half-way 918 and the three-way 928. In fact, the 908 looks like it has been sliced off the top of one of the taller speakers. For multichannel, there's also a CC 908 centre speaker and a SW 908 active subwoofer.

The Profile series replaces the Electra range and incorporates drive units that are a direct

result of the developments undertaken for the more costly Electra Be products. This includes the latest evolution of Focal-JMLab's favoured sandwich 'W' cone technology and the use of new surround materials for the tweeter. The high frequency driver is a new 25mm aluminium/magnesium inverted dome design, which uses a Poron foam rubber surround much like that found on the beryllium tweeters of the company's top ranges. The 125mm foam cored cone in a 165mm chassis uses a single layer of epoxy impregnated glass fibre with a 3mm Rohacell foam backing that's designed to achieve low mass, high stiffness and high internal damping. The motive power for this comes from a 32mm voice coil.

The distinctively non-boxy look of these new Profile speakers is a deliberate attempt to make them as domestically acceptable as possible. If you're lucky enough to be able to

plonk any old wooden box in your living room, you are in a minority. The rest of the world cannot or will not put up with anything bigger than a Bose satellite speaker if it's not an enhancement to the décor.

With its boat-tail section and scalloped grille, the 908 is a shapely speaker that should appeal to those who don't appreciate its primary function. The speaker has been voiced with the grille on, so there's no need to undermine its aesthetics if you're after the best sound. By leaving the tweeter outside of the grille on its own attractive plate, Focal-JMLab has circumvented the problem of grilles and high-frequency dispersion – the tweeter cover can be removed for best results.

The cabinet shape has sonic as well as aesthetic benefits, as its lack of parallel surfaces means that standing waves cannot be set up and thus don't colour the sound. In a rectangular box the energy coming from the rear of the cone reflects off the back of the enclosure and influences the behaviour of the cone because of the force it exerts upon it. The elliptical shape of the Profile cabinet is





achieved by bonding six MDF sheets in the curved shape of the sides, then attaching them to a solid wooden spine at the back and the flat baffle at the front. This shape naturally attenuates standing waves and is intrinsically very stiff and hard to excite.

In terms of driveability, the 908 specifies a good 89dB sensitivity for its size and an impedance minimum of 3.7ohms at 200Hz, which means you'll need at least 65 solid watts from your amp to get the best out of it.

**SOUND QUALITY**

Listening proceeded with the grilles on as Focal-JMLab recommends, with amplification courtesy of Bryston's BP25 preamp and Gamut's D200 power amp. The dedicated Profile stands were not available in time, so we used some 60cm Atacamas instead. They seemed to do the job well.

Placement proved to be critical with this speaker. The pair need to be close enough to the rear wall to reinforce the bass, but toed in to face the listener and with enough space around them to image well. In our room, a gap of 42cm behind seemed to do this trick. When we got it right, the image literally doubled in intensity and presence – it was quite uncanny. Using the Be Good Tanya's *Chinatown* album, the female voice went from being in-between the speakers to standing above them in solid, three-dimensional form. That degree of change in image quality is quite rare and suggests that a bit of placement experimentation will pay off in more than tonal balance.

In tonal terms, the 908 is inevitably limited in the bass department. The specs suggest a -3dB point of 50Hz... and this is borne out in reality. You don't get the sort of bass grunt or girth that speakers with similarly sized front baffles can dig up, which is probably because the volume is reduced by the shape of the cabinet compared to a more regular box.

The 908's charm lies in its midband and high frequencies, which are open, smooth and articulate. This is a refined loudspeaker by the standards of its price point, capable of portraying considerable depth of image with the right recording. It can also do slam rather convincingly, despite its bass limitations. The dynamics of the percussion on Tom Waits'



**“The Profile 908’s charm lies in its midband and high frequencies, which are open, smooth and articulate.”**

*Troubles Braids* (from *Swordfishtrombones*) are delivered with all of the speed and most of the impact. Gillian Welch's voice, on the other hand, is rich with harmonics and full of yearning. High-resolution recordings such as the Bach *Oboenwerk* SACD by Alexei Utkin let the speakers disappear, leaving the acoustic of the recording venue and the notes produced within it sounding live and vibrant in your living room.

By comparison, ATC's SCM12 speaker (£1,000 per pair) produces a more solid sound thanks to its extra bass extension and very heavy construction. This gives the ATC a greater sense of integrity, but makes the 908 seem rather more nimble and in fact, palpably more real. The 908 is a more expensive speaker so it should come out on top in this comparison, but not every speaker does. Its hard to argue with the increase in coherence and vitality that the Profile 908 brings to the picture, transforming albums from being flat and a little hard into living, breathing musical performances.

The 908's ability to bring out the best in female singers prompted the placement of Joni Mitchell's *Court and Spark* on LP. This proved to be a worthwhile effort, as the speakers projected her voice well into the room, with all of its timbral subtleties and inflections intact. The sense of a presence was quite uncanny – thanks to the depth of image and the life in the recording, it encouraged the location of more vinyl on the turntable and the results

continued to impress. Thanks to the 908, the *Newport Rebels* album (covered recently in *Choice Cuts*) retained a strong sense of the atmosphere of the recording studio and delivered the tone of the various brass instruments in all their depth and variety. This is a great recording for instrument timbre, as Eric Dolphy's alto sax contrasts dramatically with Roy Eldridge's muted trumpet, but not all speakers reveal it to this degree.

This is an attractive, sweet-sounding speaker for the money. Its limitations are far outweighed by its capabilities – the fact that it's so pleasing to the eye is the icing on the cake. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 88%</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>PRO</b> Well constructed and designed cabinet and a sound that produces superb stereo imaging and low perceived distortion. Mid-to-high frequencies are particularly delicious. Looks good, too.
<b>EASE OF DRIVE &gt;&gt; 70%</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>CON</b> Limited bass extension and dynamic ability – not the best choice for those who like to play loud and proud.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 90%</b>	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 85%</b>	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> An extremely fine loudspeaker, the Profile 908's sound is open and revealing – especially of spatial and atmospheric detail. It works extremely well with voices and makes up for its bass restraint with plenty of <i>joi de vivre</i> .	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 87%</b>	



# All you need to hear...



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
**AWARDS 2005**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
SPEAKER PACKAGES  
**MONITOR AUDIO RS6 AV**



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SOUND AND VISION



RS6, Sept 2005

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



RS1, Oct 2005

"...good looking; well made, speedy, accurate sound; articulate and dynamic."

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



RS1 AV, Nov 2005

"...in terms of outright resolution and its ability to uncover detail, the RS1 AV bosses the rest of this highly competitive field."

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# Denon does DAB

The king of budget FM finally goes digital, with impressive results

**PRODUCT** Denon TU-1800DAB  
**TYPE** DAB/FM/AM radio tuner  
**PRICE** £250  
**CONTACT** ☎ 01234 741200 🌐 www.denon.co.uk

It had to happen. Denon has been synonymous with superior budget FM tuner design for literally decades, but a DAB model was only ever a matter of time. Well, here it is at last! It's got a lot to live up to in terms of Denon's own reputation for FM tuners; on the other hand, we've been waiting for the ideal DAB/FM tuner that genuinely succeeds with both formats at a sensible price.

£250 is certainly sensible, but it is also sufficient to have allowed Denon the luxury of separate DAB and FM/AM tuner head modules. Interestingly, neither is from a familiar name, with the DAB module sporting a TBK logo (a Korean manufacturer) and the FM/AM one hailing from Hong Kong's Kwang Sung. Each looks pretty much typical of its breed, and they both feed into a main board that – with its multiplicity of through-hole components and wire links – is absolutely standard Far Eastern fare of the last twenty years and more. Assembly is good, though, and the external appearance very nice indeed.

At the rear are regular analogue outputs and both flavours of digital (which only apply to DAB), plus a Radio Data Interface (RDI) socket. From the front – or the remote control – one can access the usual tuning modes, memories

and so on, with full RDS on FM, plus two often-missed DAB features: Dynamic Range Control and error rate display – a reliable indicator of signal strength. The display is dimmable too. Operation is nice enough, though FM tuning is just a touch slow.

## SOUND QUALITY

Sit down and loosen any constrictive clothing, because we think that – with the TU-1800 – the wait for that ideal DAB/FM tuner is finally over. That's not to say that this unit blows all other FM and DAB models into the weeds, but it's the first model we can recall that, in addition to working smartly with DAB, achieves a very decent FM performance at such a friendly price.

Realistically, DAB reception is less variable than FM. That's one of its attractions. Recover the digits, and there's nothing particularly tricky left to do, since digital-to-analogue conversion is now such a well-understood art that, in the context of DAB's hamstrung intrinsic quality, it's a minor hurdle. FM reception is and always will be trickier to optimise.

And sure enough, the TU-1800's DAB performance is fine. Compared with various references (including its own digital output via a dCS DAC, effectively the ultimate DAB receiver) it's just slightly shy on the detail and dynamics front. This makes it better than most DAB broadcasts, anyway. But it's FM that surprises. It confidently equals the performance of classic models like Denon's own TU-260L II.

We put the FM section up against a classic Revox, veteran of many tuner comparisons. This showed clearly that while the TU-1800's noise performance is not as good as it gets, it nevertheless achieves satisfactory levels for enjoyable listening, while breakup and distortion due to multipath and other RF effects are well controlled. Most significantly, it achieves an overall clarity that makes music communicative and avoids listener fatigue. Speech is distinct and natural, while the tonal balance is just a little bass-shy but otherwise pretty much neutral. It's been a while coming, but DAB and decent FM in a single box is now a practical reality. Praise be! **HFC**

Richard Black

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 83%</b> 	<b>PRO</b> Good sound quality with both DAB and FM, plus a handy set of features, all combined in a smart and practical unit. The first affordable DAB/FM tuner that sounds good, too.
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 89%</b> 	<b>CON</b> Not quite the last word in either format, with a little more noise on FM than upmarket - but dearer - tuners can achieve.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 85%</b> 	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 94%</b> 	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> If you're looking to replace an existing FM tuner with a unit that handles both FM and DAB, this is by far the best choice at or near its price. The combination of easy operation and fine sound on both DAB and FM makes it hard to beat.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 89%</b>	







# Marantz makeover

*A little Marantz magic helps transform basic building blocks into a very fine mid-price universal player*

**PRODUCT** Marantz DV7600

**TYPE** Universal disc player

**PRICE** £600

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 44x9.7x30.6cm

• Weight 4.6kg • DD/DTS decoders fitted • Video and display on/off • HDMI (v1.0) output

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

**M**arantz has been one of the more consistent supporters of high resolution audio, with an emphasis on SACD. But the company is a long-term protagonist of DVD-Audio, too. As such, Marantz has produced a number of 'universal' disc players, of which the DV7600 is the latest.

Although the provenance of this model is not exactly obvious at first sight, it's based on a Pioneer platform, customised in typical Marantz fashion with in-house styling and treatment of the audio circuits. Regardless, it is a thoroughly contemporary package, which plays a wide variety of disc types, including various flavours of Video CD, MP3-CD and picture disc in additions to the main act, which is centred on DVD-Video, DVD-Audio, CD and SACD (stereo and multichannel).

The player is equipped with an HDMI v1.0 output, which works hand in hand with a Pioneer-made on-board video scalar. This is the version of HDMI that is limited on the audio

side to data-reduced Dolby Digital and DTS codecs. Standard coaxial and optical digital outputs are also available, but as usual are switched off for high-resolution audio.

As you would expect, the DV7600 is awash with analogue outputs. These include stereo and multichannel audio, which can be used simultaneously, perhaps to drive separate stereo and multichannel systems. On the video side, it has composite, S-Video and RGB via Scart. The cream of the crop, however, are the progressive PAL and NTSC component outputs.

Like the HDMI output, these work in conjunction with the 216MHz/12 bit video DAC and an NSV (Noise Shaped Video) low-pass video filter, with video upsampling available. This means that via HDMI, the player will talk to 720p and 1080i displays – this earns the DV7600 its 'HD ready' status, though DVD itself is some way from being a true high-definition source, even though upsampling gives much of the noise advantage of high-resolution video. The whole business of exactly what is meant – and not meant – by the 'HD ready' flag that is being used more and more widely is not always clear. The *caveat emptor* rule applies here with a vengeance.

The basic feature set is supported in depth as well as width. On the video side, the DAC is an Analog Devices ADV7310 216MHz processor with 12-bit resolution, with film and TV mode

support and the option of automatic detection. The audio section uses 24 bit/192kHz Crystal CS4398 DACs on all channels, and discrete high-speed HDAM op-amps instead of the single chip alternative, which Marantz has always used in the grounds that they can achieve better sound quality this way. It is worth noting that IC design has hardly stood still since Marantz developed the HDAM, and the integrated variety comes in various grades.

Marantz also makes the point that SACD processing is in native DSD, presumably to distinguish it from low-cost alternatives that convert the DSD signals off disc to PCM for subsequent processing. Fair enough, but SACD bass management (which you're not obliged to use) relies on converting the music signal to PCM, and arguably the finest current SACD player of them all – the TEAC Esoteric X-01 – in fact works in the PCM domain (though TEAC's is a highly specialised, cost-no-object solution). The DV7600 is also equipped with D-BUS and RS232 links for automated system control, and is available in silver or black finishes.

## SOUND QUALITY

Although the player has a solid specification and is clearly well constructed physically, with the intention of squeezing a little extra from the basic design, there is nothing particularly exotic about this Marantz machine. Nor is





there anything to suggest that it should sound notably better than other players like the £400 Philips DVP9000S reviewed on page 41.

Yet, Marantz does somehow seem to have pulled something extra from the hat. The player has the familiar Marantz house quality: a certain ripeness and fullness that is achieved without loss of transparency. Dynamics happen in all the right ways – the sound of stereo and multichannel audio discs alike have a naturally expansive feel that conveys all the image scale and dynamics that is present on the source, but which does it with an almost facile ease, as though it is no big deal.

Imaging is expansive, with a great sense of depth from a well set-up system. If you like, this is a player that delivers the goods without necessarily drawing attention to the clockwork that makes it all happen. Within this overall framework, CD sounds clean and agile, with a richness and polish that distinguishes it from other similarly priced players, and which allows it to compete sonically with budget to mid-price dedicated CD players.

DVD-Audio adds extra precision and analysis, a degree of polish, and is even more analytical than CD (in a multichannel context of course), but it is SACD that generally presents with a more expressive, organic quality, sometimes at the expense of slightly less 'bite'. But it's impossible to tell whether the differences are generic to the formats involved or due to differences in recording techniques across the formats, especially as there are precious few discs produced on all formats equally well.

**VIDEO PERFORMANCE**

As is often the case, video quality via the composite connection lacks some 'punch', though the S-Video output addresses this with some success. But it is with component video that the Marantz begins to show its real strengths, with pictures that have a genuinely cinematographic quality and an intensity (saturation) that lifts it well above the lower ranking display options, along with a degree of stability, subtlety and lack of video grain that gives the player an authentically filmic quality.

Under ideal conditions, HDMI connection can go one stage further with a picture that with good quality displays (a 720p projector for this



**“The player has the familiar Marantz house quality: a certain ripeness and fullness that is achieved without loss of transparency.”**

test) adds a precision and bite that component video doesn't always match – but we had to look long and hard to find discs that would reliably show the differences, ending up with some test disc sequences such as the famous waving flag from Video Essentials, and much of the Silicon Optics test disc. Both are particularly adept at exploring the image processing available from the internal scalar when using video upsampling. Naturally, the Marantz can't rival the picture of the Silicon Optics-equipped players from the top of the Denon range, but it gave a good account of itself.

Although not especially quick loading, the Marantz DV7600 is smooth in operation, the good initial impression aided and abetted by an excellent native control set and a more than adequate remote control. So, it feels like a

quality product, but more than this it looks like one on screen, and it sounds like one, too. It is simply a well-rounded player that comes from an expert team that has proved its mettle over the years, and although it doesn't pretend to be a cutting edge player, it's a superbly well-rounded player for the money. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*



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

**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 86%**  
 An excellent mid-price all-rounder with an attractive picture and sound quality on all modes. Good CD replay for a universal player of its price.

**VISION >> 88%**

**FEATURES >> 89%**

**VALUE >> 88%**

**CONCLUSION**  
 This is one of the few universal disc players currently available that is pitched above the run of low cost units, but doesn't cost a fortune. Marantz has done a fine job in taking mainstream essentials and adding its own touch of magic to the mix.

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





SOUND QUALITY



## Creating a new reference

Materials science is critical in the search for perfect sound. Our patented W cone technology possesses vital characteristics required for unrivalled performance. Extremely light with superb internal damping and twenty times the rigidity of conventional materials of similar mass. Flexible sandwich construction allows each cone to be manufactured with a linear response curve, removing the need to add correction within the filter network. So technology allows a better application, setting a new reference for what can be achieved.







# Under the skin

*It might look identical to its predecessor, but Cambridge Audio's budget superstar is now even better*

**PRODUCT** Cambridge Audio Azur 640C v2

**TYPE** CD player

**PRICE** £250

**CONTACT** ☎ 0870 900 1000

🌐 www.cambridgeaudio.com

The original version of this highly regarded budget CD player was only launched 18 months ago. Yet Audio Partnership – the manufacturing firm associated with retail chain Richer Sounds and owner of the Cambridge Audio brand – has already released a revised 'v2' model, albeit without changing the name on the fascia.

So, what prompted the change? Cambridge has been working on a more upmarket player, the 740C. In the process, it discovered a few tricks that it could put in the 640C.

The biggest change is the introduction of two DACs, one per channel in dual-differential mode. This is a tried and tested route among more expensive brands and works much like balanced circuit topology to eliminate noise from the signal. Cambridge uses a pair of

24/192 Wolfson digital converters to improve stereo separation and signal to noise ratio.

Another new feature is something Cambridge has dubbed a "four pole dual differential double virtual earth balanced topology". This means that each channel has two fully balanced outputs that are summed, in order to "largely reject distortion", and then filtered again to reject noise introduced by the summing filter.

The 640C v2 has a new mains transformer and a revised LCD read-out with adjustable brightness, not forgetting a metal faced remote handset with navigator style controls. It also has control bus inputs and outputs as well as an IR emitter input for multi-room set ups. The rest of the connections are standard analogue and digital varieties.

## SOUND QUALITY

There was a time, not so long ago, when even respected budget machines sounded pretty uncomfortable when played through high-end systems. No more – the latest 640C is highly listenable, even with a wide listening window. It can produce a convincing sense of acoustic

space thanks to its smooth, extended high frequencies and underpins this with good bass weight and strong dynamic resolve. It also has a tautness of presentation that reveals the articulation in playing styles and the placement of instruments in the soundstage.

Imaging seems to live up to the hype too, with voices placed precisely above and between the speakers and singers delivering both the essence and the meaning of the song. Bigger orchestral pieces expand well into the room and deliver a good dollop of timbral character, but with this sort of material there's a slight lack of smoothness evident when the volume is pushed. But, who cares? A player this fluent at this price demands high praise. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

## THE 640C V2'S BABY BROTHER

While upgrading the 640C to 'v2' status, Cambridge decided it may as well do the same thing to its baby brother, the 540C. The result is the – wait for it – 540C v2, which shares many of the same components and is priced at just £200. We had a sample delivered for review shortly after the 640C v2 arrived, and so were able to do a quick comparison... Early results suggest that, while the 540C v2 remains good value for money, it is behind the 640C v2 in terms of precision and dynamic scale. See next issue for a full report...

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 80%**



**FEATURES >> 80%**



**BUILD >> 78%**



**VALUE >> 95%**



### PRO

Considerable refinement and dynamic subtlety for the price, alongside a good sense of musicality and nice remote. There's no better CD player at this side of £300.

### CON

Of course, you can pay more to get a better sound and some may feel its look to be a bit 'basic'. But at this price you really can't ask for more.

### CONCLUSION

The latest 640C is more refined and musically engaging than its predecessor. It does most things extremely well and has a remarkably good sense of poise for the money – it's simply the cheapest way to get good CD sound at the moment.

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



# “No PC 4 MP3”

And no, we don't mean **Politically Correct**.

What we do mean is you can now record MP3 copies directly to your MP3 player or USB storage device\* without using your PC. Not only that, but you can also record your CDs and DAB radio in MP3 format. And playing back your music couldn't be easier through the USB port or the AUX input on the front panel which is suitable for iPod playback.

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# THE HI-FI 20

## WELCOME TO THE HI-FI AWARDS 2005

Spread across the next 46 pages you'll find our pick of the best hi-fi components currently available, painstakingly plucked from each relevant product category with prices ranging from entry-level to the aspirational high end.

As you'd expect from *Hi-Fi Choice*, this is no flippant, Oscars-style ceremony. Instead, we have rigorously filtered all our favourite products to come up with a final list of Award-winning components to suit every pocket – after all, how could you possibly compare the best CD player costing less than £500 to the best priced at over £5,000? Both deserve to be judged against their peers, and that's just what you get with *Hi-Fi Choice*.

### THE JUDGING PROCESS

The process we undertake in judging our Awards is painstaking. We've listened to the kit, measured it and sought the opinions of blind listening teams before extensive consultation with a judging panel of exceptional

experience: the *HFC* reviewing team! We then gradually whittled down our list of both stereo and multichannel components until we reached a final, democratically agreed selection, with three products in each price category ranked in order of Gold, Silver and Bronze. We checked the availability of each product and made sure the list is as up to date as possible – that's why some of the featured products are reviewed for the first time in this very issue. The result is an Awards edition for those who really care about quality – hi-fi awards you can really trust.

Of course, anyone's choice of hi-fi will ultimately come down to personal taste, and you'll find many other fine components worthy of your audition list nestling in our *Buyers Bible* section at the back of the magazine. Yet all our special Award winners have succeeded due to their exceptional mix of qualities at each individual price point – whether the gong is Gold, Silver or Bronze, these are products you simply have to hear. The shortlist for your next upgrade starts here...



# AWARDS★ 05

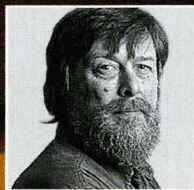
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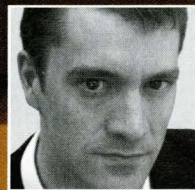
## THE JUDGING PANEL



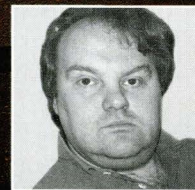
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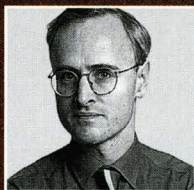
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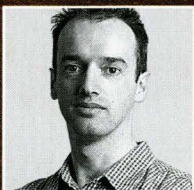
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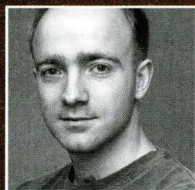
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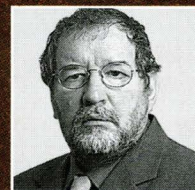
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**DAN GEORGE**  
*Hi-Fi Choice's* own reviews editor



**ALVIN GOLD**  
Top hi-fi and home cinema journalist



## BEST CD PLAYER UNDER £500



### Cambridge Audio Azur 640C v2

PRICE £250 CONTACT ☎ 0870 900 1000 🌐 www.cambridge-audio.co.uk

Last year, Cambridge Audio set a new budget benchmark with the Azur 640C CD player. Not content to rest on its laurels, the company has now tweaked its HFC Award-winning design and made it even better. Nothing near the price plays CDs with such a well-balanced mix of detail, fluidity and punch – to rival it, you'll have to spend more... on similarly excellent players like our Silver and Bronze Award winners from Marantz and Arcam, for instance.



### Marantz CD7300

PRICE £350 CONTACT ☎ 01753 680868 🌐 www.marantz.com



### Arcam DiVA CD73T

PRICE £420 CONTACT ☎ 01223 203200 🌐 www.arcam.co.uk

## BEST CD PLAYER £500-£1,000



### Cyrus CD8x

PRICE £1,000 CONTACT ☎ 01480 435577 🌐 www.cyrusaudio.com

Cyrus has been some responsible for some excellent components in recent times, all wrapped up in the brand's distinctive compact casework. The CD8x is one of the best: the brand's flagship CD player delivers superb high frequency extension and brilliantly agile bass, consistently beating its rivals around the £1,000 mark in our *Ultimate Group Tests* during the past year. It's upgradable too – add the optional PSX-R power supply and it sounds even better.



### Naim CD5i

PRICE £825 CONTACT ☎ 01722 332266 🌐 www.naim-audio.com



### Exposure 2010 S

PRICE £599 CONTACT ☎ 01273 423877 🌐 www.exposurehifi.com



**BEST CD PLAYER £1,000-£2,000**



**Copland CDA 823**

PRICE £1,750 CONTACT ☎ 020 8971 3909 @ www.copland.dk

**C**opland's innovative yet minimalist CDA 823 looks elegant and delivers a sound with excellent scale, superb spatial resolution, an extremely quiet background and first-class micro-dynamic detail. Of course, at this price level there are plenty of

excellent alternatives, like our Silver and Bronze Award winners from Brit brands Arcam and Naim. Yet in our tests, the Copland has emerged as a clear favourite since its introduction earlier this year – a true star in the CD heavens.



**Arcam FMJ CD36**

PRICE £1,400 CONTACT ☎ 01223 203200 @ www.arcam.co.uk



**Naim CD5x**

PRICE £1,450 CONTACT ☎ 01722 332266 @ www.naim-audio.com

**BEST CD PLAYER £2,000-£5,000**

**Resolution Audio Opus 21**

PRICE £2,850 CONTACT ☎ 01277 227355 @ www.resolutionaudio.com

**R**esolution Audio is a small, resolutely two-channel San Francisco-based brand; it's also an apt name to describe the performance of the Opus 21 CD player. This two-box player splits its functions simply: one unit contains the transport, DAC and

output stage, while the other houses the display and power supplies. The result? Dynamic energy, stereo imaging, subtle detailing and a naturalness of tone not often heard from a CD player. It's hardly cheap, but it's an audiophile bargain.



**Wadia 302**

PRICE £3,995 CONTACT ☎ 01992 573030 @ www.wadia.com



**Naim CDX2**

PRICE £2,800 CONTACT ☎ 01722 332266 @ www.naim-audio.com





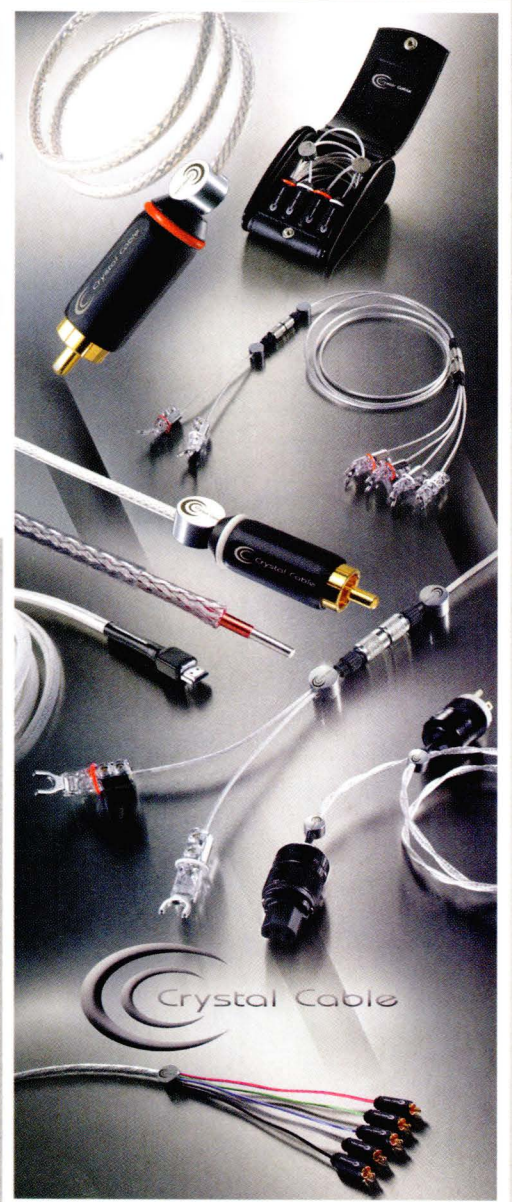
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**BEST CD PLAYER OVER £5,000**



**Meridian 808i Signature**

PRICE £8,250 CONTACT 01480 445678 www.meridian-audio.com

Two decades ago, Meridian was arguably the first brand to produce a CD player that could fairly be described as an 'audiophile' product. Now, in 2005, the company has decided to celebrate 20 years at the leading edge of digital audio replay by

producing its ultimate statement of compact disc intent. Built on an 800 Series chassis with fully-upgradable architecture, the Signature player is designed from scratch to deliver the lowest jitter and best possible sound from the CD format. It's truly superb.



**Naim CDS3/XPS2**

PRICE £7,540 (€5,075 / £2,465)  
CONTACT 01722 332266 www.naim-audio.com



**Wadia 861se**

PRICE £9,995  
CONTACT 01992 573030 www.wadia.com

**INFO >> DISC PLAYERS**



Some believe that the dedicated CD player has had its day, and that the future of audio lies with multiformat, multichannel disc players, hard disk-based servers and sundry PC-linked playback devices. At HFC, we'd agree – certainly in terms of a macroscopic view of the market. But that's not the whole story.

In hi-fi circles, the age of the dedicated CD player is far from over – that's why we've devoted three pages of our Awards to a comprehensive summation of the current state of the art. True enough, unit sales of CD separates are a fraction of what they were, manufacture is now left almost solely to smaller specialist companies and dedicated audio CD mechanisms have become much harder for manufacturers to source. Yet as long as we continue to have large, expanding and treasured CD collections, a dedicated CD player by and large remains the best way to make the most of your discs.

There are various reasons for this. One is that the complexity brought about by the inclusion of video circuits and so on can interfere with the audio signal. Another is that through two decades of experimentation and acquired knowledge, the sheer variety of finely tuned designs allows the consumer to choose the ideal candidate for his/her own budget, musical taste and sonic preferences.

That said, the concept of the multiformat disc player is equally valid for the hi-fi/music enthusiast. Across the next few pages you will see some of the best, beginning with a selection of DVD players from less than £150 to over £6,000. Few of these will match our Award-winning CD players in corresponding price categories with straightforward CD replay, but they are improving in this regard and the best machines now sound genuinely impressive as CD sources. What's more, all do a

splendid job with DVD-Video discs, and most play at least one high-resolution multichannel music format – DVD-Audio and/or SACD (DVD players that are compatible with both are commonly termed 'universal disc players' – a handy catch-all solution that's improving technically with each generation).

In the greater commercial world, sales of these two formats have hardly set the music world alight, yet their sonic potential remains undimmed. Opinions differ as to which format is technically superior, but whether or not a manufacturer supports either or both has as much to do with politics and production/development costs as any technical or philosophical judgements. In software terms, SACD continues to have the quantitative edge, with a good number of impressive remasters of past rock classics and plenty of excellent classically-oriented releases. But the launch of DualDisc, a dual-sided DVD/CD hybrid, may yet help DVD-Audio make greater inroads into high street stores.

A further disc-playing category is the audio-only SACD player, a multiformat machine that eschews DVD playback in favour of just music on CD and SACD (sometimes multichannel, sometimes stereo only). This remains a relatively small-scale category, but this year has seen a number of excellent new models that excel with both formats (see p63).

Finally, a word about hard drives. Servers using hard disk storage will undoubtedly play an important part in the way we receive, store and play back entertainment media in the future. And in the present, devices like those on p63 can be a boon if you want to carry your music on the move, or build a neat multiroom solution. But, right now, if you want convenient and collectable high-performance digital audio (and video) in the home, there's still no beating the 12cm optical disc.



PURE HI-FI, PURE SOUND, PURE ONKYO



www.onkyo.co.uk  
Tel.01494-681515

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Onkyo, a brand with over 50 years of audio heritage, proves that Audiophile components can look as good as they sound with the new 275 series.

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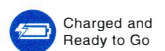
Do more with your iPod with Onkyo's optional DS-A1 Remote Interactive Dock.



Audio and Photo Playback



Control From Afar



Charged and Ready to Go

\* iPod is trademark of Apple Computer, Inc.



**BEST DVD PLAYER UNDER £500**



**Philips DVP9000S**

PRICE £400 FORMAT DVD-V/CD/SACD CONTACT ☎ 0870 6010101 @ www.philips.co.uk

**T**his striking new player from Philips shows why it's worth stepping up from bargain-basement DVD players if you care about sound quality – and video quality, for that matter. CD sound is impressive for a sub-£500 DVD machine, and performance with SACDs is better still – fluid, spacious and refined. Being a Philips player, there's no DVD-Audio playback, but its performance with other types of music disc – and its video quality, too – make it a winner.



**Pioneer DV-585A**

PRICE £130 FORMATS DVD-V/DVD-A/CD/SACD CONTACT ☎ 01753 789500 @ www.pioneer.co.uk



**Denon DVD-1720**

PRICE £130 FORMAT DVD-V/CD CONTACT ☎ 01234 741200 @ www.denon.co.uk

**BEST DVD PLAYER £500-£1,000**



**Marantz DV7600**

PRICE £600 FORMATS DVD-V/DVD-A/CD/SACD CONTACT ☎ 01753 680868 @ www.marantz.com

**W**ith Denon in the process of replacing its mid-market models, including the DVD-3910, last year's Gold Award winner in this category, the door has been left open for a new star to emerge – and that star is Marantz's DV7600. It's not stacked with gadgets, though it does offer HDMI video connection; it's simply a neatly designed universal player with great sound across all formats and commendable video, too – an impressive, flexible and well-priced all-rounder.



**Arcam DiVA DV79**

PRICE £1,000 FORMATS DVD-V/DVD-A/CD CONTACT ☎ 01223 203200 @ www.arcam.co.uk



**Sony DVP-NS9100ES**

PRICE £1,000 FORMATS DVD-V/CD/SACD CONTACT ☎ 08705 111999 @ www.sony.co.uk



# Worth The Wait...

The long-awaited versatile CD-1 transport/player is coming...

User-selectable upsampling (48khz, 96khz, 192khz - 24 bits).  
Reclocking on output stage, minimizing jitter and improving detail, timing, dynamics, imaging and soundstage.  
Optimized musical Philips transport mechanism.  
High quality DAC can be switched off to maximize performance when used as dedicated transport.  
Linear power supply - with low noise local regulators on critical circuits and optimized regarding EMC/EMI performance.

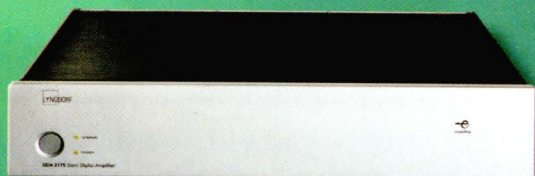


This new CD player extends the Lyngdorf Audio range of products that offer high performance, value and versatility.



The TDA 2200 **True Digital** Amplifier offers:

The functionality of a DAC, pre and power amplifier. Simply connect a CD transport to obtain pure music. Optional analogue inputs available. Parametric and voicing equalizers, subwoofer DSP crossovers. Ready to accept the new room correction module. 200W/8 ohms, 375W/4 ohms.



The SDA 2175 **Power** Amplifier offers:

Balanced and single-ended analogue inputs. Treble is sweet and accurate. Bass is tight and controlled. Complete lack of noise. Advanced protection circuits. 200W/8 ohms, 375W/4 ohms. Vice-like control of speaker cones.



The SDAi 2175 **Integrated** Amplifier boasts the same impressive power engine and offers:

6 RCA inputs + 1 XLR balanced input. Tape Out. Pre-amp output balanced and single-ended. Programmable attenuation, level and balance for each input. IR remote control. RS 232 connection for software upgrades.



Millennium True Digital Amplifier:

Our statement amplifier.  
The world's first true digital amplifier, now in its 3rd generation.

"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." SDA review, Hi-Fi World, June 2005

LYNGDORF

0870 9 100 100  
www.tactaudio.co.uk  
www.lyngdorfaudio.co.uk



**BEST DVD PLAYER £1,000-£2,500**



**Denon DVD-A1XV**

PRICE £2,500 FORMATS DVD-V/DVD-A/CD/SACD CONTACT ☎ 01234 741200 @ www.denon.co.uk

**D**enon's flagship player has it all. Every connection you could ever dream of, and with support for every format you could think of playing, and then some. It even allows the normally sacrosanct digital audio output of DVD-Audio and SACD to be passed to the amplifier via i.Link and Denon Link 3. The performance – for picture and sound – more than justifies the price tag and the battleship build only serves to complete a very thorough package. It's a disc playing *tour de force*.



**Arcam FMJ DV29**

PRICE £1,600 FORMATS DVD-V/DVD-A/CD CONTACT ☎ 01223 203200 @ www.arcam.co.uk



**Naim DVD5**

PRICE £2,350 FORMATS DVD-V/CD (DVD-A £215 extra) CONTACT ☎ 01722 332266 @ www.naim-audio.com

**BEST DVD PLAYER OVER £2,500**



**Meridian G98AH**

PRICE £3,625 FORMATS DVD-V/DVD-A/CD CONTACT ☎ 01480 445678 @ www.meridian-audio.com

**M**eridian has long been at the forefront of high-end digital audio, but in recent years the British company has secured a place at the cutting edge of digital video, too. The G98AH is one of three excellent DVD playing components in the super-smart G Series, and is perhaps the one with the widest appeal given the provision of a full set of analogue outputs alongside Meridian's proprietary hi-res digital connections. Video performance is exemplary and, crucially, the sound quality with both CD and DVD-Audio music discs is truly top-notch. In a word, stunning.



**Townshend TA 565 CD**

PRICE £3,000 FORMATS DVD-V/DVD-A/CD/SACD CONTACT ☎ 020 8979 2155 @ www.townshendaudio.com



**Linn Unidisk 1.1**

PRICE £6,500 FORMATS DVD-V/DVD-A/CD/SACD CONTACT ☎ 0500 888909 @ www.linn.co.uk



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**Authorised dealers:**

Acoustic Arts, Watford, Tel. 01923 245250 - Adams & Jarrett, East Sussex, Tel. 01 424 437165 - Glasgow Audio, Glasgow, Tel. 01413 324707 - Hi-Fi Studios, Doncaster, Tel. 01302 725550 - Holburn Hi-Fi, Aberdeen, Tel. 01224 585713 - Midland Audio Exchange, Belbroughton, Tel. 01562 731100 - Mike Manning, Taunton, Tel. 01823 326688 - Mike Manning, Yeovil, Tel. 01935 479361 - New Audio Frontiers, Loughborough, Tel. 01509 264002 - Phonography, Ringwood, Tel. 01425 461230, Practical Hi-Fi, Lancaster, Tel. 01524 39657 - Practical Hi-Fi, Manchester, Tel. 01618 398869, Practical Hi-Fi, Warrington, Tel. 01925 632179, R.J.F., Cornwall, Tel. 01209 710777 - Sound Seduction, Sevenoaks, Tel. 01732 456573 - VideoTech, Huddersfield, Tel. 01484 516670

## D e n s e n B - 1 5 0

The new reference integrated amplifier from Densen is perhaps the most advanced integrated amp on the market. It is filled with advanced solutions, which all share the goal of giving you even more musicality and flexibility. The B-150 is a downscaled version of the reference B-250 pre amp and B-350 mono amps.

The B-150 employs a true attenuator, while everybody else uses potentiometers or cheap digital volume IC's. Densen use a sophisticated microprocessor controlled attenuator; this is the reason for the distinct click you hear as you adjust the volume and it is a definitive sign that Densen use the advanced relay driven attenuator instead of cheap inferior technologies, which substantially downgrade sound quality. The click is your assurance that Densen does not compromise!

The power amp stage has a tremendous grip on even the most difficult loads which it handles with an ease and musicality that beguiles even the most discerning listener. Lifetime warranty.

**Features:**

- Upgradeable with external power supply
- Ready for SAXO electronic crossover
- Ready for remote control and phonos stages
- Ready for multiroom systems
- Ready for Bi-amping and Tri-amping
- Upgradeable with plug-in 7.1 surround board that only requires an universal player or a DVD player with a built-in decoder.

B-150 2x100w 8 ohms / 2x200w 4 ohms - GPB 3000

Densen - Lundevej 10 - 6705 Esbjerg Ø - Denmark - Phone: (+45) 75 18 12 14 - E-mail: mail@densen.dk

The sexy Gizmo system remote





**BEST SACD PLAYER (AUDIO ONLY)**



**TEAC Esoteric X-01**

PRICE £8,995 CONTACT ☎ 01727 865488 @ www.teac.com

There have some excellent new CD/SACD audio players arriving on the scene this year, not least the Marantz and Krell models here – both are superb at their respective price points and worth every penny. But our Gold Award simply had to go to this TEAC on the grounds that it's the best SACD player we've ever heard: supremely natural, detailed and communicative. And it's no slouch with CD either! The best digital audio component yet devised? It's certainly up there...



**Marantz SA-11S1**

PRICE £2,000 CONTACT ☎ 01753 680868 @ www.marantz.com



**Krell SACD Standard 5.2**

PRICE £4,244 CONTACT ☎ 020 8971 3909 @ www.krellonline.com

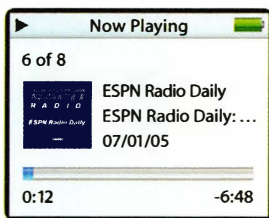


**BEST HARD DISK AUDIO COMPONENT**

**Apple iPod**

PRICE From £209 (hard disk models) TYPE Portable audio player CONTACT ☎ 0800 039 1010 @ www.apple.com/uk

Predictable? Certainly. Deserved? Undoubtedly. The iPod has become an iconic product of our age and the essential elegance of its design, both aesthetic and technical, continues to keep it ahead of the game. Here at HFC, we eschew snobbish sniping at the iPod purely on sound quality grounds. It's not an 'audiophile product', sure, and it won't replace our hi-fis at home. But its ability to shrink entire music collections into a pocket-sized package, at a reasonable level of sound quality, remains a music-lover's dream.



**Sony NW-A3000**

PRICE £200 TYPE Portable audio player CONTACT ☎ 08705 111999 @ www.sony.co.uk



**CyrusLink system**

PRICE From £1,500 TYPE Audio server system CONTACT ☎ 01480 435577 @ www.cyrusaudio.com





ALL PRODUCTS COME WITH A NO RISK 30-DAY MONEY BACK OPTION\* \*(CONDITIONS APPLY)

# JAS Audio

where beauty and sound reside  
in total harmony with one another

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

Combining exceptional workmanship and the highest quality components, JAS Audio brings to the world the 2-way speaker Orsa and Orior designed to deliver precise acoustic and vocal as well as rich tonal balance. The deep soundstage and extended frequency response are excellent for the enjoyment of HDCD and SACD.

Every model is handcrafted with quality and details that are seldom found in speakers at any price. For instance, inside the cabinet, pure natural wool is used for efficient damping/tonal signature and top grade heavy gauge silver interconnecting wire is used for signal fidelity. The authentic wood veneer and 14 coats of piano lacquer finish simply gives a JAS speaker the elegant look to match its exquisite timbre.

Most of all, its price/performance ratio is without peer hence our no risk 30-day money back guarantee. Call us today to arrange a no-risk audition.

JAS-Audio have just introduced a range of affordable and very special cables.

They are already a lot of cables on the market but we have not heard a single one that offers the same performance at anywhere near the price.

## 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 beautiful 14 coat piano lacquer finishes

Mains Leads	
JAS PE Mains lead 1.5m	£49
JAS P1-S (Copper and 9 strand silver) 1.5m mains lead	£99
JAS Extra Power 1.5m mains lead	£159
Speaker cable	
JAS Zion SP-1 3m	£295
extra 1m	£55
JAS Zion SP-2 bi wire 3m (2-4)	£595
extra 1m	£100

## 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 beautiful 14 coat piano lacquer finishes

Interconnects - all 1m, other lengths available	
JAS Zion S1	£69
JAS Zion S2	£139
JAS Zion S3	£289
JAS Zion C1 digital (1.82m)	£139

NEW - EXCITING RANGE OF CABLES HAVE JUST ARRIVED FROM JAS-AUDIO!

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www.shadowdistribution.co.uk



**BEST TURNTABLE UNDER £500**



**Goldring GR2**

PRICE £265 (with Rega RB250 arm/Goldring 1012GX cartridge) CONTACT ☎ 01279 501111 🌐 www.goldring.co.uk

Last year, Goldring's GR1 proved good enough to win a Silver Award in this category. Now it's been joined by a slightly more upmarket model, the GR2, and we're pleased to say it's Gold for Goldring this year. This Rega-derived design is superb value for

money, with fine basic construction and a Rega RB250 tonearm and Goldring 1012GX moving magnet cartridge included in the price. The result is a lively yet refined sound, good enough to show any CD or DVD player at the price a clean pair of musical heels.



**Pro-Ject 1 Xpression**

PRICE £210 (with carbon-fibre arm/Ortofon OM10 cartridge) CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 🌐 www.henleydesigns.co.uk



**Rega P3**

PRICE £298 (with Rega RB300 tonearm) CONTACT ☎ 01702 333071 🌐 www.rega.co.uk

**BEST TURNTABLE £500-£1,000**



**Pro-Ject RPM 9 X**

PRICE £1,000 (with Pro-Ject carbon-fibre tonearm) CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 🌐 www.henleydesigns.co.uk

Pro-Ject is one of the great success of recent turntable history. Although best known for its budget decks, the Czech company has built a great reputation throughout the vinyl pantheon, thanks to excellent turntables like the RPM 9 X. This

attractive transparent acrylic player comes supplied with a carbon-fibre tonearm – it's a bargain in material terms alone. Fortunately, it delivers the sonic goods too, with a sound that's open, clear and realistic. A highly desirable deck, all-in-all.



**Michell Tecnodec**

PRICE £767 (with tonearm) CONTACT ☎ 020 8953 0771 🌐 www.michell-engineering.co.uk



**Audio Note TT1**

PRICE £728 (with Audio Note ARM1 tonearm) CONTACT ☎ 01273 220 511 🌐 www.audionote.co.uk



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Radfords, founded in 1973, has always been one of the best places to buy hi-fi. Based on the principles of listening to a client's needs, a visit to Radfords is a rewarding experience. With demonstration rooms, a specialist workshop, a wide and varied selection of two channel and multi-channel equipment, a home demonstration service, unrivalled expertise, and a policy of keeping our prices as low as possible, we're sure you'll enjoy your visit!

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painting with music

# CYRUS

[www.cyruslink.co.uk](http://www.cyruslink.co.uk) | [www.cyrusaudio.com](http://www.cyrusaudio.com)



**BEST TURNTABLE £1,000-£3,000**

**SME Model 10**

PRICE £2,775 (tonearm extra) CONTACT ☎ 01903 814321 @ www.sme.ltd.uk

**S**ME's tonearms and turntables have been delighting music fans for years, so it's thoroughly appropriate that one should feature in our Awards for yet another year. Like all SME products, the entry-level Model 10 is engineered to absolute perfection, with

a sound quality to match. Its price without a tonearm only just allows it to be shoehorned into this price category, but add one of SME's own very fine arms and its delivery of the musical truth will eclipse just about every other turntable in its price range.



**Rega P9**

PRICE £2,498 (with Rega RB1000 tonearm)  
CONTACT ☎ 01702 333071 @ www.rega.co.uk



**Clearaudio Champion**

PRICE £1,365 (with Clearaudio Satisfy tonearm)  
CONTACT ☎ 01252 702705 @ www.clearaudio.de

**BEST TURNTABLE OVER £3,000**



**Avid Acutus**

PRICE £6,000 (tonearm extra) CONTACT ☎ 01480 457300 @ www.avidhifi.co.uk

**O**ne of the few turntables to combine high-end battleship build quality with high-tech design criteria, the Avid Acutus features a suspension with strong vertical springs and horizontal 'O' rings, to reduce movement in both planes. It also has a

tapered bearing housing to support the platter, contributing to a turntable that gets right to the heart of the musical event. Bass performance is truly exceptionally, and the deck's sense of well-proportioned precision propels it to the top of the turntable league.



**Roksan TMS2**

PRICE £7,500 (with Roksan Artemiz tonearm)  
CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 @ www.roksan.co.uk



**Clearaudio Ambient**

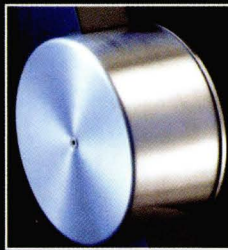
PRICE £4,220 (with Satisfy arm and Concerto cartridge)  
CONTACT ☎ 01252 702705 @ www.clearaudio.de



## The new Reference 3 with CDT II™ Tweeter Technology

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

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



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

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

[www.anthonygallo.co.uk](http://www.anthonygallo.co.uk)

tel. 0870 350 1348

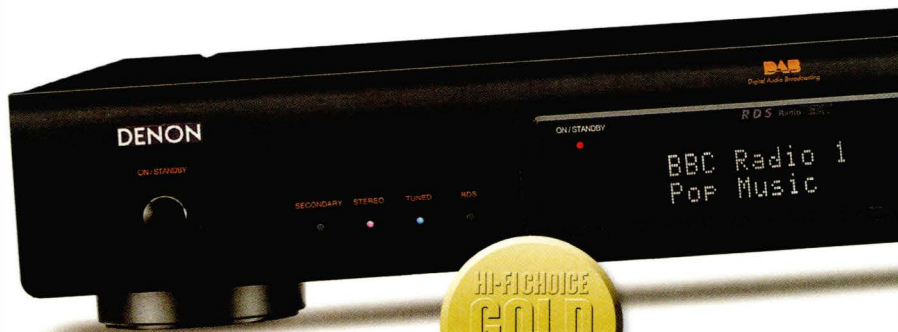
# *nonconformist*

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





**BEST RADIO TUNER UNDER £500**



**Denon TU-1800DAB**

PRICE £250 TYPE DAB/FM/AM CONTACT ☎ 01234 741200 @ www.denon.co.uk

**F**or the first time ever, a DAB tuner wins our Gold Award! No, we've not gone soft – we still have reservations about the ultimate sound quality of DAB alongside good FM. But this new Denon is the first low-cost model to make a fine fist of combining the practical advantages of DAB with FM reception in a single box, and still sound good with both, which makes it an ideal crossover product. If you're looking for an affordable tuner to add to your system, it's highly recommended.



**Rega Radio 3**

PRICE £398 TYPE FM/AM CONTACT ☎ 01702 333071 @ www.rega.co.uk



**Denon TU-260L II**

PRICE £130 TYPE FM/AM CONTACT ☎ 01234 741200 @ www.denon.co.uk

**BEST RADIO TUNER OVER £500**



**Magnum Dynalab MD-106T**

PRICE £3,600 TYPE FM CONTACT ☎ 020 8948 4153 @ www.magnumdynalab.com

**D**igital radio has a lot going for it: variety, ease of use... But on pure sound quality grounds, you still can't beat a good FM tuner and a suitable rooftop 'twig'. If you're really serious about your radio, the tuners from Canadian FM specialist Magnum Dynalab are in a different league – like the MD-106T, for example. The only digital thing about this otherwise all-analogue design is its frequency display, with a zero-feedback triode amp stage contributing to its breathtaking sound.



**Magnum Dynalab MD-90T**

PRICE £1,195 TYPE FM CONTACT ☎ 020 8948 4153 @ www.magnumdynalab.com



**Creek T50**

PRICE £550 TYPE FM/AM CONTACT ☎ 01442 260146 @ www.creekaudio.com



# a solid foundation

A transparent musical source is the foundation of a fine audio system. Recent advances in analog and digital technology are allowing music lovers to get so much more from their favourite records, compact discs and high resolution digital formats.

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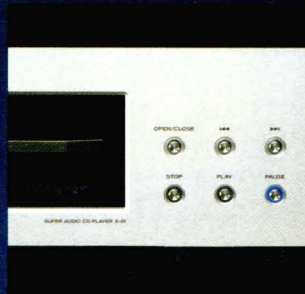
## C-5xe Universal Player

Introducing a giant leap forward in digital playback technology-the Ayre C-5xe universal stereo (U2) player. The first of it's kind, this no video, no-compromise design plays all existing optical disc formats. The C-5xe is for those of us who value the enjoyment of music above all else.



## X-01 SACD/CD Player

The Esoteric X-01 establishes a new benchmark for digital replay, from it's propriety and exclusive VRDS-NEO mechanism to it's high precision 24 bit, dual monaural digital decoding system. The X-01 is the ultimate source for the finest high end systems.



## Titan i Moving Coil Cartridge

The Lyra Titan i is an improved version of the widely acclaimed Lyra Titan. More than just a refitment the new Titan i is equipped with a different suspension and damping system. Tracking ability has been substantially improved, bass performance is lifted to new levels of refinement and speed, low level resolution and dynamics has gained a marked improvement. Finally the Titan i has been voiced by master craftsman Yoshinori Mishima, who builds and painstakingly adjusts each and every cartridge by hand. For the finest playback of your favourite records.



 symmetry

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**BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER UNDER £500**



**NAD C352**

PRICE £350 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 01908 319360 @ www.nadelectronics.com

**N**AD practically pioneered the concept of low-cost, high-value hi-fi separates, eschewing flash features in favour of good, solid sound quality. In particular, the brand is synonymous with budget amps, and in many ways the C352 is 'classic NAD' for the

21st Century. It's focus is pure musicality, combining warmth, detail and punch in one engaging sonic package. Yet it's well featured too, with 80 watts of power per channel, remote control, five line-level inputs and tone controls – a real sub-£500 cracker.



**Rotel RA-03**

PRICE £499 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 01903 221500 @ www.rotel.com



**Arcam DiVA A65 Plus**

PRICE £400 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 01223 203200 @ www.arcam.co.uk

**BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £500-£1,000**



**Arcam DiVA A90**

PRICE £850 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 01223 203200 @ www.arcam.com

**A**rcam's current range of amplifiers offers a masterclass in how to produce a delightfully slick and flexible user interface without impinging on sound quality. The A90 is perfect example: a stereo amp that's a joy to use, with a sound that's clean, smooth, detailed and involving. In last issue's *Ultimate Group Test* it continued to slay the opposition, our 'blind' listening panel remarking upon its beautifully judged sound. The ability to convert to multichannel via an optional 7.1 module is the icing on the cake.



**Primare I21**

PRICE £750 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 01423 359054 @ www.primare.net



**Rotel RA-1062**

PRICE £595 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 01903 221500 @ www.rotel.com





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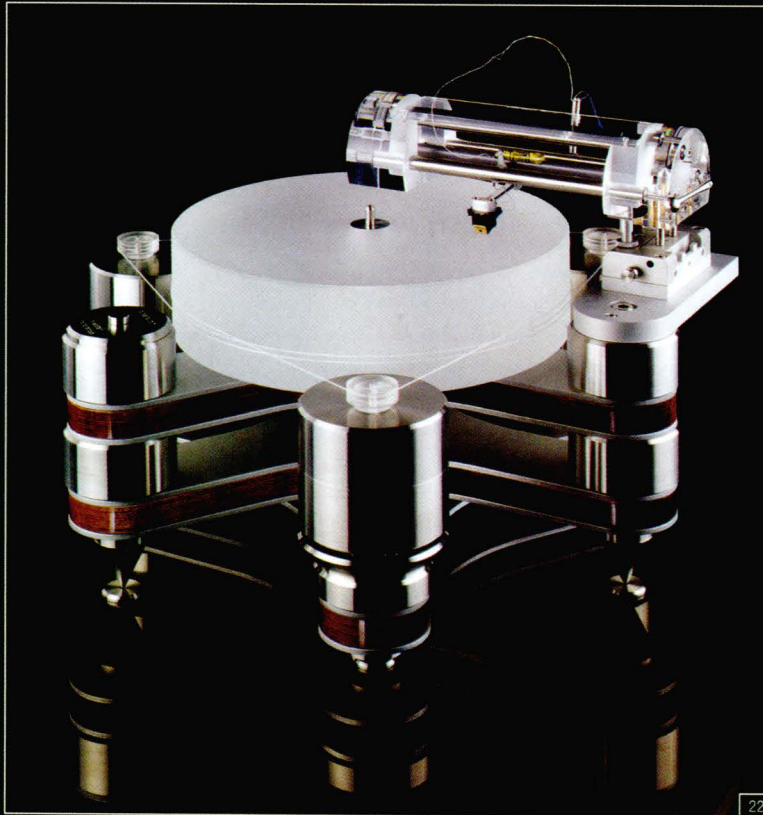
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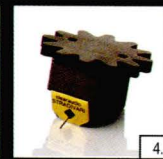
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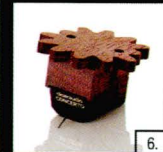
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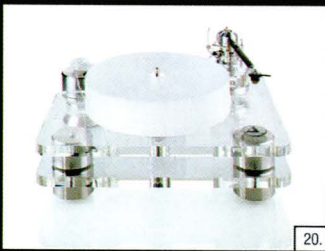
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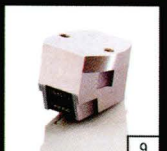
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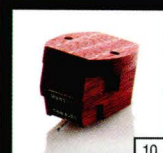
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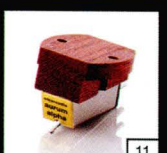
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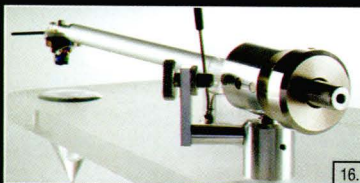
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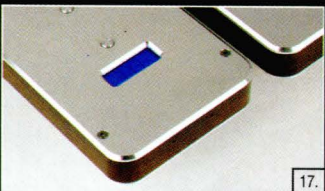
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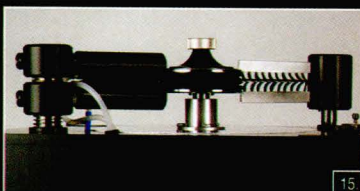
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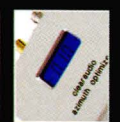
1). APG Accurate Power Generator 2). Balanced Reference Phono-stage 3). New Generation 24k Goldfinger MC Cartridge 4). Stradavari MC Cartridge 5). Titanium MC Cartridge 6). Concerto MC Cartridge 7). Symphony MC Cartridge 8). Melody MC Cartridge 9). Maestro Steel MC Cartridge 10). Maestro Wood MC Cartridge 11). Aurum Alpha Wood MM Cartridge 12). Syncro PSU 13&15). Matrix Record Cleaning Apparatus 14). Master T-OI Parallel Tracking Tonearm 16). Clear Emotion Turntable Package 17&18). Ambient Turntable 19). Avantgarde Magnum Turntable 20). Champion Level 2 Turntable 21). Maximum Solution Turntable 22). AMG Master Reference Turntable 23 to 25). Clearaudio accessories. For further products visit: [www.audioreference.co.uk](http://www.audioreference.co.uk)



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**BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £1,000-£2,000**



**Primare I30**

PRICE £1,500 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 01423 359054 @ www.primare.net

**A**re you looking for an amp that combines weight and musical gravitas with detail, rhythm and subtlety? Then form an orderly queue, because Primare's latest heavyweight integrated model delivers all the above – and then some. Replacing the A30.1, itself an old *HFC* favourite, the I30 is a dream to use thanks to its excellent build quality and wonderfully solid controls. Add its sonic prowess to the mix and this £1,500 integrated is a real audiophile bargain.



**Sugden A21SE**

PRICE £1,995 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 01924 404088 @ www.sugdenaudio.com



**Arcam FMJ A32**

PRICE £1,200 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 01223 203200 @ www.arcam.co.uk

**BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £2,000-£5,000**



**Krell KAV-400xi**

PRICE £2,698 TYPE Integrated amp CONTACT ☎ 020 8971 3909 @ www.krellonline.com

**T**his integrated design may be Krell's entry-level amplifier, but it sets a tough standard to beat at any price. Delivering 200 watts per channel, and 400 watts into four ohms, thanks to a massive 800VA toroidal transformer, the amp sounds as good as it looks. Its sound is fast, fluid and powerful, with punchy, precise bass and the sort of tonal palette that makes for a true high-end masterpiece. An *HFC* favourite for some time, it's still top dog for the money.



**Primare PRE30/A30.2**

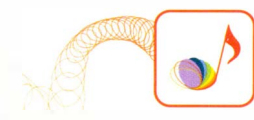
PRICE £2,400 (£1,200/£1,200) TYPE Pre/power CONTACT ☎ 01423 359054 @ www.primare.net



**Audio Research VSi55**

PRICE £2,895 TYPE Integrated valve amp CONTACT ☎ 020 8971 3909 @ www.audioresearch.com





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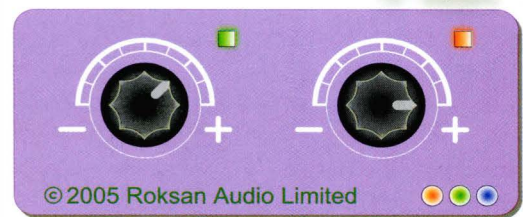
- ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
- CD player      INTEGRATED amp**
- Kandy MkIII integrated amplifier**  
 WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION **Winner 2004 Awards**
- Kandy MkIII CD**  
 HI-FI CHOICE **Bronze award 2004 Awards**
- Kandy MkIII integrated amplifier**  
 WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION **Winner 2003 Awards**
- Kandy MkIII integrated amplifier**  
 WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION **Winner 2002 Awards**
- Kandy MKIII integrated amplifier**  
**Five Stars**  
 WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION **October 2003**
- Kandy CD**  
**Five Stars**  
 WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION **First test July 2003**
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**BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER OVER £5,000**



**Ayre K-1xe and V-1xe**

PRICE £11,490 (E4,995/£6,495) TYPE Pre/power CONTACT 01727 865488 www.ayre.com

Just when you think you've got the world of hi-fi pretty much covered, along comes a product that makes you redefine just how good your system can sound. US brand Ayre is hardly new to the scene – indeed, these pre and power amps are evolved from a

classic high-end combination of the 1990s. But when we took a listen to these latest 'xe' versions in our special *The Collection 2005* edition, we were truly blown away by the living, breathing music they delivered. Expensive? Yes, but worth every penny.



**Naim  
NAC 552/NAP 500**

PRICE £24,925 (E12,575/£12,350) TYPE Pre/power CONTACT 01722 332266 www.naim-audio.com



**Burmester  
011/911 Mk3**

PRICE £22,690 (E9,495/£13,195) TYPE Pre/power CONTACT 02392 501888 www.burmester.de



**INFO >> AMPLIFIERS**

There are several decisions to make when choosing an amp. For example, it's crucial you pick one with enough inputs to take *all* your sources, both present and future. And how about features like remote control and tone adjustment? Once vilified in specialist hi-fi circles, it's now generally accepted that if implemented well, such niceties needn't have a broadly adverse effect on sound (though they might add to the price tag). For those with wide-ranging music tastes, tone controls many prove useful to tame aggressive recordings, for example, while remote control is a convenience many now take for granted – which is why amps without it are now few and far between.

Another key decision is whether you want to build a straightforward two-channel system or whether you want to go multichannel for surround sound music and movie replay. This is simply a matter of priority – if you're building a system to primarily play music from sources like CD, vinyl records and radio, then we'd recommend you concentrate your resources on optimising a pure stereo system. Remember also that there's nothing stopping you playing DVD and SACD discs in plain stereo – even surround sound discs will sound much better through a good two-channel set-up than through a bad multichannel one.

That said, multichannel AV amps are getting better all the time, notably in their ability to play two-channel material off CD etc. When choosing, don't be swayed by unnecessary frills – work out exactly how many channels you require (in many houses, and with multichannel music in particular, more than 5.1 is an unnecessary extravagance). And while the number of surround processing formats (Dolby, DTS *et al*) is continually growing, it's likely that many will remain unused in most systems – a plethora of processing options isn't everything!

Much more important are the amplifying fundamentals – a healthy power supply, high-quality circuit components, appropriate shielding, signal paths that are as simple as possible and so on. There are now some remarkably good sub-£500 integrated multichannel amps on the market (like Yamaha's DSP-AX757SE, p77), but you shouldn't expect miracles from something so complex and yet so affordable – a good, similarly priced two-channel amp will beat its AV equivalent hands down with a straight stereo source like CD. However, top-end multichannel integrated amplifiers can now perform all functions (stereo included) with aplomb, often with future-proof 'upgradeability' built in to boot. Just don't expect this level of quality to come cheap!

It's certainly true to say that multichannel music has taken the 'AV amp' concept away from its previous role as purely a slave to home cinema, with undoubted qualitative benefits. Perhaps the best way to experience 'hi-fi multichannel' is to buy a separate preamp/processor and multiple channels of power amplification from a specialist manufacturer. This is the most costly route of all, but also the most flexible and easy to optimise for genuine hi-fi sound. For the uninitiated, the results with a good multichannel DVD-Audio/SACD music disc or a DVD film soundtrack can be startling, with high-level two-channel sound a real possibility too.

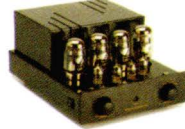
Lastly, and briefly, the subject of power. The spec sheet isn't everything, and in the case of AV amps in particular it's often misleading. But don't worry – with the exception of very low-powered valve designs, most modern amps will have no trouble driving most modern speakers. It's the sonic character that really counts (to which many factors contribute) – not nominal figures on the spec sheet!



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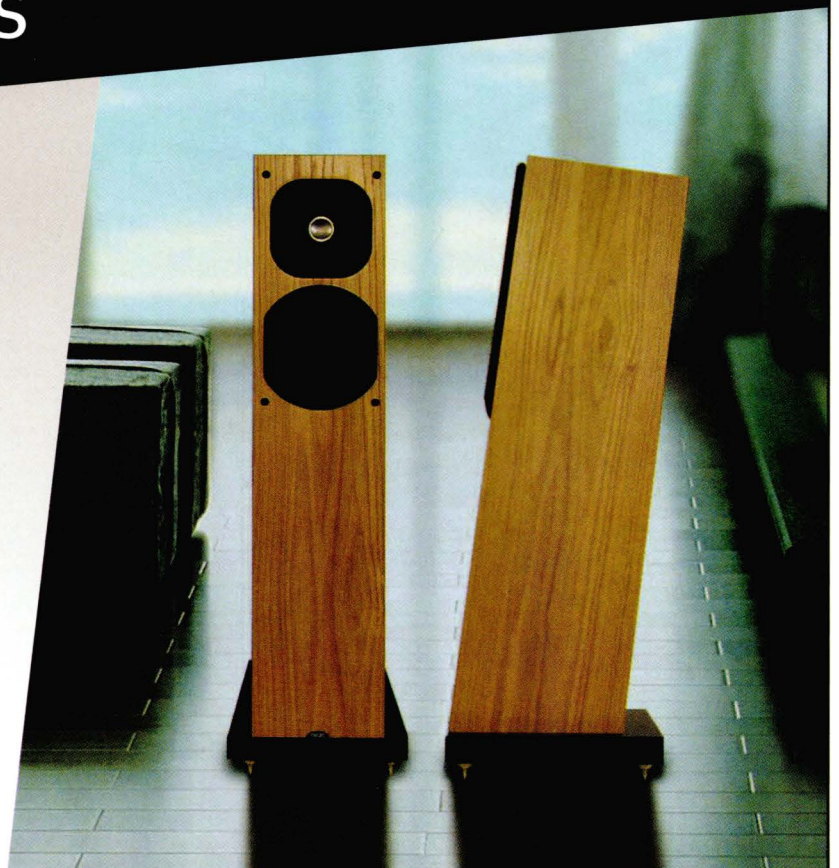
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**BEST MULTICHANNEL AMPLIFIER UNDER £500**



**Yamaha DSP-AX757SE**

PRICE £499 TYPE Integrated AV amp CONTACT 01923 233166 www.yamaha-uk.com

It is not often that hi-fi and home cinema find a happy union, especially in the world of sub-£500 multichannel amps. But Yamaha has gone a long way towards bridging that gap with the DSP-AX757SE, a low-cost integrated model that's a whizz with movies, but also impresses with music. Those who want to dabble with multichannel music without spending a fortune will find it excellent, but it sounds surprisingly good in straight stereo, too.



**Denon AVR-1906**

PRICE £330 TYPE AV receiver CONTACT 01234 741200 www.denon.co.uk



**Sony STR-DB798**

PRICE £250 TYPE AV receiver CONTACT 08705 111999 www.sony.co.uk



**BEST MULTICHANNEL AMPLIFIER £500-£2,000**



**Arcam DiVA AVR300**

PRICE £1,300 TYPE AV receiver CONTACT 01223 203200 www.arcam.co.uk

The fact that last year's winner in this category, Denon's AVR-3805, is being discontinued might have given us a headache when it came to judging time... but actually, it was all very simple. Our Gold Award winner hails not from the Far East but from the design team of Brit-Fi stalwart Arcam. And while feature fetishists might not consider it top-of-the-list material, its superb sonic abilities, not least with music, make it an excellent buy. Pure multichannel class.



**Primare SPA21**

PRICE £2,000 TYPE Integrated AV amp CONTACT 01423 359054 www.primare.net



**Pioneer VSX-AX5Ai**

PRICE £1,200 TYPE AV receiver CONTACT 01753 789500 www.pioneer.co.uk







### Tech Tip

Genelec have always been innovators, the DCW<sup>tm</sup> (Directivity Control Wave-Guide) ensures that the treble driver's sound dispersion is controlled which reduces the room's influence. This increases sound quality in the listening area even in a wide variety of acoustic conditions.



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**BEST MULTICHANNEL AMPLIFIER £2,000-£5,000**



**Denon AVC-A11XV**

PRICE £2,500 TYPE Integrated AV amp CONTACT 01234 741200 www.denon.co.uk

When Denon launched its latest multichannel flagship earlier this year, the astoundingly huge AVC-A1XV, it caused more than a few jaws to drop. It's an extraordinary behemoth, to be sure, but its 10.2-channel spec would be overkill in most systems. That's why this new, more 'sensible'

7.1-channel amp is so welcome – it calls upon much the same technology but most will find it size (and its price) more easy to accommodate. From the flexibility of its connection options to the punch and precision of its sound, this is a truly superb – and genuinely musical – multichannel amp.



**Lexicon RV-8**

PRICE £5,000 TYPE AV receiver CONTACT 01423 359054 www.lexicon.com



**Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai**

PRICE £3,000 TYPE Integrated AV amp CONTACT 01753 789500 www.pioneer.co.uk

**BEST MULTICHANNEL AMPLIFIER OVER £5,000**



**Arcam FMJ AV8/P7**

PRICE £5,750 (£3,150/£2,600) TYPE Processor/power CONTACT 01223 203200 www.arcam.co.uk

The second Gold Award for Arcam in this year's multichannel amp category will come as no surprise to anyone whose heard this excellent processor/preamp and seven-channel power amp in action. An

extraordinary undertaking for a company of Arcam's size, it's the performance/price ratio that wins the day here with a sound of terrific intensity across all formats. Most certainly, this is multichannel hi-fi done right.



**Krell HTS 7.1/TAS**

PRICE £17,496 (£8,998/£8,498) TYPE Processor/power CONTACT 020 8971 3909 www.krellonline.com



**Parasound Halo C1/A51**

PRICE £7,500 (£4,500/£3,000) TYPE Processor/power CONTACT 01423 359054 www.parasound.com



Brands:

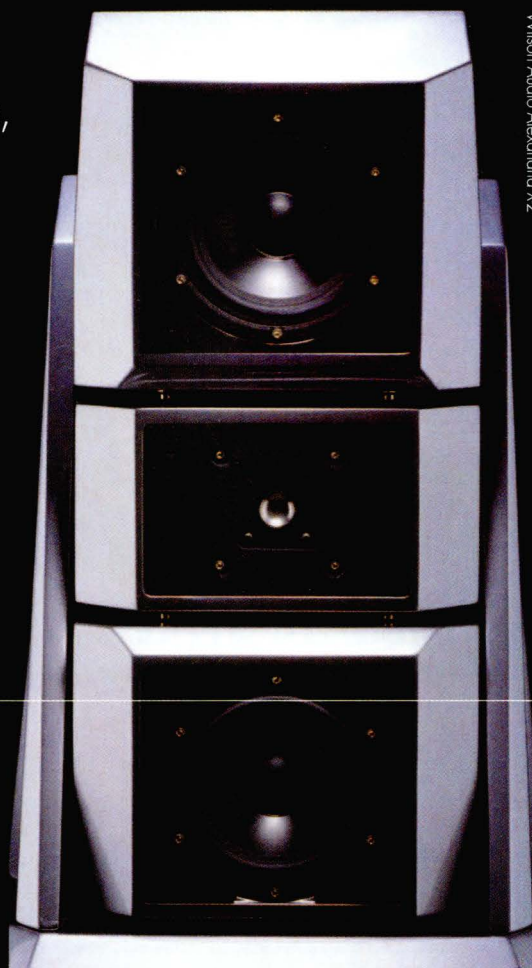
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**BEST LOUDSPEAKER UNDER £500 PER PAIR**

**Rega R3**

PRICE £448 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT ☎ 01702 333071 🌐 www.rega.co.uk

**R**ega is still best known for its turntables, but the company has been making other hi-fi components for years, from CD players and amps to some rather fine loudspeakers. But not until this year has it had a range that could really compete with the big boys of the speaker world. The R3 is a great example: a neat little floorstander that can each the competition a thing or two about musical communication. Lively, agile and brilliant.



**Epos M12.2**

PRICE £449 per pair TYPE Standmount CONTACT ☎ 01442 260146 🌐 www.epos-acoustics.com



**Epos ELS 303**

PRICE £399 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT ☎ 01442 260146 🌐 www.epos-acoustics.com

**BEST LOUDSPEAKER £500-£1,000 PER PAIR**

**KEF iQ9**

PRICE £800 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT ☎ 01622 672261 🌐 www.kef.com

**G**radually evolving over time, KEF's 'Q' series of speakers has thrown up some real stars in the past. But this latest generation doesn't just add an 'i' before the 'Q'; it is also the proud bearer of some of the best speakers KEF has ever made. The iQ9 is a perfect example, using a new version of KEF's

tweeter-in-cone Uni-Q drive unit to great effect, augmented by two more drivers for added heft. The result is a floorstander of terrific musical power, but one which deftly avoids the trap of overpowering bass. Equally happy in stereo and multichannel systems, this is an all-rounder with serious class.



**Dali Ikon 6**

PRICE £899 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT ☎ 0845 644 3537 🌐 www.dali-uk.co.uk



**Triangle Antal ES**

PRICE £975 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT ☎ 01753 652669 🌐 www.triangle-fr.com





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and many more.

# Hyperion 938

we are so confident that you will love these Loudspeakers, we even give you our peace of mind, unique 30-day money back guarantee\*



When a product wins this many awards in a single year, you know to expect something pretty special!

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

# Nordost

try the worlds best cables for 30-days with our unique 30-day money back guarantee\*

## THOR (new) - £1599

(shown on the right)

Shadow Audio are a Valhalla Reference Dealer

The Thor project has been a joint collaboration between Nordost and UK mains power specialist IsoTek. Thor is an elegant, full rack width, 6-way AC mains power distribution unit featuring sophisticated circuitry for dealing with mains noise and voltage spikes without limiting dynamic headroom. The unit is wired throughout with award winning Nordost Valhalla power cable to achieve optimum signal transfer and performance. The unit also

features IsoTek's Polaris-X circuit technology which eliminates product cross contamination, effectively offering any hardware plugged into the unit a clean power supply. This proprietary system shunts AC mains borne noise to Earth without compressing the dynamics of the music. This design also isolates each piece of equipment electrically, effectively giving each one a separate AC mains spur line. Other innovations such as sophisticated silver plated copper circuit paths and the use of silver solder throughout the system also improve overall performance. Thor also has full surge protection.

In addition Thor uses Quantum Resonance Technology (QRT) treated circuit boards.

This technology aids the transfer function of conductive materials.

The Nordost Thor is an upgradeable solution to AC mains power distribution. By systematically improving the quality of the input and output power cords the performance of the unit increases dramatically. Upgrading through the range of Nordost cables, utilising Shiva, Vishnu and Valhalla, prioritising the input cable first will offer major performance enhancements.

The Thor offers an unparalleled solution to advanced power distribution. Thor is available with three different socket versions, with US AC sockets with UK mains sockets and with European mains sockets.



\*conditions apply

# Wadia W861B

a new integrated player that offers a 25% saving over the legendary W861 but sounds exactly the same!



The new W861B is a new integrated player that offers a 25% saving over the legendary W861 but sounds exactly the same! How is this possible? Simply put the new B model is a W861 without the digital input and output boards that makes the 'standard' W861 so flexible as a CD player and digital pre-amplifier.

As with the more flexible W861, the 'B' allows for the choice of four algorithm settings to allow finite system matching.

The W861B is a response to Wadia enthusiasts who want the performance levels obtainable from the W861 but prefer not to pay for facilities and flexibility they may never use. Of course the 'B' retains Wadia's proprietary digital volume control so that you can use the CD Player directly with a Power Amplifier.

The W861B, Wadia's finest value for money yet in an integrated CD player,

sets new price / performance standards for a high end player.

In true Wadia tradition the digital input and output boards can be added at any time to upgrade the 'B' to the W861 status. For the ultimate CD Player the W861B/W861 can be upgraded to the reference W861SE.

Models available: W861B (£6,399), W861 (£8,399) and W861SE (£9,999).

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**BEST LOUDSPEAKER £1,000-£2,000 PER PAIR**

**B&W 805S**

PRICE £1,600 per pair TYPE Standmount CONTACT 01903 221500 www.bwspeakers.com

It takes a special sort of standmount speaker to beat its floorstanding rivals to our Gold Award at this price point – and that's exactly what the 805S is. The baby model in B&W's newly revised 800 Series, it's a compact speaker of exceptional class. Of course, it can't deliver the bass weight of its larger rivals, but it's exquisite build and superb engineering ensure it communicates music like few others at the price. In small to medium sized rooms it's hard to beat.



**PMC FB1+**

PRICE £1,695 per pair TYPE Floorstander  
CONTACT 08704 441044 www.pmc-speakers.com

**Rega R7**

PRICE £1,498 per pair TYPE Floorstander  
CONTACT 01702 333071 www.rega.co.uk

**BEST LOUDSPEAKER £2,000-£5,000 PER PAIR**

**Mordaunt-Short Performance 6**

PRICE £3,500 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 01753 680868 www.mordauntshort.com

These sensational floorstanders are a perfect example of what can happen when the speaker designer controls all aspects of loudspeaker production. With decoupled, metal cone drive units designed specifically for the asymmetric speaker cabinet and the use of a distinctive spike-like rear radiation diffuser for the tweeter, the Mordaunt-Short looks like no other. It's tuneful, agile sound sets new standards in transparency at the price, too. A truly ground-breaking speaker.



**Dali Helicon 400**

PRICE £2,999 per pair TYPE Floorstander  
CONTACT 0845 644 3537 www.dali-uk.co.uk

**Focal-JMLab Micro Utopia Be**

PRICE £3,799 per pair TYPE Standmount  
CONTACT 0845 660 2680 www.focal-uk.com



FINE TWO CHANNEL AUDIO SYSTEMS



a



b

**a Ayre C-5xe Universal Stereo Disc player.**

This player will play any format in stereo only. As there is no video circuitry included, there is no downgrade of the audio signal. The exceptional quality of sound on standard CD replay alone justifies its price. It has the typical high performance that Ayre has become known for; very smooth, correct tonal balance, excellent transparency and detail. It creates a very layered soundstage with precise focus of imaging within that stage. £4495.

**b Conrad-Johnson PV14L-2/MV60SE.**

This classic valve pre and power amplifier combination has always produced an excellent, natural sound and is one of the best valve designs available today. Currently there is an opportunity to purchase this pair at a combined price of £4500, a saving of £495. Individual prices; PV14L-2 pre-amplifier £2395 and MV60SE power amplifier (65wpc) £2500.



c

**c Gamut L5 loudspeakers.**

A very high quality loudspeaker from this well known amplifier manufacturer. A very transparent sound stage with precise imaging. The cabinet work and build quality is of the highest order and would enhance any domestic environment. £5950.

**d Nottingham Analogue Space Deck.**

With the new, thicker platter and upgrade kit it produces an even more neutral and stable image. £1417.



d



e

**e Rogue Audio Metis/Atlas.**

The latest products from this fine valve amplifier manufacturer. A remarkably good sound at an affordable price. Designed and built in the USA, a quality combination that should be auditioned with only the best ancillary components. Metis valve pre-amplifier £995; Atlas valve power amplifier (55wpc) £1195.

**f System Audio loudspeakers.**

These very slim speakers produce an astonishingly good sound for their price. A very 3-dimensional soundstage and a full sound for their size. Being very musical, they deserve to be heard with well balanced components. Models shown right SA 1530 £495; left SA1730 £695.



f

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**BEST LOUDSPEAKER OVER £5,000 PER PAIR**

**B&W 802D**

PRICE £8,000 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT ☎ 01903 221500 @ www.bwspeakers.com



Okay, so the 802D isn't the absolute best speaker in B&W's new-for-2005 800 Series – that accolade belongs to the quite awesome 800D. But the 802D has one important advantage: it costs £5,000 less, yet it delivers 95 per cent of the sound, diamond tweeter and all. It's a fantastic speaker in its own right, of course, capable of astonishing scale and insight, and in terms of value, both material and sonic, it's really quite a bargain!



**Vivid Audio B1**

PRICE £7,750 per pair TYPE Floorstander (stand is integral) CONTACT ☎ 01903 530005 @ www.rowlesmusic.co.uk



**MartinLogan Summit**

PRICE £8,498 per pair TYPE Floorstander (electrostatic) CONTACT ☎ 020 8971 3909 @ www.martinlogan.com



**INFO >> LOUDSPEAKERS**

There are more manufacturers of speakers on the market today than of any other hi-fi product category. Two reasons – one, they're relatively easy to develop and bring to market (though much harder to perfect). Two, whatever type of audio system you're building, speakers are the one component that everybody needs.

The result is a huge selection of designs of myriad shapes and sizes, and equally wide-ranging quality of sound. Tonally at least, no other component exerts such influence on the sonic character of a system, and as with any component, some careful auditioning is called for to ensure you choose the right model to suit your tastes.

First, you need to decide how many you need – two for a stereo set-up or more for multichannel (surround sound). In this year's HFC Awards, we've simply featured speakers in pairs rather than repeating the process with multichannel packages. This is because, even with multichannel, the most important thing is to choose the best 'main front' pair for you – this is what you'll hear with stereo material, and with multichannel sources they'll deliver a large portion of the overall soundfield. What's more, a speaker that performs well with music will also do a fine job with film soundtracks, but the reverse is not always true. Choose your main pair of speakers with care then, and build the rest around them.

There are various ways to consider the centre and rear speakers within a multichannel set-up. For music, it's recommended that you choose five identical full-range speakers and place them equidistant from the listener, firing directly towards his/her position in the centre (this is known as the ITU configuration). But this is often impractical – most multichannel systems also incorporate a video screen and a horizontal 'centre speaker' may be the only realistic solution; likewise,

it may be difficult to incorporate anything but a smaller pair at the rear. The important thing is to ensure that all speakers are as similar as possible – from the same range with the same essential voicing and the same critical drive units. So once you've chosen your main front speakers, pick your centre and rears accordingly – the result should be a sound that suits your ears across all available sources.

There's no obvious answer to the 'does size matter' question. Larger floorstanding speakers will usually plumb greater depths of bass and may offer superior dynamics, with a larger main drive unit (or units). But for the speaker engineer, there can be inherent advantages in working with a smaller box, and the best of the breed sound gloriously coherent (when used with an appropriate stand). Try before you buy, and try not to let aesthetic considerations be the major ruling factor – the only real rule is to avoid using very large floorstanders in very small spaces, and to experiment with positioning once you've got them home.

Small sub/sat systems may appeal to some people aesthetically, but rarely will they challenge the coherence of a good, full-range integrated loudspeaker system, which is why you'll find none in this year's HFC Awards. That said, there are an increasing number of stylish and compact solutions with obvious multichannel appeal emerging from some highly reputed brands, and with sound quality certainly improving this is an area to watch. Subwoofers themselves continue to be viewed in many circles as largely the preserve of home cinema enthusiasts, but the effect of a 'musical' sub in augmenting the bass and 'driving the room' in conjunction with a good hi-fi system shouldn't be ignored, multichannel or not. Our subwoofer Awards on p87 hold such ability paramount.





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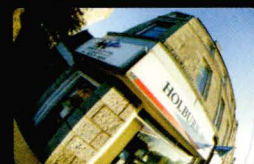
**Audio Visual Loudspeakers**

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**Secondhand**

Classé CAP151 Integrated Amp .....	2195.00	..1200.00
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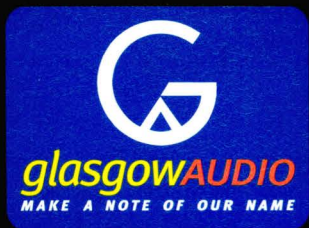


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Meridian G68ADV Surround Controller .....	4995.00	..3996.00

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**BEST SUBWOOFER UNDER £1,000**

**B&W PV1**

PRICE £950 CONTACT 01903 221500 @ www.bwspeakers.com

It's tough finding a subwoofer below the £1,000 mark that can do music as well as it does the more bombastic excesses of home cinema. The two RELs in our Silver and Bronze positions are notable exceptions, with the Stampede offering particularly fine value for money. But top billing this year goes to B&W's remarkable PV1, a distinctive spherical sub using two drive units in a clever 'pressure vessel' design to deliver fast, clear and clean bass. Truly musical, truly innovative, truly a Gold Award winner.



**REL Stampede**

PRICE £550 (wood veneer £625)  
CONTACT 01656 768777 @ www.rel.net



**REL Storm 5**

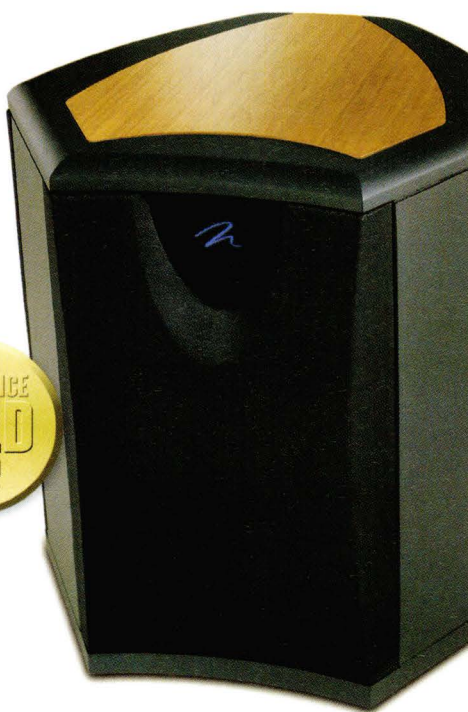
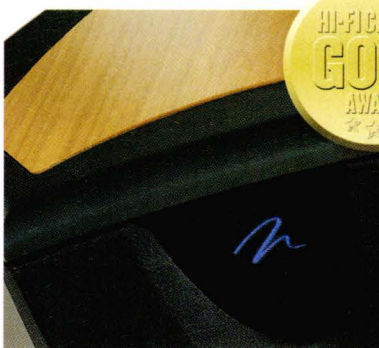
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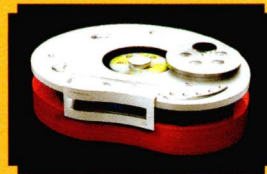
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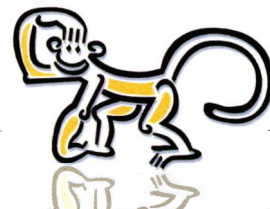
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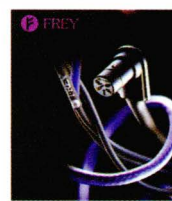
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**Accuphase**  
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Established: 1973

**Nagra**  
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## ...listen to the best



**BEST INTERCONNECT UNDER £100 PER PAIR**



**van den Hul The Well**

PRICE £85 (1m pair) CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 @ www.vandenhul.com

We originally tested this cable some time ago, so it's a testament to its quality that it remains our favourite interconnect under £100. It features van den Hul's trademark mixture of silver-plated copper and 'linear structured carbon', double screen

and all. In practice, The Well communicates music with graceful ease – imaging is solid, believable and deep, while detail is plentiful and gracefully presented. Not for the first time, van den Hul has made a low cost cable that performs way out of its class.



**Kimber Timbre**

PRICE £89 (1m pair)  
CONTACT ☎ 0845 345 1550 @ www.kimber.com



**van den Hul The Bay**

PRICE £55 (1m pair)  
CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 @ www.vandenhul.com

**BEST INTERCONNECT OVER £100 PER PAIR**



**Townshend Audio Isolda DCT 300**

PRICE £300 (1m pair) CONTACT ☎ 020-8979 2155 @ www.townshendaudio.com

Townshend Audio's speaker cable does wonders, but can the interconnect produce the same musical transformation? Absolutely! The combination of 'Deep Cryogenic Treatment' and an unshielded cable design (hum is kept at bay by the use

of a ferrite sleeve at one end of the cable) makes for a cable that is completely free from grain, packed with detail and makes most conventional interconnect cables sound flat, lifeless and dynamically strangled. A very fine interconnect for high-grade systems.



**van den Hul Integration**

PRICE £155 (1m pair)  
CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 @ www.vandenhul.com



**Chord Company Chorus**

PRICE £215 (1m pair)  
CONTACT ☎ 01980 625700 @ www.chord.co.uk



# *The colouration's in the finish*



# *Not in the music*





**BEST DIGITAL INTERCONNECT**



**Kimber Select KS2020**

PRICE £629 (1m) TYPE Coaxial audio CONTACT ☎ 0845 345 1550 @ www.kimber.com

**Y**es, it's still possible to build a complete hi-fi system that costs less than this cable.. But the fact is, the KS2020 produced a distinct improvement in every system we tried it with, from budget to high end. There's more than just solder inside those wood-

bodied phono plugs: both hot and cold return conductors are connected through capacitors, reducing the chance of stray circulating earth currents. Hard to justify in a digital cable? Audition the KS2020 as part of any DAC purchase over a grand and hear for yourself.



**QED Qunex P75**

PRICE £25 (1m) TYPE Coaxial audio CONTACT ☎ 01279 501111 @ www.qed.co.uk



**QED Qunex HDMI-P**

PRICE £50 (1m) TYPE HDMI CONTACT ☎ 01279 501111 @ www.qed.co.uk/cables

**BEST MAINS CONDITIONER/CABLE**



**IsoTek GII Mini Sub**

PRICE £545 TYPE Mains filter/distribution block CONTACT ☎ 01635 291357 @ www.isoteksystems.com

**T**he quality of the mains electricity that you feed your hi-fi can have a profound effect on its sound, as Isotek knows. The company specialises in products designed to optimise mains quality, and this year it has introduced some excellent new conditioners, including the high-end Nova and Titan. But

for our Gold Award we've returned to an old favourite – the GII Mini Sub. It's a six-way distribution block and mains filter in one, which presents a cleaner, purer supply of electricity to your system and promotes a clearer, more finely detailed sound as a result. Fine value for money, all in all.



**Russ Andrews Silencer Block**

PRICE From £120 TYPE Mains filter/distribution block CONTACT ☎ 0845 345 1550 @ www.russandrews.com



**Supra LoRad 1.5**

PRICE £40 TYPE IEC mains cable CONTACT ☎ 01223 441299 @ www.supracables.co.uk



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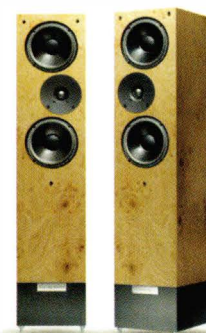
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**BEST HEADPHONES UNDER £200**

**Sennheiser HD595**

PRICE £150 CONTACT ☎ 01494 551551 @ www.sennheiser.co.uk

Sennheiser's new £150 open-backed headphones use many of the technologies found in the utterly superb HD650 (see below). Thankfully, however, listener comfort has not been sacrificed in the quest to bring high-end headphone sound to a new price level – the velvet-soft cups will sit happily around the largest of ears. What's more, the sound quality – with solid bass and excellent detail – comes surprisingly close to the £300 benchmark, making these £150 cans a true bargain.



**Beyer DT990**

PRICE £160 CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 @ www.beyerdynamic.co.uk



**Grado SR80**

PRICE £110 CONTACT ☎ 01279 501111 @ www.gradolabs.com

**BEST HEADPHONES OVER £200**

**Sennheiser HD650**

PRICE £300 CONTACT ☎ 01494 551551 @ www.sennheiser.co.uk

Our favourite pair of headphones over £200 continues its success in this year's HFC Awards – quite simply, there's nothing to touch its deftly-judged mix of skills at the price. The HD650 features hand-selected drivers with ultra-low-mass coils and diaphragms for extended frequency response, and specially optimised magnet design for lower distortion. Sound quality is a revelation – the combination of a neutral balance and extraordinary resolution means that listening fatigue is all but banished, while the bass extends to quite splendid depths.



**Grado SR325i**

PRICE £310 CONTACT ☎ 01279 501111 @ www.gradolabs.com

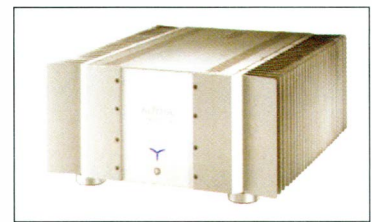
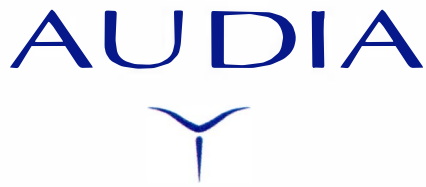


**AKG K1000**

PRICE £650 CONTACT ☎ 01707 278100 @ www.akg.com



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



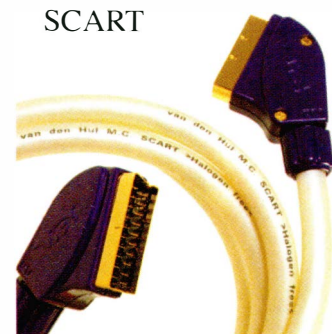
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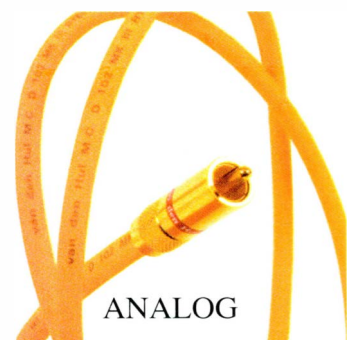
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**BEST EQUIPMENT SUPPORT UNDER £500**



**Partington Minim**

PRICE £389 (five shelves) CONTACT ☎ 01474 709 299 @ www.partingtonandco.co.uk

**P**artington is a name best known for its excellent speaker stands, which have improved the sound of many a standmount or 'bookshelf' loudspeaker down the years. Here, though, we honour one of its more recent products – an equipment support that looks good, sounds good and is impressively

flexible to boot. A turn of an Allen key is all it takes to free the shelves from their support pillars, allowing the height of each shelf to be adjusted independently. The Minim's metal and glass construction helps to deliver a sound that is tight, fast and focused, and much better than on a bog-standard shelf.



**Custom Design Concept 400**

PRICE £320 (four shelves, standard version)  
CONTACT ☎ 0191 2624646 @ www.cus\_omdesign.co.uk



**Atacama Equinox**

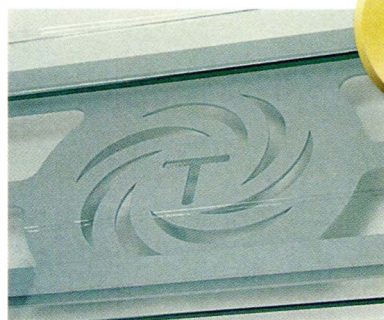
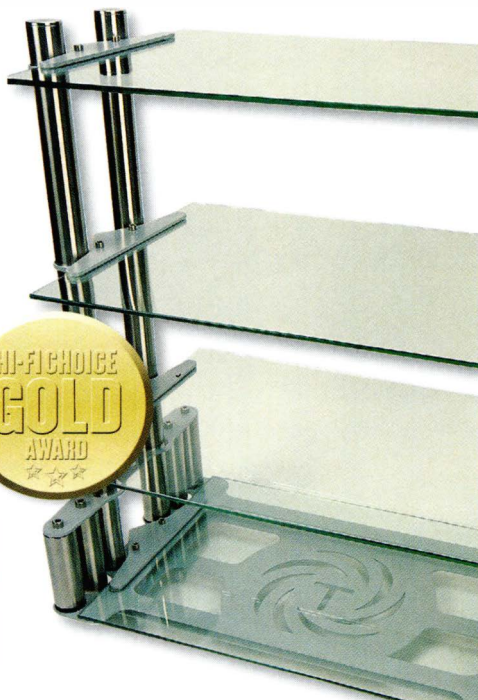
PRICE £280-£300 (four shelves, price according to finish)  
CONTACT ☎ 01455 283251 @ www.atacama-audio.co.uk

**BEST EQUIPMENT SUPPORT OVER £500**

**Townshend Audio VSSS**

PRICE £1,350 (four shelf, 50cm wide version) CONTACT ☎ 020 8979 2155 @ www.townshendaudio.com

**T**ownshend Audio's Seismic Sink Stand has undergone its most substantial change since its inception more than a decade ago. In this new Versatile version, the air suspension system is no more, replaced by maintenance-free dual tensioned load cells. With glass shelves supplanting the sinks, this makes the stand more attractive and much easier to live with. Fortunately, it retains – and even improves upon – the eye-opening clarity, rock-solid imagery and dynamic scaling of the original. An expensive stand, but you get what you pay for... and more.



**Custom Design Icon 400**

PRICE £600 (four shelves, Signature Acoustic version)  
CONTACT ☎ 0191 262 4646 @ www.cus\_omdesign.co.uk



**Clearlight Audio Aspekt**

PRICE £650 (four shelves, real wood finish)  
CONTACT ☎ 01635 291357 @ www.clearlight-audio.de



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**BEST SPEAKER STAND UNDER £100 PER PAIR**

**Partington Ansa 60**

PRICE £99 per pair (60cm) CONTACT ☎ 01474 709 299 @ www.partingtonandco.co.uk

**P**artington's Ansa 60 is an elegant stand with a steel centre column welded to four outer tubes and features distinctive bow-tie shaped top plates. The solidly engineered design means the stand has a remarkable ability to 'disappear' sonically, avoiding colorations that commonly beset other inexpensive stands. It simply gets out of the way and lets the music do its thing – few speaker stands at any price can perform the same disappearing trick, making this a thoroughly impressive speaker support for the money.



**Atacama Nexus 6**

PRICE £60-£70 per pair (60cm, price according to finish)  
CONTACT ☎ 01455 283251 @ www.atacama-audio.co.uk



**Custom Design RS 300 MkII**

PRICE £100 per pair (61cm)  
CONTACT ☎ 0191 262 4646 @ www.customdesign.co.uk

**BEST SPEAKER STAND OVER £100 PER PAIR**

**Kudos S50**

PRICE £159 per pair (45cm/60cm) CONTACT ☎ 01833 631021 @ www.kudosaudio.co.uk

**A** long-term HFC favourite, the S50 uses a large diameter central steel tube pillar with a wide and stable tripod base. An already rigid design, it can be further mass-loaded by filling the pillar with bags of silver sand or Atabites. But even unfilled, the sound is warm and rich, without over-projection but with real bass authority and first-rate dynamic range. It's the perfect compliment to a high-class standmount speaker, combining the speed of an open-frame design and the weight of high-mass stands.



**Partington Dreadnought Broadside**

PRICE £249 per pair (60cm) CONTACT ☎ 01474 709 299 @ www.partingtonandco.co.uk



**hne Cableway**

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This issue, we are featuring the superb new book, *The LP Is Back* as our special *Star Buy*, along with a further nine *Best Buy* recommendations, each one the perfect choice for the discerning audio enthusiast. For our full selection, visit our dedicated website: [www.choicebits.co.uk](http://www.choicebits.co.uk).



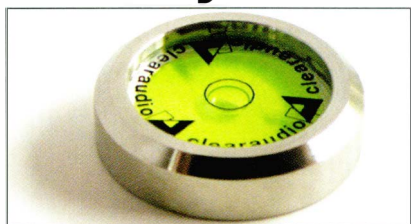
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If you have even the slightest fondness towards the LP record and an analogue front end, you need this book! This recently published collection of reissues of classic hi-fi headlines and audiophile articles consists of

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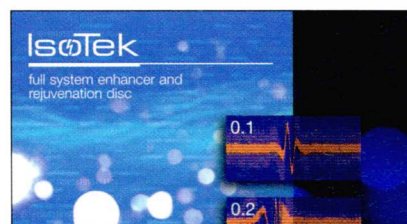
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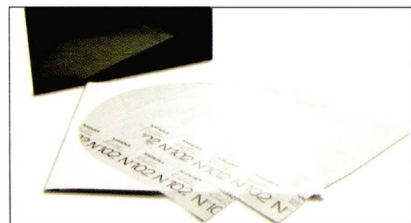
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### Knosti Disco Antistat Record Cleaner

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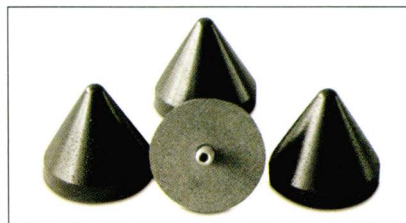
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Kemp Electronics Power Strip 4-Way	£324.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
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WattGate 320 IEC Connector (Black)	£18.95	<input type="checkbox"/>
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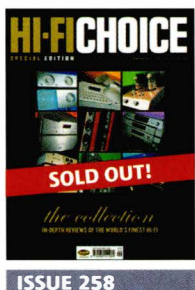
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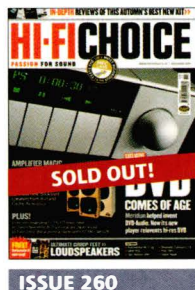
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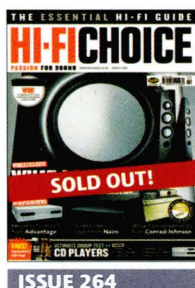
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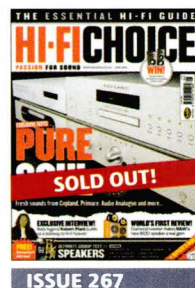
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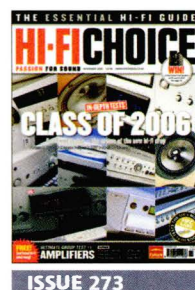
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# HI-FI CHOICE BUYER'S BIBLE



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

#### Reviews you can trust

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

#### How to use this guide

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

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

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# CD PLAYERS

*Audio disc players for music only*



Despite the emergence of new formats and the resurgence of an old one (vinyl), CD is still the king of formats if you require breadth of choice. And despite the fact that other sources will play CDs, if you want to hear your discs at their best, there's little substitute for a dedicated CD player.

It's also the most enduring format on the market. Despite high-resolution contenders like SACD and DVD-Audio, nothing has been able to undermine this universally popular format.

CD players work by reading a stream of 1s and 0s off a disc that spins at a constantly changing speed (to counteract the increasing length of 'groove'). This bitstream is then digitally filtered before undergoing digital-to-analogue conversion in the DAC (D-to-A convertor). Thereafter, the signal is filtered



again before being amplified and sent to the output sockets.

The processes of reading the disc and converting the data are sometimes split between a CD transport and separate DAC in so-called two-box players. A popular approach with very high-end kit, this separates the electronically noisy elements from the sensitive analogue stages, but can introduce timing errors known as jitter, therefore one-box players usually offer best results where budget is a consideration.

## SUPER AUDIO CD



SACD or Super Audio CD is a relatively new audio-only format introduced by Sony and Philips. It offers higher resolution than CD in the form of considerably greater bandwidth and improved dynamic range. It also has the potential for uncompressed surround sound using up to six channels, and most new discs take advantage of this. SACD discs are usually hybrids and will play on normal CD players, but you won't be able to appreciate their highest quality or their multichannel capability without an SACD-compatible player. Some SACD players also play DVD and even DVD-Audio – these are listed in our DVD section.

## Q&A

### WHAT'S A DAC?

A DAC or digital-to-analogue convertor is a fundamental part of any CD player and converts the digits read from the disc into an analogue music waveform which is amplified to line level.

### WHY HAVE SEPARATE TRANSPORTS & DACS?

Discs are read by a transport or disc drive, which creates radio frequency 'noise'. Separating the DAC means the conversion can be done with less interference.

### CAN I USE AN OUTBOARD DAC WITH MY INTEGRATED CD PLAYER?

Yes, if it has a digital output – and most do.

### DO I NEED DIGITAL CABLES FOR A CD PLAYER?

No. All analogue cables are suitable for connecting a CD player to an amp. Digital specific cables with 75ohms impedance are useful when connecting the player to a digital recorder or DAC.

### WHAT IS OVERSAMPLING/UPSAMPLING?

Oversampling involves multiplying the sampling frequency by a whole number, usually between four and 32, but sometimes higher, and is designed let the DAC to work in a more linear fashion. Upsampling is where the data stream is stretched out by interpolation and is typically used to refer to large changes in sampling rate such as from 44.1kHz to 192kHz.

### CAN I PLAY SACDS ON A NORMAL CD PLAYER?

Yes. The vast majority of SACD discs are hybrids, with a CD layer that all CD players can read.

### CAN I PLAY DVDS ON A CD PLAYER?

No, the same applies to DVD-As. But you can play CDs and DVD-As on normal DVD players.

## TOP BUYS



**Marantz CD7300** £350

The latest in a long line of highly successful sub-£500 CD players from Marantz is an absolute beauty. Engaging and sonically refined, there's little to touch it at the price.



**Cyrus CD8x** £1,000

The latest diminutive CD spinner from Cyrus is an absolute stunner. Highly detailed and supremely musical, it's more than a match for many more outwardly exotic machines.



## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE CD PLAYERS

### Audio-only CD and SACD players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	CD-RW COMPATIBLE	CD TEXT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>												
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Arcam DIVA CD73T	400	Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic – a finely judged balance for budget to mid-price systems		●	●	●	●				247
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Arcam DIVA CD192	850	Beautifully built, well featured player with clear, open and involving sound		●	●	●	●				264
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Consonance CD120	795	Fine performance in all areas with the possible exception of slight treble harshness		●				●			269
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Cyrus CD8x	1,000	Impressive mix of detail, musicality, analysis and appearance. Even better with the PSX-R power supply (£400)		●	●						270
	Cyrus CD6S	650	Much better at excitement and urgency than analysis, this player can nevertheless give pleasure			●						273
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Exposure 2010 S	599	Highly communicative sounds with good bass, though not always the most analytical		●	●	●					264
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Marantz CD7300	350	Astonishingly capable sub-£500 player with effortless bass, detailed mid and treble and vast soundstages		●	●	●	●		●		250
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Naim CD5i	825	As idiosyncratic as ever, but sonically the CD5i is the definitive player at the price				●					259
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Roksan Kandy MkIIID	650	Clean, tidy and expressive player – a more than worthwhile improvement on previous versions									259
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>												
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Arcam FMJ CD36	1,400	Deeply revealing player that tells it like it is: if you can stand the unvarnished truth, you'll love it		●	●	●	●				271
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Audio Analogue Maestro	1,650	The new Maestro 192/24 delivers a sound that's slightly rosy yet always musical and thoroughly enjoyable		●				●			257
	Audia Flight CD One	4,500	Sumptuously built toploader capable of real world dynamics with great recordings. Two digital inputs		●				●			269
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	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
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	BAT VK-D5SE CD Player	5,495	Superb valve CD player that is smooth and refined but with real guts that doesn't conform to valve stereotypes		●	●	●	●	●			251
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Copland CDA823	1,750	Its ability to resolve micro dynamics and acoustic space is second to none.		●				●			267
	Hegel CDP2A	1,500	A technically proficient and masterly-sounding player built by people who clearly know what they are doing		●		●		●			252
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	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
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	Lindemann 820	6,999	Stereo SACD player with sumptuous build and sound, onboard analogue volume control and multiple digital inputs	●	●				●		●	262
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Marantz SA-11S1	2,000	A stereo player for audiophiles – lack of DVD and multichannel SACD lead to subtle, highly focussed sound	●	●	●	●	●	●			265
	Meridian G07	1,595	Immaculately conceived and executed player with a softly-spoken voice. Needs careful system matching		●	●	●		●			259
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	Meridian 808i Signature	8,250	Stunning CD player with added preamp functions. Versatile and quite delightful		●	●	●	●	●		●	263
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Myryad MXC6000	1,400	A highly listenable player with excellent tonal balance and very fine detail		●		●					270
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Naim CD5x	1,450	A genuinely engaging CD player with remarkable musical grip and coherence									264
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	Naim CDX2	2,700	Fine quality one-box CD player, but its best feature is upgradeability via outboard XPS supply				●					238
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Primare CD21	800	If you appreciate an organic and engaging sound it's more than worthy of a good long audition		●	●						273
	Primare CD31	1,500	A well made player that may not appeal to timing freaks but does lovely things with large musical forces		●	●	●		●			270
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	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
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Sugden CD21SE	1,395	Delivers its particularly musical touch brilliantly and warrants the attention of all true music lovers		●							271
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Shanling CD-T100	1,650	Stunning-looking player that offers various operating modes: in any, sound is clear and assured		●					●	●	270
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	Wadia 302	3,999	A dynamic and gripping player, with bass to die for and resolution to change your listening habits		●	●	●		●		●	253
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	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

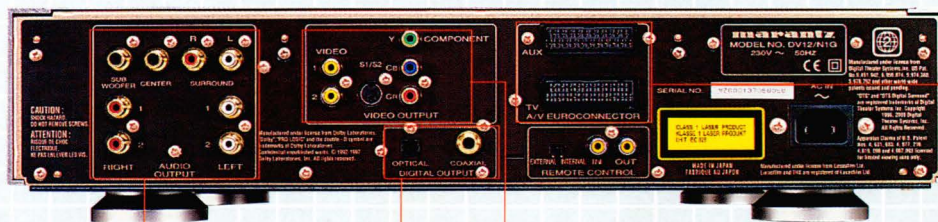
DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player.

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 BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE DVD PLAYERS

### Audio/Video disc players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER
				DVD-A COMPATIBLE	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>								
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	Denon DVD-3910	900	Exceptionally well-specified universal player with a performance to match. A true class-leader	●	●	●	●	260
	Pioneer DV-585A	150	Don't expect tip-top performance for this kind of money – the fact that it's a competent universal player is impressive enough!	●	●	●	●	273
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	Pioneer DV-868AVi	1,000	State of the art universal player with next-gen digital outputs – HDMI for video and i.Link for high-resolution audio	●	●	●	●	252
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>								
<span>EC</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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 DVDB	1,200	An impressive step up from the DVD7+, which includes component video outputs			●		238
<span>EC</span>	Denon DVD-A1XV	2,500	Sophisticated universal player with state of the art video processing, high class disc replay, especially SACD	●	●	●	●	266
<span>EC</span>	Linn Unidisk SC	2,995	Groundbreaking universal player with built-in preamplifier, with excellent picture for home cinema and sound for hi-fi	●	●	●	●	259
<span>EC</span>	Meridian G98AH	3,625	Meridian's most widely compatible G-Series DVD player – groundbreaking DVD-Audio replay and a fine CD player too	●		●	●	265
<span>EC</span>	Meridian 800	10,805	The ultimate in DVD replay, modular construction, buffered ROM drive, upsampling and high-res digital outputs	●		●	●	230
<span>EC</span>	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
<span>EC</span>	Primare DVD30	2,000	A universal player for audiophiles – no wideband digital outputs but masterful with music and a good picture too	●	●	●	●	253
<span>EC</span>	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



**Arcam DiVA DV78 £700**  
An affordable DVD player that also makes a great CD player – precious indeed!



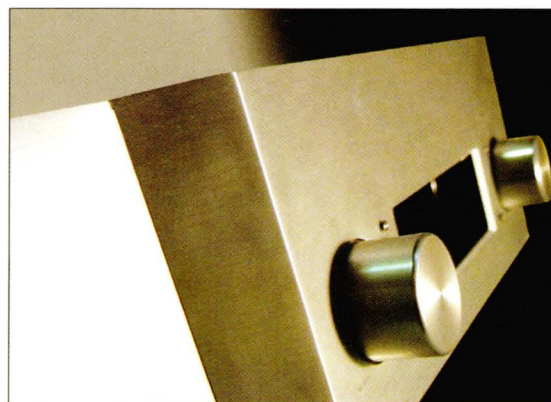
**Denon DVD-3910 £900**  
New-generation Denon is currently the most complete universal player below £1,000.



**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.



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

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**UKD Ltd**

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www.audioanalogue.net

**AUDIO ANALOGUE**  
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# VINYL

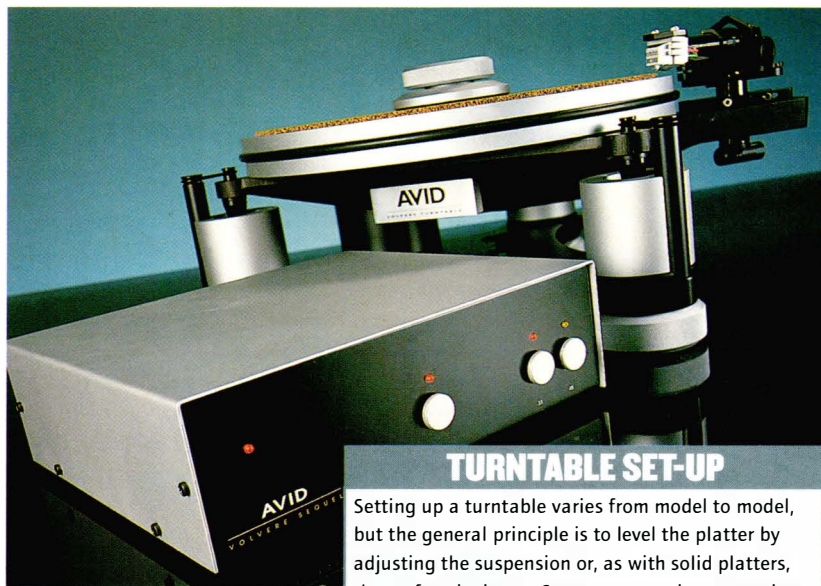
*Turntables, cartridges and phono stages*



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

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

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



## TURNTABLE SET-UP

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

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

## TOP BUYS



### Goldring GR2 £265

This Rega-derived design is stunning value for money. Supplied with an RB250 arm and Goldring 1012GX cartridge, it'll blow most budget CD players into the weeds.



### 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 BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE TURNTABLES

### Record players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER
				SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	
<span>BB</span>	Avid Diva	1,100	A solid and powerful sounding deck with fine build, requires a smooth, relaxed cartridge for best results	33/45	●			247
<span>EC</span>	Avid Volvere Sequel	3,500	Heavyweight turntable that will deliver more of what's in a vinyl groove than most of the competition	33/45	●	●		229
<span>EC</span>	Avid Acutus	6,000	Extremely capable design with no apparent shortcomings. Don't sell you vinyl 'til you've heard it on this!	33/45	●	●		194
<span>BB</span>	Clearaudio Champion	1,475	Smart, practical and good-sounding, with impressively 'dead' arm. Isolation recommended	33/45			●	268
<span>EC</span>	Clearaudio Ambient	2,285	Innovative use of materials leads to a fast, precise and thrilling sound (tonearm extra)	33/45		●	●	271
<span>BB</span>	Goldring GR2	265	Nicely finished Rega-manufactured deck with RB250 arm and an open, engaging sound quality	33/45			●	266
<span>BB</span>	Micell Gyro SE	1,058	New DC motor-equipped Gyro offers great looks and even better sound. Price includes RB300 arm	33/45	●		●	239
<span>EC</span>	Micell Orbe SE	2,015	A superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price. Now features new DC motor	33/45	●			235
<span>BB</span>	Micell Technodec	767	Simple and smartly understated, performs above expectations – full-bodied and highly detailed	33/45			●	268
<span>BB</span>	NAD C 555	250	A good budget turntable with plenty of potential for cartridge upgrades. Shames many comparable CD players	33/45			●	271
<span>BB</span>	Nottingham Analogue Horizon	529	A fluid midrange and nimble but rich bass are two of the many attributes of this bargain deck (price inc RB250 arm)	33/45			●	253
<span>BB</span>	Pro-Ject 1 Xpression	210	Well designed and executed budget deck with an entertaining and revealing sound	33/45			●	248
<span>BB</span>	Pro-Ject RPM 9 X	1,000	A gorgeous turntable that sounds as good as it looks – vital and transparent! Price includes carbon-fibre arm	33/45			●	268
<span>BB</span>	Rega P3/RB300	298	Updated Planar 3, building on the strengths of the P2 with added subtlety and detail	33/45			●	214
<span>BB</span>	Rega P5/RB700	698	Combines a great sense of timing with market-leading resolution and a phenomenal tonearm – a hard act to beat	33/45			●	opt 257
<span>BB</span>	Rega P7/RB700	1,298	A highly capable player that could hold its own in the most exalted company – a vivid and natural performer	33/45			●	opt 257
<span>EC</span>	Rega P9/RB1000	2,498	Exceptionally elegant hi-tech player with complex outboard supply, ceramic platter and wonderful RB1000 tonearm	33/45		●	●	228
<span>BB</span>	Roksan Radius 5/Nima	850	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation (acrylic version tested)	33/45	●		●	248
<span>EC</span>	Roksan TMS2/Artemiz	7,500	Typical Roksan sound, but better: pitch-accurate, lean, detailed and controlled, without the 'bloat' of lesser designs	33/45	●	●		246
<span>EC</span>	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V/309 hybrid arm	33/45	●	●	●	195
<span>EC</span>	SME Model 20.2A	5,274	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	33/45/78	●	●	●	186
<span>EC</span>	Townshend Rock Anniversary	4,900	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 BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE PHONO CARTRIDGES

### MM and MC cartridges

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			ISSUE NUMBER
				MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	
<span>BB</span>	Cartridge Man MM III	625	The MM III challenges MCs at twice the price, it produces detail, space and energy and has stunning resolve in the right arm	●			266
<span>BB</span>	Grado Prestige Black	40	Offers admirable detail and treble extension, with good bass and ambience too	●		●	214
<span>BB</span>	Grado Prestige Gold	110	Produces rich, open and expansive music with the minimum of fuss	●		●	235
<span>EC</span>	Lyra Helikon	1,095	Highly capable and highly neutral, this is a cartridge for all seasons, albeit fussy about vinyl quality	●			215
<span>BB</span>	Sumiko Blue Point Spec Evo III	239	High output MC with refinement at high frequencies and a nimble, articulate and revealing sound		●		270
<span>BB</span>	Van den Hul MC One Special	699	A gorgeous cartridge that's worth the price every time you hear a familiar track in a whole new light		●		235
<span>EC</span>	van den Hul Colibri XGP	2,699	Phenomenal resolution, custom building to suit hard and software, but needs 500 ohm loading and is vulnerable to damage		●		244
<span>EC</span>	van den Hul Condor XCM	2,400	A stunning cartridge with stereo imaging, dynamics and detail resolution to die for		●		265
<span>EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Naked Analog	1,450	With its smooth clean highs, transparent midband and nimble bass, this is a lot of performance for the money		●		253

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE PHONO STAGES

### Phono stages

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

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

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

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

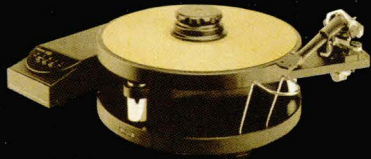
**REPLACEABLE STYLUS** Some cartridges have separate styli for ease of replacement, but it compromises sound quality



# SME

*The way to play vinyl...*

Model 10



Model 20/2



Model 30/2



Series M2



Series 300



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Series V



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## PINEWOOD MUSIC

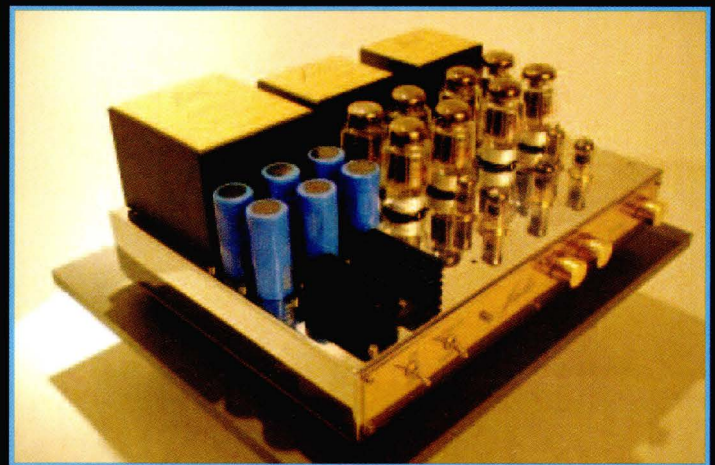
*Untouchable excellence*

After 18 years at the high end, it goes without saying that Pinewood Music handles the finest and most desirable designs in the world - from the first taste of nirvana to the gates of heaven. But we offer you more: at our premises in the Somerset countryside, just off the A303, you will find an environment of

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In a busy and frenetic world, Brian Rivas and Alison Holmes invite you into a calm and warm haven in which you may listen, discuss and consider.

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The Jadis DA88S is one of the finest integrated amplifiers you could ever own. Capable of doing justice to almost any loudspeaker, this lovely device is a musical revelation and puts a new dimension into pride of ownership as well as providing you with a lifetime of musical pleasure and involvement.

### AMATI ANNIVERSARIO

Drawing on the advanced technology and musicianship of the Stradivari, Sonus faber have remodelled the Amati into a beautiful transducer that will brighten up your darkest day. Hook it up to a Jadis DA88S and you won't stop smiling.

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### THE PINWOOD MUSIC COMPANY

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# RADIO TUNERS

*FM and DAB hi-fi separates*



Radio is a fantastic musical resource that's in danger of being taken for granted, but whatever your tastes there's someone out there catering for it. If you haven't got a decent tuner hooked up to your hi-fi already, you're missing out!

### DAB or FM?

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

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

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

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

### RECEPTION

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

### TOP BUYS



#### Denon TU260L II £130

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



#### Cambridge DAB500 £150

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



#### Creek T50 £550

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



#### Magnum Dynalab MD 90T £1,195

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

## Our favourite TUNERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### FM & DAB HI-FI SEPARATES

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>FM TUNERS</b>										
	Creek T50	550	Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics	FM,M,L	128					251
	Denon TU-260L II	130	The return of the all-time favourite, now enhanced with RDS and sounding as fine as ever	FM,M,L	40					193
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
	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity	FM,M	30					250
	NAD S400	600	One of the best around – bass and treble are both well extended and detail is excellent	FM	30					230
	Primare T21	600	Identical to NAD S400 and likewise a very fine tuner	FM	30					230
	Rega Radio 3	398	Unpretentious unit which does what it claims, very well. Unusually fine FM sound in all areas	FM,M	20					242
	Rotel RT-02	279	A highly competent tuner which always sounds appealing and fuss-free	FM,M	30					242
<b>DAB TUNERS</b>										
	Arcam DIVA DT91	450	As good as any on DAB, with serviceable FM, this one-box solution offers good build and value	DAB,FM	16					269
	Cambridge Audio DAB500	150	Very good sound, plus optional response tweaks, and slickest operation yet	DAB	10					248
	Cambridge Azur 640T	200	Slightly ahead of the pack in DAB performance, though FM is never better than decent	DAB,FM	60					260
	Pure Digital DRX-701ES	250	A good introduction to DAB – fine value and simple to use	DAB	99					234
	Pure Digital DRX-702ES	330	Very flexible DAB (inc L-band) and FM tuner. DAB is good, FM a touch disappointing	DAB,FM,M	99					242
	Sony ST-SDB900	200	Nicely designed UK-tuned model is a touch bright with both DAB and FM but generally insightful and clear	DAB,FM,M	60					259

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



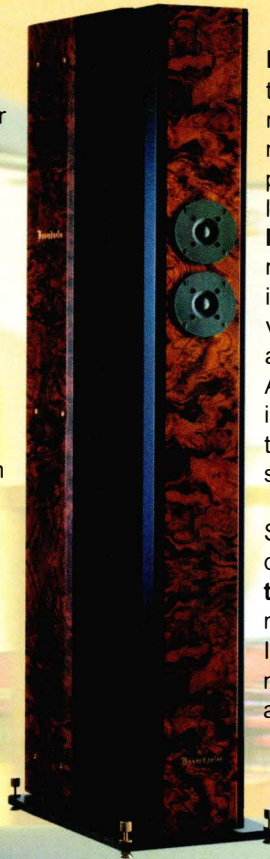
## Bosendorfer

**Renowned** for the skill and craftsmanship in building the finest traditional concert grand pianos, Bosendorfer has now created a line of loudspeakers using a new design radically different from those of the past. Going against the usual conventions of loudspeaker construction, Bosendorfer's cabinet design is a living, resonating body not an inert 'dead' shell. This creates a sound stage which comes significantly closer to the live experience than is achievable by conventional loudspeaker systems.

**Musical sounds** are formed by a complex blending of the fundamental tone, formants and overtones. The formants are primarily responsible for voice recognition because they determine the timbre: their frequencies remaining constant even when the overall tone changes. This basic musical principle, along with the consideration of high pulse dynamics, makes music come to life.

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**In the expert opinion** of leading acousticians, the critical parameters for authentic sound reproduction include extremely low levels of modulation distortion in frequency, amplitude, pulse, time-base, phase and inter-modulation-loudspeakers that function **three-dimensionally**, as only **Bosendorfer's do**, satisfy these requirements. These parameters are especially important for reproduction of tones such as vibratos, violin tones or the human voice, which are themselves a kind of frequency modulation. Additional modulation caused by electronic intervention or use of filters only leads to a distortion and misrepresentation of the original sound.

Since Bosendorfer loudspeakers were designed without losing sight of this '**law of tonality**', they are capable of producing live music of every genre with incredible accuracy. In this way, sound quality, recording quality and musical expression can all be heard to their full advantage.

**also at the Design Centre,  
Chelsea Harbour, Chelsea, London**

# AUDUSA

**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 power 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.

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# 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 DIGITAL RECORDERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

CD-R/RW, MD and HDD recorders

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

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



# SEVENOAKS

## SOUND & VISION

With over 30 years experience, **SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION** is one of the largest and most respected Audio/Visual retailers in the country.

Each Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store stocks a wide range of quality products, covering all categories of specialist home entertainment, from Hi-Fi separates and systems to DVD recorders, widescreen plasma televisions and projection systems.

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

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



### Specialist hi-fi & home cinema

**Contemporary hi-fi** is constantly setting new standards in sound reproduction and design. Whatever you listen to, 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.

**The recent growth of DVD** has led to a huge rise in demand for home cinema equipment - DVD players, AV receivers, projectors and plasma screens 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.

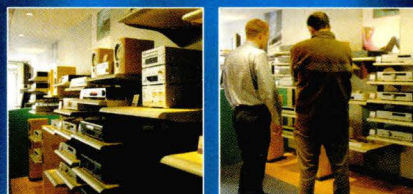
### NEWS NEW STORES

#### YEovil

We are pleased to announce that the new Yeovil store is now open.

#### YEovil

14 SILVER STREET • 01935 700078



#### LOUGHTON - OPENING SOON\*

7-9 GOLDINGS HILL

020 8532 0770

\*SUBJECT TO LEGAL COMPLETION.



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
BEST CD PLAYER  
ROTEL RA-03

### Rotel

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.



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
TURNTABLES  
BEST SOUNDING TURNTABLE  
PROJECT SOUND III

### Rokusan

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

### Audiolab **NEW** 8000 Series

Audiolab's new 8000 series offers a definitive and genuine hi-fidelity performance from a no-nonsense approach to engineering. These famous products have all been re-engineered to create a complete two channel range, including the 8000S, 8000Q, 8000M and 8000P models plus a all new CD player. A 7.1 channel pre and power amplifier completes the range.



### 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.



### B&W

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.

### 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.



### B&W MINI THEATRE MT-30

"Talented, covetable and worth every penny, the MT-30 (and PV1 especially) could well be heading for iconic status."

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
★★★★★  
SUPREMACY 2005

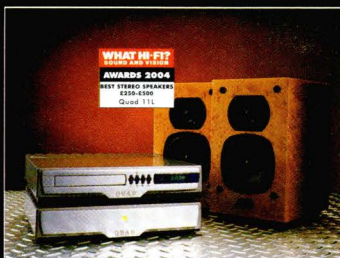


**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
SUBWOOFER  
BEST SUBWOOFER OVER £500  
B&W PV1

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
COMPACT SPEAKER PACKAGES  
B&W MT-30

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
COMPACT SPEAKER PACKAGES  
BEST COMPACT SPEAKER PACKAGE £500  
B&W MT-30





## Quad

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



## Monitor Audio

Since 1972 Monitor Audio has been developing and perfecting the implementation of metal drivers, innovative crossovers, and exemplary speaker cabinet construction and finish to further the ideal of achieving sound which is to the original "as close as it gets". The range includes - **GOLD, SILVER RS, BRONZE** and **RADIUS** speakers, plus the exciting new **i-Deck** docking station, an excellent any-room companion for your iPod.



## Digital Radio

With Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) capability, these high-quality tuners deliver more stations and offers pure, distortion-free, CD-like sound, while providing useful radio and data services.



Puric DRX702ES & NEW Denon TU-1800DAB

## Wharfedale

### Diamond 9.1

"Wharfedale has been updating and tweaking its Diamonds for 20 years - and rough they're not! Tight bass, clear midband, and sparkling treble for not a lot of cash."



### Diamond SW150

"Considering the price, the detail and definition to the bass are controlled and cohesive - equally adept with movies and music."

## KEF

Replacing the highly successful Q Series, KEF's New iQ line-up comprises eight models from the entry-level iQ1 bookshelf to the impressive iQ9 floorstander. All models incorporate KEF's Uni-Q driver technology and are available in a variety of finishes.



Other KEF ranges include XQ, KHT and the Award-winning KIT100 Home cinema system.

**KEF KIT100** "Creating a virtual surround sound experience has never been simpler or more effective, thanks to this two speakers plus subwoofer concoction from KEF."



### KEF iQ5

"The iQ5s are one of the best KEFs we've heard in years - we can't wait to hear the rest of the range."



### KEF KHT1005

"Superb value for money at its new price."

## 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."



## 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.

## 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.



**Arcam Solo Music System**  
"Excellent all-round sound combined with the convenience of a one-box product."

## Marantz

Marantz is introducing a host of new products ranging from high-end hi-fi to HD-ready DVD players and AV receivers. The two main products groups are the 'premium' and 'range' series.

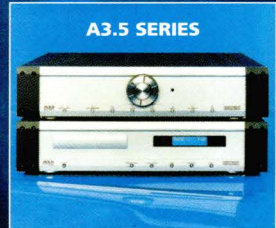
The SR9600THX Ultra2 AV receiver offers seven channels, each 140w, and features HDMI inputs. The groundbreaking DV9600 is one of the first DVD players capable of upscaling images to 1080p and is fully prepared for the high-definition future.



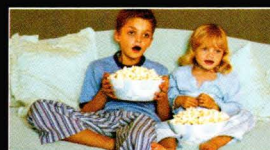
NEW MARANTZ SR9600 AV RECEIVER

## Musical Fidelity

Musical Fidelity's A3.5 Series amplifier, using circuitry closely related to A5's, and upsampling CD player combine high end performance, visuals and finish at a competitive price.



A3.5 SERIES



**PLEASE NOTE** Some products/brands are not available at all stores. Please call to confirm or visit our website before travelling.  
\*Added Value Offers - From range available in-store. Not in conjunction with any other offer. ADVERT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 17/11/2005, E&OE.



# 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.



**DVD-A1XV** "The most obvious winner of any category this year has to be Denon's evolutionary step in DVD deck design, the landmark DVD-A1XV... An astonishing piece of kit that has no equals."  
**AVC-A1XV** "It's not often we can't find fault with a product, but as we said in our review, "It not only expands the home cinema envelope, it shreds it and then nukes it for good measure." **HOME CINEMA CHOICE • AWARDS 2005**



**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
 ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEMS  
 BEST DVD-A1XV RECEIVER  
 DENON AVR-1912

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
 PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
 DVD PLAYER  
 DENON DVD-1912



**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
 BEST SURROUND AMPLI-RECEIVER  
 BEST DVD-A1XV RECEIVER  
 DENON AVR-1912

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
 PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
 HIFI HOME CINEMA SYSTEMS



# Yamaha

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



**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
 DVD PLAYER  
 BEST DVD-A1XV DVD PLAYER  
 YAMAHA DVD-S2500



**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
 PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
 SURROUND AMPLI-RECEIVER  
 YAMAHA DSP-AX757SE



**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
 SURROUND AMPLI-RECEIVER  
 BEST DVD-A1XV RECEIVER  
 YAMAHA RX-V4600

**YAMAHA'S DVD-S2500, DSP-AX757SE & RX-V4600**

# Pioneer

Pioneer has introduced three new DVD players. The super-slim (49.5mm high) DV-2850, DV-380 and DV-585A. All models are DivX compatible and deliver exceptionally high-quality pictures using a 108 MHz/12-bit Video D/A Converter. The **DV-585A** (Below) is a universal player, compatible with both DVD-Audio and SACD music discs.



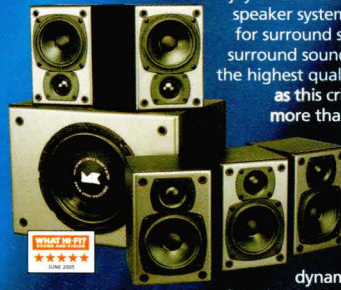
**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2004**  
 BEST SUBWOOFER  
 REL SL1000



**M&K KS** "Wonderful surround sound performance, agile and deep subwoofer."

# M&K

Enjoy cinema as the director intended with a speaker system that is genuinely designed for surround sound. Every Miller & Kreisel surround sound system is designed around the highest quality centre speaker available, as this critical speaker will reproduce more than 70% of a film soundtrack.



**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
 BEST DVD-A1XV SYSTEM  
 M&K KS

Partnered with two identical main speakers, this produces seamless panning across the front soundstage, combined with the remarkable clarity and effortless dynamics that has made M&K the first choice in recording studios worldwide.

# REL

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, REL is acknowledged as the leading provider of deep, clean bass frequencies.

# Harman Kardon

Harman's 7.1-channel DPR 2005 and DPR 1005 digital path receivers take Harman's groundbreaking digital path receiver platform to new levels of performance and functionality utilising a fully digital signal path from input to output, along with advanced features and technologies.



# DVD Recorders

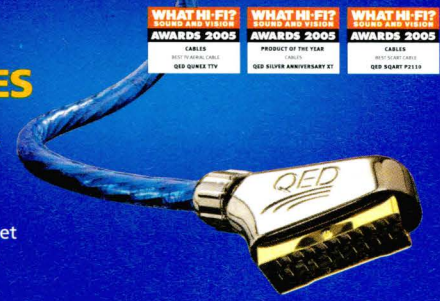
Although making digital recordings of TV broadcasts isn't new, the choice, versatility and quality of recorders keep getting better. Our product selection includes DVD only, hybrid DVD/hard-disk and multi-format models.



**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
 DVD & HARD-DISK RECORDER  
 BEST DVD-A1XV RECORDER  
 PANASONIC DMR-ES10

# 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.



**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
 CABLES  
 BEST TV AERIAL CABLE  
 QED QUINX TV

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
 PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
 CABLES  
 BEST TV AERIAL CABLE  
 QED SILVER ANNIVERSARY TV

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
 CABLES  
 BEST TV AERIAL CABLE  
 QED QUINX TV

# £ 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.

# FLEXIBLE FINANCE OPTIONS\*

Spread the cost of buying. Flexible finance options are available on the majority of products we stock. \*Written details on request. Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subject to status.

# PLEASE NOTE

Some products/brands are not available at all stores. Please call to confirm or visit our website before travelling. \*Added Value Offers - From range available in-store. Not in conjunction with any other offer. ADVERT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 17/11/2005, E&OE.





## Specialist home cinema

At the heart of any home cinema is its screen: Sevenoaks Sound & Vision can put you in the picture with a selection of flat-panel displays and projection systems. LCD and plasma screens are just a few centimetres thick and come in sizes from a 13inch portable to over 60inches.



## Sharp Aquos

Only Sharp Aquos LCD TV offers so much perfection. With supreme styling, the appeal of the Aquos range is obvious. The Titanium Series combines Sharp's sixth-generation LCD panel with stunning, angular-styling, titanium colour-finish and superb build quality to produce a premium class of LCD idTVs

### TITANIUM SERIES LC-45GD1E LCD TV with integrated FREEVIEW

"Sharp's mammoth 45in LCD TV is a testament to the growing viability and performance of large-scale LCD. Its 1,920 x 1,080 resolution panel allows high-definition pictures to be viewed without compromise and when exploited to its full potential, the results could see this screen hung in a gallery. Images are so crisp and sharp, it almost makes reality look dull. We think it's inspirational. Go pay homage." **HOME CINEMA CHOICE • AWARDS 2005**

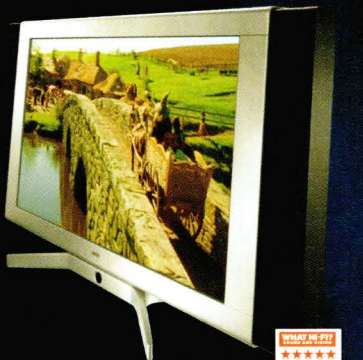
FREEVIEW channel and service subject to coverage. Aerial upgrade may be required.

## Loewe

### Concept L32 32" LCD TV

With its minimalist, functional design, slim profile and ease of operation, the Concept L32 exudes all of the classic Loewe virtues.

"This HD Ready set boasts 1366x768 resolution and plenty of inputs, including HDMI, component video and two Scarts. It also packs an integrated digital TV tuner, and - as ever with Loewe sets - its speaker set-up is a cut above most rivals... The Concept L32 is immensely attractive: it deserves to sell very well indeed."



## Hitachi

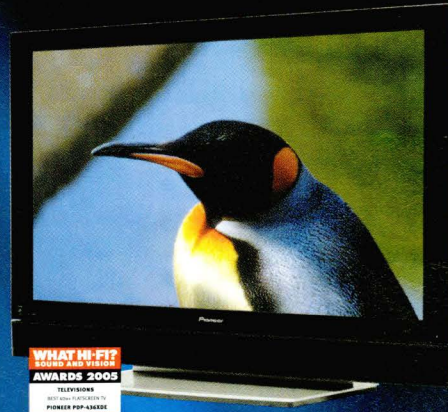
### PLATARA 42PD7200 42" PLASMA TV

"Alright, we admit it, we rather like this screen. In fact, it's very difficult to find a reason why anyone hankering for a 42in plasma shouldn't go out and buy one. Five stars for Hitachi and a new standard for affordable excellence for everyone else." **WHAT VIDEO • ISSUE 294**



# SEVENOAKS

SOUND & VISION



## Pioneer

Following its highly successful 'S' series, Pioneer has unveiled its sixth generation of plasma TVs. The 43" PDP-436XDE and 50" PDP-506XDE models include built-in digital tuners plus dual HDMI inputs.

### PDP-436XDE PLASMA TV

"Pioneer's latest is also its greatest: this is a truly wonderful HD-Ready TV."



## Panasonic Viera

There seems little doubt that the future of television is flat, and the future of flat is the award-winning VIERA range from the world leaders in screen technology, Panasonic. The VIERA range consists of both LCD and Plasma televisions. New additions to the range include 37, 42 & 50in PV500 models with support for both high-definition and MPEG-4 recording.



### TH42PV500 PLASMA TV

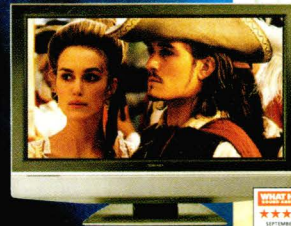
"All told, Panasonic's new TH42PV500 is a stunning set that's clearly the new class leader."



## Toshiba Stasia

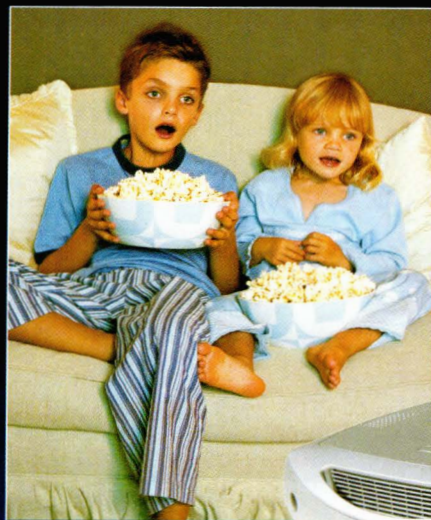
### 37WL56 37" LCD TV

Boasting HDMI connectivity, this new model also features Toshiba's impressive Active Vision LCD picture processing technology, whereby detail is improved by increasing the pixel count of the screen by three times that of a conventional LCD TV.



"Fine picture with both DVD and High-Def imagery; good with off-air TV, too... A very solid LCD buy - and fine value."





## Projection

If you'd prefer to measure your screen-size in feet, how about one of the new generation of projectors? The latest designs are delivering superb results at increasingly affordable prices - and they're more home friendly than previous projectors, too.



**SP7210**

"The new projector's picture is just phenomenal... Looks like ScreenPlay's success story is set to continue."

## ScreenPlay

From the worldwide leader in digital projection technology and solutions, InFocus® ScreenPlay® DLP™ projectors are changing the face of home cinema offering market-beating performance, specification and value at every price point.



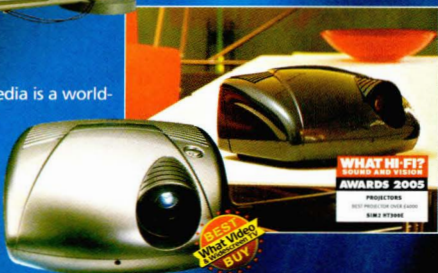
**SP4805**

"Another stunning success from ScreenPlay - there's never been a better time to take the big-screen plunge."

## Sim2

Sim2 Multimedia is a world-leading manufacturer at the forefront of home cinema technology and a name synonymous with high-end home cinema projection.

**HT300E** "Spectacular, in a word... Another terrific projector from Italy's finest."  
WHAT VIDEO • ISSUE 292



## Themescene

Since its launch, the multi-award winning ThemeScene™ brand has rapidly established a five-star reputation for uncompromised image quality.

**H30A** "There are so many good points it's hard to know where to start... Just how much better can budget DLP projectors get?!"  
WHAT VIDEO • ISSUE 292



## DVDO iScan™ VP30

The iScan™ VP30 is a high-definition video processor and A/V hub that converts standard or high definition from your DVD player, VCR, PVR, HD set top box, game console, or PC to any output resolution between 480p and 1080p, including popular HDTV resolutions such as 720p and 1080i.

## Product Selection

Listed below is a small selection of our extensive product range. **Please note:** Some products/brands are not available at all stores. Please call to confirm or see the brand locator at [www.ssav.com](http://www.ssav.com) before travelling.

### TURNTABLES

Goldring GR2	£ CALL	£ CALL
Linn RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Michell RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Project RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Roksan Radius 5	£ CALL	£ CALL

### TUNERS

Arcam RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Cyrus FM X	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon TU260L MKII	£99.95	£ CALL
Harman Kardon RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Linn RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Marantz ST4000	£99.95	£ CALL
Pure DRX-701ES DAB	£179.95	£ CALL
Pure DRX-702ES DAB/FM	£229.95	£ CALL
Rotel RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL

### CD PLAYERS

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

### CD RECORDERS

Yamaha CDR-HD1500	£469.95
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### AMPLIFIERS

Arcam RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Audiolab RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Cyrus RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon PMA355	£159.95	£ CALL
Linn RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Marantz PM4400	£139.95	£ CALL
Marantz PM17200	£239.95	£ CALL
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Musical Fidelity RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
NAD RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Quad RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Roksan RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Rotel RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Yamaha AX396	£169.95	£ CALL

### HI-FI SPEAKERS

Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo One	£119.95	£ CALL
Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo Three	£229.95	£ CALL
Acoustic Energy Aelite RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII	£ CALL	£ CALL
AVI Neutron IV	£ CALL	£ CALL
B&W RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
KEF RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Linn RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Mission RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Monitor Audio RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Quad RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Ruark RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Wharfedale RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL

### HI-FI SYSTEMS

Arcam Solo Ex Speakers	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Linn Klassik Music Ex Spks	£ CALL	£ CALL
Monitor Audio i-Deck	£249.95	£ CALL
Onkyo CR505DAB Ex Spks	£ CALL	£ CALL
Teac RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Yamaha CRX-M170 Ex Spks	£ CALL	£ CALL

### DVD SYSTEMS

Denon RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
KEF KIT100 Inc Speakers	£ CALL	£ CALL
Teac RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL

### MULTI-ROOM AUDIO

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

### DVD PLAYERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Arcam RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Cyrus RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon DVD-A1XV	£ CALL	£ CALL
Harman Kardon RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL

Marantz RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Meridian RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Panasonic RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Samsung DVD-HD945	£129.95	£129.95
Toshiba SD350	£79.95	£89.95
Yamaha RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL

### DVD RECORDERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Panasonic RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL

### A/V AMPLIFIERS & RECEIVERS

Arcam RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Audiolab RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Cyrus RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon AVC-A1XV A/V Amplifier	£ CALL	£ CALL
Denon RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Harman Kardon RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Lexicon RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Marantz RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Onkyo RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-1014s A/V Receiver	£399.95	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-2014i A/V Receiver	£499.95	£ CALL
Pioneer VSX-AX54Ai A/V Receiver	£749.95	£ CALL
Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai A/V Amplifier	£1799.95	£ CALL
Pioneer NEW RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Rotel RANGE	£ CALL	£ CALL
Yamaha DSP-AX7575E A/V Amplifier	£399.95	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V357 A/V Receiver	£149.95	£ CALL
Yamaha RX-V557 A/V Receiver	£299.95	£ CALL

### A/V SPEAKERS & PACKAGES

Acoustic Energy Evo 3B	£679.95
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
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Mordaunt Short Genie	£649.95
Quad L-Series	£ CALL
Wharfedale Diamond 9 HCP	£ CALL
Yamaha YSP RANGE	£ 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 RANGE	£ CALL
LG RANGE	£ CALL
Loewe RANGE	£ CALL
Panasonic RANGE	£ CALL
Pioneer PDP435XDE 43" (Ex Display)	£1999.95
Pioneer PDP505XDE 50" (Last Few)	£2999.95
Pioneer PDP436XDE 43"	£ CALL
Pioneer PDP506XDE 50"	£ CALL
Samsung RANGE	£ CALL

### LCD TV

Hitachi RANGE	£ CALL
LG RANGE	£ CALL
Loewe RANGE	£ CALL
Panasonic RANGE	£ CALL
Philips RANGE	£ CALL
Samsung RANGE	£ CALL
Sharp Aquos RANGE	£ CALL
Toshiba RANGE	£ CALL

### PROJECTORS

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

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

● **BRING YOUR FAVOURITE DISCS WITH YOU** - To ensure you get the most from the music and movies in your collection, it pays to test equipment using those very same discs or records, that way you can readily compare levels of performance. However, if you prefer, we can supply a selection of demo discs - current mainstream entertainment that serves to highlight the capabilities of the equipment.

● **JUST ASK** - If you are unsure of any aspect of the products or technologies available, or would like more information about installation options, simply let us know and our staff will be happy to help you out.

● **TAKE YOUR TIME** - We want you to be as happy as possible with your choices, so please take as much time as you need to determine which products are right for you.

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## Sevenoaks Website

The Sevenoaks Sound & Vision website has news and information on the Sevenoaks group and detailed pages to help you locate your nearest store. In addition, there are hundreds of **SPECIAL OFFERS** and **STOCK CLEARANCE** items available from our stores nationwide - many with savings of up to 50%. To view our regularly updated product lists, visit [www.ssav.com](http://www.ssav.com) and click on **special offers**



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SOUND & VISION

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● 29-31 ST PETERS STREET

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● 57 WESTERN ROAD, HOVE

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● 92B WHITELADIES ROAD, CLIFTON

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● 39A EAST STREET

**CAMBRIDGE** 01223 304770

● 17 BURLEIGH STREET

**CARDIFF** 029 2047 2899

● 104-106 ALBANY ROAD

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● 403 KINGS ROAD

**CHELtenham** 01242 241171

● 14 PITTVILLE STREET

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● 32 THE BOULEVARD

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● 369-373 LONDON ROAD

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● 24 THE GREEN *OPEN SUNDAY*

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● 5 THE GRASSMARKET

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● 12 UPPER HIGH STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

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**GLASGOW** 0141 332 9655

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**HOLBORN** 020 7837 7540

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**HULL** 01482 587171

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**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*)

**LOUGHTON** 020 8532 0770 \**OPENING SOON*

● 7-9 GOLDINGS HILL \**SUBJECT TO LEGAL COMPLETION*

**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, SHERWOOD

**OXFORD** 01865 241773

● 41 ST CLEMENTS STREET

**PETERBOROUGH** 01733 897697

● 36-38 PARK ROAD *OPEN SUNDAY*

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● 29-30 CLEVELAND STREET

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# 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



**NAD**  
C352 £350

NAD made its name building world-beating budget amps, and the C352 continues that tradition in style – powerful, dynamic and thoroughly enjoyable with all music types.



**Arcam**  
DiVA A90 £890

Top dog in Arcam's DiVA range is this excellent integrated amp. Its strengths include a slick, flexible user interface and beautifully smooth and detailed sound.



**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 combo combines warmth and body with energy and detail – a truly musical performer.



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

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS

### Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
<span>BB</span>	Arcam DIVA A65 Plus	370	Highly articulate and fluent – offers unusual insight for the price	7	opt	●	●	40	232
	Arcam DIVA A80	600	A very competent mid-range amp with a sophisticated control system and crisp, detailed sound	6	●	●	●	90	251
	Arcam DIVA A90	850	Very well specified, well built, a delight to use and a real musical all-rounder	7	opt	●	●	90	273
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
	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
<span>BB</span>	Electrocompaniet EC13	999	Large and fairly powerful, with individual looks and very refined sound	6		●		70	262
	Exposure 3010I	1000	Full-bodied and enjoyable sound: phono stage well worth an extra £200	5	opt	●		100	273
<span>BB</span>	Exposure 2010 S	599	Beneath the unassuming exterior lurks a very capable performer that's passionate about music	6	opt	●		75	262
<span>BB</span>	Marantz PM4400 OSE	250	Highly competent and well specified – a lively performer that makes great music	5	●		●	50	256
<span>BB</span>	Musical Fidelity X-80	600	The entry-level to Musical Fidelity's amplifier range sounds both powerful and refined	4		●		55	255
<span>BB</span>	NAD C352	350	A dynamic and musical amp at a bargain price – another budget classic from NAD	7		●	●	55	253
<span>BB</span>	Naim Nait 5i	699	A trade-off of more power and better connectivity against less inputs works surprisingly well in a grumpy, musical manner	4		●		50	252
<span>BB</span>	Primare I21	750	Energetic sound, with just a little veiling of detail at times: confident with tricky loads	4		●		75	273
	Rotel RA-03	499	Does all the basics commendably, only losing out to dearer competition in imaging and fine detail	5	●	●	●	70	273
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	Sugden A21a	899	This single-ended, Class A transistor amp has exquisite resolving ability and presence – an authentic classic	5				25	224
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>									
<span>BB</span>	Arcam FMJ A32	1,200	Ultra-civilised amp with plenty of features that's also highly revealing and musical	7	●	●	●	100	266
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	Audio Research VSi55	2,895	Superb all-rounder provides the delights of valve amplification without sacrificing convenience	5		●		50	254
<span>BB</span>	AVI Laboratory Series	1,399	Terrific power, control and resolution – effortlessly musical and fine value	6	opt	●		200	241
<span>BB</span>	Copland CSA29	1,900	A hybrid valve/solid state amplifier that gets close to offering the best of both worlds	6	opt	●		85	255
<span>BB</span>	Exposure XXXV	1,599	Musical, powerful, tuneful and controlled, though not always the most analytical	6	opt	●		80	271
<span>EC</span>	Krell KAV-400xi	2,698	The best integrated Krell yet is quick, agile, solid and finely detailed	5		●		200	247
<span>EC</span>	McIntosh MA2275	5,400	A valve amplifier that doesn't patronise. It's not soft-centred and it understands dynamics	5	●	●		75	271
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	Moon i-3	1,595	Powerful Canadian amp whose lively presentation is particularly suited to big-scale music	6		●		100	265
<span>BB</span>	Primare I30	1,500	A smooth, sophisticated yet agile performer, and beautifully built too	6		●	●	100	267
<span>EC</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	Unison Research Unico 200	3,000	Hybrid integrated with high power/quality low power modes combines much of the best of solid state and valve design	5		●		200	269

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

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS

### Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £2,000</b>										
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>EC</span>	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
<span>EC</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	Naim NAC 112x/NAP 150x	1,475	Up-rated entry-level Naim pre/power is a master of musical communication	●	●	6		●	50	262
<span>BB</span>	Quad 99/909	1,650	Well thought out and well executed, with good strong sound and just a little veiling	●	●	5		●	136	256
<b>ABOVE £2,000</b>										
<span>EC</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	Arcam FMJ C31	1,200	Professionally presented, beautifully built and exceptionally revealing, this preamp achieves much by doing little	●		5	opt	●		273

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



Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS continued

## Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
EC	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
EC	Gamut D200 Mk3	3,950	A great power amp that's now even better – one of the best regardless of price		●				200	247
EC	Halcro dm10/dm68	25,550	Extravagant, extreme and massive amp combo will probably polarise opinions, but delivers stunning midrange clarity	●	●	5	●	●	225	243
EC	Hovland HP-100/RADIA	12,745	Uncommonly musical valve/transistor hybrid transcends stereotypes, one of the genuine high achievers	●	●	9	opt		125	250
EC	Krell FPB 700cx	14,998	Reference class amplifier may represent overkill in many systems, but when no compromise is called for, this is it		●				700	234
EC	Linn Klimax Kontrol	6,000	Beautifully executed example of Scots audio art, sounds as clean as it looks and is a lot more transparent than most	●		4		●		238
	Naim NAC 202/NAP 200	2,720	More sophisticated than its forebears with a fleet-footed sound that draws you into the music	●	●	8		●	70	241
EC	Naim NAP 500	11,875	Wonderful neutrality, bandwidth and dynamic range, plus Naim's traditional leading-edge definition		●				140	208
EC	Naim NAC 552	12,100	Extremely expensive preamp, but still solid value. Magnificent sound with fine flexibility and convenience	●		6		●		233
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



**Yamaha**  
**DSP-AX757SE £499**  
 If you're looking for a multichannel amp that's good with music as well as home cinema, this is your best bet below £500.



**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	RECEIVER	LINE INPUTS	7.1 COMPATIBLE	5-CHANNEL POWER (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>MULTICHANNEL INTEGRATED AMPS</b>								
<b>BB</b>	Arcam AVR300	1,300	Cracking all-round music and movie ability sets the Arcam apart from the AV crowd	●	8	●	100	257
<b>EC</b>	Denon AVC-A11XV	2,500	Sensible, real world derivative of AVC-A1XV, but still immensely flexible, and well endowed with digital i/o		11	●	140	273
	Denon AVR-2803	650	Merely 'average' sound but it's impossible to argue against the flexibility and value of its engineering	●	9	●	130	251
<b>EC</b>	Denon AVC-A1XV	4,000	Inlegant, but powerful and effective tool with excellent auto set-up and capable of driving two 5.1 systems simultaneously		●	●	170	266
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Pioneer VSA-AX5i	1,200	A well specified receiver with a powerful, upfront sound. Includes i.Link digital interface and MCACC auto set-up	●	11	●	100	248
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Sony STR-DB798	250	Cheap but effective, and passably good with pure audio sources, but control system messy	●	7	●	100	273
<b>BB</b>	Sony STR-DB795	300	A superb value little amplifier, well appointed technically and successfully tuned for UK ears	●	7	●	100	260
<b>EC</b>	Sony TA-DA9000ES	2,600	Arguably the first convincing fully digital amplifier, an excellent match for players with i.Link encrypted outputs	●	10	●	200	253
<b>BB</b>	Yamaha DSP-AX757SE	499	Exceptional sounding budget/mid price receiver offers brilliant sound per pound; ergonomics could be better	●	9	●	100	273
<b>MULTICHANNEL PREAMPS/PROCESSORS AND POWER AMPS</b>								
<b>BB</b>	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	
<b>EC</b>	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	
<b>EC</b>	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	
	Linn Exotik	1,750	Is hi-fi ready to make the jump to multichannel music? Linn think so with this musical preamplifier	4			260	
<b>EC</b>	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	
<b>EC</b>	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	
<b>BB</b>	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.

"It is, quite simply, the most impressive mains filter we've ever heard."  
**Hi-Fi News, GII Titan**

"...one of the most cost-effective home cinema and Hi-Fi upgrades there is."  
**What Hi-Fi, GII Vision**



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 www.isoteksystems.com

"It is one of the most effective units I have had the pleasure of using."  
**Hi-Fi News, GII Mini Sub**

"The Gemini is a stunning performer giving a good overall tonal balance."  
**What Hi-Fi, GII Gemini**

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2003			2004			2005				
2003 Hi-Fi Choice Editors Choice IsoTek Mini Sub	2003 Best Buy 2003 Category Winner IsoTek Mini Sub	2003 Hi-Fi Choice Category Winner IsoTek Mini Sub	2004 Hi-Fi News Category Winner IsoTek Mini Sub	2004 What Hi-Fi? IsoTek GII Vision	2004 Hi-Fi Choice Category Winner IsoTek GII Mini Sub	2004 What Hi-Fi? Category Winner IsoTek GII Vision	2004 Hi-Fi Plus Category Winner Nordost Thor by IsoTek	2005 What Hi-Fi? IsoTek Gemini-6-Way	2005 Hi-Fi Choice Editors Choice Nordost Thor by IsoTek	2005 What Hi-Fi? IsoTek Titan



# 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.

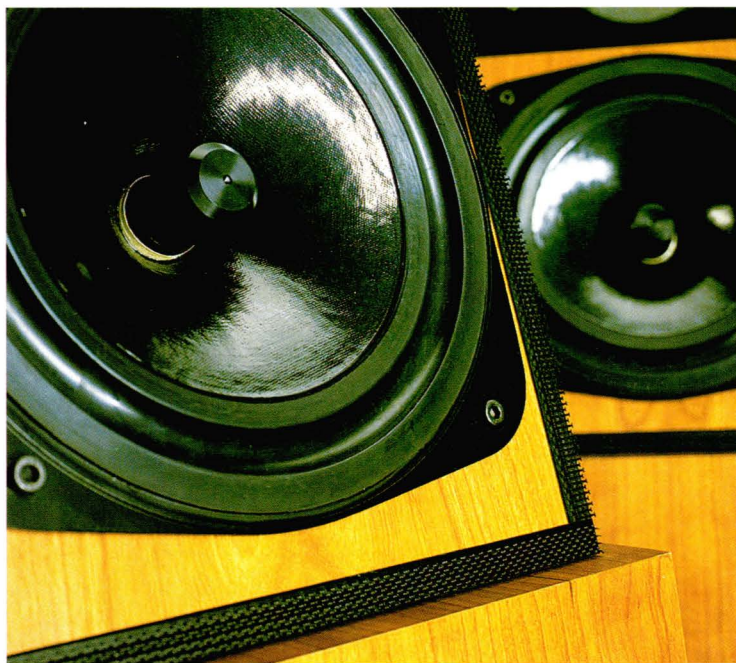
Box speakers are either designed to stand on the floor (floorstanders) or on a stand (stand or shelfmounts). Floorstanders have greater internal volume which can translate into greater efficiency and/or bass extension, but less substantial designs also introduce cabinet resonance and thus distortion.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

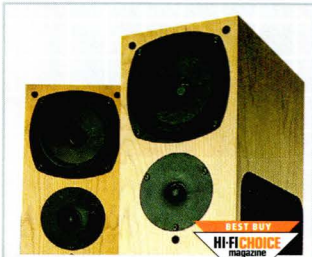
Big, efficient, easy-to-drive designs are more likely to be able to fill a room better than compact models.

### 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



**Rega**  
R3 £448

A neat little floorstander that really knows how to communicate with music. Its sound is crisp and agile, and what it lacks in sheer bass weight it makes up for in energy.



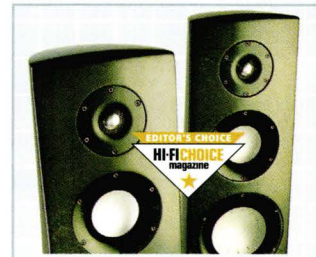
**KEF**  
iQ9 £800

This superbly judged floorstander delivers a clean, powerful and transparent sound, with impressively taut bass. A very fine all-rounder for the money.



**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

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE (WxHxD (CM))	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (W/D)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	SCALE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>										
	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
	ATC SCM12	999	Magnificent main driver confers great authority, grip and smoothness, though upper bass a little lean	22,39,26		A-	55		●	253
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	Dali Ikon 6	899	Needs care with setup, but rewards you with impressively transparent and almost obsessively detailed sound	19,100,33	●	A	37	●		271
	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
	Epos ELS 303	399	Midband is impressively smooth, even and coherent, but the sound lacks some dynamic grip and top end detail	18,85,20	●	A-	28	●		273
	Epos ELS3	200	Few affordable speakers sound as clean and convincing while taking up so little real estate	18,27,19		A-	60	●		241
	Epos M5	349	Gorgeous miniature works well close to wall. Could be smoother but communicates with authority	18,33,21		A-	40		●	269
	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
	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
	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
	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 iQ9	800	Shapely and solid floorstander has wide bandwidth and dynamic range with superior neutrality and sensitivity	22,94,33	●	A	25	●		273
	Monopulse 42A	995	Uniquely different in style and sound, midband time-coherence is magnificent but treble is too restrained	26,110,25	●	A+	28	●		271
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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

**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).



# audiolincs



## ACOUSTIC SIGNATURE

Simplicity is a virtue as well as a winning formula. The Acoustic Signature Mamba turntable embodies meticulous German engineering, superb materials and massive construction to offer world class performance with style and, in today's terms, outstanding value. The heart (and soul) of our current vinyl reference system.

## HORNING

Even with its twin, rear mounted twelve inch Beymer bass drivers, a Lowther midrange unit and Horning tweeter, the mighty Horning Agathon is designed for corner or near wall placement, delivering an effortlessly natural sound performance which demonstrates that real music reproduction transcends mere hi-fi.



## KR AUDIO KRONZILLA

A valve specifically designed for high-end audio has 'raised the bar' for lovers of 300B, 211 and 845's. KR Audio's gracefully powerful 1610 output valve (larger than a wine bottle!) is the driving force of our new single ended reference amplifiers, the truly awesome KR Audio Kronzilla DM monoblocks. Once again, it's valves that restore emotion to music reproduction.



## SHANLING CD-T300

When a respected reviewer decides to buy this fabulous CD player, even the extremely limited UK allocation sells out quickly! Our own reference for months and now destined to be a highly sought-after classic, we have only one left. And of course, that one could be sold by the time this magazine appears on the news stands!



## REFERENCE 3a

Many small speakers 'interpret' music in much the same way we read text books. So if you'd prefer to experience a more interesting story with characters, drama, pace, rhythm, just take a listen to Reference 3a loudspeakers. Small speakers that create a big picture. Dulcet and MM de Capo i models in stock.



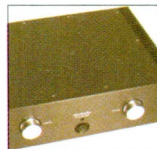
## MF AUDIO

A pre-amp that destroys all preconceptions. We've been converted! Despite having no valves, despite being passive, despite 'manual' control, we just love it! What's more, whenever we use the Music First as our reference pre-amplifier, it's very often preferred to equipment costing many times the price.



## LAVARDIN

Never underestimate the Lavardin IT integrated amplifier! Where some solid state amps are phenomenally detailed but ultimately fatiguing, and others are 'gently rounded' but lack dynamic conviction, the Lavardin delivers everything you'd expect and, best of all, you can enjoy your favourite music tirelessly, disc after disc after disc!



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&  
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AUDIOSTATIC DCI Wing Loudspeakers (£5,000)	Mint, boxed	£3495
BAT VK-51SE Pre-amp (£7,995)	Mint, boxed	£3995
BAT VK-150SE Monoblocks (£15,500)	Mint, flight cases	£8995
BAT VK5 Phono stage	New, boxed	£1395
CARY 300B SE Monoblocks (£2750)	Mint, boxed	£1995
CONRAD JOHNSON PV-14L Pre (New £2250)	Mint, boxed	£1395
CONRAD JOHNSON EF1 Phono-stage (£2000)	Mint, boxed	£895
CROFT Charisma 'X Spec' Pre Upgraded	Mint, boxed	£1795
DENSEN beat 400XS CD Player with Gizmo	Very little use, boxed	£1795
GRAAF GMS0B Integrated Amp	As new, boxed	£2895
HORNING Agathon in oak	A bargain at	£2795
HORNING Zeus in cherry (£2,000)	Ex-dem, few hours only	£1395
LINN SONDEK LP12 (Trampoline) Fully serviced and offered complete with a brand new Origin Live Ultra DC motor drive, a brand new Conqueror arm and a brand new Transfiguration Esprit cartridge.	Mint	£3,495
QUAD ESL 57 (Very late serial numbers)	Unmarked	£795
MELOS 402 Monoblocks - will drive anything!	Superb	£2795
PAPWORTH M200 Monoblocks 2004 (£4995)	Mint, boxed	£2995
SOUNDLAB A3 Oak - fabulous speakers	A bargain at	£2695
XTC CDT1LE CD Transport Remote control.	As new, boxed	£495

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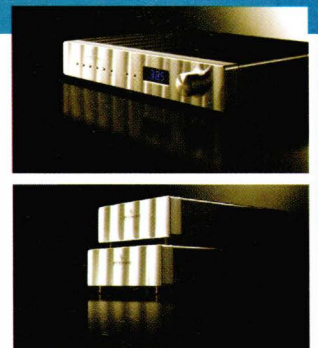
## Jeff Rowland

Jeff Rowland Design Group is a dedication to a single, heartfelt idea, the production of electronic components capable of unveiling the rich, emotional tapestry of music in a personally involving way.

The result is a product line that offers exceptional value for money, unrivalled musical revelation packaged in chassis designs of unparalleled beauty.

The end result of nearly a two-decade quest for musical truth is the creation of audio equipment of enduring value.

Jeff Rowland in no small way, offer a key that assists listeners in unlocking the vast structure of emotion that is...music.



## EgglestonWorks



ANDRA II Loudspeaker, an instrument crafted to play music like no other speaker on earth...

The underlying goal of all EgglestonWorks loudspeakers is to strike a powerful, emotional chord naturally present in live music performance. To accomplish this, EgglestonWorks takes a rather unusual approach that relies to a lesser extent on engineering measurements and mathematical equations. At the core of their innovation is a process passed down through two generations, which focuses on understanding how sound created by live musical instrumentation can be used as a tool in the critical stages of loudspeaker design.

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audiophilia



Our favourite B BEST BUY E EDITOR'S CHOICE

## STEREO SPEAKERS *continued*

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (WHD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EDGE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">E</span>	Tannoy Sensys DC1	449	Modest sensitivity but beautifully balanced with fine authority at a very realistic price	21,41,29	●	A	40	●	245
	Tannoy Eyris 1	600	Pricey but very cute standmount miniature; oddball, but has marvellous midband subtlety and delicacy	17,35,26		A+		●	227
	Tannoy Sensys DC2	649	Has impressive scale and weight with fine stereo imaging, but is also rather laid back, lacking easy agility	21,97,29	●	A	20	●	250
	Tannoy Eyris 2	999	This super-slim and cutely different-looking floorstander is very communicative, despite weak treble	17,91,26	●	A	20	●	231
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">E</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	Triangle Comete ES	500	Bulky standmount lacks style but delivers engrossing musical coherence and vivid dynamics	20,42,34		A	40	●	265
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>									
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII	1,690	Luxury miniature has a laid-back but bouncy sound, a marvellous dynamic range and very superior imaging	19,31,25		A-	30	●	251
	Acoustic Energy AE3 MKII	4,490	A beautifully neutral speaker with very wide dynamic range and superior imaging, plus lovely Art Deco styling	19,99,29	●	A	20	●	251
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	Anthony Gallo Nucleus Ref	2,400	Occasionally raw, but engaging and capable beyond its physical stature	20,89,41	●	A	34	●	257
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	Audio Physic Spark 3	1,499	Classy and discreetly laid back floorstander has delightfully neutral balance and surprising bass weight	15,98,22	●	A+	27	●	271
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">E</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	B&W 805S	1,600	Classy standmount with excellent coherence and imaging. Can sound laid back but otherwise a real delight	24,39,33		A	25	●	271
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	BC Acoustique ACT-A1	1,195	Exceptional focus, dynamic coherence and expression through the voice band, but bass could be more even	21,90,33	●	A+	25	●	257
	Beauhorn B2.2 Revelation	3,984	Magnificent midband and fine overall balance but limited bass is best with small-scale material	34,130,75	●	A+	80	●	244
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">E</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">E</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">E</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">E</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">E</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">E</span>	Gamut L5	5,900	Impressive build and sophisticated driver design make the L5 a stunning speaker with rare transparency levels	20,115,8,43	●	A-	32	●	271
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">E</span>	Krell Resolution 2	6,497	Large., but good looking with Sonus Faber type elasticated front. Musically a great full bandwidth all-rounder	122,29,61	●	B	28	●	273



# Sound Fantastic



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Our favourite  BEST BUY  EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO SPEAKERS continued

## Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (WxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF USE	BASS (FROM Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
	Living Voice Auditorium	1,700	Gloriously coherent and dynamic midband, though the top end is restrained and bass was uneven in our room	22,86,28		A-	30		247
	Living Voice Avatar OBX-R2	4,000	Has Dynamics, tonal colour, detail, space and time resolution in spades. External crossovers require extra cabling	22,100,27		A+	35		244
	MartinLogan Mosaic	1,799	Curious hybrid construction marries many panel speaker-like attributes with moving coil simplicity	24,102,30		A-	46		257
	MartinLogan Clarity	2,498	Relatively affordable and easy to live with electrostatic hybrid with class-leading resolving power	26,135,31		A-	46		245
	Mordaunt-Short Perf 6	3,500	Revolutionary enclosure design and aspirated tweeter make for a fast, hi-res ride	24,121,37		A-	35		264
	Naim Ariva	1,275	Cute and discreet floorstander has superb bass and a wide dynamic range, but it could be smoother and sweeter	23,88,31		A	25		259
	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
	Neat Ultimatum MFS	2,995	Wonderful five-driver standmount sounds bigger than it looks. Very spacious and informative	22,38,37		A+	25		241
	PMC FB1+	1,625	Nicely proportioned floorstander has a sweet top and a beautifully natural, open and restrained midband	20,100,30		A	20		260
	PMC OB1	2,450	Genuinely deep bass and lovely overall neutrality, though mid could have more tension and bass more punch	20,103,33		A	20		243
	PMC IB2	6,150	Stunning in an understated way, this speaker creeps up on you and hooks you with its transparency and power	33,74,47		A-	25		237
	ProAc Response D25	2,995	The traditional ProAc high-end detail mixed with greater efficiency and more pace - a splendid speaker	22,107,25		A+	20		254
	Rega R7	1,498	Super-slim and super-smooth floorstander has fine agility with a slightly bright overall character	27,98,35		A	25		271
	Rega R9	2,498	This subtle, laid back but very informative performer has a very superior dynamic range, especially in the bass	17,103,39		A	20		256
	Revel F32	3,200	Meticulously balanced, tonally neutral design makes for a taut, well disciplined sound	22,105,39		A	30		265
	Ruark Talisman III	1,499	No bass demon, but a sophisticated and agile speaker epitomising Ruark's design ideals	22,84,31		A	22		259
	Sonus Faber Concerto Domus	1,799	Great choice, especially for acoustic material, which performs significantly above its price level	21,99,31		A	35		270
	Sonus Faber Cremona A.	2,149	Standmount 'Auditor' version of the Cremona makes a soundstage bigger and better than its size suggests	19,35,32		A	48		246
	Spendor S6e	1,495	Combines deep, powerful bass with an attractively open midband, but perhaps too much restraint up top	30,88,19		A+	23		257
	Spendor S9e	2,895	An improvement on the original S9 - very entertaining at high levels with a fabulously open and weighty bass	24,101,38		A+	40		256
	Tannoy Dimension TD8	4,000	This stylish speaker is a splendid all-rounder, with fine dynamics, precise imaging and minimal coloration	31,86,30		A-	25		240
	Totem Forest	2,390	Low sensitivity but wonderfully open neutrality, at heart a beautifully communicative and musical loudspeaker	20,90,27		A	25		247
	Triangle Naia	1,900	Exciting, vivid and communicative, but also a bit untidy and uneven, the Naia is a whole lot of fun	23,119,32		A-	25		247
	Triangle Magellan Concerto	9,995	Scintillating midrange and treble, with tuneful, well-timed bass - a thoroughly engaging musical ride	28,149,34		A	35		262
	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
	Vivid Audio B1	6,590	Impressive cabinet design combined with hi-tech drivers to make truly world class speaker	27,110,38		A-	40		261
	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,000	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package	23,91,37		A	28		254
	Wilson Benesch ACT	8,400	Superb enclosure gives uncanny freedom from 'boxiness'. Well balanced, but top end might be sweeter	23,108,36		A	20		252

# AV SPEAKERS

Speaker solutions for multichannel surround sound



Multichannel speaker systems have a front left/right (L/R) stereo pair, a centre or dialogue channel, two (5.1) or four (7.1) surround speakers and often a subwoofer. For best results, each of these speakers bar the sub should be identical. The problem is that few surround systems are dedicated to music and perform a home cinematic role as well, meaning the centre speaker has to sit above or below a video

monitor. Centre channels are usually wide and short for this reason.

This should not be a barrier to great surround for music and movies however, as many brands make centre channels with a very close sound to their L/R designs.

### Music vs movies

High-resolution SACD and DVD-A music recordings tend to be mastered with

surround speakers in the ITU standard position which is as far behind the listener as the front channels are in front. 5.1 movie soundtracks tend to place surround channels not so far behind and to the side of listeners. Usually, practical limitations will dictate a limited range of placement options, but if you are a dedicated music fan, check out the ITU set-up regulations in the booklet supplied with SACD discs.

## SET-UP

Ideally you should set up surround speakers with as much care as you would stereo systems, but practical issues tend to have a significant bearing on surround and centre speaker placement. Surround channels can be floorstanding or wallmounted, and centres usually have to perch on the TV or underneath it. Given these limitations, adjust your L/R front

speakers to give the best tonal match with the centre. If there's more than just you listening, 'toe in' the speakers so that their axis crosses in front of the listening position - this gives a wider stereo image. And if there's a subwoofer it should be placed near the front speakers. Use a sound pressure metre (available from Tandy among others) to accurately set levels.

## SUBWOOFERS

Subs start working where stereo speakers run out of steam at low frequencies. The idea is to create deeper, better-controlled bass rather than more of it. They usually have onboard amplification (active) and connect to either the LFE (Low Frequency Effects) channel in a home cinema set-up or the speaker terminals in a stereo set-up.



## TOP BUYS



**B&W**  
600 S3 package £900  
Incorporates 602s, 601s and an LCR 600 centre speaker. Great in both stereo and multichannel surround modes.



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



**ATC**  
Concept 3 £4,877  
It might not look as flashy as some, but the quality of engineering in this ATC package ensures superb all-round performance.



**Linn**  
Akurate package £13,750  
Linn has worked wonders with its new multichannel speaker system – it's not cheap, but its performance is breathtaking.

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

# AV SPEAKER PACKAGES

### Multichannel speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	EASE OF DRIVE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">B</span>	ATC Concept 3	4,877	Extremely engaging, revealing and musical multichannel system providing 360 degrees of full-on entertainment	A-	6	12	●	opt	255
	B&W 300 package	900	An excellent compromise between the requirements of music and those of home cinema (inc. subwoofer)	A	6	27	●		241
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">B</span>	B&W 600 S3 (602/601/LCR 600)	900	Unquestionably delivers the sonic goods. High-quality drivers in standmount enclosures	A	5	22	●		224
	Castle CAV Sterling	1,250	Lovely real wood veneers. Sound has fine dynamic drive and expression, but can sound a little hard	A	5	28		●	224
	Dynaudio Audience 42 package	1,142	Multichannel package for hi-fi purists with real authority and imaging, but needs subwoofer for full-bore movie sound	A-	5	53	●		241
	Final Sound Electrostatic system	4,875	Slim, attractive, electrostatic panels have clever connections, limited loudness but a breathtaking transparency	A-	6	20	●		251
	Focal-JMLab Electra package	3,017	Bold, solid system, tremendous consistency and easy to expand with an added subwoofer	A	5	50	●		232
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">E</span>	Linn Akurate (242/212/225/221)	13,750	An extremely capable system that offers new insights into the potential for multichannel audio	A-	6	18	●		253
	Mirage Omni 2	2,650	Dark tonality, but superb imagery makes this an excellent all-round choice	A	5	30	●		232
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">B</span>	Mission m5 package	1,450	Main m52 is a clean, attractive full-range stereo speaker, while the m5as sub does big bass for movie fans	A	6	28	●		241
	Mordaunt-Short Genie	800	A prince among sub/sat packages – good integration and impressively little compromise compared to full-size models	A-	6	38		●	262
	Mordaunt-Short Declaration 500	1,600	Good value vinyl THX Select package with Power Towers. Good authority, but must be 5.1-connected	A	5	25		●	210
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">B</span>	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 BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

# SUBWOOFERS

### Bass speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE (WxHxD (CM))	POWER (W)	BASS FROM (HZ)	ISSUE NUMBER
	B&W PV1	950	Gorgeously styled sub shakes the air but not the floor, delivering a very clean sound with negligible coloration	29,34,35	500	20	259
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">E</span>	B&W ASW850	2,000	Does all the things subwoofers should do with music and movies alike, but transparently and seamlessly	53,56,52	1000	18	246
	Monitor Audio ASW100	300	For the price, this compact subwoofer performs particularly well	32,32,34	120	27	225
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">B</span>	REL Stampede	550	Few subs at this price match the Stampede's subtlety and ease of integration. Much more hi-fi than AV	28,40,29	100	18	257
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">B</span>	REL Strata 5	700	Highly musical sub that integrates well but the REL Stampede offers near-identical performance for less money	32,46,33	150	18	257
	REL Storm III	900	Excellent sub with powerful, detailed and deep bass. Comprehensive facilities, including flexible filter adjustment	42,62,33	150	18	225
	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">E</span>	REL Stadium III	1,500	It's a bulky piece of furniture, but offers superior filtering as well as an ability to delve deep into the bass nether regions	59,56,39	200	16	217
	Titan Saturn	800	Very bulky sub has curious styling, but decent filtering gives good weight and headroom	72,48,72	200	20	239

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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 supra-aurals press on

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

### Getting the best from your cans

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

## Our favourite HEADPHONES

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Stereo headphones

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS							
				ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT (g)	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR	ISSUE NUMBER
	AKG K44	20	Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed: a bargain			●			190	●	219
	AKG K270 Studio	129	Pro oriented design which is very transparent and great with acoustic material			●		●	270	●	230
	AKG K1000	600	Neutral, analytical and completely out of the head sound, suitable for connection to speaker outputs only				●		270		244
	Audio Technica ATH-D40fs	105	Detailed and involving sound with a professional 'studio' quality appeal			●		●	250		194
	Beyerdynamic DT990	160	Impeccable balance, very extended bass and treble, and bags of detail place this model ahead of the pack			●	●		250	●	245
	Grado SR-60	90	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste		●		●		200	●	194
	Grado SR325i	300	Highly sophisticated and detailed sound with great extension: check for comfort		●		●		200	●	270
	Philips HP890	70	A remarkably sophisticated and very comfortable headphone			●	●		330	●	219
	Sennheiser HD595	150	Technology from upmarket HD650 model makes this a very revealing headphone that's also extremely comfortable			●	●		270	●	266
	Sennheiser HD650	300	Astonishing resolution and hardly less impressive tonal balance make this a true hi-fi experience			●	●		260	●	252
	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
	Stax SR-001 Mk II	239	Expensive and power hungry, but this electrostatic drags personal stereo into the world of high fidelity	●	●		●		280	●	268

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

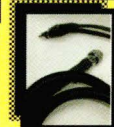
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- S.W London - Infidelity (Kingston upon Thames) 0208 943 3530
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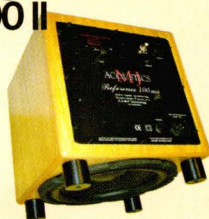


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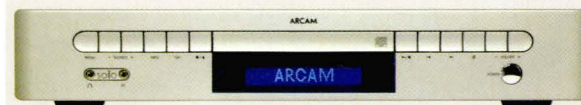
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# CABLES



## 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

### Interconnects and speaker cables

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER
				STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	
<b>ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS</b>								
	Black Rhodium Illusion	77	An upfront, lively, exciting cable which still manages subtlety when needed. Slight coloration though					248
<span style="background-color: yellow;">E.C.</span>	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
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	Chord Company Chorus	200	Very even-handed balance with notably extended bass					259
	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
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	Kimber Timbre	83	Typical Kimber construction with ditto sound – clean, extended and detailed					248
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	Monster Interlink 400 Mk2	70	Really lively and enjoyable sound at a sensible price					224
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	Townshend DCT100	100	Unusual construction with copper strip conductors, giving very detailed sound, but just an occasional hint of hardness					241
<span style="background-color: yellow;">E.C.</span>	Townshend Isolda DCT	300	Unusual construction and cryogenically treated too: whatever the reason, a remarkably capable wire					234
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	van den Hul The Bay C5	45	Terrific detail, nice balance – a great cable					224
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	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
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	van den Hul D102 Mk III	79	Hybrid conductors (carbon and copper) and intelligent construction give strong bass and excellent detail					234
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	Wireworld Luna 5	30	Authoritative bass and clear treble outperform many cables at twice the price					273
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	Wireworld Solstice 5	70	A cable with all-round appeal – treble is slightly 'dark' but bass is excellent and the overall balance very good indeed					259
<b>DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS</b>								
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	Black Rhodium Polar Scherzo	135	Highly detailed sound with notably solid and stable stereo imaging					E 270
<span style="background-color: yellow;">E.C.</span>	Kimber Select KS2020	629	Provides a subtle but rewarding lift in musicality with any DAC, justifying the price					E 260
<span style="background-color: yellow;">E.C.</span>	QED Qunex Signature 75	80	First-rate balance and imaging – ever so nearly as good as it gets at any price					E 265
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	QED Qunex SR75	50	Lots of bass and good clear midrange and treble at a sensible price					E 234
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	Supra ZAC	32	High grade fibre and quality plugs add up to a noticeable improvement over giveaway optical leads					O 259
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	van den Hul Optocoupler II	49	Noticeably has the edge over other optical leads, but still second best to electrical types					O 234
<b>SPEAKER CABLES PRICE PER METRE</b>								
	Black Rhodium S300	18	Tight, precise and extended bass makes this a great cable for rock 'n' roll					241
	Chord Company Signature	117	Dynamic, solid sounding cable, but it's bulky and not very tractable					255
	Ecosse Reference MS2.3	23	Favours excitement over refinement: can be slightly bass-shy, but plenty of life					227
<span style="background-color: yellow;">E.C.</span>	Electrofluidics 20/20	45	Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere – one of the best all-round cables available					241
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	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
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	Kimber 8TC	39	Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass. Price for 5m terminated pair					203
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	QED Silver Anniversary	5	A few minor flaws, but overall performance is very assured for this price					192
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	QED X-Tube XT300	10	A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems					234
<span style="background-color: yellow;">E.C.</span>	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
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	Wireworld Terra 5	5	Deep powerful bass, clear treble and very solid imaging add up to above-class performance					261
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	Wireworld Solstice 5	20	Unfriendly to handle, but makes up for it with very assured sound – heaps of bass and great insight					248
<span style="background-color: #d3d3d3;">E.C.</span>	Wireworld Oasis 5 Biwire	38	Full-bodied and precise sound across the board – an excellent performer in bi-wire or single-wire mode					262

**SPECS KEY** **STRANDED** Cable has a number of (usually) twisted strands to conduct the signal. **SOLID CORE** Cable has one or more individually insulated strands to conduct the signal.

**COPPER** Material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **SILVER** Alternative material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **DIGITAL CABLE TYPE** E – electrical, O – optical

Cables are one metre length unless otherwise stated.



# STANDS AND SUPPORTS

Equipment racks and speaker stands



If you want to get the most from your source and amp components, it's important to consider good quality support. Dedicated equipment supports are racks and tables made specifically to hold hi-fi gear, and the best can have a profoundly positive effect on sound

because, for example, they can help to isolate kit from ground-borne vibrations and mechanical or electrical interference. Equally, if you own a pair of small 'bookshelf' or 'standmount' speakers, it's important to place them on good quality, purpose-built speaker stands.

## Our favourite EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Equipment supports

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
	Alphason A5-G	399	Nice looking, very solid and practical with a pretty well balanced sound, but lacks a little detail	80	66,46		5	Glass	247
	Atacama Equinox	280	Stable, modular design with style. Excellent bass transients and a fresh design concept	81	50,50	●	4	Glass	217
	Audiophile Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities – a worthy upgrade	82	43		4	MDF	193
	Avid Isoschelf	1,100	An enthusiast's equipment support stand free from coloration, if a little fiddly to set up	87.5	48		5	MDF	193
	Clearlight Audio Aspekt	600	Stunning neutrality and detail from a well-damped design. Its performance makes the price tag good value	75	53.5,45		4	MDF	217
	Custom Design Aspect 650	270	Smart looks and practical thanks to adjustable shelves. Sound is fair with some loss of detail	66	46	●	4	Glass	206
	Custom Design Icon 400	599	Beautifully built, conveniently adjustable and with little sound of its own, a very classy rack	75	57, 41		5	Glass	263
	Custom Design Concept 400	700	Slightly drab looks, but great sound and efficient use of space ('Acoustic' version tested – standard version £300)	74	48,40		4	Metal	247
	Custom Design Vantige	449	'Acoustic Aluminium' shelves plus steel supports equal practicality plus musical satisfaction: just a shade bright	62	49,44		4	Metal	271
	Naim Fram	1,825	Pricy but very classy looking and sounding, with modular flexibility	96	45,34		5	Glass	232
	Isoblu 'The Stand'	460	Attractive modular design that's as easy on the ear as on the eye	47	48,40		4	MDF	247
	Quadraspire Q4 Reference	480	Excellent performance from the school of wobbly racks. Natural sounding and plenty of detail	51.5	49,39.5		4	MDF	217
	Russ Andrews Torlyte Rack	988	Attractive modular system made of very light Torlyte: a touch of added warmth is its only vice	68	54,49		4	Torlyte	240
	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!	92	50,40		5	Glass	217
	Townshend VSSS	1,300	The Seismic Sink goes all glassy and attractive, yet retains the same excellent vibration-killing sound quality	76	35,50		4	Glass	273

## Our favourite SPEAKER STANDS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Speaker stands

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF LEGS	ISSUE NUMBER
	Atacama Nexus 6	60	An excellent all-round performer and a genuine hi-fi bargain	60,50	14.5,18	●		3	202
	Custom Design RS 300 MkII	100	A solid stand improving on the original, with better focus and detail	61,56,51	16.5,18	●		2	202
	hne Cableway	395	Looks great, sounds great, so start saving! Clean and sweet, and neutrality is exceptional with orchestral material	63	17,20	●		1	220
	Kudos S50	159	Formidable bass with real authority, and a wide dynamic range across a broad bandwidth	61	15, 20	●		1	220
	Partington Ansa 60	90	Elegant flat-packer 'disappears' sonically; restrained but neutral and coherent	62	18,15	●		4	232
	Partington Dreadnought BS.	239	The Dreadnought Broadside is a superb stand for high-class standmount speakers – and it looks great too!	61	17,15	●	●	5	261
	Sound Organisation Z522	95	Very hefty build for the price helps to deliver a solid sound with good authority and drive	60	16	●		4	220
	Townshend Seismic Sink	499	Unique inflatable plinth that works wonders with decent floorstanders, as well as standmounted speakers	4	38,48			0	202

**EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS SPECS KEY** HEIGHT Of complete stand. **TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)** Width by depth of the supporting platform(s). Single figures indicate a square platform. **WELDED** As opposed to bolt-together construction. **NUMBER OF SHELVES** To put your kit on (different configurations are often available). **SHELF TYPE** Material that shelves are made of.

**SPEAKER STANDS SPECS KEY** HEIGHT Of each stand, not including spikes. **TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)** Width by depth of platform. Single figures indicate a square platform. Speakers generally overhang top plates. **FILLABLE** The stand can be mass-loaded with sand and/or lead to stop ringing. **WELDED** As opposed to bolt-together construction. **NUMBER OF LEGS** That support the stand.

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<b>Arcam A85</b> Amplifier S/H - Black (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(849.00) <b>£349.00</b>	<b>Naim NAC102</b> Preamp S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1175.00) <b>£699.00</b>
<b>Arcam DT81</b> DAB Digital Tuner (2 Yr G/tee) . . . . .(649.00) <b>£349.00</b>	<b>Naim NAC 252</b> Preamp S/H (1 Yr G/tee) . . . . .(4100.00) <b>£2890.00</b>
<b>Arcam FMJ CD33</b> CD Player (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1349.00) <b>£945.00</b>	<b>Naim NAP 180</b> Power Amplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1200.00) <b>£695.00</b>
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# GLOSSARY

## TECHNICAL TERMS

**5.1-CHANNEL AUDIO** Six discrete channels, typically front left and right, centre, surround left and right, and LFE (Low Frequency Effects) for a subwoofer.

**BALANCE** Most loudspeakers have a characteristic frequency balance resulting from emphasising parts of the audio range and/or de-emphasising others.

**BASS** The lowest three octaves of the audio band – 'low bass' refers to the bottom octave (20-40Hz), 'mid-bass' the middle octave (40-80Hz) and 'upper bass' the top octave (80-160Hz).

**BI-AMP** (sometimes tri-amp). Loudspeakers equipped with separate access terminals to each drive unit can be driven by separate (matching) power amplifiers for each driver.

**BI-WIRE** (sometimes tri-wire). Loudspeakers with separate access terminals to each drive unit can be driven by separate cable runs between the amp and each driver.

**CD-R** Recordable CD that cannot be erased, though discs that have not been completely filled can have tracks added until the disc is finalised.

**CD-RW** Re-writable or re-recordable CD, incompatible with older CD players.

**CLASS A** The operation of an amplifying stage or device in which current always flows, as opposed to Class B, where some of the devices are effectively turned off some of the time. Class A tends to have the advantage of offering lower distortion, while Class B tends to generate less heat.

**CLASS AB** Most practical amps operate in Class A for the first fraction of a watt and Class B thereafter.

**CLIPPING** An amplifier's output waveform is 'clipped' if the volume is advanced too far and no more 'volts' are available to sustain ever-increasing power levels. Distortion increases dramatically at this point.

**CLOCK** Any electronic oscillator that is used to generate a timing reference signal. Used to synchronise the data being taken from a disc.

**CROSSOVER** A simple electrical network which divides the full bandwidth signal received from the power amplifier, apportioning appropriate parts of the spectrum to the various drive units.

**DAB** (digital audio broadcasting). Digital radio using frequencies in the 217.5-230MHz band. Broadcasters use varying degrees of compression and offer a broad range of programming.

**DAC** or Digital-to-Analogue Converter. The stage in any digital component at which incoming digital data is used to reconstruct a recognisable analogue (music) waveform.

**DOLBY DIGITAL** A compressed digital audio format that typically contains five or more entirely discrete channels, eg 7.1 EX where side and rear channels are used.

**DOLBY PRO-LOGIC, DPL** Forerunner to DD that 'steers' information to the front L/R, centre and mono surround channels via an analogue matrix.

**DRIVE UNIT/DRIVER** A transducer which converts electrical energy into acoustic energy, eg bass driver, tweeter.

**DSD** (direct stream digital) The coding format used for SACD offers a frequency response of over 100kHz and a dynamic range over 120dB. It has over four times the data capacity of CD.

**DSP** (digital signal processor). Integrated circuit that handles the decoding of digital audio streams. In 5.1 processors, it separates the left from right and front from rear, while managing the various bass options.

**DTS** or Digital Theatre Sound. Competitor to Dolby Digital with a reduced 4:1 compression ratio that, ostensibly, promises higher quality.

**DVD-AUDIO** High-resolution variant on DVD offering up to 192kHz bandwidth and 24-bit dynamic range. Discs are compatible with standard DVD players.

**ELECTRICAL DIGITAL** Any digital connection that uses an electrical cable rather than optical. Includes the balanced ('AES/EBU') interface.

**FILTERS** Filters are intrinsic to digital audio, both analogue and digital. These are often very sophisticated in design, and in total they probably have rather more to do with the 'personality' of CD player sound than most other factors.

**FREQUENCY RESPONSE** The range of frequencies, from low to high, which a loudspeaker will reproduce.

**IMPEDANCE** With speakers, the complex electrical load that a loudspeaker presents to the amplifier driving it.

**JITTER** An insidious distortion specific to digital audio caused by imprecision in the clock, used to regulate the conversion of data into analogue audio.

**KBPS** (Kilobits per second) Digital data rate measurement system used primarily with highly compressed formats such as MP3, DAB etc. The higher the amount, the better the quality.

**LINE LEVEL** Practically every modern source component (except phono cartridges) gives an output in the region of 1-2V, referred to as 'line level'. It follows that all inputs labelled 'CD', 'tuner', 'aux' or 'tape' are designed for this input level and are thus interchangeable.

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

**LOSSY COMPRESSION** Reduction in data density by recourse to a complex psycho-acoustical model that predicts what is, and what is not, 'audible' within a sequence of music.

**MIDRANGE** The middle three or so octaves of the audio band, where the ear

is most sensitive, covering the approximate frequency span from 160Hz up to 3kHz.

**MP3** (MPEG layer 3) Lossy compression format for digital audio that drastically reduces data content in order to squeeze music through internet connections or allow hundreds of CDs to be stored on a hard disc.

**OUTPUT IMPEDANCE** A measure of resistance to alternating current, a source with low output impedance (below 100 ohms) helps ensure compatibility with most amplifiers, even with long interconnect cables.

**PCM** (pulse code modulation) The digital coding system for analogue waveforms used for CD and DVD. Quality is limited by the oversample and bit rates used – CD is 44.1kHz/16-bit while DVD-A is capable of 192kHz/24-bit.

**PRESENCE BAND** Critical section of the audio band at the point where midrange and treble meet.

**QUANTISATION NOISE** A form of distortion or noise resulting from errors in the description of the musical signal by the digital code.

**SACD** (Super Audio CD) was launched in 1999 and is a Sony/Philips format based on DSD coding that offers high resolution stereo and multichannel sound from hybrid discs that can also be played on ordinary CD drives.

**SAMPLE RATE** The rate at which the musical waveform is sliced up into discrete chunks. For CD, this is 44.1kHz or once every 0.023msec. DVD will also support 48kHz and 96kHz.

**SENSITIVITY** The relative loudness that a speaker generates for a specific voltage input. Expressed in decibels per watt (dB/W), measured 1m from the speaker.

**THX** Standards system for home cinema set-ups which includes amplifier power and speaker dispersion characteristics. The latest THX Ultra 2 standard is more stringent than THX Select.

**TOSLINK** The proprietary name given by Toshiba to the optical fibre signal transmission system it invented for consumer applications.

**TRANSISTOR/MOSFET** The two main types of power semiconductor used in solid state amplifier output stages.

**TREBLE** High frequencies, the top end of the audio band, ie above 3kHz.

**TWEETER** Treble driver.

**TWO/THREE-WAY** Loudspeaker crossovers split the signal into two or three frequency bands, a two-way speaker can have more than two drive units.

**WATTS** (per channel) The watt is the unit of electrical power and the WPC rating is the maximum average undistorted power that an amp can deliver to a typical speaker. However, speaker sensitivity variations can make more difference than amplifier output.

**WOOFER** Bass driver.

## DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

**AGGRESSIVE** Forward and bright sonic character.

**AMBIENCE** The impression of an acoustical space, such as the performing hall in which a recording was made.

**ANALYTICAL** Highly detailed.

**ARTICULATE** Intelligibility of voice(s) and instruments and the interactions between them.

**ATTACK** The leading edge of a note and the ability of a system to reproduce the attack transients in music.

**BALANCE** Essentially tonal balance, the degree to which one aspect of the sonic spectrum is emphasised above the rest. Also channel balance, the relative level of the left and right stereo channels.

**BODY** Fullness of sound, with particular emphasis on upper bass. Opposite of thin.

**BOXY** The sound of a loudspeaker with audible cabinet resonances.

**BRIGHT** A sound that emphasises the upper midrange/lower treble.

**DARK** A tonal balance that tilts downwards with increasing frequency. Opposite of bright.

**DECAY** The fadeout of a note, it follows the attack.

**DEFINITION** (or resolution) The ability of a component to reveal the subtle information that is fundamental to high fidelity sound.

**DEPTH** (of image) The perception of music being reproduced behind the loudspeakers and inhabiting a reproduction of the acoustic space of the original recording.

**DETAIL** The most delicate elements of the original sound and those which are the first to disappear with lesser equipment.

**DRY** A sound that is devoid of 'juice', which usually comes across as fine-grained and lean. Also a loss of reverberation as produced by a damped environment.

**DYNAMIC** The suggestion of energy and wide dynamic range. Related to perceived speed as well as contrasts in volume both large and small.

**EUPHONIC** An appealing form of distortion that generally enhances perceived fidelity, often ascribed to the harmonic elaborations of some valve amps.

**FAST** Good reproduction of rapid transients which increase the sense of realism and 'snap'.

**FOCUS** A strong, precise sense of image projection.

**FORWARD(NESS)** Similar to an aggressive sound, a sense of the image being projected in front of the speakers and of music being forced upon the listener.

**GRAINY** A slightly raw, exposed sound which lacks finesse.

**GRIP** A sense of control and sturdiness in the bass.

**GRUNT** See grip.

**HARD** Uncomfortable, forward, aggressive sound with a metallic tinge.

**HARSH** Grating, abrasive.

**IMAGING** (stereo) The sense that a voice or instrument is in a particular place in the room.

**JUICY** Sound that has joie de vivre, energy and life.

**LOW-LEVEL DETAIL** The quietest sounds in a recording.

**MUSICAL** or musicality. A sense of cohesion and subjective 'rightness' in the sound.

**NATURALNESS** Realism.

**OPAQUE** Unclear, lacking transparency.

**OPEN** Sound which has height and 'air', relates to clean upper midrange and treble.

**PACE** Often associated with rhythm, a strong sense of timing and beat.

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

**PRESENCE RANGE** The upper midrange.

**SEISMIC** Very low bass that you feel rather than hear.

**SIBILANCE** An emphasis of the 'S' sound, often heard on radio.

**SNAP** A system with good speed and transient response can deliver the immediacy or 'snap' of live instruments.

**SPEED** A fast system with good pace gives the impression of being right on the money in its timing.

**STURDY** Solid, powerful, robust sound.

**THICK** A lack of articulation and clarity in the bass.

**THIN** Bass light.

**TIMBRE** The tonal character of an instrument.

**TIMING** A sense of precision in tempo. See speed and pace.

**TRANSIENT** The leading edge of a percussive sound. Good transient response makes the sound as a whole more live and realistic.

**TRANSPARENCY, TRANSPARENT** A hear-through quality that is akin to clarity and reveals all aspects of detail.

**TWEAK** To tune a system or component in an attempt to get the best performance from it.

**TWEAKER** Someone who enjoys this process.

**VEILED** Loss of detail due to limited transparency.

**WARM** A fullness in the lower midrange/upper bass.

**WEIGHT** A sense of substance and underpinning produced by deep, controlled bass.



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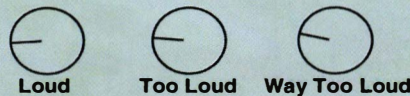
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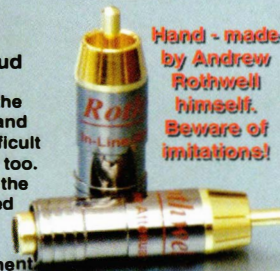
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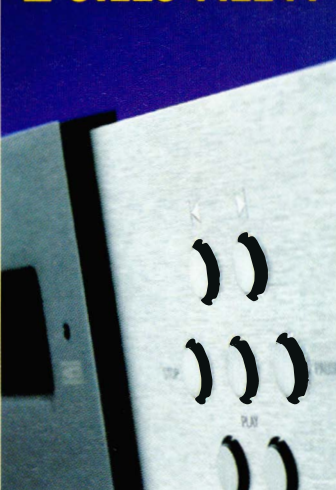
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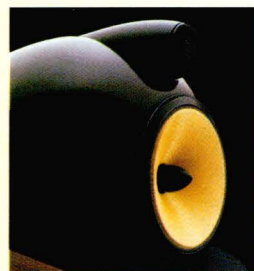
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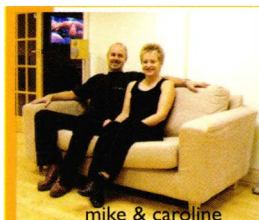
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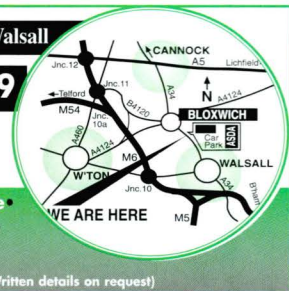
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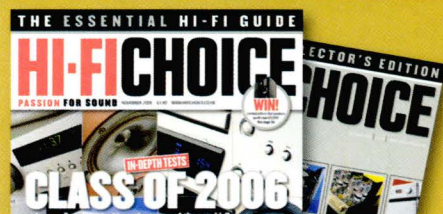


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# A-Z GUIDE TO SECOND-HAND KIT #16 NAD

**T**hink second-hand NAD and you'll probably picture the budget superstar 3020 amp. Good as it is, we're not going to feature it here, simply because these days the £60-£70+ that a reasonable 3020 still attracts looks daft when there are second-hand versions of the current (and significantly better) C320BEE going for just £90.

When buying second-hand, it's much better to think big and buy the high-end stuff. Even today, NAD is better known for its budget gear, even though the £1,000+ products are more than capable. The end result is quality kit available for less than it should be.

The first product we think that's worthy of note is the 208 power amp. Costing £1,000 new and built from 1993, this 250 watt beast was THX approved and one of the most powerful amps we'd ever tested at the time. As well as guaranteeing power, the MOSFET output stage also meant huge current. If you've got a tricky pair of speakers to drive then this is your amp. Despite the power, this is still a smooth sounding amp, if not the last word in fluidity. If this still sounds a bit tame, then you could always buy two and run them as bridged monoblocks.

UK servicing for NAD is handled by its distributor Lenbrook (☎ 01908 319360). Lenbrook told us that while the 208 is generally reliable, when it is abused it can 'blow' with spectacular results. It can rebuild the amp, but the cost can be upwards of £100. Many cosmetic parts are also no longer

available, which is worth bearing in mind if you're looking at a cheaper, solidly working but cosmetically tired model.

Prices for the 208 actually vary quite widely. Some were used in studios or sound labs – the rack mounts weren't just for effect – and can

balanced outputs. Now that there is a newer 'i' version, prices for the original model look even more attractive. Although £1,000 new, most second-hand examples fetch around £500, or maybe as little as £350-£400 if you're lucky. Although a fairly recent model, the transport

## “The S500 CD hit the shops and, in an unassuming way, proved a hit with buyers.”

now be had for around £300. For a late 1990s, privately owned example you can expect to pay between £400 and £600.

Just as production of the 208 was coming to an end, NAD was busying its Silverline range for production. In 1999, the S500 CD player hit the shops and, in an unassuming way, proved quite a hit with both reviewers and buyers alike. Although six years old now, the specs still look fresh today. The 24-Bit Crystal DAC still cuts the mustard, and there was little wrong with the Class-A output amp or XLR

used – a Philips CDM12.4 – is now obsolete. Lenbrook told us it has supplies, but that they are limited. If you plan on keeping this player for a while, then, it mightn't be a bad idea to buy a spare transport now and put it away somewhere safe!

Both the 208 and S500 are proof that NAD is capable of far more than mere 'budget blockbusters'. Take a listen to either and we're sure you'll be pleasantly surprised. **HFC**

*Dominic Todd  
Next month: Naim*



Above: NAD's Silverline S500 CD player

## DIY CORNER SPEAKERS

Part 16 Tweeter resonances

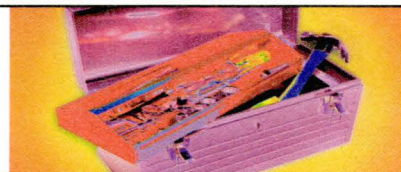
**A** tweeter's low moving mass and inductance are designed to make it fully responsive up to and beyond the limit of human hearing. But a suspended moving mass always has a fundamental resonance: the lower the mass and/or the stiffer the suspension, the higher the resonant frequency.

With the typical dome tweeter, that resonance usually occurs somewhere in the hundreds of Hertz region. Although that sounds as though it's well below the crossover point (usually in the 1-4kHz range), things aren't that straightforward. The filters used in crossover networks are not particularly steep – effectively they range from 6dB/octave up to

24dB/octave, depending on complexity – so there's an advantage in designing a tweeter with a relatively low resonant frequency.

Market leaders B&W and Focal-JMLab have both reduced the tweeter resonant frequencies in their latest models. B&W's new 800-series deliberately feeds the tweeter via a very gentle and simple first-order (-6dB/octave) filter. Focal, in contrast, uses its tweeters' reduced resonant frequency to lower the crossover point, and hence reduce the dispersion discontinuity that occurs between a 165mm midrange and the much smaller tweeter.

Both these initiatives make good sense, and both have arisen from new developments in



materials – a new polymer roll surround for B&W, and rugged Poron foam for Focal. Such apparently modest moves keep hi-fi speaker performance moving steadily forward. **HFC**

*Paul Messenger*

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Marantz CD60000SE  
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Myryad T20 nr mint boxed  
NAD C541i nr mint boxed  
NVA Transparent Statement, ex crated  
Pass Labs D1 DAC ex, cost \$5000 new  
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Audio Physic Virgo III, Cherry	£2895

## misc

Project Classic in Cherry and 510 cartridge (£500)	£249
Linn Linto MC Phono Stage, boxed, immaculate. (£850)	£1495
Otofon MC25 Cartridge, very low hours (£250)	£125
Audio Synthesis Passion Phono stage, boxed unused, (£1295)	£695
Otofon Jubilee, very low hours, boxed as new, be quick!	£595
SME 10, boxed AS NEW (£2800)	£1895
Audio Synthesis Passion Phono stage MM/MMC	£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
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Nottingham Analogue Spacelec	£695
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PS Audio P300 power plant with multiwave + Carclase £400 mains lead	£895
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Sale of part exchanged and ex-dem items	Sale	New
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Kuzma Airline tonearm - with compressor	£3250	£4700
Kondo KSL IO-J - 12 months sporadic, light use	£6000	£10000
Kondo KSL M7 Phono stage	£8500	£12700
ClearAudio Insider Wood Reference cartridge	£4000	£7500
DCS Elgar/Verdi/Purcell/Verona CD system - current spec - as new - light use	£12000	£26000
Border Patrol Control Unit - line pre-amp	£1000	£1700
Sugden Masterclass integrated - nearly new	£2500	£3300
Naim CD5 - 2003 - mint - manual - boxed	£795	
Naim NAC 112 - 2003 - mint - manual - boxed	£395	
Naim NAP 150 - 2003 - mint - manual - boxed	£445	
Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista - fully serviced by Musical Fidelity	£2000	£4000
Audio Note Japan M7 pre-amp - line only	£3000	
Musical Fidelity A2 Integrated - very nice	£250	£500
Art Audio PX25 - 5watts - Single ended flea power for the sensitive type	£3000	£4000
Krell KAV-300IL	£1900	£3000
Linn LP12 -Lingo - Eikos	£1100	
Melos amplifier - monster valve device - needs service	£1000	lots
Helios Model 1 CD player	£700	£1300
Benz Micro LP phono cartridge - 5 minutes use - perfect	£1400	£1900
AVI S.2000 M1 integrated amp	£400	£1000
Border Patrol P21 - mahogany - integrated - 11 months	£3800	£4800
Audio Mecca Mephisto CD transport	£1200	£2500
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
Aloia pre-amp - very new - very good condition - beautifully made - OK	£900	£2800
Thomas Sheu turntables (80mm platter with 12" arm)		ring for details
		(50mm platter with 9" arm)
Vitavox RH330 Mid range horn - pair	£400	
Revolver 45 loudspeaker - grey + maple	£400	£900

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At V'audio we specialise in sourcing the best sounding, best value equipment we can find, as invariably the more you spend on say a pair of speakers, the more you will normally have to spend on the front end. With an AVI Laboratory 200 w/ch Integrated plus matching CD Player (£3000 the pair), however you have a front end that can easily do justice to practically every speaker on the market. In particular of course the AVI range (£500 to £4250) is an obvious choice, while the Nola Viper range (£3000 to £9000), also sound superb. Do ring and consider saving even more money using the bargains below! Please ring / email for full details.

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RUARK CL10 (OAK)	£1200	£600
RUARK BROADSWORDS (ROSEWOOD)		
One damaged cabinet	£750	£200
AVI BIGATRON(CHERRY)	£600	£350
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LFD PA2 POWERSTAGE POWER AMP GREY MARBLE EFFECT	£649
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NAIM NAP140 OLD STYLE BOXED SUPERB CONDITION	£349
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Audio Physic, ATC, Avalon, JM Labs, Konus Audio, Pen Audio, Proac, Peak Consult, Martin Logan, REL, Sonus Faber, Velodyne, Verity Audio.

### CABLES / SUPPORTS / ACCESSORIES

Cardas, Clearaudio, Eichman, Finite Elemente, Furutech, Grand Prix Racing, Nordost, Quadrasphere, Siltech, Shakti, Shun Mook, Transparent, Van de Hul.

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## FOR SALE

**ARCAM C31** preamp (latest), mint, boxed, (£1,200) £850. 01491 613760 (Oxford)

**ARCAM CD93** silver, mint, unmarked, as new, £600 (includes postage and insurance), hardly used. 01934 647875 (Weston-Super-Mare)

**AUDIO RESEARCH LS51**, fully balanced in/out, (£5,290) £1,890. ATC 20TASL, (£4,800) £2,400, part exchange welcome. 020 8504 1638 (Essex)

**AUDIO SYNTHESIS** Desire Decade power amplifier. 175 watts per channel, transparent, neutral sound. Hardly used and in mint condition. Complete with original box. Can dem, £1,200. Jim Boswell on 020 7351 8669 or 07736 339194. (London)

**AUDIONOTE ANJ/B** speakers. Highly efficient, natural sounding, (£795) £395. Dedicated Huygens/Target stands heavy, spiked, (£190) £120. Buy together for £495, all good condition. Please call John 01253 886609 (Lancs)

**B&W704** walnut, four months old, too big for bedroom. Boxed as new, £995. Demo welcome, collection only. 07729 458836 (N.Ireland)

**CASTLE RICHMOND 31** speakers, black, brand new, boxed, (£200), surplus to requirements. Paul 01773 860776 (Notts/Derby).

**CHORD CHORUS** one metre balanced (XLR) interconnect, £80. Chord Co. Solid 0.5m interconnect, £20. Audioquest Indigo 2x5m bi-wire speaker cable, £60. Audioquest Jade 1m interconnect, £25. QED Quinex 1m optical interconnect cable, £20. Call 07787 126639 (Scotland)

**CHORD CPA4000E** preamp, (£7,615) £4,950. SPM1200E power amp, £3,800 (£5,765), both in silver with black letters and rods, two years old, boxed, mint. Beautiful combo. 07768 811275 (Reading).

**CYRUS 8** amplifier with PSX-R. DVD 8 plus QDAC Module (and PSX-R). System remote, smooth black finish, 18 months old and in excellent condition, (£2,900) £1,550ono. Martin 07843 211082 or 01883 374430 (Caterham).

**DALI CONCEPT** sub, centre, Concept 1 surrounds. All new, never used and factory sealed. Will courier free anywhere in mainland UK. Offers around £400. 01208 79065 (Cornwall)

**DYNAUDIO CONTOUR S5.4** rosewood speakers. 18 months old, mint condition complete with boxes. Bargain at £2,900. 07900 248604 (Gloucester).

**DYNAUDIO CONTOUR 1.3** MkII speakers. Detailed, superbly musical sound. Mint condition, boxed, can demo, £700. 07736 149 781 (Southampton).

**DYNAVECTOR DV10X5 MC** cartridge. A superb real world moving coil cartridge, absolutely unused, (£250) £200. Thierry (eves) 07905 303718 (London).

**ELECTROCOMPANIE** AW120DMB power amplifier, dual mono, balanced, 2x120 watts. Latest model, reviewed in *Hi-Fi Choice*, excellent condition, boxed, manual, (£2,400) £1,050. Cardas Cross power cord, £135. Soniclink (Black Rhodium) 0.5m XLR interconnect, £100. 01234 302769 (Beds)

**EPOS M5** speakers, light cherry real wood veneer, mint condition. Complete with original box,

packaging and manual, excellent reviews in all hi-fi magazines, (£350) £200. Wharfedale diamond 8.1 speakers, maple. Mint condition, (£120) £50. Lee 01384 412234 (West Midlands)

**ISOTEK 2K QUBE** silver finish, (£1,450), £1,000ono. Michell Gyrodek, Rega RB300, ATOC5 MC cartridge, QC power supply £1,050. Apogee stage full range ribbon loudspeakers, VGC, black grills and mahogany frames. Buyer collects (sorry, no boxes), (£3,000) £1,250ono. 02476 462193 (Coventry).

**JM LAB** Cobalt 815 speakers, black, three months old, £475. Roksan Caspian tuner, £275. Cyrus CD7Q black, matching PSX-R, (£1,380) £650. Cyrus 8vs amp and PSX, black, boxed, three months old, (£1,200) £750. 07821 863950 (Devon).

**KEF REFERENCE SERIES** model 104/2 speakers, rosewood finish. Immaculate condition, superb sound quality, £450ono. 01494 445005 (High Wycombe).

**KRELL** CD player KAV-250 CD/2 excellent condition £2,000. PS Audio pre/power, 150 watts, good condition with biwired speaker cables, £1,000. 07989 598890 (London). ▶

## WANTED

**CREEK A43** power amp, plus individual capable of servicing a Blaupunkt 13952 series U valve receiver and Sony Betamax SLC7UB. Nathaniel 07880 985842 (Yorks)

**DUNLOP SYSTEMDEK II** Biscuit tin version, must be in good condition, also Pro-Ject RPM 4 turntable, again in good condition. 07932 330269 or email [m.golden1@ntlworld.com](mailto:m.golden1@ntlworld.com) (Lancs).

**MARANTZ CDR6000** (gold), DR6000 or DR17MkII 01732 863918 (Kent).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A308CR** power amp wanted. 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**

■ **LINN IKEMI** CD player. Mint, boxed, little use, £750. 01384 894284 (W.Mids)

**MARANTZ CD17MK2** KI-SIG (gold) manual and box, £600. Roksan Capsian power (silver) upgraded to M-1 spec 70 watts per channel, £300. RB300 tonearm, £100. 07815 861746 (Surrey).

**MARANTZ CD7300** CD player, perfect, as new condition, (£350) £200ono. Marantz CD63 VGC, perfect working order, £50. Can post either player by courier of your choice... 01384 412234 (Weds Mids)

**MARANTZ CD6000 OSE**, boxed, £80. Cambridge Audio DACmagic 1, £40. Technics power amp SE A800S, £40. 01943 879030 (Leeds)

**MARANTZ KI SIGNATURE CD**, PM7200 amplifier in gold, boxed, certificate, unmarked as new, superb value, £299. Marantz CD7300 in gold, includes quality interconnect, £219. QED Silver Anniversary cable 3m pair, £15. 01766 781211 (N.Wales)

**MERIDIAN DSP5000 Mk1** loudspeakers in immaculate condition. All cables, boxes manuals and remote. No timewasters please, 01383 413695 (Dunfermline).

**MISSION 752F** rosewood speakers, £280. DNM speaker cable, £3.75 per metre. TCI viper interconnect cable £25. 01582 724414 (Luton).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A3.2 CD**, boxed as new, very little use, (£1,000) £450, no offers. Darran 07968 764294 (Huddersfield)

**MUSICAL FIDELITY X-DAC V3** £300. Price includes a £200 Chord Signature digital cable. ATC SCM7 speakers in cherry, £200. Including Atacama stands all mint condition. 07941 174804 (Berks)

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A3** CD and amplifier, £375 each. Dynaudio Contour 1.8Mklls speakers, £850, immaculate all round condition. Please call 07985 935277 (Manchester)

**MYRYAD MT100** tuner silver, boxed as new (£600+). Hovland 1.5 metre Gen 3 interconnect, (£400). £400 the pair. Acoustic Zen Hologram II 6ft bi-wire speaker cable as new, (£800) accept £350. Chris 07753 742021 (Essex).

**NAIM 72/ 140** pre/power, with MM phono. Plus box for 72 amp. Snaic cable for Hi Cap. VGC, £650. James 01293 821 884 (Gatwick)

**NAIM CD5I** 2004, mint condition, boxed as new, £600. Stuart 07729 458836 (Co Down).

**NAIM CD5i**, 16 months old. Mint, boxed, can demo, £525. 01273 385209 (Brighton).

**NAIM NAP500** power amp, nine months old, perfect condition, boxed, £8,500. 01285 862539 (Gloucs)

**PASS X-350** stereo amplifier. Silver finish and mint condition.

(£10k), £4,300ovno. Drives any speaker superbly but weighs 150lbs. 01926 653421 (Warwickshire)

**PERIGEE FK1** floorstander, hybrid design well regarded in Hi-Fi Plus issue 34. Piano black, (£5,000) £2,895 07905 338232 (Essex).

**PMC FB1S** in oak finish for sale in absolutely mint condition, boxed, hardly used, a bargain at £900ono. Buyer collects only, Paul 07793 764436 (Peterborough).

**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).

**QUAD 306** stereo power amp, boxed, as new, £168. Steve 01932 242083 (Surrey).

**QUAD 44** MC phono module (Type C) complete in box with instructions and schematic diagram, £30. 01740 651637 or email jwdavison@breathemail.net (Sedgefield).

**ROKSAN TABRIZ** tonearm, Chorus MM cart, Rega Elys cart, Sennheiser PXC250 cans. All boxed and unused 07879 650913 (London)

**SONUS FABER** Grand Pianos speakers in Piano Black. Original type with granite plinths,

Immaculate with original packing, dust covers and manual, £900. 01223 204934 days 01487 840659 eves (Camsb).

**STANDS UNIQUE** CD racks. 180 capacity, in wonderful Mahogany finish. Excellent condition, £100 each. Audioquest Python interconnects, 0.75m, hardly used, original box. Excellent condition, £125. Ray 01900 606650 (Cumbria).

**SYSTEMDEK IIX900/ RB250/ G1006**, £150. Audiolab 8000A grey, £120. Cambridge Audio Dac Magic 2, £50. Marantz CD84, £40. John 07855 121587 (W.Yorks).

**T+A V10** valve integrated amplifier, 80wpc, titanium finish, mint, boxed, two months old, five year warranty, read the reviews, you won't be dissapointed, (£4,000) £2,600ono. Paul 07765 001550 (Gloucester)

**TEAC X1000** open reel deck. Ten 1/2"reels, seven 1/2ips and three 3/4ips. Quarter track. DBX, tape bias and mic/line mixing, serviced. Beautiful analogue recorder. Silver, manuals and schematics, £300. 07836 248063 (Stokesley).

**THORENS TD160** super record deck (inc. cover), Audio Technica AT 1120 arm with Linn K9 MM cartridge, part used. Original packaging, literature and accessories, £100ono. Hugh 07905 224156 (Newbury).

**WILSON BENESCH ACT**, Birds Eye Maple (Gloss), purchased April 2005, excellent condition, latest spec, with original boxes, manual etc, £6,750ono. 020 8868 7835 (Middx).

**XLO 5.1 SIGNATURE**, six foot, bi-wire speaker cables, amazing soundstage and detail, with banana plugs, Stereophile recommended, (£1,350) accept £500. e-mail pazmar@supanet.com (Mids)

**TRANSPARENT CABLE** Music Wave Plus, late XL version, 35 ft pair, bought ex-demo six months ago, (£1,514) £750. 07968 972445 (Stourbridge).

**ZETA BATTLESHIP** arm plus three Decca cartridges, £450. Thorens TD 124 transcription deck, £150. 07799 893409 (Herts/Essex)



Above: Naim CD5i player

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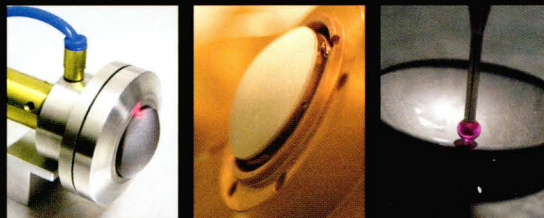


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