

**FREE GIFT! IMPROVE YOUR SYSTEM'S SOUND!**  
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# HI-FI CHOICE

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See page 30

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## NEW YEAR EXCLUSIVE REVIEWS! NEW GEAR

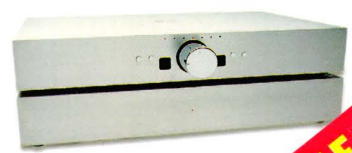
**Focal's super-detailed Electra 1027 Be speaker leads the charge for 2006**



**FIRST UK TEST!**

➤ Why you must hear **EAR's** brilliant new turntable

- PLUS!**
- Latest speakers from **Neat**
  - Cracking amps from **Densen**
  - Long-awaited music server from **Cambridge Audio**
  - And more... all tested inside!



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YOUR NEWSAGENT

### ULTIMATE GROUP TEST >>> **CD & SACD PLAYERS**

- FEATURING**
- Cyrus CD6s
  - Primare CD21
  - Micromega CD132
  - Denon DCD-2000AE
  - Sony SCD-XA3000ES
  - Marantz SA-15 S1

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# CLASSE

Welcome to the issue...

## HI-FI CHOICE FEBRUARY 2006 ISSUE 276

Future Publishing Ltd, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP ☎ +44 (0)20 7042 4000



If music is a jet 'plane, hi-fi is its engine. From data to drive unit, sound wave to cerebrum, it propels its cargo on a non-stop odyssey to the pleasure centres of your brain. Without good hi-fi, the energy and emotion of recorded music is diminished, the authenticity of its sound shrunken and shrivelled. It becomes a poor facsimile of its original self, drained of its ability to soar and reach its intended emotional destination. But good hi-fi gets you there – first class, every time.

Such passion drives us in our quest to unearth the world's finest hi-fi. We live this life for the love of music, which is why we publish a hi-fi magazine of depth and substance, yet one that's also smart, useful and easy to navigate.

To this end, we continue to evolve with an ever-expanding cocktail of tests, news, views and features. And this month, we've got yet another free gift for you. Not content with cover-mounting a variety of innovative CDs, DVDs and supplements in recent months, this time we've given you a free sample of Nordost's Eco 3 Static Inhibitor! See p7 for details...

Judging by the quality of kit that's coming our way, 2006 will be a bumper year for hi-fi lovers. I hope you'll stay with us as we continue our sonic journeys... our next issue hits the shops on Thursday, January 12. Until then, 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 EXPERT 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*.



### DOMINIC TODD

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



### 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.



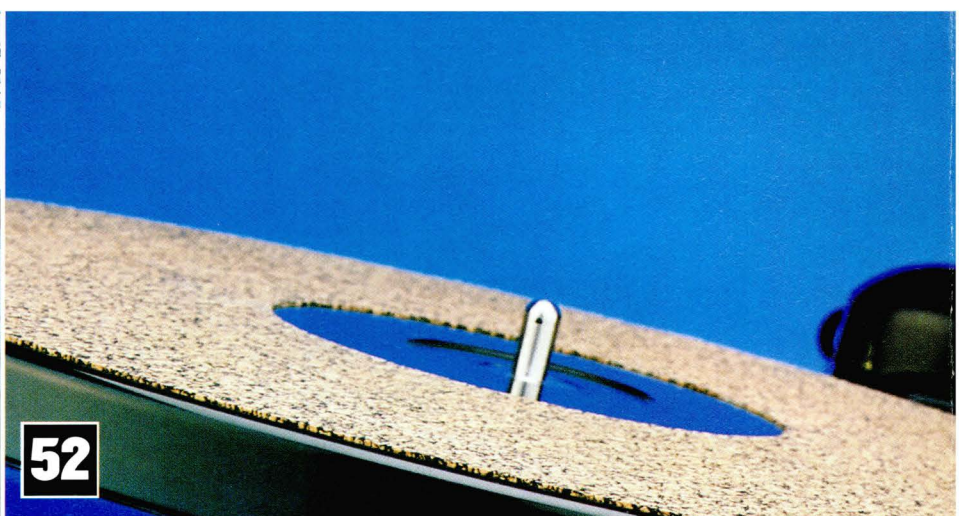
### ALAN SIRCOM

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.



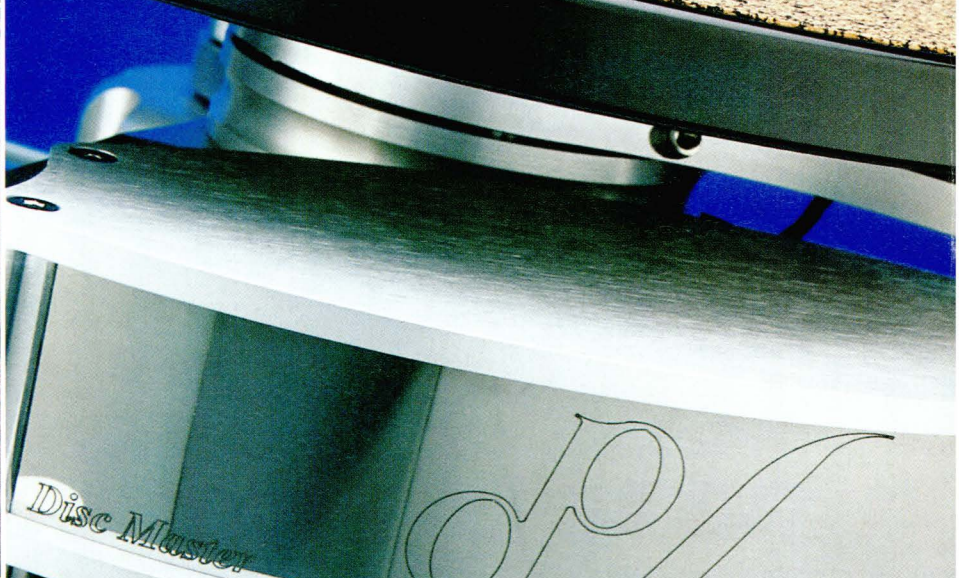
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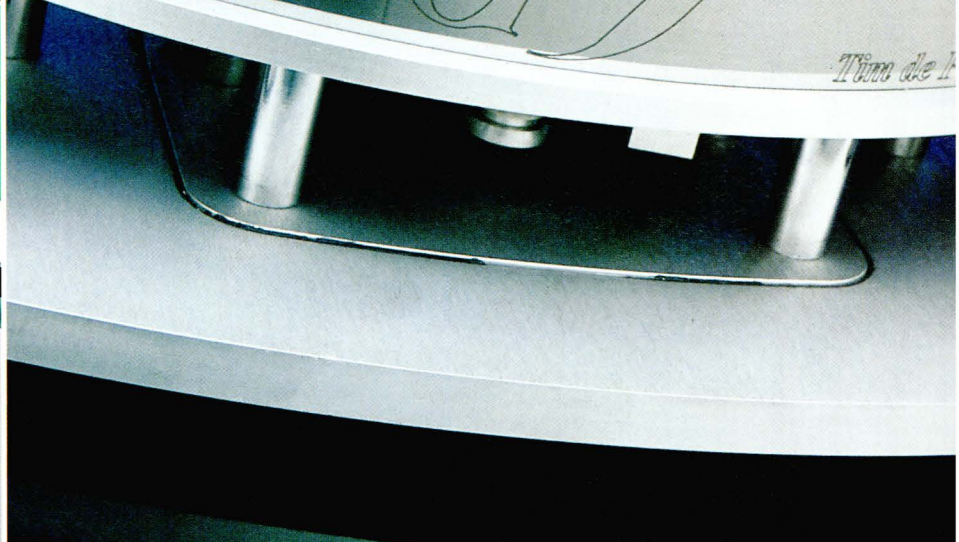
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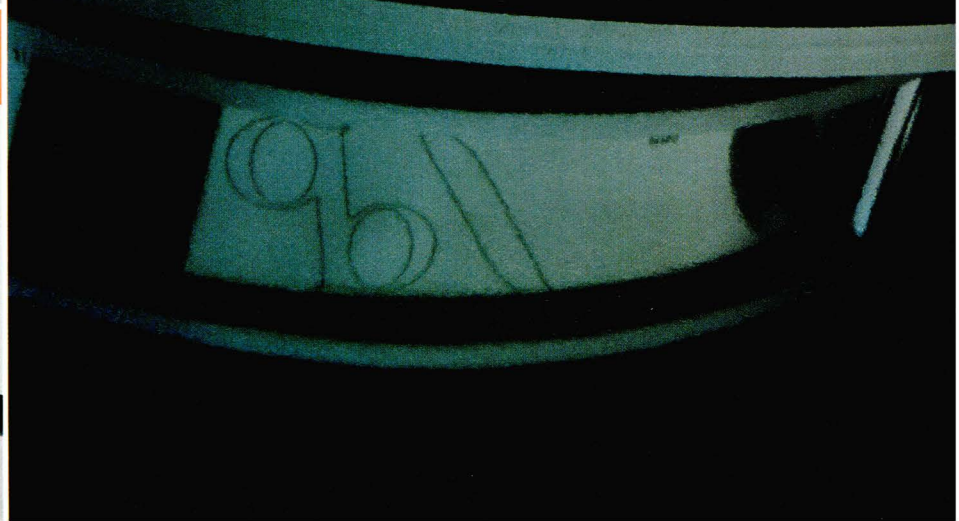
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Inside your free 2nd-hand hi-fi mini-mag...

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

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## Q &amp; A

We talked to Joe Reynolds, president of the Nordost Corporation, about the development of Eco 3

**HFC:** How did Eco 3 happen?

**JR:** It came about because of a conversation at the German High-End Show with Joachim Gerhard, formerly of Audio Physic. The discussion was about the problems of spurious static charges that build up and then introduce noise into the audio signal. If you look closely, you'll notice that dust builds up on the outer surface of all cables. We originated a proprietary formula to dissipate these charges around the cabling.

**How does Eco 3 improve the performance of cables?**

The static charge on the cable surface has a deleterious effect on the signal passing through the cable. Eco 3 prevents this static charge building up on the cable, hence preventing the deterioration of the signal as it travels along the cables in your system.

**Can this be demonstrated?**

Pick a favourite track, play it, then simply wipe a couple of interconnects and your loudspeaker cables. You will easily hear the improvements in your system. You can then try this on your power cables and the label side of your CDs, and we have again found demonstrable improvements.

**Can it be used on other parts of a system to improve sound?**

We have found improvements when treating video cables, any power cables and even the centre label of vinyl LPs.

**What's Nordost's next project?**

We have just finished a lengthy project developing the new Norse range of cables, which bring Micro-Monofilament technology to a lower price point. A new cable burn-in device is also imminent, which will optimally run-in signal cables, using a specially designed signal.

# Nordost Eco 3

Static can significantly affect the sound of your hi-fi – unless you use Nordost's Eco 3 Static Inhibitor!

**W**hen you picked up this copy of *Hi-Fi Choice*, you should have found a little black sachet taped to its cover. (If not, have a word with your newsagent!) Inside the sachet is a special cloth that's impregnated with Eco 3 – a solution specially produced by hi-fi cable company Nordost to address the problem of static, which can affect the sound of your system.

You see, a static charge can damage the way a signal flows through a hi-fi system. Nordost's years of product development in medical and aerospace equipment have given the company a special insight into how potentially damaging static build-up can be.

Applying this knowledge to audio, Nordost found that static can interfere with signal propagation through power, interconnect and loudspeaker cables.

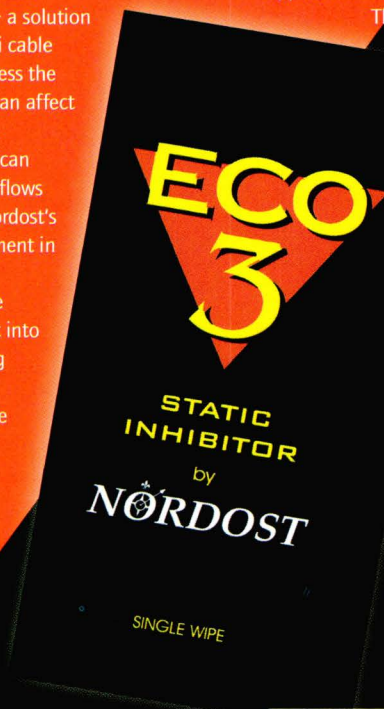
Eco 3 has been designed specifically to suppress static charge and prevent its build-up on all types of cable – simply wipe them down with Eco 3 and the treatment is complete! It can have a similarly positive effect on CDs, too – give the label side a wipe and see if you can hear the difference.

Other anti-static solutions are available, but many have been found to destabilise cable dielectric, some leave a sticky residue that attracts dirt and dust, and some can even chemically react

with the cable, actually deteriorating the sound. Eco 3 has been specially formulated by Nordost to overcome all of these problems, and is usually supplied in a pump spray dispenser, with each application lasting up to two weeks.

The supplied Eco 3 wipe is a free sample that will treat your entire system – just a simple wipe along your audio cables is all that's required. Following the treatment, listen to how any digital harshness has been reduced and how the soundstage has become more spacious. You should also hear a lower apparent noise floor with greater definition of each note, and a more coherent sound overall.

The Eco 3 spray itself is free of harmful aerosol additives, and contains enough solution to treat your system numerous times, making it a tremendously cost-effective treatment for your system. But don't take our word for it – try your free sample and hear for yourself! **HFC**

**SPECIAL OFFER!**

If you've tried your free sample of Nordost Eco 3 and you'd like to obtain more for regular treatments, you can buy a full pump spray dispenser at a special price from *Choice Bits*, the *Hi-Fi Choice* accessories shop. Turn to p86 for details...

🌐 [www.choicebits.co.uk](http://www.choicebits.co.uk) ☎ 0870 240 7228  
🌐 [www.nordostuk.com](http://www.nordostuk.com)



**Before:** Spray Eco 3 on a lint-free cloth



**During:** Wipe the treated cloth along a cable



**After:** No more static! Hear the difference

# “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.

Our new Reference Series CR-H255 CD Receiver has total connectivity by way of USB front panel connection.

All these new features coupled with the exceptional build quality and component level of performance that you have come to expect from TEAC.

So now you can connect directly to your MP3 Player without the need of a computer.

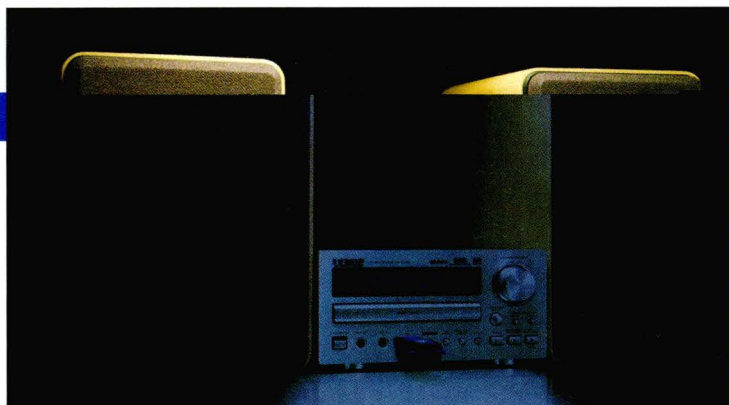
**The new Reference CR-H255.  
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**TEAC. CD ripping made easy.**

Now you can get connected at your nearest retailer.

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\*Please check with your retailer or TEAC for compatibility

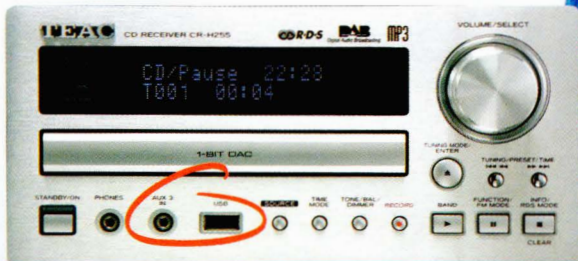


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# Vivid Audio ▶ think outside of the square box

" Even a seasoned speaker designer was just transported into the film, effortlessly and instantly. And that after all, is what the filmmakers' art is all about and what we hope our home cinema kit will deliver to us in our homes. Only the best kit does it this well and Vivid is up there. It is big and it is clever. "

**Vivid Audio Surround Sound System (B1, K1, C1)**  
**Adam Rayner, Home Cinema Choice, August 2005**  
**Gold Star Reference Status**

" 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. "

**Vivid Audio B1**  
**Jason Kennedy, Hi-Fi Choice**  
**Editors Choice Award**

" *Seamless* is a much-banded term in describing speaker sound, but the K1 gave a definitive reference point for applying the description. What may be termed the aspiration of this speaker was nigh-on perfect. "

**Vivid Audio K1**  
**Andrew Harrison, Hi-Fi News Dec 2005**



To create ultimate detail in a range of monitor studio loudspeakers for the home, Vivid took a completely new and radical approach to their design...

...this meant surpassing existing speaker technology in order to reach a no compromise solution, giving unparalleled musical insight, resolution, speed, dynamics and tonal accuracy.



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 www.vividaudio.co.uk

**Official HI-FI Loudspeaker Supplier To The**  
**10th Anniversary 2005 MOBO Awards**

## CREEK DESTINY CD PLAYER AND AMPLIFIER

➤ Destiny came knocking at the door of *Hi-Fi Choice* this month and we welcomed these new, upmarket Creeks with open arms. This CD player and matching amp are the first in a series of flagship products called Destiny, intended to run alongside the existing Creek product range.

Both products have been built from the ground up and feature a wealth of audiophile features. The Destiny CD player has been designed to extract maximum detail from humble CD, with special re-clocking circuitry to eliminate jitter and high-grade op-amps in the output stage. Particular attention has also been paid to the power supply, with results that are "truly stunning," according to Creek.

The CD player's partner in rhyme, the Destiny amplifier, is equally adept from its MOSFET circuitry right through to its fancy motorised ALPS pot for accurate volume control. With 100 watts of power on tap, the new amp features meticulous construction both inside and out, with a 10mm-thick aluminium fascia and optional phono stage.

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

**PRODUCT** Creek Destiny

**TYPE** CD player and integrated amplifier

**PRICE** (CD player) £1,200; (Amplifier) £1,100

**KEY FEATURES** (CD player) Improved master clock • 16 regulated, low-noise power supplies • Jitter-busting re-clocking circuit • (Amplifier) MOSFET circuitry • Rated power: 100 watts into eight ohms • Motorised ALPS pot • Optional plug-in phono board

**CONTACT** ☎ 01442 260 146

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



# Say hello to Genie this Christmas!

Thanks to Genie's unique blend of detail, refinement and performance, you'll begin to think it's Christmas every day. Winner of *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision* Product of the Year and countless other awards from around the world, there's never been a better time to say hello to Genie.

# M O R D A U N T - S H O R T

## ECLIPSE TD510 LOUDSPEAKER

▶ For the hi-fi radical, Eclipse offers a number of unconventional yet fundamentally sound loudspeakers. Its latest shining star is the new TD510 – another egg-shaped, single-drive unit speaker built around Eclipse's 'Time Domain' theory, intended to maximise time, phase and impulse characteristics. It's not shy of covering the full frequency spectrum either, and is said to sing between 45Hz and 20kHz – not bad for a single 10cm, fibreglass cone. Eclipse says the TD510's distinctive shape follows most

rigid form known to nature and eliminates internal standing waves. It also keeps cabinet reflections to a minimum, therefore introducing less colour to the sound.

The speaker's internals are somewhat special, too. The driver is mechanically separated from the cabinet and 'floats', anchored by a high-mass conical weight at the back of the cone to prevent energy loss. See what our eggheads think next month.

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

**PRODUCT** Eclipse TD510

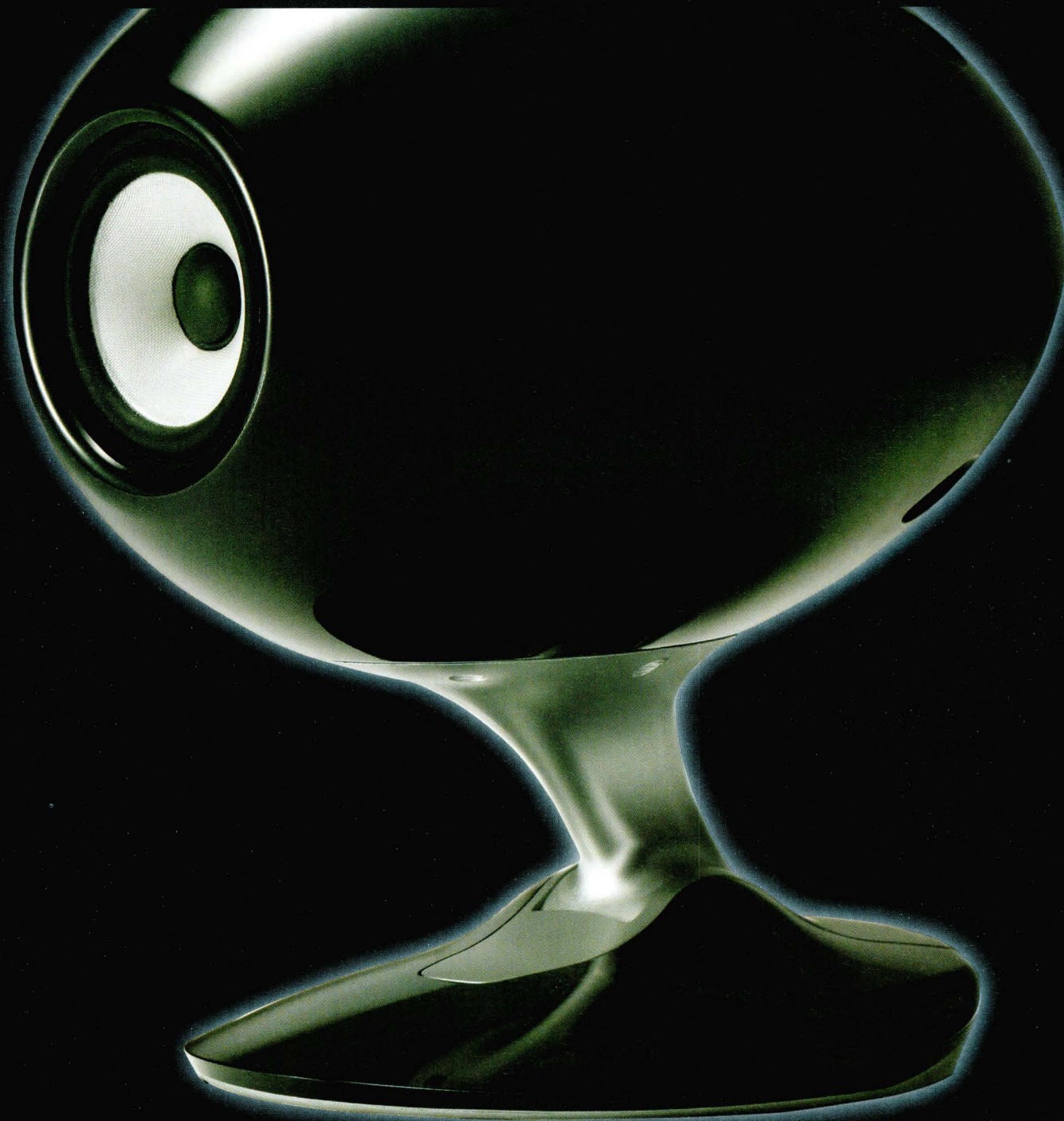
**TYPE** Loudspeaker

**PRICE** £1,200 per pair (with desk stands)

**KEY FEATURES** 'Time Domain' technology  
 • Resin-loaded, egg-shaped cabinet • 10cm fibreglass cone • Available with desk or floorstands  
 • 83dB sensitivity

**CONTACT** ☎ 020 7328 4499

🌐 [www.eclipse-td.com](http://www.eclipse-td.com)



## NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

### MONITOR AUDIO GOLD SIGNATURE

If you like your hi-fi dynamic, Monitor Audio's new Gold Signature series could be for you. The company's flagship speaker range has been thoroughly re-worked to include new drivers, updated cabinet designs and many technical improvements. The six-model line-up includes a standmount called the GS10, plus two floostanders – the GS20 and GS60 – along with a subwoofer, centre speaker and surround model.

The latest C-CAM drive units feature Monitor Audio's own Rigid Surface Technology, said to minimise break-up thanks to a dimpled cone surface, plus a new 25mm gold dome tweeter, claimed to extend to 40kHz. The driver chassis also features a new 'clamped' design coupled to a high-rigidity cabinet, made from tongue and groove ply.

Further modifications include a revised bass port, smooth cabinet edges plus a choice of real-wood veneers. Expect a review soon.

**Price** G10 £800 per pair; G20 £1,500 per pair; G60 £2,000 per pair

**Due** now

☎ 01268 740580

🌐 www.monitoraudio.co.uk

### VIVID AUDIO V1

Here's a Vivid Audio speaker you can (maybe) afford: the new V1 compact two-way.

Featuring a single C125 driver for the bass and midrange, plus a D26 tweeter for the treble, the curvaceous V1 maintains Vivid's time-alignment ethos and reaches a peak sensitivity of 98dB. The enclosure is cast from carbon-fibre reinforced polyesters and features metal cone/dome drive units, claimed to be capable of a wide frequency response (45Hz-39kHz). Available singly, as well as in pairs, the speaker comes in three mounting options – bracket, standmount and horizontal mount. Four colours are available.

**Price** £3,950 per pair

**Due** now

☎ 01903 530005

🌐 www.vividaudio.co.uk



### TANNOY PRESTIGE AUTOGRAPH MINI

2006 sees the arrival of Tannoy's newest Prestige model – the Autograph Mini. It's a scaled-down but otherwise authentic version of the famous box, popular some fifty years ago. The speaker has been modernised, of course, with Tannoy's trademark 100mm dual-concentric main driver with a paper cone, plus a titanium dome tweeter unit capable of 54kHz extension. The birch ply cabinet features hardwood veneers and solid hardwood mouldings, ensuring this new 'retro-modern' speaker majors on authenticity – there's even solid silver internal wiring and an oatmeal-coloured grille. Expect an exclusive HFC review soon.

**Price** £1,500 **Due** February 2006

☎ 01236 420199 🌐 www.tannoy.com



### T+A SACD 1245 R

German audio specialist T+A has been beavering away on several new SACD players. First up is the SACD 1245 R (pictured above), which in standard form is a two-channel CD/SACD player, said to have been designed as much for its CD performance as for its SACD sound. What's more, if you want DVD playback too, you can have it – the SADV 1245 R is essentially the same player, but with DVD-Video support added to the mix.

Then there's the D10, a high-end CD/SACD player with a valve output stage – an intriguing match for the V10 valve amp and G10 turntable reviewed in HFC 261. However, plans for a T+A universal player have been shelved, owing to "a world-wide lack in demand for DVD-Audio," according to a T+A spokesman.

**Price** SACD 1245 R £2,000; D10 £4,600 **Due** now

☎ 01623 517000 🌐 www.taelektroakustik.de



## MARANTZ DV9600

➤ Marantz's new flagship universal player is now available. Key to the player's performance is the HDMI video scaling specification – it's one of very few products capable of producing a 1080p signal, the ultimate in HD video from DVD. The player's audio prowess is equally well documented, boasting a new, proprietary mechanism with a rigid chassis, bespoke HDAM modules, plus a zero-impedance copper ground plate for the multichannel audio outputs. There are also Cirrus Logic 24-bit/192kHz DACs for each channel, a copper plated chassis, plus full bass management for DVD-Audio/Video and SACD. Keep 'em peeled for the definitive *HFC* review, coming soon.

**Price** £1,500 **Due** now ☎ 01753 680868 🌐 www.marantz.com

## NAD T 524

➤ The latest NAD product is a budget DVD-Audio/Video/CD player called the T 524. The slim-line player accommodates a host of disc formats including DVD-R and DivX. It has an integrated Dolby Digital encoder, bass management for DVD-Audio, plus 24-bit/192kHz DACs. It offers coaxial and optical digital outputs plus component video, all of which are fed from a quartet of 10-Bit video converters.

**Price** £200 **Due** now  
☎ 01908 319360  
🌐 www.nadelectronics.com



## JAMO R 909

➤ Jamo has upped the ante with a bold new open-baffle flagship loudspeaker called the R 909. This 'statement' design forgoes a conventional cabinet and the colourations that go with it, instead opting for an open baffle with two huge 380mm bass drivers. The dipolar reference speaker also features a 150mm midrange cone and a customised 25mm Scanspeak Revelator tweeter, all housed in a 43mm thick, seven-layer, lacquered ply baffle. The design has virtually no cabinet reflections and as a result has an output less influenced by room modes. Bass and speed are real strong points, according to Jamo.

**Price** £7,500 **Due** now  
☎ 01923 205605 🌐 www.jamo.com



## ASTINTREW RANGE

➤ ASTIntrew is a new British brand on the hi-fi scene with an intriguing range of smart-looking components with a valve twist. Designed in the UK with manufacturing in the Far East, the line-up comprises two hybrid power amps, a valve preamp plus a CD player with valve output buffer amp. The products use a combination of solid-state and valve technology and are matched with an ASTIntrew five-way distribution block, which is also available as an option.

Among the first launches will be the AT1000 (pictured left), a valve-based preamp sporting Electro-Harmonix ECC82 tubes. It also features an illuminated fascia, a motorised Alps pot, five line inputs and single-ended Class A operation.

**Price** From £599 to £999 **Due** From January 2006  
☎ 01491 414494

## Soundbites

**WWW.247HEADPHONES.COM** is a new website dedicated to online headphones sales in the UK. The site sells all manner of cans, including accessories and features comprehensive product information, plus related links for further reading around the subject. You can also telephone orders through to a human being.

☎ 08703 303940



**DENON's** new AVR-3806 multichannel receiver directly replaces the AVR-3805, a former winner in its category in *HFC's* annual *Hi-Fi Awards*. Priced at £1,000, the 7.1-channel, multiroom-capable amp has full HDMI video conversion and 1080p video switching. It also has Denon's Audyssey MultEQ XT room correction and calibration technology, plus seven 120-watt power amps. All analogue sources can be converted to HDMI with the new amp, which features the latest version of Denon's proprietary hi-res digital audio connection – Denon Link 3.  
☎ 01234 741200

**JAS AUDIO** has developed a new, twin-ribbon super-tweeter with extension to a claimed 100kHz. Priced at £650 per pair, the new aluminium, cylindrical-shaped tweeter modules have selectable sensitivity and an impedance of eight ohms.  
☎ 01592 744779



**NORDOST** has released a new, more affordable interconnect cable that contains the Micro Mono-Filament technology found in its flagship Valhalla and Valkyrja series cables. The new Baldur interconnect uses two silver-plated, OFC Micro Mono-Filament conductors terminated with Neutrik gold-plated copper connectors. A matching speaker cable has 26 silver-plated OFC conductors made with Nordost's proprietary extrusion process. Prices start at £270 for a 0.6m Baldur interconnect.  
☎ 01635 291357

### The Insider

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

##### SIMON POPE

**Job Title:** Marketing Director  
**Company:** UKD Ltd (a major hi-fi distribution company)



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

At UKD, we are optimistic about the future, despite the plethora of competing home entertainment options. One thing is certain – that listening to good music on a really good system is one of life's enduring pleasures. The big challenge for us is to carry that message to a wider audience.

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

I can't stop playing *Tilt* by Scott Walker. It's incredibly weird but wonderful... and like nothing else. Also, the new SACD of Mahler's 9th Symphony, conducted by Chailly with the Amsterdam Concertgebouw on Decca.

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

Professor Gianni Sacchetti at Unison Research is the epitome of refinement. He's an incredibly talented valve amplifier designer with the unique Italian combination of ability, flair and an eye for what looks right. And his amps sound sublime!

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

Broadly the same, but designers are constantly working to improve everything that can be improved. That means better sound quality, better materials, better styling and better value for money.

### Hi-Fi Diary

#### JANUARY

**28-29 Northern Sound and Vision 2006**  
Radisson SAS, Manchester Airport  
01829 740650  
[www.chestergroup.org](http://www.chestergroup.org)  
*Rapidly expanding Northern hi-fi expo*

#### FEBRUARY

**12 Audiojumble 2006**  
The Angel Leisure Centre, Tonbridge, Kent  
[www.audiojumble.co.uk](http://www.audiojumble.co.uk)  
*Antiques Roadshow with valves*

**24-26 Sound and Vision 2006**  
Bristol Marriot Hotel  
[www.bristolshow.co.uk](http://www.bristolshow.co.uk)  
*Top hi-fi show – not to be missed!*

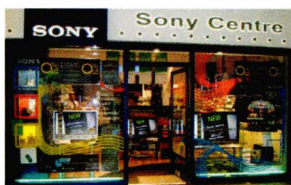
## Protection too far

⊕ Sony BMG Music has had to stop using its CD anti-piracy system because it was leaving computers vulnerable to viruses. XCP copy protection is a 'root-kit' that uses stealth techniques to hide anti-copy files in the Windows operating system. This leaves the PC open to viruses designed to use XCP as a cloak. Worse still, once installed, XCP is very difficult to remove. In the US, several law suits have been filed against Sony BMG by users whose computers have been thus compromised. US CDs incorporating XCP have included discs by Van Zant, Celine Dion and Neil Diamond.



In the UK, the All Party Parliamentary Internet Group is to hold a public inquiry into digital rights management (DRM), investigating how the law is coping with the conflicting demands of copyright owners and end users. According to Labour MP, Derek Wyatt: "This inquiry will seek to establish how consumers, artists and the distribution companies should be protected in a continually evolving market place."

## Web wailing



⊕ Web-based retailers

claim that Sony is penalising internet retailers by charging them 10 to 15 per cent

extra on trade prices, because they do not provide a showcase for its products. Sony has stated that its conditions, established in 2001, "reward all dealers who add value to the brand proposition and purchasing experience". They also recognise "the different consumer experience and service that retailers offer to their customers." In other words, those prepared to demonstrate products get a better price.

A spokesman for bricks and mortar stores said that unless a more even playing field is created, high-street electronics stores will not be able to stay in business, citing the decision by Dixons to close 100 shops as an example of the seriousness of the situation.

Those selling separates hi-fi on the high street are equally at risk, as was pointed out by Sevenoaks owner Paul Lee-Kemp earlier in the year. So if you want to be able to audition your next purchase, keep it offline.

## Slick Cyrus circulates

⊕ Cyrus is to allow third-party companies to manufacture CyrusLink-branded products.

The products will be engineered and approved by Cyrus and the move is hoped to place the brand on more mass market products, and help fund new projects. New CyrusLink products include an iPod dock system called Linkdock (£69) and the Linkcentre sat/sub system (£99) with a USB input for portable music players. There will also be various wireless components including active speakers for rear channel applications.



## Dali gets tiny

⊕ Danish company Dali has joined forces with NanoNord, in order to exploit the potential of nanotechnology in loudspeaker drive units. NanoNord is a research facility that specializes in developing and patenting nanotechnology. It has production and clean room facilities in Aalborg, Denmark. According to NanoNord's technical director, Ole Jensen, "the cooperation with Dali will spearhead a minor revolution in loudspeaker technology, featuring a level of performance that is quite simply unattainable with previously marketed technologies."

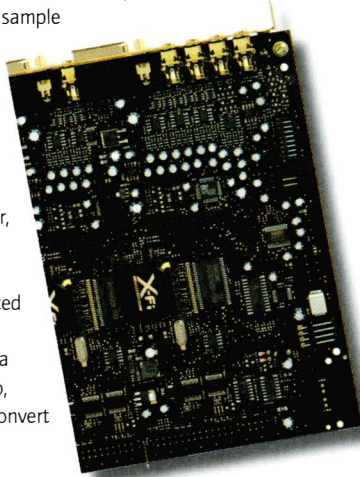
Dali's CEO, Lars Worre (pictured), added: "It will enable us to make nothing short of a leap forward in speaker performance as we know it." It is understood that the first product will be a new tweeter.





# Creative sampling

PC soundcard specialist Creative has developed the Xtreme Fidelity standard – a sample rate converting system that is claimed to upgrade an MP3 or CD recording so that the resulting signal “sounds better than its original CD recording.” This is said to be achieved thanks to the company’s new X-Fi audio processor, which features a sample rate converter (SRC) that is “so precise that any audio resolution is converted to any other resolution at near transparency”. Specs given include a claimed 136dB signal-to-noise ratio, “24-bit quality” and the ability to convert any digital signal to sample rates between 44.1 kHz and 96kHz.



## JIMMY'S TWEAKS #39

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



### True Dynamic Range

It's one of hi-fi's ironies, but very often, recordings (and audio systems) that sound obviously 'dynamic' – sharp, forward, immediate and bristling with detail – are in reality compressed and equalised. In the truest sense of the term, 'dynamic' refers to the relationship between loud and soft. The wider this is, the greater the dynamic range. However, recordings with a truly wide dynamic range often sound disappointing unless played at a fairly advanced volume level. This is due to the average dynamic level being fairly low because the peaks have not been limited or compressed.

By compressing dynamic peaks and giving a boost to frequencies in the 3kHz 'presence' region, a recording engineer can enhance the subjective impression of immediacy and transient attack, creating the illusion of a bigger, more dynamic sound. The end result may well be an impressive and enjoyable performance. Yet, in real terms, dynamics have been sacrificed!

## TOP 10

ER, TWELVE DAYS OF HI-FI CHRISTMAS

- Twelve...** Denons DACing
- Eleven...** Phonos Plugging
- Ten...** Linns a-tracking
- Nine...** Lenbrooks NADding
- Eight...** Manas moshing
- Seven...** Sugdens singing
- Six...** Graffs a-valving
- Five...** Goldrings (naturally)
- Four...** Crestron handsets
- Three...** Focal Sibbs
- Two...** Trichord Dinosaurs
- And...** a new amp by Phonosophie



## New Music

### IN THE STUDIO

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

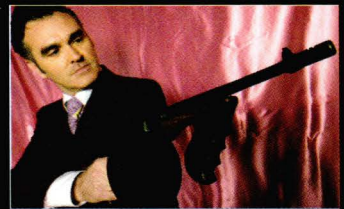


#### BELLE AND SEBASTIAN

**Title:** *The Life Pursuit*

**Release date:** 6 Feb

The follow-up to 2003's *Dear Catastrophe Waitress* from Scotland's Belle & Sebastian was recorded in Los Angeles with producer Tony Hoffer, who has previously worked with Air and Beck. First single is *Funny Little Frog* and other intriguing titles on the band's seventh album include *The Act Of The Apostle*, *For The Price Of A Cup Of Tea* and *Morning Crescent*.



#### BETH ORTON

**Title:** *Comfort Of Strangers*

**Release date:** 7 Feb

On a new label and produced for the first time by noted Sonic Youth and Wilco producer Jim O'Rourke, winsome singer/songwriter Orton has taken four years to follow-up 2002's *Daybreaker*, but those who've heard the work-in-progress say it's been more than worth the wait. "It's amazing that four albums in, she's tapped into some new inspiration and hit a peak," enthuses an only-slightly biased insider.

produced by long-time David Bowie collaborator Tony Visconti. After an initial claim that it was going to be a "balls-to-the-wall rock record", Morrissey has now announced that it is "the most beautiful, perhaps the most gentle, so far." But this is Morrissey we're talking about, so both statements could be smokescreens.

#### JARVIS COCKER

**Title:** *tbc*

**Due:** late 2006

Pulp frontman Jarvis Cocker is working on a solo album with Michael Andrews, who wrote the score for *Donnie Darko*. In the wake of Pulp's huge 1990s success, Cocker has adopted a low profile, moving to Paris, recording under a pseudonym with Relaxed Muscle and collaborating with Nancy Sinatra, but he claims that he is now ready to re-emerge from what has been described as a "personal meltdown."

#### ELVIS COSTELLO

**Title:** *tbc*

**Release date:** autumn 2006

Costello went in to the studio in November with New Orleans veteran songwriter/arranger/pianist Allen Toussaint to begin recording an album that is being compared to his 1998 pairing with Burt Bacharach. The idea for the album came about when Costello and Toussaint worked together at a benefit concert for victims of Hurricane Katrina. Joe Henry is in the producer's chair.

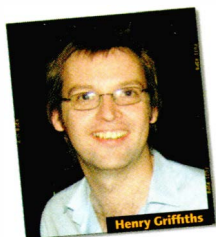
#### ALSO COMING SOON

**JAZZ/ CLASSICAL**

**Chick Corea** *The Ultimate Adventure* (Feb); **Jimmy Cobb** *tba* (Feb)

**SACD/ DVD-A**

**Talking Heads** *Little Creatures* (DualDisc, Jan); **Various Artists** *The Phantom Of The Opera* (SACD, Jan); **Eddie Henderson** *So What* (SACD Dec); **Flaming Lips** *The Soft Bulletin* (DVD-A, Jan); **Talking Heads** *Speaking In Tongues* (DualDisc, Jan)



Henry Griffiths

## Passion vs. profit

*Does the head, heart or wallet run hi-fi?*

**P**assion. Profit. For me, the mental leap between these concepts is so huge as to be almost unbridgeable. But, at the most basic level, they are the two driving forces of the hi-fi industry. I must say though, they make the most queer bedfellows.

On the one hand you have the passion. The thrill and fervour of the original musical performance: the very essence of hi-fi. Passion also embraces the desire of the hi-fi manufacturer to build a machine capable of recreating the spine-tingling exhilaration of such a great performance – their dedication, their engineering brilliance. By passion, as much as anything else, I suppose I also mean integrity: to the original performance itself and, in the end, to the listener.

**“This is the polar opposite of the musical performance, with its energy and, if you will allow me to betray my Welsh roots, ‘hwyl’.”**

On the other hand, we have profit. Profit is what every electronic or acoustic engineer has to fight against. It comes from a world of accountants and spreadsheets. Every piece of equipment is built to a budget, the harsh reality that grounds all those engineering flights of fancy. Profit dictates that budget.

The balance all depends on how much profit you're after. Manufacturers must strike a balance between passion and profit. After all, a hi-fi manufacturer needs to stay in profit, otherwise it's no good to anyone, least of all its customers. That said, the desire for profit can be all-consuming, becoming an end in itself, and negating passion in the hi-fi equation.

And when profit takes centre-stage, companies once brimful of zeal start to create conservative, guarded – hell, just plain boring – equipment. And a hi-fi industry obsessed by profit is equally insipid. People start to take themselves far too seriously, acting as if they're all neurosurgeons that deal with subarachnoid haemorrhages on a daily basis.

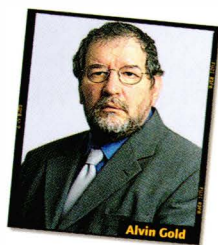
To me, this approach is the polar opposite of the musical performance, with its energy and, if you will allow me to betray my Welsh roots, 'hwyl', that is the very soul of hi-fi.

For an industry to flourish it must be vibrant, adventurous, outlandish, a bit bonkers – dare I say it, even a bit fun? We should remember money on its own never did, and never will, create anything.

Luckily, so much in hi-fi is not about numbers. In many ways, making hi-fi equipment is still a black art, which makes it all the more entertaining. It's not just about manufacturing a product that measures perfectly on the test rig. If it was, every company could create the perfect component. As Albert Einstein said, "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted". The subtle tweaks, unearthed only after years working at the engineering coalface, create the difference between a good hi-fi component and a truly brilliant one.

Equally, there is passion aplenty in the audio industry. We hi-fi fans are fortunate that there are a goodly number of companies still run by people obsessed with making the perfect component, who perhaps care too little about profit, utterly passionate as they are about hi-fi.

*Henry Griffiths is a former hi-fi journalist who has since worked for the likes of Cambridge Audio, Mordaunt -Short and now, Marantz. His passion for hi-fi is, er, scary...*



## Musical mismatch

*What makes a system perform as it does?*

I have just visited a loudspeaker manufacturer that is in the throes of launching a cost-no-object model. Never mind what the speaker is; it might change before it makes it out of the factory door, and this isn't its story. It is the story of how musical and personal tastes and elementary issues of set-up may have consequences that are potentially decisive in the way the product is perceived by its audience.

The listening, on this occasion, involved a group of about 12 people in a large room reasonably representative of the kind of space the speaker was intended to work in. On the whole, the event went well. Each representative was asked to bring his own discs, which meant listening to a fair variety of music of various types, and a fair picture of the speaker performance soon emerged.

Or did it? Even in the initial sessions, there were some peculiarities that could not be readily accounted for. Certain types of music appeared to perform better than others, with rock and jazz working particularly well by common consent, and standard mainstream classical recordings sounding rather hard and strained. Over lunch, someone suggested that we had been listening at a somewhat higher volume than usual, and that this was perhaps at the root of what we were hearing.

Later, I returned to the listening room, this time with only a couple of others, to see if it was possible to pin down exactly what was happening. In fact, sound quality had improved remarkably. Even without deliberately setting a lower volume level, the system was clearly in better form, largely

# R

## RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

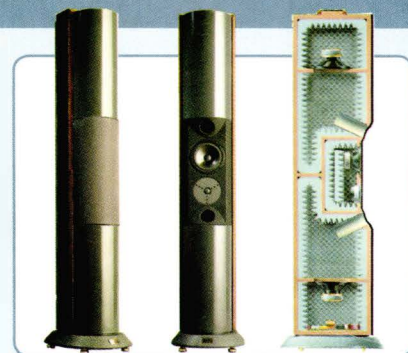
JAMO ORIEL  
LOUDSPEAKER



Jamo is a company with an interestingly mixed history. From its inception in the late 1960s, the company enjoyed exponential growth for some years. It became Europe's most successful brand, with a huge workforce, wide distribution and an enormous number of models, stretching from extremely cheap designs with painted-on tweeters (at one ignominious moment in the company's history) to the excellent and superbly built Concert series at the other.

The Oriel was designed as a technology flagship, a statement model designed to show what the company could do when not restrained by normal commercial considerations, and of course it was designed to add kudos to the Jamo brand. You should know that since its peak in the 1990s, the company went into long-term decline, from which it has only recently emerged as a much slimmed down and distinctly more up-market concern, with R&D remaining in Denmark, and most production now handled in the Far East. Jamo is about to launch a new and quite radical flagship (the production of which will be in Denmark – see p15) as part of its return to greatness, so this is an opportune moment to be reminded of its last and most famous flagship loudspeaker, the dramatic Oriel.

The Oriel was introduced after the first Concert model back in 1989 at around £6,000 a pair, and it remained in production for around nine years, a long period for any speaker without the words 'Quad' and 'Electrostatic' in the name. Imposing is hardly the word. It weighed 72kg and stood more than two meters tall, with a dramatic circular cross section, though it consumed barely a square foot of living room real estate per enclosure. Defying its external simplicity, the Oriel was an elaborate design internally, whose 210 litre multilayer walled enclosure used wood (seven layers of 2.5mm MDF), composites, hardened glass and concrete in its construction. Internally, it divided into four fully enclosed sub-enclosures, and a fifth which was externally accessible, and which housed the baffle and bass output ports.



**“It weighed 72kg and stood more than two metres tall, with a dramatic circular cross section.”**

The Oriel featured five drive units: two 200mm internal bass drivers that used coupled cavity loading, crossing over at 100Hz to a 160mm Kevlar cone midrange driver, and a 28mm tweeter whose massive magnet weighed in excess of 1kg, and whose peak power handling capacity was said to exceed 1kW. The Oriel had a sensitivity of 87.5dB per watt at one metre, with a six-ohm nominal impedance, and a power handling capacity of 1kW, while low frequency response extended to 20Hz (-3dB apparently, and probably in room measurement). But you'd hardly expect the Oriel to be a shrinking violet, spec-wise.

I did review this speaker, all details of which have long disappeared along with the hard disc it was filed on, but my recollection is of a fast, powerful and (of course) wide bandwidth design, well controlled and highly articulate. That is certainly the reputation it long enjoyed, and I would guess that a second-hand pair – though rare – would make an interesting, and probably musically worthwhile investment at the right price. Certainly Jamo assures me that it can still fix the errant Oriels, which is something not possible for many CD players of much less antiquity. As the mug shot shows, the passage of time has not dimmed its startling good looks. Just what you would expect of a great Dane. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*

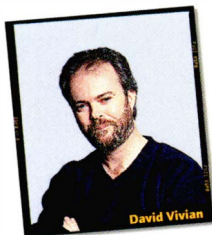
free of the edgy midband. One reason could have been that with fewer people in the room, less sound absorption meant the system was cruising along at lower power levels, and more in its comfort zone.

Over and above this, however, it transpired that the replay system had only been turned on just before the main listening session began, so it was running cold – a rookie's mistake. It had clearly warmed to its role, and by the time we had to call it a day to catch our flight home, the system was beginning to sound genuinely impressive.

I don't want to say too much about the programme material that was used, except that the occasion helped reinforce some of my personal prejudices. Some (though by no means all) of the mainstream pop material was incredibly compressed and cannot surely have been designed to benefit from a wide ranging hi-fi system of the kind we were listening to. The primarily acoustic (jazz and classical) material told all of those present, I believe, much more about what the system was doing, for better or for worse, irrespective of individual musical tastes.

Speaking purely personally, I could quickly determine the strengths and weaknesses of the system using ordinary commercial classical CDs (and some SACDs), rather than avowedly audiophile recordings. And, as I have found in the past, it was all so much easier to make (I think) value judgements in an unfamiliar, but relaxed environment.

*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*



## Budget brilliance

*David remembers the A-400's best update*

Inspirational budget hi-fi part two. Good to hear that some of you not only remember the Pioneer A-400 – let's just call it the greatest cheap amp ever made – but still use it. I wish I still had mine, but it was blown up (along with every other domestic hi-fi amp that could be rounded up in a particular district of Maidstone) the night the town shuddered and flickered to the final multi-kilowatt throb of the phenomenal rooftop system designed by my son James to celebrate his 21st birthday.

Pity. Because guess what I've just found in a dim corner of a dusty cupboard? The small plastic black box that made the A-400 sound even better. This, then, is the brief story of the Michell Iso, phono stage extraordinaire. It begins, as so many tales of supercharged sonics do, with Tom Evans, who had then just designed the exotic and fabulous Finestra preamp. Having heard the Japanese

wonderamp, Tom was disappointed to discover that its moving coil phono input couldn't hold a light to the astonishing clarity, focus and power of the line stage with CD. Which meant that, great amp that the A-400 was, it couldn't weave its spell with the finest source of all, a top-drawer turntable.

A travesty, thought Tom, who duly set about designing a high-value phono stage that would simply plug into any amp's line input. After a few very promising field trials in bareboard form, it was handed to the late John Michell – of Gyrodek fame – for encasement in a pleasantly finished plastic box. It cost £380, £150 more than the amp itself.

Good moving-coil headamps are still notoriously expensive because boosting a tiny signal to line level without simplifying, softening or otherwise corrupting it is something of a fine art and damn fiddly. Phase integrity is vitally important and it was here that the Iso – basically, a single PCB with two pairs of op-amps and full dual mono circuitry – claimed its greatest success.

I remember using the ISO for the first time. It floored me. So superior was it to the Pioneer's own phono hardware, the differences were ludicrous. The A-400's phono input sounded horribly thick and compressed by comparison.

The key to the Iso's sound was that it didn't have one. It wasn't merely transparent but a completely open window, revealing acoustic

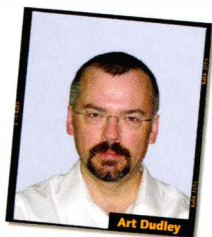
**“Like all open windows, a certain amount of rubbish was liable to fly in.”**



and timing clues on Rickie Lee Jones' *Flying Cowboys* album I'd never even suspected before, while bringing a tangible, harmonically rich feeling to John Lee Hooker's collaboration with Carlos Santana on *The Healer*.

Like all open windows, a certain amount of rubbish was liable to fly in, but with the right the turntable and vinyl, the results were breathtaking. It made team A-400/ISO the most cost-effective £600 amplifier in existence. To those who still use both today, I salute you.

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



## Metal guru

*WBT now lightens the metal load*

Just when I thought the humble phono plug couldn't get any better – as a cable do-it-yourselfer, I've tried just about all of them – along comes Wolfgang B. Thoerner to prove me wrong. WBT GmbH, which is Herr Thoerner's design and manufacturing firm, has made a name for itself with its thoroughly engineered connectors. But some folks have regarded their phono connectors as somewhat over-engineered, especially given the plugs' excess of conductive metal...

Perhaps in response to recent concerns about eddy currents and high-frequency signals – noted with a hat tip to Denis N. Morecroft of DNM fame – WBT has introduced a new connector that pares the mass of its conductors down to an absolute minimum. Dubbed the Nexgen series, it's a two-part polymer structure which, when snapped together, holds a central plug and partial outer sleeve tightly in place, both beautifully machined from a choice of silver or oxygen-free copper, and plated with platinum or gold, respectively. WBT's patented locking mechanism remains, but this too has been re-thought, with significantly less metal (an Al/Mg alloy) than before.

Making a true 75-ohm phono connector was among WBT's goals, but it also succeeded in making a plug that's easier to install than most, with removable conductors whose solder tags are sensibly far apart. The Nexgen was obviously designed by someone who's spent lots of time with a soldering iron in his hand.

Most impressive of all is the performance. I soldered a pair of platinum-on-silver Nexgens ▶

# M

## MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

PUBLIC ENEMY  
IT TAKES A NATION OF MILLIONS...



Before rap became the main tool in the major labels' marketing war, before wannabe 'gangstas' found they could make a living by beefing up their thug CV in rhyme, there were a few young musicians who wanted to use rap to make a difference. To their circumstances, to their environment... hell, to the whole world. The group that was the most focused, most dedicated and most successful in this regard, was Public Enemy.

Led by the hurricane monotone of former graphic design student Chuck D (aka Carlton Ridenhour) Public Enemy's stance invoked the image of the Black Power struggles of the sixties. There were no scantily clad booties gyrating on stage; Public Enemy's 'dancers' were the Security of the First World, a group of unsmiling pseudo-paramilitaries led by choreographer and future rapper Professor Griff. Leavening this apocalyptic broadside of words, music and images was the cartoonish Flavor Flav, a comic character never seen without his outsize clock hung around his neck ("So I always know what time it is, boyee!") and who would play Caliban to Chuck D's Prospero, his jokey rhymes and interjections offering counterpoint to the radical news bulletin, "the black CNN", that formed the basis of Public Enemy's message rap.

The group's first album, *Yo! Bum Rush The Show*, was a hard-hitting mix of beats and rhymes – a stark, full-on assault. But *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back* in 1988, saw them spread their musical wings, incorporating free jazz, hard funk and even *musique concrète* cut-up techniques.

Opening with a live intro from London's Hammersmith Odeon, each track of the 56-minute album segues into the next in an echo of Marvin Gaye's classic *What's Going On*, and Chuck D has gone on record as saying he wanted this album to be his generation's version of that document of outrage, despair and hope from the 1960s.

Using confrontational language and an aggressive approach that had already been utilised by some of the proto gangstas on record, there was no rhyming about how many



**"Many rap acts have used a similar approach, but Public Enemy's sound was never less than unique."**

diamonds/cars/bitches they had, no grabbing of crotches or self-aggrandisement. *Nation's* targets include the prison system, TV, government disinformation, drug dependency, the music business and much more. Public Enemy's schtick was educational, using rap as a means of communication to raise awareness and bring about social change – like a more focused version of the Clash.

Musically they were revolutionary, too. Instead of looping a recognisable lick from a hit tune which they could make their own, the group's production team – the Bomb Squad, led by Hank Shocklee – created dense, threatening soundscapes from a seemingly limitless range of sources: a shriek from Maceo Parker's saxophone, a funk guitar lick, police sirens, political speeches, treated scratches, replayed snatches of their own raps. They didn't invent this cut 'n' paste approach, but they probably did more than anyone to make it their signature sound – many rap acts since have used a similar approach, but Public Enemy's sound was never less than unique.

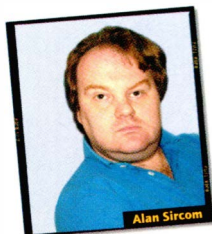
*Nation* was followed by another nine Public Enemy albums of varying vintage, but it's still the point at which the group's message and music combined in a defiantly powerful statement of what popular music, not just hip-hop, could aspire to. **HFC**

*Dave Oliver*

onto my Naim Aro tonearm cable and was frankly amazed at the increase in clarity and resolution wrought by the change, audible mostly in the treble range. Skeptics, of course, may be forgiven for thinking my response is nothing more than self-congratulation for having heard any change at all – and God bless them just the same.

The silver Nexgen, notwithstanding its hefty price (\$49 each on this side of the Atlantic), deserves a solid recommendation, and its design represents a significant enough change in WBT's direction that the new plug should and presumably will attract the interest of people who've avoided the brand in the past. My only lingering complaint is that the 'barrel' part of the plug remains a bit too big for the strain relief screw – itself quite a nice little engineering achievement – to get a bite on the skinny wires I prefer for my interconnect cables. But I can take up the slack with a few turns of electrician's tape (not pretty, but remarkably effective) and assure myself that WBT will, some day, tackle that problem, too. Or, as an American ad for Sunsweet prunes once had it: "Today the pits, tomorrow the wrinkles". Hats off to Herr Thoerner.

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



## Fazed by fuses

*Can a £35 'upgrade' topple your hi-fi cred?*

Okay, that's it. I am officially NOT an audiophile. My Nonsense-O-Scope (supplied by [www.skepticalbugger.com](http://www.skepticalbugger.com)) kicked in on p25 of this issue, in *AudioFile: Essentials*. Thirty-five quid for a mains fuse... someone's having a laugh, aren't they? I can handle the thousand pound a centimetre speaker cables, I can understand the loudspeaker system costing as much as a night on the tiles with Paris Hilton, I even get – up to a point – the beautifully recorded plinky-plonky lift music that's so often associated with all things hi-fi. But thirty-five nicker for a fuse? C'mon!

But why do I balk at paying £35 for a mains fuse? Is it because the price differential between the common-or-garden versions is so great? Currently (no pun intended) one 13A fuse costs about 25p, which means you can get around 140 regular fuses for the price of



## "I can understand a loudspeaker costing as much as a night on the tiles with Paris Hilton, but thirty-five nicker for a fuse? C'mon!"

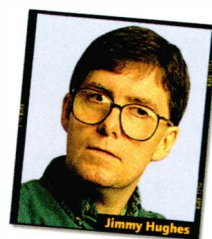
the Furutech special. If this is so, why don't I have a problem with a massive price differential on any other hi-fi component – you could get roughly 267 pairs of the cheapest hi-fi speakers in the Maplin catalogue for the cost of a pair of B&W 802Ds, yet this differential seems entirely justifiable. Perhaps it's the fact that the cheap version costs pennies and the audiophile version costs as much as a takeaway Chinese meal for two. If so, would the Furutech seem more acceptable if it cost a pony, or even 'only' a fiver?

Or is it because the improvement in sound just cannot happen? Having not compared a regular 13A fuse against the extreme version, any statement about the sound quality improvement – or lack thereof – is purely based on hearsay or prejudice. Perhaps it's because the 13A fuse is a disposable item... fuses blow. But, they shouldn't blow that often.

It dawns on me that no matter how much I try to justify my astonishment at the idea of spending £35 on what is basically a mains fuse, I simply cannot dismiss these fuses without also throwing out much of what constitutes hi-fi today. If funky fuses are dismissed out of hand, surely the same must apply to everything mains-oriented? Yet, I've heard the improvement an Isotek box can have on a system, so this can't be right. But because I've dismissed fuses, the Isotek must be suspect, too. Now, if the audible improvement an Isotek delivers is called into question, perhaps I will end up with a micro system hooked up with bellwire.

Okay, this 'slippery slope' argument is not logically valid, as there is no link between the sonic performance of a fuse and that of a CD player, for example. But you can see how this chain of thought can develop. And it will develop in the minds of those who are not audiophiles. They will call you crazy. All of which means that if you are going to spend £35 on a fuse, don't tell anyone about it... even if they say "Wow, your system sounds good today." One day, perhaps people will be able to come out of the audiophile closet about £35 mains fuses, but that day isn't today.

*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*



## Excess all areas

*Jimmy turns to the power of the dynamic side*

Reduced to basics, a hi-fi system's way with extremes determines its ability to successfully reproduce demanding dynamic music. Yet, although dynamic and frequency extremities are important, the real test is how

well opposing extremes are handled when both are present simultaneously.

Recreating the scale of a piece of music is just a start; unless subtle low-level detail is retained, things won't sound real. Concentrate on quiet background voices and instruments, and notice if these remain audible when things are at full tilt.

A really good hi-fi system produces bold, strongly-projected dynamics, yet still allows subtle backing voices and instruments to be heard. It's delicate low-level information, such as hall ambience, that creates the impression of people singing and playing in a defined acoustic space.

If these subtle reverberations are lost, a tonally hard, constrained and 'forward' sort of sound results, creating an arid and somewhat airless musical presentation. This sort of sound does not please the ear. It may seem impressive in the short term but in the long term, the results are tiring.

As hi-fi systems improve in terms of dynamic attack and extended bandwidth, often such things come at the expense of something called Working Dynamic Range (WDR). WDR defines the difference in relative volume levels between simultaneous loud and quiet sounds that can still be heard.

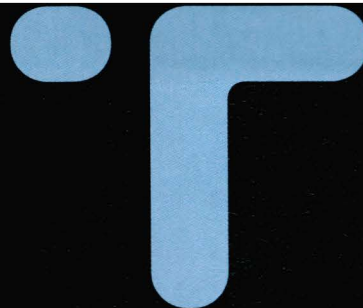
A hi-fi system with a wide WDR produces an easy, effortless clarity. Instruments and voices retain complete individuality and separation as though they were still distinct entities. It's akin to different vegetables in a stew maintaining their flavour and colour, rather than everything mushing up and tasting the same.

Digital recordings (especially early digital), and those made using multi-track techniques, can have a narrow WDR even though the dynamic swing between loud and soft is very wide. In superficial hi-fi terms, the impact, brilliance and immediacy may be excellent. But this can be misleading.

Clarity and transparency disappear as more and more voices and instruments enter the fray; the sound 'crowds up' and becomes congested as the music grows in complexity. Although the fault lies in part with the recording itself, a really good, well-balanced and natural-sounding hi-fi system has the ability to make all but the most congested and aggressive recordings sound acceptable.

So, when you're choosing hi-fi components, don't be seduced by superficial impact and chromium brilliance. What sounds impressive in a 30 minute demonstration isn't necessarily satisfying to live with long-term. Clarity and transparency allied to a smooth, natural tonal balance are the qualities that make for rewarding long-term listening.

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



# TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

THOUGHTS ON SACD



SACD has clearly come of age – see our *Ultimate Group Test* in this very issue, where the format stands toe-to-toe against CD players, as it does in most hi-fi shops today. Apart from optional multichannel, just what does it offer that conventional CD doesn't?

Each channel of an SACD recording is recorded in a format called 'Direct Stream Digital' (DSD), which is different in important ways from CD's 'Pulse Code Modulation'. PCM stores a 16-bit (or 24-bit, as in DVD-Audio... or indeed other multi-bit permutation) word for each sampling interval of the waveform, but DSD samples at a very much higher frequency and does so with only one bit. The ins and outs of this are enormously complex (to the extent that some of the leading authorities on digital audio differ fundamentally over their details) but the main conclusions are simple enough.

First, the overall data rate of each channel is four times that of CD. That means that effective bandwidth can be higher than CD, or signal-to-noise improved, or a bit of both. The details are somewhat flexible, and the designers of SACD decided on a compromise that gives a theoretical 120dB signal-to-noise ratio across the audio band (up to 20kHz) and a notional upper frequency extension of 100kHz. At that upper frequency limit though, the signal-to-noise ratio is nothing like 120dB – in fact, it's less than 40dB.

In order to get a usable signal-to-noise ratio, DSD relies heavily on 'noise shaping', a technique that filters the inevitable quantisation noise of the digitisation process so that it is mostly at high frequencies. This is fine in principle, but the problem in DSD is that noise starts to rise rapidly above 20kHz. As a net result, ultrasonic signals above about 30kHz start to disappear into noise. Test signals at full level will stick up from the noise happily enough, but the amount of ultrasonic information in even the brightest-sounding real music is such that 40kHz is a pretty optimistic estimate of the upper band limit. This, of course, is quite apart from considerations of whether we can really hear anything much that high up.



**“There's an increase in signal-to-noise ratio of up to about 25dB. That's a lot and not to be sneezed at...”**

At the same time, even while replaying audio with a bandwidth of 20kHz or less, SACD players put out a constant level of ultrasonic noise that could, in principle, upset amps and speakers. But, as far as we have been able to ascertain, decent amps and speakers are entirely immune to it. The potential problem is of intermodulation between this noise and genuine audio, causing distortion products within the audio band that could be audible. Ironically, these are more likely to occur if there is highish-level ultrasonic music signal present.

What, in sum, does SACD achieve? First, there's an increase in the signal-to-noise ratio of up to about 25dB. That's a lot and not to be sneezed at, though it's degraded by electronics both before and after the recording medium. Second, there's an extra octave, or a little less, of bandwidth. This is, in fact, not such a lot to show for four times the data rate, especially given the drawbacks of high-level ultrasonic noise. It is hand-waving and ultimately inaccurate to claim that DSD is 'closer to analogue' than PCM: it's not. It does, however, avoid some of the pitfalls of many (not all) PCM implementations, including marginal aliasing around half the sampling frequency.

In the end, SACD's perceived advantage is probably down to little details like that rather than any truly revolutionary qualities. **HFC**

*Richard Black*

# TRUST YOUR SENSES



## IKON 6

Have you ever heard a blade of grass crying out in fear of the oncoming mower, begging for a drop of water or a nurturing spread of fertilizer? To discover a world of details, we recommend that you hone your hearing by auditioning a pair of IKON 6 at your nearest DALI Embassy.

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"Verdict: The IKON 6's are great speakers."*







What Hi-Fi | September 2005

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Alvin Gold | Hi-Fi Choice | September 2005



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## FURUTECH 13A FUSE £35

⊕ Yes, it's a £35 mains fuse! Furutech's replacement is made using materials selected for audio performance, including rhodium plating on the end caps. That alone doesn't start to justify the price, but, well, if it works... To be brutally frank, having first thought we could hear the change it wrought on the test system, a crude blind test suggested we couldn't. Probably. We spent a couple of hours trying to measure any kind of change in technical performance, from voltage across the fuse itself to changes in the audio performance of the connected equipment, without picking up anything more substantial than a difference of 2mV in voltage drop – one part in 100,000! Nevertheless, if you're the type who can't sleep unless all the 'i's have been dotted, buy one for every component in the chain.

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

## GENUS DIGITAL DU-1 DAB UPGRADE £70

⊕ It looks like an alarm clock – actually, it *is* an alarm clock – but more to the point in this context, it's a DAB radio. Calling it an 'upgrade' is clever, but shouldn't conceal the fact that this is a fully-functional tuner with both analogue and digital (optical) outputs. It pulls in the full range of DAB stations, displays the usual range of information on the front panel and simply does everything a big unit does except take up the space. Add to that one of the nicest displays we've seen, large and gently backlit in blue, and the only drawback we can see is that you need the remote control for everything except switching on and off. That just leaves the sound, which is fine, not distinctly better or worse than other DAB tuners we've tried. A top device then, but we'd be tempted to go for its big brother, the £80 DU-2, which also includes a 'rewind' function.

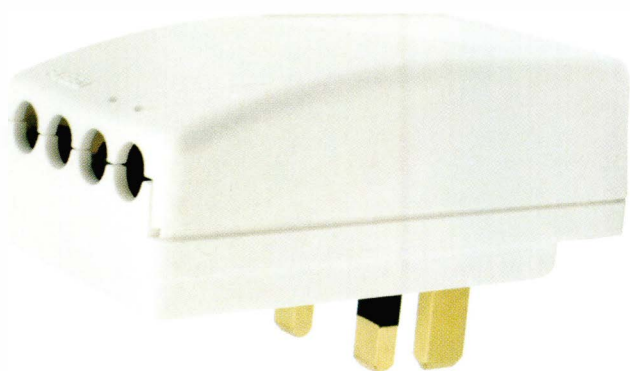
☎ 023 9231 3090 🌐 www.nevada.co.uk



## STANDS UNIQUE 4-WAY PLUG MULTI-WAY MAINS PLUG £11

⊕ This thing has been on the market since the days when equipment was supplied without a mains plug. In these days of moulded cordsets, it's slightly less relevant, but there is still much to be said for the basic idea of running four cables into one plug. Apart from being a lot neater than rows of multiple extension blocks, it reduces the number of contacts within the mains path, which can only be beneficial. It's slightly inconvenient when equipment must be moved, but no big deal. In addition, the four-way terminal blocks inside could be just the thing for terminating some ultra-fat specialist mains cables on the market.

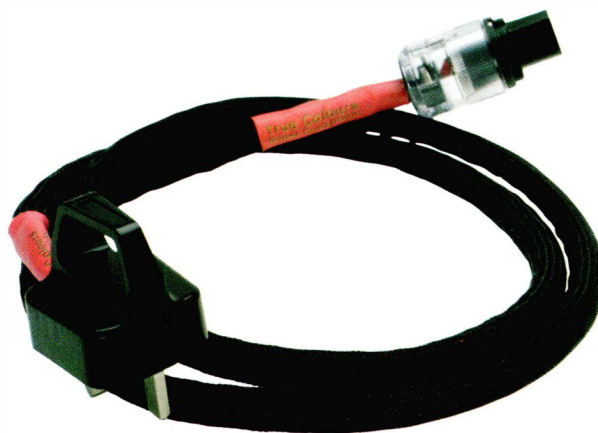
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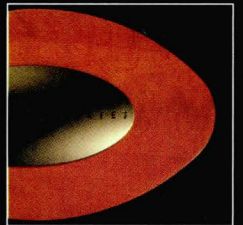
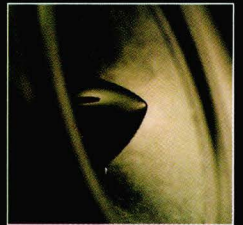
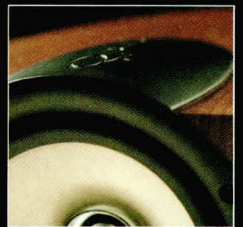
## TCI SUPER CONSTRICTOR RHODIUM MAINS LEAD £240 (1M CABLE)

⊕ Despite the notable absence of any scientific support, we are not alone in believing that 'audiophile' mains cables can make a difference to a system's sound. This example seemed to have a subtle sweetening effect on the sound of a couple of power amps, but with source components – including a CD player and even an analogue open-reel tape deck – it noticeably opened up soundstages and seemed to enhance bass and treble extension. All the same, at its high price, and given its deeply impractical nature (fat and inflexible, due to the use of thick, braided, PTFE-insulated wire within), we can only really give it a qualified thumbs-up.

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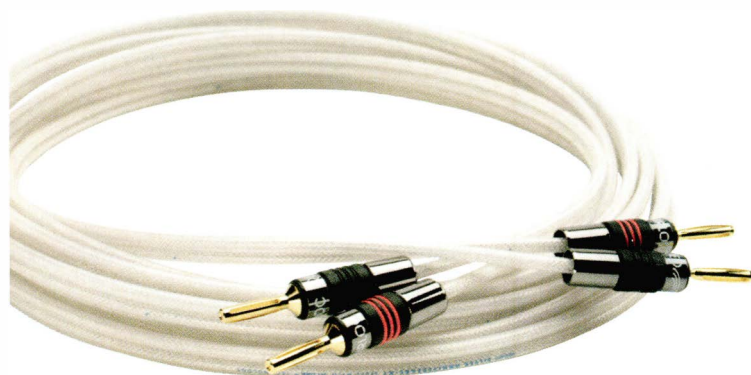
New fully-shrouded binding posts with oxygen-free copper wiring. And new super-rigid curved cabinets engineered from higher density material, with a choice of stunning new finishes.

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**QED SILVER ANNIVERSARY XT  
 LOUDSPEAKER CABLE £5.50 PER METRE**

QED has got some good mileage out of its 'X-Tube' conductor design. In essence, it's a hollow conductor just like the screen of a coaxial cable, with the centre conductor removed, the centre void containing PTFE and air, while the outer insulator is polythene. Two conductors stuck together make up a classic figure-eight cable, and the relatively large overall diameter does keep inductance low. This cable produces clear, open sounds of considerable authority. Bass is nicely extended with just a hint of excess bloom to it, while treble is sweet and detailed. Images extend well both sideways and away from the listener, and the dreaded 'cable dryness' is almost completely absent, making this a strong contender for its price.

☎ 01279 501111 🌐 www.qed.co.uk

**STANDS UNIQUE SMART STRAPS  
 CABLE TIES £8 (SET OF 10)**

This is such a simple idea that anyone could have thought of it – but the rest of them didn't, did they? So all the more credit to Stands Unique for cutting out some double-sided Velcro (hook one side, loop the other) to make these nifty straps for tying cables out of the way. Of course, you could do the same thing with string, elastic bands, bits of wire – but it wouldn't be as neat nor anywhere near as convenient to untie later if stuff needs to be moved or changed. Beautifully simple to use and reuse, and cut so as to be easily attached to a surface if need be, these will find uses within and beyond every hi-fi system. Buy a pack and be amazed how quickly you need another!

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**VAPEXTECH  
 RECHARGEABLE BATTERIES £4.25 (SET OF 4AA)**

If you've any interest in portable audio, you've probably got through a few batteries. You may have thought that rechargeables don't last long on a charge and don't recharge many times. Wrong! We investigated several brands and found that modern rechargeables not only last longer on a single charge than alkaline (disposable) types, but take hundreds of charges with little or no fall-off in performance. In a portable DAT recorder (which warns against using rechargeables in its manual) these lasted over twice as long on one charge as a set of alkalines. One or two other brands offer marginally better performance, but at much higher prices.

🌐 www.vapextech.co.uk

**KISO fo.Q  
 DAMPING COMPOUND £38**

This vibration-damping compound is a thick, grey sludge made up of piezoelectric crystal particles in something that smells a bit like linseed oil. Piezoelectric materials convert vibration into electricity, and the idea is that this is electrically conductive and shorts out any resulting charges. It's a microscopic version of the generator braking systems that pull up some trains, converting motion into electricity and electricity into heat. We aren't sure why this should be more efficient than simply converting the vibration directly into heat, but this stuff works remarkably well. Applied to all kinds of components that might ring and resonate, from metal casework to CD mechanisms, it does indeed damp vibration effectively with useful sonic results in the form of clearer images and removed veils.

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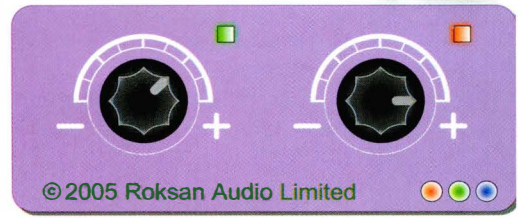
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# Massive in dub

Producer and musician Bill Laswell has worked with everyone from the great and the good to the crazed and the weird. Now he's reimagining dub reggae for the new millennium

Over the last 20 years, New York-based bass player, engineer and producer Bill Laswell has carved himself a niche. Chances are, you'll encounter him playing, arranging, or producing with the likes of Herbie Hancock, Mick Jagger, Peter Gabriel, Yoko Ono, George Clinton, David Byrne, Laurie Anderson, Afrika Bambaataa and even Brian Eno. He's released over 30 albums under his own name and been involved in over 700 other, largely underground, projects. Idle he ain't.

His latest (though by the time you read this he'll probably be working on a dozen others) is an 'enhancement' of Trojan Records' legendary dub catalogue. He's worked on similar projects in the past, notably *Panthalassa*, which reimagined Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*-era electronic jazz as an ambient excursion to the dark side, and *Dreams Of Freedom: Ambient Translations Of Bob Marley In Dub*, which pretty much speaks for itself.

Not everyone was a fan of those exercises, which detract somewhat from the raw, exciting edge of original Trojan dub, although they do open the music up to a wider audience. Many of these recordings were B-sides by such reggae luminaries as King Tubby, Sly and Robbie, The Upsetters, Augustus Pablo and many more, cut as alternate, longer, largely instrumental versions of dance hits. Generally recorded on fairly primitive equipment, there's often a roughness about the original cuts that's a pungent reminder of where they come from – Jamaica in the 1960s and 1970s. Little of that is present on Laswell's versions, but in keeping with his basic philosophy that all music is equal, the man himself is unrepentant.

"Why not? It seemed like a very natural thing to do. I'm very familiar with the material and I just tried to make it bigger, fuller, bring out more detail. I'm not particularly interested in the old stuff or songs from the past, it's more the beat of it, more to do with sonics rather than technical capabilities, just in terms of size

and dimension, the depth of the sound. I don't know what people are used to hearing, and I could care less. But the point is that if you play this and then play one of the other compilations, you'll notice a big difference.

"It should be coming out on vinyl, too, which will be good. Vinyl just carries that bottom-end

**"But the point is that if you play this and then play one of the other compilations, you'll notice a big difference."**

that doesn't quite happen in digital sound, y'know? It's not really refined, it's like a raw sound. Digital is very compact and compressed, everything cops out at just the right time, but vinyl is kinda loose. Vinyl to CD is like a live performance compared to a recording.

"I think also that surround sound has a huge potential. No-one's developed it to the point where anybody's actually doing anything that creative with it. I've done about three or four, including Herbie Hancock's *Future Shock*, and I really believe in it – I can see how it could be a great medium and a new experience. I don't

think it relates to all music though, like I don't really see how pop music could benefit from it, which is why it hasn't happened. But techno, electronic music, drum 'n' bass, ambient, that could be major, it's gonna be great."

Dave Oliver



## ESSENTIAL BILL LASWELL RECORDINGS

### Trjoan Dub Massive Chapter One

First of two double CDs of 1970s vintage dub which opens up the sound for modern systems and reimagines the herb-flavoured ambience for a new generation.



### Herbie Hancock Future Shock

Bill was producer on the one-time jazz wunderkind's 1983 leap into the MTV mainstream, combining jazz, funk, techno and hip-hop in a whole new way.



### Miles Davis

#### *Panthalassa: The Music of Miles Davis*

Bill recreated some prime cuts from Miles Davis's early 1970s electric mayhem, moving the percussion to the fore and pulling out some previously hidden details.



# WIN!

**AUDIO ANALOGUE'S SUPERB ENIGMA ONE-BOX SYSTEM AND TRIANGLE TITUS ES SPEAKERS, WORTH OVER £1,200!**



Last month, Italian hi-fi company Audio Analogue seduced our eyes and ears with its elegant Enigma one-box CD/FM tuner/amp system. It received a Best Buy badge, displaying all of the hi-fi ambitions with none of the full-width girth. Designed in Audio Analogue's Italian facility, the Enigma's bomb-proof build sets it apart

from the competition and its svelte dimensions have real charm. What makes this system special, however, is the use of valves on the amp's output stage. Peer through the window on the fascia and you can clearly see the ECC88 double-triode valve in all its glowing glory, helping to deliver the cool and composed Enigma

sound. Partnering this wonderful music maker is a superb pair of Triangle Titus ES speakers, another winner of our coveted Best Buy badge. The combination is a match made in Euro heaven – a Franco-Italian masterpiece no less. For your chance to win, simply correctly answer the question below. The lucky winner will be drawn at random.

## QUESTION:

**What can you see through the window on the Enigma's fascia?**

**A:** An ECC88 double-triode valve?

**B:** Michaelangelo's David?

**C:** A Golden Retriever?

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**By Phone:** Simply call **0906 403 1013** and follow the instructions (maximum cost of call: £1.50).

**By Text:** Simply send the text message **ENIGMA** (followed by a space) with the answer A, B or C to **80889**. For example, if you think the answer is C: A Golden Retriever, then text ENIGMA C to 80889.

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# ChoiceCuts



This month's varied musical morsels

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



## AUDIOPHILE VINYL

### CHARLES MINGUS

Presents Charles Mingus

Candid/Pure Pleasure  
180g vinyl

**Music:** This is an extremely fine album from the bassist/composer's most dynamic period, featuring Eric Dolphy on alto sax and bass clarinet, Ted Curson on trumpet and Dannie Richmond on drums. *Folk Forms No1* and *Original Faubus Fables* are joyful, upbeat numbers which genuinely raise the spirits with their energy and expressiveness. The second side is more complex and less predictable: *What Love* has a varying tempo and *All The Things You Could Be By Now If Sigmund Freud's Wife was your Mother* is almost summed up by its title, but is actually based on *All The Things You Are*. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Although the sleeve indicates that this is a stereo album, when Pure Pleasure checked the tapes the mono version was found to be the better of the two – perhaps this is why it's so dynamic? Either way, it makes you question the supposed superiority of two-channel. ★★★★★ JK

### LITTLE WALTER

The Best Of

Chess/Speakers Corner  
180g vinyl

**Music:** Born Marion Walter Jacobs in Alexandria, Louisiana, Little Walter became one of the most successful harp (harmonica) players of the latter blues era and a prime influence on the Chicago sound. He was a regular sideman to Muddy Waters and Big Bill Broonzy,

bringing an extra spring to the performances of those giants. This album combines Walter's dynamic and expressive harp playing along with his rich, distinctive vocal talents. Few of the dozen tracks exceed three minutes and as a result they are tightly focused tunes, with often strong rhythmic drive and an economy of playing that gets straight to the point. ★★★★★  
**Sound:** No details are given as to the vintage of these mono recordings but they show their age in the character of sound. There is distortion on one track, but you couldn't hope to make this material sound any better. ★★ 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



### VEDA HILLE

Return Of The Kildeer

Ape  
**Music:** Canadian Veda Hille has been at the *avant garde* lark for a few years now and has taken the singer-songwriter genre to the point of high art. Her lyrics – by turns sentimental, simple, clever, brutal and slick – are stark or bluesy vaudeville or string-laden arrangements that make her come across like an art-house poet and 'all round entertainer'. Her debut for Andy 'XTC' Partidge's Ape label is her best effort yet, a darkly beguiling smorgasbord of an album, yielding dozens of bizarre little surprises with each successive play. One for those snow-capped long winter evenings. ★★★★★

**Sound:** The crisp, lush production gives Ms H's twisted melodies room to breathe. ★★★★★ PS

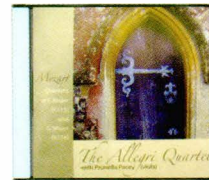


### RICHARD ASHCROFT

Keys To The World

Parlophone  
**Music:** The third album from Richard Ashcroft represents a scaling down of his ambitions – and the results are entirely positive. Few are more adept at writing big, yearning melodies with huge, swelling choruses, but the former Verve singer over-reached himself in his hubristic attempts to make everything sound epic. The genius for melody is still present on *Keys To The World* and there are some potent strings and vaulting moments on tracks such as *Why Do Lovers* and *World Keeps Turning*. But he's more intimate and natural than we've heard him before and sounding all the better for it. ★★★★★

**Sound:** The dense production has been swapped for something still rich but considerably warmer, complemented by an satisfyingly grittier timbre in his voice. ★★★ NW



### MOZART

Quintets in C maj K515, G min K516

The Allegri Quartet with Prunella Pacey

Naim 085

**Music:** Violist Prunella Pacey augments the Allegri to play these two excellent *Mozart Quintets*, both written around the time of the death of Mozart's father, and just a few years before the composer's own demise aged just 35. The Allegri bring seriousness to their readings, but when the music needs to sing, as in the final *Allegro* of the *C Major*, few can make it do so more joyfully. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Described as a strictly minimalist True Stereo recording, two spaced AKG 414 mics were employed feeding a two-track Nagra recorder, with no manipulation or equalisation, which is reflected in a vivid, full and lifelike recording with excellent stereo imaging. The bass register of the cello sings particularly well. ★★★★★ AG

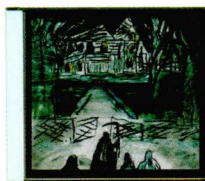


### RYAN ADAMS

29

Lost Highway  
**Music:** It sounded like hype when US singer-songwriter Ryan Adams announced that he planned to release no less than three albums in 2005. Yet, true to his word, December brings *29*, following April's *Cold Roses* and September's *Jacksonville City Nights*. All three have maintained an astonishingly high level of quality control and *29* is yet another diverse and potent collection, ranging from the rockabilly-tinged title track to stark piano ballads such as *Starlite Diner* and *The Sadness*, via acoustic guitar weepies like *Strawberry Wine* and *Voices*. After badly losing his way following 1999's career-defining *Heartbreaker*, each instalment of his comeback trilogy should see him awarded 'comeback of the year'. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Producer Ethan Johns helmed Adams' best early work and returns for the first time in several years to recreate the organic, live-in-the-studio feel that was a major reason for his original success. ★★★★★ NW



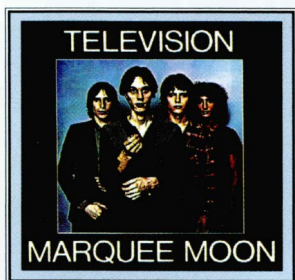
### BIOSPHERE

Dropsone

Touch  
**Music:** Norway's Biosphere, aka Geir Jenssen, is the last great ambient music saviour. Jenssen digs deep on this vinyl disc, to combine whirring machines with the natural tones of dogs barking or fires crackling. Here, on an album that celebrates weather balloons, Jenssen reaches out to the high-hats of jazz and the flutey tones of early seventies jazz rock. By the end of this album's astonishing second side (the entire record lasts just 37 minutes) you have witnessed a composer transform ambient into a new form of sonic improvisation. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Tones just float off the vinyl and when the bottom end kicks in, your speakers just go through the roof. A worthy argument for a wholesale return to vinyl. ★★★★★ MP





## THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "There are few albums that do this better."

### TELEVISION Marquee Moon Elektra

**Music:** Released in 1977, Television's debut album was pivotal in shaping the 'new wave' music that followed. This eight-track album has such a distinct and powerful sound that its influence is still felt today. The dual guitars of Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd create a bright and aggressive sound that is devoid of the blues influence that had shaped much of rock up until this time. There have been subsequent reunions since the band split up after just one more album,

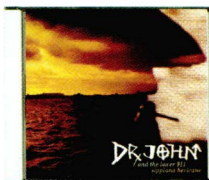
but none have matched the intensity and originality of this amazing piece of work. ★★★★★  
**Sound:** It doesn't have an audiophile sound, but has plenty to distinguish itself, particularly in the way it captures the essence of the electric guitars – there are few albums that do this better. Verlaine's 'ugly' voice is as gritty and coarse as the front cover photo and, though closed-in, is not obviously compressed and fits the music perfectly. ★★★★★ JK



### DR JOHN Sippiana Hericane

EMI

**Music:** This may, in essence, be a worthy fundraiser album, hastily compiled in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the good doctor's hometown of New Orleans in August, 2005. But worthiness is welcomingly absent from the material. Who else but a Big Easy native could get away with leading off such an album with a reworking of the Ramsey Lewis classic *Wade In The Water* (or indeed naming the band specially assembled for the sessions, the 'Lower 911'). The city may be battered, but with music like this still being produced, it's far from beaten. After years of slightly saccharine, worthy and musically bereft music, Dr. John's influence is highly refreshing. ★★★★★  
**Sound:** Mac Rebennack's voice is in good, gravelly form and the music on this mini album is fully up to par, the urgency of the occasion lending weight to his relaxed boogie woogie stylings. It may only be 25 minutes long, but if you are going to buy one hurricane-related charity mini album this year, you'd better make it this one. ★★★★★ DO



### VARIOUS ARTISTS Congotronics 2

Crammed

**Music:** The first Congotronics album featured just one band, the remarkable Konono No1. But this documents a musical explosion in the Congo capital, Kinshasa. The rhythms and chants are obviously 'African', but the sound has more in common with fuzzed-up 1960s garage bands or *avant garde* electronica. It can be an intense listen, but the power of the repetitive, driving rhythms and weirdly familiar instrumentation is infectious. ★★★★★  
**Sound:** Recorded in the street, in rooms and in shopping malls, using amplified thumb harps, guitars, accordions and home-made percussion instruments, this is a rough and ready sound. It's compressed and dense, but a decent system will be able to pick out the pearls. ★★★★★ DO



### JS BACH Preludes & Fugues

Ivo Janssen (piano)

Void 9812

**Music:** Although not well known in the UK, Ivo Janssen is more widely recognised in Europe and the US, and in particular in his native Holland. On this evidence, with the early but still intermittently brilliant *Preludes And Fugues*, he is a soloist of immense vitality and undeniable skill. For a taster, try the BV948 *Fugue in D minor*, the final track on the disc, which has a maturity and inventiveness that belies Bach's youth at the time. ★★★★★  
**Sound:** Janssen's own Void Classics recording – made on a Yamaha C7 grand – is clean, uncluttered and spacious, with a light, bright sound that suits the character of the music well, though it lacks the distinctive timbral complexity of a Steinway. ★★★★★ AG

## DVD-AUDIO & SACD

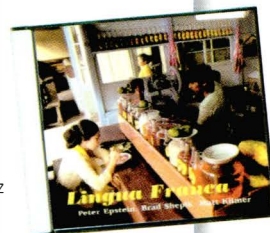
### PETER EPSTEIN, BRAD SHEPIK, MATT KILMER

Lingua Franca

SACD (Stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Songlines

**Music:** This Songlines SACD brings together guitar player Brad Shepik and saxophonist Peter Epstein, musicians who have played together in various small jazz groups in and around New York for over a decade. Here they are joined by percussionist Matt Kilmer, who has a nice line in instruments including tambour, a large tambourine without the little cymbals. The music they make is a mix of world and jazz influences, with the fluidity and naturalness of the former and the improvisational freedom of the latter. Though easy to listen to, it has more soul and depth than 'dinner jazz'; Shepik and Epstein have great rapport and their playing produces a colourful mosaic of sound. ★★★★★  
**Sound:** This was originally an analogue recording and sounds very natural and organic as a result. Songlines has retained much of that quality here, creating a sound that reinforces the calibre of the instruments and playing. ★★★★★ JK



### SCHUBERT Piano Sonata in E flat major D568, 6 Moments Musicaux D780

Mitsuko Uchida

SACD (Stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Philips 470 603-2

**Music:** The D568 *Sonatas* is a relatively early work, and the first of the great Schubert four-movement sonatas. Although no match for the celebrated posthumous sonatas, it remains an excellent piece of music, especially under the expressive fingers of the great Mitsuko Uchida, and despite the rather deliberate tempi. *Moments Musicaux* is a series of musical tableaux, a "cycle of songs without words" as the cover essay has it, and fully formed Schubert at his most tuneful and engaging. In both cases this is one of the finest available recordings, which if anything elevates the music above its already high stature. ★★★★★

**Sound:** An excellent example of where SACD scores. The multichannel mix adds space and physicality to the sound, while SACD stereo scores over the already excellent CD mix thanks to a more fluid, believable sound, recorded in the fine, warm acoustic of the main auditorium of the Vienna Musikverein. ★★★★★ AG



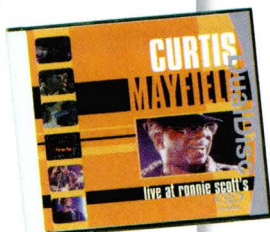
### CURTIS MAYFIELD

Live At Ronnie Scott's

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

Silverline

**Music:** Whatever bizarre strategy is employed to identify albums for DualDisc release, it occasionally throws up some gems. This live recording from 1988 finds arguably the world's greatest soul songsmith at the UK's most famous jazz niterie and includes a video performance of *Freddie's Dead*, from the *Superfly* soundtrack, and a video interview between Curtis and fawning acolyte Paul Weller, just two years before the accident which crippled him. Most of the classics are here, including *Move On Up*, *Pusherman*, *People Get Ready*, *Billy Jack* and more, in a sparkling performance towards the end of Curtis's too-short performing life. ★★★★★  
**Sound:** Curtis may have been long past his 1970s creative peak here, and the synth-driven arrangements aren't on a par with the original recordings, but there's a joy in the playing of these magnificent songs that shines through the generally excellent mix. ★★★★★ DO



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## 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.

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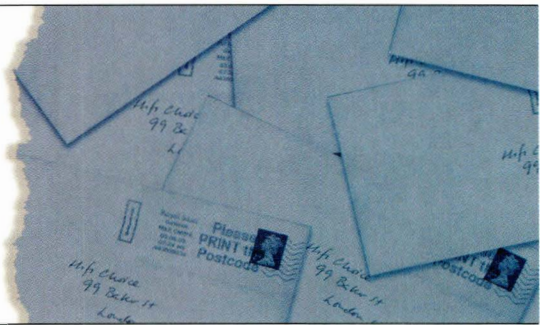
The sexy Gizmo system remote

# ChoiceMail



The pick of this month's best letters

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



## ★ LETTER OF THE MONTH

### SWINGS AND ROUNDABOUTS

I always considered hi-fi to be immune from changing fashion, but we've gone from integrated amps to pre/power amps, CD players to CD transports and DACs. And back again, each time with a supposed sonic benefit. One minute two boxes are better than one, the next minute, one-box is all the rage again. Is this technology-driven? I think it's fashion-led. Leave pretty, compact and practical to the mass market products, we're after ultimate sonics after all.

**David Jackson** via email

**HFC** We've seen lots of integrated *and* multi-box amps and CD players, often backed by sound reasoning. Now, DACs are integrating into amps. With digital technology always evolving, there can be good reasons for what could be perceived as design 'compromises'.



**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...)



### COULD IT BE MAGIC?

I knew that I wanted a pair of Focal Micro Utopia Bes as soon as I saw them. I already owned a pair of JK Acoustics Prestige Powerblocs and a gorgeous Reference CD-transport of the same manufacture, ([www.jk-acoustics.com](http://www.jk-acoustics.com), not yet available in the UK) combined with a dCS Elgar/Purcell. The whole combination sounds very good indeed and the Utopias produce awesome detail – the bass is great too! These standmounts are fussy and difficult to handle, but once you get it right there simply is no turning back.

**Marcel van Oosterhout** Holland

### GOING CHEAP

As a regular reader of your *Reader Classified* section, I am constantly amazed at second-hand hi-fi's generally low prices. Regularly, readers price their equipment at around half the retail price, which is also often quoted in the ad in brackets. Such harsh depreciation seems so misplaced in the hi-fi industry – we're talking about the best quality audio kit you can buy, not the finite-life, budget brands found in Dixons. This stuff should last a lifetime, so why is it worth so little, so quickly? Some brands, such as Densen, even offer a lifetime guarantee!

**"I knew that I wanted a pair of Focal Micro Utopia Bes as soon as I saw them."**

I can't believe that the latest versions of established equipment are even as much as ten per cent better than equipment made a few years ago; after all, we're only talking about minor tweaks and component changes. I say cherish your purchase and don't get suckered in by obsolescence marketing strategy.

**Ben Jones** via email

**HFC** You sure can pick up a bargain in our *Reader Classified* pages. Second-user kit is incredibly hard to price, however, because it depends largely on the product, its availability and the numbers produced at the factory. As always, though, the market will decide the price, and you can only get as much for your product as someone is willing to pay. Whether you feel the latest CBR-DVDVD-150 MkIV is better than your current model, however, should be answered with your ears only. ☐



**MUSIC AND MOVIES**

John Jeffries, the Sussex-based retailer and importer of exotic hi-fi is a big fan of dynamics and scale in music, and I know he genuinely tries to reproduce the 'live' sound of a stadium or hall with his Lumley speakers. I love the big, live sound too, but many concert arenas in the UK have considerable sonic flaws, although there are notable exceptions. I have noticed recently, however, that despite Dolby Digital soundtracks, large, modern cinemas can create incredible scale and musical drama if there's a good soundtrack to accompany a film. I'm not advocating cinema over live music, but check it out next time you see a film. Just make sure you get a good seat in the middle of the room – it's quite something.

**Andy Holter** via email

**HFC** As you suggest, if the soundtrack is good, then cinema, although strictly not high fidelity, can be immensely entertaining in terms of sheer scale and brute dynamics. Luckily, soundtracks seem to be getting better as they are increasingly recognised as an integral (and also profitable) element to film. You can certainly pursue the live sound in your system with careful component selection and matching. Drama and scale are often the products of large speakers and powerful amplification, but if your wallet (and neighbours) can take it, the results can be spectacular – use our *Buyer's Bible* to get you on track.

**“I know he genuinely tries to reproduce the 'live' sound of a stadium or hall with his Lumleys.”**

**WAX RACKS**

I'm trying to find a firm that makes storage systems for vinyl LPs: just over 1,000 in fact. I lost my built-in storage when I moved house. Anything basic will do, but it must be designed for the purpose. I'm not considering the reproduction furniture in styles as advertised in *Gramophone*, by the way – they aren't suitable at all. I would appreciate any help you can give me with this search.

**Michael Foster** via email

**HFC** There is a solution from Sefour vinyl storage: a grey, vertical racking system that holds 500 LPs for £150. Of course, you'd need two, but they are a simple and neat-looking option. The unit measures 45x145x46cm (WxHxD) and is available from Sapphire on 020 8960 8989. If you are a bit handy, of course, you could make your own racks from 25mm MDF. This would be a cheaper, if somewhat heavier and more permanent option. For a super-budget solution from Ikea, check out the Online Forum banter to the right of this page.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE**

I have great respect for Jimmy Hughes. But, while I agree with his *Tweak #37* (leave your transistor equipment permanently running), it is not exactly environmentally friendly. I can't remember the recently published figures stating the cost of leaving TVs and radios in stand-by mode, but it was surprising. Just imagine all those Krells and so on burning away 24 hours a day. I know they can keep the chill off the room, but leaving it on does damage the environment.

**Robert E Vince** via email

**HFC** Jimmy is coming from an ideal, purist point of view, of course. Whether you leave your kit on all the time is personal choice and partly down to your environmental awareness and your attitude towards your energy bill. Although there are some components – Naim CD players and preamps, for example – that demand constant power to sound their best, for most of us powering up about an hour before listening is a real-world compromise.

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IN THIS ISSUE

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

• The world's most rigorous group test of pre/power amps: 2000 to £2,500 – our crucial criteria from Akai, Exosurf, NAD, Phihar, Quartz and Roksan  
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I noticed that last month, three of the UK hi-fi magazines had awards issues out at the same time. I had a flick through them all in *Borders* and found *Hi-Fi Choice* the best. *Hi-Fi News* had a lot of products in the seriously high-end league.

**Miller-8**

Do you have to buy 'special audio' CD-R/RWs for use in the latest standalone CD recorders..?

**Peter312uk**

...Yes, and even some of those don't work!

**Icehockeyboy**

I am looking to buy a pair of B&W 805s in cherry veneer. Any suggestions where I can look to buy a pair second-hand..?

**RussellJ**

...Keep your eye on this dedicated site: [www.bw-secondhand.com](http://www.bw-secondhand.com)

**Crustylloafer**

Is there a 'reference' in this business? Really, I mean, look at all the top-of-the-range speakers and amplifiers, etc. They all have 'reference' in their name but they all sound different. What kind of reference can there be in hi-fi..?

**iBug**

...Reference means absolutely nothing in this context. Anything can be a reference product – i.e. something by which others can be judged. It's purely a marketing ploy.

**Legzr1**

Need vinyl storage? I thought I'd post this as I am so pleased with my purchase. It's an Ikea Expedit – £69, or £99 for a bigger one. It is ideal for storing LPs. Each square holds about 70. It comes in white and birch veneers, as well as black.

**jampal**

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DECEMBER 04 / HI FI NEWS / CD3MKII / KEN KESSLER

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ISSUE 37 / HI FI PLUS / CD3MKII / ALAN SIRCOM

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

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

**“A SUPERB ALL-ROUNDER AND AN OBVIOUS BEST BUY”**

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

**“OUTSTANDING SOUND QUALITY AND EXCEPTIONAL EASE OF USE”**

ISSUE 35 / HI FI PLUS / PH5 / JIMMY HUGHES



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

The SP16 preamplifier, VS55, VS110 and VM220 power amplifiers, the state-of-the-art CD3 Mk II CD player, the multi-channel amplifier and the VS155 integrated amplifier are not only packed with knowledge gained from the company's legendary flagship models, but they herald a change in the way reasonably-priced high-end equipment is perceived. The astonishing PH5 brings Reference Phono performance to a remarkably affordable price point. The LS25 Mk II Pre-amp clearly shares parentage with the Reference pre-amplifiers. And the VT100 Mk III boasts DNA derived from the Reference 300 and 600 power amps.

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

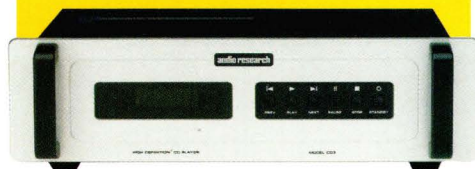
The bloodline strengthens.

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

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



AUDIO RESEARCH VM220



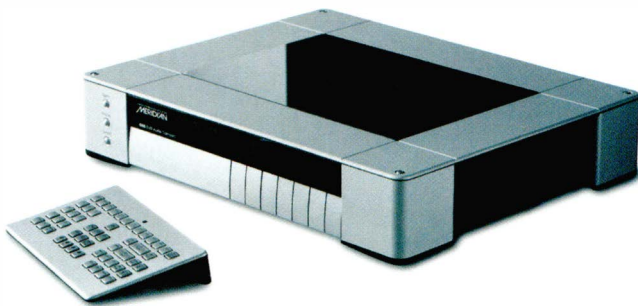
AUDIO RESEARCH CD 3 MK2

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The G98 (above, left) offers superb audio performance, and plays almost any PCM disc format – exquisitely. The G98 now also includes stunning 1080p full-bandwidth High Definition video, taking your existing DVDs to cinema-screen quality.



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G98 and 808: just two more reasons why magazines and Meridian owners alike award us 'Best Sound' and 'Best Picture'. Contact us for details.



Best DVD Player over  
£2,500:

**Meridian G98**

Best CD Player over  
£5,000:

**Meridian 808i  
Signature Reference**

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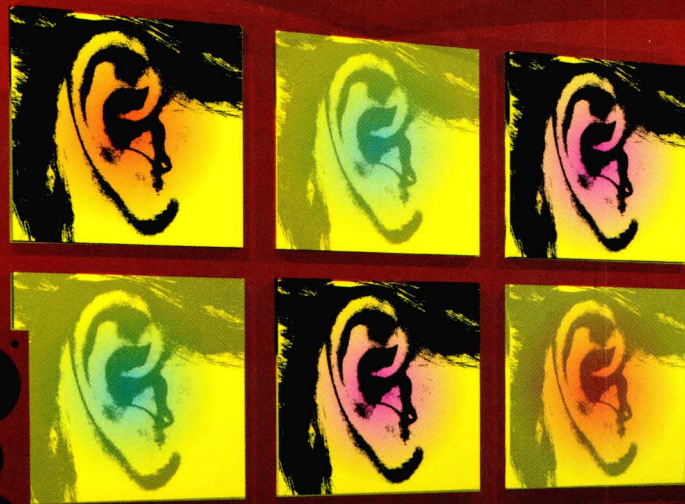
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## The Science of **Hearing** Part One

*What are the most important components in your hi-fi system? Your ears, that's what! In the first of a three-part series, hearing expert R. A. Lawrence explains what makes them tick*

**T**his article – and the two parts that will follow in forthcoming issues of *HFC* – endeavours to delve into the mechanics and functioning of the human ear, with the aim of providing an insight into the 'nuts and bolts' of human hearing. We shall also try and answer a few common questions that many of

us, the casual hi-fi buff and audiophile alike, have been plagued with.

It is true that the human ear is perhaps the most important component in the hi-fi chain. It's an ingenious and clever design, one that has been 'upgraded' by millions of years of evolution. Many of us take it for granted – but

then why shouldn't we? However, like so many things, only its loss alerts us to its importance.

Deafness is perhaps the cruellest form of sensory deprivation. Because it is not an immediately obvious 'disability', it often provokes ridicule rather than sympathy. Our ability to hear not only informs our spatial **▶**

position in the world, but also helps control our voice and speech, both in tone and level. Listen to someone trying to sing along to music while they are wearing headphones and you soon discover just how much our hearing places us in our world. It's a precious commodity indeed!

What we hear is, in fact, what the brain *thinks* it heard. This is, in turn, a summation of several factors: the actual sound stimulus, perception and amplification by the ear itself, processing

## “The external ear and the head play an important role in the hearing process because of their acoustic properties.”

within the auditory cortex and, finally, signal integration with the rest of the brain leading to awareness of the stimulus. This complicated process is what we simply call 'hearing'.

### WHAT'S 'NORMAL', ANYWAY?

If you took a group of 20 year olds (it's surprising how dramatically our hearing falls off, due to aging and our loud environment), examined their ears to ensure all was well and then tested their hearing, you could take the average hearing level of these individuals and class it as 'normal acceptable hearing'.

This is precisely what has been done and it is accepted as the normal hearing level. It is the 'zero point' on a typical audiogram (hearing test). The medical profession accepts hearing levels up to 20dB from that zero point on a pure tone audiogram as being within the 'normal' range. The perfect test would produce a result close to zero, but hearing can be both worse and better than this.

The audible range for humans is roughly 10Hz to 24kHz. However, because of its size

*pinna* introduces other resonances and anti-resonances. In particular, these features are used by a listener to help differentiate sound sources in front from those behind, thereby aiding localization.

### RESONANT GAINS

The sound pressure measured near the eardrum differs from that measured in free air. There is a gain of about 15dB in the 3kHz region and a gain greater than 10dB between about 2kHz and 5kHz. This gain reflects the acoustic properties of the head and outer ear, especially the resonant frequency of the ear canal. A tube such as the ear canal that is open at one end and closed at the other behaves like a quarter-wave resonator, where the length of the tube determines the resonant frequency. The resonance of the external canal is about 8kHz or so in an infant and decreases to adult values when the infant is about two and a half years old, although the ear canal continues to change its shape slowly and subtly from birth to death. For a tube 2.5cm long, the resonant frequency is about 3.5kHz.

Because of this resonance, a sound field, which in free air has a flat frequency response, is changed significantly by the acoustic properties of the head and outer ear. Indeed, the acoustic properties of the outer ear are one of the reasons why noise-induced hearing

and construction, the ear responds better to certain frequencies than to others. Both the natural resonances and the efficiency of the outer and middle ear mechanisms are greatest in the range between 1kHz and 5kHz. Beyond this range, the sensitivity of the ear is a little less for higher frequencies and considerably less for lower frequencies.

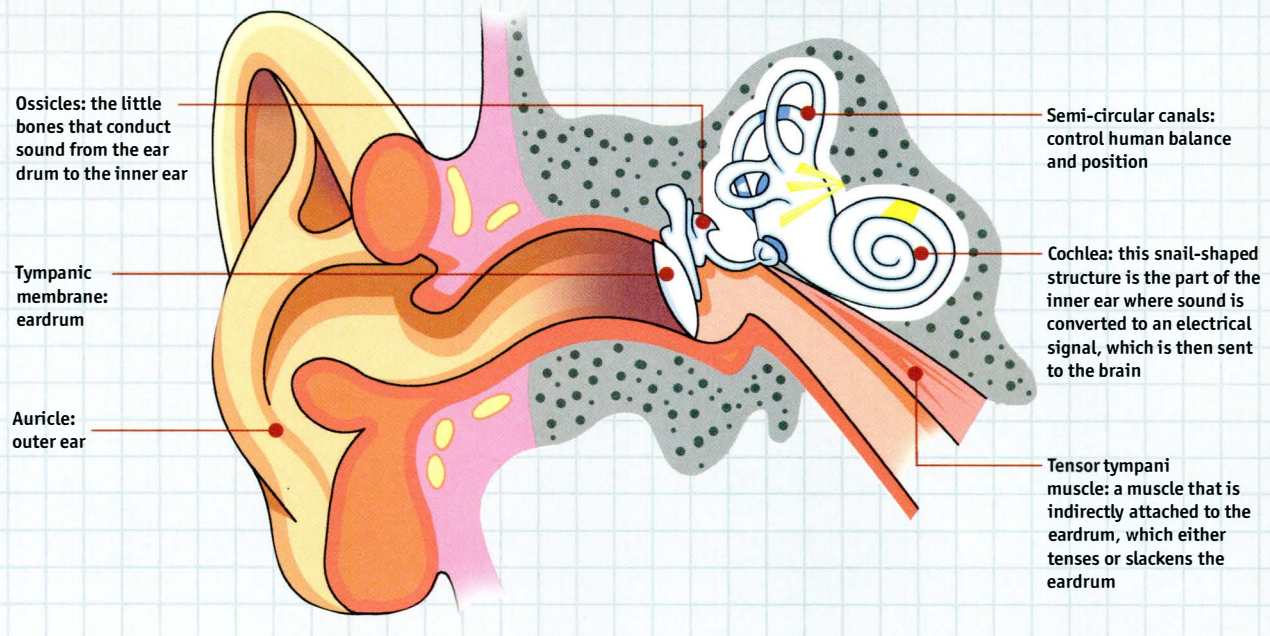
The external ear and the head play a passive but important role in the hearing process because of their acoustic properties. The *concha* (see diagram below) has a resonance at about 5kHz, and the irregular surface of the

## The construction of the ear

The 'external ear' consists of the *pinna* (the bit you can see, pretty much) and the external ear canal up to the outer border of the eardrum. The human *pinna* is composed mostly of cartilage and has no useful

muscles – by contrast, many domestic pets have the ability to move the *pinna* to aid reception and localization of sound. The center of the *pinna*, the bowl-like depression called the *concha*, leads to the external ear

canal, which is about 2.5 cm long. The outer 1/3 of the canal is the soft portion (cartilage), containing wax-producing glands and hair follicles; the remaining two-thirds is the bony portion.





losses tend to occur first and most prominently in the 4kHz frequency region.

In addition to the prominence of noise-induced hearing loss in the 4kHz region, the acoustic properties of the head and external ear play an important role in several hearing functions. **These** are described below.

## FINDING THINGS

In regard to the localization of sound sources, the head acts as an attenuator at frequencies where the width of the head is greater than the wavelength of the sound. Thus, at frequencies above 2kHz, a 'head shadow effect' occurs in which inter-ear differences of 5dB to 15dB in sound intensity are used to localise sound sources.

At lower frequencies, where the wavelength of the sound is larger than the width of the head, the head provides little attenuation. Instead, inter-ear time differences (about 0.6 milliseconds for sound to travel across the head) are the salient cues for localization. The head shadow effect is also the reason why right-handed hunters using rifles and shotguns have larger hearing losses in their left ears than in their right ears (and vice versa): the muzzle of the gun, where the acoustic energy is greatest, is not only closer to the left ear, but the right ear is also protected by the head shadow effect.

This effect may also be responsible for the imaging and depth of soundstage that many audiophiles claim exists with two-channel stereo: sound waves originating from the front speakers and reflected from the walls of the listening room reach the listener as they would in a real concert venue, with a degree of decay and time delay that makes sense to the processing network of the brain.

It must be remembered that the auditory centre is closely integrated with the rest of the

with shed skin cells. It sounds disgusting, but earwax is an essential component, which possesses antibacterial and waterproofing qualities. In normal circumstances, it works its way out spontaneously thanks to a special migratory property of the ear canal skin and is thus best left well alone.

If the canal is interfered with, or in the presence of infection, excessive hair or kinked/deformed ear canals, this migration is affected and the wax rolls up on itself, eventually

**“This effect may also be responsible for the imaging and depth of soundstage that many audiophiles claim exists with stereo.”**

brain, and spatial and visual cues need to be in keeping with the sound heard. Multiple speakers surrounding the listener may produce confusing stimuli that are detrimental to the sense of soundstage.

Finally, the 10 to 15dB gain provided by the external ear in the 3kHz to 5kHz region is useful for improving the detection and recognition of low-energy, high frequency sounds.

## WAXING LYRICAL

Earwax (cerumen) is a mixture of secretions from various glands in the ear canal, together

forming a compact hard mass called impacted wax. Hearing loss from normal amounts of wax is virtually nil; however, impacted wax can cause hearing problems. This occurs not merely as a reduction in sound intensity due to mechanical blockage but also by altering the length of the ear canal resonator, thereby affecting the resonant frequency.

As with all health related issues, any queries you may have in this regard are best discussed with your doctor. **HFC**

*R.A. Lawrence*

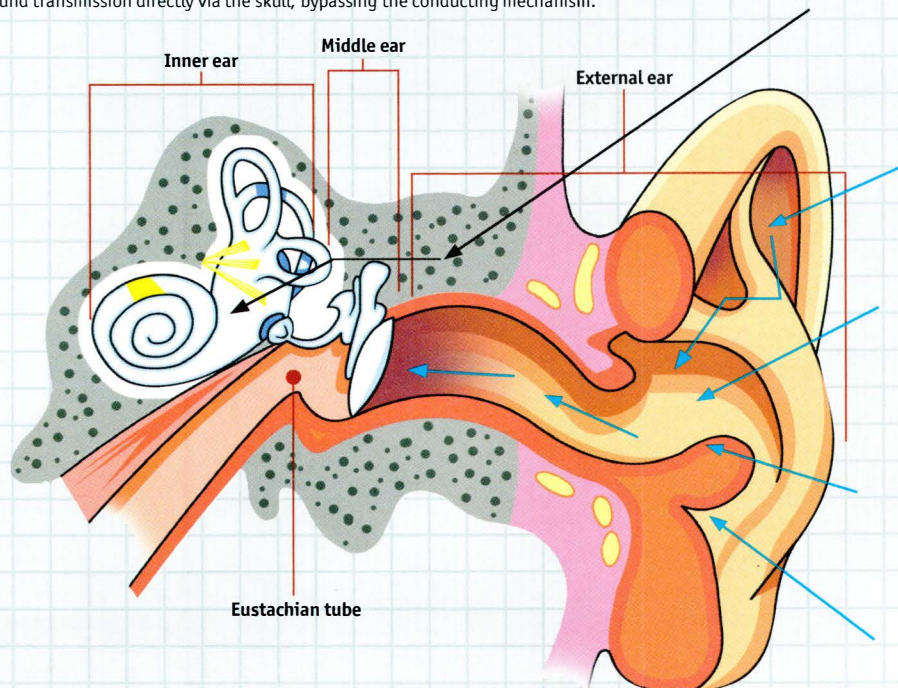
*Next issue: Middle ear mechanics*

## The path of sound in the ear

### KEY:

**Blue arrows:** Direct and reflected/attenuated sound waves from the source augmented by the outer ear, amplified by the middle ear and reaching the inner ear.

**Black Arrows:** Some sound transmission directly via the skull, bypassing the conducting mechanism.





AVI LAB SERIES CD PLAYER | AVI LAB SERIES DAB TUNER | AVI LAB SERIES PREAMPLIFIER  
AVI LAB SERIES POWER AMPLIFIER | AVI TRIO LOUDSPEAKERS | £8,616

# British wail

*A little-known UK-based company makes hi-fi that sings so well, it could make its rivals cry*

**A**VI (or AV International, if you prefer) is the best British hi-fi company most people have never heard of. So, why the radar-dodging anonymity? Because this Stroud-based business is in no hurry to become the centre of attention. It might seem a strange way to do business in this image-obsessed age, but AVI spends almost nothing on advertising and everything on keeping its steadily expanding band of customers around the world satisfied.

Those customers – music biz professionals, celebrities who prefer to keep their higher-fi desires on the down low and audiophiles yet to stray too far from the path of sanity – know a good thing when they hear it. They are only too relieved to sidestep the tangle of conceited claims, exaggerated expectations and downright deceits that represent the dark side of the high end for hassle-free enjoyment of a, let's face it, rather expensive pastime.

AVI has a disarmingly straightforward philosophy. Keep it simple, build it right and don't include anything that doesn't benefit the customer. "Would you pay extra for fancy terminals if they made no difference to the sound?" asks AVI's Ashley James. He anticipates a response in the negative. "That's how we can offer simple, elegant and non-intrusive loudspeakers at exceptionally low prices for the performance they offer."

## INDEPENDENCE DAY

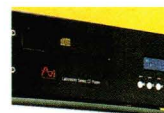
And it's not just loudspeakers. The low-profile/high-performance/zero-hype approach was forged with its electronics and it's a luxury that comes with independence. AVI is one of the very few wholly British-owned companies that still designs and manufactures its speakers and electronics in the UK. As

well as striving for an exceptional performance/price ratio, it also puts a huge effort into build quality, sharp yet understated design (you'd better like black and sparsely applied twinkling blue LEDs), considerable durability and ease of servicing. 'Bullet-proof' hardly does justice to the solidity of the Laboratory Series CD player, DAB tuner and preamp/power amp combo that head up this month's *Beautiful System*. And if the odd unit did happen to fall under the tracks a Centurian tank, circuit diagrams and technical information are available via the web so that, wherever the unfortunate event, repairs could be carried out by local specialists.

Stark, almost painful, honesty is another hallmark of AVI. Take the one product that may just have pricked the interest of those not intimately familiar with the nuances of the subject we love so much: the Lab Series Integrated amplifier. We're not the only magazine to have lavished praise on this compact colossus or suggested that it punches so far above its weight that amps twice its £1,500 price might struggle to best it. You'd have thought that, for the sake of keeping the giant-killing reputation intact and the cult bubbling along, AVI might have laid off direct comparisons with its new pre/power amp pairing. But no. Good as the Integrated is it can't hold a candle to the new pre/power partnership, according to Mr James. And he's happy to explain why.

In an earlier incarnation of the Lab Series pre/power combo, the 175-watt power amp was identical to the power amp stage in the Integrated, only in its own box. This was teamed up with an upgraded preamp section in a second box. The pairing clearly out-performed the Integrated – something of a result you might have thought, given the

**"AVI has a straightforward philosophy. Keep it simple, build it right and don't include anything that doesn't benefit the customer."**



### AVI Lab Series CD player

£1,469

The new Lab Series CD player looks unchanged but, under the lid, there have been major improvements. The upshot is a machine that sounds clean, fresh and natural.



### AVI Lab Series DAB tuner

£899

AVI considered making another FM tuner, but top-quality FM components are hard to find these days. The DAB tuner is anything but a poor excuse, at its best approaching true CD sonics.



### AVI Lab Series pre/power amp

£2,998

The preamp design launches AVI into the superleague for sound quality, while AVI claims that its new 200-watt power amp has the lowest distortion of any currently made, in real-life conditions.



### AVI Trio loudspeaker

£3,250 per pair

Not quite AVI's last word on big, beefy floorstanding monitors (the Brio fulfils that role), the Trio is nevertheless something of a *tour de force* and capable of quite breathtaking sonic results.





excellence of the one-box product. But 'better' wasn't good enough. Now the £1,399 preamp has been dramatically upgraded, while the power amp is the benefactor of 18 months of further development and a hike in power to over 200 watts per channel into eight ohms, all for just £1,599. It is claimed to be a radical improvement, too.

#### FULL THROTTLE

So you get the picture – AVI simply doesn't know how to throttle back. The company's dedication to the cause is relentless and perhaps best illustrated by another Lab Series component that has undergone intensive development since it first appeared: the CD player. There wasn't anything wrong with the first one, but the more carefully AVI looked at the whole question of CD sound quality, the more obvious it became that the artifacts that spoil the sound were at such low levels, they were incredibly difficult to detect. It ignited a complete re-think that involved procuring all the DAC manufacturers' demonstration boards from Philips, Wolfson and Burr Brown (among others) and comparing them before settling on the new CD player design.

It now uses two dual-differential, 24-bit/192kHz oversampling DACs and the most advanced analogue IC stage AVI could lay its hands on, with

state-of-the-art noise and distortion figures, solid aluminium capacitors throughout and printed circuit boards made by a company specialising in military and communications satellite work. AVI says the DACs are built in a clean room by robots and tested in laboratory conditions, and claims that it is impossible to use better components or make a better DAC.

AVI was also concerned that laser life in the latest transports appeared to be half what they were a few years ago. To get over this, it continues to use Philips' VAM1202/19 because of its old-school longevity... plus the fact that it can be found cheaply almost anywhere in the world and easily replaced if certified professional help is a long way away. Each section of the CD player is removable and pluggable; AVI would rather send an entire PCB half way across the world than have a hapless but well-meaning engineer from the Yellow Pages bugger up the one in the machine.

The CD player isn't just not flimsy, it reflects the granite-like build quality that makes the Lab Series amps feel so amazingly dense and nuggety. The front panel is 10mm thick aluminium and the rest of the case is 1.6mm steel plate with stiffening bends to enhance rigidity and damping of moving parts. Some 14 screws hold the lid on. Small buttons are mounted just below the surface of the

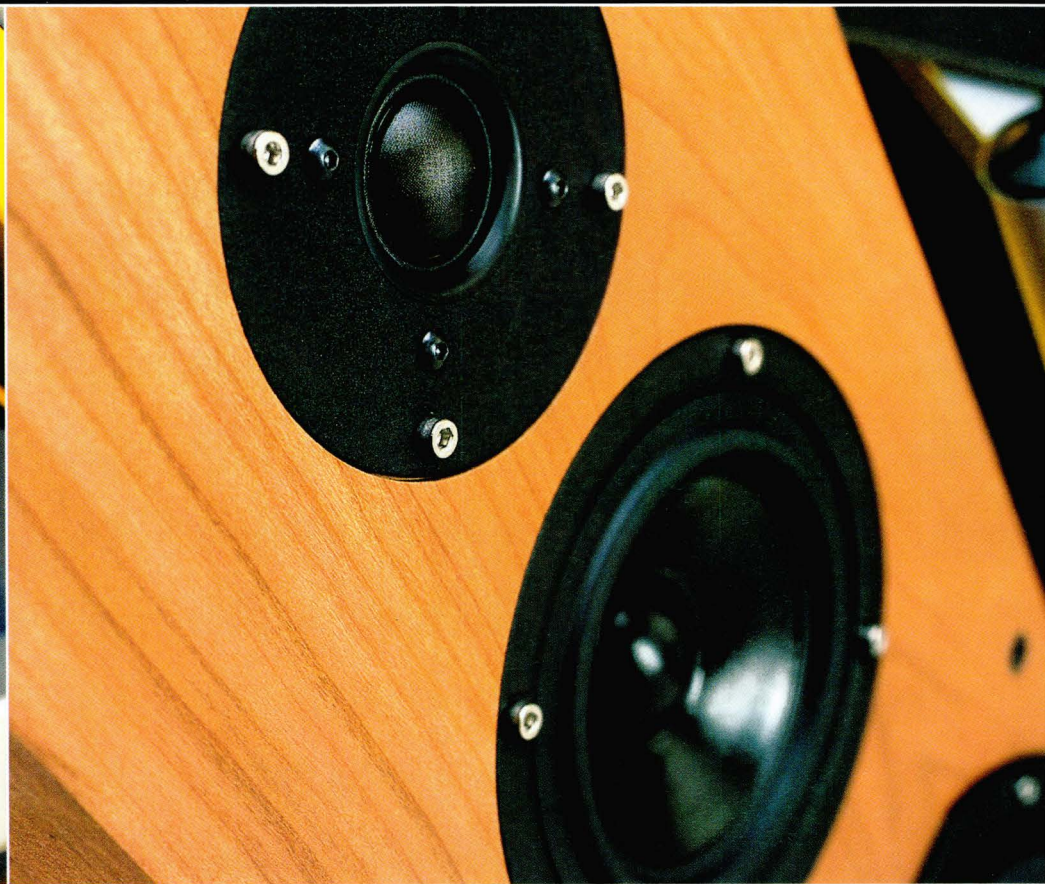
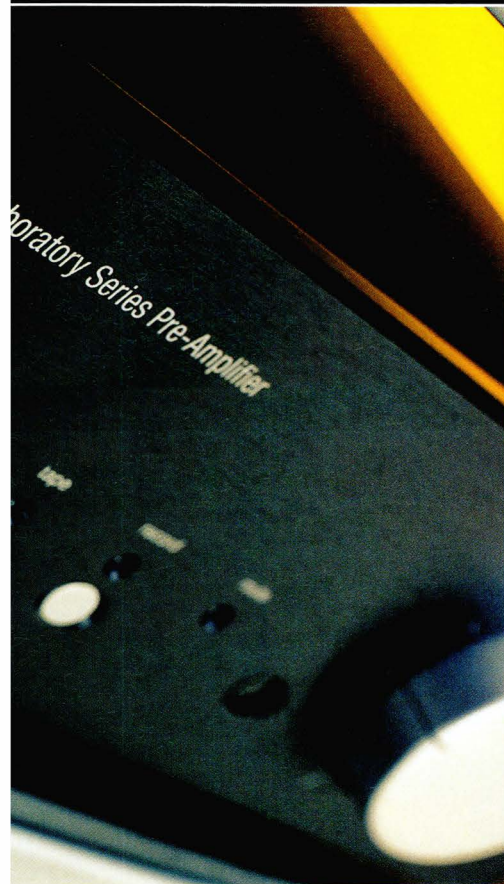
front panel in close tolerance, oval holes. The new Lab Series DAB Tuner is built to identically high standards and uses the same DAC as the CD, albeit in a single rather than a dual configuration. After spending several years evaluating commercial receivers and building numerous prototypes, AVI believes that DAB, properly implemented, is noticeably better than FM and that, while not quite as good as a CD, is good enough to wrong-foot its detractors. And besides, there is a much wider choice of stations than FM can offer.

#### MUSICAL TRIO

And so to the Trio, second from the top in AVI's recently expanded speaker line up but, at £3,250, a fittingly serious floorstander for a system shooting as high as this one. AVI describes the handbuilt, made-to-order Trio as a highly accurate, sealed-box, three-way monitor. Its drive units are mounted in separate, sealed enclosures – tweeter and midrange at the top, bass unit in the middle – and the crossover, which consists of 48 elements on three PCBs, in a third enclosure at the bottom.

The 200mm bass driver is made by Volt, the 120mm midrange unit by Vifa and the 28mm tweeter is from Scanspeak. These are very pricey, hand made units with all the metalwork precision machined rather than stamped





## “It’s hard not to be impressed by the hi-fi: the amazing transparency, dynamics and grip, the exceptional speed and precision of the Trios and the sheer dimensionality they create.”

out, each reckoned by AVI to be the best in its class. Despite a slightly lower system sensitivity than average of 88dB, AVI says the Trio will hit 110dB with a good threshold for peaks thanks to the sealed box and the large voice coil diameters (38mm, 32mm and 28mm respectively). AVI argues that the lower sensitivity helps minimise coloration.

Like other AVI designs, the Trio boasts a very flat amplitude response and textbook impedance plot. The complex crossover is claimed to be accurate to better than one degree of phase and less than 1dB of amplitude response, factors that along with each drive unit’s ability to extend smoothly by at least one octave beyond its desired crossover point, contribute to what AVI calls the speaker’s “outstanding midrange clarity and a stereo image of astonishing depth and width”.

### TECHY NITTY-GRITTY

I haven’t focused too closely on the technical nitty-gritty of this system. It’s aimed at people who aren’t concerned with ‘specs’ and who’d rather cut straight to the chase: the music.

After all, music’s what this system’s extraordinary baseline abilities are for. True, it’s hard not to be impressed by the hi-fi: the amazing transparency, dynamics and grip, the exceptional speed and precision of the Trios and the sheer dimensionality of the soundstage they create. But it’s when Marcus Miller slaps that bottom G, Oscar Peterson takes off with a dazzling two-handed sprint up the keyboard, the London Philharmonic gives it the lot or Joni Mitchell takes it down to a husky whisper, that the true significance of this system’s meticulous engineering and from-the-ground-up synergy hits home. What shines through is the sublime effortlessness of it all.

This isn’t ‘effortless’ in the way a big American combo is effortless. It has little to do with conspicuous refinement. No, it’s the way this system takes all the sundry expressions of strain and imbalance clean out of the listening experience. What’s left is frighteningly pure and direct – like being given a glass of Evian after years of drinking slightly cloudy, chlorinated tap water.

Even the DAB tuner is capable of making digital radio sound better than many would believe possible. With a strong, high-bit signal it’s almost shockingly good, delivering clarity that occasionally startles but, more generally, a sense of natural tonality and texture that draws you into the programme material, whether it’s music or spoken. All genres are handled with equal insight and listenability is always high.

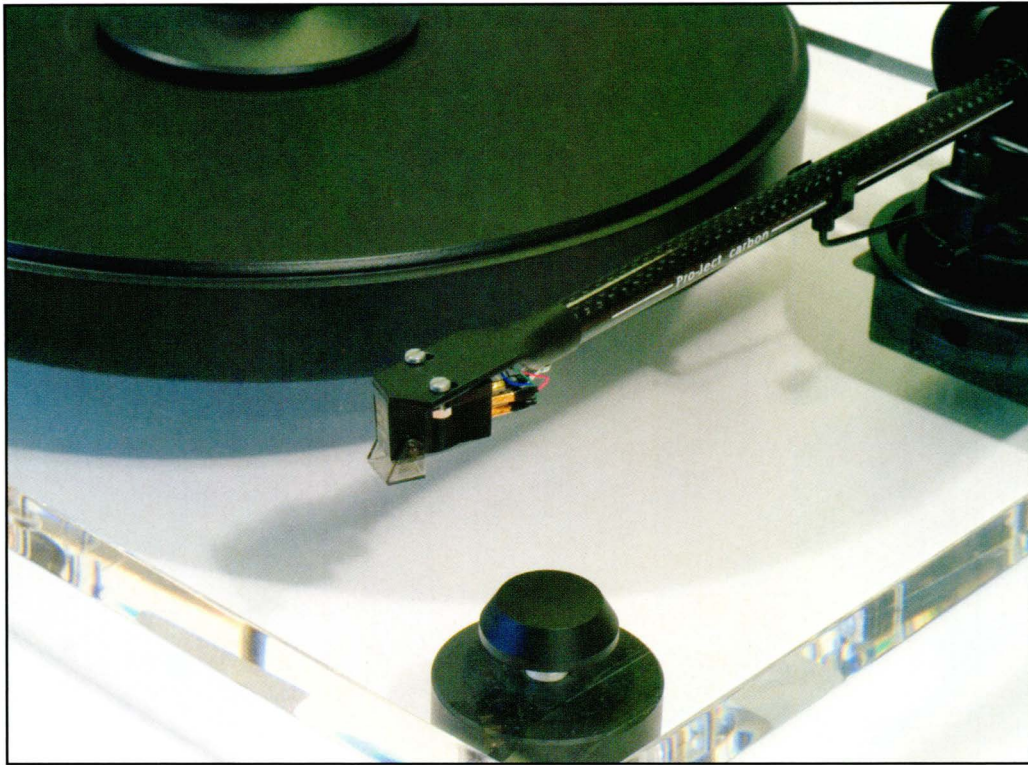
Time and time again, you think you know what an accurate, communicative sound is, but this system shows you that you don’t. Once you’ve got rid of the artifacts that don’t contribute to the communication of the music, what’s left feels wonderfully right. Listening to lesser hi-fi seems crude, grubby and corrupted by comparison. It’s the stunning finesse and focus that gets you, the resolution of dynamic nuances others can only hint at.

And if you think that makes this AVI combo the best-sounding *Beautiful System* yet, you wouldn’t be far wrong. Black is the new reference. **HFC**

David Vivian



# *The colouration's in the finish*



# *Not in the music*



# REVIEWS



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

## ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

### CD AND SACD PLAYERS £650-£1,200

- 71 Cyrus CD6s
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## EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

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## OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

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

recommend you compare this with Marantz's £800 player, the 17 MkII M, which has excellent build and is a very good impression in HFC 243. At the same price there's also the Cyrus 7, a strong all-rounder in a compact case. After trying the Heart with the standard speakers we switched over to the Siemens grade, a comparison somewhat muddled by the fact that it was a cold for hot swap – the player had been on for several days with the

Our overall conclusion after a livelier 100-hour burn-in, the Siemens-equipped player has an snappier sound with better timing that comes with dense material with remarkable confidence 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

<b>VERDICT</b>	
SOUND >> 83%	PRO Well built and fully featured, with a snappy, open and dynamic sound.
FEATURES >> 85%	CON Externally it's a £300 Marantz – no bad thing in itself, but it's better than it looks!
BUILD >> 85%	
VALUE >> 85%	
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	
This is a highly entertaining and vibrant player at a competitive price. The build quality is good and the feature list is huge – it's not the most subtle £750 player but if you're looking for a option to inspire you it could prove a bargain.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 84%</b>	

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...

A close-up photograph of a speaker driver, likely a tweeter, mounted in a wooden cabinet. The driver is housed in a circular, brushed metal frame. The word "Beryllium" is printed in a serif font on the metal frame. The driver is surrounded by a dark, polished wood grain. The image is a high-angle, close-up shot, focusing on the details of the speaker's construction and the wood grain.

Beryllium



# Budget beryllium

*Can the new Focal Electra 1000 Be speakers from Focal-JMLab bring Utopia at half the cost?*

**PRODUCT** Focal Electra 1027 Be

**TYPE** Floorstanding loudspeaker

**PRICE** £4,000 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 26.5x111x35cm

⊙ Weight: 33kg ⊙ Three-way design ⊙ 25mm inverted beryllium dome tweeter ⊙ 165mm 'W-Sandwich' mid and bass cones ⊙ Sensitivity/impedance: 89dB/3 ohms (min)

**CONTACT** ☎ 08456 602680 # www.focal-fr.com

Just over a year ago, in *HFC 260*, we reviewed this model's immediate predecessor. The Focal Electra 927 Be (Focal-JMLab recently dropped the 'JMLab' part of its name on its products) was a strictly limited edition variation on the already well established Electra 900-series theme. This made the company's innovative beryllium inverted dome tweeter available at a much lower cost than had previously been possible in the very costly Utopia series.

Although the Electra 927 Be was an undoubtedly successful design, it was also very much a stop-gap. It was based on taking the existing Electra 927 model and bolting in a beryllium dome tweeter borrowed from the Utopia range, with appropriate adjustments to the crossover network. In fact, the TCE-type tweeter used in the Electra 927 Be shares the same diaphragm as the Utopias' TBU-type, but has a less costly magnetic motor. That was 2004, and the limited production run of Electra 927 Bes sold out very quickly. The reason became apparent in the autumn of 2005, as Focal-JMLab introduced the first examples of an all-new Electra 1000 series.

**“These new Electra 1000 Be speakers are altogether more assertive in appearance than their predecessors.”**

These new models build on the fundamentals established by their predecessors, essentially sharing the same bass and midrange drivers. But they also feature additional refinements, such as a completely fresh approach to enclosure design and construction, and a completely new beryllium dome tweeter, quite different from that used in the Utopia range. Whether the Electra 1000 series can really offer something approaching the striking Utopia performance on the cheap is hard to say, but the prospects look promising since each costs roughly half the price of its Utopia equivalent.

The initial Electra 1000 Be launch consisted of just two models: a two-way 1007 Be standmount selling at £2,300 per pair, and this three-way, £4,000 per pair floorstanding 1027 Be – significantly more than the £2,800 price of its Electra 927 Be predecessor. These are joined by a CC 1000 Be centre speaker and SW 1000 Be subwoofer, while a SR 1000 Be surround speaker is also in the pipeline.

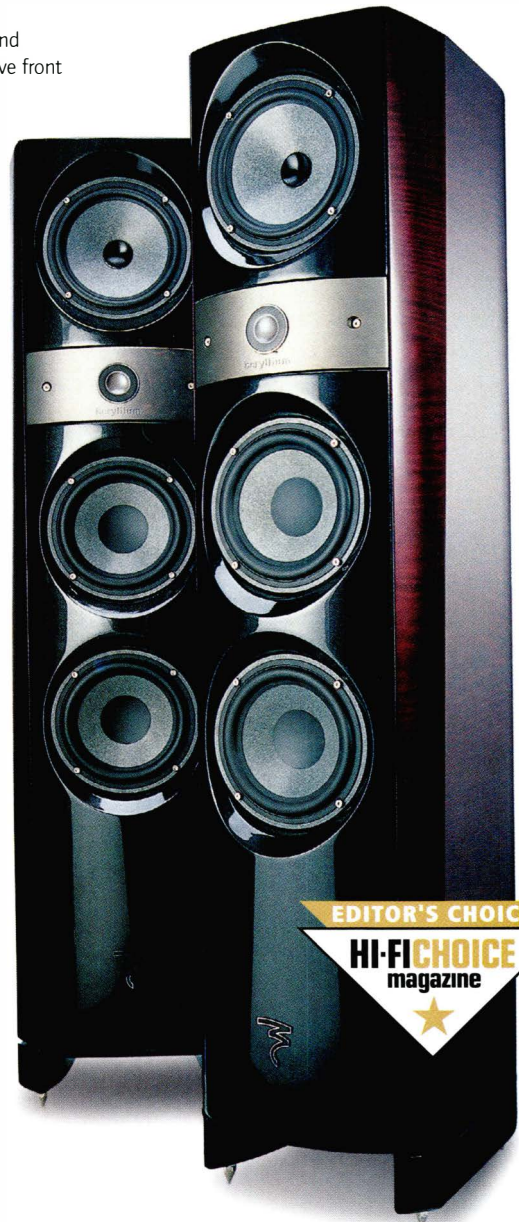
The styling of these new Electra 1000 Be speakers is altogether more assertive in appearance than their predecessors – indeed, more assertive than any other Focal models, partly because of the way they emphasise the engineering content by highlighting the shiny full-width cast alloy tweeter front plate. Furthermore, whereas the Electra 900 and Utopia models featured vertically concave front panels, with the tweeter set back a little behind the bass and midband drivers, the new Electra 1000s have continuously vertical front panels with a strongly convex horizontal profile. The front, top, back and plinth are all finished in high gloss black – the top is actually a piece of glass – while the shaped sides are real wood veneered. Our sample panels had an attractive deep red finish, code-named Signature; a much lighter Classic alternative is also available.

This front baffle is ultra-thick and heavy, made up from as much as 50mm thickness of MDF for maximum strength and stiffness. It's shaped internally to avoid creating reflections

and cavities, and externally to create smooth and wide lateral distribution. Inside, the structure is further reinforced by plenty of additional bracing, while the enclosure as a whole is tapered front-to-rear to spread out any internal standing waves and improve the overall stiffness. Confirmation of the very solid build is seen in the total weight of 33kg.

The three-way driver line-up consists of twin 165mm bass drivers, port loaded and operating in parallel, plus a

single, somewhat different 165mm midrange unit, the latter mounted above the 25mm beryllium inverted dome tweeter. Since introducing W-Sandwich cone technology, combining layers of structural foam and woven glassfibre, Focal-JMLab has been exploring various recipes to achieve the best compromises between stiffness, mass and damping for any particular application. While a conventional sandwich cone is used to give the high stiffness desirable for the bass drivers, the midrange cone used here has an 'open sandwich' construction, with just one layer each of woven glass fibres and structural foam, for better damping and transient behaviour. ▶

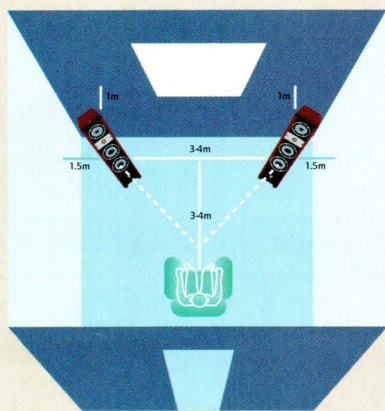


EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine



## SET-UP



### POSITIONING

The bass alignment of this speaker was well-judged for free-space siting in our listening room, thanks in part to a relatively low port-tuning frequency centred on 35Hz. That in turn means that port blocking won't be effective in countering the effects of close-to-wall siting, as the latter tends to boost the 50-100Hz octave, whereas the port will be most active in the octave below that, 25-50Hz.

Add in the very good lateral dispersion that is provided by the convex front panel used here, and there's further good reason to keep these speakers well clear of walls, to avoid the colorations that are caused by near-reflection cancellations.

The tweeter output indicates that listening directly on axis is neither necessary nor perhaps desirable. That wide lateral dispersion will allow the speakers to be positioned facing straight ahead if preferred, but for best imaging across the widest listening arc, it may well be better to position the speakers so that their forward axes cross a metre or so in front of the listening position. This is even more true if the speakers are quite close to side walls, again in order to reduce the effects of nearby reflective surfaces.

### SYSTEM MATCHING

Like its predecessor, the Electra 1027 Be doesn't make life easy for the driving amp. Sensitivity is a decent 88-89dB (somewhat shy of the 91 dB claimed by the manufacturer), while the load is both complex and demanding through the low frequency half of the spectrum (below 500Hz), reaching a minimum of around three ohms close to 115Hz. Above 600Hz, the impedance rises steadily and stays reassuringly high at all frequencies above 1kHz.

This impedance characteristic won't pose any significant problems for most solid state amplification, but it does mean that trickier single-ended valve amps are best avoided. That said, a push-pull valve power amp with decent power delivery would probably suit this speaker rather well, as its inherent top end sweetness would make the most of that fine beryllium tweeter.



❑ Focal-JMlab naturally enough extols the virtues of its pure beryllium tweeters. There will doubtless be much debate about the relative merits and demerits of beryllium versus diamond tweeter diaphragms: suffice it to say that both materials are clearly capable of very high performance, with the undoubted benefit of extending responses and break-up points well into the ultrasonic region and above the limits of human hearing. And it's good to see that Focal-JMlab has made a major investment in machinery to increase production, and this is bringing down the beryllium entry price.

Built into a substantial cast alloy chassis, the new Electra tweeter, dubbed IAL (for Infinite Acoustic Loading), has a generous obstruction-free cavity, located behind a slightly smaller inverted dome than that used by the Utopias (beryllium is a very costly metal). A stable and tough new foam called Poron now forms the tweeter surround, and this lowers the fundamental resonance to 680Hz. Focal-JMlab is using this drop in resonant frequency in order to lower the crossover point, and hence reduce the dispersion discontinuity that inevitably occurs at the handover from a 165mm midrange cone to a much smaller tweeter.

Although there is a plinth of sorts here, with a front-centre cut-out to accommodate the port exit, it follows the line of the enclosure and doesn't increase the footprint in any way. That said, the

speaker feels reassuringly stable on its substantial spikes. Focal-JMlab remains unconvinced that bi-wiring offers any benefits, so the Electra 1027 Be comes with just a single pair of high quality WBT terminals.

### SOUND QUALITY

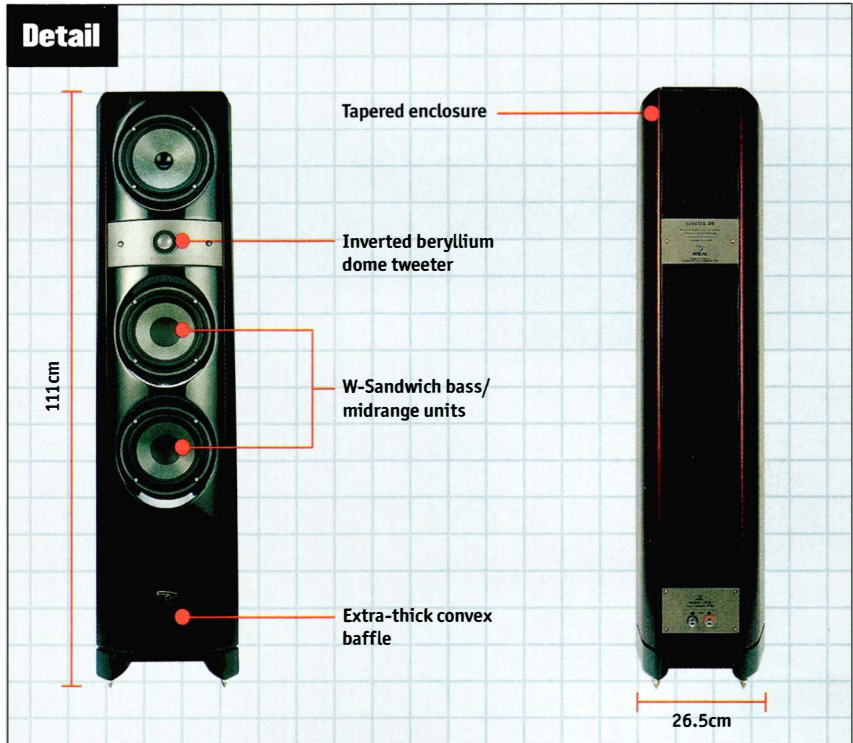
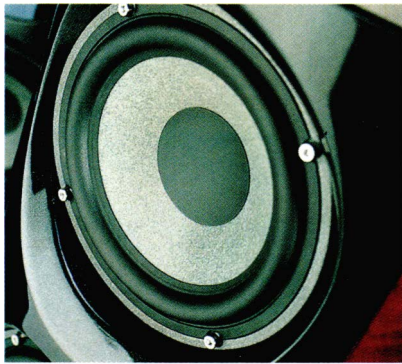
Given the size and driver complement, it's no surprise to discover that the Electra 1027 Be works best when located well clear of walls, an observation confirmed by the in-room measurements. The basic performance envelope looks satisfactory here, with a good overall frequency balance, decent sensitivity (albeit 2-3dB shy of the claimed 91 dB), and solid extension well down into the deep bass.

However, under far field conditions, measurement shows some loss of output around both crossover points. The presence depression between midrange and tweeter (1.3-3kHz) is quite normal and perfectly acceptable, but the dip between bass and midrange section (300-450Hz) is less common and also less desirable. Furthermore, the impedance stays low throughout the bass region, so this isn't an easy load from the driving amplifier's perspective.

Comparing the Electra 1027 Be's lab results with those taken for its 927 Be predecessor is interesting. At low frequencies, the impedance traces are virtually identical, though the new model shows slightly more low bass and slightly less in the upper reaches. While that is positive, the down side is a dip around the bass-to-mid crossover point. At the top end of the band, the tweeter is smoother than its predecessor, and is also set a little stronger, relatively speaking.

Hooked up on the end of a very serious hi-fi system, consisting mainly of Naim electronics (CDS-3, NAC 552, NAP 500), supported and





linked by ancillaries from Vertex AQ and others, the Electra 1027 Be has a sound that is bright and light in character, with a beautifully sweet and sparkling top end, suffused with the finest and most delicate detail.

This was highlighted by spinning Nitin Sawhney's brilliant *Beyond Skin* CD. The track *Tides* features piano and bass decorated by beautiful percussion – mostly cymbal work – from Marque Gilmour, and a recording of breaking waves. Not only did the 1027 Be reproduce the brushwork with exceptional delicacy and realism, it also made it easy to distinguish the cymbals from the surf.

The top end here is entirely seductive, showing that the new IAL tweeter development is very successful. Like its predecessor, however – and

no shortage of deep bass weight or gravitas here, and the bottom end as a whole is both even and pretty well extended. But it also sounds just a little understated, with a slight lack of ultimate grip, authority and punch.

'Clinical' is one adjective that springs to mind. Tonally speaking, more warmth and richness would have been appreciated, rather than the slightly cool overall effect that is evident when playing the sort of discs where the bass end is the prime mover. Massive *Attack's Blue Lines*, for example, seemed undernourished, attention tending to focus on the vocals instead of the driving bass lines that are the very essence of this group's sound.

One obvious reason behind the dry bass is that box coloration is exceptionally well

of the drivers on the front panel, with the tweeter placed immediately beneath the midrange drive unit. Such an arrangement will somewhat restrict the vertical radiation of the tweeter, assisting the stereo image focus at some expense in terms of in-the-room 'airiness'.

The most critical part of the spectrum is in the upper midband and lower treble, where human hearing is most sensitive, and where perversely (but for good practical reasons) most designs place the mid-to-treble crossover point. There's usually a compromise to be drawn between maintaining vocal openness and avoiding aggressiveness, and the Electra 1027 Be handles this trade-off particularly well. It displays sufficient restraint to allow the system to be played loudly, yet remains well able to maintain good voice diction when playing at whisper quiet levels. In this respect, it's a remarkable speaker for the money. **HFC**

Paul Messenger

## “The Electra 1027 Be has a sound that is bright and light in character, with a beautifully sweet and sparkling top end.”

indeed if anything a little more so – it does tend to draw attention to itself, rendering background FM radio hiss a little more audible than usual, for example. Sometimes, provided the material is well-recorded, this is both very acceptable and a positive boon; on other occasions, the experience can be less happy. Music from Radio 3 is usually delicious, whereas the horrors that regularly emanate from the Radio 1 studios are much less palatable.

This slightly bright character is rendered that much more obvious because the bass end is rather dry. The track *Anthem Without Nation* (again from *Beyond Skin*) confirms that there's

controlled – the slight 'thickening' noted when reviewing the Electra 927 Be is entirely absent with this new model, and touching the enclosure whilst playing heavy music loudly makes it quite clear that the box is making very little contribution to the whole.

The fine cabinet control confers an impressive freedom from boxiness that is reflected in very low midband coloration, refreshingly free from nasal effects on voices, and superior stereo imaging. It's impossible to pin-point the precise locations of the two speakers, partly because the central image is so well focused. That in turn may well be a function of the disposition

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 92%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>PRO</b> Inverted beryllium dome tweeter gives great delicacy in reproducing vital fine detail and texture. Fine enclosure ensures low box coloration.
<b>EASE OF DRIVE &gt;&gt; 68%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>CON</b> Top end can be bright, and the bass lightweight and lacking in grip and propulsive drive. A cool, dry overall character that might benefit from a little more warmth.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 93%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 84%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> 'Utopia light' is a fair description of this attractively assertive looking floorstander. It has an outstanding midrange and top end, with fine delicacy and freedom from coloration, but lacks a little grip and drive through the lower registers.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 88%</b>	

# Magnetic charm

Valve amp specialist EAR's first turntable tears up the rulebook with opposing magnets for isolation

**PRODUCT** EAR Disc Master

**TYPE** Turntable

**PRICE** £7,695 (arm and cartridge extra)

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 43x16x43cm

● Weight: 24kg ● Outboard PSU with 45, 33 & variable 78rpm ● Decoupled magnet drive system ● Tonearm outrigger can support two arms

**CONTACT** ☎ 01223 208877 @ www.ear-yoshino.com

**E**AR is one of the UK's best-established makers of valve amplifiers, yet it remains outside traditional valve circles because EAR amps don't sound like other valve designs. Instead, the company's founder and designer Tim de Paravicini uses these classic devices in the same way that others use transistors. With its first turntable – the company's first source component – EAR's maverick approach delivers a design that is as radical as anything you're likely to see under a piece of vinyl.

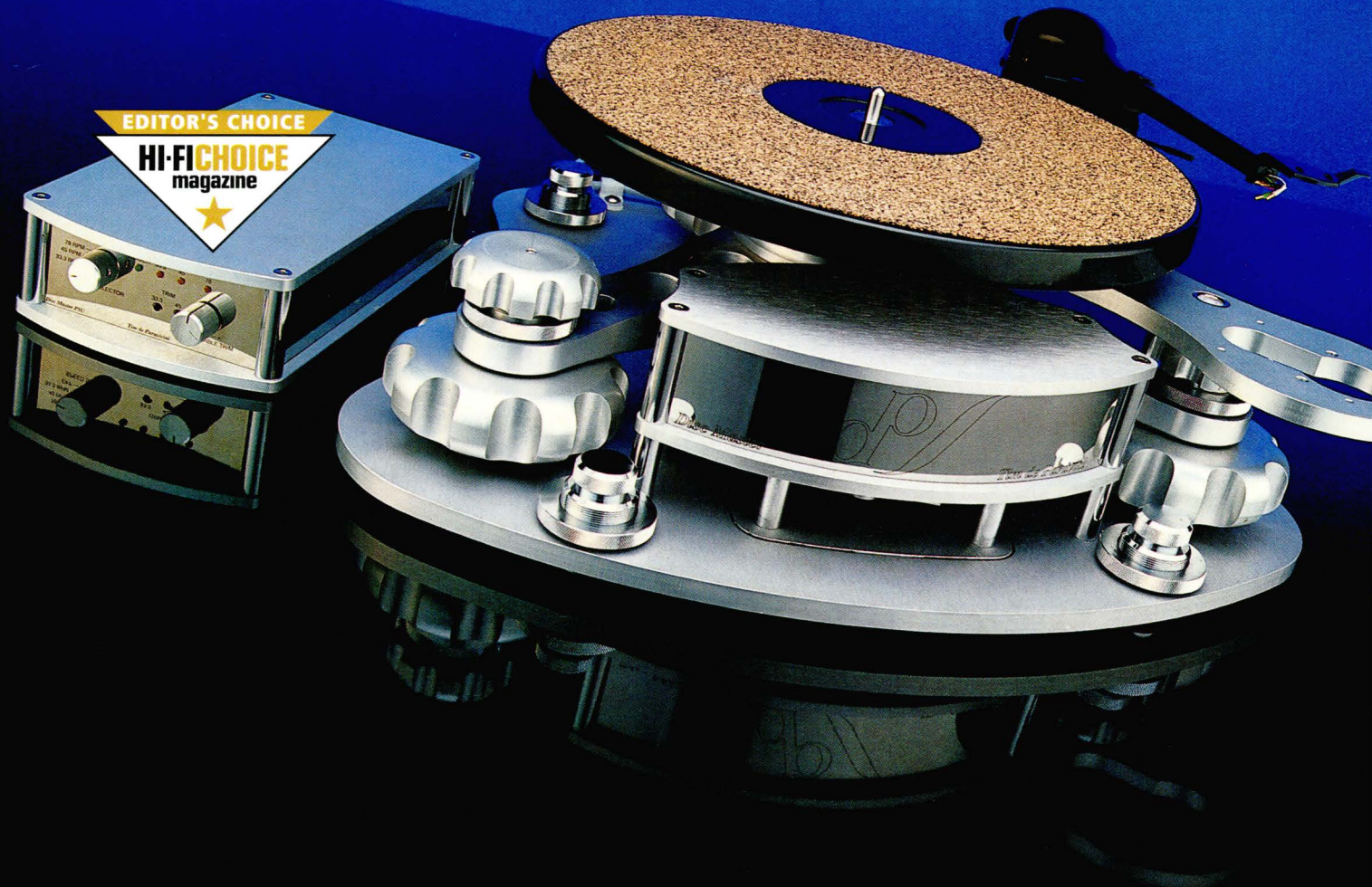
The Disc Master turntable's most ingenious feature is what's known as the 'no contact'

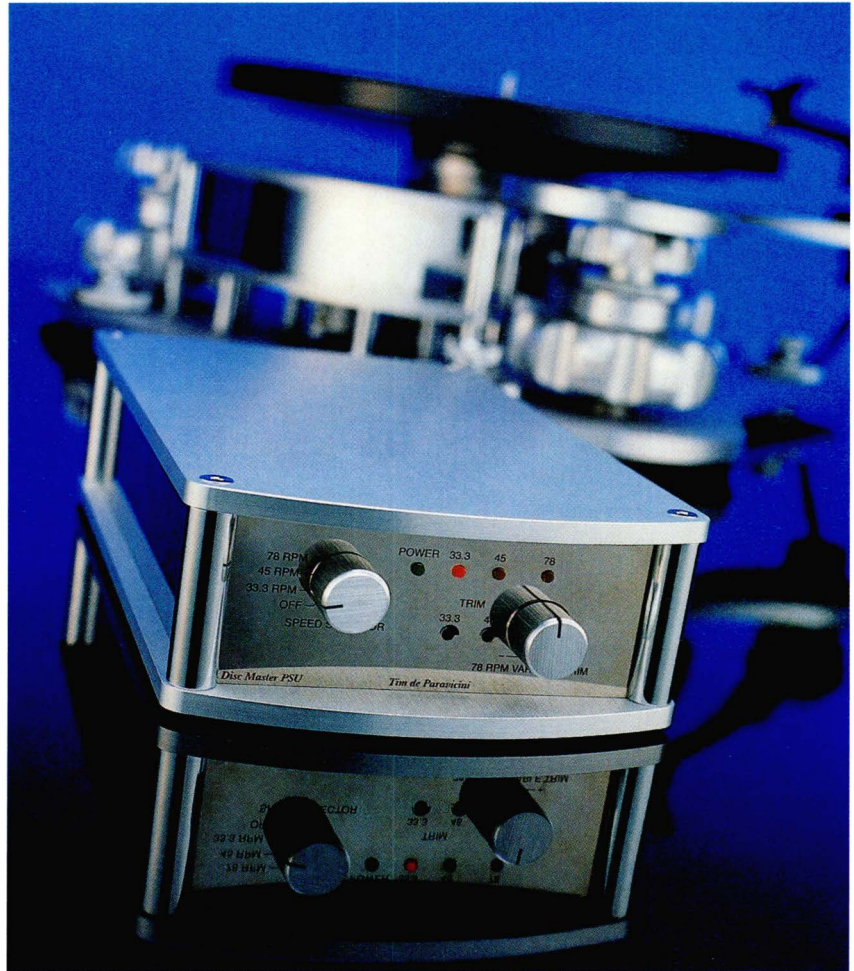
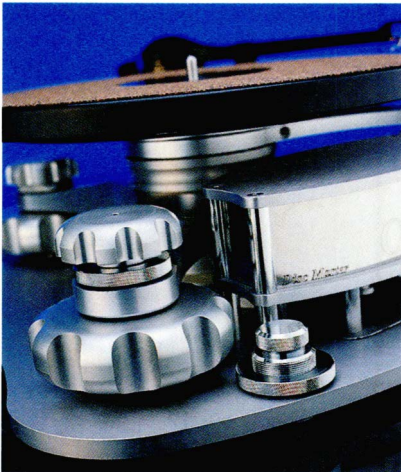
drive system. This is a technique for isolating the drive system from the bearing, platter and tonearm, by using opposing magnets. Most turntables attempt to stop motor energy from affecting the stylus/groove interface by decoupling the motor itself and using a rubber belt to minimise vibration transfer. The drawback to this approach is that rubber belts can be inclined to slip very slightly and thus induce small fluctuations in speed, known as 'flutter'. By using a system of opposing magnets in the driven sub-platter and underneath the bearing, EAR has managed to engineer a drive system with enough compliance to iron out motor energy, yet stiff enough to drive the platter.

The Disc Master turntable has a toothed belt connecting the motor (which sits upside down in the case at the front of the turntable) to the sub-platter. Cleverly, both elements are decoupled from the spider that supports the platter and arm by springs inside the three chunky aluminium feet.

The bearing is also an unusual type that uses an angular-contact – rather than the popular point-contact – system, because this approach is said to give considerably longer life. It feels stiff to turn when the platter is not on, but this is because you are also turning the sub-platter and motor as well as a damped drag system that's designed to maintain speed stability.

The gorgeous black platter is made from the king of kitchen work surfaces, Corian – a material selected for its very high self-damping and topped with cork, which is very good at turning energy into heat. EAR eschews record clamps because they tend to deform vinyl and are a bit of a pain to take on and off, something we can heartily agree with. The Disc Master has been designed to stop from full speed within a revolution, so that changing records is a quick and easy job, one that's only marginally inconvenienced by the tight-fitting centre spindle (and then only with some records). Its benefit in anchoring the disc to the platter outweighs the occasional tight squeeze.





You may have noticed that the armboard has the potential to support a second tonearm – the aluminium outrigger will let you run an alternative arm and cartridge combination. This could be for a 78rpm specific cartridge, or a set up which suits some albums better than others (an approach that's popular in Japan).

The tonearm supplied with our review sample was a standard Helius Omega (from £1,485) rather than the forthcoming EAR-specific Omega, which will include some functional modifications alongside a silver finish to match the deck. The Omega is the latest generation of Helius arms and an evolution of its Orion and Cyalene forerunners. Innovations include the main bulk of the counterweight being fixed to the bearing body and the placement of the vertical bearing in front of the lateral one.

**SOUND QUALITY**

We had a few teething troubles with the first sample of this deck. Speed stability proved to be distinctly wanting, but a couple of tweaks later and it was turning at precisely the right amount of revolutions per minute. This is probably because we encouraged EAR to supply the deck as soon as one became available, so the company didn't have the time to iron out this particular foible. Regular production samples will not have this problem.

**“The turntable’s resolving capabilities are most apparent when you switch LPs and hear the difference in recording quality.”**

Initially, the Disc Master merely sounds very neutral and not dissimilar to the SME Model 20 we use as a reference. However, the longer listening went on, the more it became apparent that the grooves were giving up an unusually large amount of information.

Listening commenced with the Helius arm and a van den Hul Condor cartridge, a partnership that allows the turntable to turn in a powerful and fleet-footed performance with great three-dimensional solidity and a precise rendition of acoustic space. Its sense of speed can be pinned down to a total absence of overhang in the bass. On the one hand, this means the bass doesn't have the girth that it's capable of; on the other, you get more nimble and musical bass lines. This quality rather than quantity approach serves instruments like double bass extremely well, the turntable delivering the energy of the music in full effect.

The flip side of this precision is a slight over exposure at high frequencies that was not apparent when we swapped over to an SME Model V arm with the same cartridge. The

Helius Omega does deliver speed and dynamics with considerable gusto, however, reminding us of the way that its predecessor, the Cyalene, used to sound with Voyd turntables in the 1990s. For many, the ability to turn on a dime and describe the full character of an instrument will outweigh the slightly upward tonal balance tilt with this arm – it certainly makes for thrilling listening.

With the more relaxed SME V on board, the calm it brings to the sound does seem to allow rather more fine detail to emerge, and the control at low frequencies means that the bass has all the power and weight you could wish for. Then again, you could obtain the best of both worlds by fitting the Helius Omega and SME Model V, if your pockets are deep enough.

The turntable's resolving capabilities are most apparent when you switch LPs and hear the magnitude of difference in recording quality that exists. We can't say we compared the rumble signature of run-in grooves, but it was easy to hear how the rumble disappeared just before the music kicked in on Frank ▶

**Q & A**

We talked to Tim de Paravicini, EAR's founder and designer, about the intricacies of the Disc Master's unusual design



**HFC: Why build a turntable now?**

**TdP:** Because I've spent 20 years thinking about the problems [of turntables] and secondly, 20 years ago I would have had to market it against the Linn LP12... forget it! The Linn was so effectively marketed back then, it would have been like trying to start up against McDonalds.

**Can you tell us more about the bearing?**

The angular-contact bearings are hideously expensive and made in Switzerland; they are normally used in ultra high-speed spindles. With the loading I have on them they should certainly last ten years, if not a lifetime. They have lower rumble and lower noise than any other bearing structure. They are also stiffer in side-to-side motion than any single-point bearing.

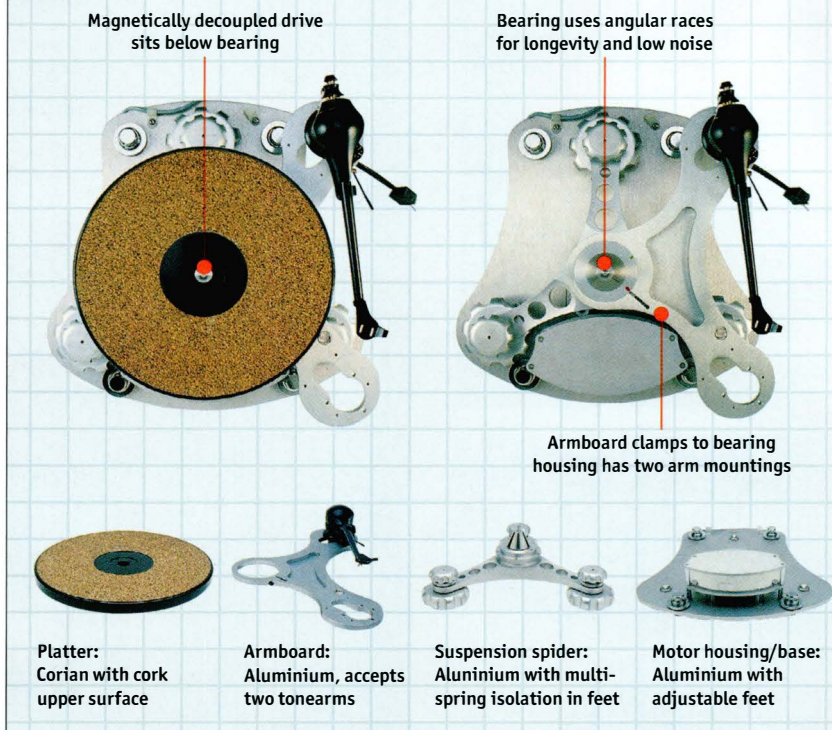
**Are there no problems with placing the motor under the arc of the stylus?**

It's such a long distance away, the effect is immeasurable. If it's not measurable on the output of the cartridge when it's resting on the vinyl, then it's a nonentity. It's the same with the magnetic coupling: there is no stray field that affects or produces any subsonic signatures. All the subsonic signatures you hear are inbuilt deformations in the records when they are pressed, and you should be able to hear a different rumble signature on every record you play. This is because the lead-in grooves all sound different – on a normal turntable, there's enough basic rumble in the system that you can never quite hear all that. The Disc Master is different. I wanted to hear only what existed on the record and not other effects. Even turntables with 50kg platters have significant inbuilt rumble, because of the heavy loading on the bearing.

**What's the Helius connection?**

I've known Geoffrey for many years and I've always thought that his arms are better engineered – in a technical sense – compared to other arms. They are fundamentally well thought out and his bearing structure is unique and clever. The Omega is also a genuine 10in (25cm) arm which gives you less angular (tracking) error – you can keep 90 per cent of the record under one degree of error.

**Detail**



☑ Zappa's *One Size Fits All* and just as easy to hear the coherence and separation of instruments and voices within the dense mix. What the deck does best is to reveal how much better some recordings are than others, how much quieter the background is and just how strong a sense of three-dimensionality some engineers manage to achieve with the medium. John Fahey's *Visits Washington DC* album revealed not only the extraordinary timbre that he gets out of a steel string guitar, but also the scuffling of his fingers on the body of the guitar as he picks the strings.

Timing is another strong point of the EAR Disc Master. One's foot or fingers rarely sit still and the rhythmic qualities of the material shine through. The Helius arm emphasised this with its balance, but it's there in equal measure with the SME too, albeit rather more

subliminally presented. Combine a great recording with a musician that has a fine sense of timing – something like Keith Jarrett's *Eyes of the Heart* – and you have a musical feast of extraordinary depth and richness. Even the sax playing here comes across better than Coltrane on *Kind of Blue*, because the recording is so much more real.

The Disc Master's level of resolve will make it more apparent which of your albums are the better recordings, but it will also extract every last scrap of detail from the lesser ones. It is an extraordinary turntable in many ways, from the innovation of its design to the gripping clarity of its sound. Make no mistake: this is a high-resolution deck, yet the music always come first – whatever tonearm (or tonearms) you choose. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 96%**

**FEATURES >> 88%**

**BUILD >> 88%**

**VALUE >> 83%**

**CONCLUSION**  
It's hard to break new ground in a technology that's a century old, but EAR has done just that. This turntable is extremely neutral, and has the ability to tell you exactly how your records (or even your tonearms) sound.

**PRO**  
Combines new technological solutions with high-quality materials to bring state of the art resolution to good of analogue audio. Second arm option surprisingly handy.

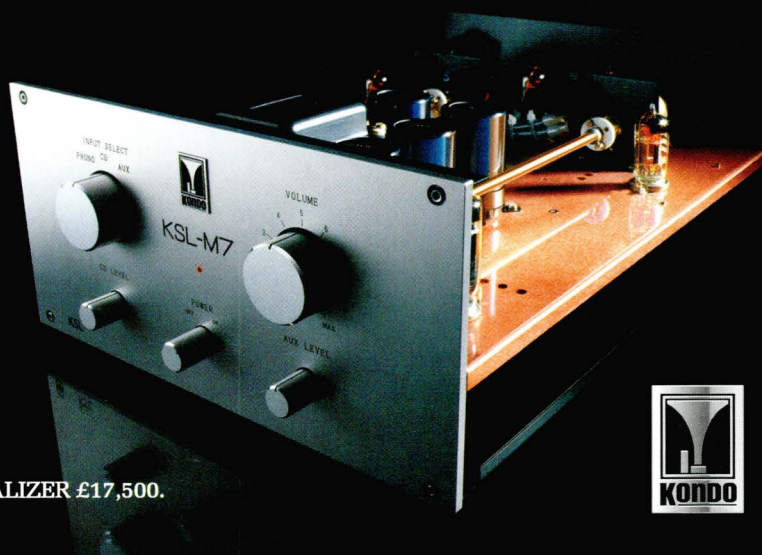
**CON**  
Early samples had speed stability issues and motor noise is a little higher than average. It's also a bit of a 'mare to dust!

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

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# Hi-ho silver lining

Monitor Audio improves its Silver line-up... but we won't make a fuss, though it's obvious!

**PRODUCT** Monitor Audio Silver RS8

**TYPE** Floorstanding loudspeaker

**PRICE** £800 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 18.5x90x27cm  
Weight: 21kg • 150mm C-CAM (Ceramic Coated Aluminium Magnesium) mid and bass cones • 25mm C-CAM tweeter • Sensitivity/impedance: 91dB/6 ohms

**CONTACT** ☎ 01268 740580

🌐 www.monitoraudio.co.uk

**“N**ew drivers and new cabinet design mark a further leap in quality for Monitor Audio's Silver loudspeakers” is how the opening of the press release for the Silver RS range reads. Created to meet the needs of the most demanding music lovers and home cinema enthusiasts (well, it says so in the same release), the Silver RS range includes a number of improvements over previous models. In particular, the C-CAM (Ceramic Coated Aluminium Magnesium alloy) cone drivers – which were first specified in the previous Silver S series – have been radically improved. The other key claims are for cosmetic improvements, although changes in drive unit also usually entail improvements to the rest of the design in general.

The RS8 is ostensibly a straightforward floorstander, built into a strictly rectilinear, wood-veneered enclosure that stands 90cm tall. Its solidity is reinforced by the 21kg deadweight, and by the solid overhanging base that is supplied in the box. It is not exactly under-endowed with drive units either, though electrically it's only a two-and-a-half-way system, consisting of a 25mm tweeter and a 150mm midrange unit, supplemented at the lowest frequencies by two 150mm bass drivers rather than the usual one. Front and rear facing reflex ports are used to tune the bass, which has LF response extending to a claimed 33Hz, and although there is nothing to indicate whether this is at -3dB or any other figure, bass extension is subjectively impressive and of excellent quality too. Sensitivity is high at 91dB per watt (at one meter), which in practice is slightly enhanced by the six-ohm nominal impedance. The other notable factor that falls out of the figures is the high

175-watt power handling figure. Again, the precise meaning of power handling numbers is always open to interpretation, but the load sharing effect of the three bass and midrange drivers is a major factor.

The most interesting technology on display here is the Ceramic Coated Aluminium Magnesium alloy mid and bass driver cone construction which, says Monitor Audio, “has been further developed from the Silver S series equivalent to enhance its mechanical properties”.

The cones also feature a cast polymer chassis that is said to help damp residual energy injected by reaction forces from the cone. Similarly, the C-CAM Gold (anodised) dome tweeter has been engineered for a 25kHz nominal bandwidth, though it would be surprising if the first break-up mode was not well under 20kHz. In fact, we think it's audible. There have also been improvements made to the cabinet, which is slim of line and “bolder and more architectural” than the old S-series boxes, with improved internal bracing and damping. There is something very muscular and utilitarian looking about the RS8, notwithstanding the good-quality wood veneer finish.

## SOUND QUALITY

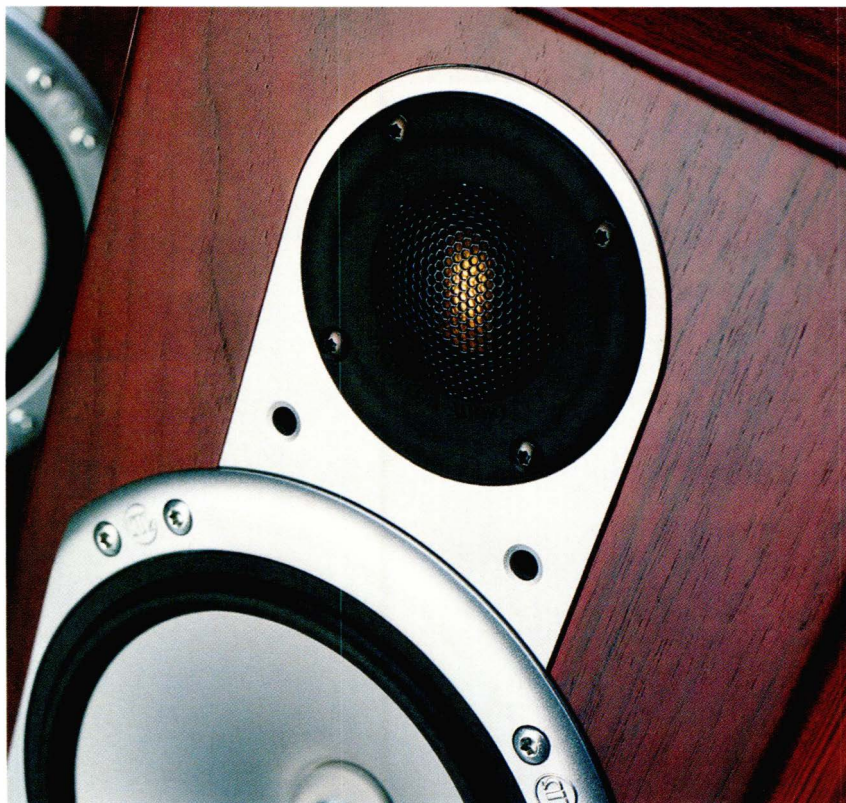
It is a curious, but irrefutable fact that hi-fi components often sound how they look. More correctly, their appearance may suggest how they sound, and this is as good an example of the anthropic principle that we have stumbled across for a while. Just consider: the front panel is plastered with acres of drive units, and the natural presumption is that it is a ballsy speaker, with plenty of bass and midband output, lots of drive, and perhaps a slight shortfall of the high-end virtues – sophistication, detail and sweetness.

Which is more or less how the Monitor Audio Silver RS8 pans out. This is a loudspeaker with real balls, which consistently goes louder, deeper and fuller than you would reasonably credit from a box this size. The tremendous opening drum entry at the start of Mahler's *Third Symphony* hits hard, and with a wonderfully characterful, resonant delivery that makes the most of the drums' character, as well as delivering real impact.

It's a *tour de force*, but so is the toe-curling slide guitar opening of







Jennifer Warnes cover of Leonard Cohen's *Ain't No Cure For Love* (from *Famous Blue Raincoat*). And yes, it works wonderfully with more straightforward rock material – Marc Cohn's eponymous album, Eric Bibb's *Good Stuff* – but no less would be expected of any loudspeaker that is so obviously at home with the other examples mentioned.

What about the wider picture? Here matters are a little more equivocal. There is more to the job requirements of any good loudspeaker than drive, or – if you prefer – the ability to rock and roll. On the plus side, and it's a very big plus indeed, the Silver RS8 has excellent timing. It simultaneously sounds measured and propulsive, with wonderfully 'on the balls of the feet' timing. It's almost as though the RS8 is leaning into the rhythm, driving it along, rather than being pulled behind, reluctantly obeying its master's voice. This almost seems to inject its own feeling of enthusiasm into the music, which as you might have guessed works better with some types of music (often the kind of music indicated in the examples above) than others. And it does this without demanding a massive amplifier to generate the power. If anything, it's just the opposite. Some of the best results achieved on test were with amplification at the £500 – rather than £5,000 – level, so long as the design's principal remit is refinement and clarity rather than outright earth moving horsepower.

The RS8 has some other strong dynamic qualities too. Imaging, for example, is explicit and stable, and it has all the hallmarks of a loudspeaker that is easy to drive, one that gives

**“This loudspeaker goes consistently louder, deeper and fuller than you would reasonably credit from a box this size.”**

amplifiers an easy time. The result is a style of music making that is naturally bold and open, that remains consistent over a wide range of volume levels, and that – coincidentally or otherwise – is relatively unfussed about positioning. It likes some room to breathe and moderate toe-in, but it doesn't really need any special molycoddling. In addition, it works well with the baffle cover in place, and we have to say that this is a blessing. With the cover removed, it really is a bit of an eyeful – overdressed and very 'in yer face'. With the covers on, appearance is more restrained, and arguably in better taste.

It images well, and tonally it is not far from neutral, allowing for some slight touch of mid-forwardness. But there is a *quid quo pro* here. As has already been hinted at, this is not the most sophisticated loudspeaker around. The tweeter has a certain 'bite', an obviousness that shouldn't be there. The baffle cover actually helps a little here by taming the treble, though inevitably it adds a smearing effect in the upper midband, probably caused by delayed reflections from the back of the baffle cloth and frame. More generally, the RS8 has a slightly roughly hewn quality, a degree of coarseness that is in tune with its excellent dynamic qualities, but arguably out of kilter with design trends at this price level.

Don't let this bite and seemingly rather obvious nature put you off the RS8, though. This is a clean, agile and dynamic speaker, with an extended low frequency bandwidth and good loudness capability. It is tonally near neutral – a little mid-forward, but close – and imaging is clean and explicit. It conveys enthusiasm and drive in appropriate musical performances, better perhaps than it deals with more subtle detail. But at this price level, you can't expect everything. **HFC**

Alvin Gold

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 85%</b> 	<b>PRO</b> Bold, dynamic loudspeaker that has potent bass and mid, and sounds surprisingly comfortable in its own skin. A very easy speaker to drive and good material value, too.
<b>EASE OF DRIVE &gt;&gt; 91%</b> 	<b>CON</b> Bold, rather brash appearance with the front covers removed (though build and finish are fine). Slightly aggressive upper mid and treble voicing.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 85%</b> 	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 88%</b> 	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> The RS8 has a very distinct personality that stresses dynamics and bass delivery over finesse and sophistication. Its great in larger-sized rooms for use at moderate to high volume levels, even with a medium-power amplifier.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 87%</b>	



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**PRODUCT** Denon DVD-1920

**TYPE** Universal disc player

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**CONTACT** ☎ 01234 741200 🌐 www.denon.co.uk

This is not the cheapest HDMI-equipped DVD player, the least expensive 'universal' player, or even the cheapest player with video upsampling. But we would contend that this is one of the cheapest disc players you can buy that makes all these features worth having.

First, let's get the measure of what the DVD-1920 actually is. It's essentially a replacement for the DVD-1910; that was not a universal device, but this new one plays DVD-Video, DVD-Audio and SACD... In fact, the range of compatible disc formats is long and impressive (see our compatibility box), though it doesn't extend to Pioneer's trick of being able to play unfinalised writable discs. The audio circuits are said to be based on Denon's standard practice for hi-fi products, and although there is no direct evidence that this is the case, the player does boast 24-bit/192kHz audio DACs. There's on-board Dolby/DTS decoding too, along with playback of DivX compressed video, for those who really care about such things.

Given its price, the player's video component is exceptionally well catered for, not least via its HDMI output. Here, HDMI means 'home cinema' digital audio and video, rather than purist, high-resolution audio. But multichannel Dolby Digital and DTS data-reduced audio are available across the link, with or without bass management (at 80Hz). The video side of HDMI

here includes black level enhancement, plus the option of RGB or component video with Silicon Image video scaling up to 720p and 1080i via HDMI. Progressive processing uses Faroudja's FLI-2301 DCDi chip – something of a benchmark at DVD-1920 price levels.

## SOUND QUALITY

The danger is that the prosaic looks may result in the player not being taken as seriously as it deserves. In fact, stereo CD replay is satisfyingly three dimensional, with some warmth and even a touch of grace when the occasion demands. The trick is to remember to use the Pure Direct mode (readily accessible on the front panel) when you don't need the video or digital outputs. This is not a player that will surprise you with the insights it provides into your disc collection, but it is far from the stereotype of flat, thin and raw CD playback that is still too common from lesser DVD players.

The ability to play SACD and DVD-Audio discs is simply the icing on the cake, and the player does a decent job with these, too. As usual at this end of the price band, there appears to be a generic difference between the two formats, with DVD-A sounding more CD-like, and SACD a little more smooth and soft. Results usually favoured the latter, but good material on either format turned in a fine performance.

## VIDEO QUALITY

Much of the focus of this design is on the video section, especially with the inclusion of an internal scaler. The player looked strong on screen, with moderately good contrast levels, low levels of video noise, and clean handling of

scrolling motion – the kind of picture that while not exceptional, is very watchable.

At the price, it is hard to criticise this player. Despite the focus on video playback, it's a good entry point to the rich world of multichannel high-resolution audio. **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 >> 80%**

▶▶ SUB RATINGS

CD 75% SACD 83% DVD-A 82%

**VISION >> 86%**

**FEATURES >> 90%**

**VALUE >> 93%**

### PRO

Good video performance is a bit of a revelation at this price level. Sound quality is good too, especially in 'Pure Direct' mode.

### CON

This rather video-centric design leaves the audio section appearing to be unexceptional, though it still performs creditably, even with 'legacy' CD replay.

### CONCLUSION

This well-equipped player is an excellent, low-cost all-rounder, suitable for HD displays thanks to the combination of HDMI and an internal scaler. Importantly, the sound section is strong enough to support decent audio replay systems, too.

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

BEST BUY

HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine



# Block rockin' beats

*Densen's new 'budget' pre/power combo does magical things in perfect time with the rhythm*

**PRODUCT** Densen Beat B-200 and Beat B-310

**TYPE** Stereo preamplifier and power amplifier

**PRICE** (B-200) £1,100; (B-310) £1,200

**KEY FEATURES** (B-200) Size (WxHxD): 44x6.4x31 cm

• Weight: 8kg • Six line inputs • Two tape inputs/output outputs • Four preamp outputs • Processor input/output • (B-310) Size (WxHxD): 44x6.4x31 cm • Weight: 12kg • Rated power: 80W per channel (eight ohms)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01732 451938 • www.densen.dk

**B**ack in *HFC 270*, we took a look at some upmarket amps from Densen, the Beat B-250 and B-350. The new Beat B-200 and B-310 tested here are hardly 'budget', but the pairing is distinctly more affordable than the 250/350 combo. Appearance is very Densen indeed, with both B-200 preamp and B-310 power amp sharing the familiar slab boxes (available in black or 'albino') made of thick aluminium with a brushed and anodised finish. We would have appreciated a little deburring and chamfering of the edges, but this is a part of the traditional Densen 'look'.

Undoubtedly the most obvious feature of the preamp is its big knob. That's a bit of a Densen trademark, though behind it is a perfectly normal volume control. Well... not absolutely normal, because it's got more channels to it

than usual. At least one of them is dedicated to a control circuit which allows Densen to include an unusual standby feature: as the amp shuts down it turns the volume to zero, returning it to the original setting when woken up again later. Clever, and indicative of some admirably original thinking.

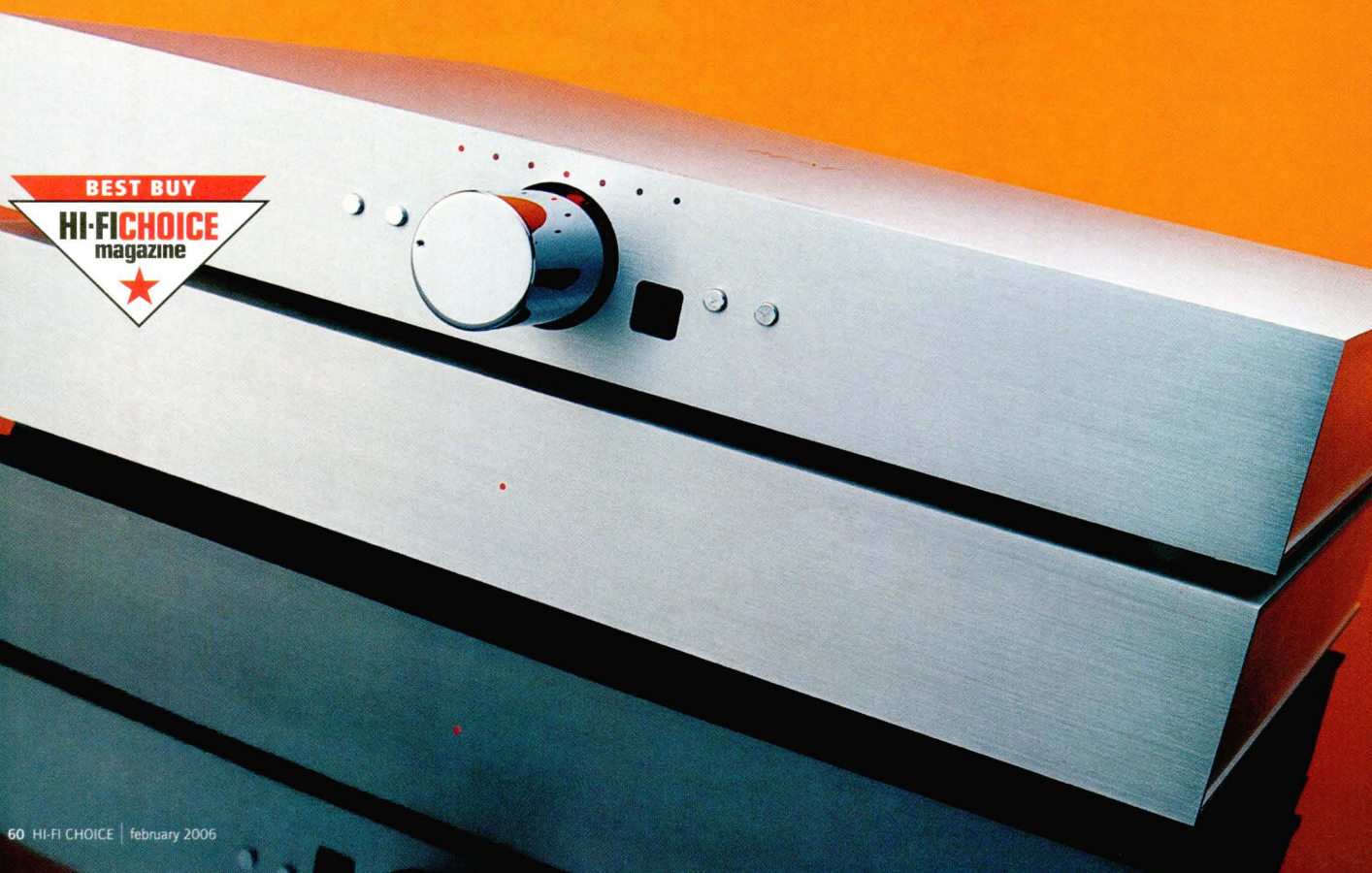
Another unusual feature is the provision of four preamp outputs. Yes, four. Bi-amp, tri-amp, quad-amp, bi-amp to two locations, whatever you want. Those apart, the connections are largely typical of the breed. This means four main inputs, two tape loops and processor in/out, the latter bypassing most of the B-200. The D-connector at the rear is for the 'DenLink' remote/multiroom control system. Such a facility is not that remarkable in 2006, but it was pretty novel when Densen first did it a few years ago.

The power amp features slightly more connectors than one might at first expect. Doubled output terminals are not so striking, since plenty of manufacturers appreciate the possibilities of bi-wiring, but twin input sockets? Turns out the pair marked 'E.C.' are for use when you have an active crossover fitted. Densen keenly espouses the benefits – which can be considerable – of inserting the crossover before the power amplifier, dedicating one

amplifier channel to each drive unit without the use of any further filtering components. Of course, you need extra power amps (Densen won't mind that!) and the crossover needs to be matched to the speaker, but Densen already has a database of likely speakers and will set up a 'SAXO' crossover board to suit them: speakers available in Denmark can have their own internal crossovers removed, and as a last resort you can send your own pair of speakers to the Densen labs.

Apart from that, power amp gain is switchable between normal and high, the latter facilitating the use of passive (gainless) preamps, and there are DenLink input and output connectors. Internally it's a neat amp with extensive use of surface-mount components, apart from the output transistors, which are big Japanese parts fitted to a heat spreader. This, in turn, dumps heat into the bass. There's no heatsink as such, but while under lab conditions the amp can be made to get alarmingly hot, in the real world, there's no real danger of that happening.

It's worth mentioning that Densen is an opponent of feedback in audio circuits. Most amps use a spot of feedback to linearise performance, but there are other ways to do this and Densen argues that avoiding feedback



improves sound definition. Measured performance (while once again not quite reaching the levels claimed in the promotional literature) is good, with remarkable bandwidth from the preamp especially, so it looks as if Densen has once again employed some nifty tricks in there.

The 'Gizmo' remote control is a slightly pricey (£150) optional extra, but it is unusually nice to use, powerful and rechargeable, and on the whole we would probably bother with it.

## SOUND QUALITY

These amps are a lot of fun. They have punch, clarity, extension at both ends and, to use a rather anthropomorphic term, enthusiasm. The B-310's 100 or so watts (our measurement) go a long way to delivering voluminous sound pictures through some highly power-hungry speakers and do an excellent job of delivering a boisterous rock band, or an upbeat symphony orchestra, to your living room.

That's good, if not essential, for any amp that has pretensions to upmarketness, but there needs to be more. Subtlety, for a start, and that mellifluous touch that nicely accompanies ballads or a gentle tune on the piano. And



**“That word ‘believable’ is a key one in understanding these amps. Even when they are subtly wrong, they are believable.”**

Densen seems to have got the measure of that aspect, too. In the past, we've come across the odd amp that always felt it was straining at the leash with quieter musical fare, but those are getting rarer and we never for a moment felt that these units fell into that category. In such circumstances, the Densen duo are the essence of refinement.

However, as with the dearer B-250/350, we are not about to claim that these amps are perfect. They do have some character, and while it's one that we suspect a large majority of listeners will not just tolerate but indeed enjoy – we did! – it's only honest to discuss it. It's not wholly unlike the character of the 250/350 combo, giving a slight lift to the rhythm section of a band and seemingly enhancing the drive of energetic music.

There's also a slight tonal effect, which we didn't spot in our last encounter with Densen: a subtle 'warming up' of the upper bass and lower midrange. This may very well be part and parcel of the drive and energy thing, since it's in the more audible harmonics of the true bass frequencies where a lot of music's energy lives.

With speakers that tend towards chestiness, that could become slightly oppressive, but it's only fair to

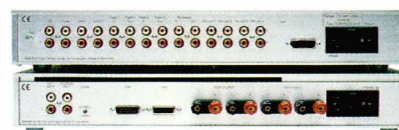
assume that most potential customers for £2,300-worth of amps have reasonably neutral speakers, so in practice, it's likely to add little more than the touch of added warmth we noticed (principally using ATC SCM20s, which are highly neutral in that area).

To be really fussy, we could find minor fault with the Densens' handling of stereo images, which lose a little precision in the depth dimension. All the same, the tonal and energetic qualities do a lot to make up for that. In some circumstances, this even gives an image which is, if not more precise than with other amps we've heard, at least more immediately enveloping. This seemed true across a very broad range of music, and while at one extreme, the superb recent Water Lily recordings of Mahler and Shostakovich had vast scale and a truly panoramic sense of perspective, a brand new recording of a lone, unaccompanied singer put his voice solidly and utterly believably in a near-perfect facsimile of the (very familiar) recording venue.

That word, 'believable', is a key one in understanding these amps' virtues and minor weaknesses. Even when they are subtly wrong, they are believable. In addition, they

are inviting, comfortable – in the best possible way – in the long run and utterly devoid of any of the common vices that can make promising hi-fi wearisome: no dryness, treble congestion or thuddy bass here. Performance is nicely matched between the two, by the way, so they could be mixed and matched – but why bother? Densen may hate us for this, but in some ways, we actually preferred these to the more expensive 250/350 combination. If you're in the market for amps around this total price, be sure to try these. **HFC**

*Richard Black*



## VERDICT – BEAT B-200

**SOUND >> 88%**



**FEATURES >> 85%**



**BUILD >> 87%**



**VALUE >> 88%**



### CONCLUSION

Simple but well-featured, sounding immediate and full of life. More tonally neutral than the B-310, but offers similar high-energy qualities.

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

## VERDICT – BEAT B-310

**SOUND >> 88%**



**FEATURES >> 87%**



**BUILD >> 87%**



**VALUE >> 88%**



### CONCLUSION

A subtle warming in the upper bass, but otherwise this amp's musical performance and epic sense of scale will bring new life to old favourites.

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





a



b

**a Esoteric X-01 CD/SACD player.**

This single box player redefines the capabilities of digital replay. Without doubt, it is one of the finest digital sounds we have heard almost at any price. A truly large and deep soundstage with unprecedented transparency and focus. The legendary VRDS-NEO mechanism technology allows the finest nuances of the music to be followed easily without resulting in an analytical sound. Build quality is of a reference standard. £8995.

**b Audio Aero Capitole CD player.**

This already superb sounding player has had a facelift and a software upgrade. The sound is now one of the most transparent and musically engaging we know. An exceptionally 3-dimensional soundstage, comparing favourably with players costing much more. It also includes a pure analogue pre-amplifier with inputs for other sources. £5500. For a very limited period we can offer this at £4675.



c

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**c Dali Ikon 6 loudspeakers.**

The Ikon range brings the ribbon tweeter design concept into a more affordable package. The big soundstage and sweet tonal balance that is achieved with the Helicon series is recognisable in this loudspeaker. Remarkable value. Ikon 6 £895.

**d Clearaudio Champion Level 2 turntable.**

One of the most popular combination packages from this fine manufacturer. This exceptional turntable with the Unify uni-pivot tone-arm and Sigma cartridge offers incredible value. A very transparent sound and a build quality that is of the highest order. Champion Level 1 £1365. Champion Level 2 £1935. Please phone for details on package prices.



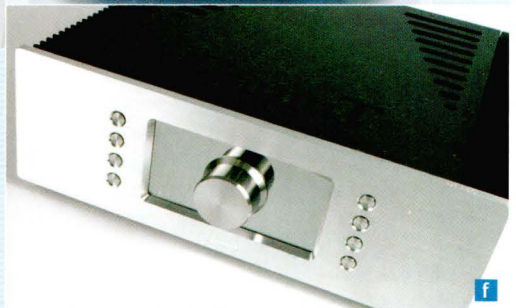
d



e

**e Aesthetix Calypso Line pre-amplifier.**

This valve pre-amplifier has a sound so unlike most tube designs, it has to be heard. A very transparent sound, revealing the finest detail but without sounding analytical. A deep soundstage and a correct tonal balance with none of the usual "bloom" associated with some valve amplification. The internal design is dual mono and fully balanced. Each input has parallel XLR and RCA connectors. The build quality and features are exemplary and these alone could justify a higher price. £3500.



f

**f Gamut DI 150 integrated power amplifier.**

The new product from this well established manufacturer. It is a one-box solution to those that do not want a pre-power combination but without the compromise to sound that most integrated amplifiers have. A very high quality sound with the build quality to match. £5500

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# Warp drive

With its bigger platter and upgraded cartridge, could this be the best Debut yet?

**PRODUCT** Pro-Ject Debut SE

**TYPE** Turntable, arm and cartridge

**PRICE** £200

**CONTACT** ☎ 01235 511166

🌐 www.henleydesigns.co.uk

The MkIII version of Pro-Ject's evergreen Debut turntable has a selection of flavours that would do Ben & Jerry proud. The standard Debut kicks things off at £130, while the £225 Phono SB (reviewed in *HFC* 271) adds onboard phono amplification. Now there are two more Debuts. The £210 Debut E features optical sensing, which means the luxury of having the arm lift itself at the end of the record. Finally, there's the new SE tested here, which has the greatest audiophile appeal of the lot thanks to a larger platter, pointy metal and rubber feet, a higher grade cartridge and the option to change the arm lead whenever you like.

A bigger platter is a heavier platter. This means greater inertia and a better chance of constant rotational speed. Pro-Ject's 'flexifeet' combine pointed aluminium cones with rubber damping, which should keep out more spurious energy than one material alone and thus make the turntable's job easier. The SE also benefits from an Ortofon 510 MkII, which normally retails on its own for £50. This is a moving magnet design, with greater tracking ability and lower distortion than the OM 5E that's usually fitted to Debuts. The existence of phono

output sockets rather than the usual fixed arm lead means that you can use alternative cables for this critical link. The only drawback is that there is an extra connection in the signal path, which tends not to help the sound.

In all other respects, this is a well-built and nicely finished budget turntable with a gimbal bearing arm and manual speed selection. The on/off switch is under the plinth.

## SOUND QUALITY

The potential for good disc reading is enhanced by precise cartridge alignment, but this was undermined on our sample because the armtube was slightly twisted. This alignment is called 'azimuth' and fortunately the Pro-Ject arm does allow it to be adjusted, but it's a fiddly job.

The SE makes a good fist of all things musical when given a slab of vinyl to spin. It has decent welly, plenty of scale and only a slight predilection for the treble frequencies. With Joni Mitchell's *Free Man in Paris*, there is a little more emphasis on the flute and hi-hat than might be ideal, but it's by no means a bright sound. In fact, by the standards of its price class, this is an accomplished turntable.

That accomplishment becomes all the more clear if you hook up some better interconnects and place the deck on an effectively isolated surface. As with most solid plinth designs, the needle picks up any energy in the support, so good isolation is always beneficial. The advantages when combined with some van

den Hul Orchid cable include deeper bass, a more even tonal balance and greater dynamic energy. The soundstage has a weight and scale that is entirely appropriate to the musical event. There's plenty of harmonic variety too, with different acoustic instruments and the all round feel is unusually relaxed for the price.

Goldring's dearer GR2 has greater solidity and probably slicker timing, but may not be as tidy overall. This is a more substantial sounding turntable than the other Debuts: the automatic E model might be user-friendly, but that's not what vinyl is really about. Instead, it's about gripping sonic entertainment... and that's what the Debut SE is capable of. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 77%**



**FEATURES >> 73%**



**BUILD >> 76%**



**VALUE >> 94%**



### PRO

Good scale and energy that come from a decent cartridge, easily upgradable arm cable and good looking footwear. That higher-mass platter delivers the goods, too.

### CON

Needs decent support for best results, the cable replacement is a must-have upgrade and our sample required a fiddly azimuth tweak.

### CONCLUSION

Clearly the most capable Debut yet. The quality of cartridge combined with the easy cable upgradability means it delivers a sound with scale, energy and resolve. The new feet make it look better, too. Goldring had better stay on its toes!

HI-FI CHOICE  
OVERALL SCORE

>> 86%



# Neat and two veg

*This cute 'n' compact, floorstanding two-and-a-half-way is the first of Neat's brand new Motive range*

**PRODUCT** Neat Motive 1

**TYPE** Floorstanding loudspeaker

**PRICE** £1,200 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 16x92.5x20cm

• Weight: 14kg • Two-and-a-half-way design • 25mm inverted metal dome tweeter • 100mm paper bass/mid cones • Sensitivity/impedance: 85dB/4 ohms (min)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01833 631021 # www.neat.co.uk

**N**eat Acoustics has built a fine reputation over the years for its beautifully finished and voiced loudspeakers. They combine a small but select range of top quality drive units with deliberately simple crossover networks and cunningly contrived bass-loading techniques. However, the all-new Motive range represents something of a departure. The range comes in at lower prices than most previous Neats, and uses smaller bass/mid drivers to boot.

Effectively replacing the discontinued Mystique II, Critique II and standard (non-SE) Elite models, all three Motive models share similar drive units and construction techniques. The Motive 1 is the largest and most complex, featuring twin main drivers operating in a two-and-a-half-way configuration. And at £1,200 per pair, it's also the most costly. Below this there's a floorstanding, two-way Motive 2 at £850 per pair, and a £650 per pair standmount Motive 3.

The larger Motive 1 is the subject of this review, but 'larger' is a comparative, not an absolute, and this is certainly one of the

smaller and more discreet floorstanders on the market, for two fairly obvious reasons. Neat by both name and nature, the Motive 1 stands just 92.5cm tall, with a gentle backwards tilt that keeps the drivers pointing towards the listeners. It's also only 160mm wide because the main drivers are relatively small affairs.

The enclosure is compact, sharp-edged and beautifully finished in well figured real wood veneers. You can choose from the standard selection of cherrywood, maple, oak and rosenut; others, including black ash, walnut and rosewood, are available to order. Under the veneer, the enclosure is made from 15mm MDF, internally braced, and the inside cabinet walls are lined with bituminous pads to damp panel resonances.

**“Neutral tonal balance and an unusually wide bandwidth are an excellent start, but are by no means the whole story here.”**

The whole thing sits on a chunky and carefully shaped matt black MDF plinth. This performs the triple task of providing the gentle backward tilt, expanding the stability footprint in both width and depth, and creating an outlet from the port fitted to the bottom panel of the enclosure. Smart, chunky spikes are locked by thumbwheels, which seemed more than adequate to the task, and also help avoid the socket damage that all too frequently

occurs when proper nuts are properly tightened. Twin terminal pairs fitted well apart on a rear panel terminal block permit bi-wire or bi-amp options.

Its bass/mid drive units, based on the Peerless type SDS design, have 134mm steel frames, cut down at opposite edges to make them extra slim. These are then secured to the front baffle by six bolts. Each has an inverted dust cover, a doped paper cone some 100mm in diameter, a 26mm voice coil, and a low-loss rubber surround. Both are loaded in acoustic parallel by the whole enclosure.

The tweeter looks very like one of the Focal inverted dome types that Neat uses in its upmarket Ultimatum models. However, 'looks very like' is the key phrase here. Although the

original intention was to use one of that French company's highly regarded tweeters, this wasn't possible because Focal is trying to cut back on its commitments as a supplier of raw drive units. Accordingly, Neat elected to develop its own tweeter for use throughout the new range, and any similarity to the Focal designs is entirely deliberate. Like some Focal examples, this NMT tweeter features a powerful magnet and uses an inverted 25mm



titanium dome, along with an all new surround developed for a wide usable bandwidth. The case in favour of an inverted (concave) rather than a convex dome is complex, but ultimately quite persuasive. Inverted cone designs minimise the path difference between edge and centre, and enable a smaller diameter voice coil, whose lower inductance increases the high frequency bandwidth. They are popular with many high-enders, even including esoteric brands like Wilson Audio.

## SOUND QUALITY

In the past, Neat has always relied entirely on subjective judgement in designing and voicing its loudspeakers, which has made its uncanny ability to deliver a beautifully flat in-room response all the more surprising. This time it admits to having checked the subjectively derived balance by measurement, but an impressively flat response is again confirmed under our measurement regime. Indeed, from 150Hz right up to 20kHz, the in-room far-field response held within +/-2dB, which is wholly remarkable. Even the bass end, 20-150Hz, which is much more affected by room standing wave modes, holds within an equally impressive +/-3dB, provided the speakers are kept well clear of walls.

Equally remarkable is that such a compact speaker can deliver genuinely deep bass extension, registering around 0dB at 20Hz under in-room far-field conditions, though three factors contribute to this. First, sensitivity is comfortably below average at around 85dB (which is significant as sensitivity and bass extension are inextricably linked) – and incidentally a lot lower than the specified 90dB. Then there's the port, tuned here to an unusually low 27Hz. Finally, there's the impedance. This stays comfortably above six ohms from 55Hz upwards, but falls to around four ohms at very low frequencies (24-34Hz).

Given the above findings, it's no surprise to find a very superior neutrality high on the list of the Motive 1's positive attributes. In fact, few other speakers can match it in this regard, and its sheer lack of any obviously identifiable 'character' makes this a quite difficult speaker to describe, as one tends to note speakers more in the breach than the observance of neutrality.

Neutral tonal balance and an unusually wide bandwidth are an excellent start for any speaker, but are by no means the whole story

here. The midband is exceptionally expressive and coherent, bringing unusual realism to individual voices. And, while the presence band remains beautifully open and free from any nasal tendencies, there's no tendency for this speaker to sound aggressive when the volume is wound up, which is an unusually clever trick.

The sound as a whole is agile and impressively free from any boxy colorations, generating precise and well-focused stereo images that fill the space around and between the speakers without betraying the Motive 1's physical locations. This speaker has the sort of agility and

freedom from enclosure effects that one normally only associates with high-quality standmount designs, while the slight backward tilt seems to help by giving the sound extra room-filling spaciousness and air.

Although the top end is explicit in terms of providing good detail, it's not particularly sweet – there seems to be a slight hardness here, which probably has more to do with the crossover components than the tweeter itself. And in the final analysis, this is a small

loudspeaker at heart; while it remains engagingly light on its feet, dynamic expression seems a shade muted and the sound is a little lacking in grip and tension. Although it does everything with considerable competence, there's some lack of power and authority in the way it delivers bass instruments in comparison to larger loudspeakers, and a hint of congestion when things start to get really busy.

This highlights the dilemma for both speaker designers and purchasers. Beyond the obvious aesthetic and cost benefits, small loudspeakers such do have some inherent sonic advantages over their larger competitors, but ultimately a large radiating area will bring a greater sense of realism to the party. However, the new Motive 1 is an outstanding example of a top-quality compact floorstanding speaker, which plays to its very real strengths and makes it very easy to overlook its limitations. Very Neat indeed! **HFC**

*Paul Messenger*



VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 90%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>PRO</b> This compact floorstander combines superb neutrality, fine open voicing, low coloration and out-of-box imaging with surprisingly good bass extension.
<b>EASE OF DRIVE &gt;&gt; 70%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>CON</b> Sensitivity is well below that claimed in the spec. Could do with more bass grip and authority, while the top end is not particularly sweet.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 90%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 91%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> Attractive floorstander with a neutral balance that sounds open but never aggressive. It combines superior imaging, good bass extension and low coloration with fine midband expression, but could have more dynamic grip and authority.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 90%</b>	

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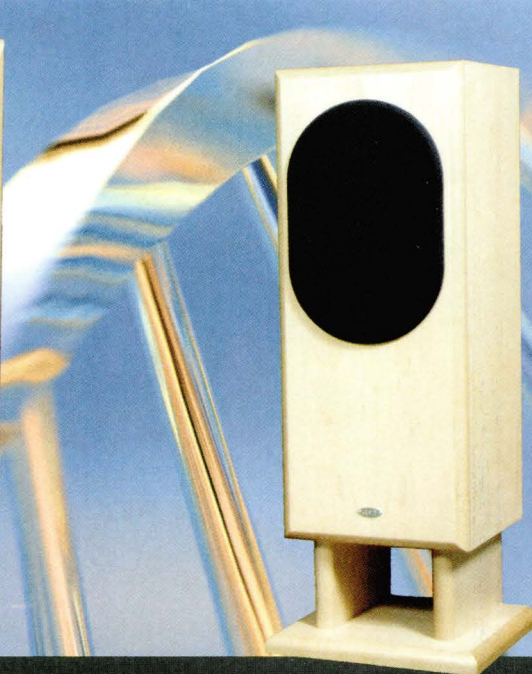


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BRENTWOOD	AUDIO T	01277 234730	OXFORD	OXFORD AUDIO	01865 790879
BRIGHTON	AUDIO T	01273 609431	POOLE	MOVEMENT AUDIO	01202 730865
BRISTOL	AUDIO EXCELLENCE	0117 9264975	PORTSMOUTH	AUDIO T	023 9266 3604
CAMBERLEY	AUDIO T	01276 685597	RAYLEIGH	RAYLEIGH HI-FI	01268 779762
CARDIFF	AUDIO EXCELLENCE	029 2022 8565	READING	AUDIO T	0118 9585463
CHANDLERS FORD, HAMPSHIRE	AUDIO T	023 8025 2827	SALISBURY	SALISBURY HI-FI	01722 322169
CHELMSFORD	RAYLEIGH HI-FI	01245 265245	SHEFFIELD	MOORGATE ACOUSTICS	0114 2756048
CHELTENHAM	AUDIO T	01242 583960	SOLIHULL	MUSIC MATTERS	0121742 0254
CHESTER	AUDIO EXCELLENCE	01244 345576	SOUTHAMPTON	PHASE 3 HI FI	023 8022 8434
COVENTRY	FRANK HARVEY HI-FI	024 7652 5200	SOUTHEND-ON-SEA	RAYLEIGH HI-FI	01702 435255
DARLINGTON	MUSIC MATTERS	01325481418	STOURBRIDGE	MUSIC MATTERS	01384 444184
EAST GRINSTEAD	AUDIO DESIGNS	01342 314569	SUTTON COLDFIELD	MUSIC MATTERS	0121 3542311
EASTBOURNE	AUDIO T	01323 731336	SWANSEA	AUDIO EXCELLENCE	01792 474608
ENFIELD	AUDIO T	020 8367 3132	SWINDON	AUDIO T	01793 538222
EPSOM	AUDIO T	01372 748888	TUNBRIDGE WELLS	AUDIO T	01892 525666
EXETER	AUDIO EXCELLENCE	01392 491194	WARRINGTON	CHRIS BROOKS AUDIO	01925 261212
GLASGOW	GLASGOW AUDIO	0141 332 4707	WARRINGTON	DOUG BRADY HI-FI	01925 828009
GUILDFORD	P J HI-FI	01483 504801	WEYMOUTH	WEYMOUTH HI-FI	01305 785729
HAMPOLE, YORKSHIRE	HI-FI STUDIOS	01302 725550	WORCESTER	AUDIO EXCELLENCE	01905 619059
HARROW	HARROW AUDIO	020 8863 0938	WORTHING	PHASE 3 HI FI	01903 245577
HATCH END, MIDDLESEX	MUSIC MATTERS	020 8420 1925			
HEREFORD	ENGLISH AUDIO	01432 355081			
HIGH WYCOMBE	AUDIO T	01494 558585			
HORSHAM	AUDIO DESIGNS	01403 267766			
HOVE	POWERPLANT (HI-FI)	01273 775978			
KINGSTON-ON-THAMES	INFIDELITY	020 8943 3530			
LEEDS	IMAGE AUDIO	0113 2789374			
LEICESTER	CYMBIOSIS	0116 2623754			
LEICESTER	LEICESTER HI-FI	0116 253 9753			
LONDON	AUDIO T	020 7794 7848			
LONDON	BARTLETTS HI-FI	020 7607 2148			



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BEST BUY

HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine

# Silver service

Cambridge Audio's high-value music server mixes comprehensive functionality with good hi-fi sound

**PRODUCT** Cambridge Audio Azur 640H

**TYPE** Hard-disk music server

**PRICE** £600

**CONTACT** ☎ 0870 900 1000

www.cambridgeaudio.com

This may look like a normal CD player. In fact, the Cambridge Audio Azur 640H is a music server, complete with 160GB hard drive and the ability to connect to a PC, keyboard, mouse, Ethernet network and a television or similar display device, as well as the more commonplace optical and coaxial digital audio outputs, plus a pair of stereo phono analogue audio outputs.

All of which makes the Azur 640H necessarily more complex than most hi-fi source components. It's basically an audio computer, running Cambridge Audio's proprietary 'AudioFile' operating system. Its functionality is centred on a VIA C3 1GHz chip, while the audio D-to-A conversion side is handled by Wolfson WM8740 chips. All of which means you can both play CDs and rip them to the hard drive in one of four compression levels, or bit-for-bit uncompressed. You can allocate, store and playlist these tracks as you like, and the Azur 640H can read and convert music – stored on networked computers or online sources – of almost any flavour. If something new comes along, updates will be provided via CD-ROM.

Then there's the internet radio option, available if you plug the 640H into a PC-less broadband home network. You can also access the Gracenote online CD database this way.

The next level of sophistication means hooking the 640H into a more elaborate PC

network. Here, the Cambridge acts as an audio hub, squirting music content from computers to hi-fis. The more complex the system, the more you need to know about IP addressing, but this is largely explained in the manual and if you are capable of wiring up your home PC network without calling for professional help, the 640H is an easy add-in.

The unit ideally needs to be hooked up to a monitor at all times. You can just about get by without the screen, but a fair chunk of the functionality gets very hard to follow from the front panel alone.

## SOUND QUALITY

Used as a standalone CD player, the sound is not too far removed from the likes of the 640C v2, Cambridge's excellent £250 CD player (tested in HFC 274). It's direct, self-assured and surprisingly precise, but disc access is much slower than you'd expect from a dedicated player – hardly surprising given its complexity.

Of course, CD playback is only a fraction of the functionality of the 640H. And the rest of its performance is dependent on what level of compression you use to fill up that 160GB disc drive. At 320kbps – the highest quality level, after uncompressed – unless you listen to complex music critically through a very good system, you aren't likely to hear much difference between this and the original CD source. As the compression increases, so the sound flattens out and becomes the 'all-treble, all-bass, nothing in the middle' sound, so typical of downloaded sources. Eventually, by the time you get to 64kbps, the sound is only one stage up from a good quality telephone signal, and only fit for those in need of weeks of non-stop

music in near-mono. Alternately, it's good for downloading a small library of talking books.

External sources like internet radio are similarly well treated, but this time the performance is beholden on the quality of the download itself. This is a bewildering but fascinating way of listening to sounds from around the world, and the sound quality is generally close to DAB. Fortunately, those Wolfson DACs make this the best sounding MP3 replay you'll probably ever hear from a PC.

This has been a long-awaited product, the one that transforms music servers from being hidden away in multiroom installations to being right up-front on the hi-fi table. And it was worth the wait. The more you put into it, the better the return, but even on a basic level, used as an uncompressed store for just over 240 CDs, it's well worth the asking price. **HFC**

Alan Sircom

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 74%**



**FEATURES >> 96%**



**BUILD >> 82%**



**VALUE >> 90%**



### CONCLUSION

If you know what you are doing, this can be a true audio hub, bringing internet radio and PC sources to the party. But even if you just use it to store lots of CDs, it still has much to offer. This brings sophisticated home music servers to a new audience.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
OVERALL SCORE

**>> 86%**

GROUP TEST AND LAB REPORTS: RICHARD BLACK

# CD AND SACD PLAYERS

The audiophile CD player gets a subtle twist with the inclusion of SACD

## ON TEST



Cyrus CD6s  
£650



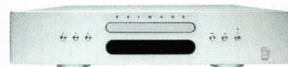
Denon DCD-2000AE  
£1,200



Marantz SA-15 S1  
£1,200



Micromega CD132  
£699



Primare CD21  
£800



Sony SCD-XA3000ES  
£800

**S**ACD arrives! For the first time, our CD player group includes three machines that also happen to play SACDs. This raises all sorts of questions, many of which have simple enough answers. For a start, is CD on the way out? Frankly, it's hard to see that it is – and if it is, SACD has little enough to do with it. Is SACD going to dominate? Not in the short term, because at present the economics of getting into it for most manufacturers are not that enticing. Super-budget kit always needs to shave pennies off the build price, while 'proper' hi-fi often hails from small manufacturers who can't easily find the entry price for SACD either. Mind you, the cheapest Sony machines seem to be creeping inexorably towards the £100 mark.

For those who can justify getting on the SACD train though, why not? There's next to no added complexity once the transport itself has been sorted, and many of the newest DAC chips on the market will decode DSD (the SACD digital format) perfectly happily, meaning that the same DAC and output circuit, pretty much, can be used for both SACD and CD replay. That in turn means incorporating SACD need have no detrimental effect on CD performance, so in some ways this is a win-win situation.

That's the case with two-channel SACD replay, anyway. Slightly more electronics is needed for multichannel – not to mention the extra channels of amplification and speakers, of course. But yet again it seems that a large number of audiophiles have shrugged off multi-channel and the two stereo SACD decks here are representative of quite a few more out there. Don't be too hasty in choosing stereo players over multichannel, we'd advise: try to find a dealer who can demonstrate a good surround audio system first, at least.

But if you're decided on stereo, you can hardly lose even if you buy a CD-only player, since practically all SACD discs will also play on any regular CD player. Given all that, the only difference between the stereo SACD players and the CD-only players is that the former may offer two different versions of some discs, as not all are mastered identically for SACD and CD layers. And if your hearing is spectacularly extended, you may just get some extra benefit from the SACD version's higher cut-off frequency.

So in most ways, this boiled down to a perfectly normal CD players group. Once again, we were impressed by the overall standard but were still able to pick out differences – sometimes pretty minor nit-picking ones, but differences nevertheless – between the players. Let's get stuck in, then! **HFC**

## EQUIPMENT USED

- ⊕ Densen Beat 200 preamplifier and Beat 310 power amplifier
- ⊕ EAR 802 preamplifier/519 monoblocks
- ⊕ ATC SCM20 loudspeakers
- ⊕ Kimber, Bespoke Audio and Furukawa interconnect and speaker cables

## MUSIC USED

- ⊕ Shostakovich *Symphony No. 7*
- ⊕ Penguin Cafe Orchestra *Concert Programme*
- ⊕ Miles Davis *Kind of Blue*
- ⊕ Michael Jackson *Thriller*

## EARS USED

Once again, we are enormously grateful to the following pillars of the industry for their time and listening acuity during our 'blind' listening session:

- ⊕ Abbas Hussain (Wireworld)
- ⊕ Steve Reichert (Armour Home Electronics)
- ⊕ Ed Selley (Cambridge Audio)



## STRUCTURED LAB AND LISTENING TESTS

Each of the players in the group was subjected to a rigorous programme of listening and laboratory tests. Measurements were made using a combination of custom-made CD-Rs, devised specifically for these tests, and a high quality ADC which converted the analogue output of each player back to digital for analysis on a PC, using principally Cool Edit Pro and Mathcad. To test aspects of SACD performance, since SACD test discs are not widely available and impractical to generate, commercial music discs were used and analysed by inference and comparison. Our methodology provides a searching analysis of a multitude of aspects, the most important of which are summarised in the bar graphs (with other significant findings mentioned in the text). A few measurements were carried out which are not reported unless results were alarming: for instance, absolute speed accuracy – quite beyond reproach for all the players here.

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

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

## LAB REPORTS: THE BAR GRAPH

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

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

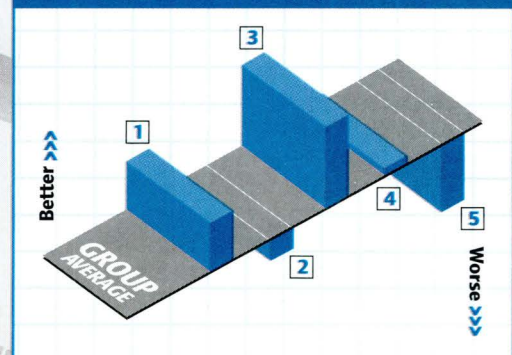
**2] Jitter:** A measure of how stable the timing clock is. Measured at the analogue output, this distortion shows up as increased noise and/or low-level interfering frequencies that can contribute to sonic 'grunge'.

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

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

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

## OUR BAR GRAPHS: AN EXAMPLE



## Buy from Shadow Audio with confidence.

Shadow Audio makes choosing the right product or system simple. We have one of the largest selections of hand-picked products from the most established manufactures around the world.

Remember on many of our product lines we offer our unique 30-day money back guarantee (subject to conditions). Call or visit our web site for more details.

## ART Loudspeakers



### get ready for an emotional demonstration...

The long-awaited new Loudspeakers from ART Loudspeakers are finally here and it's all about emotion. Designed by Derek / Ramsay Dunlop, the Emotion loudspeaker is without doubt their finest creation to date and they are rightly very proud of this speaker – it took us at Shadow less than 5 minutes to see and hear why!

Many of you will have noticed on all the popular Hi-fi Forums, the number of people talking about the Emotion loudspeakers and everybody is saying the same thing. No matter what you have to do, what you have to sell, you just have to buy the Emotion loudspeaker because nothing else comes even close! For those of you not convinced by the hundreds of forum posts, call us to arrange a demonstration and hear for yourself what all the fuss is about....

If £9,000 is more than your budget allows, all is not lost for those clever people at ART have designed three Emotion loudspeaker models: Emotion (£5,000), Emotion Signature (£9,000) and Emotion Silver Signature (ETBA). Even more clever is the fact that the Emotion and Emotion Signature can both at a later date be upgraded to the next model(s) – truly ingenious!

We at Shadow think the sound is just staggering, awesome, jaw-dropping and its a speaker that no one can afford not to hear.

Call today to arrange a very emotional demonstration!

## Musical Fidelity (NEW)



### the ultimate transport and dac combo...

Here's the problem... In general people believe that more expensive a product is the better it must be. The kW DM25 system proves this not to be the case.

**KW DM25 Transport**  
The kW DM25 transport has a unique configuration of power supplies for the primary information retrieval that sets new standards.

Just like an analog turntable the kW DM25 transport has a proper isolation system to ensure that acoustic/seismic feedback are virtually eliminated.

The digital output is split into left and right separately. Each output is AES/EBU balanced operating at 96kHz (not the usual 44.1kHz.)

Taken as a system the kW DM25 transport is able to retrieve the finest detail from your discs.

#### KW DM25 DAC

The kW DM25 DAC is a significant advance (although using the same technology) on the kW SACD. First off it has four full choke regulated power supplies and other subtle detail improvements. It has an amazing signal to noise ratio, which means that it's capable of going very loud without any stress. Perhaps more importantly, the dynamic range extends significantly downwards so that you can hear right into what would have been noise on an ordinary DAC.

Arguably its the very finest separate DAC available at anywhere near the price.

The kW DM25 system delivers dramatically more of that per pound than any other system available.

Audition the KW DM25 Transport & DAC at Shadow Audio today.

## New Brand: VPI

### the super scoutmaster signature...



editors  
choice  
the absolute sound  
2004

The Super Scoutmaster Signature is a direct development of both the state of the art VPI TNT HR-X and the Scout entry level turntable.

The standard Scout uses an all acrylic platter, this one uses a composite platter manufactured from two slabs of acrylic, sandwiching a steel plate.

The bearing is the same design as used throughout the VPI range., however the main bearing housing has been lengthened to accommodate the new, thicker

platter first seen on the TNT HR-X turntable. This bearing is very much at the heart of the Scout's design.

Harry Weisfeld has known for a long time that both the quality of the power supply and the drive system are critical to the overall performance of the playback system, so for this turntable the drive system from the awesome HR-X.

Finally the turntable ships with a JMW - 9 Signature Tone Arm, an arm critically acclaimed Worldwide for it's ease of setup, outstanding design

and stunning sound quality. Now, exclusively for the Super Scoutmaster Signature, VPI has collaborated with cable experts, Nordost, to produce this new Signature arm which is wired with Nordost Valhalla Micro Monofilament tonearm cable.

By using this unique cable with the JMW 9 Signature Tone Arms stunning engineering and the outstanding performance of the VPI Super Scoutmaster, a vinyl playback system is created which truly challenges the very best available.

## Product Previews

### a glimpse into the future from shadow...



**(LEFT PIC) Shanling 500 Reference**  
Shanling will soon be launching a new Reference Amplifier and CD Player. The A500 and CD500 look simply stunning and we at Shadow wait with baited breath to get our hands on a set. Pictures posted on our web site have already got people very excited. Call us for more details.

**(RIGHT PIC) Musical Fidelity Stable 1**  
Musical Fidelity will shortly be releasing an Isolation Platform called the Stable 1. Using the same isolation system as on the DM25 Transport it is sure to make a significant improvement to all components you place on it! Call us for more details.



£650 (CD) ☎ 01480 435577 🌐 www.cyrus.com

# CYRUS CD6s

Cyrus' new entry-level CD player bristles with musical energy

The latest in the Cyrus dynasty, the 6s is an upgrade to the original CD6 player. The upgrade in question involves the filtering, which in any CD player is an integral part of reassembling digits into audio waveforms. The basic player is a pretty familiar beast, starting with the ubiquitous Cyrus diecast case – now provided with a metallised plastic base for screening purposes. Inside, the transport is a 'proper' audio CD type which loads nice and fast (to be really fussy, it sounds a little antiquated, compared with slicker, newer models, but we'd sacrifice that kind of refinement for speed of use), accompanied by a circuit board bearing the audio components. Power comes via a small toroidal transformer that's neatly tucked into a corner.

Cyrus makes no fancy claims for this player and eschews such fashionable technologies as upsampling, but of course the digital filter uses oversampling and the integrated circuits used to do it are recent, high-performance parts. Passive components are also of good quality, though 'audiosnobs' may wrinkle their nose at the use of 5532 output amplifier chips.

The feature set is decent but functional, including separate skip and search buttons on the front panel. The digital output is optical only, but the analogue output is doubled up and there are input and output sockets for Cyrus' MC-Bus remote control system. The player does not display CD Text and will not recognise CD-RW discs.

### SOUND QUALITY

When we gave this player its first HFC review three issues ago, we had some reservations. Specifically, we were concerned about its level of detail retrieval and the way treble holds together in dense textures. It's good to report that some of those reservations can be laid to rest: indeed, the general reaction to the CD6s was strongly positive.

Where our panellists definitely agreed with our own earlier assessment was in the area of



dynamics, life and general musical energy – there's a lot of it around! Not – we hasten to add – too much, for the sound here is no blowsy, overblown affair. All the same, it has at least as much get-up-and-go as any of the others here, leading to comments like, "gets your foot tapping", "handles the sound with aplomb" and (definitely quote of the month), "even the tape hiss is interesting".

There was the odd word of caution, or at least modified rapture. One member of the panel twice described the detail as "reasonably good", though in another track the qualification was dropped. The same listener also felt that Miles Davis' trumpet was a little harsh compared with the other players. But, while these comments point in roughly the same direction as our criticisms in HFC 273, they are considerably milder (a function of listener preferences and the available references) and it seems that this player offers a highly appealing blend of musical performance and analytical skills.

We could find no tonal anomalies to argue with – indeed, the bass was another aspect that our panellists specifically praised, noting its strong but well-balanced presentation. Lots to like and little to quibble over at the price – chalk up another success to Cyrus! **HFC**

### VERDICT

**SOUND >> 85%**

**FEATURES >> 84%**

**BUILD >> 85%**

**VALUE >> 90%**

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

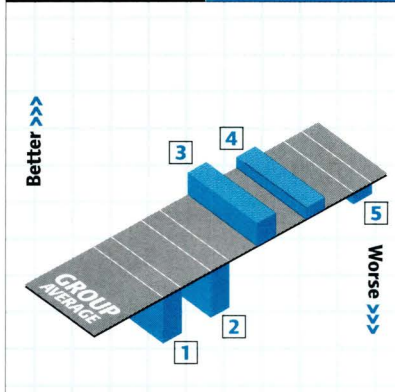


### LAB REPORT

Distortion is kept exceptionally low throughout the lower and midrange frequencies: the poor showing on the bar graph reflects a marked rise at HF but, in absolute terms, performance is still good. Noise is also kept to an admirably low level. Jitter is the highest in the group, but that's misleading: it's actually very low, the other machines simply gilding the lily here.

As far as the vaunted output filtering is concerned, performance is generally pretty good, though there's still plenty of aliasing permitted above 20kHz, as is common if not necessarily desirable. However, the stopband is otherwise very clean, and the filter's behaviour is classic in terms of both amplitude and phase. There are no unexpected artefacts in the output and as with most of the players here mains breakthrough and other undesirables are low to vanishing. This is a very decent performer all round.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >> -40%
- 2] Jitter >> -40%
- 3] Linearity >> +20%
- 4] Dynamic range >> +10%
- 5] Digital filter >> -10%

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Maximum output level	2.1V	2.1V
Total harmonic distortion	0.005%	0.0006%
Signal-to-noise ratio	110dB	106dB

## Integrated Amplifiers

## the ultimate one-box integrated solutions...

(NEW) Bryston B100 SST



The first obvious advantage of an integrated amplifier is the fact that you usually have just one single box containing both pre/power sections. Whilst an amplifier of this nature has its own set of challenges for the designer it also offers a number of advantages such as much shorter signal paths. The Amplifier chassis is often separated into sections to shield Pre/power components from one another, bringing interference to a bare minimum. Designers have met the challenges head on and many of today's integrated amplifiers offer a performance that is truly breathtaking.

If you are looking for a new Integrated Amplifier, we at Shadow Audio have three Award Winning products that you should audition as a must. Bryston, Gamut and Musical Fidelity make some of the finest products available. Each rightly deserves its praise and many awards.

If you believe that you have to split an amp into separate boxes to achieve the best results, here are three amplifiers that will make you think again!

### Bryston B100 SST

This new amplifier from Bryston is only their second integrated amplifier in 32 years. Not only will this 100wpc Amplifier bring your speakers to life but your CD Player and any other digital sources as well with its stunning optional onboard D/A Converter (4 inputs). Was it worth the wait? You bet!

### Gamut DI 150

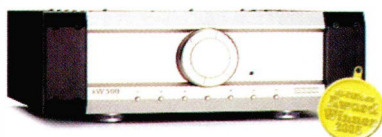
The DI 150 brings the D3 pre-amplifier and D200 MKIII together in a single chassis. Amazingly very few compromises have been made and the result is a strikingly beautiful, 31kg, 180wpc beast that reproduces music almost flawlessly. Integrated Amplifiers don't get any better than this!

### Musical Fidelity KW500

It's really, simple the kW 500 is virtually indistinguishable from the monster-killer kW monoblocs. The kW 500 is one of the best five amplifiers in the world regardless of price. It has super technical performance, loads of power (more than 500 wpc). All in all the kW 500 is just about as good as you can get except it doesn't cost the earth.



(NEW) Gamut DI 150



Musical Fidelity KW500

## New Brand: PMC

## award winning professional monitor loudspeakers...

PMC IB2



PMC is a UK based, world-leading manufacturer of professional monitor and audiophile speaker systems.

PMC designs feature its uniquely engineered Advanced Transmission Line technology (ATL), which provides, high resolution, wide bandwidth signal response across the complete product range. Proprietary drive units, electronics and cabinet engineering, provide unrivalled tonal accuracy, clarity and dynamic range throughout a range of designs.

### Models include:

**DB1+** The latest incarnation of the worlds smallest transmission line design. Outstanding dynamics, exceptional sound staging, and depth of bass that would suggest a loudspeaker of dramatically larger proportions.

**FB1+** Features the identical high performance 27mm soft dome tweeter as found in the OB1 and more costly loudspeakers in the range, providing reference quality high frequency response

**GB1** A true breakthrough; a loudspeaker that encompasses PMC's award-winning professional monitoring heritage in a compact and elegant design, ideally suited to match modern décor and lifestyles. GB1 employs PMC's advanced transmission line technology in conjunction with

sophisticated cabinet construction, proprietary drive units, and patented absorption materials.

**OB1** Until now this definitive level of performance has been the preserve of the larger models from the PMC range. The OB1 design, is not only ground breaking in its innovative bass loading system, but it also allows the listener to engage a piece of music and awe at the sheer scale of a truly massive sound stage.

**IB1** An extremely flexible 3-way monitor, which has found its home in the most varied of environments.

**IB2** Based on the hugely successful IB1 with one major change to the driver compliment. The addition of the PMC75 large soft dome mid range unit increases the definition and clarity to the level of the larger monitors in the range with no increase in cabinet size.

**MB2** The new 3 way MB2 series is flexible in the extreme, its many variants allowing to fill roles from high-power midfield to large scale soffit mounted main monitoring. Higher SPLs with lower distortion, greater dynamic capacity and detail are the benefits of the active designs, but all units feature a useable frequency range from 20Hz - 25kHz making the MB2 a potent performer.

All models are available to audition at Shadow Audio.

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

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**£1,200 (CD/SACD)** ☎ 01234 741200 🌐 www.denon.co.uk

# DENON DCD-2000AE

*Denon brings SACD to the CD replaying party*

**D**enon seems pretty keen on SACD, with no less than three such audio players in its current range (not to mention its DVD-compatible 'universal' players). The DCD-2000AE is the middle model and a very substantial beast it is too – it weighs over 13kg, though it has a smaller footprint than the Sony, Marantz and Primare models in this group. The mass is largely due to the use of particularly thick casework to kill resonance. The top and base are both double-skinned steel, the top glued together in an example of constrained layer damping (one of the best ways to prevent ringing), while the base is assembled with enough screws to have much the same effect.

The transport is connected initially to the Advanced AL24 Processing board. This process applies to the CD data stream and claims to improve frequency response and resolution by the use of upsampling and adaptive filtering. It's clear that both those techniques are indeed used. But, even Denon can't rewrite the laws of physics, and in practice performance is still restricted by CD's basic specification.

SACD replay is handled in stereo only, with AL24 processing being irrelevant; conversion of both formats to analogue is handled by a Texas Instruments chip on the main audio board, followed by a filter and buffer using high-quality audio op-amps. Build is pretty good, though electronic components are regular commercial grade. Power is drawn from a pair of potted transformers, labelled 'audio' and 'digital'.

### SOUND QUALITY

As a CD player, this was judged a fair success. At no point did anyone get carried away with praise, but there were several comments along the lines of "enjoying it", "natural" and so on. It seemed to have a slightly bright character, with comparatively lightweight bass, and was lively and communicative but not always quite as solid and believable as others in the group.

Away from a synergistic match in terms of amp and speakers, this can edge into harshness,



especially with sounds that are naturally pretty bright. The Miles Davis track did elicit a few comments along those lines. In the same track, though, the good delineation of the individual instruments was felt to be a significant plus, while by the same token Michael Jackson's voice was particularly distinct from the backing. For whatever reason, the Shostakovich track was felt by all to be less successful, the imaging in this particularly demanding passage showing some signs of collapse towards the centre.

SACD replay proved interesting in comparison. On first listen, sound quality was not greatly distinguishable from that of CD replay, which is perhaps as much a tribute to the Denon's CD playback quality as anything else. However, though SACD sound followed the same general trend – light, bright and detailed – longer listening revealed a dash more fluidity and, perhaps, inner detail.

Overall, this is a well-built and competent player, but not one that our panel felt able to really get excited about. However, as we discovered last issue, it forms an impressive partnership with Denon's matching PMA-2000AE integrated amp, and in this configuration in particular it is worthy of serious consideration. **HFC**

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt;&gt; 84%</b>	In many ways this is an impressive player, but it's also one that needs careful partnering. With some amps it sounds rather too bright and forward, but with others it's impressively detailed and informative.
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt;&gt; 88%</b>	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt;&gt; 89%</b>	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt;&gt; 82%</b>	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 84%</b>	

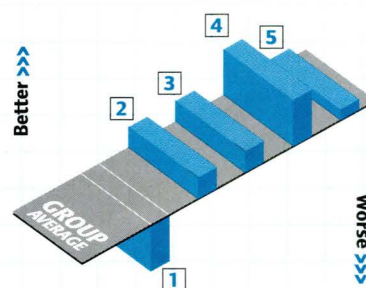


### LAB REPORT

The data sheet for the DAC chip Denon uses suggests that intrinsic distortion is fabulously low, so the relatively middling results we obtained (mind you, better than most amplifiers) are presumably down to the output stage. Noise is remarkably low, however: at -108dB unweighted it's among the best figures we've seen and unlikely to be a real limit on either CD or SACD performance. Linearity and jitter are exemplary, too.

The ultrasonic zone is interesting, because the adaptive nature of the AL24 filter makes interpretation rather difficult. As far as we could see, however, there is still some aliasing and even for audio-band signals at moderate frequencies a little ultrasonic breakthrough occurs, around -85dB. SACD replay shows no odd features, with levels well matched to CD on honestly mastered discs; the usual ultrasonic noise shows up around -37dB, a slightly lower level than average.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >>> -30%
- 2] Jitter >>> +20%
- 3] Linearity >>> +20%
- 4] Dynamic range >>> +40%
- 5] Digital filter >>> +10%

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Maximum output level	2.0V	2.1V
Total harmonic distortion	0.0017%	0.002%
Signal-to-noise ratio	119dB	108dB

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# MARANTZ SA-15 S1

*Great to look at, even better to hear*

Now that Marantz is under the same management roof as Denon, one might perhaps expect to see some shared characteristics of this and the Denon player. But, apart from slight similarities in the transports, this is not the case. Well, they do share a predilection for weight – the SA-15's a big bit of kit by any standards. Here too, it's all casework, including a hefty steel baseplate. The front panel's very smart, making a virtue of bulk and nicely balancing controls, display and effect lighting.

Inside the case, there's plenty for Marantz to get excited about in its promotional literature. We were particularly struck by the company's claim to have developed components in-house. This is definitely not the quick and easy way to solve a problem and does bespeak a certain amount of dedication. That apart, the audio decoding process is based on a chip from Crystal Semiconductor, which supports both PCM (CD) and DSD (SACD) formats.

However, where most players pass the output from the DAC to an op-amp or two, Marantz prefers its own HDAM blocks, seen here without their usual screening cans – so now we finally know they consist of a mix of MOSFETs and bipolar transistors. The HDAM modules are followed by a current buffer similarly built from discrete transistors and a relay for the mute function, all encouraging stuff for sound quality. A single mains transformer feeds a largely conventional power supply.

## SOUND QUALITY

A largely positive response to this player is recorded in our listeners' notes. Interestingly, but probably coincidentally given how much of it is emphatically not in common with the Denon, two out of three listeners thought it sounded a little like the latter. On the whole, though, the remarks were more favourable and pointed to such desirable features as a very solid stereo image, neutral balance, a good sense of presence and good body in the bass.



Opinions varied a little on just how honest the stereo image was, notwithstanding its solidity. One listener felt it was slightly too far forward and clearly found this slightly oppressive, while another described it simply as "terrific". Given the listeners are in slightly different positions, that may not be surprising, but the best kit does seem to give pretty good imaging at any seat and we're inclined to treat this finding as a small sign of weakness.

Detail seemed to be quite a strength of the player, both in the formal 'blind' session and later under sighted conditions. It's not in the same league as the big-money high-end machines, but we would recommend this player on detail grounds, not least because of the effortless way in which it presents everything. There's no cold dissection going on, but gratifyingly little veiling either.

The sound (as opposed to the music itself) is at all times nicely relaxed and this makes big climaxes all the more telling. As such, communication scores highly, and stereo SACD follows on in much the same mellifluous vein as CD. If you're very fussy about how images are presented, you may wish to cock a particularly critical ear at this player, but on balance, we're inclined to give it a warm thumbs-up. **HFC**

### VERDICT

<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 87%</b> 	Apart from slightly variable results with stereo imaging, this player turns in a good all-round performance that features strong bass and presence and particularly fine detail – a good long-term listen.
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 88%</b> 	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 89%</b> 	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 86%</b> 	

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

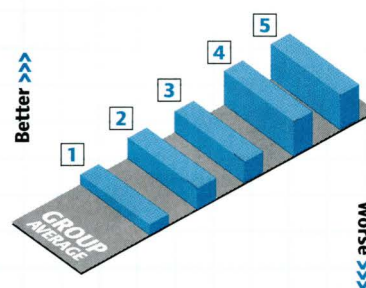


## LAB REPORT

While the player was not the best in any single measured parameter, it gave what was arguably equal (with the Micromega) best overall performance and in every area showed itself considerably better than competent. Noise is minutely worse than the Denon, distortion a fraction higher than a couple of others – but how upset should one get, really, about 0.0013% distortion at nearly full level at 20kHz? Jitter is around the measurement limit at worst, and ultrasonic breakthrough similarly vanishing.

As with all the players, signals in the range of 20kHz to 22kHz do produce significant aliasing. If that is indeed an issue, due to Alias-Intermodulation Distortion, similar mechanisms may produce audible side-effects from the slightly high (-34dB) level of ultrasonic noise the player produces in SACD mode. It's clear, though, that this is a well-sorted player with no obvious vices.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >> +10%
- 2] Jitter >> +20%
- 3] Linearity >> +20%
- 4] Dynamic range >> +30%
- 5] Digital filter >> +30%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Maximum output level	2.1V	2.1V
Total harmonic distortion	0.002%	0.0008%
Signal-to-noise ratio	111dB	107dB

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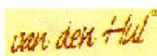
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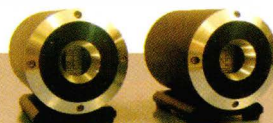
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## MICROMEGA CD132

*Micromega used to lead the CD field. Can the French still cut it?*

The case of this French-made player is more than a little reminiscent of the firm's old Minium CD player, but the electronic design is – we're assured – all new. Well, mostly new. Features retained from earlier models include the Philips CD-Audio transport, which loads discs swiftly and makes less mechanical noise than the CD-ROM transports used by many.

It's what comes after the transport that's new and, indeed, to some extent a new take on a well-established technology. Upsampling has been popular for some time now, but Micromega has conducted its own investigations and come to two interesting conclusions: first, upsampling works best when there is an integer ratio between input and output frequencies, and second, that integer should be an odd number. Integer upsampling looks like old-fashioned oversampling, but the chip used to do it is different, and odd-number oversampling is completely novel (we think).

Micromega has gone to some lengths to minimise jitter in this player, to the extent of mounting the main crystal oscillator physically on top of the upsampling chip, keeping wide lengths to millimetres. That apart, the design springs few surprises, with a high-performance modern DAC chip from Analog Devices, well-respected op-amps and good quality passive components. The player uses an R-core mains transformer, commonly used for its low cost but claimed by Micromega to offer performance advantages in this application. Some lateral thinking has led to the hijacking of filters intended for mains inputs being used in the low voltage filtering chain. This helps to reduce electrical nasties in the power supply.

### SOUND QUALITY

It's become a habit to present at least one unit in each *Ultimate Group Test* twice to check the 'blind' listening panel's consistency, and on this occasion the result was intriguing. There's usually the odd discrepancy, but this time the



comments simply seemed to refer to different aspects of the player's performance. On its first outing, the CD132 gave an impression of good, strong bass but compromised dynamics, and maybe a little veiling, too. The second time it was thought particularly involving, with great foot-tapping potential and just a trace of hardness in the treble. No actual contradiction there, but very different overall impressions.

That could be partly due to what was heard immediately before, and perhaps partly to external factors of all kinds. Still, the comments are surely not without validity, and our sighted listening later helped make some sense of them. Bass is a strength, with both depth and control, making this a very apt player for such tricky instruments as plucked double bass. Treble is pretty good, on the whole clean and open but inclined to close in a little when the music gets complex and loud. Detail, however, is somewhat behind the best that can be found – not badly behind, but that does tend to put a degree of emotional distance between performers and listener.

That's a shame, because the basics here are not at all bad and the player is certainly a fuss-free and efficient package. But if you really want to hear the utmost from, and within, your CD collection you may be better off looking beyond this. **HFC**

### VERDICT

**SOUND >> 81%**



**FEATURES >> 80%**



**BUILD >> 83%**

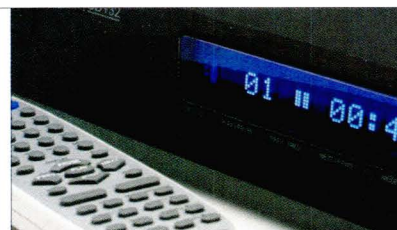


**VALUE >> 83%**



Tonally this is a fine player, with notably good bass that offers both depth and control, but there's a lack of detail that reduces the overall effectiveness and veils performances from the listener.

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

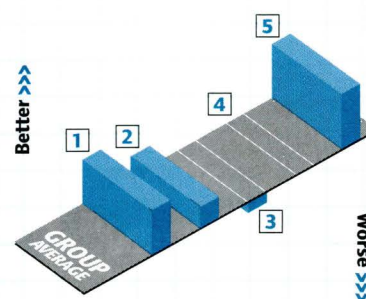


### LAB REPORT

Vying with the Marantz for the best set of measurements, the CD132 offers few clues as to what our listeners found amiss with it. Midband distortion is excellent and high-frequency distortion even slightly better, an amazing 0.0006% which must surely count as 'academic'. Jitter is barely measurable and for audio signals below 20kHz the ultrasonic band is as clean as the proverbial whistle, aliases all below -100dB.

Once again, signals above 20kHz do produce aliasing, albeit at a slightly lower level than with the other players in the group. Noise is low and the linearity, while below the excellent average of the group, is still fine at 0.2dB error on a -100dB tone – it's hard to believe that's audible. Perhaps some arcane property of the upsampling filter is having an insidious effect that's hard to measure: otherwise, we can only commend a fine set of measurements, here.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >> +40%
- 2] Jitter >> +20%
- 3] Linearity >> -10%
- 4] Dynamic range >> 0%
- 5] Digital filter >> +50%

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Maximum output level	2.0V	2.1V
Total harmonic distortion	0.001%	0.0007%
Signal-to-noise ratio	100dB	105dB

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## PRIMARE CD21

*Primare's 'budget' player looks like a well-built beauty*

This is Primare's budget CD player, and while you have to have a pretty dedicated high-end vision to describe 800 quid's-worth of CD (only) player as 'budget', there's no denying that you do get something that looks well worth the money, and more. From its stainless steel pushbuttons to the very rare AES/EBU balanced digital output, this player does go the extra mile to meet audiophile expectations.

It's bulky, for sure, but the proportions and details make it look less threatening than it might. Most of the weight is the case, which is made from steel in some places and aluminium in others, including the thick front panel. Beneath the lid sits a DVD transport, a model we've seen in a few players already; it's not the quietest in the world mechanically, but Primare's solid case keeps the noise in.

From the transport, data passes via a 'digital input receiver' chip to a pair of high-grade DACs, connected in a distortion-cancelling, push-pull configuration to optimise performance. They, and the op-amp output circuits, are powered by an R-core mains transformer feeding an array of power regulators – Primare sets great store by careful handling of the power supply arrangements.

Apart from the balanced digital output already mentioned, a couple of other unusual sockets appear at the back: an RS232 (D-type) connector for use with home automation and diagnostic/software upgrade equipment, and a phone jack "for future use". Operation of the player takes a little getting used to, especially the 'open' function which requires a long press – sensible enough, really. The CD21 is also available in black.

### SOUND QUALITY

Our listeners found themselves wishing they could be more complimentary about this player, but attempts at praise always seemed to end up as "quite nice" or "inoffensive" or some such term. More specifically, it's a direct,



immediate-sounding player with plenty of punch. Good so far – but the punch was consistently thought excessive, "in yer face" and on occasion downright harsh. That, of course, is in music that actually has some punch. More lyrical, melodious stuff seems to lack interest and verges on the bland, while bright sounds like Miles Davis' trumpet tend to shout.

That's not to say that there are no positive aspects. Image presentation is good, with clear and consistent placement of individual instruments, at least on the width axis. Depth is slightly less assured, but even here the position of instruments at least stays consistent no matter what the dynamic, which is certainly commendable. It's the tone of the instruments that's the questionable part, and the listener who enjoyed this player the most still queried how natural it sounds on more than one occasion.

After the panel members had left, we were able to warm to this player a little more, finding a certain warmth in its presentation which seems to grow on one over rather longer timespans than the blind listening allowed. But reservations over its tonal honesty remain and it would be hard to argue that, in the end, it offers anything in performance terms over its rival models in the group. **HFC**

**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 80%**

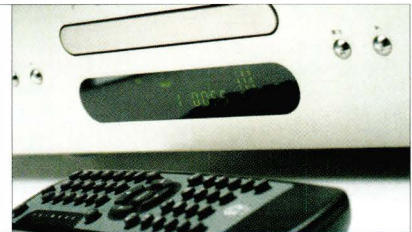
**FEATURES >> 85%**

**BUILD >> 90%**

**VALUE >> 82%**

This beautifully built CD player appears to be a very tempting package for the money, but while its sound is not without virtue, its tonality is suspect. Not the best product in Primare's mostly excellent range.

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



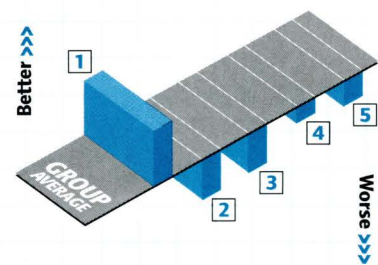
### LAB REPORT

With distortion figures comfortably bettering 0.001% at any frequency, that aspect at least of the CD21's performance would appear to be beyond reproach. An average noise performance by modern standards will be very slightly compromised in practice by jitter that is just a little higher than the best in the group. Two areas where performance falls slightly are linearity and digital filtering.

It's rare these days to find linearity errors of any reliably measurable size, but this player gave an error of 0.4dB (about 4%) at -100dB output, which may be just enough to contribute a little uncertainty to the sound.

The filtering shows the same characteristic as the other players of failing to prevent aliasing above 20kHz, but even at 20kHz there is still a touch of ultrasonic breakthrough. It's doubtful, though, whether that's sufficient to be a problem, especially under real-world conditions.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >> +50%
- 2] Jitter >> -30%
- 3] Linearity >> -30%
- 4] Dynamic range >> -10%
- 5] Digital filter >> -15%

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Maximum output level	2.0V	2.05V
Total harmonic distortion	0.01%	0.0006%
Signal-to-noise ratio	105dB	104dB

**“ Music is the art which is most nigh to tears and memory ”**

Oscar Wilde

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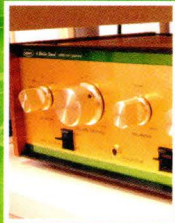
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# SONY SCD-XA3000ES

Can a multichannel player cut it against the best of stereo CD?

These days, £800 is upmarket for Sony, especially as the firm's cheapest SACD players are now well below £200. But, in fairness, the SCD-XA3000ES looks the part. It's by some margin the best-specified player in this group: for a start, it's the only one to offer multichannel SACD replay, with full 5.1 channel output plus separate sockets for stereo. You get the usual set-up options for multichannel and – since most SACD discs have both multichannel and stereo versions on the disc, in addition to the CD layer – there's plenty of scope for fiddling!

The transport appears to be Sony's own, and it is followed by a DAC from Texas Instruments that handles both CD and DSD flavours of audio – Sony seems to have given up on producing its own chips for this kind of application. Output stages use a common audio op-amp and decent quality passive components. A pair of R-core mains transformers and plentiful power supply regulators help to ensure that the large case is pretty well filled up.

Operation of this player is on the whole rather nicer than the others, not least due to the typical Sony 'jog knob' which makes selecting high-numbered tracks a breeze (though scan buttons on the front would have been nice). The smart display is the only one in this group to show CD Text – all SACD players can display SACD Text and it seems little short of cussed when CD Text is neglected.

## SOUND QUALITY

'Middling plus' would probably sum up our listening panel's reactions to this Sony's CD replay quite fairly. In no area was this machine felt outstanding, but it never received more than mild criticism and was well liked for several aspects of its performance. There seemed to be some disagreement over its bass: one listener found it nicely strong while another thought it rather recessed. Further investigation showed that, as sometimes happens, the bass



varies rather depending on what's happening in the music, becoming a little dry and tuneless when a lot's going on but sounding a lot fuller when textures are sparse. Accordingly, listener reaction will vary depending on your tastes and what you listen for.

Soundstaging is generally good, but the presentation is a little forward. This places images nearer the listener than reference replay kit suggests they should be; they are also slightly compressed in the depth direction but there is certainly plenty of width on offer, with good separation, too. Detail is just a shade behind the best in the group, but not by any means bad, with plenty of discrimination between instruments. Tonally, the midrange is neutral and the treble just a touch bright, which can occasionally lead to some harshness in music that is already on the bright side.

This player differed from the two other SACD machines in offering a significantly more detailed sound from the SACD layer of discs. Treble sounds a touch mellower from SACD (see lab report) and the bass is more assured in complex music. That, plus the multichannel replay, makes this Sony the SACD player of choice this side of £1,500. It's a decent player with CD, but with SACD it's excellent. **HFC**

## VERDICT

SOUND >>> 85%

FEATURES >>> 92%

BUILD >>> 89%

VALUE >>> 90%

This Sony isn't quite the best CD player in the group, but with SACD – in stereo or multichannel – it's top of the class. If you're serious about SACD, this is an excellent choice, and superb value for money.

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

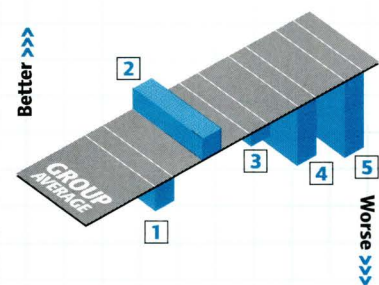


## LAB REPORT

It's hard to think it deeply significant, but SACD replay shows a very small (about 0.2dB) lift in the high treble compared with CD. In the ultrasonic region, by contrast, response is curved downwards above about 50kHz, cutting the level of ultrasonic noise by a significant 5dB compared with the Marantz – it's still pretty high, though, at -39dB.

In CD terms, replay performance is good despite the player not being one of the most fancied in the group subjectively. Distortion is a hardly shocking 0.002%, linearity error a borderline-measurable 0.2dB at -100dB and noise a respectable -102dB. The one area where there is definitely room for improvement is the digital filtering, which allows aliasing of only -55dB to appear when playing a 20kHz tone; in general, ultrasonic signals are around -80dB, which is probably adequate. Output level is a little below the current average, but overall the Sony delivers a perfectly respectable set of measurements.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Distortion >>> -20%
- 2] Jitter >>> +20%
- 3] Linearity >>> -10%
- 4] Dynamic range >>> -40%
- 5] Digital filter >>> -50%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Maximum output level	2.0V	1.9V
Total harmonic distortion	0.0019%	0.0018%
Signal-to-noise ratio	99dB	102dB

# CONCLUSIONS

Is SACD the audiophile's choice, or is money better spent on good 'old' CD replay?

The introduction of SACD players into one of our CD group tests has clearly shown that they need no special pleading when judged as players of the 'old' discs – which will, in practice, form the greater part of their workload.

Bearing in mind experiences with recent groups and solo reviews, these six machines seem to be quite closely matched in performance with no vastly outstanding winner... and certainly no loser. Not for the first time, we feel moved to point out that both subjective and measured results are of a thoroughly modern

standard and few digital sources of five or more years ago would have come out of this test with anything like full honours.

Let's take the Primare first. On the whole, we're huge fans of this company's products – particularly the amps – but the CD21 fails to challenge the best at the price. It's beautifully presented and thoughtfully specified, but the sound just doesn't quite stack up.

Micromega's intriguing CD132 likewise offers bits of the puzzle but can't quite put them all together. With the Primare's resolution and the Micromega's tonality, we might be on to something!

In a sense, cousins they may be, but the Denon and Marantz SACD offerings are internally very different animals. Sonically, though, there's some common ground. In the end, we found the Marantz the more assured and more emotionally involving, but both have impressive manners and few obvious flaws. If SACD is your thing, though, do bear in mind that neither has any kind of multichannel capability.

Cyrus continues to do its thing in its own size and shape, and while the more costly CD8x (see *HFC* 270) can do things the CD6s can't, there's a lot to recommend the latter. Most obviously, it's lively

and energetic, involving the listener and repaying sustained attention with good detail and natural tonal qualities.

Finally, Sony's SCD-XA3000ES sets itself apart on the features front by including multichannel SACD. Despite the added complication, though, stereo performance seems hardly compromised and the player offers good CD sound with just an occasional touch of treble harshness. On CD replay alone it's a shade behind the likes of the Cyrus and Marantz models, but with SACD it's top of the class – an impressive way to achieve the best of both stereo and multichannel music. **HFC**

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## HINTS AND TIPS

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

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

direct line of fire of the speakers. Keeping them out of earshot helps too.

» Do try both CD and SACD layers of hybrid discs.

» Switch off your CD player's display, if possible, while listening – it often subtly improves sound.

## CD PLAYERS AT A GLANCE

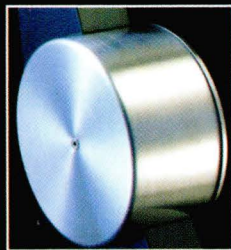
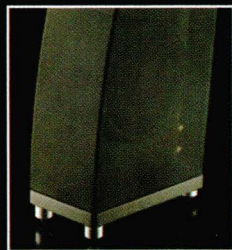


MAKE MODEL	Cyrus CD6s	Denon DCD-2000AE	Marantz SA-15 S1	Micromega CD132	Primare CD21	Sony SCD-XA3000ES
<b>PRICE</b>	£650	£1,200	£1,200	£699	£800	£800
<b>SOUND</b>						
<b>FEATURES</b>						
<b>BUILD</b>						
<b>VALUE</b>						
<b>OVERALL</b>						
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	Small, efficient and engaging, with plenty of energy and just the smallest lack of detail.	A light, bright performer that needs careful partnering to make the most of its musical insight.	Some sonic similarities to the Denon player, but a little more assurance and solidity gives it the edge.	Tonally excellent, but a persistent lack of detail spoils the party.	Presentation can be unduly forward and there's a touch of hardness in the sound. Good body and detail, though.	Good, if not great, with CD, but a class-leader with SACD – and multichannel too. A fine and flexible musical all-rounder.
<b>KEY FEATURES</b>						
<b>ELECTRICAL DIG O/P</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>OPTICAL DIG O/P</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<b>CD-RW</b>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<b>CD TEXT</b>	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
<b>BALANCED O/P</b>	No	No	No	No	No	No
<b>LAB CONCLUSIONS</b> E = EXCELLENT • G = GOOD • A = AVERAGE • P = POOR						
<b>DISTORTION</b>	0.006% <b>G</b>	0.002% <b>G</b>	0.0008% <b>E</b>	0.0007% <b>E</b>	0.0006% <b>E</b>	0.0018% <b>G</b>
<b>JITTER</b>	0.16ns <b>G</b>	<0.12ns <b>E</b>	<0.12ns <b>E</b>	<0.12ns <b>E</b>	0.15ns <b>G</b>	<0.12ns <b>E</b>
<b>LINEARITY</b>	<0.1dB <b>E</b>	<0.1dB <b>E</b>	<0.1dB <b>E</b>	0.2dB <b>G</b>	0.4dB <b>A</b>	0.2dB <b>G</b>
<b>S/N RATIO</b>	106dB <b>G</b>	108dB <b>E</b>	107dB <b>E</b>	105dB <b>G</b>	104dB <b>G</b>	102dB <b>A</b>
<b>STOPBAND REJECTION</b>	-80dB <b>A</b>	-75dB <b>A</b>	-100dB <b>G</b>	-110dB <b>E</b>	-82dB <b>A</b>	-55dB <b>P</b>

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# nonconformist

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

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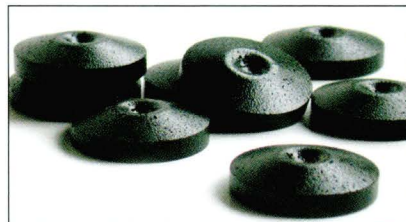
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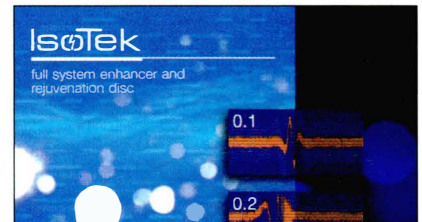
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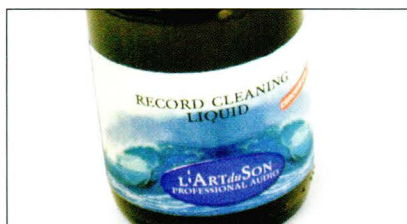
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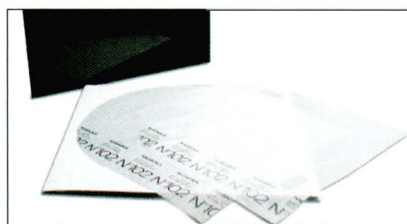
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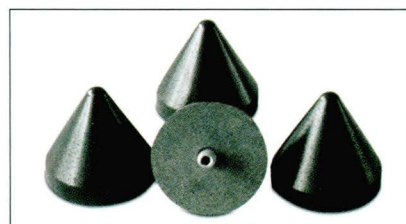
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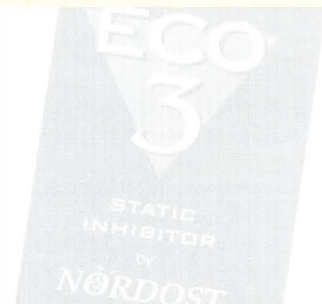
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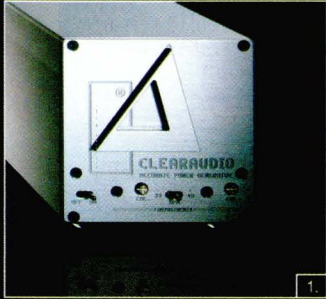


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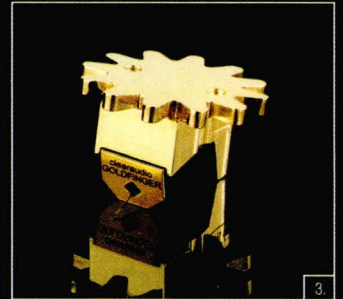
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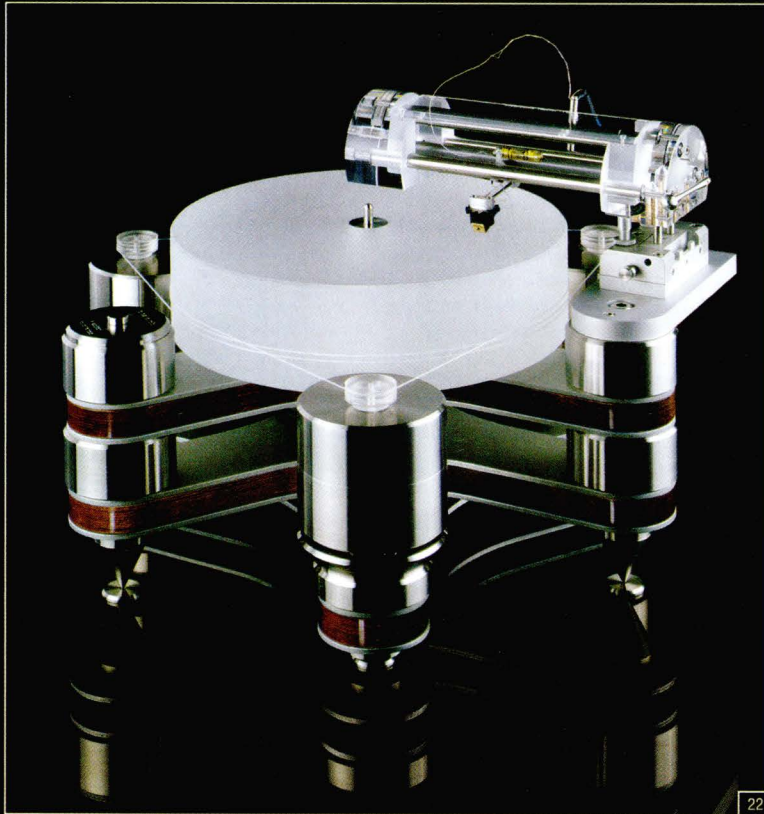
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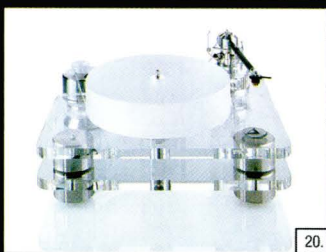
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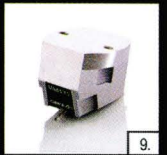
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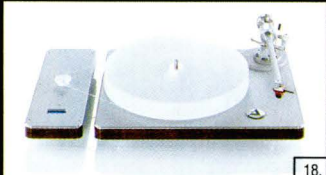
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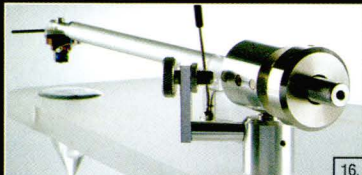
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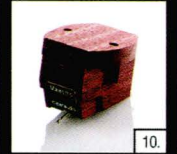
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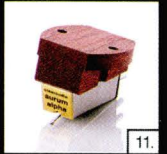
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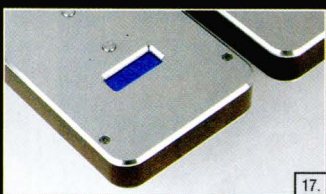
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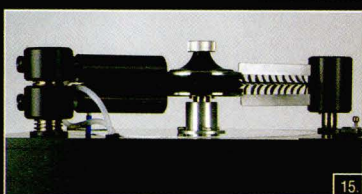
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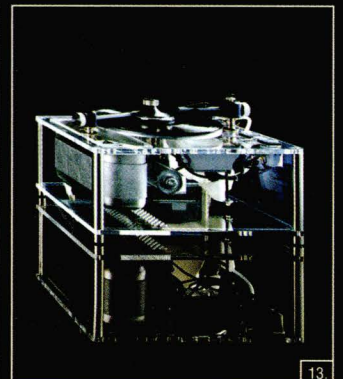
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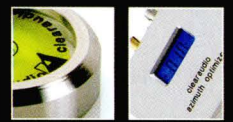


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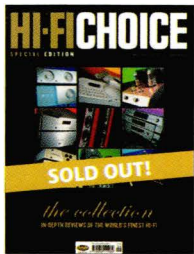
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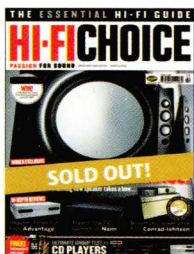
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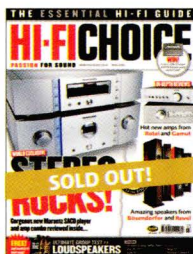
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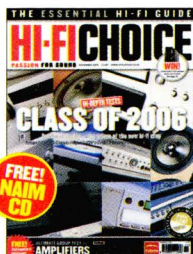
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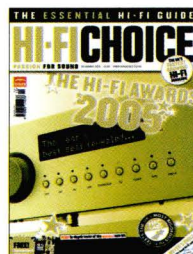
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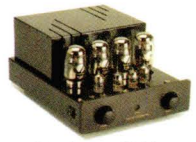
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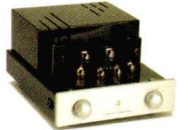
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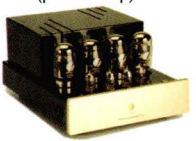
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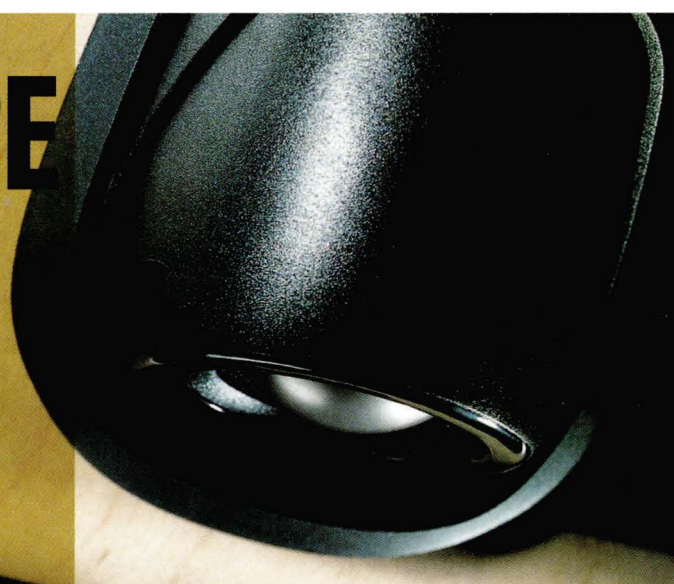
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# HI-FI CHOICE BUYER'S BIBLE



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 considered for inclusion 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



### Cambridge Audio Azur 640C v2 £250

The old 640C was a fantastic low-cost CD player, and its new 'v2' replacement is even better – an extraordinarily graceful and dynamic-sounding player for the money.



### Cyrus CD8x £1,000

The latest diminutive CD spinner from Cyrus is an absolute stunner. Highly detailed and supremely musical, it's more than a match for many more outwardly exotic machines.

## Our favourite CD PLAYERS

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

### Audio-only CD and SACD players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS							ISSUE NUMBER
				SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	CD-RW COMPATIBLE	CD TEXT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>											
<b>BB</b>	Arcam DIVA CD73T	400	Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic – a finely judged balance for budget to mid-price systems	●	●	●	●				247
<b>BB</b>	Arcam DIVA CD192	850	Beautifully built, well featured player with clear, open and involving sound	●	●	●	●				264
	Cambridge Azur 540C v2	200	Not quite up the standard of the 640C v2, but still an awful lot of CD player for the money	●	●						275
	Cambridge Azur 640C v2	250	Does most things extremely well and has a remarkably good sense of poise for the money		●	●					274
	Consonance CD120	795	Fine performance in all areas with the possible exception of slight treble harshness		●				●		269
<b>BB</b>	Cyrus CD8x	1,000	Impressive mix of detail, musicality, analysis and appearance. Even better with the PSX-R power supply (£400)	●	●						270
<b>BB</b>	Exposure 2010 S	599	Highly communicative sounds with good bass, though not always the most analytical	●	●	●					264
<b>BB</b>	Marantz CD7300	350	Astonishingly capable sub-£500 player with effortless bass, detailed mid and treble and vast soundstages	●	●	●	●		●		250
<b>BB</b>	Naim CD5i	825	As idiosyncratic as ever, but sonically the CD5i is the definitive player at the price				●				259
<b>BB</b>	Roksan Kandy MkIIID	650	Clean, tidy and expressive player – a more than worthwhile improvement on previous versions								259
<b>BB</b>	Sony SCD-XA3000ES	800	A revised and refined version of the SCD-XA333ES that provides an almost holographic SACD sound	●	●	●	●	●			248
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>											
<b>BB</b>	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
	Audia Flight CD One	4,500	Sumptuously built toploader capable of real world dynamics with great recordings. Two digital inputs		●				●		269
<b>EC</b>	Ayre CX-7 CD Player	2,950	Superbly built and natural sounding player that will win you over with its range of capabilities and transparency		●		●		●		251
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	Krell SACD Standard	4,244	A landmark SACD player and an excellent CD player at what by Krell standards is a relatively affordable price	●	●	●	●	●			251
<b>EC</b>	Lindemann 820	6,999	Stereo SACD player with sumptuous build and sound, onboard analogue volume control and multiple digital inputs	●	●				●	●	262
<b>BB</b>	Marantz SA-11S1	2,000	A stereo player for audiophiles – lack of DVD and multichannel SACD lead to subtle, highly focussed sound	●	●	●	●	●			265
	Meridian G07	1,595	Immaculately conceived and executed player with a softly-spoken voice. Needs careful system matching		●	●	●		●		259
<b>EC</b>	Meridian 808i Signature	8,250	Stunning CD player with added preamp functions. Versatile and quite delightful		●	●	●	●		●	263
<b>BB</b>	Myryad MXC6000	1,400	A highly listenable player with excellent tonal balance and very fine detail		●		●				270
<b>BB</b>	Naim CD5x	1,450	A genuinely engaging CD player with remarkable musical grip and coherence								264
<b>EC</b>	Naim CDX2	2,800	Fine quality one-box CD player, but its best feature is upgradeability via outboard XPS supply				●				238
	Orelle CD100evo2	1,299	Relaxed, but strong on refinement and detail. An intelligent choice, particularly strong with acoustic music		●	●	●				259
	Primare CD31	1,500	A well made player that may not appeal to timing freaks but does lovely things with large musical forces		●	●	●		●		270
<b>EC</b>	Resolution Audio Opus 21	2,850	Dynamic, well timed and 3D performance with an analogue volume control and digital input for a second source				●		●	●	244
<b>BB</b>	Sugden CD21SE	1,395	Delivers its particularly musical touch brilliantly and warrants the attention of all true music lovers		●						271
<b>BB</b>	Shanling CD-T100	1,650	Stunning-looking player that offers various operating modes: in any, sound is clear and assured		●				●	●	270
<b>EC</b>	Wadia 302	3,999	A dynamic and gripping player, with bass to die for and resolution to change your listening habits		●	●	●		●	●	253
<b>EC</b>	Wadia 861se	9,995	Stunning player with a full digital preamp and an all-revealing sound that'll keep you up all night		●	●	●		●	●	256

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



**Copland CDA823** £1,750

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



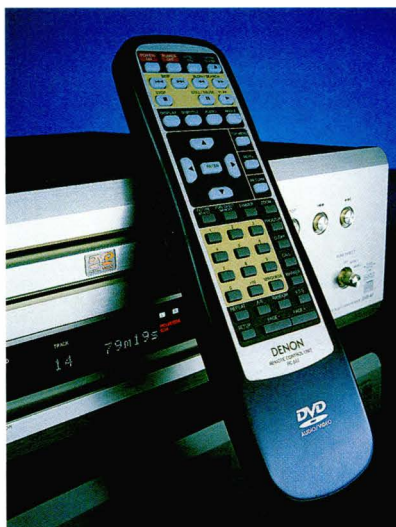
**Resolution Audio Opus 21** £2,850

This player is king of subtlety. Outwardly, the music sounds dynamic and well-scaled, but it's the level of inner detail resolved here that is truly outstanding.

# DVD PLAYERS

*Disc players for audio and video*

➤ DVD has proved a phenomenal success in commercial terms and has virtually extinguished the market for budget CD players – you can't really beat a multiformat player when it comes to features. Early DVD players were not particularly good CD spinners because of the enormous amount of RF interference produced by video circuits, but as this problem has been identified manufacturers have begun to tackle it. Nowadays, most DVD players are competent CD players and a few are very good – often as not they are the ones that play DVD-Audio discs as well. The great advantage of DVD is that it offers sufficient capacity to hold a feature length movie or music concert *and* discrete multichannel sound on a disc the size of a CD. In the case of plain DVD-Video discs, the audio is encoded in either the Dolby Digital or DTS format, both of which use 'lossy' compression to fit the audio onto the disc alongside the video data. You can use



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

## Q&A

### WHICH AUDIO OUTPUTS GIVE THE BEST QUALITY?

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

### WHICH VIDEO OUTPUTS GIVE THE BEST QUALITY?

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

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

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

### DO I NEED PROGRESSIVE SCAN VIDEO?

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

## DVD-AUDIO

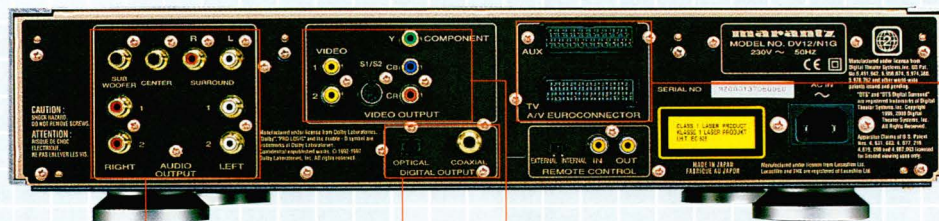
DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player.

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

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



## CONNECTIONS



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

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

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

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

## Our favourite DVD PLAYERS

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

### Audio/Video disc players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					ISSUE NUMBER	
				DVD-A COMPATIBLE	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET		
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>										
<b>BB</b>	Arcam DiVA DV78	700	Imagine almost all of the DV88 Plus at a knock-down price. Top picture and sound performance for the money	●	●	●	●	●		254
	Cambridge Audio Azur 540D	200	Very respectable and well presented DVD-Audio player at a knockdown price	●	●	●	●	●		257
<b>BB</b>	Denon DVD-2910	600	Denon's entry-level universal player lives in the shadow of the '3910, especially on CD, but is a fine overall model	●	●	●	●	●		262
<b>BB</b>	Denon DVD-3910	900	Exceptionally well-specified universal player with a performance to match. A true class-leader	●	●	●	●	●		260
<b>BB</b>	Marantz DV7600	600	A mid-market cracker, with sound and picture quality that generally exceeds expectations	●	●	●	●	●		274
<b>BB</b>	Philips DVP9000S	400	Philips proves it hasn't lost its touch with mid market DVD players. Includes SACD and HDMI for quality video, and it's a star	●	●	●	●	●		274
	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
<b>BB</b>	Pioneer DV-868AVi	1,000	State of the art universal player with next-gen digital outputs – HDMI for video and i.Link for high-resolution audio	●	●	●	●	●		252
	Sony DVP-NS9100ES	1,000	Video playback is foremost, with the i.Link delivering significantly better sound than the analogue counterparts					●	●	274
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>										
<b>EC</b>	Advantage S12.3	9,350	Adaptable ultra-high grade player with built-in preamp functionality that can be extended further. Unusually strong with CD	●	●	●	●	●		264
<b>BB</b>	Arcam FMJ DV29	1,600	An excellent DVD player, very fine with both CD and DVD-Audio music discs and superb in its video role	●	●	●	●	●		263
	Cyrus DVD8	1,200	An impressive step up from the DVD7+, which includes component video outputs			●	●	●		238
<b>EC</b>	Denon DVD-A1XV	2,500	Sophisticated universal player with state of the art video processing, high class disc replay, especially SACD	●	●	●	●	●		266
<b>EC</b>	Linn Unidisk SC	2,995	Groundbreaking universal player with built-in preamplifier, with excellent picture for home cinema and sound for hi-fi	●	●	●	●	●		259
<b>EC</b>	Meridian G98AH	3,625	Meridian's most widely compatible G-Series DVD player – groundbreaking DVD-Audio replay and a fine CD player too	●		●	●	●		265
<b>EC</b>	Naim DVD5	2,565	Naim's first DVD player is a real success, notable for its class-leading sound with CD and (optional) multichannel DVD-Audio	●						263
<b>EC</b>	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



### Philips DVP9000S £400

An attractive and well designed DVD player with a great picture and good CD/SACD sound.



### Marantz DV7600 £600

A universal player that's strong with all formats, including music on CD/SACD/DVD-A.



### Arcam FMJ DV29 £1,600

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



### Meridian G98AH £3,625

A digital *tour de force* – as exceptional with both audio and video as you'd expect.

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<b>Arcam DV89</b> DVD-A Player New (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1299.00)	<b>£479.00</b>	<b>Linn 5103</b> AV Processor - Black (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(4500.00)	<b>£950.00</b>
<b>Arcam AVR 200</b> AV Receiver (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(799.00)	<b>£399.00</b>	<b>Linn Majik</b> Amplifier - Blk S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(945.00)	<b>£375.00</b>
<b>Arcam DT81</b> DAB Digital Tuner (2 Yr G/tee) . . . . .(649.00)	<b>£299.00</b>	<b>Linn LK100</b> Power amplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(650.00)	<b>£375.00</b>
<b>Arcam FMJ CD33</b> CD Player (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1349.00)	<b>£845.00</b>	<b>Linn 2250</b> Power Amplifier Silver (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1995.00)	<b>£1195.00</b>
<b>Arcam Alpha 7</b> CD Player (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(349.00)	<b>£129.00</b>	<b>Linn Trikan</b> Centre Spkr - Maple (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(495.00)	<b>£249.00</b>
<b>AVI S21</b> Lab Series CD Player (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1400.00)	<b>£849.00</b>	<b>Naim 112</b> Preamplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(660.00)	<b>£425.00</b>
<b>AVI Pro 9</b> Speakers - Cherry (S/H) (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(799.00)	<b>£399.00</b>	<b>Naim NAC102</b> Preamplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1175.00)	<b>£499.00</b>
<b>B&amp;W CM2</b> Speakers Rosenut (S/H) (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(550.00)	<b>£295.00</b>	<b>Naim NAP 180</b> Power Amplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(1200.00)	<b>£695.00</b>
<b>Denon AVR 3805</b> AV Amplifier (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(999.00)	<b>£499.00</b>	<b>Naim NAC82</b> Preamplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(2400.00)	<b>£1195.00</b>
<b>KEF KHT 1005</b> Sub - Sat System (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(299.00)	<b>£199.00</b>	<b>Rotel RA-01</b> Amplifier (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(249.00)	<b>£159.00</b>
<b>KEF Q4</b> Speakers (Cherry) (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .(399.00)	<b>£199.00</b>	<b>REL Q100e</b> Sub Woofer S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(559.00)	<b>£199.00</b>
<b>Linn Unidisk SC</b> Mformat Player Silver (2Yr G/tee) (2995.00)	<b>£2249.00</b>	<b>Sugden A21a</b> Amplifier (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(945.00)	<b>£659.00</b>
<b>Linn Kairn Phono</b> Preamplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(2200.00)	<b>£795.00</b>	<b>Yamaha HD1300</b> H/Disk CD Player (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .(599.00)	<b>£429.00</b>

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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	SPEEDS	SPECIFICATIONS			
					SUSP. SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	ISSUE NUMBER
🏆	Avid Diva	1,100	A solid and powerful sounding deck with fine build, requires a smooth, relaxed cartridge for best results	33/45	●			247
👑	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
👑	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
🏆	Clearaudio Champion	1,365	Smart, practical and good-sounding, with impressively 'dead' arm. Isolation recommended	33/45			●	268
👑	Clearaudio Ambient	4,220	Innovative use of materials leads to a fast, precise and thrilling sound (tonearm extra)	33/45		●	●	271
🏆	Goldring GR2	265	Nicely finished Rega-manufactured deck with RB250 arm and an open, engaging sound quality	33/45			●	266
🏆	Michell Gyro SE	1,058	New DC motor-equipped Gyro offers great looks and even better sound. Price includes RB300 arm	33/45	●		●	239
👑	Michell Orbe SE	2,015	A superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price. Now features new DC motor	33/45	●			235
🏆	Michell Tecnodec	767	Simple and smartly understated, performs above expectations – full-bodied and highly detailed	33/45			●	268
	NAD C 555	250	A good budget turntable with plenty of potential for cartridge upgrades. Shames many comparable CD players	33/45			●	271
🏆	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
🏆	Pro-Ject 1 Xpression	210	Well designed and executed budget deck with an entertaining and revealing sound	33/45			●	248
🏆	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
	Rega P3/RB300	298	Updated Planar 3, building on the strengths of the P2 with added subtlety and detail	33/45			●	214
🏆	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
🏆	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
👑	Rega P9/RB1000	2,498	Exceptionally elegant hi-tech player with complex outboard supply, ceramic platter and wonderful RB1000 tonearm	33/45		●	●	228
🏆	Roksan Radius 5/Nima	850	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation (acrylic version tested)	33/45	●		●	248
👑	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
👑	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V/309 hybrid arm	33/45	●	●	●	195
👑	SME Model 20.2A	5,274	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	33/45/78	●	●	●	186
👑	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	MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	ISSUE NUMBER
🏆	Cartridge Man MM III	625	The MM III challenges MCs at twice the price, it produces detail, space and energy and has stunning resolve in the right arm	●			266
	Grado Prestige Black	40	Offers admirable detail and treble extension, with good bass and ambience too	●		●	214
🏆	Grado Prestige Gold	110	Produces rich, open and expansive music with the minimum of fuss	●		●	235
👑	Lyra Helikon	1,095	Highly capable and highly neutral, this is a cartridge for all seasons, albeit fussy about vinyl quality	●			215
🏆	Sumiko Blue Point Spec Evo III	239	High output MC with refinement at high frequencies and a nimble, articulate and revealing sound		●		270
🏆	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
👑	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
👑	van den Hul Condor XCM	2,400	A stunning cartridge with stereo imaging, dynamics and detail resolution to die for		●		265
👑	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	MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	AOL GAIN	AOL IMPEDANCE	ISSUE NUMBER
	Clearaudio Smart-Phono	250	Minute and very practical unit with slightly bright, but very detailed and low-noise, sound	●	●			268
🏆	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
🏆	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
👑	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
🏆	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.

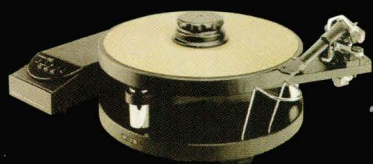
**CARTRIDGE SPECS KEY** **MM** Moving magnet cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type. **MC** Moving coil cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type.

**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



Series IV



Series V



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## PINEWOOD

## MUSIC

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darTZeel

mimetism

sonus faber

wilson audio

martin logan

audio research

unison research

synergistic research

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transparent

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## AUDIO RESEARCH CD7

The Pinewood Music Company

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Mobile: 07860 351113

e-mail: [brianriv@mac.com](mailto:brianriv@mac.com)

# 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 FM/AM tuners, with great sound and features.



#### Denon TU-1800DAB £250

Combines DAB with FM/AM reception and good all-round design at a tempting price.



#### 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

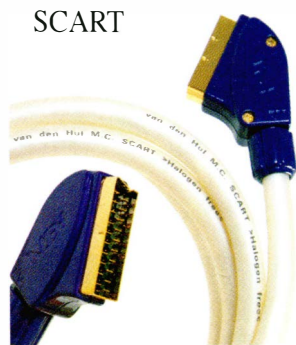
### FM & DAB HI-FI SEPARATES

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				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
	Magnum Dynalab MD 90T	1,195	No remote or presets as standard, manual everything and valves... but its sound is simply sublime	FM	opt		opt	●	●	257
	Magnum Dynalab MD 102	2,200	Superb remote control analogue FM tuner delivers a superbly transparent sound that makes radio fun	FM	5		●	●	●	241
	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity	FM,M	30	●		●		250
	Primare T21	600	A very fine tuner – bass and treble are both well extended and detail is excellent	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
	Denon TU-1800DAB	250	DAB reception is as good as any and FM performance clearly benefits from Denon's long experience	DAB,FM,M	200	●	●	●	●	274
	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.



HDMI



SCART

SOURCE



ANALOG

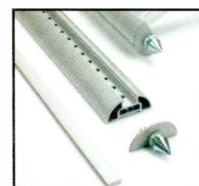
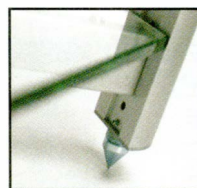
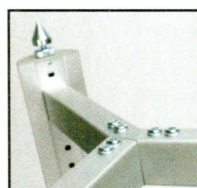


VIDEO

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## When detail matters.....



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Henley Designs, serious about sound!

 Henley Designs 01235 511166  
[www.henleydesigns.co.uk](http://www.henleydesigns.co.uk)

# 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			
				DECKS	HD CAPACITY (GB)	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS
<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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">BEST BUY</span>	Marantz DR6000	400	No frills, but in its fundamentals this is one of the finest CD recorders on the market	1		● ●	233
	NAD C660	500	Audiophile twin deck offering high-speed copying, HDCD replay and notably fine recording from analogue	2		● ●	243
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">BEST BUY</span>	Philips CDR802	300	Tacky looks and build notwithstanding, this is a well-equipped and technically sound 3-to-1 autochanger/recorder at a good price	2		● ●	233
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">EDITOR'S CHOICE</span>	Philips CDR951	380	An improvement on previous models, it delivers the musical goods in some style	1		● ●	205
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">BEST BUY</span>	Pioneer PDR-609	270	Classic CD recorder with outstandingly good sound for the money on both record and replay	1		● ●	243
	Pioneer PDR-W839	350	Good-quality twin CD burner makes recordings that can be hard to distinguish from the original. Good value too	1		● ●	218
<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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 1px;">BEST BUY</span>	Yamaha CDR-HD1300	600	Superb combination of high-speed CD-RW drive and hard disk, adding editing flexibility to CD recording	2	80	● ●	243

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

# SEVENOAKS

## SOUND & VISION

### Winter Sale

STARTS 17 DECEMBER 2005

Save up to 25%  
in our fabulous Winter Sale

For information on all the latest offers, visit [www.ssav.com](http://www.ssav.com) or call your nearest store on Freephone 0800 587 9909

### Christmas & Sunday Opening

Many of our stores are open on Sundays during December and January.

For up-to-date information, please call your local store or visit our website.

#### SUNDAY 18th DECEMBER

MOST STORES OPEN

#### CHRISTMAS DAY

ALL STORES CLOSED - HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

#### BOXING DAY

ALL STORES CLOSED

#### NEW YEAR'S DAY

ALL STORES CLOSED - HAPPY NEW YEAR!

#### SUNDAY 8th JANUARY

MOST STORES OPEN

Due to local variations, please call your local store or visit our website to verify opening hours before travelling.



### 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.



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
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 TURNTABLE OVER £100  
PROJECT DDBT II

### Roksan

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

### 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.

#### 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."

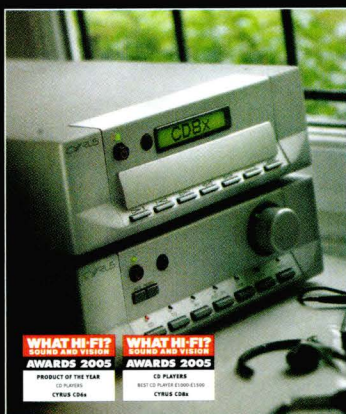
WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
★★★★★  
SEPTEMBER 2005



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
SUBWOOFERS  
BEST SUBWOOFER OVER £100  
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  
B&W MT-30



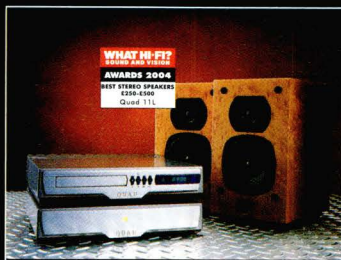
WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
CD PLAYER  
CYRUS CDB4

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
CD PLAYERS  
BEST CD PLAYER UNDER £1000  
CYRUS CDB4

### 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.





**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2004  
BEST STEREO SPEAKERS  
£200-£500  
Quad 111

## Quad

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



i-Deck

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
BEST AV RECEIVERS & RECORDERS  
MONITOR AUDIO I-DECK

## 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.



Silver RS1

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
★★★★★  
OCTOBER 2005

## 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.



Silver RS6 AV Package

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
BEST AV RECEIVERS & RECORDERS  
MONITOR AUDIO RS6 AV



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
RADIO  
BEST HI-FI DIGITAL DAB  
DENON TU-1800 DAB

Pure 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."



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
STEREO SPEAKERS  
BEST STEREO SPEAKERS OVER £100  
WHARFEDALE DIAMOND 9.1



### Diamond SW150

"Considering the price, the detail and definition to the bass are controlled and cohesive - equally adept with movies and music."

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
SUBWOOFERS  
BEST SUBWOOFERS OVER £100  
WHARFEDALE DIAMOND SW150

## 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.



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2004  
BEST HOME CINEMA  
A BOX OVER £1000  
KEF KIT 100

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."

## 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."



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2004  
BEST STEREO SPEAKERS  
OVER £500  
Acoustic Energy AE1 100



### KEF iQ5

"The iQ5s are little stars, providing stunning scale and authority from discreetly sized towers..."

The iQ5s are fully deserving Products of the Year."

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
BEST SPEAKERS  
KEF iQ5



### KEF KHT1005

"The KHT1005 is an ideal first-time buy, and will suit those looking to 'downsize' to a more living-room friendly style of speaker."

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
BEST SMALL SPEAKERS  
KEF KHT 1005

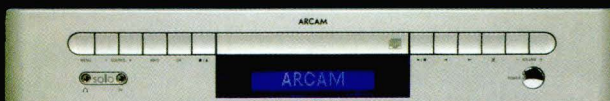


**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
DVD PLAYERS  
BEST DVD PLAYERS OVER £100  
ARCAM DIVA 9078

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2004  
BEST MULTI-CHANNEL RECEIVERS  
OVER £1000  
ARCAM AV8250

## 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.



**Arcam Solo Music System**  
"Excellent all-round sound combined with the convenience of a one-box product."

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEM  
ARCAM SOLO

## Marantz

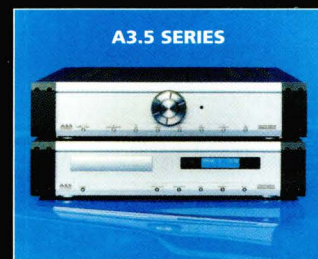
Marantz is introducing a host of new products ranging from high-end hi-fi to HD-ready DVD players and AV receivers. The two main products groups are the 'premium' and 'range' series.

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

**HOME CINEMA**  
Best Buy



A3.5 SERIES

## 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.



## 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  
ACCESSORIES  
BEST CABLES  
GRADO SR82

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
CABLES  
BEST CABLES OVER £100  
QED QUANTUM 7.1

**PLEASE NOTE** Some products/brands are not available at all stores. Please call to confirm or visit our website before travelling.  
Special Offers and Sale Offers - Not in conjunction with any other offer. Advert valid until at least 12/01/2006, E&OE.

# Save up to 25%

in our fabulous **Winter Sale**. Visit [www.ssav.com](http://www.ssav.com) or call your nearest store on Freephone **0800 587 9909** for the latest prices and information.

# Winter Sale

STARTS 17 DECEMBER 2005

## Denon

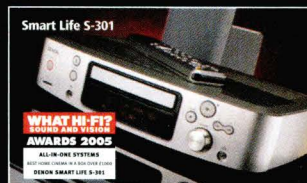
Denon, Japan's oldest audio company, has established an enviable reputation for the performance of both its hi-fi and home cinema products, winning numerous awards and accolades over the years. Its stylish systems have succeeded in becoming the benchmark by which all other are judged.



**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
DENON DVD-1920

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
SOUNDTRACK AWARDS 2005  
BEST SURROUND AMPLIFIER  
DENON AVC-1900

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
TECHNOLOGY  
DENON DVD-A1XV, AVC-A1XV



Smart Life S-301

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEMS  
BEST ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEM  
DENON SMART LIFE S-301

**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**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
YAMAHA DVD-S2500



## 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.



**YAMAHA'S DVD-S2500, DSP-AX7575E & RX-V4600**

## Harman Kardon

Harman/Kardon's high quality audio, audio/visual and multi-room products are more than just boxes with knobs on, they are declarations of passion for music and movies. Producing pure, realistic sound with ever smarter engineering and simpler design,



Harman/Kardon products delight both the audio purist and the film lover around the world. We invite you to experience the unique combination of artistry and engineering that is Harman/Kardon.



## 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.

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2004**  
BEST SUBWOOFER  
REL S100



## 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 and partnered with two identical main speakers, producing seamless panning across the front soundstage, combined with remarkable clarity and effortless dynamics.

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2004**  
★★★★

## Onkyo

"A Dinky design that offers a vigorous listen, plus reassuringly solid build... Onkyo's CR-50SDAB is a fab buy."



**Onkyo DS-A1 iPod Connector Deck**

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
BEST IPOD CONNECTOR DECK  
ONKYO DS-A1



**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEMS  
BEST ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEM  
ONKYO CR-50SDAB

## Pioneer

Pioneer's AV amplifiers and receivers are sound-tuned by the world-famous Air Studios to perfectly recreate the natural sound and energy of the original performance. The result is powerful, pure and crisp. Coupled with HDMI and iLink digital connectivity, as well as a connection for your iPod and PC, the audio adventure is even more absolute.



## 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 RECORDERS  
BEST DVD & HARD-DISK RECORDER  
PANASONIC DVD-RS10

### 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 TANGLED CABLE  
QED QUINEX TTV

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
CABLES  
QED SILVER ANNIVERSARY XT

**WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005**  
CABLES  
BEST SPORT CABLE  
QED SCARF FLEXX

### £ 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.  
**Special Offers and Sale Offers - Not in conjunction with any other offer.**  
Advert valid until at least 12/01/2006, E&OE.

**Winter Sale**





## 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.

# SEVENOAKS

SOUND & VISION



## 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.



## Pioneer

Following its highly successful '5' 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.

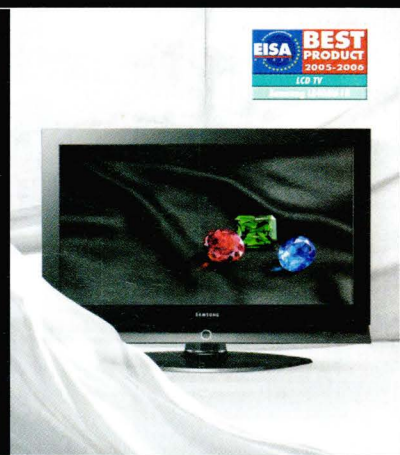
### PDP-436XDE PLASMA TV

"Pioneer's latest is also its greatest: this is a truly wonderful HD-Ready TV."



## Samsung Milano LE40M61B 40" LCD TV

Samsung's New 40" LCD TV (LE40M61B) was honored with an EISA award for its premium display technology in terms of contrast ratio (5000:1), color expression (6.44 billion colors, 92% color gamut for NTSC), viewing angle (178°) and response time (8 ms). Also the model's simple body design focuses the viewer's attention on the screen. On the front of the minimalist design, the speakers are hidden from view in the bottom bezel and nothing distracts from the superb image quality



## 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."



### 32WLT58 LCD TV

"All in all, this is a great set. The twin HDMI inputs lift it a step above the current competition, while the performance could easily grace something far costlier."

WHAT VIDEO • XMAS 2005 #301



## 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 LCD TV

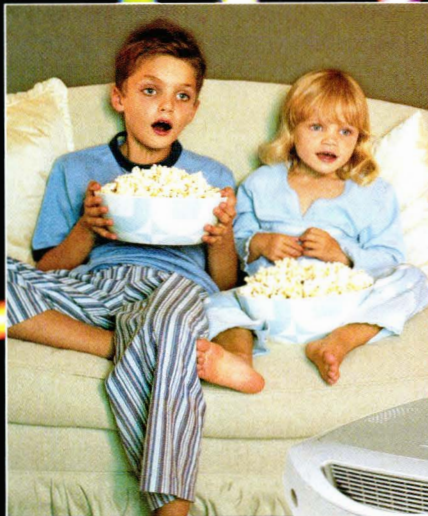
These super-slim screens will take your breath away. Each model has been moulded from a stunning blend of cutting-edge design and state-of-the-art technology to create the ultimate audio-visual sensation. The collection comprises LCD screen technology, offering unrivalled combinations of image quality and sophistication and a variety of screen sizes and options, including integrated digital tuner.

# Save up to 25%

in our fabulous Winter Sale. Visit [www.ssav.com](http://www.ssav.com) or call your nearest store on Freephone 0800 587 9909 for the latest prices and information.

# Winter Sale

STARTS 17 DECEMBER 2005



## 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.



## 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.

**SP7210**

"The new projector's picture is just phenomenal... Looks like ScreenPlay's success story is set to continue."

**SP4805**

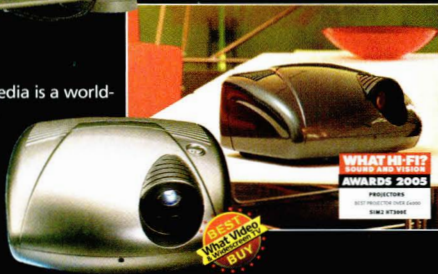
"Another stunning success from ScreenPlay - there's never been a better time to take the big-screen plunge."



## 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



The **iScan™ VP30** is a high-definition video processor and AV 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.

## £ PRICING POLICY

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## 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. Special Offers and Sale Offers - Not in conjunction with any other offer. Advert valid until at least 12/01/2006, E&OE.

## 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	£ SALE
Linn RANGE	£ SALE
Michell RANGE	£ SALE
Project RANGE	£ SALE
Roksan Radius 5	£ SALE

### TUNERS

Arcam RANGE	£ SALE
Cyrus FM X	£ SALE
Denon TU260L MKII	£ SALE
Harman Kardon RANGE	£ SALE
Linn RANGE	£ SALE
Marantz RANGE	£ SALE
Pure DRX-701ES DAB	£ SALE
Pure DRX-702ES DAB/FM	£ SALE
Rotel RANGE	£ SALE

### CD PLAYERS

Arcam RANGE	£ SALE
Audiolab RANGE	£ SALE
Cyrus RANGE	£ SALE
Denon DCD485	£ SALE
Linn RANGE	£ SALE
Marantz RANGE	£ SALE
Meridian RANGE	£ SALE
Musical Fidelity RANGE	£ SALE
NAD RANGE	£ SALE
Quad RANGE	£ SALE
Roksan RANGE	£ SALE
Rotel RANGE	£ SALE

### CD RECORDERS

Yamaha CDR-HD1500	£ SALE
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### AMPLIFIERS

Arcam RANGE	£ SALE
Audiolab RANGE	£ SALE
Cyrus RANGE	£ SALE
Denon PMA355	£ SALE
Linn RANGE	£ SALE
Marantz RANGE	£ SALE
Meridian RANGE	£ SALE
Musical Fidelity RANGE	£ SALE
NAD RANGE	£ SALE
Quad RANGE	£ SALE
Roksan RANGE	£ SALE
Rotel RANGE	£ SALE
Yamaha AX396	£ SALE

### HI-FI SPEAKERS

Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo One	£ SALE
Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo Three	£ SALE
Acoustic Energy Aelite RANGE	£ SALE
Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII	£ SALE
AVI Neutron IV	£ SALE
B&W RANGE	£ SALE
KEF RANGE	£ SALE
Linn RANGE	£ SALE
Meridian RANGE	£ SALE
Mission RANGE	£ SALE
Monitor Audio RANGE	£ SALE
Quad RANGE	£ SALE
Ruark RANGE	£ SALE
Wharfedale RANGE	£ SALE

### HI-FI SYSTEMS

Arcam Solo Ex Speakers	£ SALE
Denon RANGE	£ SALE
Linn Klassik Music Ex Spks	£ SALE
Monitor Audio I-Deck	£ SALE
Onkyo CR505DAB Ex Spks	£ SALE
Teac RANGE	£ SALE
Yamaha CRX-M170 Ex Spks	£ SALE

### DVD SYSTEMS

Denon RANGE	£ SALE
KEF KIT100 Inc Speakers	£ SALE
Teac RANGE	£ SALE

### MULTI-ROOM AUDIO

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

### DVD PLAYERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Arcam RANGE	£ SALE	£ SALE
Cyrus RANGE	£ SALE	£ SALE
Denon RANGE	£ SALE	£ SALE
Denon DVD-A1XV	£ SALE	£ SALE
Harman Kardon RANGE	£ SALE	£ SALE

Marantz RANGE	£ SALE	£ SALE
Meridian RANGE	£ SALE	£ SALE
Panasonic RANGE	£ SALE	£ SALE
Pioneer RANGE	£ SALE	£ SALE
Samsung DVD-HD950	£ SALE	£ SALE
Toshiba SD350	£ SALE	£ SALE
Yamaha RANGE	£ SALE	£ SALE

### DVD RECORDERS

MAKE & MODEL	REGION 2	MULTI REGION
Panasonic RANGE	£ SALE	£ SALE
Pioneer RANGE	£ SALE	£ SALE

### AV AMPLIFIERS & RECEIVERS

Arcam RANGE	£ SALE
Audiolab RANGE	£ SALE
Cyrus RANGE	£ SALE
Denon AVC-A1XV AV Amplifier	£ SALE
Denon RANGE	£ SALE
Harman Kardon RANGE	£ SALE
Lexicon RANGE	£ SALE
Marantz RANGE	£ SALE
Onkyo RANGE	£ SALE
Pioneer VSX-1014s AV Receiver	£ SALE
Pioneer VSX-2014i AV Receiver	£ SALE
Pioneer VSX-AX5Ai AV Receiver	£ SALE
Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai AV Amplifier	£ SALE
Pioneer NEW RANGE	£ SALE
Rotel RANGE	£ SALE
Yamaha DSP-AX757SE AV Amplifier	£ SALE
Yamaha RX-V357 AV Receiver	£ SALE
Yamaha RX-V557 AV Receiver	£ SALE

### A/V SPEAKERS & PACKAGES

Acoustic Energy Evo 3B	£ SALE
Artcoustic RANGE	£ SALE
Audica RANGE	£ SALE
B&W RANGE	£ SALE
B&W Mini Theatre RANGE	£ SALE
KEF KHT1005	£ SALE
KEF KHT2005.2	£ SALE
KEF Q7 AV	£ SALE
M&K RANGE	£ SALE
Mission M Cube	£ SALE
Mission Elegante RANGE	£ SALE
Monitor Audio RANGE	£ SALE
Mordaunt Short Genie	£ SALE
Quad L-Series	£ SALE
Wharfedale Diamond 9 HCP	£ SALE
Yamaha YSP RANGE	£ SALE

### SUBWOOFERS

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

### PLASMA

Fujitsu RANGE	£ SALE
Hitachi RANGE	£ SALE
LG RANGE	£ SALE
Loewe RANGE	£ SALE
Panasonic RANGE	£ SALE
Pioneer PDP436XDE 43"	£ SALE
Pioneer PDP506XDE 50"	£ SALE
Samsung RANGE	£ SALE

### LCD TV

Hitachi RANGE	£ SALE
LG RANGE	£ SALE
Loewe RANGE	£ SALE
Panasonic RANGE	£ SALE
Philips RANGE	£ SALE
Samsung RANGE	£ SALE
Sharp Aquos RANGE	£ SALE
Toshiba RANGE	£ SALE

### PROJECTORS

Optoma RANGE	£ SALE
ScreenPlay RANGE	£ SALE
ScreenPlay SP5700 (REFURBISHED, LAST FEW)	£ SALE
Sharp RANGE	£ SALE
Sim 2 RANGE	£ SALE
Sim 2 C3X	£ SALE
ThemeScene RANGE	£ SALE

### ACCESSORIES

We have a wide range of Accessories from QED, Soundstyle, Grado, Goldring and more...

# Who are Sevenoaks?

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

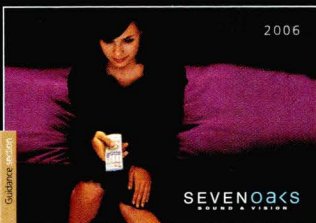
## How to shop at Sevenoaks

When it comes to making big decisions about what to buy, there's no substitute for actually road-testing your prospective purchases - seeing, hearing and experiencing the products in action, with the benefit of our expert knowledge and guidance to help you choose.

## Hi-Fi & Home Cinema Guide

### New 2006 Edition

Pick-up a copy of our new **68 Page Guide** at your nearest Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store or order a copy via our Website. The brochure will be posted to you (UK mainland addresses only) **FREE OF CHARGE**.



## New Sevenoaks Website

The fully re-designed Sevenoaks Sound & Vision website has news and information on the Sevenoaks group and detailed pages to help you locate your nearest store. You will find all our fabulous **WINTER SALE** offers and, in addition, hundreds of **STOCK CLEARANCE** items available from our stores nationwide - many with savings of up to 50%. To find out more, just click on [www.ssav.com](http://www.ssav.com)

**WITH OUR CUSTOM DESIGNED INSTALLATIONS**, your home entertainment choices become as convenient as they are clever. We can help transform every room and every home, whatever your requirements and budget.

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



Custom  
Installation

# SEVENOAKS

SOUND & VISION

## NATIONWIDE STORE GUIDE

**ABERDEEN** 01224 252797

● 57 CROWN STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

**BEDFORD** 01234 272779

● 29-31 ST PETERS STREET

**BRIGHTON** 01273 733338

● 57 WESTERN ROAD, HOVE

**BRISTOL** 0117 974 3727

● 92B WHITELADIES ROAD, CLIFTON

**BROMLEY** 020 8290 1988

● 39A EAST STREET

**CAMBRIDGE** 01223 304770

● 17 BURLEIGH STREET

**CARDIFF** 029 2047 2899

● 104-106 ALBANY ROAD

**CHELSEA** 020 7352 9466

● 403 KINGS ROAD

**CHELTENHAM** 01242 241171

● 14 PITTVILLE STREET

**CRAWLEY** 01293 510777

● 32 THE BOULEVARD

**CROYDON** 020 8665 1203

● 369-373 LONDON ROAD

**EALING** 020 8579 8777

● 24 THE GREEN *OPEN SUNDAY*

**EDINBURGH** 0131 229 7267

● 5 THE GRASSMARKET

**EPSOM** 01372 720720

● 12 UPPER HIGH STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

**EXETER** 01392 218895

● 28 COWICK STREET

**GLASGOW** 0141 332 9655

● 88 GREAT WESTERN ROAD *OPEN SUNDAY*

**GUILDFORD** 01483 536666

● 73B NORTH STREET

**HOLBORN** 020 7837 7540

● 144-148 GRAYS INN ROAD

**HULL** 01482 587171

● 1 SAVILE ROW, SAVILE STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

**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 **NEW**

● 7-9 GOLDINGS HILL

**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*

**PLYMOUTH** 01752 226011

● 107 CORNWALL STREET

**POOLE** 01202 671677

● LATIMER HOUSE, 44-46 HIGH STREET

**PRESTON** 01772 825777

● 40-41 LUNE STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

**READING** 0118 959 7768

● 3-4 KINGS WALK SHOPPING CENTRE

**SEVENOAKS** 01732 459555

● 109-113 LONDON ROAD

**SHEFFIELD** 0114 255 5861

● 635 QUEENS ROAD, HEELEY *OPEN SUNDAY*

**SOLIHULL** 0121 733 3727

● 149-151 STRATFORD ROAD

**SOUTHAMPTON** 023 8033 7770

● 33 LONDON ROAD *OPEN SUNDAY*

**SOUTHGATE** 020 8886 2777

● 77 CHASE SIDE

**STAINES** 01784 460777

● 4 THAMES STREET *OPEN SUNDAY*

**SWINDON** 01793 610992

● 8-9 COMMERCIAL ROAD

**SWISS COTTAGE** 020 7722 9777

● 21 NORTHWAYS PDE, FINCHLEY RD *OPEN SUNDAY*

**TUNBRIDGE WELLS** 01892 531543

● 28-30 ST JOHNS ROAD

**WATFORD** 01923 213533

● 478 ST ALBANS ROAD

**WEYBRIDGE** 01932 828525

● 43 CHURCH STREET, THE QUADRANT

**WITHAM (ESSEX)** 01376 501733

● 1 THE GROVE CENTRE

**WOLVERHAMPTON** 01902 312225

● 29-30 CLEVELAND STREET

**YEovil** 01935 700078 **NEW**

● 14 SILVER STREET

**OPENING HOURS:** PLEASE TELEPHONE OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE  
**E-MAIL:** [insert store location]@ssav.com

## Save up to 25%

in our fabulous **Winter Sale**. Visit [www.ssav.com](http://www.ssav.com)  
or call your nearest store on Freephone **0800 587 9909**  
for the latest prices and information.

## Winter Sale

STARTS 17 DECEMBER 2005

# 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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 combines warmth and body with energy and detail – a truly musical performer.

## Our favourite STEREO AMPLIFIERS

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

### Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
	Arcam DIVA A80	600	A very competent mid-range amp with a sophisticated control system and crisp, detailed sound	6	●	●	●	90	251
<b>BB</b>	Arcam DIVA A90	850	Very well specified, well built, a delight to use and a real musical all-rounder	7	opt	●	●	90	273
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Exposure 2010 S	599	Beneath the unassuming exterior lurks a very capable performer that's passionate about music	6	opt	●		75	262
<b>BB</b>	Marantz PM4400 OSE	250	Highly competent and well specified – a lively performer that makes great music	5	●		●	50	256
<b>BB</b>	Musical Fidelity X-80	600	The entry-level to Musical Fidelity's amplifier range sounds both powerful and refined	4		●		55	255
<b>BB</b>	NAD C352	350	A dynamic and musical amp at a bargain price – another budget classic from NAD	7		●	●	55	253
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Onkyo A-933	500	PCM amplifier facilitates dinky toy packaging, with full size performance, and more engaging musically than you might expect	5			●	80	275
<b>BB</b>	Primare I21	750	A confident and energetic amp, with just a touch of veiling at times. Great build quality	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
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	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>									
<b>BB</b>	Arcam FMJ A32	1,200	Ultra-civilised amp with plenty of features that's also highly revealing and musical	7	●	●	●	100	266
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	Bryston B100-SST DAC	3,850	A remarkable amplifier which is greatly enhanced by the inclusion of an impressive onboard DAC	6	●	●	●	100	275
<b>BB</b>	Copland CSA29	1,900	A hybrid valve/solid state amplifier that gets close to offering the best of both worlds	6	opt	●		85	255
	Exposure XXXV	1,599	Musical, powerful, tuneful and controlled, though not always the most analytical	6	opt	●		80	271
<b>EC</b>	Gamut DI 150	5,700	Serious contender for the best integrated amp ever. The DI 150 takes on pre/power combos on their own terms	6		●		180	275
<b>EC</b>	Krell KAV-400xi	2,698	The best integrated Krell yet is quick, agile, solid and finely detailed	5		●		200	247
<b>EC</b>	Mcintosh MA2275	5,400	A valve amplifier that doesn't patronise. It's not soft-centred and it understands dynamics	5	●	●		75	271
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Moon i-3	1,595	Powerful Canadian amp whose lively presentation is particularly suited to big-scale music	6		●		100	265
<b>BB</b>	Primare I30	1,500	A smooth, sophisticated yet agile performer, and beautifully built too	6			●	100	267
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Unison Research Unico 200	3,000	Hybrid integrated with high power/quality low power modes combines much of the best of solid state and valve design	5			●	200	269

## Our favourite STEREO AMPLIFIERS

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

### Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				PREAMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £2,000</b>										
<b>BB</b>	Arcam FMJ A32/P35	1,980	One of the few correctly matched integrated/power combinations, the sound has real gravitas and sophistication	●	●	7	●	●	100	227
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	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
<b>BB</b>	Naim NAC 112x/NAP 150x	1,475	Up-rated entry-level Naim pre/power is a master of musical communication	●	●	6		●	50	262
<b>BB</b>	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>										
<b>EC</b>	Border Patrol P20	6,750	Muscular 300B push-pull design with fluidity and dynamics to match the best	●	●				20	231
	Bryston BP25/4BSST	4,000	Extremely transparent, high-power combo, you'll listen louder and longer because you can	●	●	8	opt	●	300	241
<b>BB</b>	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 **STEREO AMPLIFIERS** continued

Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)
EC	Chapter Preface/II+	9,800	Among the finest amps available, the resolution of this preamp and power amp challenges the best at any price	●	●	6	●	300	249
EC	Chord Prima/Mezzo 140	6,100	Small, muscular, beautifully made and styled and sounds like a dream	●	●	5	●	120	269
EC	Conrad-Johnson ACT2/Prem 350SA	20,000	Valve preamp and solid-state power deliver some of the most transparent and naturally dynamic sounds around	●	●	5	●	350	264
	EAR 864/534	4,156	Valve combo delivers fine measured and subjective performance and inspires great confidence	●	●	6	●	50	254
EC	ECS EA-1	6,000	Understated monoblocks with real transparency to the fine detail, passion and energy in your record collection	●	●			180	253
	Exposure XXIII/XXVIII	2,790	Highly natural and dynamic amplifier that offers the fluidity and energy of valves via transistors	●	●	6 opt	●	70	241
EC	Gamut D3	3,430	Creamy smooth, yet lets you hear all the fine detail that goes to making a tonally rich, dynamically strong sound	●	●	5 opt	●		265
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
HI	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



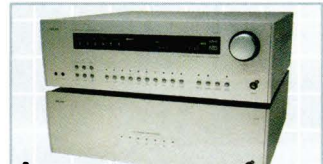
**Yamaha**  
**DSP-AX757SE** £499  
 If you're looking for a multichannel amp that's good with music as well as home cinema, this is your best bet below £500.



**Arcam**  
**DiVA AVR300** £1,300  
 Here's one for those who value great sound over numerous gizmos and gadgets – an integrated AV amp for audiophiles.



**Denon**  
**AVC-A11XV** £2,500  
 A splendid 7.1-channel amp that packs in the latest digital links and processing formats without sacrificing sound quality.



**Arcam**  
**AVP700/P1000** £3,000  
 Cutting edge British processor and power amp combo with HDMI output and plenty of cool-running power for dynamic flare.

## Our favourite AV AMPLIFIERS

**BB** BEST BUY **ED** 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 DiVA AVR300	1,300	Cracking all-round music and movie ability sets the Arcam apart from the AV crowd	●	8	●	100	257
<b>ED</b>	Denon AVC-A11XV	2,500	Sensible, real world derivative of AVC-A11XV, 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>ED</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>ED</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 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>ED</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-AX5Ai	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>BB</b>	Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai	3,000	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>ED</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
	Arcam AVP700/P1000	3,000	Cutting-edge processor/tuner with HDMI and novel Class H rail switching technology for lots of cool-running power on tap	●	8	●	135	275
<b>ED</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
	Cyrus AV8/3x Smartpower	2,900	Classic Cyrus sound translated to a multichannel arena, limited features and power, but civilised sound		3		105	238
	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>ED</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>ED</b>	Parasound Halo C1/A51	7,500	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.



**Hi-Fi Choice, Jan 2006**  
**Audio Analogue Enigma: £850**

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

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“It is possibly the best 'mini' system we've ever heard, and deserves more than simply being relegated to the kitchen or bedroom.”

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Hitachi	42PD5200
Hitachi	42PD5300
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LG	RZ42PX11
Panasonic	TH37PE30B
Panasonic	TH37PW7B
Panasonic	TH42PE30B
Panasonic	TH42PW7B
Panasonic	TH50PV30B
Philips	37PF9946
Philips	42PF9966
Philips	42PF9986
Pioneer	PDP435XDE
Pioneer	PDP435FDE-TE
Pioneer	PDP505XDE
Pioneer	PDP503MXVE
Samsung	PS42V4SX
Samsung	PS50P3HXX
Sharp	LC37GD1E
Sony	KDEP42M1SI
Sony	KEP37M1S
Sony	KDEP37XS1
Sony	KDEP42SX1
Sony	KDEP42MRX1
Vision	PM4230
Toshiba	42WP46B

#### MAKE MODEL

Sharp	LC26GA3E
Sharp	LC20SH1E
Sharp	LC32GD1E
Sharp	LC37GD1E
Sony	KLV17HR3B
Sony	KLV17HR3S
Sony	KLV20SR3S
Sony	KLV23M1SI
Sony	KLV23M1B
Sony	KLV21SG2
Sony	KLV26HG2
Sony	KVL32M1SI
Sony	KVL32M1B
Sony	KDLL32MRX1
Sony	KDLL42MRX1
Toshiba	14VL44B
Toshiba	17WL46B
Toshiba	17WLT46
Toshiba	23WL46
Toshiba	27WL46B
Toshiba	30WL46B
Toshiba	32WL48P

### A/V SYSTEMS

#### MAKE MODEL

Aiwa	AVJX33
Denon	DHT500SD
Denon	DHT550SD
JVC	THS3
JVC	THS5
JVC	THSW8
JVC	THA75R
JVC	QP112AL
JVC	QPF30AL
JVC	QPF70AL
JVC	QPF90AL
LG	LHT6740
LG	SCHT520
Panasonic	SCHT05
Panasonic	SCHT870
Panasonic	SCHT25R
Panasonic	SCHT1500
Panasonic	SCST1S
Panasonic	SCHT37R
Philips	LX3900SA
Pioneer	DCS222
Pioneer	DCS323
Pioneer	DCS222MR
Pioneer	HC51S
Pioneer	DCS424
Pioneer	NSDV1000
Philips	DCS780
Sony	DAVD150
Sony	HTP1200
Sony	DAVSB200
Sony	HTDDW860
Sony	DAVSB300
Sony	DAVSR1
Sony	DAVSB500W
Sony	DAVSR3
Sony	DAVSR2
Sony	HTR6100
Sony	DAVSR4W
Sony	DAVLF1
Thomson	DPL915VD
Toshiba	SD44HK
Yamaha	DVXS100
Yamaha	DVXS120

### LCD TELEVISIONS

#### MAKE MODEL

DMTech	DM14117WD
DMTech	DM14120SD
Hitachi	17LD4220
Hitachi	28LD5200
JVC	LT17C50
JVC	LT17D50
JVC	LT23C50
JVC	LT26D50S
JVC	LT32D50S
LG	RZ15LA70
LG	RZ20LA70
LG	RZ17LZ40
LG	RZ26LZ50
Loewe	MIM015C
Panasonic	TX20LA2
Panasonic	TX22LX2
Panasonic	TX26LXD1
Panasonic	TX32LXD1
Philips	15PF8946
Philips	17PF9946
Philips	23PF8946
Philips	23PF9946
Philips	30PF9946
Philips	32PF9976
Philips	23HM8821
Philips	32PF9986
Philips	37PF9986
Philips	42PF9986C
Samsung	LE15E31SX
Samsung	LW20M11CX
Samsung	LW17N23NX
Sanyo	27LC3
Sanyo	30LD3
Sharp	LC15SH1E
Sharp	LC15L1E

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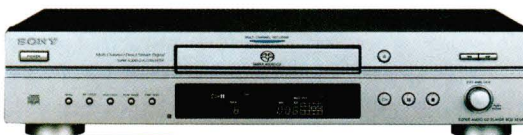


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# STEREO SPEAKERS

*Speaker pairs for stereo sound*



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

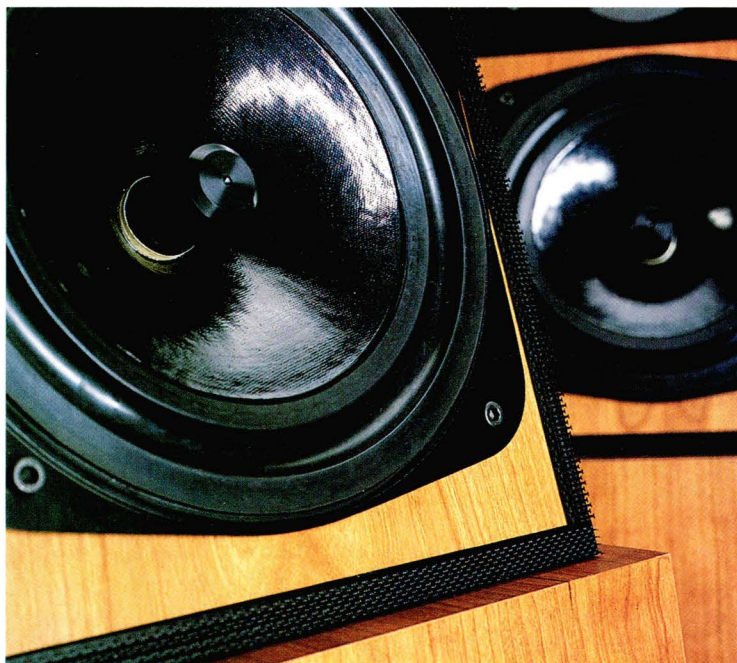
Box speakers are either designed to stand on the floor (floorstanders) or on a stand (stand or shelfmounts). Floorstanders have greater internal volume which can translate into greater efficiency and/or bass extension, but less substantial designs also introduce cabinet resonance and thus distortion.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

## Positioning

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

## Going multichannel

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



## Choosing speakers

Because speakers and the rooms they are used in vary so much, choosing a pair tends to be quite subjective. To find some that will suit you, try to listen to a good variety to hear how they differ, and if possible, audition some at home. Tonal balance tends to vary the most, but is less important than more subtle factors such as timing and dynamics. Finally, listen with your ears not your eyes – great-looking speakers aren't necessarily great sounding.

## Spikes

Floorstanding speakers and stands have threaded inserts for spikes that allow rigid coupling with the floor. These have the advantage of draining resonance from the speaker and giving tighter bass, but can result in more vibration getting back to the electronics and often cause the floor to resonate as well.

## POWER

Though some speakers have a power rating, this isn't as informative as a rating for how difficult they are to drive, nor does it indicate wattage extremes for the partnering amp. In practice, an amplifier cannot be too powerful. Our listings quote ease of drive to indicate how much power

your amp needs to avoid a mismatch. An above-average (A+) speaker will work with amps rated at 25W plus, while an average (A) speaker will need 50W or more, and a below average (A-) speaker could require 100W plus to sound its best. These are guidelines rather than rules.

## Q&A

### IF SPEAKERS ARE RATED AT 75 WATTS, DOES THAT MEAN I NEED A 75 WATT AMP?

No, see the box on power for the full story.

### WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR SMALL ROOMS?

Those designed to work close to the wall will be smoother in confined spaces. Speakers that have relatively dry, tight bass will also sound better.

### WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR BIG ROOMS?

Big, efficient, easy-to-drive designs are more likely to be able to fill a room better than compact models.

### DO I NEED TO BUY CENTRE AND SURROUND CHANNELS FROM THE SAME BRAND AS MY STEREO SPEAKERS?

Yes, assuming that you're wanting to create a homogenous surround sound experience, where voices don't change when they move from one channel to another.

## TOP BUYS



**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 BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO SPEAKERS

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>										
	AcousticEnergy 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	
	AM 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+	37		237	
	Dali Ikon 6	899	Needs care with setup, but rewards you with impressively transparent and almost obsessively detailed sound	19,100,33	●	A	30	●	271	
	Dali Ikon 7	999	Bulky vinyl floorstander has high sensitivity and a bright sound with superior coherence, delicacy and transparency	20,114,34	●	A+	22	●	275	
	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	449	A true classic stand-mount with lovely presentation, fine sound balance, superior coherence and low coloration	20,37,25	A-	40	●		265	
	Epos M22	949	Very classy floorstander has a tricky bass and an edgy top, but a very smooth and even midband	20,88,25	●	A-	25	●	275	
	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	
	Harbeth NRG2	650	Strikingly styled standmount majors on dynamic excitement at some expense in smoothness and coloration	19,34,29	A+	42		●	263	
	JBL Studio L880	700	Good value floorstander with neutrality, massive headroom and plenty of punch. Could be more transparent	22,99,37	●	A	25	●	275	
	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	
	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	
	Nbien NX6	899	Very nice cabinet work for the money and a decent speaker it makes too with good imaging and low noise	21,38,5,30	A	46	●		275	
	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	

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

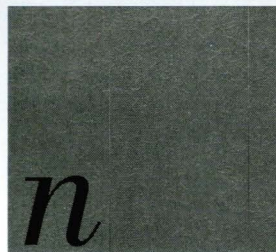
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## Our favourite BC BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO SPEAKERS

continued

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (W/H/D) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE-OF-DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
<span>BC</span>	PMC TB2+	795	Classy transmission line stand-mount has superior midband, restrained presence and a bright clean top end	20,40,30		A	28	●	275
<span>BC</span>	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
<span>BC</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>EC</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>BC</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>BC</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>BC</span>	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
<span>BC</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>BC</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>BC</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>BC</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>BC</span>	ALR Jordan Classic 5	1,200	Slim, laid back floorstander has sweet sound with fine coherence, imaging and dynamic range	17,99,26	●	A	28	●	275
<span>BC</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>BC</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>BC</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>BC</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>BC</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>BC</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>EC</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>BC</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>BC</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
	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>EC</span>	Bosendorfer VC 7	4,745	Unique design delivers superior dynamics that sound particularly convincing with acoustic and classical music	20,135,40	●	A	37	●	265
<span>BC</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
	Chario Cygnus	1,200	Beautiful solid walnut sides. Port tuning suspect, but laid back sound has fine delicacy, imaging and refinement	20,96,27	●	A-	28	●	275
<span>EC</span>	Dali Helicon 400	2,999	Advanced drivers and enclosure give a generous sound with wide dynamic range and no boxiness	22,103,46	●	A	20	●	264
	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
	Focal-JMlab Profile 908	1,300	Open and revealing especially of spatial and atmospheric detail, makes up for its bass restraint with joi de vivre	23,39,27.5		A	50	●	274
<span>EC</span>	Focal-JMlab Micro Utopia Be	3,799	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>EC</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>EC</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>EC</span>	Gamut L5	5,900	Impressive build and sophisticated driver design make the L5 a stunning speaker with rare transparency levels	20,116,43	●	A-	32	●	271
<span>EC</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
	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
<span>EC</span>	Living Voice Avatar OBX-R2	4,000	Has Dynamics, tonal colour, detail, space and time resolution in spades. External crossovers require extra cabling	22,100,27	●	A+	35	●	244



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Home Entertainment, May 2001

# Our favourite EB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

## STEREO SPEAKERS *continued*

## Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				SIZE (WxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE-OF-DRIVE	BASS FROM (H)Z	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
	MartinLogan Mosaic	1,799	Curious hybrid construction marries many panel speaker-like attributes with moving coil simplicity	24,102,30	●	A-	46	●		257
<span>EB</span>	MartinLogan Clarity	2,498	Relatively affordable and easy to live with electrostatic hybrid with class-leading resolving power	26,135,31	●	A-	46	●		245
<span>EC</span>	Mordaunt-Short Perf 6	3,500	Revolutionary enclosure design and aspirated tweeter make for a fast, hi-res ride	24,121,37	●	A-	35	●		264
	Naim Ariva	1,275	Cute and discreet floorstander has superb bass and a wide dynamic range, but it could be smoother and sweeter	23,88,31	●	A	25		●	259
<span>EB</span>	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
<span>EC</span>	Neat Ultimatum MFS	2,995	Wonderful five-driver standmount sounds bigger than it looks. Very spacious and informative	22,38,37		A+	25	●		241
<span>EB</span>	PMC FB1+	1,695	Nicely proportioned floorstander has a sweet top and a beautifully natural, open and restrained midband	20,100,30	●	A	20	●		260
	PMC OB1	2,450	Genuinely deep bass and lovely overall neutrality, though mid could have more tension and bass more punch	20,103,33	●	A	20	●		243
<span>EC</span>	PMC IB2	6,150	Stunning in an understated way, this speaker creeps up on you and hooks you with its transparency and power	33,74,47		A-	25	●		237
<span>EC</span>	ProAc Response D25	2,995	The traditional ProAc high-end detail mixed with greater efficiency and more pace - a splendid speaker	22,107,25	●	A+	20	●		254
<span>EB</span>	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
<span>EB</span>	Rega R9	2,498	This subtle, laid back but very informative performer has a very superior dynamic range, especially in the bass	17,103,39	●	A	20	●		256
<span>EC</span>	Revel F32	3,200	Meticulously balanced, tonally neutral design makes for a taut, well disciplined sound	22,105,39	●	A	30	●		265
<span>EC</span>	Revel M22	1,800	A remarkably clean and revealing speaker with superb tonal and microdynamic capabilities	22,37,30		A-	48	●	●	274
<span>EB</span>	Ruark Talisman III	1,499	No bass demon, but a sophisticated and agile speaker epitomising Ruark's design ideals	22,84,31	●	A	22	●		259
<span>EB</span>	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
<span>EB</span>	Sonus Faber Cremona A.	2,149	Standmount 'Auditor' version of the Cremona makes a soundstage bigger and better than its size suggests	19,35,32	●	A	48	●		246
	Spendor S6e	1,495	Combines deep, powerful bass with an attractively open midband, but perhaps too much restraint up top	30,88,19	●	A+	23	●		257
	Spendor S9e	2,895	An improvement on the original S9 - very entertaining at high levels with a fabulously open and weighty bass	24,101,38	●	A+	40	●		256
<span>EC</span>	Tannoy Dimension TDB	4,000	This stylish speaker is a splendid all-rounder, with fine dynamics, precise imaging and minimal coloration	31,86,30	●	A-	25	●		240
<span>EB</span>	Totem Forest	2,390	Low sensitivity but wonderfully open neutrality, at heart a beautifully communicative and musical loudspeaker	20,90,27	●	A	25	●		247
	Triangle Naia	1,900	Exciting, vivid and communicative, but also a bit untidy and uneven, the Naia is a whole lot of fun	23,119,32	●	A-	25	●		247
<span>EC</span>	Triangle Magellan Concerto	9,995	Scintillating midrange and treble, with tuneful, well-timed bass - a thoroughly engaging musical ride	28,149,34	●	A	35	●		262
<span>EB</span>	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
<span>EC</span>	Vivid Audio B1	7,750	Impressive cabinet design combined with hi-tech drivers to make truly world class speaker	27,110,38	●	A-	40	●		261
	WEGG3 Stelar 1	4,995	A full-range sound from a small(ish) box is possible, but only if you are very careful about set up, room and amps	35,97,45	●	A-	28	●		275
<span>EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,000	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package	23,91,37	●	A	28	●		254
<span>EC</span>	Wilson Benesch ACT	8,400	Superb enclosure gives uncanny freedom from 'boxiness'. Well balanced, but top end might be sweeter	23,108,36	●	A	20	●		252

# AV SPEAKERS

## Speaker solutions for multichannel surround sound



Multichannel speaker systems have a front left/right (L/R) stereo pair, a centre or dialogue channel, two (5.1) or four (7.1) surround speakers and often a subwoofer. For best results, each of these speakers bar the sub should be identical. The problem is that few surround systems are dedicated to music and perform a home cinematic role as well, meaning the centre speaker has to sit above or below a video

monitor. Centre channels are usually wide and short for this reason.

This should not be a barrier to great surround for music and movies however, as many brands make centre channels with a very close sound to their L/R designs.

### Music vs movies

High-resolution SACD and DVD-A music recordings tend to be mastered with

surround speakers in the ITU standard position which is as far behind the listener as the front channels are in front. 5.1 movie soundtracks tend to place surround channels not so far behind and to the side of listeners. Usually, practical limitations will dictate a limited range of placement options, but if you are a dedicated music fan, check out the ITU set-up regulations in the booklet supplied with SACD discs.

### SET-UP

Ideally you should set up surround speakers with as much care as you would stereo systems, but practical issues tend to have a significant bearing on surround and centre speaker placement. Surround channels can be floorstanding or wallmounted, and centres usually have to perch on the TV or underneath it. Given these limitations, adjust your L/R front

speakers to give the best tonal match with the centre. If there's more than just you listening, 'toe in' the speakers so that their axis crosses in front of the listening position - this gives a wider stereo image. And if there's a subwoofer it should be placed near the front speakers. Use a sound pressure metre (available from Tandy among others) to accurately set levels.

### SUBWOOFERS

Subs start working where stereo speakers run out of steam at low frequencies. The idea is to create deeper, better-controlled bass rather than more of it. They usually have onboard amplification (active) and connect to either the LFE (Low Frequency Effects) channel in a home cinema set-up or the speaker terminals in a stereo set-up.

## TOP BUYS



**B&W**  
600 S3 package £900  
Incorporates 602s, 601s and an LCR 600 centre speaker. Great in both stereo and multichannel surround modes.



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



**ATC**  
Concept 3 £4,877  
It might not look as flashy as some, but the quality of engineering in this ATC package ensures superb all-round performance.



**Linn**  
Akurate package £13,750  
Linn has worked wonders with its new multichannel speaker system – it's not cheap, but its performance is breathtaking.

Our favourite BT BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

## AV SPEAKER PACKAGES

### Multichannel speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				EASE OF DRIVE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
<span>BT</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>BT</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>EC</span>	Linn Akurate (242/212/225/221)	13,750	An extremely capable system that offers new insights into the potential for multichannel audio	A-	6	18	●		253
	Mirage Omni 2	2,650	Dark tonality, but superb imagery makes this an excellent all-round choice	A	5	30	●		232
<span>BT</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>BT</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 BT BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

## SUBWOOFERS

### Bass speakers

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

**SPECS KEY** **SIZE WxHxD (CM)** Width, height and depth of one cabinet in centimetres. **POWER (W)** How many watts the onboard amplifier of active models delivers.

**BASS FROM** How low the sub goes, the smaller the number the deeper the bass.

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

*Do you want friendly and impartial advice ( and a cup of tea) ...?*

*Do you want to buy your system based on what you hear, and see, and not what somebody tells you...?*

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**Nobody else** in these areas carries all the following major hifi brands:

Apollo, Arcam(Diva/FMJ), Ash Design, Atacama, **Atlas** (spkr cables & interconnects) B&W, **Chord Company**, **Creek**, **Cyrus**, Denon, Epos, **Exposure**, **Genelec**, **Anthony Gallo Acoustics**, Harman Kardon, Infinity, Iso Tek, KEF (including **Reference**), Linn Products(including Knekt), **MJ Acoustics**, Meridian, Michell, **Mirage**, Mission, Musical Fidelity, NAD, **Naim**, Ortofon, Pioneer, **PMC**, **Primare**, **Proac**, Project, Pure, QED(including Systemline), Quad, Quadraspire, REL, Rotel, Sennheiser, Soundstyle, **Spendor**, Stands Unique, **Tag McLaren**, Wharfedale, Yamaha.

**Nobody else** in these areas carries all the following major Home Cinema products:

DVD players: Arcam & FMJ, **Cyrus**, Denon, Harman Kardon, Meridian, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**, Yamaha,

Processors: **Arcam FMJ AV8**, **Cyrus**, **Lexicon**, Linn, Meridian, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**.

Amplifiers: Arcam/FMJ, **Bryston**, **Cyrus**, Denon, Harman Kardon, **Lexicon**, **Naim**, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**, Yamaha.

Display devices: Plasma screens from Loewe, Panasonic, Pioneer and **Yamaha**. Televisions/LCD: Loewe.

Projectors: **Barco(CRT/DLP)**, **Sim (DLP)**, **Yamaha(DLP/LCD)** Screens: **Stewart/Draper/Vutec** ,

Video Processing: **Faroudja**, **I-Scan**, **Key Digital**, **Lumagen**, **Tag**. Control systems: **Crestron**, Lutron lighting.

Specialist set up services: **ISF Display Callibration**.

**Nobody else** in the area offers you a "**One Stop Solution**" to all of your home entertainment requirements, as we are also Custom Installation experts. Discuss your requirements with us and we can survey, design, install, commission, and maintain full Sound and Audio-Visual distribution, and automated lighting around your home.

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# HEADPHONES

*For your ears only*



Headphones come in several varieties and some are designed for particular usage. The majority of 'cans' use dynamic cone and coil-type drive units and can be used with anything from a personal stereo to a dedicated amplifier. Other types also exist, most significantly electrostatics that use a charged panel membrane to produce a distinctly refined sound. These are supplied with their own dedicated amplifiers, which tends to increase the price.

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

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

### Getting the best from your cans

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

## Our favourite HEADPHONES

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

### Stereo headphones

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS							
				ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT (g)	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>BB</b>	AKG K44	20	Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed: a bargain			●		●	190	●	219
<b>BB</b>	AKG K270 Studio	129	Pro oriented design which is very transparent and great with acoustic material			●		●	270	●	230
<b>EC</b>	AKG K1000	650	Neutral, analytical and completely out of the head sound, suitable for connection to speaker outputs only				●		270	●	244
	Audio Technica ATH-D40s	105	Detailed and involving sound with a professional 'studio' quality appeal			●		●	250	●	194
<b>BB</b>	Beyerdynamic DT990	160	Impeccable balance, very extended bass and treble, and bags of detail place this model ahead of the pack			●	●		250	●	245
<b>BB</b>	Grado SR-60	90	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste		●				200	●	194
<b>BB</b>	Grado SR325i	310	Highly sophisticated and detailed sound with great extension: check for comfort		●		●		200	●	270
<b>BB</b>	Philips HP890	70	A remarkably sophisticated and very comfortable headphone			●	●		330	●	219
	Sennheiser HD595	150	Technology from upmarket HD650 model makes this a very revealing headphone that's also extremely comfortable			●	●		270	●	266
<b>EC</b>	Sennheiser HD650	300	Astonishing resolution and hardly less impressive tonal balance make this a true hi-fi experience			●	●		260	●	252
<b>EC</b>	Stax SRS-2020 Basic Sys. II	349	Luxury option at its price, but the sound delivery is five-star quality all the way	●		●	●		295	●	205
<b>EC</b>	Stax SR-001 Mk II	239	Expensive and power hungry, but this electrostatic drags personal stereo into the world of high fidelity	●	●		●		280	●	268

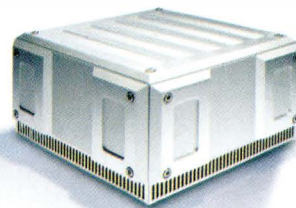
**SPECS KEY** **ELECTROSTATIC** Uses electrostatic film instead of more common cone or dome dynamics. **SUPRA-AURAL** Earpads sit on ear rather than around it. **CIRCUMAURAL** Earpads rest on the head around the ears. **OPEN BACK** Vented capsules let sound in and out. **CLOSED BACK** Sealed capsules.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

*"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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*"It is one of the most effective units I have had the pleasure of using."*

**Hi-Fi News, GII Mini Sub**

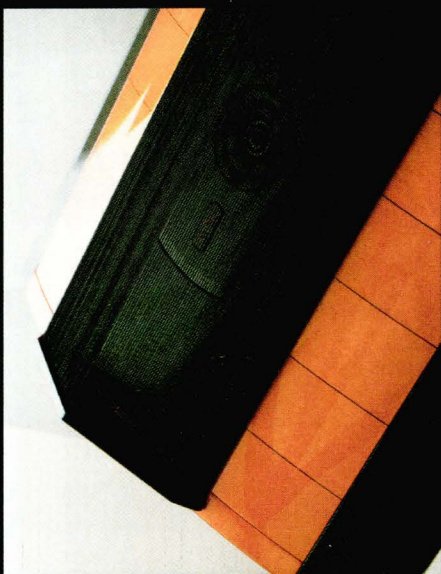
*"The Gemini is a stunning performer giving a good overall tonal balance."*

**What Hi-Fi, GII Gemini**

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2003 Hi-Fi Choice Editors Choice IsoTek Mini Sub	2003 Best Buy Category Winner IsoTek Mini Sub	2003 Hi-Fi Choice Category Winner IsoTek Mini Sub	2003 Hi-Fi Choice 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



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#### ELECTRONICS

Accuphase, Audio Analogue, Audio Research, Belcanto, Conrad Johnson, Copland, Creek, Densen, DCS, Electrocompaniet, Krell, Lavardin, Magnum Dynalab, Nagra, Orpheus, Pathos, Primare, PS Audio, Reson/Resolution Audio, Spectral, Sugden, Trichord, Unison Research, Wadia, 47 Laboratory.

#### LOUDSPEAKERS

Audio Physic, ATC, Avalon, JM Labs, Konus Audio, Pen Audio, Proac, Peak Consult, Martin Logan, REL, Sonus Faber, Velodyne, Verity Audio.

#### VPI TNT HR-X

The TNT HR-X is the TNT concept taken to the next level. The HR-X features a triple laminated chassis, integral air suspension (which rejects up to 98% of acoustic feedback) and an inverted main bearing incorporating a hardened steel ball running on Teflon.

An outer periphery record clamp centers on the platter, not the record, to provide vacuum-like hold down without the problems inherent in a vacuum system. The drive system uses two low-powered 24-pole motors driving a 7 pound flywheel, and the flywheel spins at 500 RPM and has 62 times the inertia of a 25 pound platter.

The included JMW 12.5 is bolted to the aluminum portion of the chassis with a double base mounting, providing the ultimate in rigidity and adjustability. The SDS power supply (included) rounds off the package and provides a pure AC signal to the drive system.

#### CABLES / SUPPORTS / ACCESSORIES

Cardas, Clearaudio, Eichman, Finite Elemente, Furatech, Grand Prix Racing, Nordost, Quadraspire, Siltech, Shakti, Shun Mook, Transparent, Van de Hul.

#### TURNTABLES / CARTRIDGES

Avid, Benz Micro, Dynavector, Koetsu, Kuzma, Lyra, Michell, Rega, Roksan, RS Labs, SME, Triplanar, VPI.

#### PENAUDIO

Penaudio is ambitiously producing joy and pleasure to its customers. In Penaudio, wellbeing and technology are combined into a form of a loudspeaker.

Pen Audio Ltd. was founded by Sami Penttilä. As a player of many instruments, music had always been a part of Sami's life. Sami made hundreds of connections and many types of boxes to compare their sound.

Opinions of many listeners were heard and many different kinds of rooms were tested. Learn-by-mistake project ended as 7.6 cx. It was a dream-come-true speaker for Sami. With 7.6 cx he could get started in the loudspeaker business.

#### SONUS FABER STRADIVARI

Stradivari system, 3 way, elliptical design, virtual 2x radiation symbiotic tuning system.

Acoustic enclosure-multilayer, constrained-mode damping, elliptically shaped enclosure formed using hand selected wood layers, quality-graded and oriented for carefully optimized resonance control, substructural ribs are strategically placed for absolute rejection of spurious vibrations.

Available in graphite and Stradivari's crimson

#### WADIA DIGITAL

The Wadia 302 CD Player, in the elegant 3 series chassis, features many of the performance qualities expected from Wadia products at an accessible price point.

Updated Digital and Analog Circuitry Throughout - The enhanced main decoding circuit design includes DigiMaster 3.1 up-sampling algorithm, 24-bit Burr-Brown 1704 D/A-C's, Wadia SwiftCurrent IC, and DirectConnect with Digital Volume control.

Updates to the main boards included a time coherent analog filter array, and superior grounding scheme. Greater current capacity and improved filtering provide improved power onboard the main decoding circuit.

# 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 connector instead – check your components before you buy.

## Our favourite CABLES

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

				SPECIFICATIONS					
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIGITAL CABLE TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>INTERCONNECTS AND SPEAKER CABLES</b>									
<b>ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS</b>									
	Black Rhodium Illusion	77	An upfront, lively, exciting cable which still manages subtlety when needed. Slight coloration though		●	●			248
<b>EC</b>	Black Rhodium Opera	297	Very open, clear and detailed sound, with excellent extension at frequency extremes		●		●		260
	Brilliance Hi-Fi Synergy	83	High quality materials help give this cable fine imaging: bass not as extended as some	●		●			275
	Chord Company Signature	499	Silver plated, triple screened. Some granularity but great resolving ability, a good match for Chord Signature loudspeaker cable		●	●			255
<b>BB</b>	Chord Company Chorus	215	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
<b>BB</b>	Kimber Timbre	89	Typical Kimber construction with ditto sound – clean, extended and detailed	●		●			248
<b>BB</b>	Monster Interlink 400 Mk2	70	Really lively and enjoyable sound at a sensible price	●		●			224
<b>BB</b>	Townshend DCT100	100	Unusual construction with copper strip conductors, giving very detailed sound, but just an occasional hint of hardness		●	●			241
<b>EC</b>	Townshend Isolda DCT	300	Unusual construction and cryogenically treated too: whatever the reason, a remarkably capable wire		●	●			234
<b>BB</b>	van den Hul The Bay C5	55	Terrific detail, nice balance – a great cable	●		●			224
<b>BB</b>	van den Hul The Well	85	Hybrid cable with carbon-fibre conductors added. Very slight bass coloration does little to detract from fine performance	●		●			241
<b>BB</b>	van den Hul D102 Mk III	79	Hybrid conductors (carbon and copper) and intelligent construction give strong bass and excellent detail	●		●			234
<b>BB</b>	Wireworld Luna 5	30	Authoritative bass and clear treble outperform many cables at twice the price	●		●			273
<b>BB</b>	Wireworld Solstice 5	70	A cable with all-round appeal – treble is slightly 'dark' but bass is excellent and the overall balance very good indeed	●		●			259
<b>DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS</b>									
<b>BB</b>	Black Rhodium Polar Scherzo	135	Highly detailed sound with notably solid and stable stereo imaging	●		●		E	270
<b>EC</b>	Kimber Select KS2020	629	Provides a subtle but rewarding lift in musicality with any DAC, justifying the price		●	●		E	260
<b>EC</b>	QED Qunex Signature 75	80	First-rate balance and imaging – ever so nearly as good as it gets at any price			●		E	265
<b>BB</b>	QED Qunex SR75	50	Lots of bass and good clear midrange and treble at a sensible price	●		●		E	234
<b>BB</b>	Supra ZAC	32	High grade fibre and quality plugs add up to a noticeable improvement over giveaway optical leads					O	259
<b>BB</b>	van den Hul Optocoupler II	49	Noticeably has the edge over other optical leads, but still second best to electrical types					O	234
<b>SPEAKER CABLES PRICE PER METRE</b>									
	Black Rhodium S300	18	Tight, precise and extended bass makes this a great cable for rock 'n' roll	●		●			241
<b>BB</b>	Black Rhodium Disco	4	Lively and energetic with pretty good detail, if a touch bass-light	●		●			274
	Chord Company Signature	117	Dynamic, solid sounding cable, but it's bulky and not very tractable	●		●			255
<b>EC</b>	Electrofluidics 20/20	45	Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere – one of the best all-round cables available		●	●			241
<b>BB</b>	Kimber 8VS	18	Beautifully full, open and transparent sound right across the board	●		●			227
	Kimber 8PR	21	Bass very full, just occasionally a touch flabby, but detailed and sweet upper frequencies make this a good value cable	●		●			241
<b>BB</b>	Kimber 8TC	39	Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass. Price for 5m terminated pair	●		●			203
<b>BB</b>	QED X-Tube XT300	10	A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems		●	●			234
<b>EC</b>	Townshend Isolda DCT	50	Cryogenically treated 'impedance matched' cable with stabilising components added: great sound all-round		●	●			241
	Wyewizard Spellbinder	5.50	Sold off the reel, this entry-level cable is a surprisingly purist performer, lean yet powerful, with good detail resolution.		●	●			267
<b>BB</b>	Wireworld Terra 5	5	Deep powerful bass, clear treble and very solid imaging add up to above-class performance	●		●			261
<b>BB</b>	Wireworld Solstice 5	20	Unfriendly to handle, but makes up for it with very assured sound – heaps of bass and great insight	●		●			248
<b>BB</b>	Wireworld Oasis 5 Biwire	38	Full-bodied and precise sound across the board – an excellent performer in bi-wire or single-wire mode	●		●			262

**SPECS KEY** **STRANDED** Cable has a number of (usually) twisted strands to conduct the signal. **SOLID CORE** Cable has one or more individually insulated strands to conduct the signal. **COPPER** Material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **SILVER** Alternative material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **DIGITAL CABLE TYPE** E – electrical, O – optical. Cables are one metre length unless otherwise stated.

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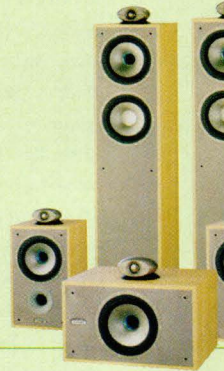
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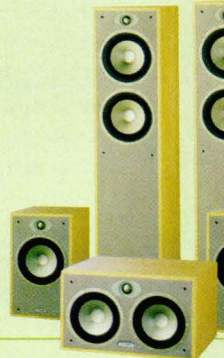


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# STANDS AND SUPPORTS

## Equipment racks and speaker stands



If you want to get the most from your source and amp components, it's important to consider good quality support. Dedicated equipment supports are racks and tables made specifically to hold hi-fi gear, and the best can have a profoundly positive effect on sound

because, for example, they can help to isolate kit from ground-borne vibrations and mechanical or electrical interference. Equally, if you own a pair of small 'bookshelf' or 'standmount' speakers, it's important to place them on good quality, purpose-built speaker stands.

## Our favourite EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

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

### Equipment supports

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT (CM)	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
<b>EC</b>	Audiophile Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities – a worthy upgrade	82	43		4	MDF	193
	Avid Isosshelf	1,100	An enthusiast's equipment support stand free from coloration, if a little fiddly to set up	87.5	48		5	MDF	193
<b>HFC</b>	Clearlight Audio Aspekt	650	Stunning neutrality and detail from a well-damped design. Its performance makes the price tag good value	75	53,5,45		4	MDF	217
	Custom Design Aspect 650	270	Smart looks and practical thanks to adjustable shelves. Sound is fair with some loss of detail	66	46	●	4	Glass	206
<b>HFC</b>	Custom Design Icon 400	600	Beautifully built, conveniently adjustable and with little sound of its own, a very classy rack	75	57, 41		5	Glass	263
<b>HFC</b>	Custom Design Concept 400	700	Slightly drab looks, but great sound and efficient use of space ('Acoustic' version tested – standard version £300)	74	48,40		4	Metal	247
<b>HFC</b>	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
<b>EC</b>	Naim Fraim	1,825	Pricey but very classy looking and sounding, with modular flexibility	96	45,34		5	Glass	232
	Isoblu 'The Stand'	460	Attractive modular design that's as easy on the ear as on the eye	47	48,40		4	MDF	247
	Quadraspire Q4 Reference	480	Excellent performance from the school of wobbly racks. Natural sounding and plenty of detail	51.5	49,39,5		4	MDF	217
	Russ Andrews Torlyte Rack	988	Attractive modular system made of very light Torlyte: a touch of added warmth is its only vice	68	54,49		4	Torlyte	240
<b>HFC</b>	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!	92	50,40		5	Glass	217
<b>EC</b>	Townshend 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

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

### Speaker stands

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT (CM)	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF LEGS	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>HFC</b>	Atacama Nexus 6	60	An excellent all-round performer and a genuine hi-fi bargain	60,50	14,5,18	●		3	202
	Custom Design RS 300 MkII	100	A solid stand improving on the original, with better focus and detail	61,56,51	16,5,18	●		2	202
<b>EC</b>	hne Cableway	395	Looks great, sounds great, so start saving! Clean and sweet, and neutrality is exceptional with orchestral material	63	17,20	●		1	220
<b>HFC</b>	Kudos S50	159	Formidable bass with real authority, and a wide dynamic range across a broad bandwidth	61	15, 20	●		1	220
<b>HFC</b>	Partington Ansa 60	99	Elegant flat-packer 'disappears' sonically; restrained but neutral and coherent	62	18,15	●		4	232
<b>EC</b>	Partington Dreadnought BS	249	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
<b>EC</b>	Townshend Seismic Sink	499	Unique inflatable plinth that works wonders with decent floorstanders, as well as standmounted speakers	4	38,48			0	202

**EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS SPECS KEY** HEIGHT Of complete stand. **TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)** Width by depth of the supporting platform(s). Single figures indicate a square platform.

**WELDED** As opposed to bolt-together construction. **NUMBER OF SHELVES** To put your kit on (different configurations are often available). **SHELF TYPE** Material that shelves are made of.

**SPEAKER STANDS SPECS KEY** HEIGHT Of each stand, not including spikes. **TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)** Width by depth of platform. Single figures indicate a square platform. Speakers generally overhang top plates.

**FILLABLE** The stand can be mass-loaded with sand and/or lead to stop ringing. **WELDED** As opposed to bolt-together construction. **NUMBER OF LEGS** That support the stand.



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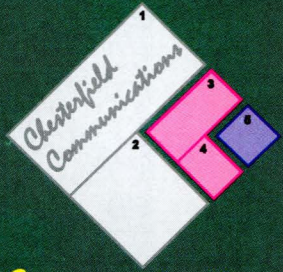
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# GLOSSARY

## 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.



# What



# How &



# Where..

## TO BUY YOUR HI-FI SYSTEM



“...too many people today know the price of everything and the value of nothing.”

Oscar Wilde

Isn't it easy to buy a new system? You read the magazine product reviews, you find out who sells the recommendations, five-star favourites or best buys at the cheapest price, you order the system, get a friend who knows his onions to install it - and live happily ever after.

This is a fairly well-trodden path but it leads to dissatisfaction, endless upgrades and a lot of wasted money. It's likely that the system will help you lose interest in music pretty rapidly. The problem is that there are more myths about hi-fi than Aesop's Fables. CD gives you perfect sound. All CD players sound the same. A £50 CD player plays high fidelity music. All magazine reviewers are experts. Big speakers are always better than small ones. More watts per channel is everything. MP3 format gives you high quality. A collection of 'Best Buy' components will be a great system. And so on and so on. All myths.

### Music - the real aim

Our aim must be to buy a hi-fi system that will prove musically satisfying, reliable and deliver true value for money. If the system doesn't excite you musically you've wasted your money. What is even worse is that you may not even realise you've bought a bad egg - you'll just switch the TV on instead and your desire to listen to music will gradually diminish. Have you ever been in a pub or club where you realise it's very difficult to

conduct a conversation, even to the extent of being really tiring? A poor quality system continuously distorts but I don't mean it necessarily reaches the point of audibly breaking up. With a top quality system you can play music very loudly and still hold a conversation because it's free of distortion. A poor system is tiring to listen to even when it's played at low volume.

If you want proof, go into a shoe or clothes shop where they play background 'music' and try to enjoy listening. It's odds on you'll fail.

Get the best system for your money by asking our Top Twenty UK specialist hi-fi dealers.

### What and Where to buy

The system you think you want may not be right for you. So where do you start? Here's an important tip... don't start with **WHAT** - start with **WHERE**. There is only one way to give yourself the best chance of getting it right first time, and that's through a specialist hi-fi dealer. Now it's likely you have preconceived ideas that may put you off visiting one. Although you would welcome the advice and guidance, you don't know the technical jargon. You don't want to be talked down to. Your friend has said they only sell expensive gear and they're not interested if you don't have a big budget. They're expensive. Again, just myths. Most specialist hi-fi dealers are running their business because, above all, they love music. They spend a large portion of







their time listening to music and comparing systems to get the best possible results. They know the component combinations which don't gel together and, conversely, they know the combinations which give the best performance within a given price range. But they all also know the system must suit you.

### Buying or being sold to?

Now there's a group of long-established specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer first. Their idea of 'selling' is to discuss your requirements, offer their advice, give you the best options, then play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge.

Listening to your choice of music in a peaceful, well organised demonstration room, you may be surprised and, almost certainly, relieved to discover how easy it is to hear the differences between components and between systems. You'll be able to make a clear and informed decision about what to buy. It comes down to trusting your own judgement rather than the opinion of a reviewer you've never met ...and who won't refund your money if you're not satisfied or be at the end of a phone to sort out any problem you might encounter.

The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put your hand in your pocket. They won't leave you to set up the

system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it sounds great, and make sure you're entirely happy with the way it works. Why? Because a high proportion of these dealers' custom comes through people who have bought from them before, either directly or by commendation. It's vital to them to get it right for you.

### Getting the best deal

Oscar Wilde wrote "...too many people today know the price of everything and the value of nothing." Specialist retailers know that not all potential purchasers will seek them out. They tend to attract the more discerning, thoughtful customers. Let's face it, a good deal is about a great deal more than just price. After all, unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years. Most of these dealers offer much longer equipment guarantees than provided by the manufacturer, a very worthwhile benefit, but it also makes it in the dealer's interest to ensure high build quality and reliability. Maybe you could save a few pounds by buying piecemeal but you'll lose out on the overall package. As far as the dealers are concerned, maybe they believe that taking care of their customers properly is a nicer way of doing business than just handing over boxes.

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 Listed below are 20 of the best hi-fi shops in the country. They have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give them years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.

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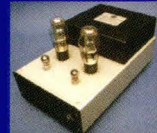
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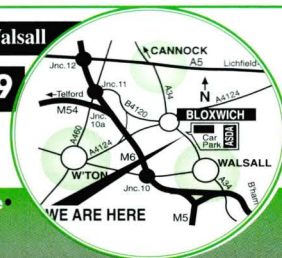


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FEBRUARY 2006 ISSUE 276

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Distributed by Markeforce (UK) Ltd, 5th floor, Low Rise  
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# 2ND HAND HI-FI HOME CINEMA BUYER

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WITH THE FEBRUARY ISSUE OF HI-FI CHOICE



# A-Z GUIDE TO SECOND-HAND KIT

## #18 QUAD

It can be said, with confidence, that no other hi-fi company offers quite the same level of service back-up as Quad. Although taken over some years ago by the International Audio Group, Quad still employs the same service team who continue to service products dating right back to the 1950s. Quad is happy to deal directly with the public and will even offer a same-day repair service for those wanting to drop off equipment in person. Labour charges are fixed at £46.50 per unit (or single speaker) – however long the repair takes and Quad will even send you the original packaging if needed.

With such a legendary level of service, it's little wonder that second-hand Quad is popular. Choose the model carefully, though, and there are still some excellent buys to be had. Quad are perhaps best known for their electrostatic panel speakers. Essentially, there have been three models over the past fifty years or so – the ESL-57, ESL-63 and current ESL-988/9. The most recent models are still expensive second-hand, so we'd recommend searching out a pair of ESL-63s. Large in size, these speakers don't tend to suit smaller rooms – they need plenty of space behind them – but find a room that fits and they'll reward you well. Launched in the early 1980s, the ESL-63s offer wonderful transparency and a genuinely seamless sound quality. They respond well to modification and, over the years, there have been countless magazine articles dedicated to this. When buying used, though, it's important

to remember that not all will have been modified to the same standard. There will be some dodgy models out there, which is why we'd recommend seeking out an unmolested pair.

Prices range from anywhere between £400 to £1,800, but bear in mind, that the cheaper models may well have tired stator plates by

from any particular faults. Of a similar vintage to the ESL-63s, this combo will give years of reliable service. Age takes its toll on the sound quality and, with the oldest models now twenty years old, it's worth looking for newer (or well-serviced) examples. Although perfectly decent sounding, especially the laid-back yet powerful 606, this combo hasn't captured the

**“With such a legendary level of service, it's little wonder second-hand Quad is popular.”**

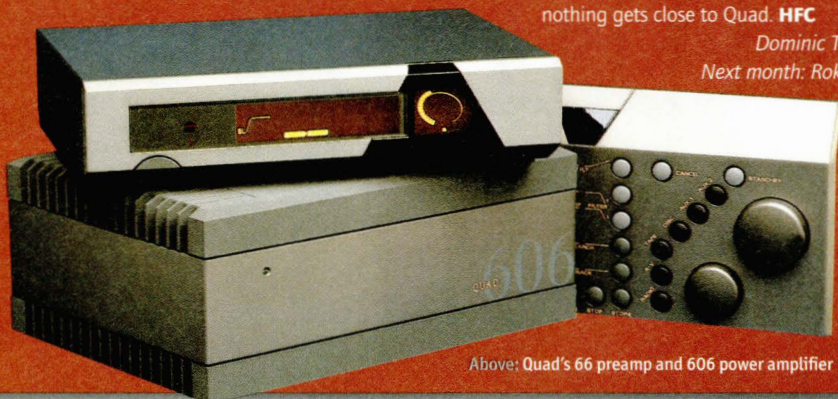
now and could end up costing you as much to restore as a recently serviced set would have cost in the first place. The matching Quadrapod stands could be part of the deal, and are well worth having as they focus the sound still further.

Like the electrostatic speakers, the Quad 66/606 pre-/power amps don't really suffer

imagination as much as the older models – making them a great second-hand purchase. Prices for the pair start from around £400, which is cracking value when you consider the long-lived potential.

Perhaps not the most exciting sounding of products reviewed in these pages, but for peace of mind and relaxed easy listening, nothing gets close to Quad. **HFC**

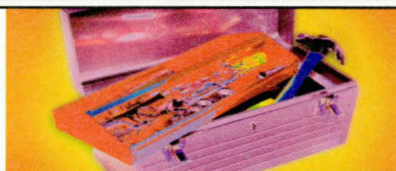
*Dominic Todd  
Next month: Roksan*



Above: Quad's 66 preamp and 606 power amplifier

## DIY CORNER SPEAKERS

Part 18 More exotic speakers



In a ribbon tweeter, the actual conductive ribbon itself is often encased in some sort of polymer to improve its mechanical and structural integrity. However, it still represents a more direct contact between voice 'coil' and air than a regular coil-driven dome.

Much the same is true of electrostatic tweeters, where the diaphragm consists of an ultra-light film, usually suspended between perforated plates carrying a very high voltage. The diaphragm itself is energised directly, and in direct contact with the air, which is a powerful plus. But, electrostatics have very restricted diaphragm motion, so the radiating surface needs to be much larger than an

equivalent dynamic or ribbon drivers, raising the problem of 'beaming' at the highest frequencies (where the wavelengths are smaller than the diaphragm width or height). They also need to supply the very high polarising voltage, via some form of mains supply.

A similar polarising voltage handicap applies to the ionic tweeter, which gives the most direct path of all to the air, because air itself forms the 'diaphragm'. A polarising voltage is used to ionise air molecules within a magnetic gap, causing them to glow. Modulating the charged molecules with a signal causes them to vibrate and generate sound waves. Although ionics are unquestionably the purest

form of tweeter, practical disadvantages include low efficiency (making horn loading mandatory), and the generation of small amounts of poisonous ozone! **HFC**

*Paul Messenger*

### DIY CONTACTS

**FALCON ACOUSTICS** ☎ 01493 751100  
www.falcon-acoustics.co.uk

**WILMSLOW AUDIO** ☎ 01455 286603  
www.wilmslow-audio.co.uk

**IPL ACOUSTICS** ☎ 01271 867439  
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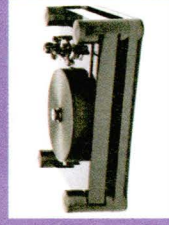
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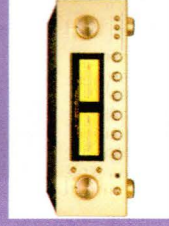
### Acoustic Signature

Masterpieces of analog music reproduction and made for natural listening. You lose nothing: all the emotions that are on your records can be heard. After all, music is for everybody. Very special products indeed...



### Basis

The philosophies underlying Basis designs are sound principles of physics/probable concepts that result in the most accurate reply of records possible. Precise execution of those principles is critical, and you'll find Basis turntables are made with exacting care and precision machining unsurpassed in the industry.



### Luxman

Finally Luxman is back in the UK at long last and its definitely been worth the wait! The L-509F Integrated Amplifier (£3800) is shown above and we have not heard anything below £10k that comes even close...it really is that good. Call for more details.



### Music First

David Price says, "The MF open pre-amp is extremely open and sophisticated musical performer that betters a number of even more expensive designs." We definitely agree!

## Brands include:

- Acoustic Signature
- Acoustic Zen
- Airlight
- Amphion
- Audience
- Audio Valve
- Basis
- BAT
- Border Patrol
- Boulder
- Cabbase
- C.A.T
- CEC
- Clearaudio
- Garnut
- Graham
- Halcro
- Hovland
- Hyperton
- Lavardin
- Luxman
- Music First
- Oracle
- Pass Labs
- Plinius
- PS Audio
- Reference 3A
- Rogue Audio
- S.P.J Record Players
- Transfiguration
- Vincent
- & Many More...

## Just In

- AUDIO PHYSICS VIRGO MK2 £2,800
- AUDIO RESEARCH D70 POWERAMP £995
- BRYSTON 1.7B PROCESSOR 10 MONTHS OLD £4,800
- BRYSTON BBST 4 CHANNEL POWERAMP £1,250
- BRYSTON 75T MONOBLOCKS £2,500
- CAT JLI MONOBLOCKS £6,500
- DCS ELGAR PLUS/VERDIDAC AND TRANSPORT £18,000
- ISOTEK CUBE 2K £1,500
- KEF REFERENCE 107 SPEAKERS [BLACK ASH] £800
- KRELL PAM 5 PREAMP £500
- NAGRA VALVE MONOBLOCKS £11,000
- QUAD 606 MK2 £295
- QUAD 34 PREAMP £150
- QUAD 989 SPEAKERS [AS NEW] £3,500
- WILSON WITTS £2,000
- WILSON AUDIO WATT/PUPPY 3/2 £18,000

## Current

- ACCU PHASE C2000 PREAMP [LATEST] £4,800
- ACCU PHASE FS500 POWER CONDITIONER £4,000
- ATC SP1100P SPEAKERS £8,000
- AUDIO ARTISTRY DVORAK SPEAKERS £6,500
- AUDIO NOTE ANE.SP [EBONY FINISH] £2,800
- AUDIO RESEARCH LS16 £3,500
- AUDIO RESEARCH PH3 PHONO AMP £800
- AUDIO RESEARCH V70 POWERAMP £1,250
- AUDIO RESEARCH CLASSIC T20 MONOBLOCKS £8,000
- AUDIO RESEARCH VTI 50 MONOBLOCKS £2,400
- AUDIO RESEARCH REFERENCE 600 MONOBLOCKS £7,000
- AUDIO RESEARCH LS16mk2 £3,750
- AUDIO STATIC 5s [new] £5,550
- AUDIO SYNTHESIS DAX DECADE [DAC PRE] £3,000
- AUDIO VALVE BALDUR 70 MONOBLOCKS £3,100
- BASIS DEBUTE GOLD STANDARD/5EV £11,000
- BATWKS5 POWERAMP [X DEM] £1,800
- BOULDER PHONO STAGE £7,000
- CADENCE ANINA SPEAKERS [NEW] £4,500
- CANARY AUDIO CA303 MONOBLOCKS £1,900
- CARY CAD300 SIGNATURE SEAMPS £2,950
- CARY CAD500 SIGNATURE SEAMPS £3,000
- CASTLE HOWARD S2 SPEAKERS [OAK] £500
- CLEARAUDIO MASTER REFERENCE MASTER TQ1 ARM £14,000
- CONRAD JOHNSON PREMIER 8A MONOBLOCKS £6,500
- CONRAD JOHNSON ART 2 PREAMP £18,000

- CONRAD JOHNSON PREMIER 8A MONOS £7,995
- CONRAD JOHNSON PREMIER 2 PREAMP £500
- COPULARE 4 TIER STAND £995
- CYRUS PRE X [SILVER] £750
- GAMMA 211 MONOBLOCKS £1,200
- GAMUT CD2 £1,500
- JM LABS COBALT 807 SPEAKERS £350
- JEFF ROWLAND CONCENTRA MK2 [BOXED AS NEW] £2,995
- JM LAB MINI UTOPIA £1,500
- KONDO AUDIO NOTE [JAPAN] KASSAI SILVER [POWERAMP] £12,000
- LINN SONDEK LP1/2AKITO [CIRCUIT/TRAMPOLINK9] £550
- LINN SONDEK LP1/2BASIK PLUS £450
- LINN PEKIN PM/AM £400
- LUMLEY ST70 VALVE POWERAMP £650
- MARANTZ CD12 £2,450
- MARK LEVINSON ML380 PREAMP £1,200
- MCINTOSH MA 6850 INTEGRATED £4,500
- MCINTOSH MC2000 POWERAMP £1,500
- MUSE 18 SUBWOOFER [with active cards] £5,995
- MUSICAL FIDELITY DVD 1 £900
- MUSICAL FIDELITY DVD 1 450
- NAIM NAP10NAC62K PRE/POWER £1,200
- NOLA ELITE SIGNATURE SPEAKERS £295
- ORACLE ALEXANDRIA+ARM £4,250
- ORACLE ALEXANDRIA+ARM £550
- PASS LABS X150 POWERAMP £1,400
- PVC 588 SPEAKERS £1,495
- PROAC D15 SPEAKERS £12,000
- PROAC D15 SPEAKERS [STEM] £2,000
- PROAC D15 SPEAKERS [STEM] £2,000
- PLINIUS 250 POWERAMPLIFIER £2,500
- PLINIUS CD LAD MK2 PREAMP £995
- PS AUDIO 600 POWERPLANT £2,900
- ROKSAN XERXES 10 TURNTABLE + 1.5 PSU [AS NEW] £995
- ROWLAND CONCENTRA 2 £2,500
- ROWLAND SYNERGY PREAMP £3,500
- ROWLAND SYNERGY PREAMP £1,800
- SNELL TYPE A1 TYPE2 SPEAKERS £5,995
- SNELL TYPE A1 TYPE2 SPEAKERS [LATEST] £4,500
- SOUNDLAB A1 SPEAKERS [VERY LATEST] £5,995
- TANNAY CANTERBURY'S £950
- TOM EVANS GROOVE PHONO STAGE £2,000
- WADIA 2700/271X DAC TRANSPORT [LATEST MODEL] £7,995
- WELLS MEDIA DAC £4,500
- WILSON BENESCH-FACTOR £9,000
- WILSON SYSTEM 7 WATT/PUPPY [LATEST] £1,800
- WYD REFERENCE CYCLONE AUDIO NOTE [KONDO] £12,995
- WYD REFERENCE CYCLONE AUDIO NOTE [KONDO] £2,500

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## LUXMAN

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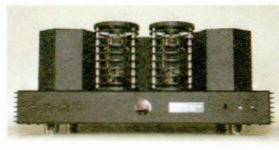
The magnificent new Luxman L-509f integrated amplifier delivers an effortless 150wpc - 225wpc and provides the most capable array of control, flexibility and facilities.

Hi-fi's finest traditions have been brought right up-to-date by Luxman with this masterstroke of sheer musicality ... and for just £3,795.



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## KR AUDIO

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AUDION Sterling Integrated (£134) amplifier	New valves	£645
AUDIOSTATIC DC1 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 VK-P5 Phono stage	New, boxed	£1395
CARY 300B SE Monoblocks (£2,750 +)	Mint, boxed	£1995
CONRAD JOHNSON EFi Phono-stage (£2000)	Mint, boxed	£895
CONSONANCE Ref 1.2 Pre-amp (£2,995)	Ex-dem, boxed	£1995
CROFT Charisma 'X Spec' Pre-amp. Upgraded.	Mint, boxed	£1795
DENSEN Beat 400XS CD Player with Gizmo	Very little use, boxed	£1795
GRAAF GM50B Integrated Amp	As new, boxed	£2895
HORNING Agathon in oak	Beautiful	£2795
HORNING Zeus in cherry (£2,000)	Ex-dem, few hours only	£1395
KIMBER Kabel Type Bag Spkr cable 1.6mtr (£3,000)	Unmarked	£895
KR AUDIO Valves - Now in stock. Models 300B, 2A3, 845		NEW
LINN SONDEK LP12 (Trampoline) Fully serviced and offered complete with a brand new Origin Live Ultra DC motor drive, and a brand new origin Live Conqueror arm. (Circa £4,500)	Mint	£2,995
QUAD ESL 57 (Very late serial numbers)	Unmarked	£795
QUAD ESL 57 (Brand new panels)	Unmarked	£1295
MANTICORE Mantra + Musician Tonearm	Superb	£425
PAPWORTH M200 Monoblocks 2004 (£4995)	Mint, boxed	£2995
PROAC Response 1SC	Unblemished	£745
SOUNDLAB A3 Oak - fabulous speakers	Coming shortly	
TOWNSHEND Isolda Spkr Cables - 3mtr banana	Mint	£375
UNISON S2K Integrated valve amp.	Beautiful, boxed	£895
XTC DTD1LE CD Transport Remote control.	As new, boxed	£495

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## digital

Marantz CD6000OSE Ki Signature, in black, mint	£249
TEAC P700 CD transport, boxed as new	£399
Marantz CD94, boxed manual 9/10 condition, very very rare	£369
Meridian G08 CD player, boxed as new (£2250)	£1495
McIntosh MCD1000 and MDA1000 DAC/Transport (£14330)	£90A
Unison Research Unico CD triode valve CD player (£1295)	£995
Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista CD player, one owner, as new condition	£1395
Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista 21 DAC - boxed as new	£895
Bel Canto PL-1, boxed as new, ex-dem. (£6990)	£90A
Primare D30.2 boxed (£1595)	£795
Cyrus Discmaster CD Transport, Black, PSX-R available, see misc	£295
Bel Canto PL-1 Universal CD/DVD-ASACD boxed as new (£9490)	£90A
Audio Synthesis DAX Discrete in Black (£4000)	£2195
EAD DSP 9000 Pro S3 DAC pre	£995
Wadia 302 CD player (£4000)	£2995
Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista CD Player	£1495
Shanling CDT-100 (3D acoustics UK model) - £1600	£990
Audio Analogue Paganini (£950)	£695
Musical Fidelity A308CD player	£995
Roksan Kandy MKIII silver/black ex-dem	£450

## amplifiers

Copland CSA 28 integrated amplifier, excellent. (£1500)	£695
McIntosh MA2275 valve integrated, ex-dem (£5773)	£90A
Chord SPM 4000 in silver with integra legs, mint (£9500)	£4995
Audio Valve Eclipse Pre-amplifier, boxed as new (£2395)	£1295
Pathos TR-RR integrated amplifier, one owner (£3595)	£1995
Conrad Johnson PV-10BL pre amp, mint	£545
Jeff Rowland Model 8 ti power amplifier, mint (£14000)	£5895
Roksan Caspian M1 pre + 2x M1 Mono blocks, mint, (£3500)	£1995
Bel Canto Evo4, boxed as new, ex-dem (£3499)	£90A
Bel Canto Pre2, boxed as new, ex-dem (£2999)	£90A
Bel Canto EVO 2i, boxed as new, ex-dem (£2750)	£90A
Rotel Pre/Mono Combination RCD3 pre with 2x RB05 Mono blocks,	£495
Graaf GM50, black, 2 months old, boxed as new (£4000)	£2995
Meridian 557 Power amplifier, boxed, one owner, excellent	£795
McIntosh MA6500 integrated amplifier, ex-dem (£3361)	£90A
Nagra VPA mono blocks, boxed (£10500)	£6399
McIntosh MC501 Monoblocks (pair), boxed as new, ex-dem (£7800)	£90A
McIntosh MC-T200 8x140 watts, home cinema heaven ex-dem (£6503)	£90A
AVI Lab Series Integrated amplifier (£1500)	£949
Conrad Johnson PV14L pre, 2yrs old (£2300)	£1250
Unison Research SR-1 integrated (£1325)	£699
ES Lab DXS4 digital amplifier	£1295
Croft TS1 with Epoch Pre (£3000)	£1795
ART Conductor Pre-amp	£895
Audio Analogue Puccini Settanta (£950)	£795
Suggden Masterclass Mono blocks (£6600)	£3895
Musical Fidelity X-150 v3 (£799)	£650
Hovland HP100 pre-built in phstage (£5350)	£3595
Hovland Radia Power amplifier (£7995)	£4995
Hovland HP200 + phono stage (£7325)	£4995
Audio Analogue New Maestro (£1750)	£1255
Audio Analogue Primo Setanta	£325
Roksan Kandy MKIII (silver or black)	£450

## loudspeakers

Monitor Audio GR10 speakers in cherry, mint (£850)	£390
ATC SCM 50 ASL, boxed as new, upgrade maple burr finish (£2000) + stands (£600), new would have cost in xs of £10000	£4595
ART Expression V6, boxed as new, one owner in cherry (£3250)	£1995
Usher AC10 loudspeakers, Very rare in Walnut (£7000)	£2995
Martin Logan Aeries I, oak finish (£2800)	£995
ATC SCM-50ASL, finished in Yew, boxed as new (£7947)	£4995
PMC OB1 speakers in cherry, boxed as new (£2700)	£1595
Klipsch Klipschorns. Original boxes/packing, mint walnut (£8000)	£2495
Wilson Benesch Curve speakers (£5000)	£3495
Dali Helicon 400 (£3300)	£1995
LivingVoice Avatar II, finished in cherry (£2700)	£1595
Nola (Alon) Elite Signature speakers (£8000)	£3595
Ref 3a Dacapo i, maple (£2700)	£1650
Triangle Heliade, Champagne finish (£595)	£395
Wilson Benesch ARC's with stands (£2500)	£1699
Triangle Australe in cherry (£3300)	£1995
LivingVoice Avatar OBX-R in Cherry	£2895
Wilson Benesch Discovery (£5700)	£3895
Quad 989 ESL Vintage, new £5000	£3600
Quad 988 ESL in Nouveau, cost new £3750	£2999
Audio Physic Spark3, Cherry or light maple	£1250
Audio Physic Tempo 3i, Cherry or light maple	£1395
Audio Physic Tempo3i SE, Cherry/light maple	£1799
Audio Physic Virgo III, Cherry	£2895

## misc analogue

Pro-ject Tube Box - as new - superb valve phono stage	£195
Linn LP12, Ittak (V1), one owner, very good condition	£495
Trichord Dino Phono Stage (Never Connected PSU) £890	£590
Audio Synthesis Passion Phono stage, boxed unused (£1295)	£695
Ortofon Jubilee, very low hours, boxed as new, be quick!	£595
SME 10, boxed AS NEW (£2800)	£1895
SME 20/2a + SME V tonearm (£5695)	£3695
Wilson Benesch Full Circle-Ply Cart (£2100)	£1495
Michell Orbe SE boxed as new	£1595
SME 10A, boxed	£2495
Nottingham Analogue Spacedec	£695
Trichord Dino - silver front	£199
ISOLB Mainline2 digital mains lead, in-line filter (£225)	£129
Kimber 4TC 2x 4.5m (£262) Kimbers best selling speaker cable	£145
Totem Beaks - acoustic resonance tuner £150	£69
PS Audio P300 power plant with multiwave + Carbas £400 mains lead	£895
Audio RS1, top of the range headphones (£750)	£450
Atlas Navigator XLR Interconnect, 2.5m (£400)	£225
Naim Hi Cap, boxed as new	£550
Nordost Vishnu 2m mains lead, one owner as new (£450)	£249
PS Audio P600 power plant (£2895)	£1495
Townshend Super Tweeters in Titanium matt	£650

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## New Products on Evaluation

I am always looking out for new and interesting products, (though they may just be new to me), and one I came across and has just arrived today, is a new range of interconnects and speaker cable, by Moving Air called Abbey Road Cables, ([www.movingairproducts.com](http://www.movingairproducts.com)) and are used at that famous location. Obviously they will need running in, but initial listening sounds very promising, and the prices are not unreasonable, so if interested do give me a ring. I have also been listening to one of the more expensive ALR Jordan speakers (Classic 5 @ £1200), a larger floorstander than the usual 'Entry S' model that I still consider to be the best 5.1 system I know @ £1250, but also makes an excellent small speaker for stereo @ £250. Excellent speaker, but await AVI Duo before deciding!

SALE ITEM	NORMAL PRICE	SALE PRICE
ATC SCM50SL (ROSEWOOD - As new)	£5500	£3000
ATC SCM20SL (WALNUT) + STANDS	£2600	£1400
RUARK SOLSTICE (OAK) NEW	£4000 +	£2500
RUARK CL10 (CHERRY)	£1200	£600
RUARK BROADSWORDS (ROSEWOOD)		
One damaged cabinet	£750	£200
AVI BIGATRON(CHERRY)	£600	£350
CHORD 800 POWER AMP	£2000	£900
ALON PETITE SPEAKERS (WALNUT)	£1200	£600
ESLAB DX -P10+S PRE/S40 Power/	£3400	£2200

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VALVE AMPS: AUDIO RESEARCH LS15, boxed as new £1350	TOTEM MITES [E499] AS NEW, boxed £325
AUDIO RESEARCH L50, boxed as new £650	MONOPULSE 42A's ex-dem, seriously dynamic £795
AUDIO NOTE OTO SE serviced £675	TDI ELECTRONICS REFERENCE STUDIO 4 HUGE FLOORSTANDING £1500
BEARD P35 MK1 £475	MULTI-FACED SPEAKERS [seven units per cab, in black] [£6500] £1500
WORLD AUDIO EL34 AMP £550	QUAD ESL57's black, known history £850
AUDION EL34 STEREO POWER AMP £899	QUAD ESL 63 Speakers complete service by QUAD £1250
AUDION 300B STEREO POWER AMP ex-dem [£2150] £1500	QUAD ESL 63 Speakers complete service by ONE THING £1250
Black Cat Electronics PX4 Valve, PAIR of MONO bloc's [Lowthers/Tannon] £1500	Jordan Watts Modular speakers rare matched pair ex-BBC £295
ARION Class A Valve Integrated AMP uses 5881 valves £1850	Snell speakers K's fantastic small speaker £325
Croft Super Micro tube phono/pre-amp £1400	CELESTION VF302, 's' shaped style, [£650] £325
Audion CD1 Valve pre-amp - classy sound £325	Monitor Audio Monitor 3 Speakers (Top Tweeter Model) £275
ANTHEM X1 EL 34 single ended stereo valve integrated amplifier £650	Epos ES 11 brilliant small stand mounter £245
BAT 3K1, hybrid, phono stage, boxed £275	Epos M15's excellent all rounder, floor standers £350
MISTRAL 5801 push-pull 20 watt integrated £325	RUARK SABRES, cherry £275
TRANSISTOR: £325	RUARK Equinox in black, very nice!! £275
ETALON Suprampli remote, 40watts, simply stunning £525	Celestion SL6's excellent cond. £275
KELVIN LAB5 class A, MM and MC phono stages £1400	Heybrook Quintets,gold pizto tweeter [£1450] £425
MVL A1 integrated, class A, 100 watts £1500	VENNA ACOUSTICS Mozart speakers, as new, boxed [£1500] £950
NAIM NAC42, mint £525	QUAD 111's cherry, beautiful £249
NAIM MAC 2.5, as new, phono by pass mod £375	JR149, metal cylindrical speakers like BBC LS3/5a's mint £375
NAIM SNAPs, just serviced £375	MERIDIAN M3's, active, as new plus stands and all cables £375
NAP 110 very nice £425	USHER standmounts S520'S £265
MISTRAL integrated, black, warm but dynamic £450	CD PLAYERS: £595
CYRUS 1 good classic £150	MARANTZ CD17 MKII [£850] £225
LINX STRATOS VDH wired pre-amp dual-mono £225	Audio Innovations fish-eye CD-TUNER boxed as new £725
QUAD 66 pre-amp with large console control £225	CYRUS DAD7 & PSX as new and boxed £725
QUAD 606 mint £225	HEART CD6000OSE LE £750
QUAD 66 two mono blocks, excellent condition £95	SHANLING SCD 1200C[NEW] £2150
QUAD 77 integrated, boxed £275	SHANLING DTD100 VALVE cd player, as new boxed £175
QUAD 3344 pre-amps, 303/306/405 power amps £375	Marantz CD6000 OSE as new boxed £125
Always available 11 and 12 Pre-amp and Power Supply £350	Graham Slee phono stage GRAM AMP 1 £150
Exposure Super 8 Power Amp £185	Graham Slee phono stage GRAM AMP 2 £150
Arcam Alpha 8 amp £185	Graham Slee phono stage GRAM AMP 1 £98
Marantz PM60100SE integrated, boxed, as new £185	Graham Slee phono stage GRAM AMP 2 Communicator MMMC £185
Meridian 201 pre £175	GARRARD 401, very good cond, SME plinth, 3009 arm, Ortofon cart £485
Musical Fidelity B1 excellent condition £175	LINN SONDEK LP12, Valhalla, LVV ARM, LINN X9 CARTRIDGE £525
Musical Fidelity A1 very nice £165	THORENS TD 125-SME 3009 ARM-John Morris SPIRALEX plinth-SHURE V15 £625
LUXMAN C-120A HIGH END PRE-AMPLIFIER warm sound £225	MICHELL gyrocde SE £940
Musical Fidelity P140 Power Amp in new condition £1950	MICHELL Technodec £575
Suggden CS1/PS1, classic pre-power combo in very good cond. £295	MICHELL Techno Arm 'A' £419
Tandberg 3002 Pre Amp £175	ORIGIN LIVE AURORA £970
SPEAKERS: £550	ORIGIN LIVE AURORA GOLD £1470
LIVING VOICE - Auditoriums-as new-boxed, maple [£1750] £450	ORIGIN LIVE MODIFIED OLT ARM £444
ETALON Supraton 1 £850	
ETALON Supraton 2 very natural sound £920	
NAIM Credo's in cherry beautiful, boxed £1950	
AUDIO NOTE AN-J LOUDSPEAKERS with stands £775	
KEF 105/2 REFERENCE LOUDSPEAKERS, darlek type £550	

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Pathos 2 box pre-amp - spotless	£1700	
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EAR 534 power amplifier - excellent condition	£1100	
Audio Note DAC 3 with Border Patrol PSU	£1200	£2600
Naim CD5 - 2003 - mint - manual - boxed	£795	
Border Patrol Control Unit - line pre-amp	£1000	£1700
Audio Note Japan M7 pre-amp - line only	£3000	
Musical Fidelity A2 Integrated - very nice	£250	£500
Art XFX P25 - 5watts - Single ended flea power for the sensitive type	£3000	£4000
Krell KAV-300iL	£1900	£3000
Helios Model 1 CD player	£500	£1300
Teac BRDS 10SE CD player - reclocked	£400	
SJS Phono amp	£750	£2000
AVI S.2000 M1 integrated amp	£400	£1000
Border Patrol P21 - mahogany - integrated - 11 months	£3800	£4800
Audio Mecca Mephisto CD transport	£1000	£2500
Canary 303 [110v] - new - fillet mignon	£3800	£7200
B&W CDM	£290	
Audio Innovations L2 pre-amp	£450	
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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Digital	Amplifiers	Speakers	Analogue
AH1 Njoe Tjoeb 99 nr mint boxed	199 Albany AP4 Preamp, Active/Passive	249 Acoustic Energy AE1 ex, new bass drivers	399 Alchemist Bragi Phono stage c/w Forsetti p/s
Arcam CD82T as new	399 Arcam A85 Integrated, nr mint boxed	419 Acoustic Energy AE1 Mk2 vgc	449 Audio Research PH3SE, nr mint boxed
Arcam CD72T	199 Arcam Alpha 9 Preamp, remote, nr mint boxed	249 Acoustic Energy AE1 Mk3 ex dem	Call Chord Phono stage, ex boxed
Arcam CD331, nr mint boxed	749 Arcam Alpha 9 Poweramp nr mint boxed	299 Acoustic Energy AE2, ex black	349 JBE StateSeries 3Mission774 rare as...
Audiolab 8000CCDM and DAC	699 Arcam Alpha FMJ C30 Preamp	999 Acoustic Energy AE2, ex piano black, c/w stands	Kinshaw Perception phono stage and p/s
Audiomeca Obsession ex, boxed	399 Audio Analogue Maestro, 150w Reference, nr mint crated	349 Acoustic Energy AE505, nr mint boxed	Linn LP12/Synrx PU3 ex afromosia
AVI Lab series CD player, less than 1 yr old	129 Audiolab 8000A Integrated	249 ATC SCM20, Piano black, vgc, boxed stands	Linn LP12/Lingo/Ekos, afromosia, boxed
Marantz DV4 1000SE	129 AudioNote OTO, nr mint a steal at	599 AudioNote ANJ-SPE ex, boxed	Linn LP12/Lingo/Akito
Marantz CD63KI Signature, ex remote	199 Audio Research VT100 Power, as new boxed	1999 AVI Posttron, burr finish, ex	Linn LP12/OL Advanced DC Kit
Marantz CD17 KI nr mint	499 Audio Research LS25 Preamp/Power, as new boxed	2299 AVI NuNeutron IV ex, boxed cherry	Call Linn Ittok 12"
Marantz CD6000SE LTD Edition version	149 AVI S2000M Integrated fair	349 B&W CDM7NT, ex, boxed	Linn Ekos, nr mint boxed
Marantz SA1 vgc boxed	SOLD AVI S2000MP/MM Pre/Monos	899 B&W CDM1 marked	Linn Ekos, nr mint boxed
Meridian 208, ex 209 remote and phono stage	349 Bryston BP25 and 4BSt Pre/Power, mm/vmc, remote	749 Castle Eden, ex boxed	249 Michell Gyrodec Export
Meridian 200 Transport, ex remote	299 Cairn Mea Monoblocks, as new, Class A yum	1199 Dynaudio Contour 1.3 Mk2, vgc	Michell Reference Hydraulic/Fluid arm
Meridian 263 DAC	299 Chord SPM 1000B	699 EPOS M15, Dark Cherry, vgc boxed	249 Michell Focus One/Mission 774LC arm
Meridian 507/24, ex remote	179 Creek 4330Mk2 Integrated, remote, as new boxed	249 Jamo Concert 111 ba	299 Michell Gyrodec SE, nr mint boxed
Micromega Stage 1	749 Crinson 610C/630D Pre/Monos, nr mint boxed	599 Jamo Concert 111 ba	Call Michell Technoarm/Technoarm A from
Micromega Stage 2 and matching DAC	179 Croft Linestage Preamp	499 KEF RDM1, nr mint boxed, superb bookshelf	599 Michell Mycro RB300 Incognito rewire, ex
Micromega T-drive and T-dac, nr mint boxed	399 Cyrus Power, ex boxed	249 KEF RDM1, nr mint boxed, superb bookshelf	249 Michell IsoHera
Micromega Duo CD3/BS2, nr mint boxed	799 Cyrus 3 Integrated, ex boxed	179 PMC FB1, nr mint boxed	498 NIRM Source heavyweight suspended deck
Micromega Optic bargain intro to Micromega	899 Denon POA6600 Monoblocks, ex boxed	699 PMC FB1, nr mint boxed	699 Nottingham Analogue The Foot Tonearm
Monarchy DIP vgc	129 Densen DM30 Power, ex boxed	649 QUAD ESL63 Floorstander, Quad serviced 2005 REDUCED!!!	3749 Oracle Delphi V, full version, turbo ps, SME IV as new
Musical Fidelity XPSU v3 as new	149 Graaf WB72 and 50/50 Pre/Power combo, ex boxed	1249 QUAD ESL63 Floorstander	Origin Live fully modded OL, as new only a few months old
Musical Fidelity CDT	179 ITL MA80/MA100/MA100 Pre/Power x2 lovely combo	349 QUAD 11L Standmount, boxed - REDUCED	349 Origin Live Aurora Gold ex dem
Musical Fidelity A3CD, nr mint boxed	199 Lumley Reference 120 Monoblocks	249 QUAD 12L Standmount as new	429 Origin Live Silver as new
Musical Fidelity MW SACD as new	399 Meridian 555 power	899 Revolver R33 ex dem, well reviewed bargain	249 Ortofon Kontrapunkt A
Myryad T20, nr mint boxed	2999 Meridian 505 Monoblocks, ex boxed	899 Sonus Faber Electa Amator 2, nr mint boxed c/w stands	Call Ortofon Kontrapunkt B
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NVA Statement, ex crated	199 Micromega Tempo 2	449 Tannoy Chatsworth Floorstander	300 Ortofon MC30 Supreme
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Roksan Caspian, nr mint	499 Musical Fidelity X80, as new	279 Warfedale Diamond series, various	Call Project Phono box LE boxed certificate
Rotel RCD971 ex, remote	349 Musical Fidelity A3 Integrated	449 Wilson Benesch Orator, ex boxed	59 Rega Planar 2/RB250, good
TEAC T1/D1 ex	179 Musical Fidelity Pre/Typhoon	299 Rega Planar 2/RB250, ex boxed	179 Rega Planar 3/RB300
Technics SL-Z1000/SH-X1000 Trans/DAC ex, boxed	549 Odyssey HT3, 3 Channel 180w power amp	799 Rega Planar 3/RB300	79 Rote/RD970
Theta Data Basic 2 Transport, nr mint boxed	1499 Odyssey Stratos, nr mint stereo power	699 Cyrus - PSXR, ex boxed	SME IV nearly new, nr mint boxed etc
Theta DS Pro Progeny	599 Odyssey Kharifago, nr mint stereo power	499 JPW 204/200/208 - 5.1 Speakers	399 SME 3009 boxed
Theta Pearl Transport, nr mint boxed	199 NAIM 521/40 Pre/Power, nr mint - REDUCED	299 Isotek Cleanline	299 Thorens TD160b boxed
	399 Pathos Logos, just back from UKD service, ex boxed remote	149 Musical Fidelity A3 Amp/CD/Tuner	Call Thorens TD125/SME3009
	499 Quad 405 and 405/2 Power various from	229 Musical Fidelity Xcans v3 as new	249 Thorens TD160b/Mayware vgc
	249 Quad 44 Preamp ex boxed	139 Nordost Shiva Mains 2m	299 Townshend Elite Rock Mk2/Mission 774LC
	299 Quad 77 Integrated ex	149 Nordost Red Dawn RCA 1m	149 Transcriptors Skeleton/Vestigal
	549 Quad 707 Power, ex	749 Nordost Blue Heaven RCA 1m	99 Transcriptors Hydraulic Reference
	79 Quad 909 SEALED BOX	149 Nordost Blue Heaven XLR 0.6m	799 Transcriptors Saturn, vgc
	159 Roksan Caspian M Pre/Monos x/dem	49 Nordost Solar Wind 1m	349 Transfiguration Split 3, 50 hours max - REDUCED
	79 Marantz ST4000 ex	349 ProjectHeadbox	599 Trichord/Dino, as new
	199 Myryad T30, nr mint boxed	299 Pure Elan portable DAB, new	199 Voyt Vaid/Helius Scorpio, fair
	199 Nakamichi DR2 ex	Call QUAD 99CDP/909, ex boxed	849 Whest Audio Phono Stage
	199 Nakamichi 1.5 ex	499 QUAD 34/306 Pre/Power, nr mint grey	349 Williams Hart two box phono stage
	89 Pure 701ES ex, boxed	699 TEAC A1/D1/T1 - Amp/CD/Tuner	449 Wilson Benesch Act/Act 2 arm ex
	149 Quad FM2 the great hybrid, Quad serviced 2005		
	199 Quad FM4 ex boxed		
	349 Sony JA50ES Minidisc		

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**Welcome** to *Hi-Fi Choice Reader Classified*, the UK's first and best free private ads service for second hand hi-fi. These pages a must-read if you're thinking about buying used kit, and if you want to sell something it's definitely the place to be. It's free to place an advertisement – simply submit your ad of up to 30 words,

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## FOR SALE

### ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE1

speakers, rosewood, dedicated stands, £495. Alphason VR5555, five-shelf rack, £160. Audiolab 8000MX monoblocks, £795. Musicworks block, £110. All excellent 0117 9629725 (Bristol).

### AUDIO NOTE UK valve system.

Pre/power, CD transport, DAC, floorstanding speakers, (£3,000) £1,700. 01992 300713 (Herts).

**AUDIOQUEST** speaker cable, 4x1.5m, £100. Townshend DCT interconnect, £50. Wadia 301 CD player, £2,500. John 020 8418 9437 (Laughton).

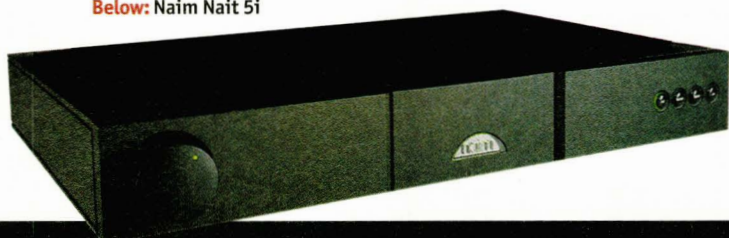
**B&W 804** 18 months old, excellent centre or rear, £750. Meridian 568.2 surround processor, superb condition, £1,500. 020 8450 5506 (London).

**B&W NAUTILUS 801**, black ash. Mint condition, boxes available. Will demonstrate, £4,700 ono. 07930 396086 (London).

**B&W SNT** rear surround speakers, black ash veneer, bi-wire, 120w max power, eight ohms impedance, metal dome tweeter, bass/midrange Kevlar, as new, boxed, (£700) £350 four years warranty. 01782 256087 (Staffs)

**CHORD DAC64** (latest model), mint, one year old, boxed with manual and cables (optical and Stereovox HDVX), £1,500. Bob, after 6pm please 01245 252015 (Chelmsford, Essex).

**Below:** Naim Nait 5i



### CLASSE 30 preamp, (£1,800)

£450, very good condition. 01491 613760 (Oxford).

### COINCIDENT SPEAKER

Technology TRS-1 speaker cables. Three metre single pair. Good condition with original box. True reference cable, (\$1,495) £390 07815 819318 or email [saifulkassim@hotmail.com](mailto:saifulkassim@hotmail.com).

**CUSTOM MADE** six tier isolation rack, spiked top and bottom in oak, (£760) £230. 0115 9126424 (Notts).

**CYRUS 781** bookshelf loudspeakers, rosewood, boxed, lovely condition and sound, £100. 01751 430911 (York).

**DALI EUPHONIA** Sub, centre and rears very good condition, in flight cases, in Alpi dark wood veneer, (£7,500) £3,000. What a bargain. 07734 054534 (Sussex)

**DALI PIANO AV** set including Noble fronts, centre, rears and sub. All in aluminium. Very stylish set in good condition, (£2,800) £1,200. 07734 054534 (Sussex).

**DYNAUDIO BARGAINS** Special 25 (new) in masser birch, £2,000. Dynaudio 1.4s (new), £1,000. Audience 82 (second user), £650. Also, new Audience 42s, £250 and 52s, £400. Please call anytime 01732 741883 (Kent).

**DYNAUDIO AUDIENCE 42** speakers in cherry wood. Mission Stanlette stands and QED X-Tube XT300, 3m pair, excellent condition, still under warranty, £350. 07981 863670 (Aberdeen)

### ELECTROCOMPANIEI fully

balanced 4.7 preamp and 120AWB dual mono power amp. Boxed, £1,800 ono. Kimber Select series 1120 balanced interconnects 0.5 and 0.75m, £150 and £200. Including carriage cases, both pristine condition. Craig 07990 898736 (Shropshire).

**EXPOSURE XXV RC** amplifier, £430. Castle Avon speakers (mahogany), includes Audioquest bi-wire and plugs, £250. Excellent condition, original packaging Beverley, after 6pm 01482 887409 (Hull).

**GALE 401s** mint, rebuilt, £400 ono. Pioneer C90 and M90 pre/power reference amps, £400. 01942 720220 (Wigan).

**HI-FI CHOICE MAGAZINES** No 171 (1997) to date plus a choice of other mags (*Hi-Fi News*, *Hi-Fi World*) – free if you collect. Or otherwise £2 each plus p&p, quantity discounts available. Evenings and Saturdays only please 01704 57832 (Southport).

**HI-FI CHOICE MAGAZINES** 205 to 261. Hi-Fi Plus 27 to 34, £20. Rega Bias cartridge, used only once, £15. Fukakawa 1m interconnect, £20. 020 8590 8530 (Ilford). ▶

## WANTED

**A&R T21** tuner and A&R P60 power amp, must both be in good condition. 01873 856499 (Gwent).

**BRYSTON 4B-SST** amplifier. Good price paid 01487 814015 (Camps).

**DENON AU320 MC** transformer. 01942 891741(Wigan).

**MARANTZ CD63MKII KI** Signature, fully functioning, black, made in Japan and in excellent condition. Will pay reasonable price. 07974 274615 (W Yorks)

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A308CR** power amp. 0115 9126424 (Notts).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY TRI-VISTA** 21 DAC. Will pay good price, must be excellent condition. 0121 601 0325 (West Mids).

**NORDOST VALHALLA** speaker cable and digital lead with standard plugs. Will pay cash. 01264 335479 (Andover)

**ROTEL RC5000** preamp and RB5000 power amp. 01942 720220 (Cheshire).

**SHAHINIAN ARCS** or Celestion A3. 01722 334694 (Wilts)

## 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**

**INFINITY BLACK WIDOW** tonearm with SME base, as new, £120. Two Monitor Audio MA150 bass speaker drive units, unused in original packaging, £40. Several good cartridges 01227 219639 (Essex).

**JA MITCHELL REFERENCE** hydraulic transcription turntable, circa 1979. Serial number K798933 with SME 3009 series 11 arm. Original box, £525 onvo. 01305 889664 (Dorset)

**KEF QI** speakers, (four), one KEF Q9C centre speaker in maple. As new in boxes, £250. 07729 422585 (Crawley).

**KEF Q35**, Q95c and 60s speakers. Good condition, boxed, sell as set, £350. Rel Q50, £150. Rotel RA-972, (£550) £200. Alan 07841 715340 (Staffs)

**KEF 104/ 2** Reference speakers complete with Kube, (£2,300) bargain at £465 or near offer. 01992 572098 (Epping).

**KEF REFERENCE 1.2** new, boxed, unwanted gift, £600 onvo. Audiolab 8000A, black, excellent condition, £220 020 8678 6853 (S.London).

**KRELL KAV300i** integrated amp, £1,000. Copland CD player CDA266, £650. Both with remote, boxed, hardly used, excellent condition. 01494 439689 (Bucks).

**LEAK STEREO 20**, valve power amp with Leak Varislope 2 Stereo preamp. Also Leak Stereo 30. 020 8830 8003 (North London).

**LINN IKEMI** CD player, immaculate condition, boxed and little use, £750 onvo. 01384 894284 (W.Mids).

**LINN SONDEK** mint condition, needs cart, £300 onvo 01225 429170 (Bath)

**LIVING VOICE AUDITORIUM** Cherry veneer, mint condition, award winners in Hi-Fi Choice and Hi-Fi +, (£1,700) £1,100 07899 808918 (Kent)

**MARANTZ** PM8200 amp as new, (£500) £150. 07903 613418 (London).

**MERIDIAN 506** CD player, boxed, great sound and build and demo welcome, £390 onvo. 020 8694 9350 (London)

**MICHELL HERA 150** phono, £400. Linn Valhalla and motor, £100, cardboard speakers, £150. 01606 784767 (Cheshire).

**MICROMEGA STAGE 6 CD** player, £375 onvo. Andy 01503 549071 (Norfolk)

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A3.2CR** pre and power amps, £895 the pair, or can split. Mint, boxed, manuals. 07941 174804 (Berks).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY NUVISTA** SACD player. 20th Anniversary edition. Mint, all original packaging and ancillaries. One careful owner, (£4,000) £2,900. Evenings 01525 635909 (Beds).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY TRI-VISTA** 300 amp, two box. Two sets of interconnects, excellent condition, (£4,000) £2,350. (Somerset).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY X-RAY V3** CD player, (£900) £600. Terry 020 8482 0363 (Enfield)

**MUSICAL FIDELITY X-LP** phono, £50. X-50 monoblocks, £250. X-Pre, £75. All boxes, manuals, very good condition. Evenings 028 417 64088 (N Ireland).

**NAIM NAIT 5** amp and Flatcap 2 power supply, £600 onvo the pair. 07917 004044 (Hants).

**NAIM NAIT 51** amp. Few hours use, boxed with two-year guarantee, (£700) £550. 01782 785734 (Stoke On Trent).

**NAIM SBL** speakers, black on Mana sound bases, £750. 01722 334694 (Wilts)

**PHILIPS DVD963** SACD player (£400). *Hi-Fi World* says, "Creamy CD sound allied to super SACD and DVD". Brand new, boxed, £275. 020 8951 3178 (Middx)

**PROAC RESPONSE 1** speakers, (£1,000) and Target stands, £375. Rel Stadium subwoofer, £400. Cyrus pre/power, £400 (MC). All one owner little used. 01977 732562 (W Yorks).

**ROKSAN TABRIZ** tonearm new, boxed, (£455) £100. Roksan Chorus, (£155) £45. Rega Elys, £30. Sennheiser PXC250, (£100) £40. Delly 07879 650913 (Luton).

**QUAD 44/ 405** £250. Celestion SL6, £50 01732 741883 (Kent)

**QUAD 63S** brown, £500, very good condition. 33 preamp with MM and MC boards, plus 405/2 power amp, £250. 01743 289240 (Shropshire).

**SME 3012**, Garrard 401, Shure V15 II all in good order, £300. Vinyl record collection, £200. Barrie 01564 776911 (Solihull).

**SONY CDP101** original flagship player complete with remote and handbook. Excellent condition, a bargain at £70. 01278 782622 (Somerset).

**SONY DVP-S7700** reference machine in gold. Multichannel

component output. Matches SE series, a steal at £200. Originally paid £900. 01903 523 268 (Sussex)

**SONY XA9000ES SACD** player, one week old, black. Stereophile A plus rated. 020 8951 3178 (Edgware).

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