

# HI-FI CHOICE

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See page 22




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HFC LABS



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**ROKSAN** New British speakers you must hear!



**FUNK** Sexy vinyl sounds for less than £500!



**MARANTZ** Superb new amp blows us away!



**FREE!** 2nd hand hi-fi mini-mag!



## ULTIMATE GROUP TEST >>> SPEAKERS

- FEATURING**
- > ALR Jordan Entry L
  - > Arcam Alto
  - > B&W CM1
  - > Dynaudio Focus 110
  - > Monitor Audio RS6
  - > Opera Prima

**\* BUYER'S BIBLE**  
The world's best hi-fi rated





# A different Classé

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

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020 8943 3530

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020 7487 3455

**Glasgow Audio**  
Glasgow  
0141 332 4707

**Sound Academy**  
Bloxwich  
01922 493499

# CLASSE

Welcome to the issue...

## HI-FI CHOICE MAY 2006 ISSUE 279

Future Publishing Ltd, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW ☎ +44 (0)20 7042 4000



Three things that rock my world. One, a crisp, cool beer on a sultry summer's day. Two, a bacon sandwich and a lusty cup of coffee the morning after. Three, coming home, slipping some music on the hi-fi and just drifting, drifting...

Music makes me laugh, it makes me cry. It cools my brain when I'm stressed and peaks my high when the adrenaline flows. I love music for the music's sake, but it's hi-fi that makes it something real, something absorbing. Never underestimate the emotive power of high fidelity.

This issue, we're paying homage to the products that made it all possible in *Hi-Fi That Rocked The World*, a supplement containing the 50 greatest hi-fi components ever to grace the UK. But hi-fi's not just about past glories – the future is bright, too. Starting on p35, our *Reviews* section features its highest-ever average score thanks to some great new kit.

Improving techniques and technologies, coupled with the pressure of competition, have led to rising standards in hi-fi. *HFC* only picks the strongest products for review – and we get the best kit first. It's a formula that has helped us to become the UK's only hi-fi magazine with a growing circulation, for the second consecutive year.

Our aim is to show you the hi-fi that in years to come will rock your world. So enjoy, until next time.

Tim Bower

Tim Bower 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*.



**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.



**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.



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

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

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

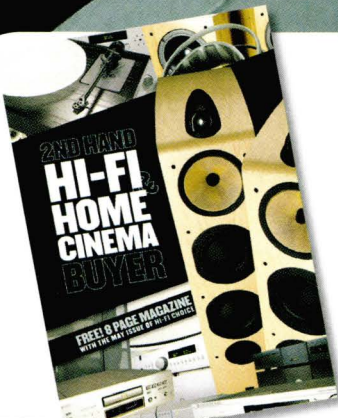
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## FREE MINI-MAG!

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

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





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## MERIDIAN M3100 ACTIVE LOUDSPEAKER

▶ With preamp 'modules' becoming increasingly common in high-end disc players, what better time to revisit active speakers? Meridian Audio has a new compact active standmount called the M3100 – a two-way, rear ported design with a distinctive cabinet. The box is made from braced wood with aluminium side panels, bonded for extra rigidity and offering "extremely low coloration", according to Meridian.

The drive units are equally as enticing – doped carbon-fibre with a cast alloy basket

plus a Meridian piston fabric tweeter. These are powered directly by independent, high power, low feedback amps with an "audiophile-grade" power supply. Meridian also has DSP versions of the speaker on the cards, based on a Motorola chipset and dual 24-bit delta-sigma convertors. Both can be controlled remotely via Meridian's MSR+ system remote too. So, could active be back on the hi-fi agenda?

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

**PRODUCT** Meridian M3100

**TYPE** Active standmount loudspeaker

**PRICE** £1,845 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Two 75-watt power amplifiers

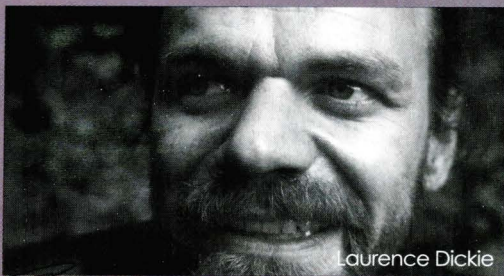
▶ Doped carbon fibre cones ▶ Balanced and single-ended inputs ▶ Wood/aluminium cabinets

▶ High power, low feedback amps

**CONTACT** ☎ 01480 445678

🌐 [www.meridian-audio.com](http://www.meridian-audio.com)





Laurence Dickie

# vivid audio .co.uk

Laurence Dickie, world-renowned designer of the famous Nautilus Loudspeaker system, has developed and patented new advanced drive units which are integral to the striking new Vivid Audio range of Loudspeakers. A true technical tour de force - both visually stunning and unquestionably musically rewarding.

It takes a special combination of characters to achieve successful partnerships. Vivid Audio has come into being because of the coming together of just that sort of team. Much of the innovation is the brainchild of the Brighton-based designer Laurence Dickie. Since a young age, Laurence Dickie has been passionate about music and the sciences but his particular obsession has been with loudspeakers. With his insatiable zest for learning and discovering, he has been developing his passion from school days through University and beyond. Laurence (Dic) has honed his skills in the design of loudspeakers of extraordinary performance. His achievements to date are noteworthy, to say the least, and he commands a deep respect from his peers. But, Dic does not simply design loudspeakers.....  
.....he takes the proposed design concept and improves it beyond the point most designers are happy to "sign off".

Joining forces with the South African contingent of Bruce and Deone Gessner and Philip Guttentag (forming Vivid Audio), was the ideal career move since he could now be involved in designing and engineering products in their entirety. It meant his having a say at every stage of development, from the acoustic performance to the aesthetic design of each product. Dic's involvement in the Vivid Audio story is one that started approximately five years ago when he set out to create a range of drivers for professional monitors. He was introduced to the other members of Vivid two years later when it quickly became clear that these same drivers would be eminently suitable for a new range of groundbreaking designs they had been developing.

For a new high-end speaker manufacturer to succeed it was clear from the outset that such a company would have to deliver products featuring more than just innovative engineering. These products would have to deliver an acoustic performance rendering them virtually invisible. They would need to refine acoustic performance to a new level which encourages the listener to want more, rather than tire and need a break.

Vivid Audio wanted to achieve all these things but not just at any price. That's why they made considerable effort to extract the best performance imaginable from each component using customary materials wherever possible. Which is why there are no standard parts to be found in any of their loudspeakers.

Every component is made to their own exacting specification. Most hidden away but quietly delivering a listening experience not to be forgotten.

" 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-FiNews, 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. "

To arrange an audition please contact:  
[vividaudio.co.uk](http://vividaudio.co.uk)

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

home cinema choice  
Gold Star  
Reference Status  
Guarantee



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



Rowles Music Limited





## CASTLE COMPACT COLUMN LOUDSPEAKER

▶ The slender Castle Compact Column (CCC) floorstander is the latest addition to the Compact range of speakers – a svelte bunch, said to offer power a-plenty from small boxes. The column is assembled and tested in Castle's Yorkshire factory, where the real-wood cabinets (in eight finish options) are also manufactured.

Drivers are provided by Klippel, with two optimised, glass-fibre 112mm units delivering the bass/mid. These drive units are both

timbre-matched with the rest of the Compact range. The 20mm soft dome tweeter is said to extend to over 40kHz. It features heavily braced and damped cabinets, plus an upmarket Linkwitz-Riley topology crossover. The CCC prefers close-to-wall placement, so it's ideal for smaller rooms. If you're after a floostander that combines compact style with sonic grace, it could be just the thing.

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

**PRODUCT** Castle Compact Column

**TYPE** Floorstanding loudspeaker

**PRICE** £550 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Twin bass/mid drivers from Klippel

▶ 20mm soft dome tweeter ▶ Choice of eight real-wood finishes ▶ Matching centre and rear speakers for multichannel set-ups

**CONTACT** ☎ 01756 795333

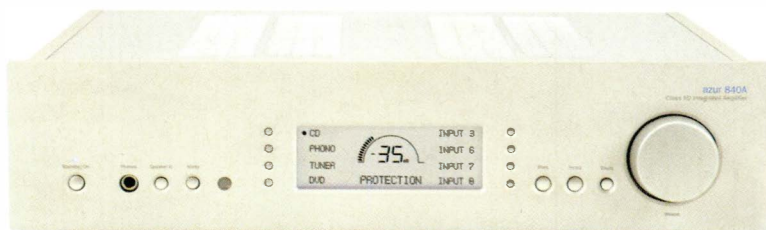
🌐 www.castle.uk.com

## NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

### SAXON AUDIO COMPONENT RANGE

A whole new range of British-built hi-fi has emerged from Saxon Audio – a division of Talk Electronics. Saxon is the brainchild of Talk proprietor Kevin Edwards, who has developed the UK-designed and built range over the last three years. It comprises three levels – the 300, 500 and 700 series, each offering a CD player and amplifier option. The entry-level 300 series kicks off around the £500 mark with a CD player and 50-watt amp, while the 500 series takes amp power to 75 watts and adds an advanced upsampling CD player. At the top end, the 700 series boasts a 100-watt integrated amp, a dual-differential upsampling CD player, plus a preamp and power amp. The Saxon Audio range has been built from the ground up and more products are coming later in the year.

**Price** From £400 to £1,000 **Due** now  
 ☎ 08456 123388 # www.saxonaudio.com



### CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 840A

The new 840A Class XD digital integrated amplifier marks the zenith of Cambridge Audio's Azur line up. This upmarket stereo amp uses proprietary Class XD technology and operates in pure Class A at low levels, moving into an enhanced version of Class B at higher levels. The technology is said to avoid the distortion pitfalls inherent in Class A/B designs. Key design elements include a sophisticated volume control system, two pairs of high-current output transistors and oversized toroidal transformers. It also sports a power rating of 120 watts, separate preamp and power amp circuits, eight inputs, plus a backlit LCD display.

**Price** £750 **Due** now ☎ 0870 900 1000 # www.cambridgeaudio.com



### NAD C445

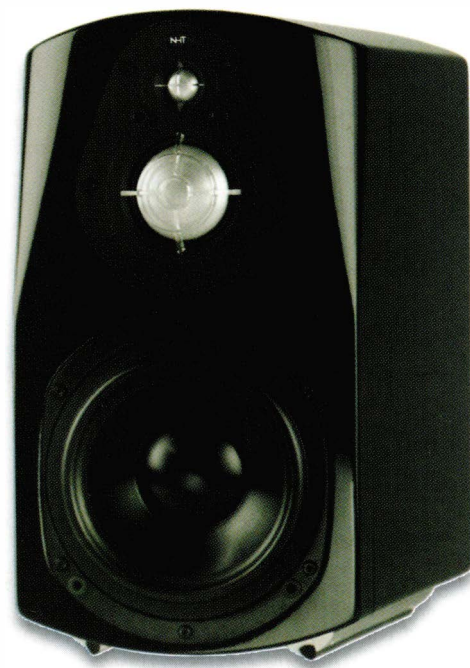
NAD is entering the world of digital radio with the C445, its first-ever DAB tuner. The unit includes AM/FM analogue reception alongside L Band and Band III DAB radio, and features the same Burr Brown D-to-A conversion technology as found in NAD CD players – but you can also feed a high-end DAC from the tuner's digital output. Features include favourite DAB station memory, 10 AM and 30 FM station presets plus a two-line display with full RDS capability. Expect an *HFC* review soon.

**Price** £350 **Due** April  
 ☎ 01908 319360 # www.nadelectronics.com

### NHT CLASSIC SERIES

US West Coast speaker company NHT has launched a new speaker range called Classic. The eight-strong line-up comprises five standmount speakers, a floorstander with side-firing 250mm bass unit, plus two dedicated centre channel models. Key to the range is NHT's acoustic suspension principle. This relies on air suspension to control cone movement, something NHT claims decreases distortion and increases detail and bass response. Aluminium tweeters and driver cones feature across the Classic range, and all models are finished with seven coats of polyurethane and two of clear lacquer.

**Price** From £345 to £1,545 per pair **Due** now  
 ☎ 0151 236 1832 # www.nhthifi.com



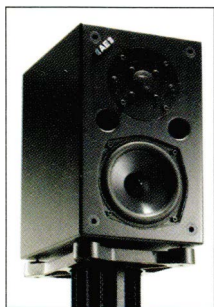


## DENON DVD-A1XVA

The latest version of Denon's flagship universal disc player – the DVD-A1XVA – is crammed with up-to-the-minute high-definition video technology, said to take the HFC 2005 Gold Award winner to new performance levels. Central to the player's potential is HQV (Hollywood Quality Video) technology, which enhances picture quality before upscaling it to the 1080p pictures used with HDTV. Video performance is not the only boon, however, as the player boasts all kinds of audio and video digital outputs, including HDMI, DVI, FireWire and Denon's own DenonLink3 connection. The sound benefits from Denon's advanced 24-bit/192kHz AL24 processing circuit, which is available across all channels. An upgrade option for existing DVD-A1XV players will be available later in 2006.

**Price** £2,700 **Due** now ☎ 01234 741200 Ⓜ www.denon.co.uk

## ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE1 CLASSIC



Acoustic Energy's original AE1 mini monitor is back. Distinct from the redesigned AE1 MkIII, the Classic returns to the original 1988 design, with only minor differences

born of improved manufacturing techniques. It retains the original's 110mm ceramic sandwich bass/mid driver and 25mm magnesium dome tweeter, plus the same latex-lined cabinet. The distinctive column stands are also available, for an additional £450. Expect a review soon.

**Price** £845 **Due** now

☎ 01285 654432

Ⓜ www.acoustic-energy.co.uk



## ECS PRE

London-based amplifier specialist ECS has unveiled a new preamp, to match its existing range of power amplifiers. The Class A, line-level ECSpre is the first high-end audio product to utilise the ground-breaking 'never connected' (NC) power supply technology from Fenson – a battery-like circuit within the power supply that's said to be entirely unaffected by mains noise. The fully balanced preamp has been designed with an intuitive interface, which allows users to switch between balanced (XLR) and single-ended (RCA) inputs and outputs at any time. ECS says the amp has an "enduring classical sound quality". Expect an exclusive HFC review this summer, in this year's edition of *The Collection*.

**Price** £5,500 **Due** now

☎ 020 8743 8880 Ⓜ www.ecsamplifiers.co.uk

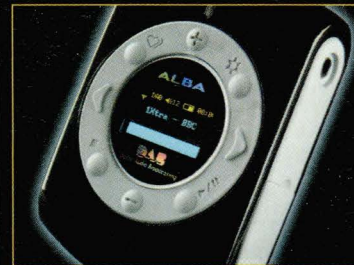


## ONKYO A-9755

Onkyo is continuing its current forays into the specialist two-channel market with two new integrated stereo amplifiers. The full-width amps are based on Onkyo's Hybrid Class D amp technology and include a host of proprietary technologies, including the brand's specialist low-noise VL Digital D-to-A conversion. The 150-watt A-9755 has been developed to drive difficult speaker loads and contains two large capacity transformers. It also boasts a discrete CR-type phono stage, six inputs plus defeatable tone controls. Its smaller brother, the A-9555 offers many of the same features but with a lower power rating of 100 watts, and this is generated from a single transformer.

**Price** A-9755 £700; A-9555 £450 **Due** now ☎ 01494 681515 Ⓜ www.onkyo.co.uk

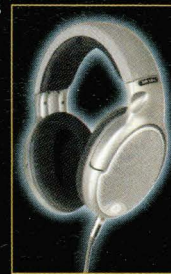
## Soundbites



ALBA's new pocket DAB/FM radio also doubles as a solid state MP3 player, incorporating an SD/MMC memory card slot that enables playback of up to 1GB of MP3/WMA tracks. It boasts a blue and black OLED display, in-ear headphones, a carry case and a ten-hour battery life. The PRDA200MP sells for £110. ☎ 0870 873 0078

OELBACH is a German cable manufacturer with a range that has just reached the UK. The Swiss/German-made cables are all individually tested and cover all manner of hi-fi and home cinema applications. Prices range from £15 to £3,000 and carry a lifetime warranty against defects and deterioration of performance. ☎ 020 8863 8979

GOLDRING's new headphones are the first from the brand for thirty years. Three open-backed models are available, all featuring circumaural ear cushions, 3m detachable leads and 40mm drivers. Prices start at £35 for the DR50, to £70 for the top of the range DR150. ☎ 01279 501111



MARANTZ has a new slim-line universal DVD player with HDMI connectivity and video scaling to 1080p. The DV6600 (£350) is based around a Texas Instruments 24-bit/192kHz DAC chip with enhanced architecture to eradicate jitter. Video is processed via an Analog devices DAC and picture circuits can be defeated with an 'Audio Exclusive' mode. The player is also compatible with DivX, DVD-R/RW and MP3/WMA formats. ☎ 01753 680868

NORDOST continues its output of Micro Mono-Filament cables with the new Frey cable range, including speaker cable, interconnects and tonearm wire, with prices from a mere £350. Frey interconnects are terminated with WBT 'NextGen' copper connections, with XLR and 5-pin DIN ends also available. ☎ 01635 291357

### The Insider

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

##### DOUG GRAHAM

Job Title: Sales manager  
Company: Naim Audio



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

Without doubt our reference CD 555 CD player. It's really amazing what's on a 44.1kHz disc.

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

The good news is that the hi-fi industry has a future. The amount of people who are listening to music again is staggering. Apple iPods are being sold in the tens of millions, yet people are still buying CDs, not ripping from the web.

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

Sonos' multiroom server. Cheap, cheerful and sounds okay for the money

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

I keep going back to Lambchops' *Is a Woman*. I must have bought it at least five times to give to some deserving person or other; it's achingly beautiful. On a more contemporary note, *Set Yourself On Fire* by Stars. Rock/Pop that makes you feel good.

##### CD or vinyl – and why?

CD – consistent performance, software availability and CD is less ritualistic too. I think that's why some people love their records... it's the process. In most cases, you have to spend a considerable sum on a vinyl spinner to get close to a good CD player performance.

### Hi-Fi Diary

#### APRIL

1-2 Heathrow High Fidelity Show  
Park Inn, Heathrow Airport  
www.chestergroup.org  
*Small but well-formed enthusiast event*

#### MAY

25-28 High End 2006  
The MOC, Munich, Germany  
+49 202 02022  
*A chance to dream at the world's finest hi-fi*

#### SEPTEMBER

1-6 IFA 2006  
Messe Berlin, Germany  
*Europe's biggest consumer electronics show returns to Berlin for 2006*

## Diamonds at Abbey Road

Abbey Road studios has upgraded its monitoring systems by installing 33 Classé CA-M400 mono power amplifiers driving 40 loudspeakers from B&W's 800 Series. According to Simon Campbell, Head of Technical Services at Abbey Road: "Immediately on hearing the new 800D, we decided to equip all of our control rooms that have surround monitoring. They are all bi-amplified by the excellent Classé CA-M400s and used in combination with the mighty new ASW855 sub. We're also investing in the N802D and N805D to give our clients an even greater variety of monitoring options."

Classé's Dave Nauber, executive VP for brand development commented: "To be an integral part of a site associated with so much great music-making in all genres, at the very highest level of professionalism, is a special thing." Abbey Road is replacing models from the previous 800 Series that were powered by Chord amplification.



## BFA damns low bit-rates

The British Federation of Audio (BFA) says that portable music players could sound much better if users avoided low bit-rates. It suggests the standard 128kbps bit-rate results in sound quality that is significantly inferior to CD and "consumers are not getting the enjoyment they could from their portable music devices or hi-fis," according to BFA chairman Steve Harris (pictured above).



The BFA points out that bit-rates of 256kbps and above deliver better performance, but this is still not as good as is available from CD. It applauds Apple's lossless compression system, however, and the BFA wants to encourage high bit-rate users to hook their MP3 players up to their hi-fi systems, "as the performance can be very good indeed". The interest in portable music players is claimed to "encourage music enthusiasts to pop into specialist hi-fi stores, to hear just how good their music can sound".

## Hiroyasu Kondo RIP

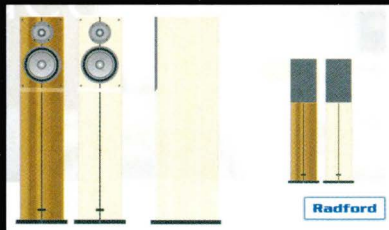


The founder of Audio Note Japan, Hiroyasu Kondo, passed away in his sleep while attending the CES show in Las Vegas. A professor of metallurgy and the son of a Buddhist priest, Kondo-san pioneered the use of age-annealed silver in hi-fi components and cables. He founded Audio Note in 1976 and created some of the most celebrated valve electronics produced in Japan. The legendary Ongaku amplifier with its 211 output tubes and silver-wound output transformers cemented his reputation as a craftsman of significant skill both at home and internationally.

Kondo-san had suffered ill health for some time and appointed Masaki Ashizawa as his successor. He has been a close colleague of Kondo-san for the past 16 years. Audio Note Japan's products are sold internationally under the KSL brand.

## Radford revived

Classic British valve brand Radford is being resurrected by new company Arena Electronics, headed up by ex-Heybrook and Mission man Peter Comeau. Initially, the Radford badge will be appended to a small range of loudspeakers using 'Tuned Line' bass loading – Radford was one of the pioneers of transmission line designs. First up will be the Acclaim Two, a floorstander with a mid/bass unit that was co-developed with Norwegian driver manufacturer SEAS, it has a motor system suggested to be a low-distortion design and a Nextel coated pulp cone. Treble is covered by an in-house developed fabric dome. A larger model, Acclaim Three will use two mid-bass units and a triple ABR array of passive units.



The first valve products will be a pre/power combination based around the circuit concepts of the original SC22/STA25 amplifiers that were last manufactured in the early seventies. Radford plans to use modern circuitry and construction enhancements to create a "completely new definition of the original design" and expects to launch the new range later in the year.

# Sumiko buys REL

REL, the Bridgend-based subwoofer specialist, has been acquired by its US distributor, Sumiko. The transaction, which took place last November, was driven by founder Richard Lord's desire to retire, according to Sumiko co-owner Donald Brody. Sumiko has also taken over the Sheffield-based cabinet makers that supplied REL, in order to have control over the complete manufacturing process. John Hunter, Sumiko's other co-owner said: "REL is a special company; our sole aim is to be good stewards of what it has built.

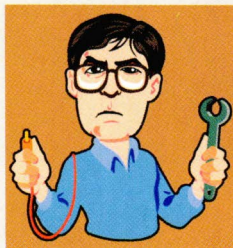
"Keep in mind there are 55 English and Welsh men and women who pour their passion and attention to quality into their work every day. We're here to grow this company, to make it better in every way it needs."

Richard Lord, REL's founder and former managing director commented: "I have enjoyed myself at REL over the last 14 years. At times frustrating, at other times exhilarating, but always interesting. I am now taking a well-earned (in my opinion) retirement."



## JIMMY'S TWEAKS #41

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



### Tightening that mains plug

For some strange reason, the screws that secure the electrical connections inside mains plugs seem to slacken off over time. As such, it's worth unplugging everything once in a while, and checking that all the screws in your mains plugs are properly tight. While you're at it, take each mains fuse out and give the contact caps a clean

to get rid of corrosion and dirt. Make sure all the various mains connections are clean and firm, and you'll find your hi-fi system sounds much better. Something else you can try – and here we're in Whacky Territory – is aligning all the slot-head screws so that those connected to negative voltages (blue and yellow/green) point vertically, and the positives (brown) are horizontal. I haven't the space to explain why this improves the sound – which is just as well, because I don't actually know – but improve it it does. Try it and see!

## TOP 10 FUTURE CLASSICS OF HI-FI

- 1. Marantz** PM7001 integrated amplifier
- 2. Meridian** 808i Signature CD player
- 3. Cambridge Audio** 640C v2 CD player
- 4. Funk** Funk turntable
- 5. B&W** 802D loudspeaker
- 6. Naim** NAC552/NAP500 pre/power amp
- 7. Rega** R3 loudspeaker
- 8. Denon** TU-1800DAB tuner
- 9. Avid** Acutus turntable
- 10. Apple** iPod



## New Music

### IN THE STUDIO

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



#### THE STREETS

**Title:** *The Hardest Way To Make An Easy Living*

**Release date:** 11 April

Mike Skinner's follow-up to *A Grand Don't Come For Free* is again based on his own eventful life. "After the last record I was like, 'What am I going to write about?' I can't moan I've got no money any more. Then it dawned on me that my life is so crazy. You'd never believe some of the stuff that's happened."

#### GUNS N' ROSES

**Title:** *Chinese Democracy*

**Release date:** tbc

You've heard this too many times since their last album way back in 1991, but according to Axl Rose the most delayed record in history is finally on the way. "People will hear music this year," he promises. "It's a very complex record. Some people are going to say, 'It doesn't sound like Guns 'N' Roses.' But you'll like at least a few songs on there."

#### RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS

**Title:** *Stadium Arcadium*

**Release date:** 8 May

The follow-up to 2002's *By The Way* was originally intended as a 38-track triple album. You'll be relieved to know it's now been scaled back to a mere 24 titles on two CDs. The surfeit of songs is apparently down to all four Chili Peppers insisting on including their own material and production is by Rick Rubin.

#### SCOTT WALKER

**Title:** *The Drift*

**Release date:** May

Once a decade, the enigmatic Walker breaks his silence and *The Drift* is only his third release in more than 30 years. No word on what it sounds like yet, but perhaps he's



about to end his notorious reclusiveness for he's also apparently co-operating on a documentary film about his life being made by New York director Stephen Kijack.

#### KEANE

**Title:** tbc

**Release date:** late spring or early summer

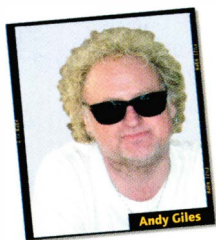
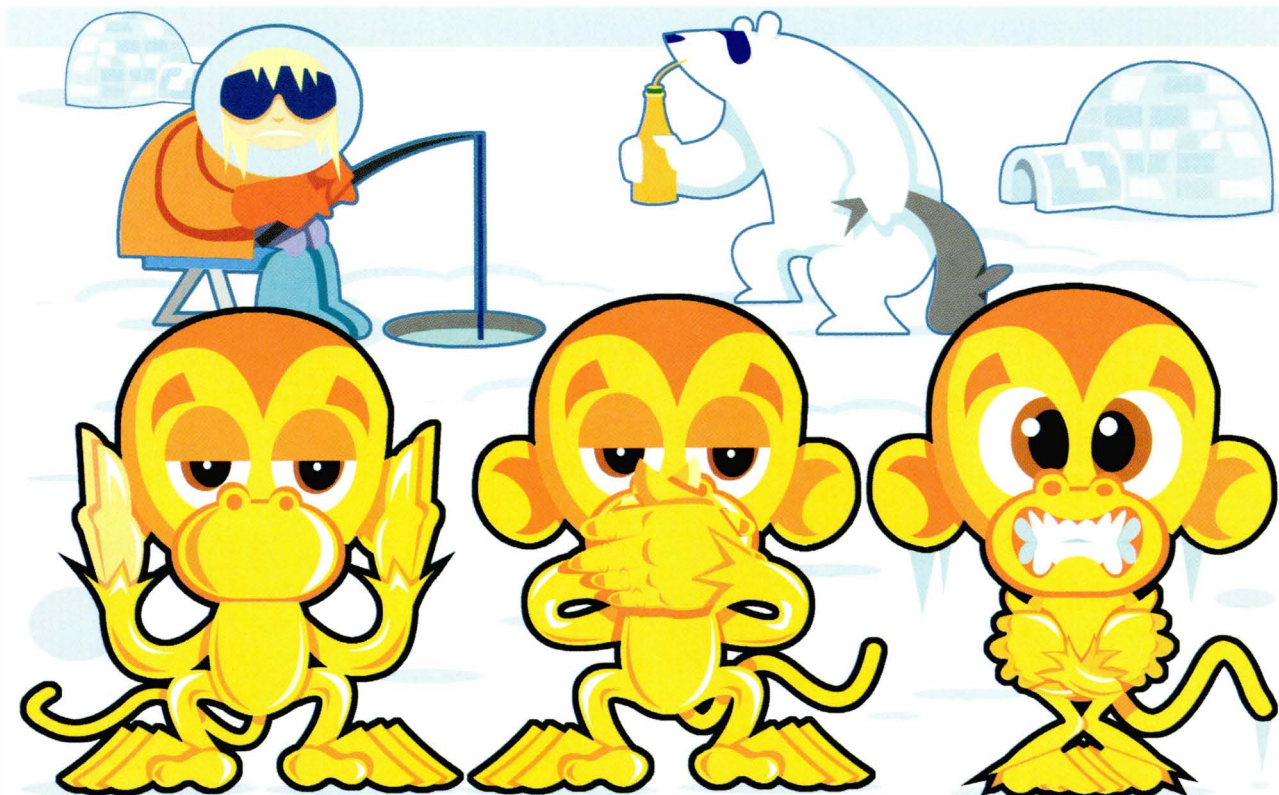
David Cameron lookalike Tom Chaplin's follow-up to the multi-platinum *Hopes And Fears* includes titles like *Try Again*, *Let It Slide* and *Bad Dream*, so perhaps we'd better not pursue the political parallels too far. Production is by Andy Green, again.

#### ALSO COMING SOON JAZZ/ CLASSICAL

**Sir Charles Mackerras/ SCO** Mozart: *Magic Flute* – highlights (Mar); **Peter Kopp/ Dresdner IC** Vivaldi: *Moteczuma* (Mar); **Charles Mingus** *Introducing Charles Mingus* (Mar); **Brother Jack McDuff** *A Change Is Gonna Come* (Mar)

#### SACD/ DVD-AUDIO

**Luiza Borac Enescu** *The Two Piano Sonatas* (SACD, Mar); **Haftor Medboe** *Group In Perpetuity* (SACD, Mar); **Michel Camilo** *Rhapsody In Blue* (SACD, Mar); **Virgil Fox** *Encores* (SACD, Mar)



## Monkey tragic

*It's not cool to like the Arctic Monkeys*

This isn't an album review – I've long given up those and, anyway, they are done far better in this magazine by others. I just want to get something off my chest. I'm proud to say the Arctic Monkeys leave me cold. And that's an understatement. Now the press darlings of Telegraph and Mail readers from Weybridge – whose homes previously whirred with the sound of food-mixers preparing French recipes from the Sunday supplements and gently purred with Coldplay on the Bang and Olufsen – these scruffy, less than average Sheffield pretenders have me incensed. Arctic Monkeys set out to beguile – and what's worse they have succeeded – just by developing a 'look at us, we're just normal northern lads in new grunge creased clothes and with a real f-off attitude to the record business' stance. Aye-oop lad, we're the business, we are.

**“I want to get something off my chest. I'm proud to say the Arctic Monkeys leave me cold. And that's an understatement.”**

Well they're not. The majority of middle-class punters buying the Arctic Monkeys now would, admittedly for different reasons, have been Abba fans in a different time domain – and almost certainly rate James Blunt today. I bet David Cameron really 'digs' them as well. After all, it's 2006-cool to like them. And all that that inspires. The crying shame is that a band so demonstrably contrived and frankly soulless as the Arctic Monkeys should hold off the new Strokes album in January. There's no comparison for chrissake!

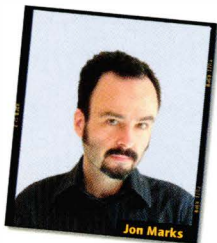
Okay – I said that this is not an album review but I have to suggest that *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*, with its alleged wry observations on contemporary Britain, manifests mediocrity. If it's become an incentive album for unattractive, gobby, shaven-headed hoody-boys to drink 12 pints of snakebite and then try to pull birds it may have worked in one respect. How lamentable is that incentive?

The Arctic Monkeys have to rate as the most cynical band the UK has ever had the misfortune to have been taken in by. A group

of probably quite pleasant kids who, maybe by management skills alone, have planned all their gigs, press releases, media attitude and – most unpalatable of all – their chart strategy. The use of the internet – the download deal – made them oh so clever. Reams of glowing press paved their way to number one. If *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* had been sung in Latvian it would have been a sure-fire success. The fact that it has done so well and is at best an average album, is a sad indictment to how media hype warps minds and influences people. If you bought the album – shame on you. If it sets the trend for A&R men – shame on the music biz, too.

I think I preferred the Monkees to the Arctic Monkeys; at least the contrivance was honest. For those who don't know who the Monkees were – well, go and ask your Mum. She's probably out in the kitchen switching on the food-mixer to prepare a French recipe from a Sunday supplement.

*Andy Giles is one of British hi-fi's biggest personalities. A former journalist, he has strong industry ties and a long-standing PR business*



## Recycle race

WEEE will, WEEE will RoHS you!

**C**ustomer: "Hello, I'd like to get this DVD player repaired, please."

Assistant in AV shop: "How long have you had it, sir?"

Customer: "366 days."

Asst: (sharp intake of breath) "Oooohhh, I'm afraid you're looking at a minimum of £100 for a whole new radial gobbledegook-flange and underheaded focusing assembly."

Customer: "But the whole player only cost me £39.99!"

Asst: "Price of spares, sir, price of spares – shocking, it is. Can I interest you in this new DVD player for £29.99?"

Hopefully, conversations like this will start to become a thing of the past. They might, because the European-wide directive on Waste from Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) came into force last year. One of the most salient sentences runs: "Producer responsibility (for the costs of recovering and recycling equipment) is one of the means of encouraging the design and production of electrical and electronic equipment which take into full account and facilitate their repair, possible upgrading, reuse, disassembly and recycling." Backing up WEEE is RoHS, the 'Removal of Hazardous Substances' such as lead and cadmium from WEEE products and their production processes. Quick calls to some specialist audio manufacturers yielded promising examples of RoHS compliance, including Linn Products, which is soon to fire up a lead-free-solder production line (they already use solvent-free paints and a plating process that involves no hexavalent chromium, chief chemical villain in the film *Erin Brockovich*). And, as exemplars of WEEE, DNM offer the Start series of refurbished pre/power amplifiers (each unit is subjected to a complete overhaul, and the pres are fitted with new switch gear and volume controls).

Of the three Rs (Reduce, Re-use, Recycle), the third seems to loom much larger on most consumers' radars than either of the other two, despite the fact that they're listed in order of environmental friendliness. ▣

# A&R

## RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

### ARCAM BLACK BOX DIGITAL-TO-ANALOGUE CONVERTER



The Arcam formula was established long before the company changed its name from A&R Cambridge in 1984. Back in the mid-1970s, A&R's first product – the A60 integrated amp – provided a natural foil for the stunning looking and much admired P40 and P50 amplifiers from Cambridge Audio. Although the A60 was packaged in sackcloth and ashes, it was reliable, sounded good and offered solid value for money and serviceability. These were not always Cambridge Audio's greatest strengths.

The second part of the formula, which has been carried forward to the present day, was to master the key enabling technologies. When Arcam went for its first CD player, the £500 Delta 70, it didn't just badge a third party, off the shelf player, but paid for the required (and costly) licences and rolled its own, with key assemblies sourced from Philips.

This was not the cheapest, easiest or quickest way to get product out on the road, but it gave Arcam a certain flexibility. It led to the company being the first (in Britain, at least) to produce a standalone digital-to-analogue converter (DAC) back in 1988: the Black Box, which could be connected to the new-fangled digital outputs then appearing on the back of many CD players. In many cases, the £250 Black Box could provide a very worthwhile improvement in sound quality for a relatively modest outlay, by splicing the well-regarded Philips multibit conversion topology onto the often not very refined back end of many commercial CD players. Of course, it was a natural partner for Arcam's own Delta CD mechanisms, making a relatively affordable two-box player of real stature. It was an instant hit, though predictably Arcam didn't have the market to itself for long.

The Black Box probably acquired its name because it was just that – an all-but featureless black box, with just a couple of switches and two LEDs to provide power and absolute phase switching, and high (2V) and low (800mV) outputs for connection to the amplifier. The option of a low-level output provided a signal level that avoided clipping the inputs of the many amplifiers that hadn't



**"The Black Box could provide a very worthwhile improvement for a relatively modest outlay."**

yet learned to live with CD's knack of delivering a signal level significantly higher than most line-level sources.

The converter was built around Philips' TDA1541 two-channel 16 bit DACs with 4x oversampling, and a third-order Bessel low pass filter at the output. Much of the remaining circuitry was of Arcam's own design and differed from other implementations of the Philips core technology. The result was the first truly affordable domestic DAC, and a genuinely cost-effective way of upgrading the performance of many CD players – certainly more affordable than changing to a new player. Of course, the results were dependent on the performance of the mechanism in the player, but the Black Box soon acquired a reputation for producing a more expansive, but also more neutral sound than many players of the time. It offered even greater neutrality than Arcam's rather dark-sounding Delta 70 player when used on its own. But this was a time of rapid development for the digital replay industry.

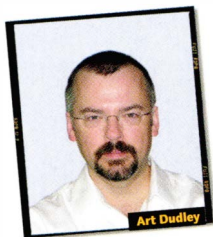
The Black Box's lifetime was relatively short, in the order of about three years. By then, the base level of CD player sound quality had risen above the level of most Black Box augmented transports or players. But as a British statement of intent to the world of digital audio, Arcam's baby had made its mark. **HFC**

Alvin Gold

Perhaps the second R should stand instead for Repair, especially of cheaper, mass-market audio gear. I've given up counting the number of times (as a fully paid-up member of the Hi-Fi Green Anoraks) that I've seen a terminally skipping CD player return to full health with no more than a spin of a lens cleaner or some fresh grease on the mechanism (or a noisy or unreliable amp make a full recovery after a squirt of switch cleaner in the volume control or tarnished connector contacts). All of this is simply affordable grist to the mill for quality service engineers (who, for some reason, tend to turn up in dingier shops rather than brightly-lit establishments where shirt and shiny tie are the uniform).

Another rapidly growing alternative to the dustbin is an Internet group called Freecycle ([www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)). This global community of re-users has just celebrated its 100,000th member here in the UK, all of whom have joined because of Freecycle's central tenet – you can place OFFERED and WANTED ads for most goods (within reason), as long as they're free. The result is a steady stream of items, including hi-fi equipment, that would make keen students of anyone out to relearn their three Rs for the 21st century.

*Jon Marks has been happily addicted to hi-fi for 20 years, especially since becoming a member of the hi-fi press in the mid-1990s*



## Great wail of China

*Why 'Made in China' isn't a bad thing*

It's the unpleasant rash I've ignored for months, but can no longer tolerate... A visiting audio manufacturer leans into the curve of his sales pitch, reciting a litany of product strengths that I'm afraid he might actually believe:

"When people hear my speaker, they ask where I've hidden the subwoofer!"

"Everyone else sells tone controls, but our cables are neutral!"

Then, as he hurls himself toward the finish line, he gives it that last little thrust:

"Our company can compete on price without moving to China."

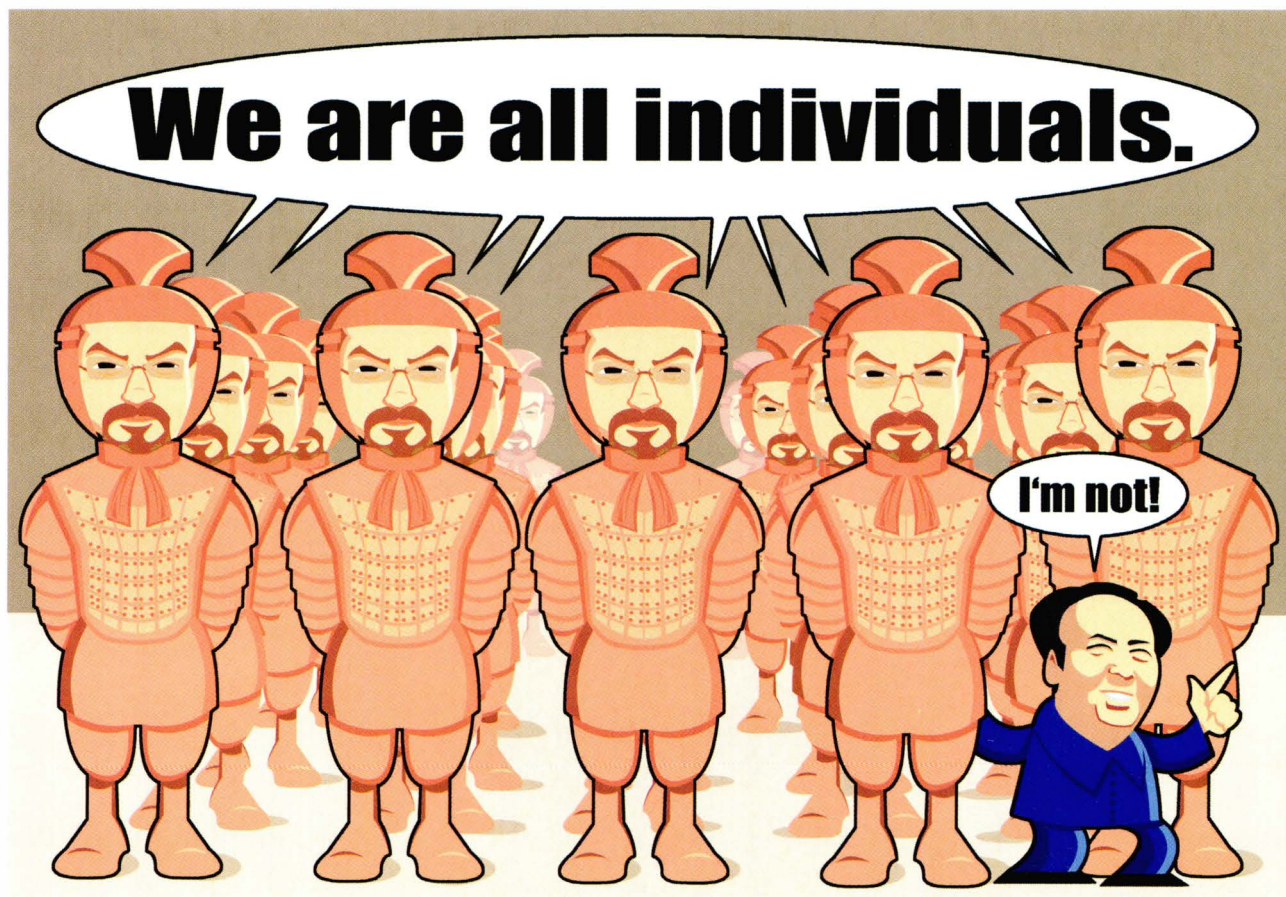
And on that last word he gives a shudder, and a small, conspiratorial wink: "You and I understand each other, don't we?"

Yes, I understand well enough: It's all right to get my wristwatch from Switzerland, my car from Bavaria, my shoes from Italy, and my underpants from Israel. But it isn't all right to get my tube amplifier from China.

Well, when I was a lad, I was conditioned to look down on consumer goods from Japan. But that changed when most of us here in the States discovered that the Japanese make much better cars than we do – and when we read that Japan's workers are better educated, better paid, and better cared for, to boot.

The first Chinese audio products I encountered were single-ended amplifiers sold here under the name Antique Sound Lab – they were dirt cheap and sounded three times their price. And I thought, "More power to them". Then came the deal with Quad, where much of their English workforce was kept on and the company made an investment in Chinese property and people. And I thought, "That's the way to do it". Then came the companies, all run by very well-paid men, that sacked their

**"Maybe someday I'll find it me to say that everyone in China is an individual."**



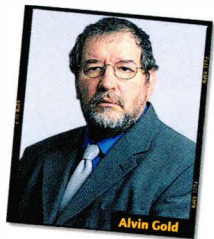


Western workforces in favour of Chinese piecework, and blamed it all on liberal legislators and people who "don't want to work." And I thought, Hold on, a minute...

I lack the courage to speak up when I should. But maybe someday I'll find it in me to say that everyone in China is an individual, just like everyone in Switzerland and Bavaria and Italy and Israel is an individual – and so, too, are the things they put their talents and hearts and souls into, some more or less than others.

Generalizations aren't even worth the time it takes to make them.

*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*



## SACD redux

*SACD's not a dead – or even a tired – duck*

Once again, I find myself responding to what I believe to be ill-informed speculation about SACD. It's not that SACD can be counted a great success globally, as CD has become. But when I read the tired old canard that SACD has bitten the dust at yet another CES, where the evidence was plainly pointing the other way, I have to speak out.

Far from DVD-Audio dominating the high-resolution audio scene, there has been a remarkable *volte face* from last year, where DVD-Audio protagonists were crowing about SACD's imminent demise. This year saw virtually no action on the DVD-Audio front: new players were scarcer than hen's teeth, and the discs had virtually disappeared from the sales area at the Alexis Park, which generally tracks market changes quite accurately.

On the hardware side, only stalwarts like Meridian persisted. And this in the United States, which is more closely associated with DVD-Audio and DualDisc than anywhere else. The Far East always has been SACD territory, and Europe is increasingly leaning the same way. Over here, DualDisc exerts no detectable traction, and despite early claims, it has failed to take off convincingly in the US either. As *Stereophile* put it, the best of breed DualDiscs sound like shagged-out compact discs (or words to that effect) because they cause the error correction to work overtime. There are also compatibility issues. ▶

# M

## MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

### ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN HEAVEN UP HERE



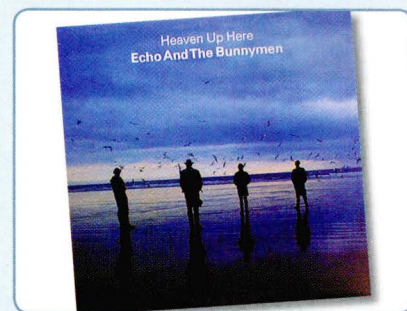
When Ian McCullough, Will Sergeant, Les Pattinson and the late Pete De Freitas entered Rockfield's 24-track studio in Wales in March 1981, they were going to make a masterpiece. With a self-belief of messianic proportions, they saw themselves as torchbearers of a new psychedelic rock. From its moody sunset mauve cover (by Brian Griffin on Porthcawl beach, South Wales) to its glittering sonic surface, *Heaven Up Here* was a triumph of minimalist sound painting.

At its heart was the guitar playing of Bunnyman co-founder Sergeant, who ignored the usual verse/chorus riffing for a radical angular approach to the instrument where sprinkles of notes were employed to underscore the song with feedback and noise utilised for dramatic effect. When he employs rhythmic chopping, Sergeant's playing felt like a razor gliding down the neck. In fact, it packed the killer punch on most of the record's songs, making him the best guitarist of his generation next to U2's The Edge.

Will Sergeant actually wanted Brian Eno to produce the record, and famously felt gutted when he produced U2 instead. McCullough thought Eno too weird, but the band didn't want the garage sound that manager Bill Drummond (later of The KLF) had brought with David Balfe to their debut album the previous year. So it came to young engineer Hugh Jones to pass the acid test, with the Bunnyman semi-producing themselves. McCullough also felt it was the isolation of Rockfield's Monmouth location that finally turned them into a great rock band.

The band felt magic mushrooms and LSD would help them groove like The Doors and The Velvet Underground. Talking Heads were also in their sights, especially the ambient funk of *Remain In Light*. Sergeant remembers them ditching most of their synths except an ARP Odyssey and going for more white noise and minor keys. McCullough softened the strain on his vocal chords with copious amounts of Captain Morgan's rum.

Recording went tremendously smoothly. Otto, a resident Rockfield engineer, remembers



**“The band felt magic mushrooms and LSD would help them groove like The Doors.”**

them taking no time at all to put down the album's 11 tracks – a product of plentiful rehearsals at Ministry in Liverpool. All songs had a rhythmic birth in the circular bass patterns of Les Pattinson, which would then be embellished with spiralling note sequences. Hugh Jones emphasised that the Pattinson/De Freitas precision rhythm machine should be foremost in the mix, making each track a kind of mantra. Sergeant remembers playing in D for most of the record, the stand-out track *A Promise* he checked as “one chord just going round and round.”

*Heaven Up Here* was a tremendous achievement in 'light and shade'. *Turquoise Days* came nearest in its intensity to U2's *Sunday Bloody Sunday* but without the bombast. *All My Colours*, famous for its military drumming, was originally a paean to Jim Morrison (*Jimbo/Zimbo*) and featured Leslie Penny on woodwinds. *All I Want* saw de Freitas playing a slit-drum with beaters in African style. Understated but with a glorious shimmer that competitors U2 would only achieve four years later, *Heaven Up Here* made the UK Top Ten in June of 1981.

Fans should check out the 25th Anniversary Remastered & Expanded Edition CD, which has the best sound and comes with some wonderful bonus tracks. **HFC**

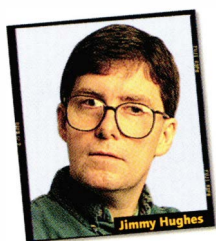
*Mark Prendergast*

❑ Companies making component SACD/CD hardware currently include Esoteric, Marantz, Denon, Classé, Linn, Shanling, Ayre, T+A, Sharp, Lindeman, Sony, dCS, Krell, Opera, Musical Fidelity, Philips, Micromega, Accuphase – just the start of a longer list that excludes universal players and one-brand systems featuring SACD. The number of available titles mirrors the hardware. Enough to give audiophiles real cause to salivate.

This is not primarily a numbers game. SACD is an audiophile format, made for listeners who may want multichannel, and who certainly want better sound quality. DVD-Audio is different. It was designed from the ground up as a multimedia format. SACD requires no video support or the other complications of DVD, and the players invariably sound better as a result. Even the mighty Esoteric has so far proved incapable of making a universal player as good as their own SACD players.

Okay, I admit that I may be slightly prejudiced by my overwhelming passion for classical music, which is disproportionately well represented on SACD, but I probably would be anyway. Classical and acoustic music are at the core of what high fidelity is about. At the very least, music of these genres is an absolutely indispensable tool for evaluating and stretching any hi-fi replay chain.

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



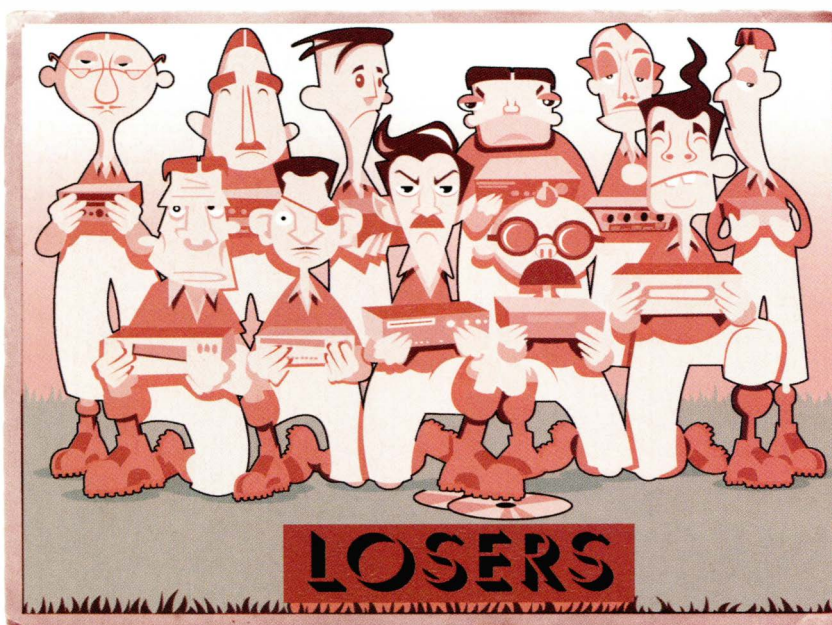
## Footie-fi

*Premiership hi-fi, without the transfer fees*

If you're planning a journey, it's usually a good idea to have a destination in mind before you set out. If nothing else, it means you know when you've arrived! It's the same when you upgrade your hi-fi.

There's definitely an art to choosing hi-fi components. It's not simply a matter of selecting the 'best' items, putting them together and automatically getting a great sound. More important is selecting components that work well together and suit your room, so that the whole produces results greater than the sum of the parts.

It's a bit like one or two Premiership football teams that don't have any real stars, but



## “It’s the hi-fi equivalent of a football team winning all its home games, and getting thumped 5-0 away from home. Well, sort of...”

nevertheless play in a highly organised and cohesive way. Such teams can beat others that may be far better in terms of individual talent and skills, but aren't as effective as a complete unit. Having brilliantly gifted players does not by itself create a great team.

I think hi-fi's the same. A well-chosen, compatible combination of components in a sympathetic listening room can produce results that sound vastly preferable to an expensive but mis-matched and incompatible system. The question is, how do you achieve a hi-fi system that works to the greater good?

You may be lucky and have a particular combination of components that works brilliantly in your gaff. But take it over to a friend's place and it sounds terrible. It's the hi-fi equivalent of a football team winning all its home games, and getting thumped 5-0 away from home. Well, sort of...

So, have a route map before deciding to improve your hi-fi. Simply trying something new in order to see if the change represents an improvement is a bit aimless; you need to know where you're going in order to get there!

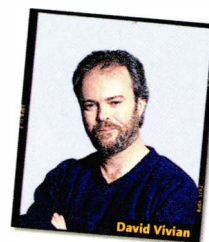
If you can identify something specifically wrong with your hi-fi – for example, the sound distorts during peaks – it makes your task much easier. But what if your misgivings are subtler and less tangible?

Suppose you feel that the sound you're getting – although quite good – could be even better? You've no specific complaints or grumbles, but believe that spending a few

hundred pounds on a new super-duper amplifier or CD player would bring worthwhile improvements. There's only one thing to do – try it. Preferably in your own home.

The acid test is always when you eventually return to your original set up. If, on going back, your reaction is one of disappointment and dismay, chances are the new item really was and is a lot better.

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



## Upgraditis

*How to feed your hi-fi addiction*

So you've finally got your hands on the hi-fi of your dreams and it sounds fabulous. Sooner or later, though, you're going to be wondering "is this as good as it gets?" Almost invariably the answer is "no". As well as there being the still-tussling high-definition formats to consider (Super Audio Compact Disc and

DVD-Audio), there's plenty of life left in CD and the players continue to get better and better – seemingly month on month.

Fortunately, any separates hi-fi system can be upgraded cost-effectively. As ever, it's logical to start at the front and work back, but that wouldn't necessarily be my *modus operandi*. More often than not, upgrading the speakers can reap fairly spectacular improvements. You might even consider the purchase of more power amps for bi-amping or even tri-amping.

Some high-end hi-fi is designed with future developments in mind, anyway – Meridian being a prime example with its continuously upgradable preamp/DAC, DAB module and updateable firmware.

The best one-hit upgrade I ever made was to add Chord Electronics' DAC 64 to my Densen CD player. At the time it was the world's only 64-bit DAC – essentially a converter with very superior data handling abilities – and I'd never heard CD sound better.

The right equipment support can make a surprising difference – ideally, the individual components should be sited on separate shelves in a dedicated equipment support to isolate them from vibration and feedback. Eliminating earthborn vibrations helps achieve the widest possible bandwidth. Without such provision, the superior resolution of newer formats such as DVD-A might just be wasted. Maybe that's why some people are slightly less enthusiastic about the new technologies. Their systems are editing the improvement.

Spending time choosing specialist interconnects is nearly always repaid in listening pleasure. For a £5k player/preamp/power amp system, you need to fork out at least £70 per interconnect, though really expensive rigs do seem to benefit from costlier connections.

If possible, plug your hi-fi directly into the mains. If you have to use extension blocks, investigate the specialist mains products which, typically, include cables, blocks and purifiers. Best of all, get a competent electrician to run a dedicated spur from the ring main just for the hi-fi. You'll be astonished at the difference it makes.

Finally, CD mats really can make things better. The idea is that CDs are to a small extent see-through. Hold one up to the light so the playing side faces you and you can actually make out the label on the other side. This leads to reflection anomalies when the laser reads the disc. Some mats seek to correct this so the error correction circuitry doesn't have to work so hard, leading to better sound. The best I've tried is the Sound Improvement Disc, invented by a guy called – perhaps unsurprisingly – Peter Boffin.

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

# TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

## FREQUENCY (SLIGHT RETURN)



Two *Technos* ago, we looked at how a section of signal can be described in terms of its frequency components as well as in terms of instantaneous amplitude. But why bother? Principally because this spectrum tells us stuff of useful, practical and important value about the signal.

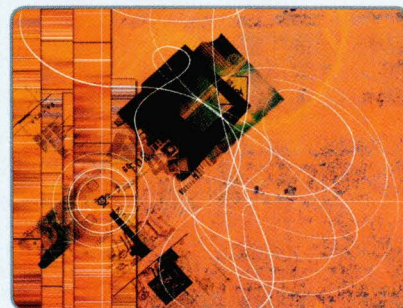
Most obviously, the graph of a spectrum is by far the quickest way of analysing the distortion of a piece of audio equipment. A conventional distortion figure (e.g. '0.01%') tells us next to nothing on its own and even when properly qualified (e.g. 'at rated power into 8 ohms at 1 kHz') is not much more informative.

By contrast, the spectrum of the distortion can tell us quite a lot. Using a pure single tone as a test signal is handy because its spectrum is very simple, a graph with a single very narrow peak sticking up from a low-lying baseline. Any distortion will cause a few more peaks, usually at exact multiples of the input signal, which are easy to spot and, with experience, useful in determining just what is going on inside the amplifier or whatever. Of course, the more information the better and it's preferable to have a whole bunch of spectra taken at different input frequencies and levels.

Using two or more single-tone input signals mixed together is possible, too, and the 'perfect' spectrum will have exactly as many peaks as there are single-tone components. All other peaks are distortion.

By analysing where those peaks fall on the graph and how high they are, one can gain yet more information about the nature of the distortion. For the equipment designer, this can be a great short-cut to finding problems with a new circuit.

The typical spectrum will not only show distortion but also a few unrelated peaks due to mains pickup, interference from TVs and so on. Again, with experience, one learns at what level these should be cause for concern. And then there's background noise, which shows up as a rather ragged line at the bottom of the graph. A conventional signal-to-noise measurement simply gives a figure indicating



**“For the designer, this can be a great short-cut to finding problems with a new circuit.”**

the level of the noise. By taking a spectrum, one can see what 'colour' the noise is – how much its level varies with frequency. If it is mostly at very high frequencies (as is the case with noise-shaped dither, for example, in CD recordings mastered for optimum noise floor) it will be a good deal less audible than if its energy is concentrated round the 3kHz band.

But the cleverest part of a spectrum is the way it allows one to find signals that are 'buried' in noise. Remember that one cannot define a spectrum without analysing a reasonable amount of data, which is typically between 256 and 1 million samples (always assuming digital audio, since this stuff is intrinsically the realm of digital analysis).

Because of that, one is in a sense taking an average of the signal and noise gets averaged out. As a result, it becomes perfectly realistic to look for signals at levels as low as 130dB below maximum level, even though the noise level may be much higher than that in reality.

We can hear signals below noise, as well, and the ability of a spectrum to search them out analytically gives us boffins more confidence in the principle that 'if we can hear it, it must be possible to measure it'. At least, that's the theory. In reality, there are always elements of the sound quality of a product that defy measurement. But we're catching up! **HFC**

*Richard Black*

# Not Just Another CD Player

from the company that knows a thing or two about digital....

DALI Loudspeakers



Stillpoints Isolation



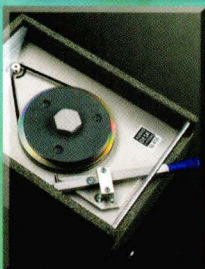
Vertex AQ



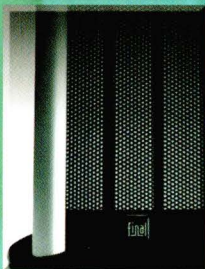
ExactPower Conditioners



AudiDeskSysteme



Final Electrostatics



Lyngdorf Audio



## The Lyngdorf CD-1 player/transport

Expectations were high when the company that delivered the world's first true digital amplifier, the ground-breaking Millennium, announced a CD player/transport launch.

Using their extensive knowledge of digital circuits, clocks, sampling rates, jitter and noise control, the designers were meticulous in their approach. The philosophy is simple. Less distortion means more music. Delicious, flowing music.

"You can drop this into a system with a price tag in excess of £50,000, and it will not let it down.

Good grief, what a debut!"

Ken Kessler, Hi-Fi News March 2006.

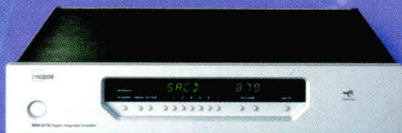


The high-spec'd CD-1 is also loaded with features to maximize musical performance.

- + Digital signal upsampled to 96khz for optimal analogue conversion
- + User-selectable 24 bit sampling rate for digital output (44.1, 48, 96 & 192khz)
- + To optimize performance when used as a dedicated transport, the DAC is powered down
- + High precision clock resamples signal close to output stage, further reducing jitter and noise
- + Low noise linear (non-switching) power supply

### As a CD Player

Connect to our matching integrated amplifier (or any other integrated or pre/power) using balanced or single-ended cables, and enjoy a truly musical performance from a low-noise, upsampling CD player.



### As a Transport

Connect to our own True Digital Amplifier (or any other DAC) for an even purer performance. Select the upsampling frequency that delivers the optimal sound for your system, music and taste.



Lyngdorf Audio UK distribute the ground-breaking Lyngdorf digital products, together with ExactPower conditioners, Stillpoints and AudiDeskSysteme CD enhancers.

We also compliment these products by offering/dealing with a very few, select components such as the award winning DALI speakers, Vertex AQ accessories and the new range of Final electrostatic panels.



tel: 0870 9 100 100  
www.lyngdorfaudio.co.uk

# The cutting edge

*Matt Black and Jonathan More are not only the head honchos behind the Ninja Tune label, they're often better known as Coldcut. But what's that got to do with B&W speakers in water pipes?*

**M**att Black and Jonathan More are chilling on a giant leather sofa at Ninja Tune's London HQ. Though not exactly spring chickens, the influential pair whose freestyle mixing skills, sample-based experimentation and audio visual mash-ups have inspired legions, have just made possibly their best record to date. *Sound Mirrors* is a polished, classy ride, full of texture and melody. Featuring the likes of Roots Manuva and Jon Spencer (Blues Explosion), it journeys through beatwise downbeat pop, stomping hip-hop rawk, dubby Bollywood, out-there soundscaping and more. In short, a balance between underground and overground.

"To do something that is different and yet has broad appeal is a real challenge," Matt explains. "And that's something that we're trying to do with this record."

No surprise then that the resulting lush concoction was just the sort of thing that speaker manufacturer B&W wanted to show off a new range.

"B&W was in the process of launching its new, top-of-the-range 800 Series," Matt explains. "They wanted a surround sound track to put on a demo DVD to show off the speakers' multichannel capabilities and invited us to do it. That's how we got to go to Abbey Road with a string orchestra and have it mixed in surround sound. I think we made a really good piece for B&W, actually. *Sound Mirrors* has elements of classical music. It has dynamic range."

But Matt's association with B&W goes back even further. "I'll give you a potted version," he smirks. "A few years ago, B&W was throwing out a load of speakers and some bright lads took them and made a sound system out of it. That became the Blue Room system. They even put these speakers in cardboard tubes to make a kind of hi-fi public address system. Now, the Inner Field Crew in Brighton, who I work a lot with doing parties, they got that system. I played on it. For what we do with



**"I think we made a really good piece for B&W, actually. *Sound Mirrors* has elements of classical music. It has dynamic range."**

audio/visual stuff, I wanted a hi-fi system where you could really hear the mids and spoken word samples. And they'd done it. So I got working with these guys."

The system apparently involves a load of hi-fi speakers put in custom mountings, stacked up and driven by powerful hi-fi amps, utilising crossovers and an omnidrive.

"So that was the Inner Field One rig," Matt continues. "Then a few years ago we were gonna do this tour of the Balkans, so I financed building the Inner Field Two rig, which could be the best sound system in the world. It has eighteen bass tubes, each with 470mm drivers. They're made in lengths of water pipe with these red fibre-glass nose cones. All hand made. It looks amazing and sounds amazing.

It's 12 grand, the rig. You can hear it at free parties in Norfolk and Brighton. That system is still around, go to [www.InnerField.co.uk](http://www.InnerField.co.uk) and you can see it."

The same attention to detail is also deployed in their studio set-up. Coldcut monitor using Dynaudio and Yamaha NS10s, as well as small laptop speakers. By getting the right sound on each, they can be sure tracks will work on all systems. But they never get lost in gear for the sake of it. Their goal is always clear. "The challenge is to do something that satisfies us creatively yet has a broader appeal," Matt proclaims. "That is a good challenge."

Even if you don't use B&W speakers, Coldcut's *Sound Mirrors* is out now on Ninja Tune. **HFC**  
*Gal Detourn*

## ESSENTIAL COLDCUT RECORDINGS

### Let Us Play (1997)

An eclectic ride with guests including ex-Dead Kennedys frontman Jello Biafra. *Mojo* described it as "genre straddling" and "funkjazztical tricknology." Cor!



### Let Us Replay (1999)

Essentially, *Let Us Play* remixed by the likes of Grandmaster Flash, Shut Up & Dance, J Swinscoe, Cornelius and more. It lives up to Coldcut's audio recycling philosophy.



### Sound Mirrors (2005)

Probably their best effort to date. Eclectic and experimental in an almost classical manner, but with mainstream pop appeal and close attention to detail.



# WIN! ECLIPSE TD510 SPEAKERS WORTH £1,200!



Two months ago, we were bowled over by Eclipse's new 'Time Domain' TD510 loudspeakers. The radical, egg-shaped design offers an enclosure of inherent stiffness, created from a special moulding compound with a strength and density similar to artificial marble. The shape is also adept at minimising internal standing waves, which can be detrimental to sound.

Another key feature is the use of a single full-range drive unit to improve time coherence, eliminating the need for crossover networks and a tweeter. This drive unit sports a 100mm cone made from woven fibreglass, and is decoupled from the main enclosure using a complex internal structure to provide a more efficient energy transfer. And does it all make sonic sense? You bet it does – the TD510 plays music with an integrity and quality of articulation that is rare in any loudspeaker. It excels by focusing on the fundamentals and delivering superb transients. However, its best asset by far is the way it keeps 'time', in a musical sense – which it does to an exemplary standard. So much so, in fact, that we awarded it with a well-deserved Editor's Choice badge in our March issue (*HFC 277*).

For your chance to win a pair, simply answer the question below. The lucky winner will be drawn at random.  
www.eclipse-td.com  
020 7328 4499



## QUESTION:

**How is the Eclipse TD510's radical egg-shaped enclosure created?**

- A:** By using a special moulding compound?
- B:** By sourcing the world's largest hen?
- C:** By hand-rolling a molten sphere?

## TO ENTER:

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

**By Text:** Simply send the text message **ECLIPSE** (followed by a space) with the answer A, B or C to **80889**. For example, if you think the answer is B: By sourcing the world's largest hen, then kindly text ECLIPSE B to 80889.

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# The New Gold Standard



## *Gold Signature*

The Power of a Thousand Small Impressions

The radiating surface of Monitor Audio's innovative RST<sup>2</sup> drivers, used exclusively by the new Gold Signature speakers, is patterned with hundreds of concentric dimples, meticulously fashioned to preserve cone geometry at all volume levels. This means you'll enjoy smoother, distortion-free sound however hard you play music and film.

With a choice of slender stand, floor, centre and surround speakers, expertly engineered in beautiful real wood and lacquer finishes, the new Gold Signature range will make a big impression all round.

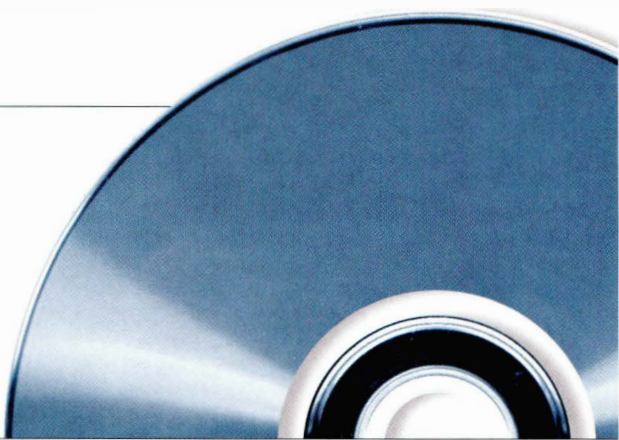
For details of the new GS Series please visit:  
[www.goldsignature.co.uk](http://www.goldsignature.co.uk)  
mail: [info@monitoraudio.co.uk](mailto:info@monitoraudio.co.uk)  
or call free on: 0800 0352032

# ChoiceCuts



This month's varied musical morsels

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



## AUDIOPHILE VINYL

### TAJ MAHAL

Recycling the Blues & Other Related Stuff

Columbia/Pure Pleasure  
180g vinyl

**Music:** Multi-instrumentalist Taj Mahal may have made a name for himself of late with some fascinating world music collaborations, but in his early days he was one of the

foremost revivalists of acoustic blues. This 1970 album (his sixth) combines a side of studio cuts, featuring backing vocals from the Pointer Sisters and a live side recorded at Winterland in San Francisco. Both halves contain excellent songs. The live material in particular has tremendous atmosphere and energy with a very enthusiastic crowd, while the studio side features a very fine take of *Sweet Home Chicago* and a superb solo guitar piece, *Gitano Negro*. A fine introduction to a great musician. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Another super-silent slab of 180g vinyl from Pure Pleasure. The live side has excellent scale and dynamic colour while the studio cuts are clear and of a high standard for the period. Excellent! ★★★★★ JK

### OSCAR PETERSON TRIO WITH MILT JACKSON

Very Tall

Verve/Speakers Corner

180g vinyl

**Music:** Recorded in 1961, this album marks the first of many fruitful collaborations between Oscar Peterson and Milt 'Bags' Jackson. It features OP's soulful rhythm section of Ray

Brown on bass and Ed Thigpen on drums and has a sophisticated and smooth sound. These two artists work together with considerable finesse, the piano and vibes played singly and together with a precision and ease that is rare. The album's strength is in its harmonies, although things do get funky on Nat Adderley's *Work Song* and *John Brown's Body*, and it's never too smooth – just a little understated at times. ★★★

**Sound:** The vintage and the label means that this is an album with plenty of tone. The vibes are gorgeous and the production silky smooth. It makes you wonder why later recordings in the rock field couldn't have been just as good. ★★★★★ JK

These LPs were supplied by Pure Pleasure.

020 8723 7297

www.purepleasurerecords.com

## COMPACT DISC & VINYL



### PROKOFIEV, RAVEL

*Cinderella Suite, Ma Mere l'Oye*  
Martha Argerich, Mikhail Pletnev

DGG 00289 474 8172

**Music:** These two familiar works are arranged by Mikhail Pletnev for four hands, and dedicated to Martha Argerich. Aside from being brilliant soloists in their own right, the two communicate as though by ESP. There is certainly no hint that they are playing safe to ensure good ensemble. On the contrary, they appear to think in complete unison, the extra hands allowing a richer, more varied spectrum of colours and textures. ★★★★★

**Sound:** This is an excellent recording that is apparently also available as an SACD hybrid, which should make an interesting alternative. The disc notes identify which channel each player can be heard on, though even the stereo soundstaging displays superior homogeneity. ★★★★★ AG



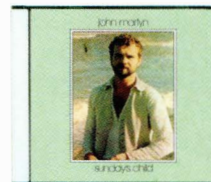
### SOPHIE SOLOMON

*Poison Sweet Madeira*

Decca

**Music:** Solomon has made a name for herself with Jewish fusionists Oi-Va-Voi, but she's also a highly trained classical violinist. Her solo debut is an intoxicating mix of Jewish, Russian, gypsy and other global rhythms, rock'n'roll attitude and western concert hall virtuosity. She doesn't sing and so Richard Hawley and KT Tunstall lend guest vocals to a couple of tracks, while Ralph Fienes delivers a hipster narrative of ineffable cool on *A Light That Never Dies*. Otherwise it's an instrumental showcase in which Solomon lets her violin do the talking in the most eloquent fashion. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Is it world music, classical crossover or maverick, left-field pop? The answer's a brilliant fusion of all three, full of flair, imagination andchutzpah. ★★★★★ NW



### JOHN MARTYN

*Sunday's Child*

Universal/Island

**Music:** Coming as part of a fair batch of re-issues, *Sunday's Child* is often overlooked but shines as a consummate John Martyn album. Acoustic folk, country blues, electric jazz and ambient sit comfortably as Danny Thompson and Martyn trade licks in only six days of Island studio time in 1974. Famous for the folk classic *Spencer The Rover*, every track shimmers with Martyn's plucked acoustic and treacly vocal. The highlight has to be *Call Me Crazy*, which dovetails into an instrumental that would define Martyn's legendary *Live At Leeds* set, the following year. Comes with seven superb cuts from a 1975 Peel session. ★★★★★

**Sound:** From the open D tuning of *Spencer The Rover* to the tablas and bass of *Call Me Crazy*, this CD has magnificent depth. ★★★★★ MP



### STORM GORDON

*Someone To Dance With*

Hypertension

**Music:** Singer Storm Gordon's second album sees her reuniting with songwriting partner and producer David Galbraith to produce an inspired mix of quietly emotive, jazz-tinged tunes blended with pop electronica, all recorded at the couple's home studio near the Firth of Forth in Scotland. Notable eclectic contributions from cellist Robin Mason, Sri Lankan hip-hop provocateur Dravidian, reggae reeds maestro Isax and blues harpist Jerome Godboon, ever threaten to overwhelm the songs, which include a delightful cover of Prince's *I Wish You Heaven*. But the musicianship is always kept in check and the album benefits from this reining in. ★★★★★

**Sound:** The analogue instruments blend easily with the electronics in a relatively sparse mix, all in thrall to Storm's honey-throated voice – warm and sensual, yet coolly enunciated with an elastic tension that will weave a magic spell over anyone with a hint of romance in their soul. ★★★★★ DO



### JOE WILKES

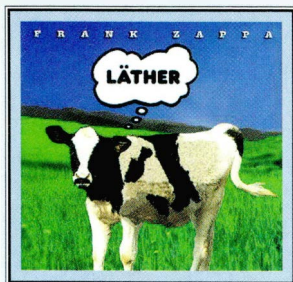
*Spotlight*

VM

**Music:** Joe Wilkes has made the odd recording before, but *Spotlight* shows a new level of maturity in the work of the twentysomething Brit. His work shows a touch of Nick Drake, Bill Fay and, in Wilkes' dry vocal phrasing, early Colin Blunstone. He's happiest spinning out effortlessly charming melodies underpinning his sweet 'n' sour lyrics ("It's too late to cry, too early to pray"). But there's a bluesy feel to it all too, as well as some atmospheric clarinet, harmonica and flute that takes things up a notch. A haunting set that deserves to be spot-lit. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Well cut by the man himself and well mastered by Denis Blackham at Skye. Only the eponymous opener seems a bit too bass lumpy to these jaded ears. ★★★★★ PS





## THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "Elastic vitality that has rarely been matched."

**FRANK ZAPPA** *Läther* Ryko

**Music:** *Läther*, or leather, was planned as a four-album box set in 1977. It wasn't released, but Zappa played all two and a half hours of it on a radio station and encouraged fans to record it at home – you won't find Elton John doing that very often. It was eventually released in 1996 as a three-disc CD set with material released on the individual albums: *Orchestral Favourites*, *Sleep Dirt* and *Zappa In New York*. As such it is a comprehensive overview of his mid-seventies work

and is all phenomenally good stuff; even the classical material is never less than listenable. ★★★★★  
**Sound:** A mixture of studio and live recordings, the sound is tremendously live and atmospheric with the latter and never less than ballsy with the former. Dense mixes are handled with panache and the low frequencies are particularly gratifying. Thankfully, it precedes Zappa's love affair with digital recording. ★★★★★ JK



**VAN MORRISON**

*Pay The Devil*

Polydor

**Music:** Morrison's albums can be too eclectic for his own good. Jazz standards follow Irish folk tunes, R&B work-outs are mixed with tearful ballads – and that's often just the first four numbers. But not with *Pay The Devil*. Here, Van Morrison has decided to make an out-and-out country album and the 15 tracks create a mood of such perfect cohesion you wish he'd make more genre records. Backed by traditional dobros, fiddles and weeping pedal steels, there are just three original compositions, but when the covers of such country classics as Webb Pierce's *There Stands The Glass*, Hank Williams' *Your Cheatin' Heart* and George Jones' *Things Have Gone to Pieces* are so exquisite, there's no cause for complaint. The modern alt-country movement could learn a lot from Country's new master. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Nashville forgot how to create this kind of authentic, raw-edged feel long ago, while Morrison's voice makes most modern American country singers sound bland and ersatz. ★★★★★ NW



## DVD-AUDIO & SACD

**HANDEL**

*Water Music, Music for the Royal Fireworks*

Kevin Mallon (conductor), Aridia Ensemble

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Naxos 6.110115 hybrid

**Music:** Some may ask if we need yet another version of these potboilers to add to the already extensive list available, some from much bigger names than these. But Kevin Mallon and the Canadian Aridia Ensemble are absolutely at the top of their game, and these performances have something to say that many older versions don't. The music, like much of Handel's output, is superb. Finally, it is on a budget label, yet has superb high-resolution sound. Some of the tempi are quite fast, especially in the *Water Music*, but throughout there is real attention to the dance-like character of the music. Fabulous! ★★★★★

**Sound:** Recorded in the atmospheric acoustic of St Anne's Church, Toronto, the SACD sound is organic, alive with detail and has a real sense of polish and verve. It's quite a package for its pocket money pricing and a good example of what SACD (or DVD-A) can add to the party. ★★★★★ AG



**CANDIDO & GRACIELA**

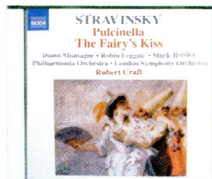
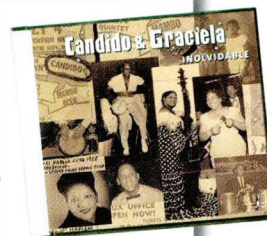
*Inolvidable*

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD layer)

Chesky

**Music:** Graciela Perez is the sister of and singer with Machito and his Afro-Cuban Jazz Orchestra but she has not performed since 1993. However, this situation was remedied when Machito's congo player Candido Camero asked her to join him for a run through some familiar tunes from her heyday. Candido worked with Dizzy Gillespie, Wes Montgomery, Art Blakey and Sonny Rollins among others and it's clear that his and Graciela's skills are still going strong. *Inolvidable (Unforgettable)* has charm in spades and is easily the best album by octogenarians since *The Buena Vista Social Club* lofted Cuban music back into fashion in 1996. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Chesky recorded this pairing and their band in a New York church (used for its natural reverberation, a Chesky trademark). The sound is clean and open yet as smooth as you'd like, thanks to the attention to audio detail. It doesn't have the energy of genuine 1950s 'Cubop' but then it doesn't have the distortion either. ★★★★★ JK



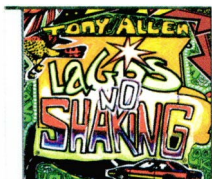
**STRAVINSKY**

*Pulcinella, The Fairy's Kiss*

Robert Craft (conductor), Philharmonia & London Symphony Orchestras  
NAXOS 8.557503

**Music:** Here is a big band version of *Pulcinella*, a quirky, sparsely orchestrated neo-classical creation characteristic of Stravinsky's later output. The disc also includes the more conventionally orchestrated *The Fairy's Kiss*, which dates from earlier in his life. Robert Craft has a long association with Stravinsky, and his interpretations therefore have unusual authority, and it would be difficult to gainsay the playing on this disc. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Due to its orchestration, *Pulcinella* often sounds rather scrawny, but *The Fairy's Kiss* has an altogether fuller and more richly coloured sound, which suits the more romantic character of the music. ★★★★★ AG



**TONY ALLEN**

*Lagos No Shaking*

Honest Jon's

**Music:** Tony Allen was the drummer with Fela Kuti in the 1970s, and helped forge the highly danceable afrobeat. The man Fela said could play "like five drummers at once" has been based in Paris since the early 1980s, and this is his first Lagos-recorded album since his days with his charismatic bandleader. On the surface, it's a return to afrobeat, but the local singers, evoking everyday life in Lagos, tone down some of Fela's more strident excesses. The result is an album that feels like the homecoming of an older, wiser man, albeit one who still has restless feet. ★★★★★

**Sound:** The sound is warm and organic, with a loose-limbed kinetic feel. This is underpinned by the drums, which give the tight funk plenty of space to keep it swinging. ★★★★★ DO

**JACKSON BROWNE**

*Running On Empty*

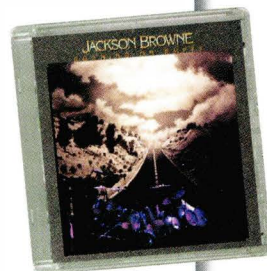
DVD-Audio and CD double disc

Elektra/Rhino

**Music:** Punk may have been in full swing in the UK in 1977, but in California it was still a few years away and the big, easy rock of Crosby, Stills & Nash and Fleetwood Mac ruled the roost. As did that of Jackson Browne. The sensitive singer/songwriter had expanded his band and taken them on a long-haul tour, pretty much reaching his popular zenith around this time.

*Running On Empty* was recorded on the road and was a concept album of sorts, some of it recorded on stage, some in hotels and buses. Ultimately, the album yielded two country rock hits: the title track and *Stay*. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Released as a two-disc set – one is a straight CD, the other DVD-Audio – with a couple of extra tracks, some photos and some scraps of video. The sound is, of course, opened out for surround and although this tends to show up the disparate nature of the recording process, it helps to contribute to Browne's on-the-road concept. ★★★★★ DO



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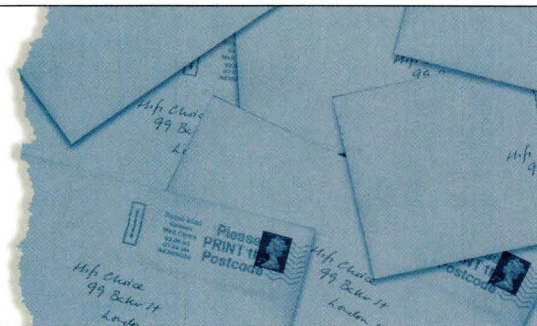
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# ChoiceMail



The pick of this month's best letters

Write to: Hi-Fi Choice, Future Publishing Ltd, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. Or email your letters to dan.george@futurenet.co.uk



## NAD'S OUT!

For the last 15-20 years, I have had to make do with a NAD 7020e receiver, a Sony CDP-350 CD player and Tannoy Eclipse loudspeakers. Now it's time for a change. I need to run a Dual 505 turntable and two Aiwa cassette decks as well. I have about £2,000 to spare and would really appreciate your recommendations.

Tony Thomas via email

**HFC** A two-grand system that's vinyl-friendly? We'd spend it on an Exposure 2010 S CD player (£600) hooked up to Primare's excellent I21 amp (£750) with a £60 Cambridge Audio 640P phono stage. We'd spend the rest on a lovely pair of Rega R3 floorstanders (£448), which should make sweet music with the Primare/Exposure combo. The only limits to this system would be the Dual deck, which will likely sound distinctly tired and

outgunned by the newcomers. A new Rega P3 turntable is a great solution, although with a good matching cartridge it will stretch the budget by about £400. If you are still listening to vinyl extensively today, this is a wholly worthwhile investment and one that perfectly matches the electronics and speakers we've recommended.

## ITSY-BITSY BUTTONS

I enjoyed David Vivian's *AudioFile: Dispatches* column (HFC 277) criticizing in-car fascia ergonomics, but there are several design issues at stake. Notably, the interface between user and unit is the most problematic – many functions have to be squeezed onto a very restrictive area. Since the growth in computing power, display technology and memory has eased the problems in most arenas of interface design, but with car audio there is another, over-riding requirement: safety.

**“For the last 15-20 years, I have had to make do. Now it's time for a change.”**

David mentions the iPod's superb interface but it is very dangerous to operate in a car. It is very hard to develop a car interface that is universal and simple.

The answer, of course, is to integrate the functions on the wheel, and use something like a head-up display (HUD) – examples of which are just beginning to be seen in production cars, like the latest BMW models. This, of course, poses a problem for independent manufacturers of car audio since the integration of electronics beyond that of standard fit equipment is not encouraged by the car makers.

So ultimately, the designers fall back to flashing lights to make their equipment stand out. The future probably lies in wireless interfaces between the car's electronics and other devices, such as phone, audio devices, computing etc, but trying to get everyone to agree to a standard, now that's another story!

Simon Heap via email



Above: Primare I21 amplifier

# Letter of the month

## VINYL LESSONS

You occasionally refer to the fact that the hi-fi market is in decline, due to technology and hard disk audio etc. But, in its defence, you argue that there are millions of CDs in existence. Think about vinyl. When CD arrived it was largely written off by the mass media, yet some two decades later, vinyl is enjoying a huge resurgence. People hung onto their vinyl and I think they'll keep their discs. I can't see CD going away; it may take a knock, sure. But die? Never. Here's another thought – digital data should be backed up,

so we are told. So surely, even if you rip your CDs you should still keep them?

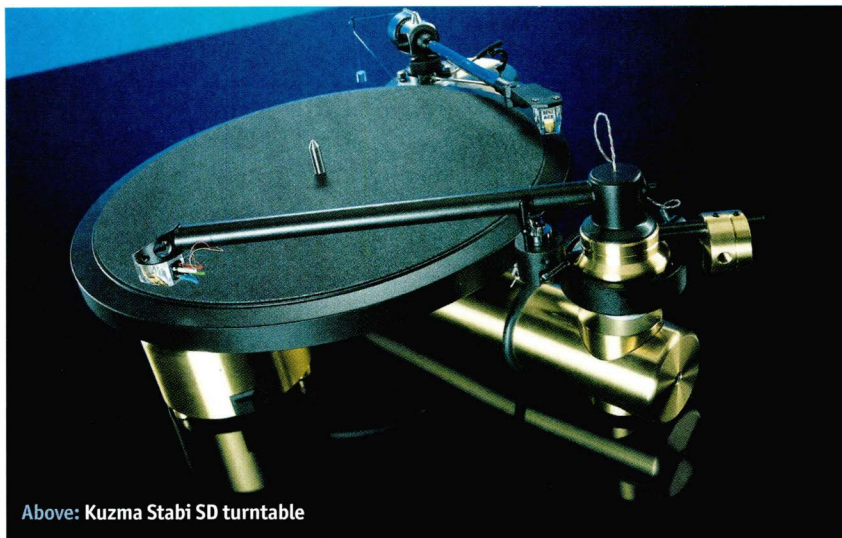
Alan Fry via email

**HFC** There is a school of thought that says the iPod *et al* are doing great things for music awareness, which could lead to demand for higher fidelity. Whether people entrust their entire music collections to vulnerable digital storage for the long term is a good point. Perhaps the CDs will go into the loft as did vinyl, only to come out again when the mp3 fuss dies down.



## WIN CRYSTAL CABLE PICCOLO INTERCONNECTS!

The author of our letter of the month receives a one-metre pair of Crystal Cable Connect Piccolo interconnects worth £260, featuring a silver/gold conductor with Kapton insulation, plus a transparent Teflon jacket. So get writing! (150 words max please...)



Above: Kuzma Stabi SD turntable

**THE PRIDE OF SLOVENIAN HI-FI**

Hello from Slovenia! I always considered *Hi-Fi Choice* to be the best magazine in the business, so I decided to write to you. I am very proud to say that we in Slovenia have a top-end turntable designer named Kuzma. I would like to see what your staff have to say about it. We have just two million people here and it would be great to be known for something as good as a Kuzma turntable!

**Aljaz Cuden, Slovenia** via email

**HFC** Thanks for your support. Kuzma's reputation has circumnavigated the globe and *Hi-Fi Choice* has been a fan since the original Stabi deck and Stogi arm appeared in the late 1980s. More recently, *Hi-Fi Choice* reviewed the excellent twin-armed Stabi SD turntable (£1,800) in 2004's *The Collection* (HFC 258). We're also impressed by the Karan Acoustics range of electronics, made in Serbia and distributed in Slovenia by Kuzma.

**BURNING ISSUE**

I was interested to see your Yamaha CDR-HD1500 review in the April issue (HFC 278). I bought one of these after my Marantz DR6000 CD recorder packed up. I bought a hard disk machine as my dealer said there were no dedicated CD-R recorders on the market – they'd all gone hard disk/CD-R. I've

**“I am proud we in Slovenia have a top turntable designer.”**

had problems with the operation of the HD1500 due in part to the incomprehensible instruction manual. I assumed that you could record straight from source (vinyl) to CD-R as the Marantz did, but no, you have to record to the hard disk first and then burn a disc. The machine seems complicated even for simple tasks and I find it slow and cumbersome.

However, CD-R quality from the hard disk is excellent and I can't hear any appreciable difference between the original and the CD-R. Overall though, it's too complicated. My Marantz was much more user-friendly and gave a good playback sound to boot.

**Michael de Koningh** via email

**HFC** We also found the Yamaha complicated, but relished its ability to make superb CD-Rs. There's no excuse for poor interfaces – if Apple can do it with the iPod, why can't Yamaha?

**MONKEY COFFINS**

I'm getting bored reading about speakers that look like 'monkey coffins' (rectangular boxes). Tannoy made speakers with hexagonal sides, claiming that was the best shape to suppress standing waves, but now it seems forgotten. Could you please do a group test on loudspeakers under a brand that are less boxy and use different technology, like the Eclipse TD510 and various speakers utilising NXT flat panel technology. It has been a while since you did a group test on unconventional loudspeakers.

**Dr. K. Fonseca** via email

**HFC** We've had several unconventional speakers in *Hi-Fi Choice* recently, including an in-depth test of the Eclipse TD510 (HFC 277). We also featured the distinctive Design E GT3 spheres in the last issue (HFC 278) and have covered more expensive models recently. While NXT speakers remain too niche for a group test, you can expect more reviews of esoteric audiophile speakers in *Hi-Fi Choice*. In fact, there's a very exciting exclusive planned for the July issue, out on 04 May.

**Onlineforum**

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



I think the highlight of my hi-fi life would be my Etymotic Research earphones. When I heard they were 'reference' earphones for a big hearing aid specialist, I had to try them. What a great decision that was.

**iBug**

I've been wondering – can anyone define 'high-end'?

I think it's more a price/status thing that invites feelings of exclusivity – of being part of a select club and setting a high price for entry to it...

**Boseman**

... I would say it's the level where sound couldn't improve significantly, the wife argues that you're wasting your money and

where you may as well spend on room treatment to improve acoustics.

**Ali**

I hear people talking about monitors and hi-fi speakers as though they are different. Are they..?

**Pioneer31**

...Monitors originate from studios where a monitor is

used to listen to a recording as it happens. Their function is to reveal detail to facilitate a successful mix of the final recording.

**Hman**

Just wondering if there are any females on the *HFC* forum, or is it a mostly male hobby..?

**Paul Mac**

... I suggest that the female brain is 'wired' somewhat differently to the male, when it comes to hi-fi hardware. At least, it seems so in most cases.

So, while women certainly enjoy listening to music, they're generally not interested whatsoever in the hardware or technology side of things.

**Michael**

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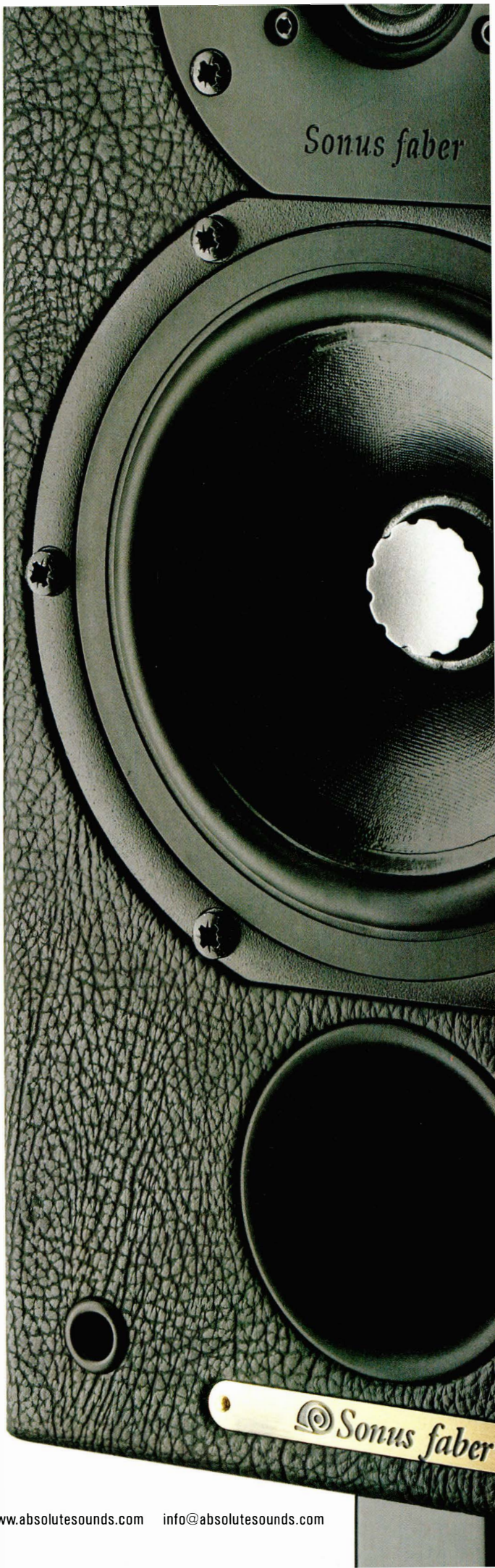
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# Way out there

*Just how weird and wacky can hi-fi really be? Only the Shadow knows, because that's who selected this odd-ball collection*

**E**xactly how strange and wonderful is the hi-fi universe? We suspect no one knows for sure. If you're a follower of hi-fi show reports from around the world (or maybe a regular attendee), you might just think you've got weird down. Just then, something comes along that almost makes you jump out of your skin.

At the recent Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, for instance, there was a loudspeaker that looked worryingly like a Gatling gun. Talk about blowing the competition away. Another large floorstander appeared to be modelling a selection of hub caps from 1950s Cuban taxis. They were the drive units, naturally. And that's to say nothing of entire fleets of CD players that looked like heavily armoured flying saucers. It's all brilliant, of course. Who would have thought, 20 years ago, that a stack of plain black boxes with a few knobs on would re-emerge as an *avant garde* design statement?

Here at *Beautiful Systems*, we try not to stray too far from planet Earth (and we wouldn't dream of entering the Delta quadrant) but, just occasionally, a system comes together comprising components that really do look as if they've been sourced from different planets. This is one of them.

It was suggested to us by Shadow Distribution as something "quite extraordinary"... and that turned out to be understatement. It isn't just the countries of origin – France, Canada and Scotland – that point to the insanely eclectic thinking behind the combo, the disparity in the sizes of the individual pieces is extreme almost to the point of humour. We're talking, front to back, surprisingly small, absolutely bloody tiny and something the size of a modest fridge. Well, almost.

'Surprisingly small' is Micromega's new flagship 'reference' CD spinner, the £2,150 Aria. A long time in the making and building on the reputations of the iconic Duo and Trio models from a few years back, the single chassis Aria is a top loading player barely a foot wide with notably nuggety build and a thick Perspex top plate that covers the sprung CD transport. The machine is so new, Micromega was still finalising the design of the remote control and redesigning the magnetic puck that holds the disc in place (currently plastic, production versions will be metal) during its stay with us.

## HAZY SHADE OF DETAIL

Technical details about what lurks under the lid were distinctly hazy too. Suffice to say, for the time being, it's a fully balanced design that employs a single bit DAC and posts some very impressive stats. It's a lovely thing to use, even without the remote, a tactile feast of sheen-smooth metal, heavyweight plastic and precision action buttons. And the large, blue LED display is easy to read from a distance. The CD player is the first release in a new reference range series of Micromega Aria components and will be joined, later this year, by a 200-watt integrated amplifier, a preamp and DAB Tuner.

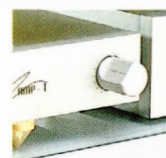
Here, however, it teams up with the 'absolutely bloody tiny' Audio Zone Amp-1 single input integrated amp from Canada. It may be small, but it's creating dirty great ripples of unalloyed enthusiasm around the globe. The reason can be found in its spiritual heritage, to wit a hi-fi underground legend from Japan called the 47 Lab GainCard. A pricey two-box miniature, dual mono 25-watt integrated amp that used an op-amp for its output device, ▶

**"It was suggested to us by Shadow Distribution as something 'quite extraordinary' ... and that turned out to be an understatement."**



**Micromega  
Aria CD player  
£2,150**

Solid, sexy and, thankfully, not shaped like a flying saucer, the Aria is French manufacturer Micromega's take on the current state of the CD art. As engaging to use as it is to listen to.



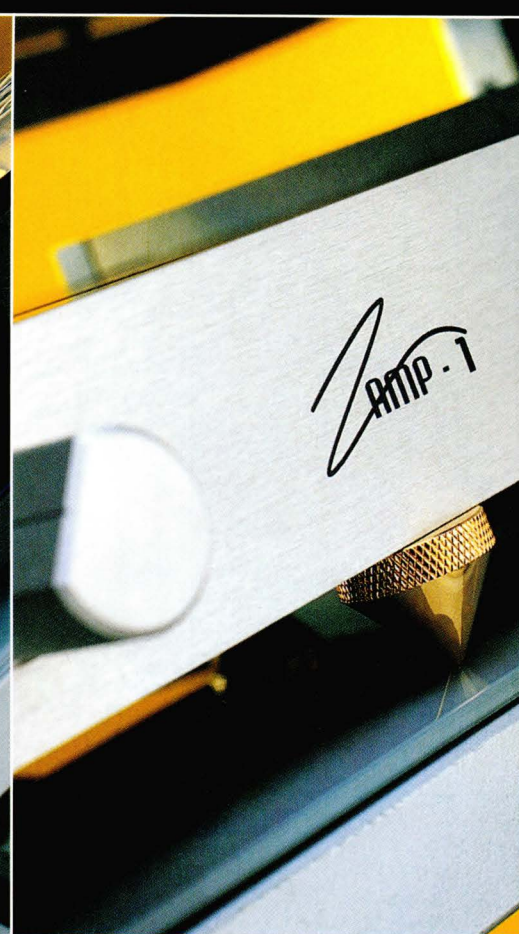
**Audio Zone  
Amp-1  
integrated amp  
£1,595**

This absurdly small two-box integrated amp from Canada is attracting a cult following and, listening to it, it's easy to understand why. Makes other amps sound murky and sluggish.



**ART Emotion  
loudspeaker**

**£5,000 per pair**  
As bulky as the Audio Zone amp is bijou, these lavish floorstanders from Scotland bring a real sense of scale and weight to the party, but present the front end's quicksilver sonics to perfection.



super-short signal paths and extremely minimal circuitry, the GainCard spawned a burgeoning GainClone DIY movement populated by hard-bitten audiophiles who craved the GainCard's sensational sonics, but couldn't run to the attendant expense.

The £1,595 Amp-1 is a compelling alternative to a soldering iron, circuit schematic and small pile of components on the kitchen table. It's a clone all right and owes no small debt to Sakura Systems and 47 Lab, who pioneered the uber-minimalist approach. But it's a clone you can buy. Its designer, Peter Daniel, has spared no effort on the aesthetics, build and component quality. And, of course, its sonic performance.

#### LESS IS MORE LOVE

Lovers of the idea that less is more should feel right at home here. No, it isn't a piece of wire with gain (the 'ideal' amp) but its simplicity and ultra-short signal paths do at least get within orbiting distance of the ideal. With less stuff to muck up the signal, greater purity should be the result. Not only that, Audio Zone claims, but a greater sense of immediacy or directness.

The Amp-1 comprises two boxes. One chassis contains the power supply and the other the amp itself. Both are aluminium, both are very small and both

are startlingly stark. It's makers call it "a revolution in two-channel amplification" and you can see what they're getting at. Audiophile purists tend to turn their noses up at op-amps and yet it's the op-amp integrated circuit at the heart of the Amp-1 that enables it to be so small.

The main chassis has dual mono construction with precisely matched, 31-step volume controls for each channel, supported by a built-in protection circuit and, reassuringly, a 10-year warranty. Although there barely seems room for them, it comes equipped with Cardas gold plated speaker terminals. The key to what is claimed to be exceptional linear transient response, outstanding speed, soundstage size and accuracy is the incredibly short (120mm) signal path which includes the length of the input RCA sockets and speaker terminals; the 9mm feedback loop is surely one of the shortest in the world.

Component quality is classy, too, with Black Gate capacitors, Riken and Caddock resistors, Noble volume pots, Cardas wire and Piltron transformers. The power supply has an AC inlet, two Cardas cords for connection to the amp, and also the amp's on/off switch. Claimed power output is 45 watts per channel into eight ohms (100 watts peak). Two volume knobs and an on/off switch. That's it.

Slightly rude of us to compare the dimensions of the ART Emotion loudspeakers to those of a fridge. It's big but not that big – though, if it were a fridge, it would still hold an awful lot of cans of Stella. Designed by Derek and Ramsay Dunlop (of Systemdek turntable fame), the Emotion is intended to compete with the world's best, but not require a direct feed from the nearest nuclear power station to drive. The result is a no-compromise, two-way floorstander of notably wide bandwidth and sensitivity that uses very high quality drivers, a downward firing port (hence the breathing space created by the integral 'stands') and mildly exotic Kondo internal wiring. It comes in three versions: the Emotion (£5,000), the Emotion Signature (£9,000) and the still on the test-bench, take no prisoners Emotion Silver Signature.

Basically, the more you pay, the better the crossover. What you see here is the standard Emotion. The good news is that you can buy it and, at a later date, upgrade it to the Signature or Silver Signature (when it is finally launched). A bonus of having a downward firing port, of course, is that positioning becomes much less critical. The Emotion can even be placed against a rear wall, if necessary, and as such is quite happy in smaller rooms.







**“This system has a fabulous reach: a deep, tangible bass, crystalline mid and treble clarity that’s strong on atmosphere. There’s plenty of height and space to the soundstage, too.”**

This is a system that simply reeks confidence – from the aesthetic audacity of its small/tiny/huge scaling of its component line-up to the death defying brilliance of its sonic performance. It certainly hit the ground running with *Rave Un2 The Joy Fantastic* from Prince, the bass guitar and kick drum propelled into the listening room with impressive impetus and gusto. The forceful, up-front sound on this track sounded exceptionally solid and rhythmic, with lightning transients and outstandingly explicit presentation of midrange information. The sound was fast and articulate, the presentation well balanced and effortless.

A great mix of punch and delicacy was apparent with classical music, too. Spinning up a slice of Dvorak – not noted for its jaunty tempo – the combo handled the music with finesse and a sense of ‘performance’. String tone had a particularly natural and unforced quality – smooth and nicely integrated with just the right amount of body. There was a palpable instrumental presence.

Jazz fusionist Larry Carlton’s laid back acoustic guitar playing on the old Michael McDonald number *Minute By Minute* moved along in a nice, relaxed groove, the incisive sting of the guitar’s plucked strings sounding nape tinglingly real. As did jazz pianist Julian Joseph’s Steinway. Joseph is a powerful player and, thanks to this system’s transparency and temporal precision, the listener is left in no doubt that JJ possesses more expressive ammunition than your average ivory tickler. Moreover, the instrument’s timbre and acoustic signature were beautifully resolved in three dimensions, sounding as rich and resonant as it should. Both its size and presence were convincing.

#### CRYSTAL DEEP

This system has fabulous reach: a deep, tangible bass, crystalline mid and treble clarity that’s strong on atmosphere. There’s plenty of height and space to the soundstage, too. And, when the material requires it, wonderful delicacy and lightness of touch.

Further experimentation revealed that the Audio Zone amp is most definitely orientated towards the clarity/detail end of the presentational spectrum. Fed by the Micromega, it delivers an astonishingly transparent insight into all types of music, always sounding clean and fast, precise and explicit – but never harsh or artificially tense. With the big Emotions in the equation, though, things sound perfectly in balance. Clear, lucid, fast and involving, this combo’s grip and powers of resolution benefit all types of music and let it breathe in an effortless, uncompressed manner. It’s an artful combination of power and finesse, both thrilling and satisfying.

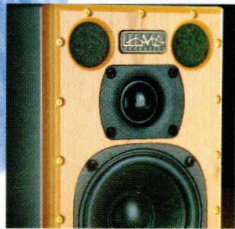
Things are often quirky for the sake of simply being quirky, the idea being folks will buy a product on the basis of it being different alone. This system is different. It’s quirky for a single-minded reason: the pursuit of good sound. Nothing else – not even an extra input on the amplifier – matters. And that’s hard logic to fault. **HFC**

David Vivian

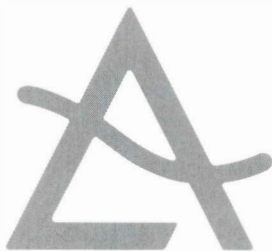




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# REVIEWS

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



## EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

- 36** Cyrus CD Xt/DAC X two-box CD player
- 40** Roksan Caspian FR-5 loudspeaker
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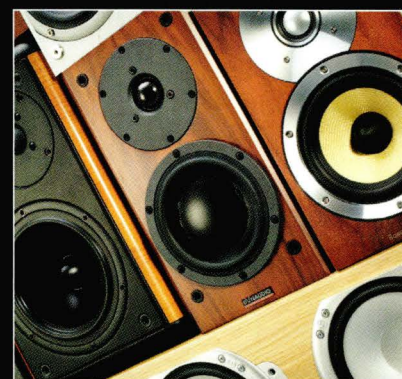
- 60** JAS Audio Twin Ribbon super-tweeter
- 61** Wireworld Starlight 5 digital interconnect cable
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## ULTIMATE GROUP TEST

### LOUDSPEAKERS £400-£850

- 66** ALR Jordan Entry L
- 67** Arcam Alto
- 69** B&W CM1
- 71** Dynaudio Focus 110
- 73** Monitor Audio Silver RS6
- 75** Opera Prima



## OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

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

Our overall conclusion

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

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

VERDICT	
SOUND >>	83%
FEATURES >>	85%
BUILD >>	85%
VALUE >>	85%
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	
This is a highly entertaining and colourful player at a competitive price. The build quality is good and the feature set strong. It's not the most subtle £700 player but if you're looking for a speaker to inspire you it could prove a bargain.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE</b> >> <b>84%</b>	

## 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...**

# Two to tango

Top 'Brit-fi' brand Cyrus raises its game with a new flagship, two-box CD player

**PRODUCT** Cyrus CD Xt and DAC X

**TYPE** CD transport and DAC

**PRICE** (CD Xt) £800; (DAC X) £1,100

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 21.5x7.5x36.5cm (each)  
● (CD Xt) Weight: 3.5kg ● Digital outputs: 1x electrical, 1x optical ● (DAC X) Weight: 3.8kg ● 192kHz upsampling ● Adjustable filter ● Digital inputs: 4x electrical, 2x optical ● Analogue outputs: 2x balanced (XLR), 2x RCA-phono ● Digital output: 1x optical

**CONTACT** ☎ 01480 435577 🌐 www.cyrusaudio.com

**C**yrus makes a compelling case for the return of the two-box CD player with these two stunning newcomers, the CD Xt transport and DAC X D-to-A converter. Up until a decade or so ago, it was widely considered desirable to split the transport

mechanism and digital-to-analogue conversion components into separate boxes to achieve optimum CD performance. But since the early 1990s, a lot has been discovered about the difficulties inherent in sending a digital signal from one box to another. Many very serious companies now consider the single-box solution to be as good or better than a separate transport and DAC.

The new Cyrus duo marks a tentative trend back towards the two-box approach for flagship CD components, facilitated by recently developed techniques that can overcome the increases in jitter created by separating transport and DAC. The thinking behind the split of these two functions is that transports produce a lot of spurious noise that can have a negative effect on the operation of the highly

sensitive digital-to-analogue conversion process – DACs sound a lot better if they are in a 'quiet' electronic environment. Single-box players address this with extensive power supply regulation, but there's an obvious advantage in separating power supplies all the way back to the mains socket and getting the maximum shielding between the two units.

Cyrus started its multi-box ball rolling again with the DAC XP (tested solo in *HFC 266*), which contains the finest digital conversion technology that Cyrus' R&D team is able to produce, almost regardless of cost. This £2,200 DAC also includes digital preamp functionality and fits into the standard Cyrus half-width casework, giving it a familiar look. But despite the visual similarity, the DAC XP is clearly a cut above the other digital components in the Cyrus

**BEST BUY**

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
magazine





**“Though the DAC X and XP were launched last year, it’s taken until now for them to be joined by a discrete Cyrus CD transport.”**

range, with the ability to outgun some very serious high-end electronics in a sympathetic system (not necessarily a Cyrus one, either).

The £1,100 DAC X that forms half of the CD player we’re testing here is essentially a DAC XP without the built-in digital preamp, but it retains the XP’s key features, including the fast/slow switchable filter option.

The DAC X has six inputs and will accommodate all manner of digital sources, from DAB tuners to TV set-top boxes – the only exceptions being SACD and high bit-rate DVD-Audio. Inputs include both S/PDIF electrical and Toslink optical, with both balanced and single-ended analogue outputs.

At the heart of the DAC X is an upsampler, which takes the re-clocked incoming signal up to 192kHz before passing it on to twin stereo DACs operating in a dual-mono configuration, the pairing producing a truly balanced output. Extensive power regulation and isolation is

used for a noise-free supply and control signals to the DAC are optically isolated.

Though the DAC X and XP were launched last year, it’s taken until now for them to be joined in the Cyrus range by a discrete CD transport. The CD Xt is not the first such product from Cyrus – back in 1993, when the brand was still part of the Mission empire, there was a Discmaster CD transport and matching Dacmaster DAC. But those products have long been defunct, and the CD Xt/DAC X partnership promises to deliver the best CD performance yet from Cyrus, eclipsing its current integrated players like the excellent CD8x.

The new CD transport incorporates a number of technologies designed to improve its performance, the most significant being a remote re-clocking circuit that’s designed to minimise jitter on the output. Power is supplied by a toroidal transformer with entirely separate secondary windings. These divide power

delivered to the electronics and to the motors as far back in the chain as possible.

Interestingly, if you add one of Cyrus’s outboard PSX-R supplies to the CD Xt, it’s used solely to drive the motor/laser mechanism.

On the interface front, the DAC X offers various adjustments via the scrolling set-up display (but not, unfortunately, the remote). Here you can name inputs, so long as the name you want is on the preset list. There are 30 names to choose from including ‘PC’ (but not ‘Mac’), so 99 per cent of sources are covered. Other controls include optional fast or slow digital filtering, absolute phase (also available on the CD Xt) and display size. The latter gives a choice of basic input name in large, easy to read letters, or smaller lettering with the addition of the incoming sample rate, which can be useful with DVD-Audio sources

No arrangement of these two units is particularly recommended but side by side would seem the best place to start. A PSX-R can be used to upgrade the performance of both components and there is the option of adding a digital preamp to turn the DAC X into a DAC XP.

One foible that has yet to be ironed out is that the display dimming only works on the transport. This is the word from Cyrus: ▣

## Q & A

We talked to Peter Bartlett, managing director of Cyrus, about how the CD Xt and DAC X came about



**HFC** Why was there such a long gap between the Discmaster and CD Xt?

**PB** Because we've focused on integrated players to grow that market segment. But after a number of years we realised that a lot of our customers with CD7s, CD8s and Qs were hungry for something more exotic. We thought that now was a natural point in the cycle of our customers' systems for them to be looking for something more specialised, such as a separate CD transport and DAC.

**How have you avoided the problem of increased jitter in two-box players?**

Re-clocking has gone a significant way toward addressing this issue. With a two-box player, it's easy to have a mismatch between the two units. However, with the DAC in the DAC X, the performance achieved with the re-clocking circuitry is really something special. Even when you use it with something less exotic than the CD Xt, the jitter at the DAC's output is very low indeed.

**Why are both units not equipped with a true 75ohm connection such as BNC?**

The only reason why some companies use a 75ohm impedance connection is because that's what their input needs are; many companies use someone else's input circuitry. The way we look at it: what do people have in the real world? They either have RCA leads or optical leads, so RCA leads are the way forward. The only situation in which you need to worry about the impedance of the connection is if the the incoming circuitry of the DAC is sensitive to impedance. We've developed the input to be insensitive to impedance – we've actually designed it to be perfectly matched to an RCA phono lead.

There's no need to have a 75ohm connector as long as you've designed the circuit not to expect one. It's just a matter of what you can engineer if you're not limited by what's available off the shelf. I know that from a marketing perspective, big sockets look great. But unless it actually works better, why add the cost and complexity?

**Can you upgrade a one-box Cyrus CD player to CD Xt status?**

Yes, although it's quite a big change and we haven't got a price for it yet. However, this is definitely something that we can do to Cyrus players.



**“It's easy to hear what individual elements within a mix are contributing, without the slightest hint of digital glare.”**

❑ “For various historic reasons, the DAC XP can't have its display dimmable at the moment. However, a revision is planned for the next delivery of handsets and we plan to add this feature later.”

### SOUND QUALITY

Once hooked up with a Chord Company Signature digital interconnect, the Cyrus pair delivered digital audio gratification in spades.

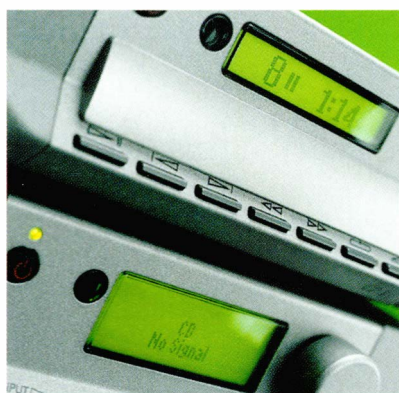
Its tonal balance is on the relaxed side, yet its resolution of detail is extremely fine. The body and tone of the jazz instruments on the CD layer of the *Lingua Franca* SACD were particularly well served – there was an earthiness and presence to the performance that made for an intense listening experience. The same was true when listening to *G.P.T.* from Martha Wainwright's debut album: the track sounded particularly powerful through

the Cyrus, and its detail resolution helped to make the precise words sung during the chorus sound unusually ineligious.

Next to the Resolution Audio Opus 21 (which admittedly costs £950 more), there is an increase in transparency and precision from the Opus which makes the Cyrus seem a little soft, but on the plus side instrument/voice separation is a little stronger.

In tonal terms, the Opus has a slightly greater sense of purity, but there is a body and warmth to voices from the Cyrus that sounds pretty convincing on its own terms. This is an unusually close contest; in our





experience, the Resolution Audio Opus tends to trounce competitors with ease, but the battle between this £2,850 player and the Cyrus pairing is much closer than usual.

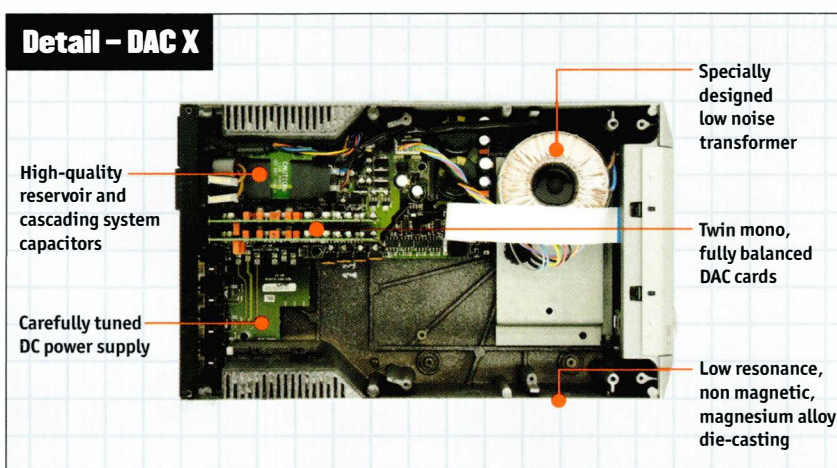
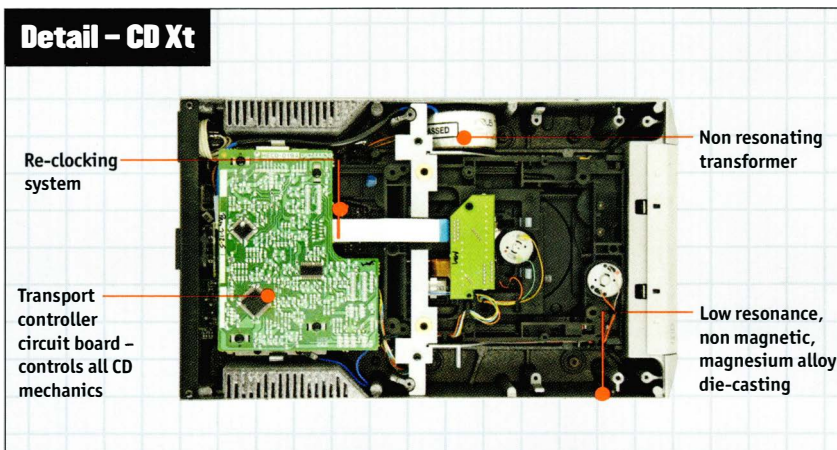
The Cyrus does seem to have a very strong sense of coherency. It's easy to hear what individual elements within a mix are contributing, without the slightest hint of digital glare. This is something that is often apparent with Gillian Welch's *Time (The Revelator)*, but in this company, her voice is relaxed and finely detailed, the image three dimensional and the acoustic space well defined.

Comparison with another more costly, class-leading player – the £3,000 Townshend Audio TA 565 CD – proves that there is still more acoustic space to be found on the disc, the soundstage opening up further in its hands. But while there is a slight sense of compression when returning to the Cyrus, a disc like Bob Dylan's *Live 1966* seems pretty convincing when it comes to the character of the recording, which one would expect to be a little rough and hard edged.

Surprisingly, an album which often sounds compressed – Jaga Jazzists' *What We Must* – was delivered in remarkably open fashion, the dense multi-instrumental mix sounding impressively coherent. A favourite from 2005, thanks in part to the band's storming live capabilities, this album usually seems congested and small – a fact assumed to be due to the recording. So it was particularly thrilling to hear more of the energy that JJ manage to drum up on stage.

Dynamics too seem to be well served, the player revealing changes in level both small and large with a calmness that serves the music rather than giving the impression of 'hi-fi' for its own sake. If all this makes the Cyrus combo seem a little lightweight and overly refined, all you have to do is put on a recording with real energy to hear that it can do firepower with aplomb.

Placing a Yo Miles SACD in the CD Xt's drawer proved enlightening. The Cyrus combo can only deliver the CD layer, of course, and as expected there was a slight veiling of the detail that the SACD layer will resolve. But there was no shortfall in the power department, with the slam of the bass delivered in full effect.



The DAC X's alternative 'slow' and 'fast' filters offer subtly differing versions of events – the question of which sounds best will depend on personal taste and the music being played. It's not a vast change, but we found the more bodacious and clean sound of the 'fast' filter to be generally preferable.

As a transport alone, the CD Xt lacks the vigour of Townshend's TA 565 CD and is more 'polite' as a result, but it puts up good fight given the price differential. Being a multi-format player, the Townshend will also deliver a 96kHz DVD-Audio signal to the DAC X, and the result makes a very good case for the higher resolution format. Wayne Horvitz's *Forever* disc, played through the Townshend/Cyrus combo, delivered massive depth of image and a real sense of tension in the reined-in jazz that his band plays.

Despite the minor resurgence in CD transport/DAC combinations at the high end, there aren't many dedicated CD transports that are as affordable as the CD Xt. In fact, we can't find any for less than the £1,100 Audio Note CDT One, so it has the field to itself. It's a capable performer and as a CD playing partner for the DAC X it's very well suited, but of the two it's the DAC that shows the greatest star quality. With a combined price of £1,900, the pairing has some strong competition from one-box CD players like Copland's superb CDA823. But sonically the Cyrus can hold its own, and the ability to upgrade the sound of

other digital sources via the DAC X is a distinct advantage. All-in-all, it's a persuasive argument for the two-box approach. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 91%**  
 [Progress bar showing 91%]

**FEATURES >> 92%**  
 [Progress bar showing 92%]

**BUILD >> 85%**  
 [Progress bar showing 85%]

**VALUE >> 88%**  
 [Progress bar showing 88%]

**PRO**  
 Unusually coherent and revealing sound with lovely tone. Flexible multi-input DAC. Easy PSX-R upgrade path for both components.

**CON**  
 The Cyrus 'shoebbox' case lags behind some rivals in terms of build and finish at this more lofty price level. There's some stiff sonic competition around the £2,000 mark.

**CONCLUSION**  
 These two components make for a subtle and revealing CD player that offers greater resolve than the majority of the single-box competition at the price. This, combined with the six inputs of the DAC X, make this a very tempting musical duo.

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



**BEST BUY**

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
magazine



# Back in black

*After a lengthy break, Roksan's making speakers again. And the FR-5 is a Rok idol in the making...*

**PRODUCT** Roksan Caspian FR-5

**TYPE** Floorstanding loudspeaker

**PRICE** From £2,000 per pair (according to finish)

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 20x100x25cm

• Weight: 35kg • 25mm fabric dome tweeter • Twin bass/mid drivers with 90mm paper cones • Sensitivity: 89dB • Impedance: 4 ohms (minimum)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01235 511166 @ www.roksan.co.uk

**O**ver the company's 20-year history, Roksan – and in particular its chief engineer Touraj Moghaddam – has come up with some of the most surprising and interesting design ideas in hi-fi. The Xerxes turntable was crammed with original thinking, and went on to achieve considerable success.

No less dramatic (though rather less successful) was the Darius speaker, also from the mid-1980s. This originally appeared with an enormous exoskeleton stand that spiked the enclosure in all the right places, but looked rather too dramatic and bulky for its own good. A subsequent version was rather more discreet, but perhaps too late.

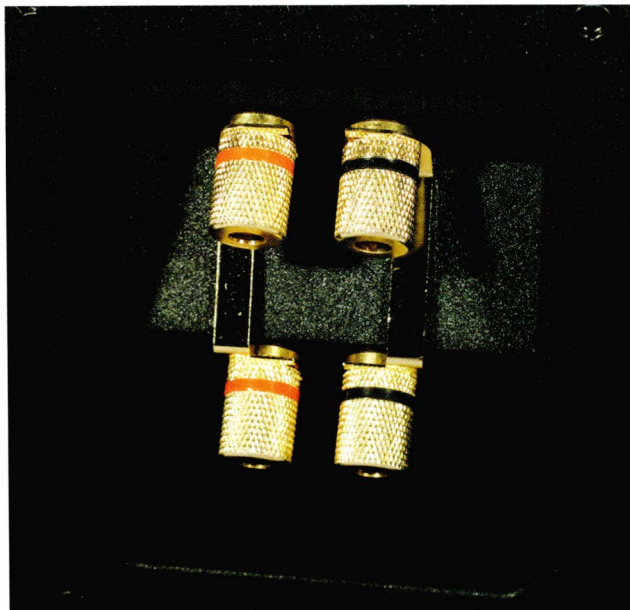
Both Darius and the mid-1990s Ojan featured different and elaborate techniques for mechanically decoupling the tweeter, as well as decidedly unusually shaped cabinets. So it was something of a surprise to discover that this new Caspian FR-5 speaker looks thoroughly conventional, with little to distinguish it from the majority of the speakers that come in for review. It's clearly intended to partner Roksan's

Caspian electronics, and has a partnering CR-5 centre channel based on the same drivers for those interested in multichannel operation.

It's a tall, handsome floorstander, costing £2,000 for a pair finished in the standard finish of high-gloss piano lacquer black. A luxurious bird's eye maple is available at an extra £250. It comes fitted with a attractive plinth that provides as neat finishing touch aesthetically, and also ensures fine physical stability once the floor spikes are fitted.

The deep black colour and sharp-edged cabinetwork, not to mention the unit's considerable height, does create a rather severe, almost funereal appearance, but in the right environment it will look very smart indeed. The whole thing feels unusually – nay





**“The FR-5 delivers a big and generous performance with a notably clean and open midband and no tendency to sound shut in.”**

exceptionally – solid, and this is reflected in a very substantial total weight of 35kg, largely down to the hefty 25mm MDF used in cabinet construction. Three internal braces add stiffness to the whole structure, and the only internal damping is a lining of ‘egg-box’ foam. However, tightening the spikes proved tricky: thumbwheel lock-nuts are used in order to avoid stripping the thread set into the plinth, but these are the same size as the spike bosses, so it’s hard to get a proper grip to lock the spikes securely and permanently in place.

Removing the (black fabric) grille reveals three flush-mounted drive units in a vertical line – a 25mm soft fabric dome tweeter at the top, plus two bass/mid drivers that look surprisingly small, given the not inconsiderable bulk of the enclosure. The tweeter looks conventional enough, though its diaphragm is set back behind a short horn flare, and surrounded by a thin foam gasket with a serrated inner edge. The two bass/mid drivers look identical; each has a 90mm diameter doped paper cone and operates within a 130mm pressed steel frame. Interestingly, and again surprisingly, these two drive units also operate in parallel, right up to the crossover point – the operating configuration here is actually a straight two-way. All three drive units are magnetically shielded.

The generous 28.5-litre enclosure is reflex-loaded by a similarly generous port, mounted through the rear panel and tuned to provide reinforcement centred on a low 30Hz. Twin terminals are fitting to allow bi-wiring or bi-amping (the latter well worth considering in this case), and the crossover uses low

impedance air-cored chokes and tight tolerance polyester capacitor, mounted on a substantial printed circuit board.

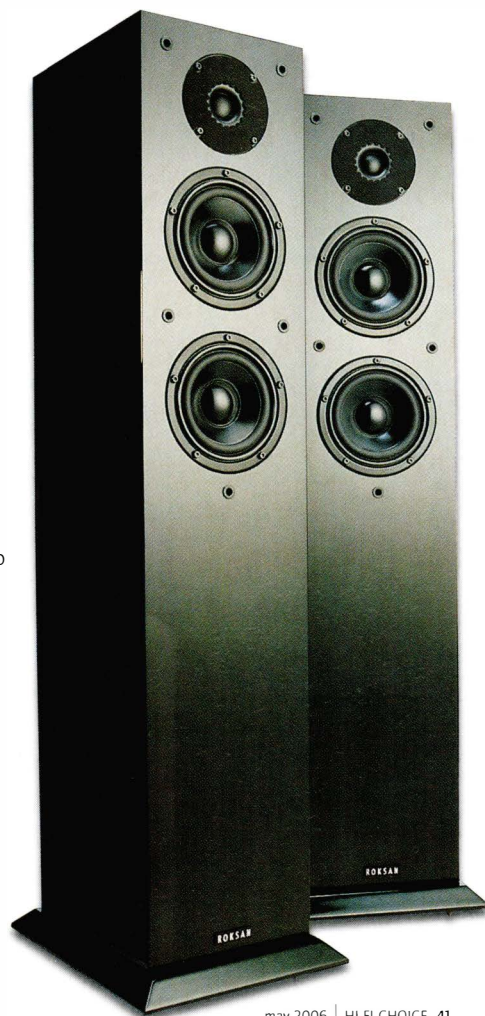
**SOUND QUALITY**

The manufacturer’s spec looks very conservative in its claims for sensitivity and bass extension, both of which were comfortably exceeded under our measurement regime. Instead of 87dB, we would estimate 89dB, while the bass extension – thanks to that low port tuning frequency – actually recorded -2dB at 20Hz under our in-room far-field conditions, rather than the more modest 35Hz that Roksan claims.

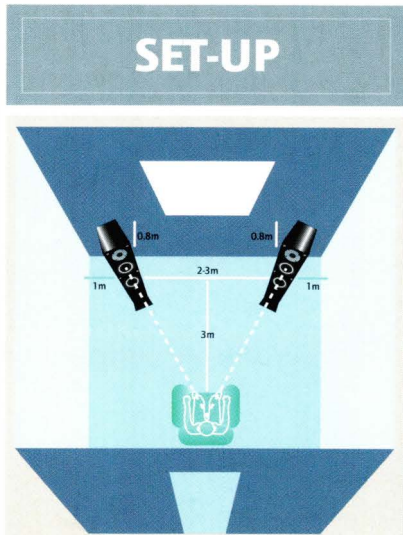
The tonal balance is not entirely neutral, but it gets close enough. Output is a little strong below 55Hz (thanks to room mode reinforcement) and rather lean through the upper bass (60-200Hz), but very well ordered thereafter, with a broad, shallow depression centred on 1.5kHz, and a lower treble (2-5kHz) that’s a little stronger than average. Indeed, its behaviour over the whole range from 200Hz to 7kHz was very good, holding within +/-2dB limits throughout. That’s impressive, in view of the known difficulties of integrating twin drivers (which will start behaving as a line source towards the top of their operating range) with the solitary point-source tweeter.

Although the manual suggests that these speakers can be placed within 10cm of a wall, our measurements suggest that this might be unwise (unless steps are taken to block up the ports), and the listening was done leaving an 80cm gap between speakers and rearward wall, to avoid generating too much mid-bass.

If the appearance of those two little main drivers didn’t exactly fill this reviewer with great expectations, the listening experience proved yet another surprise – and a very pleasant one at that. The FR-5 delivers a big and generous performance with a notably clean and open-sounding midband. There’s no tendency for voices to sound ‘shut in’ here, yet the system can be driven hard and loud without any obvious aggression or unpleasantness – a very difficult combination to achieve. ▣



# [Review] Roksan Caspian FR-5 loudspeaker



## POSITIONING

The manufacturer suggests that this speaker can be placed as close as 10cm from a rearward wall, and suggest starting the set-up procedure with the speakers 20cm out. This siting may well be possible under some circumstances, but in our listening room, close-to-wall siting tends to boost the complete 50-100Hz octave by several dB, and the FR-5's output is already rather strong around 50Hz. Our suggestion is therefore to start off by placing each of the speakers at around 70cm from the wall, and then experiment by moving them to and fro while playing music with plenty of bass content, in order to find the positioning that gives the most even results. For the sake of your floor and its coverings, make sure you determine the best positions prior to fitting the spikes.

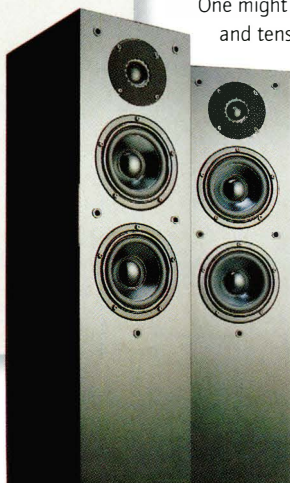
Speaker/room interactions have always been basically unpredictable, depending on the modal behaviour of the room as well as the positioning of the speakers therein. And in a room with different characteristics it might well be that wall proximity boosts the 60-120Hz octave, rather than 50-100Hz. With this speaker that would actually be beneficial, as it would help fill in the 'lean zone' recorded between 60Hz and 200Hz when measured under our conditions.

If close-to-wall siting is considered important, and the speakers do sound too heavy when placed there, try blocking the ports. This might reduce the overall power handling a little, but it should help avoid the sub-60Hz part of the spectrum from being too strong.

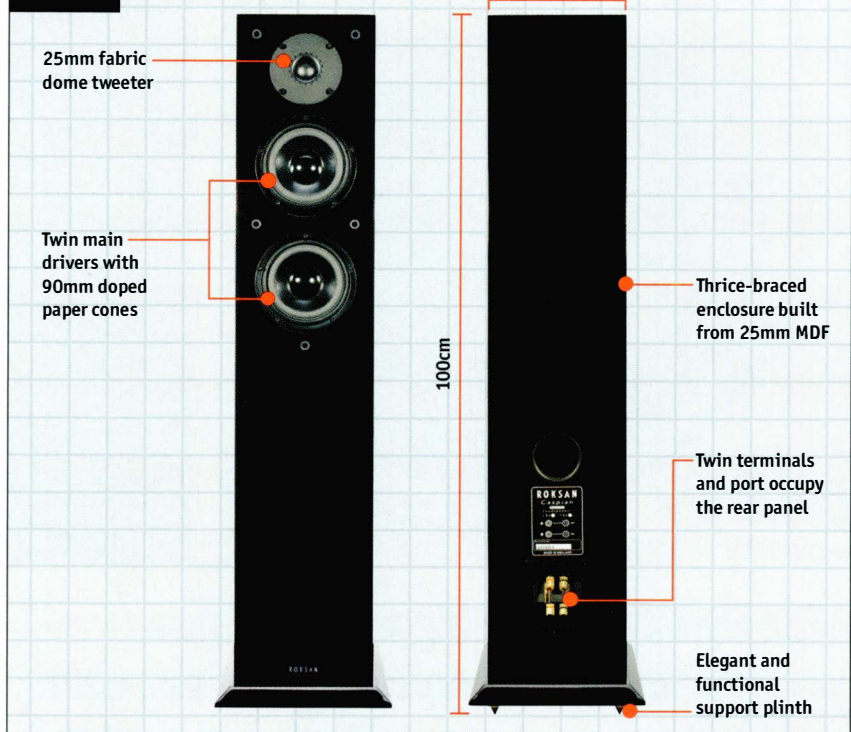
## SYSTEM MATCHING

The sensitivity comes out at a very respectable 89dB on our measurement regime, and this is in the context of a respectable amplifier load that never falls below four ohms, and stays at six ohms or higher over most of the band.

It should be possible to use low power amplifiers, including the valve variety, without encountering any problems. Indeed, it seems likely that the speaker's mild forwardness in the upper midband and lower treble could be very well suited to the innately sweet character of valve amps.



## Detail



It seemed a shame to have to pack these speakers up for shipping, after having enjoyed them so much for the previous week. They had taken over the listening room in the wake of this issue's *Ultimate Group Test* (see p64). And, while it's only reasonable to expect the FR-5s to sound significantly better than models that cost only a third of their price, the sheer comprehensiveness of the demolition job they carried out was a little unexpected.

The FR-5 manages to combine the sense of weight and scale associated with genuinely large loudspeakers with the sort of sweet delicacy and lively, vivid agility one normally encounters in the very best small speakers. Furthermore, the stereo imaging here was truly outstanding, showing very precise focus, good lateral positioning and fine depth perspectives.

That leanness leaves things a trifle lacking in punch and warmth, so that the contributions of bass guitars and cellos, in their respective genres, tend to be a little too restrained. And while this could be described as part of the FR-5's character, it didn't seem to spoil things to any significant degree.

One might also wish for a little more grip and tension in the way dynamics are handled, but it's not unusual in this regard – most regular speakers lack the sort of taut drama one finds in very large or horn-loaded designs, and the FR-5 is certainly rather more convincing here than small miniature speakers. Finally, the sound lacks just a little air and sparkle, which can slightly limit the sense of

reality, though to be fair that's a small price to pay for a tweeter that sounds exceptionally crisp and clean across the most important part of its operating range.

The FR-5 somehow manages to be much more than the sum of its parts, which is the one factor that distinguishes a really good speaker design from the merely prosaic. Each of those small main drivers, for example, has its own motor, and the combined surface area of their diaphragms is greater than the single 165mm driver, which is the market norm.

The enclosure delivers a wide dynamic range, while the port loading acts rather like a subwoofer. Include a fine quality tweeter, an essentially simple network with high-class components, and subtle voicing through the crossover zone, and you have an excellent recipe for a high-quality speaker. **HFC**

Paul Messenger

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 92%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>PRO</b> A superb performer that sounds exceptionally open and lively without harshness or aggression. Splendid stereo imaging. Build is very solid and styling sharp.
<b>EASE OF DRIVE &gt;&gt; 85%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>CON</b> Could be warmer and have a bit more punch. Lacks a little grip and transparency. Looks rather sombre and spikes are difficult to tighten properly.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 92%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 88%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> Roksan's new speaker is a winner: good looks, fine build and an expertly balanced sound. It's lively, open and easy on the ear, with a balance that'll suit a variety of high-quality source and amp components – including Roksan's own Caspian kit.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 90%</b>	



For all things analogue...

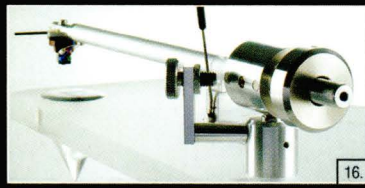
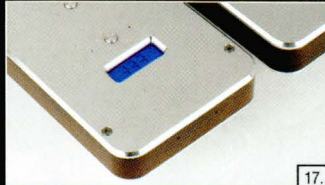
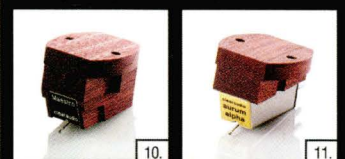
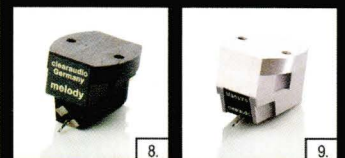
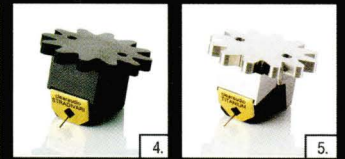
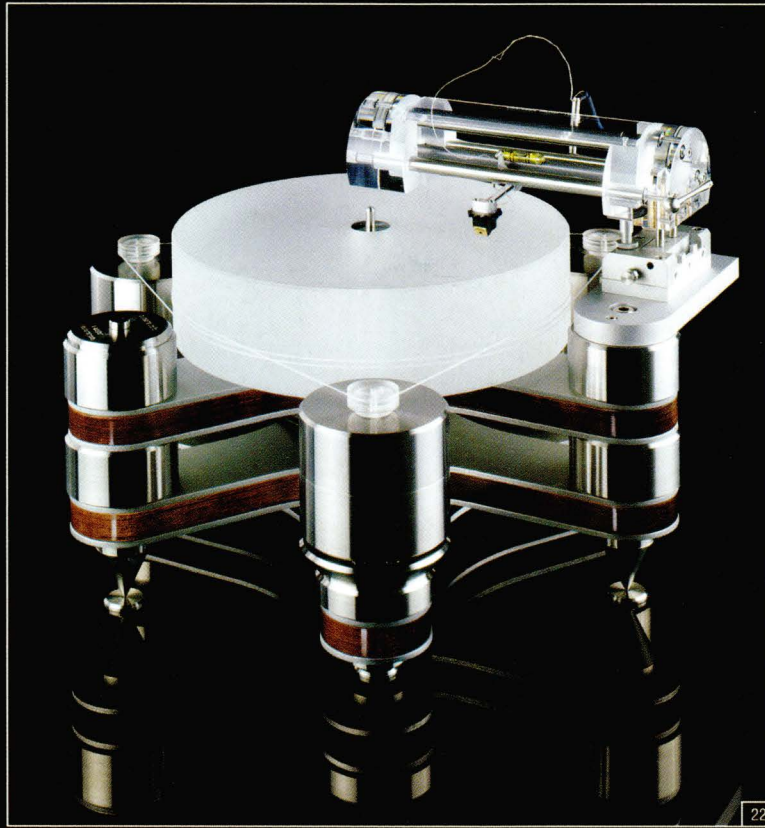
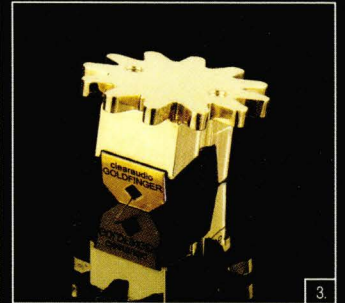


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23. 24. 25.



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# What the funk?

*Can this weird little turntable really be the 'new' Pink Triangle?*

**PRODUCT** Funk

**TYPE** Turntable

**PRICE** £450 (tonearm and cartridge extra)

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 43x11.5x33.5cm

• Weight: 4kg • Speeds: switchable 33/45

• DC motor drive • Inverted sapphire bearing

**CONTACT** ☎ 020 8697 2705

🌐 [www.thefunkfirm.co.uk](http://www.thefunkfirm.co.uk)

**B**ack in vinyl's halcyon days, two turntables were considered the Blur and Oasis of the UK hi-fi scene. They were the Linn LP12 and the Pink Triangle. The latter was the first to sport an acrylic platter, used a leaf spring suspended subchassis and had a battery power supply. It never sold as well as the Linn, but was considered (intellectually at least) its strongest competitor. Pink went the way of the 78 some years ago but one of the company's founders, Arthur Khoubessarian, turned up at last year's Bristol show with a completely new and entirely un-Pink-like turntable called simply 'Funk' and made by his new enterprise the Funk Firm.

This company makes two similar looking turntables of which the plain £450 Funk is the least expensive and most straightforward. The

£765 Funk V uses what the company calls Vector drive: an asymmetric arrangement of pulleys that cause the drive belt to make a triangular shape around the sub-platter and drive it in three places, to stop the motor from pulling the bearing toward it and causing judder (the standard Funk has a low tension belt to minimise this issue). The Funk V also has a dished platter, metallic finish and a 'Transient Load Control' bearing.

But it's the basic £450 Funk we're looking at here. At a glance, it looks like a pretty basic turntable with a platter, arm and motor unit bolted onto an oddly shaped piece of MDF that sits on some slightly eccentric ball shaped feet. Pick up the unusually coloured 'Achroplat' platter and you'll realise that it's a little out of the ordinary. For a start, it weighs very little by platter standards and secondly it has a thin piece of acrylic bolted to its underside. The latter is there to keep the Achroplat flat, as the expanded polyvinyl that it's made of is not particularly rigid.

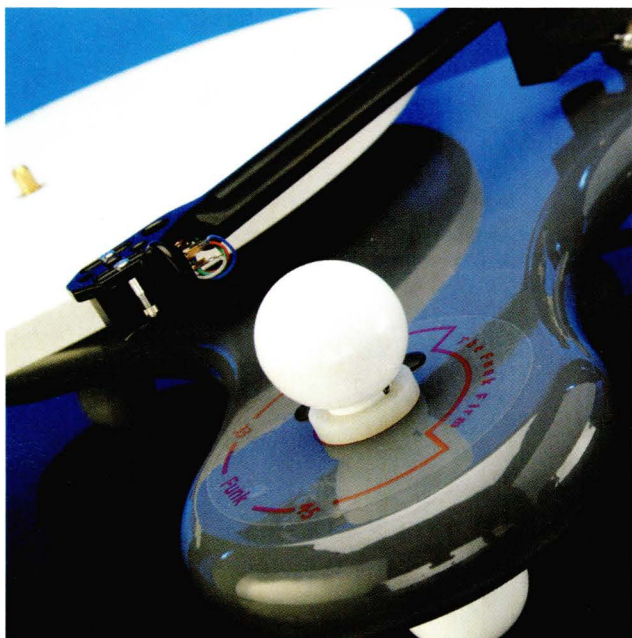
This platter is the key to the remarkable sound quality of the Funk turntable. It has to be, because all the other elements have been done before, several by PT, but never have they yielded the result that this modestly priced

design achieves. Arthur Khoubessarian says that the reason for its success is that it's made from vinyl, like an LP, so the mechanical impedance between record and platter is perfect. This combines with the expanded foam core which has extraordinary self-damping properties and such a low mass that it has no potential to store energy. It's called Achro because this is short for achromatic or colourless, a very apt description of the Funk's sound.

Supporting the Achroplat, the Funk has an inverted sapphire main bearing and an acrylic sub-platter, both quite classy elements to find on a deck at this price. Drive is derived from a DC motor, which is presumably not unlike those used on the PT turntables of yore, but power is supplied by a basic plug-top PSU rather than anything more fancy.

The round white legs don't necessarily stand perfectly straight because they are bedded in Sorbothane, a sticky, rubbery material developed for maximum energy rejection. These feet have been placed to put the bearing in what Arthur calls the 'sweetspot', where it will be least affected by vibration that does get past the limits of the Sorbothane.

Funk turntables are designed to take Rega (or Rega-fit) tonearms and our sample bore the



**“This will remove your socks within two tracks of your favourite slab of vinyl. Yes, it’s that good and no, that isn’t price-relative.”**

entry-level RB250 (£125), which did a remarkably fine job. Its potential is enhanced by Funk’s threaded collar, which usefully allows you to adjust VTA.

**SOUND QUALITY**

Let’s get one thing clear from the outset: this turntable will remove your socks within two tracks of your favourite slab of vinyl. Yes, it’s that good and no, that isn’t a price-relative statement. The Funk is one of the most neutral turntables we’ve encountered, and while neutral can often mean detailed and clean but also lifeless, this is not the case here as the dynamic energy it extracts from any piece of vinyl is in the very top league. The Achroplat seems to do what acrylic does but in a less coloured fashion. With acrylic platters, you often get a sense that at least some of the energy is produced by undamped resonances; this platter gives you the energy of acrylic but with apparently little or no resonance. You can tell that it’s doing this because the sound, while powerful, is extremely clean and nimble and you can hear pretty well everything from the smallest to the loudest sounds.

What is most surprising about this lightweight deck is the way it does bass. One expects it to be capable of stopping and starting well because of its inability to store energy but the depth and weight of bass it

extracts will cause concern among those with big speakers and suspended floors. During our test period, we got a bit carried away with the Prodigy’s *Poison* and could feel the B&W 802Ds playing tunes with the floorboards!

It took a little bit of fiddling to get these results, though. Our review sample came with a Denon DL-103 moving coil cartridge onboard and, while extremely charming, it doesn’t have the aforementioned low frequency capabilities. So we put something better on... only to achieve similar results! It became clear, after a third relatively affordable cartridge, that the deck was revealing the limitations of these cartridges (and/or their incompatibility with the tonearm), so we cut to the chase and stuck on a very expensive van den Hul Condor. That did the trick... well, almost.

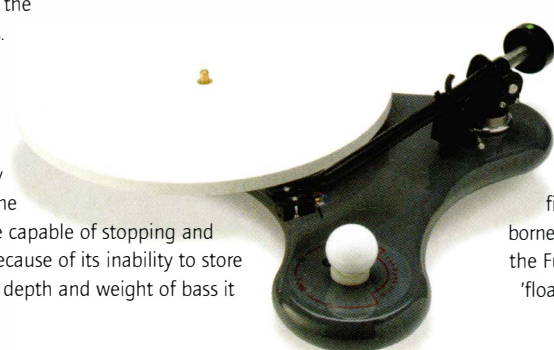
The second critical factor turned out to be the equipment support. This deck is not particularly well equipped for dealing with furniture-borne energy and its performance on the stiffer of two different (first and second generation) Townshend Seismic Stands was comparatively ‘loud’ and fatiguing. To be fair, the stand is only half a metre from one of the aforementioned B&W speakers and right in the firing line of floor borne energy. Moving the Funk to the more ‘floaty’ original Seismic

Stand gave it the low resonance platform it needs to strut its (funky) stuff.

There are some who might find the Funk’s energy and exuberance a bit much and there is room for a bit for refinement in its high frequency performance, which is presumably where the Funk V helps. On the other hand, it may only take a more refined tonearm – the RB250 is about the least expensive decent tonearm that can be separately purchased. It would be fascinating to hear an RB1000, SME or Hadcock on here, all of which would bring a greater sense of calm to the sound.

The standard of resolution on offer is close to the top league, the noise floor is vanishingly low and a good piece of vinyl is as silent as a CD in between the notes. But it does depend on the recording – differences between discs are starkly revealed, as are musical differences, so the Funk doesn’t get in the way of the music. As musician/producer Bill Laswell said in *HFC* 276: “Vinyl to CD is like a live performance compared to a recording”. And with a turntable like this you know that’s true. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



<b>VERDICT</b>	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 90%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>PRO</b> Uncannily revealing, dynamic and uncoloured sound quality that would sit comfortably on a deck costing many thousands. Adjustable VTA on Rega arms is useful.
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 83%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>CON</b> Demands a high-quality cartridge and effective isolating support. Cartridge sits rather close to the on/off/speed control knob.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 81%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 96%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> You will not find another turntable at anywhere near this price that can touch the Funk for dynamics, tonal colour or detail. In fact, you won’t find one that clearly beats it on any sonic score for less than three times the price. Get one while they’re hot!	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 93%</b>	

# Reference manual

*No gizmos, no gimmicks, no automated niceties... just CD audio engineering at its finest*

**PRODUCT** Audio Research Reference CD7

**TYPE** CD player

**PRICE** £8,000

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 48x13.4x39cm

• Weight: 14.8kg • Crystal 24-bit DAC • Balanced (XLR) and single-ended (phono) analogue outputs

• Balanced (XLR) AES/EBU and single-ended (phono) coaxial digital outputs

**CONTACT** ☎ 020 8971 3909

🌐 www.audioresearch.com

The word 'reference' is taken really, really seriously in Minnesota. Audio Research has been making electronics for more than 35 years, but in that time only eight products have been given the 'Reference' tag. This – Audio Research's ninth Reference point – is the first ever source component to do so.

The Reference CD7 doesn't replace Audio Research's much-respected CD3 MkII CD player, it sits way above it, costing a cool eight grand to the CD3's already frisky five and

bringing much to the party in the process. But, in the understated manner that's typical of its maker, you'd likely never notice the difference from the outside. Except for the word 'Reference' in small block capitals and a few slats on the side and top right of the player, it would be easily to mistake one with the other. Both are top-loaders, with a manually operated pull-back drawer and a milled black puck to hold the disc in place. Both have a solid build with a thick alloy front panel, distinctive black grab handles and a simple green LED read-out that looks like something out of a £100 Philips player of a decade ago. Both have a simplistic, functional remote control and squidgy-feel buttons on the front panel. Both have a combination of balanced and single-ended digital inputs and analogue outputs. Both have five solid rubber feet. Both use the same transport mechanism and digital converter.

Let's face it, though... the already excellent CD3 MkII is a good jumping off point for a truly first-rate player.

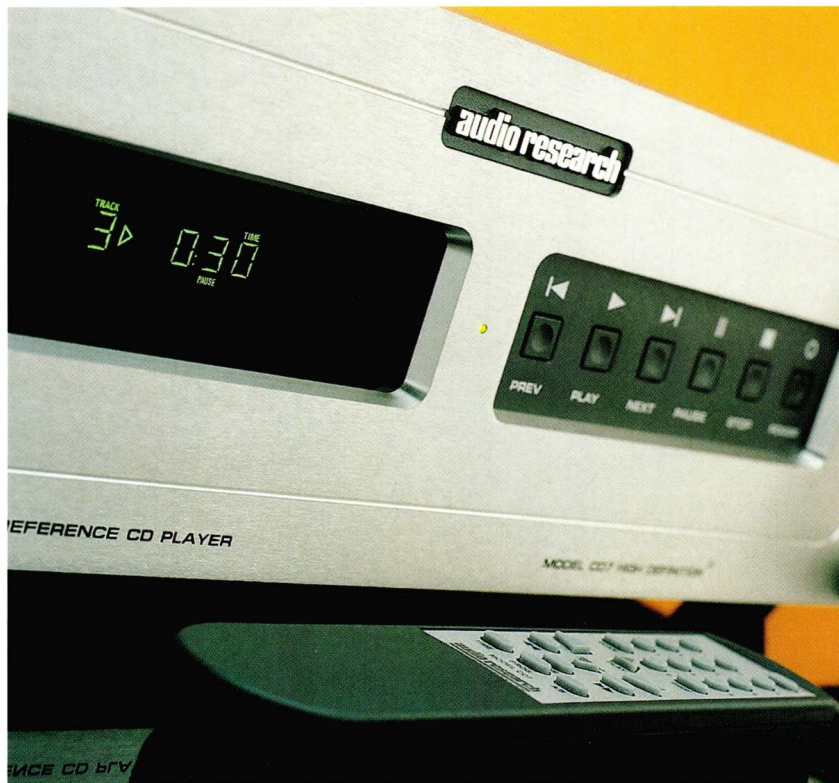
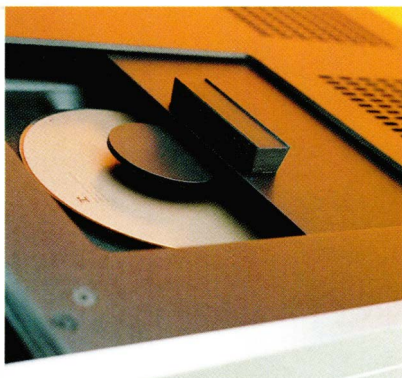
The Reference CD7 is slightly deeper than the CD3 MkII, deep enough to hang off the end of most equipment tables and about the footprint of a decent sized stereo power amp. However, it's more or less identical in footprint to the Reference 3 preamp, so it's in good ARC company. It's heavy, too; not by power amp standards, but this is no lightweight CD spinner. Much of that mass is taken up with the anti-vibration system incorporated in the player. Forget springs, bits of neoprene, foam or anything sappy like that – this is the belt 'n' braces approach: the cast Philips Pro 2 transport mechanism sits shock-mounted on the case's backbone. Resonance and negative vibration effects are effectively sunk into the belly of the beast and the high mass of the transport mechanism makes any minor rotational distortion effects disappear in similar style to a heavyweight turntable platter eliminating wow and flutter – by sheer mass. This is overcoming the mechanical limits of CD by ironwork and sheer strength of will.



EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine





**“This player is a Reference point sure enough, but a reference that categorically refuses to wear its lab coat.”**

Like the CD3 MkII, the Reference CD7 uses a Crystal 24-bit DAC, although this is not the sort of player that features upsampling, post-22kHz brick-wall signal reconstruction techniques on any other forms of audio hippy nonsense. It's just good, solid delta-sigma technology, done right.

The slats in the top and side of the case dissipate heat from the four 6H30 triode valves used in the output stage of the player, together with a further three 6H30s as high-voltage regulation for the power supply. This is a new thing for Audio Research: despite its 'hollow-state' (valve-based) heritage, the CD players that went before the Reference were all profoundly solid-state in approach. But the development of the Reference 3 preamplifier (reviewed in *HFC 272*) changed all that. The output stage of that preamp offered such a performance boost to the Audio Research sound, in such a potentially modular package, it would have been folly not to use it in other products. So, out went the solid-state output section and in went essentially a baby Reference 3 preamp gain stage, complete with intricate and sophisticated capacitor grid-like layout, unique to Audio Research.

This, of course, necessitates a revision in the power supply stage and this CD player sports the sort of meaty power delivery that is the dream of many an integrated amp designer.

The valves also necessitate higher power consumption than is usual with CD players: it draws up to 120 watts and even up to five watts when turned off, but still connected to the juice. If you want to do your bit to save the polar ice caps from marauding superheated whales or something, look elsewhere... or switch off the player at the wall if you are concerned by a five-watt power draw. (If you are concerned about this, how do you sleep? Your alarm clock radio has about the same power consumption levels.)

**SOUND QUALITY**

Audio Research is one of those companies that has a very definite 'sound' to its products. They are big, powerful and bright sounding in the main. Recent Reference products challenge that standing, by adding layers of finesse and levels of listen-through insight that puts the company at the very forefront of what's best in audio these days. The Reference CD7 player completes the package.

This player is a Reference point sure enough, but a reference that categorically refuses to wear its lab coat. The player manages to combine the sort of musical grace that is so rare in digital replay with all the detailed analysis of CD at its best. Yet it doesn't seem engineered to sound like an 'analogue' player: its design is wholly 'digital' in approach. It

simply represents the very best of digital engineering as it stands today.

Perhaps the best example of what it does so much better than the vast majority of players is found in the voice of Joni Mitchell. Many of us have years of extensive exposure to Joni Mitchell's voice and the sparse backing she often used in her best works. Many of us also have the same albums replicated on vinyl and CD, because they are old friends. So, Joni Mitchell's voice holds plenty of charm, but little mystery from an audio perspective... or so I thought. I'd forgotten just how important her lyrics, how beautiful the orchestration, how pure the voice until *Blue* was played on the Reference CD7. This wasn't just a CD playing, it was casting a spell back to that first time I heard Joni Mitchell and how much you take that voice for granted.

Those of us old and fat enough to remember punk and new wave will have a collection of truly dreadful remasters of not that good original recordings from the 1970s and 1980s. These take the words 'edgy' and 'raw' to new levels. Usually, there are only two ways that CD players approach such musical content: with all the warmth and charm of a chainsaw, or with all the edginess of a well-chewed soft cushion. Very, very occasionally, a CD player appears that can cut through the raw quality of the recording to deliver up the equally raw musical content, without smoothing over the sound in the process. Eight grand on a CD player to listen to Gang of Four's radical left-wing *Entertainment!* may be an exercise in irony, but it nevertheless serves as a prime example of why this player works so well. It manages to get past the recording and deliver levels ▶

**Q & A**

We spoke to Terry Dorn, vice president of marketing and sales at Audio Research, about why it took so long to make a Reference CD player



**HFC Why has there not been a Reference CD player before the CD7?**

**TD** The Reference CD7 is our first Reference series CD player for two primary reasons. It is the first CD player/transport under our name that we believe has a level of performance commensurate to our other current Reference models – in information retrieval and definition, soundstage precision and musical dynamics. Also, the CD7 takes direct advantage of circuit technology first developed for the Reference 3 preamplifier.

**What technology has been used from the Reference 3 preamp?**

The analog audio stage of the CD7 is basically transplanted directly from the Reference 3 preamp. We believe it to be the best audio line-stage circuit we have yet developed, and so it was a quite logical step to think of its application in a product like the CD7. The basic circuit topology employing four 6H30 twin triodes, massive power supply, custom proprietary power transformer and costly proprietary output coupling capacitors all found their first use in the Reference 3.

**Can the Reference CD7's technology trickle down to regular ARC players?**

Unfortunately, the factors that give the Reference CD7 its remarkable performance also make it more costly, and therefore less suitable for finding a place in less expensive products. Exacting selection, custom manufacture of expensive components and precision hand assembly do not yield the cost savings necessary for moving down-market.

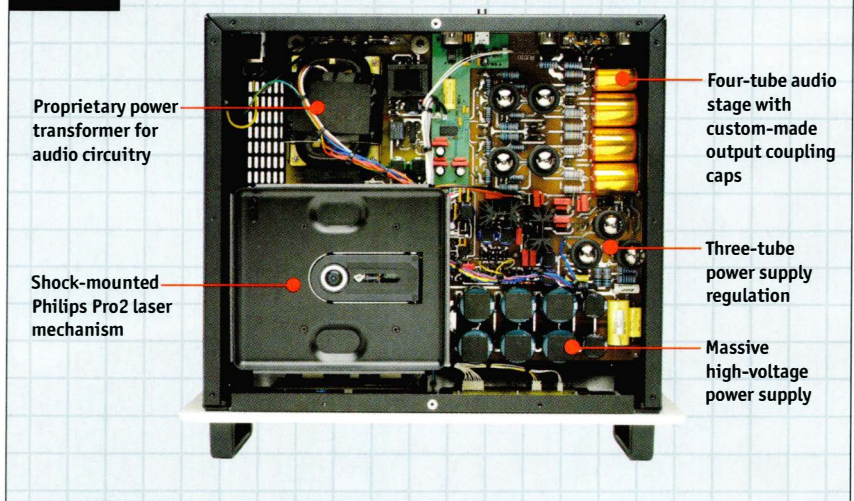
**What's next for the Reference series?**

Having introduced four new Reference models in a little over a year is enough to keep us busy with production and support of those models for now. They are all doing well enough to keep us on overtime production at our factory in Minnesota. As for the future, we'll just have to see where our market leads us.

**Are there any plans for a universal disc player?**

Multi-format players, even of very high quality, inevitably entail compromises in one format or another, and to our ears, it is often two-channel music reproduction that suffers. So we have kept our focus on dedicated two-channel player/transports. A multi-format player just doesn't fit who we are and what we do best.

**Detail**



Proprietary power transformer for audio circuitry

Shock-mounted Philips Pro2 laser mechanism

Four-tube audio stage with custom-made output coupling caps

Three-tube power supply regulation

Massive high-voltage power supply

of detail and musical communication unheard of with this low-fi recording. Of course, it also makes unaccompanied female vocals sound seductive and dynamic classical recordings seem powerful and titanic.

These are the sort of justifications people have used to explain the continued success of vinyl in the digital world of today. And, in some ways, this is a 'record player' for the digital age. It is not engineered to sound warm and romantic, it merely makes you want to play your discs more. You call them 'records', not 'CDs' when you play discs on the CD7 – oddly.

In truth, we struggled with this player. Struggled to find anything bad to say about it, that is. It doesn't 'pretty up' the discs it plays, yet its natural-sounding clarity is wonderfully easy to listen to. And, just to get this absolutely clear, it doesn't sound all warm and 'valve-y'. It's also a really 'quiet' sounding CD player; it's not low in gain, it's just there is an absence of digital hash that has to be (not) heard to be fully understood. This makes the noise floor of the whole system appear lower, with music rising out of limpid pools of inky black silence. Oh dear... time for the medication, nurse.

Just as Audio Research has its Reference, so does any reviewer. We all have a series of benchmark products (either physically *in situ*, or with a sound firmly locked in our own memory) by which products must be evaluated. From recent experience, these would include Audio Research's own CD3 MkII and the Townshend Audio TA 565 CD beneath the price of the CD7, and the full four-box Zanden

Model 2000/Model 5000 Signature priced way above it. Of these, only the TA 565 CD was directly available for comparison, but from this one benchmark point, it was clear the Reference CD7 is in a different class. Sounds were far fuller through the Reference CD7, with the sort of coherence of both music and musical instruments that showed up the limits of the already sublimely coherent TA 565 CD.

£8,000 for a CD player – when one can be picked up for thirty quid these days – may be a tough call to argue for bargain status, but hear us out. If what's important to you is the replay of music, then this player must be compared to its musical peers, not in absolute terms against lesser products that produce a 'digital noise' simulation of music. In that context, this player must be ranked alongside the best that Wadia, Zanden and the like can offer. And those companies all deliver products that make eight grand seem like loose change. In that respect, this player really is a bargain after all. **HFC**

Alan Sircom



**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 95%**

**FEATURES >> 84%**

**BUILD >> 93%**

**VALUE >> 85%**

**CONCLUSION**  
 One of the very best CD players ever designed. Musically it's eminently satisfying – you'll be stunned by the way it deals with all manner of discs. Frankly, it's good enough to make you wonder why anyone bothered with SACD in the first place...

**PRO**  
 A magical combination of musical integrity, richness, depth and detail. Good enough to shine through even the most humble hi-fi system. Lives up to the 'reference' tag.

**CON**  
 It's a big box that needs breathing room for the valves and space to gain access to the top-loading mechanism. Basic controls and display.

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

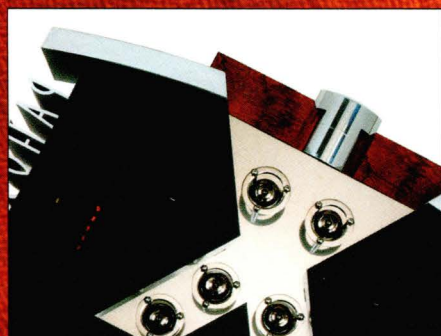


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# Understated art

T+A's slender SACD player offers a subtle, unassuming and above all musical take on stereo sound

**PRODUCT** T+A SACD 1245 R

**TYPE** CD/SACD player (stereo only)

**PRICE** £2,000

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 44x7.5x39cm

• Weight: 8.6kg • Four analogue filter patterns

• Analogue outputs: single-ended (RCA) • Digital outputs: electrical and optical • Optional remote control

**CONTACT** ☎ 01623 517000

🌐 www.taelektroakustik.de

**W**e have covered a smattering of T+A equipment in previous editions of *Hi-Fi Choice*, including a striking turntable and valve amplifier from the exotic V range. The SACD 1245 R is visually more subdued, but is still of great interest in an audiophile context. It's one of a select group of stereo-only CD/SACD players aimed at audiophiles who are not interested in, or cannot accommodate multichannel replay.

Styling in this case is typically Germanic (T+A is based in Germany), with a mass of front panel controls and a display that is too bright at its default setting, though dim and off

settings are available. The controls are necessary because remote control is an extra cost option. But with a very solidly constructed carcass and a finish that is fully engineered on all visible surfaces, the SACD 1245 R retains an unusual visual clarity, and most of the controls are self-explanatory. Exceptions include 'Wide', which switches the nominal output bandwidth from 60kHz to 100kHz, a feature enabled by a switch on the rear. 'Inv' inverts the absolute phase of the output (0/180 degrees), while 'Audio Mode' selects the CD or SACD layer on hybrid discs, or between a multichannel downmix to stereo or the stereo mix on the disc, depending on when it is selected in the play cycle. Optical and electrical digital outputs are available from CD, and adjustable damping feet can be levelled as required.

There are also oversampling options. In both CD and SACD modes, there are four filters that juggle response shape, and pre and post echoes ('ringing'). In SACD form, less complex filters modify the overall bandwidth and stopband attenuation in conjunction with the 60/100kHz overall response switching.

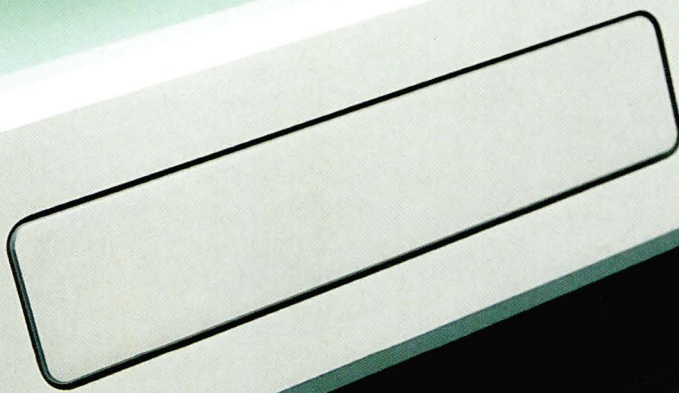
At a nuts and bolts level, the SACD 1245 R is a far from routine player. The mechanism is a dual laser type, one each for SACD and CD. This mechanism is fixed to a rigid sub-chassis that is decoupled from the outer case, itself an unusually solid item.

Two separate power supplies are fitted, a switch mode supply for the mechanism, decoder and control section, and a linear supply with multi-stage voltage regulation and stabilisation dedicated to the analogue audio. Extensive supply side filtering inhibits interaction between the two.

Building on earlier T+A players designs, this one upsamples CD data to 352.8kHz, with relatively shallow subsequent anti-aliasing filters, of which pride of place goes to the Bezier interpolation filters (select OVS2 and 3), which feature zero overshoot. The player uses several clocks for various functions associated with CD and SACD replay, located as close as possible to the DAC. The latter uses four Burr-Brown PCM1792 Delta Sigma DACs, each with two processing channels, and is configured as a fully differential converter, with the



**T+A**  
SACD 1245 R





## “It displays the key attribute of any really good SACD player by sounding consistently better with this format than with CD.”

additional processing chains improving linearly and further reducing common mode noise. High-quality passive components and Analogue Devices AD823 and Linear Technology LT1028 op-amps are used in the signal path, again to reduce noise and distortion by distributing artefacts over a wider amplitude and time axis range.

### SOUND QUALITY

It took a long time to get to grips with this player. As a CD player, it is clearly competent even straight from the box, and there is an added frisson from SACD. But the T+A SACD 1245 R doesn't exactly shout its quality from the rooftops... and that's why it's an uncommonly musical instrument.

Not all SACD players make very good tools for playing compact discs, but this one has subtlety, grace and a surprising sense of detail, in two distinct ways. First, better quality recordings demonstrate an edge through the T+A that many other players tend to obscure. Second, this superiority is apparent even when listening in the dead of night at a necessarily low volume level, where lesser players simply lose presence and dynamics.

It is a very quiet player electrically, and an unusually consistent one as the recorded musical level rises (independent of replay volume level of course), which bespeaks of a consistent, stable distortion. From experience, it is changes in distortion signatures with level

rather than the inevitable fact of their presence that makes such artefacts hard to ignore. The T+A SACD 1245 R has a very organic and progressive quality, too. In fact, it doesn't seem capable of making ugly noises, unless the source material is completely out of order.

Turning to high-resolution discs, the SACD 1245 R displays the key attribute of any really good SACD player by sounding consistently better with this format than when playing CDs. This is easily demonstrated by switching layers in a hybrid recording, but it is obvious enough with most discs, single or dual layer. SACDs sound more open, vivid, colourful and expressive. The discs are also more detailed when playing, too.

The Handel *Music for the Royal Fireworks* recording on Naxos, covered in this month's *Choice Cuts* music review section (see p24), provided a near ideal test piece for this player. The SACD layer has a rare sonic beauty, a near completely natural sound that is subtle, organic and alive. The CD layer is similar, but just that bit more mechanical and lacking in the sense of space. It sounds just as sharp, but not as musically detailed. Nevertheless, the CD player stood up to everything we were able to throw at it. The Martha Argerich and Mikhail Pletnev recording of Ravel and Prokofiev – another refugee from this month's *Choice Cuts* – had an almost exquisite quality, just softened around the edges, but very natural and enjoyable. Meanwhile, voices are expressive and credible.

The sole remaining task for the user is to choose one of the available filters for each disc format. We favour the OVS3 filter, which is a Bezier implementation, when playing CD: it's a broad bandwidth filter with no pre or post echo and a good phase performance. The same OVS3 filter offers a very broad bandwidth and minimal group delay with SACD. But your system may well respond differently, depending in part on how the partnering amplifier handles very high frequencies. So, suck it and see would seem the best advice.

T+A remains one of the best kept secrets of the high-end, its achievements partially obscured by the mid-price equipment that flies under the same flag of convenience. But T+A has some excellent engineers on its payroll, and this player is an impressive example of their produce. It may look unprepossessing, but it is a surprisingly tactile, organic sounding player that offers fine CD replay, and SACD sound quality that goes a long way in the direction of the state of the art. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*



**VERDICT**

**SOUND >> 90%**  
 >> SUB RATINGS  
 CD 87% SACD 92%

**FEATURES >> 89%**

**BUILD >> 90%**

**VALUE >> 86%**

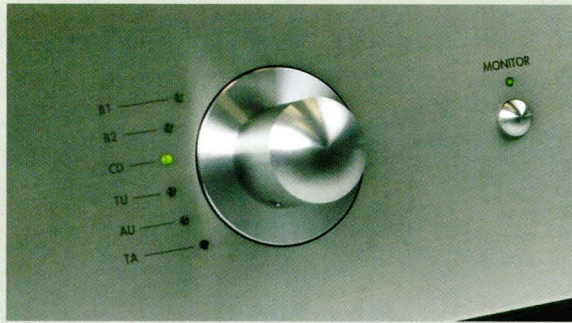
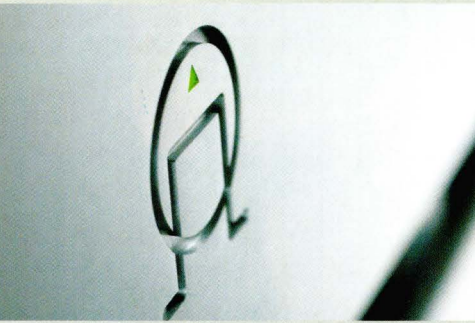
**PRO**  
 Beautifully understated with CD and even better with SACD, the T+A plays to the strengths of each format with the emphasis on the inner musical qualities of the source.

**CON**  
 Complicated front panel layout, remote control is an optional extra, no balanced output and default display brightness too high.

**CONCLUSION**  
 First-rate player that exploits the capabilities of SACD without prejudicing baseline CD sound quality. The player is flexible enough to cope with most different amplifiers, and has enough fine tuning possibilities on board to suit almost any need.

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





SCANDINAVIAN DESIGN

**I 130**

"It has the kind of performance that products in the next price class upwards would envy, yet has sacrificed nothing in build, finish or usability in the process."  
 What Hi Fi? Sound & Vision Awards 2005



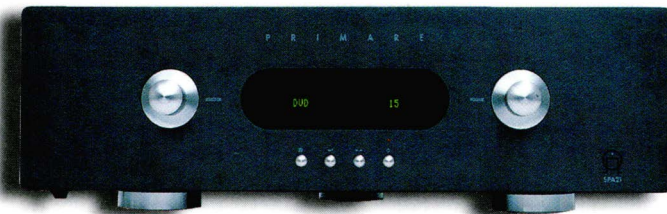
**I CD31**

"If you want an elegant, superbly built top-end player, Primare's CD31 is an excellent place to start. It sounds fabulous and is built to sky-high standards."  
 What Hi Fi? Sound & Vision Awards 2005



**I SPA21**

"If you're after the Holy Grail of home cinema amps – great sound with both music and movies – then the SPA21 is it. The queue to pay homage starts here."  
 What Hi Fi? Sound & Vision Awards 2005



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# Class act reborn

Marantz drops Class A operation from one of its most popular designs, but still retains the star quality

**PRODUCT** Marantz PM7001

**TYPE** Integrated stereo amplifier

**PRICE** £350

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

**M**arantz has had a good run in recent years with its CD players and amplifiers. So, interest in new models is bound to run high, especially when replacing a much-loved oldie. In this case, the PM7001 has a particularly hard act to follow in the shape of the PM7200, a multi-talented amplifier that functioned as both Class AB powerhouse and mid-power Class A wonder.

Marantz was keen to draw our attention to various circuit enhancements in the PM7001, and also to explain why the Class A circuit of the PM7200 has been laid to rest. Ken Ishiwata, Marantz's 'brand ambassador', pointed out that the new amp's high-bias Class AB output stage intrinsically has next to no crossover distortion (the bane of every amplifier designer's life), while other potential problems of this mode of operation have been addressed by careful circuit board layout and high-performance small-signal stages upstream of the output.

The amp gave a very impressive performance in our lab, noticeably (though not dramatically) better than the PM7200, which in itself is quite a feat. In fact, the results were broadly comparable to some of the better amps we've tested lately at twice the price or more.

Internally, the power amp section is mounted on a remarkably large heatsink and fed from a good-size frame transformer via low-noise Schottky diode rectifiers and generous supply capacitors. Input switching is via integrated circuits except, apparently, for the CD input, which has a relay. There's a phono stage, the usual single op-amp sort of thing, and this year's must-have feature, separate pre-out and main in sockets. Phono sockets eschew gold plating, surprisingly.

## SOUND QUALITY

There is no doubt that this is a highly capable amp. Right from the start of our tests, from stone cold as delivered, we found ourselves enjoying a presentation that's both punchy and detailed, with a real sense of musical engagement. Even at high listening levels, there's never any sense of a shortage of power, the amp's 100 or so watts (our finding, despite a 70-watt rating) being delivered with a confidence that can give quite a start even to power-hungry speakers. At the same time, fine details within the whole are lovingly preserved and convincingly portrayed.

It's not just a high-power, high-energy wonder, though. Subtle, small-scale music seems just as well served and even at background-music levels, there seems to be an unusual degree of listener involvement. The ever-popular combination of voice and guitar loses little or nothing in individuality or precision to the version presented by considerably more expensive amplifiers.

In terms of basic hi-fi requirements, bass seems to be cleanly and deeply extended and treble very open and sweet, without any obvious limitations in reach. As one expects these days, noise (on line inputs) is completely inaudible unless you're using incredibly high sensitivity speakers in a very quiet room, and manners in general are exquisite.

Is this the perfect high-end bargain? Not quite, though it comes pretty close. There is a very slight lack of bass authority with some heavily rhythmic dance stuff, and we heard a repeatable hint of chestiness in male vocals, though instruments seemed free of similar effects. All the same, this is one of Marantz's best and comes strongly recommended. **HFC**

*Richard Black*

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 86%**



**FEATURES >> 88%**



**BUILD >> 83%**



**VALUE >> 95%**



### PRO

Detailed, communicative sound with plenty of extension at both ends and confident power reserves. Notably fine coverage of the dynamic range.

### CON

There's a touch of coloration on voice and less authority in the bass than is available elsewhere – but only if you pay at least twice the price.

### CONCLUSION

Even viewed in the context of the recent trend among amps to deliver ever-increasing performance at ever-decreasing prices (witness also the Cambridge Audio 640A v2 on p57), this model performs well above expectations. We're impressed!

**HI-FI CHOICE** >> **91%**  
OVERALL SCORE





# Shoot for the moon

*Is taking on the big boys at CD an act of lunar-cy? Not if you're from Westcliff... the Rega has landed!*

**PRODUCT** Rega Apollo

**TYPE** CD player

**PRICE** £498

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 43x8.5x27cm

- Weight: 5kg
- Single Class A unbalanced analogue output
- Electrical and optical digital outputs
- Top-loading disc drive
- Supports MP3 recorded discs
- Silver or black finish

**CONTACT** ☎ 01702 333071 🌐 www.rega.co.uk

As Britain's leading manufacturer of turntables and tonearms, Rega didn't exactly rush into producing its own CD players, to partner the electronics and loudspeakers that it made. As a committed vinyl protagonist, it was one of the last to take the digital plunge, and still regards vinyl as the format of choice.

But the Planet, and its more elaborate Jupiter sibling, have both been well received by the marketplace, and went through two generations, starting with the distinctive

ribbed cast alloy casework, and later with the tryptich-fascia styled units that are now current throughout the electronics range.

Rega tends to keep its models running over many years. The transition from the Planet to the Apollo player was not made voluntarily, or even willingly, though Rega is very happy with the end results. In fact, the company is struggling to meet demand for the new CD player. Apollo is pitched at the same £500 price as its Planet predecessor, and Rega is preparing a beefed-up Saturn, to replace the £1,000 Jupiter with Apollo technology.

From across the room, you'd be hard pushed to spot a difference between Planet and Apollo. Both share the same stylish casework, featuring a centrally placed top-loading mechanism with clever double-hinged lid. The only visible difference lies in the centre of the loading bay lid: whereas the Planet's lid incorporated a rotating disc clamp, the Apollo has no need of such a device – a clue that the crucial change here is a new disc drive mechanism.

Specialist hi-fi brands don't generally have the resources to create custom integrated circuits and the like, so the CD players they make are built up from components bought in from original equipment manufacturer suppliers. Rega used to source its disc drive mechanisms and their attendant control chips from Sony Europe, but Sony pulled out of this business about three years ago, so Rega has been busy making alternative arrangements.

Rega has always preferred to work with local suppliers, and it recently found a British software company that was just finalising a brand new chip-set specifically dedicated to CD drive. This is rather unusual, as all the traditional suppliers have spent the last decade focusing on DVD rather than CD replay. However, because this drive is a new development, it benefits from the latest innovations in chip design, and therefore incorporates much more memory than earlier designs. This ensures full 'Red Book' compliance, and allows the demands of both



**“The surprise was how easily and comprehensively superior the new player sounded, despite only costing half as much.”**

signal processing and error correction to be satisfied without compromise.

These control chips are used with a Sanyo-sourced laser and drive mechanism, which features a neat ball-chuck arrangement (three spring-loaded ball bearings) to grip the disc. This is a technique that offers the lowest possible inertia (making life easier for the servo) and obviates the need for a clamp. Beyond the new disc drive, the Apollo uses the latest 24-bit dual-differential Wolfson digital-to-analogue converter, and also has a new analogue output circuit – a Class A 'bootstrapped cascode pair'. This needs a good 15 minutes of warm-up from cold before reaching optimum playback temperature.

The alloy casework is available in either silver or black, and a modest red LED display sits centrally on the fascia, underneath the loading bay. Four intelligently shaped fascia buttons supply 'play', 'stop' and 'skip', leaving most of the control work to a brand new handset. Very similar to its predecessor and a slim light affair that's easy to operate one-handed, the handset covers all the usual basics. However, it also includes the necessary functionality to support the replay of discs recorded in compressed MP3 format, which the Apollo can play in addition to regular CDs.

**SOUND QUALITY**

Though only mildly inconvenient, the Apollo took longer to get going

than older players. On the plus side, it's still quicker than many universal disc players and it proved unusually capable at tracking damaged discs that caused problems on other machines.

First chance to hear the Apollo provided an opportunity to compare it to the earlier but more upmarket Jupiter, a CD player that this reviewer has always held in high regard. And the surprise was how easily and comprehensively superior the new player sounded, especially through the top half of the audio band, despite only costing half as much.

Serious listening began by placing the Apollo on a Naim Fraim support, and connecting via Rega's Neutrik/Klotz cables to the Naim NAC 552 preamp. This in turn fed a NAP500 power amp and a pair of B&W 800D speakers using Vertex AQ Moncayo speaker cables and bi-wire links. Mains was supplied via a Powerigel. It was subsequently used on a Vertex AQ Kinabalu platform and connected via WBT NextGen-equipped interconnects, improving the sound further.

The Apollo's top end sounds simply wonderful, with a subtlety and sheer musicality that can rival players costing four times as much. The way it enables the voice of a favourite singer, such as the estimable Alison Krauss, to raise the hairs on the back of one's neck is almost unprecedented. While the top is little short of magical, the bottom end is dry, lightweight and

lacking a little authority in comparison. It just doesn't grab the attention in

the way the upper registers do, yet at the price the overall effect is thoroughly convincing.

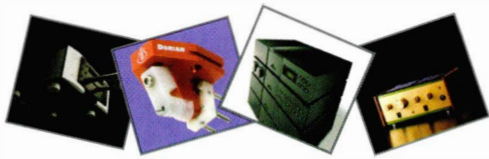
It is, in short, a brilliant communicator, especially so when reproducing delicate and well recorded acoustic material. But it also makes compact discs of all kinds uncommonly interesting, and unusually easy on the ears. Even the Chemical Brothers' unpleasantly compressed and edgy *Push the Button* managed to sound remarkably listenable – still fierce, but no longer uncomfortably aggressive, while the essence of the music came through clearly. This is rare at any price.

The Apollo seemed equally adept at the most delicate detail. The very subtle percussion work on the title track of Laurie Anderson's *Life on a String* seemed to fit perfectly into the whole, with a very superior coherence that helps the whole performance and composition make good sense. Highly recommended. **HFC**

*Paul Messenger*



VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 88%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>PRO</b> Outstanding sound quality, especially in the higher registers. Makes even difficult CDs accessible. Communicates voices with subtlety, delicacy and emotional content.
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 80%</b> [Progress bar]	<b>CON</b> Bottom end is lightweight and would benefit from more authority. Top loading arrangements require player to be on a rack's top shelf.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 85%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 94%</b> [Progress bar]	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> An outstanding sub-£500 CD player, with an enchanting top-end and overall musicality that belie its relatively modest price. The top-loading mechanism and general aesthetics may not be to all tastes, but the sound is a recipe for CD success.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 91%</b>	



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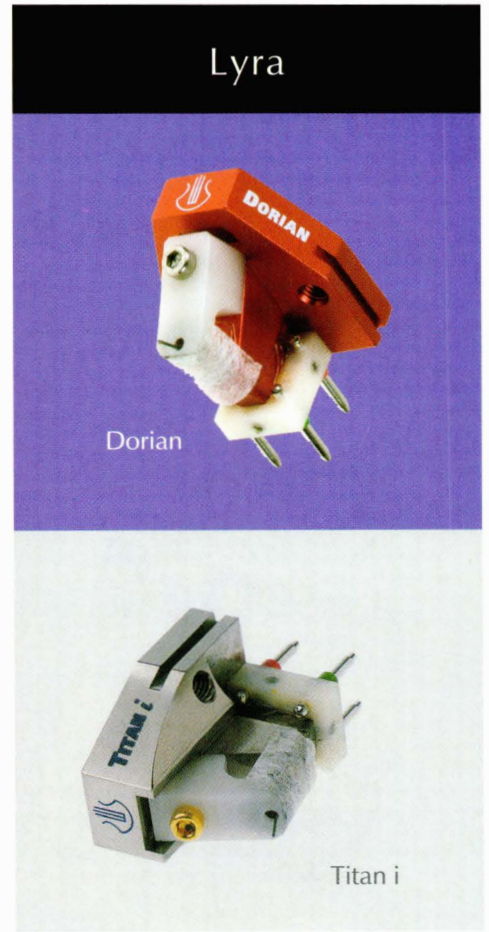
Mark Levinson

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No. 390s

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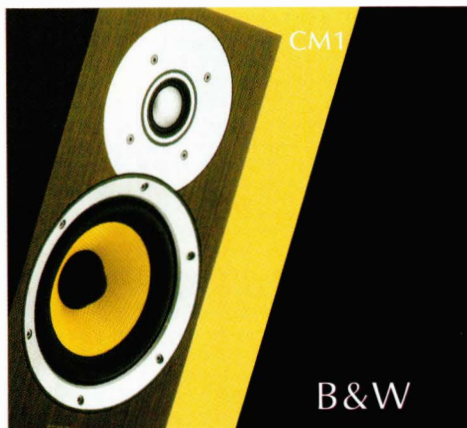
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(available soon)



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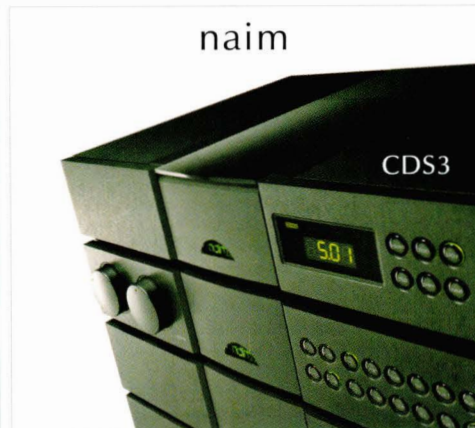
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# V2 rocket

Cambridge Audio has revised its Azur 640A amp... and we are blown away by the update

**PRODUCT** Cambridge Audio Azur 640A v2

**TYPE** Integrated stereo amplifier

**PRICE** £300

**CONTACT** ☎ 0870 900 1000

🌐 www.cambridgeaudio.com

Cambridge Audio has been upgrading its Azur range to 'v2' status of late... first came the CD players, now it's the amps' turn. The 640A v2 is an update which, in addition to offering a few sound enhancements (a little more power, improvements in crosstalk performance, generally improved circuitry), adds compatibility with the company's new 'Incognito' multiroom system. That means a few extra connectors on the back and a small amount of additional circuitry.

The basic specification is similar to most other integrated amps on the market today: six line level inputs (no phono option), twin speaker outputs, headphone output, 75-watt power output (nearer 90 watts by our meters) and defeatable tone controls. The mains transformer is a healthy-looking toroidal, the internal heatsink is substantial and the circuitry uses a mix of op-amps for line-level stages and discrete transistors for the power stages. Op-amps are more numerous as the inputs are all individually buffered, while the headphone socket has its very own miniature power amp – an unusually deluxe feature at this sort of price.

There is some evidence of cost savings, for instance in the very thin side panels and some cheap-feeling details, like the knobs used for tone, balance and volume controls. The small knobs are hard to grasp and the volume knob is really 'soggy'. It doesn't track too well between channels and images can just slightly wander from side to side as the knob is turned. But we love the overload protection feature, which simply winds the volume control down when overload is detected. Pure genius!

## SOUND QUALITY

Most amps at the upper end of the budget range are now very good. Where once we would expect a few trade-offs, there are now just a small handful of minor niggles, none of them likely to stand between the lucky owner and an enjoyable night's music-making.

Does the 640A v2 rock? Can it do voices? Can it do classical? Will it make your foot tap? Does it image? Should I sell the Krell? Decidedly 'yes' to all except the last, and the answer there is only 'no' because, apart from the limits imposed by 90 watts, there are still a few veils to strip from the sound and some authority to add before performance can truly be described as 'high-end'.

In terms of sonic essentials, though, the 640A v2 offers them all in impressive abundance. At any rate, there is no sense of curtailment either in the bass or the treble. The bass is pretty tight, too – not controlled with

the sort of rigour that one might expect from a hundredweight of exotica, but sufficiently under manners to maintain good independence of, say, orchestral double basses, bass drum and the multitude of higher-pitched instruments. Treble is beautifully open and notably sweet, and the midrange seemed to us virtually coloration-free.

As a result of all that, Cambridge Audio's new baby offers a lively, involving and compelling view of pretty much any kind of music, driving speakers small and large with vigour and also subtlety. It's a great little amp is recommended with enthusiasm. **HFC**

Richard Black

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 85%</b> 	<b>PRO</b> Excellent extension into both bass and treble, with good control of the former and delightful sweetness in the latter. Powerful, lively and musical, too.
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 85%</b> 	<b>CON</b> Not the ultimate in detail and resolution, and the rotary controls feel rather 'cheap'... but both these criticisms seem churlish at the price.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 75%</b> 	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 94%</b> 	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> A cracking little integrated stereo amp, offering performance that covers all the basics and a good deal more. There are shortcomings, but hardly enough to rob it of its bargain status. For those on a tight budget, the 640A v2 could be a godsend.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 90%</b>	

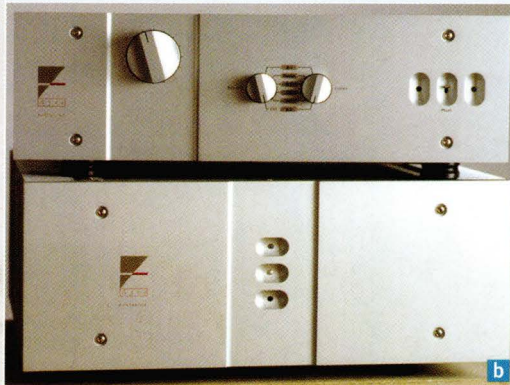


## FINE TWO CHANNEL AUDIO SYSTEMS



### a Gamut L5 loudspeakers.

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### b Ayre Acoustics K-1 and V-1.

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



### c Aesthetix Rhea phono stage.

This is one of the best phono stages we have ever had the experience of listening to. A very large soundstage with the best layering of the depth we have ever heard. A very natural tonal balance and not too warm for a valve design. Transparency is of a very high level allowing the finest details and nuances of music to be heard. The precision of focus of the images is noteworthy. The build quality is exceptional with dual mono and fully balanced design through out. Three inputs and four outputs – 2 balanced and 2 single ended. Gain and cartridge loading can be done from the remote control whilst the music is playing. There is a built in cartridge demagnetiser which is also activated from the remote control. A must hear for those who want the best from their vinyl replay system. £3175.



### d SME Model 20/2A turntable.

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# Revolution five

*Pro-Ject's least expensive RPM is a great looker... but how does it sound?*

**PRODUCT** Pro-Ject RPM 5  
**TYPE** Turntable, arm and cartridge  
**PRICE** £400  
**CONTACT** ☎ 01235 511166 @ www.henleydesigns.co.uk

**P**ro-Ject must have every possible price point covered in the affordable turntable market, yet it's managed to find space for a new entry-level model in its upmarket RPM range. With its distinctively shaped and beautifully finished plinth, the RPM 5 is one of the best looking sub-£500 decks around – plus you get the arm and cartridge thrown in too.

The RPM 5 replaces the rather less elegant RPM 4, and has a piano lacquered MDF plinth on three pointy aluminium feet. It closely resembles the excellent RPM 9 (£1,000), albeit without the outboard motor. The plinth supports a 'quiet running', rubber-decoupled AC motor that drives a sub platter. A block of metal adds mass to the bearing which uses a Teflon pad in a bronze housing to support the MDF platter. The latter is topped with a cork mat, which makes a change, and you are encouraged to hold your vinyl down with a threaded clamp.

The deck features Project's 9c carbon-fibre tonearm, an impressive component on a turntable at this price. Carbon fibre has the advantage of a high stiffness to weight ratio.

So, it's strong and light as well as having high internal damping, which means it copes with spurious energy rather better than the more commonly-used aluminium. The drawback with carbon fibre is that it's hard to form into complex shapes like a headshell, so that part is glued on aluminium, as is the junction with the bearing. That said, it offers adjustability and build quality is well up to the mark.

Connection to the outside world is via phono sockets, using either the supplied cable or virtually any interconnect. This makes for an easy and inexpensive upgrade route.

## SOUND QUALITY

Supplied with an Ortofon 510 MkII cartridge as standard, the RPM 5 is clearly in a different league to the Pro-Ject Debut SE we looked at in *HFC* 276. That deck is great value, but the RPM 5 has a clarity and solidity that its sibling can only dream of. This turntable may be limited by the cartridge it comes with, but nonetheless manages to deliver an awful lot with it. It's only real limitation is bass depth – there's plenty of energy and shape to low frequency sounds, but the depths are not likely to be plumbed. Against this, it delivers a lovely sense of pace – double bass has great snap and when combined with drums, the rhythmic drive is entirely convincing.

It does a good job of sorting out stereo imaging, managing to track the variations in

left and right channels finely enough to create a good sense of depth and a solid presentation of instruments and voices. There is a security to the soundstage combined with a degree of sonic definition that you just can't get with cheaper turntables.

The supplied cartridge lacks the refinement of more costly needles, and there's no doubt the deck is good enough to show the benefit of an upgrade in this department. But as a complete £400 'plug and play' package, this neat little deck will take some beating. **HFC**

*Jason Kennedy*

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 84%</b> 	<p><b>PRO</b> Great sense of stereo and appealingly snappy timing combine with good ease of upgrade and attractive design. Can go even further with a better cartridge on that impressive arm.</p> <p><b>CON</b> It'll need regular dusting to keep it shiny as there's no lid. Bandwidth extremes are limited by the cartridge.</p>
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 82%</b> 	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 85%</b> 	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 95%</b> 	
<p><b>CONCLUSION</b> This turntable has great looks and an on the ball, engaging sound that puts it in the seriously grinworthy league. It needs decent isolation and a better cartridge to make the most of its potential, but as a package it's excellent value for money.</p>	
<p><b>HI-FI CHOICE</b> &gt;&gt; <b>90%</b>  <b>OVERALL SCORE</b></p>	

# QED Qunex MP-SW



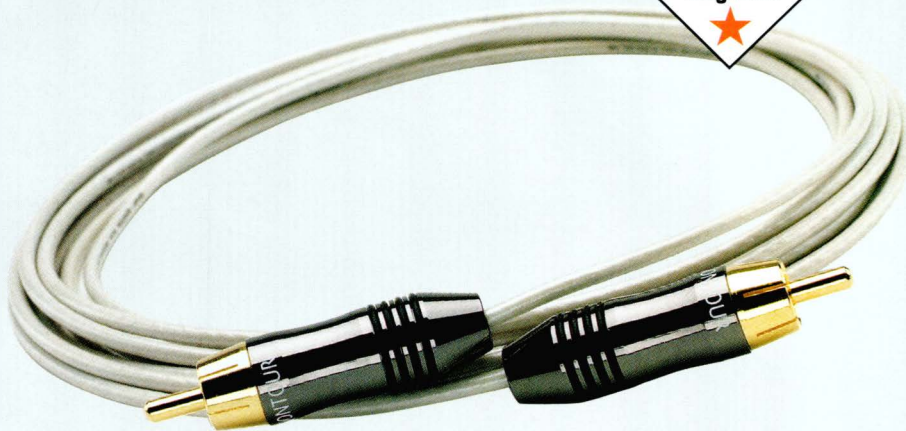
**TYPE** Subwoofer cable  
**PRICE** £25  
**CONTACT** ☎ 01279 501111 🌐 www.qed.co.uk

**A**n extra bit of wire to connect up a subwoofer is a practical necessity, and it might as well be a decent bit.

Admittedly, it's tempting to scrimp when one realises that the cable is really only carrying the bottom couple of hundred Hz of the frequency band and, while no two 'experts' agree on exactly why cables sound different, most concede that differences are likely to be greater at higher frequencies.

True that may be, but the transmitting and receiving electronics at each end of the cable are in themselves full-bandwidth and have the same interference issues as any other interface stages, so it's worth at least trying out a high-quality cable. And, at its very reasonable price (£25 for 3m, including QED's particularly nice phono plugs), with a practical 2.5mm diameter and good build quality thrown in, this is hardly an extravagant punt.

Indeed, comparing it to a bit of giveaway-grade cable, we definitely felt there was a tightening-up of the sound. Not just in



the bass, either. In fact, the differences we heard seemed more treble-related, with a reduction in congestion and corresponding increase in the detail in the midrange and lower treble. Paradoxical at first sight, this is a common finding when some aspect of bass is improved, illustrating how odd the psychoacoustic mechanism is. But at any rate, it clearly justifies the expense in any music-based system. If you just want louder

explosions from your home cinema, save your money. But, if clarity is a virtue in your book, this is a very worthwhile purchase. **HFC**

*Richard Black*

<b>VERDICT</b>	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> It may seem strange, but the most obvious improvement is to frequencies above the bass region. A fine, low-cost cable.	<b>HI-FI CHOICE</b> >>> <b>88%</b>

# JAS Audio Twin Ribbon

**TYPE** Super-tweeter  
**PRICE** £649  
**CONTACT** ☎ 01592 744779  
🌐 www.shadowdistribution.co.uk

**T**he idea of a super-tweeter is simple enough. Conventional tweeters, as built into regular speakers, don't work too well above about 20kHz. So, add in an extra driver that handles higher frequencies and you've got a match with the best of DVD-Audio and SACD. This particular example uses twin ribbon driver elements in each housing to achieve a claimed response from 7kHz to 100kHz and connects in parallel to each channel's main loudspeaker. A toggle switch gives roll-off points of 12kHz or 16kHz.

Whether extension beyond 20kHz is actually needed is still open to discussion, but there's no doubting that the JAS super-tweeter makes an audible difference to the treble of a typical speaker. Unfortunately, we're not in a position to equate that difference with an actual improvement. The main problem is that with the gentle roll-off provided by the internal filter, there is substantial overlap with the existing tweeter between about 5kHz and



20kHz. This leads to a net frequency response that will generally be anything but flat and also, with most speakers around, distinctly boosted in the upper treble. In other words, significantly too bright. You may sometimes like this, but it's not accurate. Even when the super-tweeter's sensitivity happens to match that of the main speaker reasonably well, separation between tweeter and super-tweeter will put notches and peaks in the response.

Not only is the sound over-bright, but imaging suffers markedly. With hand on heart, we can't recommend this as an upgrade. **HFC**

*Richard Black*

<b>VERDICT</b>	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> While the idea is attractive, this implementation, we feel, introduces more problems than it solves.	<b>HI-FI CHOICE</b> >>> <b>50%</b>

# Wireworld Starlight 5

**TYPE** Digital interconnect cable (coaxial)

**PRICE** £90 (1m)

**CONTACT** ☎ 020 8991 9200  
 🌐 www.wireworldaudio.com

**W**ireworld has a popular HDMI cable by the same name, which illustrates the extent to which specialist digital cabling has entered home cinema – we tweaky audiophiles are no longer alone! Now, the very high data rates of HDMI may make digital audio look like child's play, but the ever-present problems of jitter and interference still apply, and Wireworld has taken painstaking steps to combat them in this mid-price design. It's a coaxial cable with silver-clad copper conductors and foamed polythene insulation, offering an accurate 75ohm impedance and ensuring good signal transfer via silver-plated phono plugs of good grip and robustness. It's of medium diameter and is handily flexible.

In terms of performance, there is a very clear improvement in the precision of stereo imaging compared with a couple of representative budget cables we tried. It successfully linked various digital sources with a couple of DACs of moderate jitter rejection. More jitter-immune

DACs (typically not cheap!) are less critical of cables, but even they seemed to appreciate the Starlight 5, with subtle gains in detail and, again, imaging. Not only is precision improved, but in several cases we found the depth to be increased, giving musicians more room to breathe and making their individual contributions easier to follow. It's all good worthwhile stuff and, while we've had even more profound improvements from real

high-end digital interconnects, we'd say this is a fine choice if you want to avoid the dreaded law of diminishing returns. **HFC**

*Richard Black*



## VERDICT

**CONCLUSION**  
 A very fine cable at a pretty fair price. If you don't believe digital cables can make a difference, give it a try!



# Clearer Audio Silver-line Interconnect

**TYPE** Analogue interconnect cable

**PRICE** £244 (0.75m pair)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01702 543981 🌐 www.cleareraudio.com

**A**s with the Silver-line mains lead tested over the page, this interconnect cable is both visually striking and impressively featured. The visual aspect is based not least on the vivid blue ferrite rings and cable/plug heatshrink, and the uninsulated and very dense braided screen that covers each cable. The potential disadvantage of having no insulation is that it could come into contact with metal objects that are earthed separately and introduce hum loops, but that's not terribly likely and easy enough to fix (bend the wires!). That braid is only part of what is, we're told, a six-layer screen which should presumably guard against everything short of a direct nuclear strike. There's a hiatus in the screen at the plugs, however, which are the plastic-bodied variety from Eichmann, employing single-point contact for the earth. We've had good results from them so far, but screening is not their forte.

That apart, the silver-plated conductors, low-loss insulation and ferrite noise-absorber

rings do seem to achieve something, for this is a very detailed cable with a most assured command of the frequency range. Bass is among the most extended, yet tautly controlled, that we have come across at this kind of price and treble also has great reach. There is sometimes just a hint of hardness in the lower treble, but it's very slight and was the only real flaw we could identify. Detail is excellent, imaging likewise and as with other

high grade cables, the silence between notes and tracks seems somehow 'blacker' than with budget cables. Recommended. **HFC**

*Richard Black*



## VERDICT

**CONCLUSION**  
 Not cheap, but real care has been taken over the design and construction. Sound is very clear with excellent bass.



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# QED Qonduit P-MC

**TYPE** Mains cable

**PRICE** £40

**CONTACT** ☎ 01279 501111 # www.qed.co.uk

It may have been in audio cables since the dawn of the specialist cable market, but this is QED's first mains wire. In fact, it's part of a range of mains products including filtered distribution blocks. In keeping with the general QED ethos, it's relatively straightforward and competitively priced. Dispensing with fancy conductor materials (high purity stranded copper is used) and outlandish construction, it does feature a tape and braid screen which, says QED, reduces both pickup of interference and radiation from the cable, which could affect sensitive equipment nearby. The conductors are more than thick enough to handle the heaviest current demands that will pass through an IEC connector safely, and connectors at both ends are well fitted. The cable is quite flexible for its size and has, we're told, been "tested by the British Standards Institute" – we hope it's safe to assume it passed!

Connecting the Qonduit was at first a rather underwhelming experience. Mains cable

changes are seldom, in our experience, night and day jobs, but we thought at first nothing at all had changed. With time, however, it became apparent that the sound had gained something in clarity and definition and was more distinctly etched, more precisely located in space. It's not dramatic, but it does seem to improve, slightly but usefully, the listener's sense of immersion in the music. With a price tag somewhat less than a meal for two, and

being considerably more practical than some mains cables we've seen, this seems an attractive and affordable purchase. **HFC**

*Richard Black*



## VERDICT

### CONCLUSION

A gentle approach to mains, but long-term benefits in involvement and comfort are well worth the expense.



# Clearer Audio Silver-line Power Cable

**TYPE** Mains cable

**PRICE** £150 (1m)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01702 543981 # www.cleareraudio.com

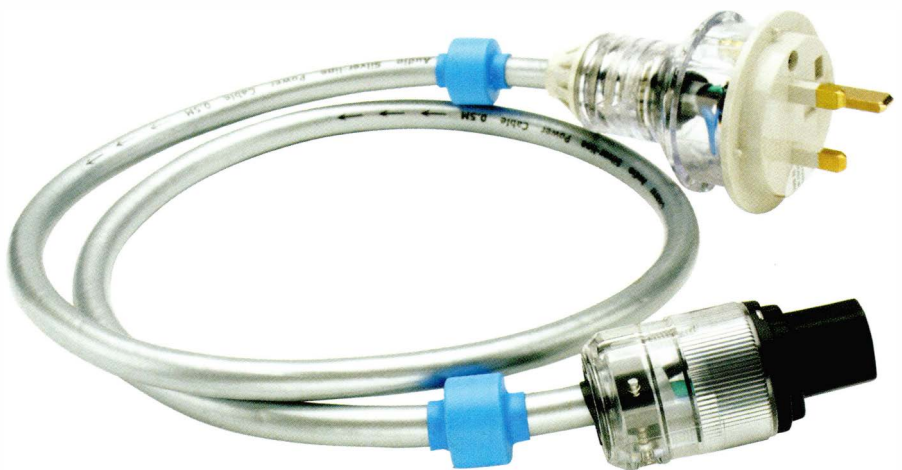
You might upgrade your mains cable because you think it makes a big difference to the sound, or because you just want the whole system to look the utter biz. In the latter case, this must rank as a top product. It just smacks of space-age hi-tech, with those funky Wattgate connectors, ferrite rings at both end, large size (11 mm diameter) – and inside, invisible to the eye, silver-plated conductors (enough to handle 26A, not that the connectors can or ought to), silver-plated fuse, multiple shields... Oh, and the connectors are pre-treated with Caig contact enhancers and the cable is pre-burned-in for 90 hours. Is that a catalogue of the finest ninth-dan black belt tweaker or what?

All the same, we're most interested in how the thing actually performs. Fascinatingly, it proved a strong contrast to the QED Qonduit featured above. Where the QED made its mark slowly, this one prompted raised eyebrows on very first hearing, thanks not least to what seemed to be a change in tonality.

This is not something we've previously encountered in a mains cable. The idea of a real frequency-response change is quite implausible, but the definite impression we got was of a lift to the 'presence' region, bringing out female vocals and solo lines on instruments like trumpet and violin. If this was just added HF energy, it would surely become wearing... but it doesn't, suggesting instead that it is an improvement principally in clarity.

It may not be to everyone's taste but we were, after some prevarication and experimenting, rather taken with it. Try it! **HFC**

*Richard Black*



## VERDICT

### CONCLUSION

A cable that looks a million dollars. Its sonic effect is bold and upfront, thanks to an apparent increase in clarity.



GROUP TEST & LAB REPORTS: PAUL MESSENGER

# LOUDSPEAKERS

Standmount speakers abound in our latest mid-price speaker line-up

This month's *Ultimate Group Test* focuses on the more popularly priced, sub-£1,000 per pair sector of the stereo loudspeaker market. Our six models range from the tiny £400 per pair Arcam Alto up to the most costly example from Dynaudio, the not much larger Focus 110 at £850 per pair.

On this occasion, the standmounts outnumber the floorstanders by four to two. This repeats the same ratio we encountered the last time we covered this price grouping, at least in part because it's cheaper to manufacture and transport a pair of standmounts than a pair of floorstanders.

However, it also reflects the fact that these standmounts are far from beer budget packages: all come dressed in attractive real wood veneers and feature rather more than basic enclosure and drive unit engineering.

Three of our standmounts are very small indeed. The Arcam, B&W and Dynaudio all have port-loaded enclosures of seven litres or less, and bass/mid drivers of around 130mm frame diameter. The fourth, from the Italian brand Opera, is altogether

larger, in both the enclosure and the 165mm bass/mid driver.

As one would expect, all the standmounts are simple two-way designs. But so too is the least expensive of the two floorstanders, the ALR Jordan. As its Entry L name suggests, this aims to deliver the most sound for the least money, and you do get a lot of speaker for little more than the cheapest standmount in our group, with no need to purchase stands either. Okay, so its vinyl finish isn't particularly pretty, but what do you expect for £500?

Monitor Audio's new Silver RS6 looks equally fine value for money. An extra bass-only driver holds the promise of some worthwhile extra muscle, and the very smart styling package includes a proper separate plinth, all of which makes the little standmounts look rather more pricey than they really are.

When it comes to providing sheer refinement at a relatively modest price, the small speaker still has plenty going for it, whereas the larger floorstander faces the difficult task of trying to control the vibrations generated in its much larger enclosure. Even the fact that

the standmount sits on a dedicated stand with fresh air underneath can be fair compensation for the inevitable lack of bottom end muscle. **HFC**

## EQUIPMENT USED

- ▶ Naim CDS 3 CD player
- ▶ Burmester 001 CD player
- ▶ Linn Sondek LP12 turntable
- ▶ Rega RB1000 tonearm
- ▶ Linn Akiva phono cartridge
- ▶ Magnum Dynalab MD 102 tuner
- ▶ Naim NAC552 preamplifier
- ▶ Naim NAP500 power amplifier
- ▶ Partington Heavi, Kudos S100 speaker stands
- ▶ Cables from Vertex AQ, Chord Company, Harmonic Technology and Naim

## MUSIC USED

- ▶ Alabama 3 *Exit on Coldharbour Lane*
- ▶ System of a Down *Mezmerize*
- ▶ Nitin Sawhney *Beyond Skin*
- ▶ Arcade Fire *Funeral*
- ▶ Laurie Anderson *Life on a String*
- ▶ BPO Karajan/Wagner *Tannhauser Overture*
- ▶ BBC Radios 3 and 4 were also used throughout the test

## ON TEST



ALR Jordan Entry L  
£500



Arcam Alto  
£400



B&W CM1  
£500



Dynaudio Focus 110  
£850



Monitor Audio Silver RS6  
£600



Opera Prima  
£795



## LISTENING TESTS

Loudspeaker listening poses more complex problems than those involved in assessing other components.

Loudspeakers vary greatly and interact strongly and often unpredictably with the room. The difficulty facing sequential unsighted loudspeaker presentations is the strong tendency to judge each example according to how its balance differs from the model that preceded it.

Accordingly, extended hands-on listening sessions were adopted for this group, giving scope to adjust to the changes in balance and to experiment with positioning.

## LAB TESTS

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

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

## LAB REPORTS: THE BAR GRAPH

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

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

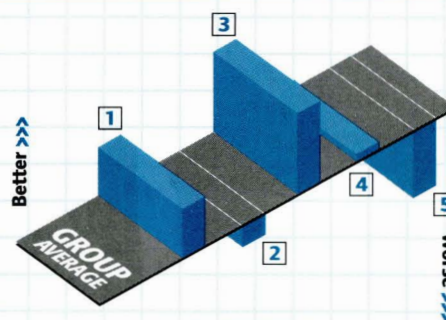
**2] Bass extension:** A speaker's bass is heavily modified by the room. To replicate 'real world' conditions, our figure represents the averaged bass roll-off frequency at -6dB ref the broad midband, measured across the far field for a stereo pair in a 4.3x2.6x5.5m room.

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

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

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

## OUR BAR GRAPHS: AN EXAMPLE



£500 per pair ☎ 01730 261924 🌐 www.alr-jordan.com

# ALR JORDAN ENTRY L

*Great sound outweighs this floorstander's prosaic styling*

**D**espite the reference to British speaker designer Ted Jordan, ALR Jordan is actually a German brand, headed by speaker designer Karl-Heinz Fink. Ted Jordan was the original pioneer of metal cone driver technology, and the company's models combine his main driver expertise with German engineering and production.

While Ted Jordan's own designs have always favoured crossover-free, full-range operation, Karl-Heinz Fink's acknowledged expertise lies in voicing and crossover design. As such, the ALR Jordan designs are more conventional and feature separate tweeters.

The Entry models are the least costly of three ALR Jordan ranges. This is clear from the decidedly basic cosmetic presentation, with a plain charcoal grey front baffle and a rather unconvincing vinyl woodprint elsewhere.

This £500 per pair Entry L is third up the four-rung Entry ladder of stereo speakers, and is the least expensive floorstander in ALR Jordan's line-up. From the outside, it's a large two-way, port-loaded at the front. From the inside though, only part of the enclosure is acoustically active: the

lower third or thereabouts is blanked off from the space behind the main driver, and an access hatch allows ballast to be added. This improves physical stability and allegedly tightens the bass.

The main driver here has a 165mm cast frame and 120mm Jordan-designed aluminium cone, while the tweeter has a 25mm soft fabric dome. A single terminal pair feeds a crossover network that uses low loss capacitors and, unusually, an autotransformer (instead of resistors) to set relative treble level. Reversible spike/domes are supplied for floor coupling, but no separate plinth.

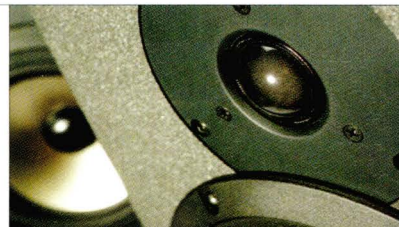
## SOUND QUALITY

This bulky two-way has a delightfully musical integrity and coherence, together with a surprisingly delicate and transparent midband. The bass alignment looks very well suited to positioning the speakers clear of walls. Here, it shows an even balance that's also dry enough to suggest that some wall proximity should also give good results.

Perhaps the greatest strength of this speaker lies in its exceptional smoothness and all-round evenhandedness. Colorations are very well

controlled and the tonal balance is beautifully neutral. It has sufficient restraint in the presence zone to avoid any aggressive tendencies, while still maintaining good voice and speech intelligibility. The treble proper is also exceptionally well judged, providing the essentially fine detail that is the reason for using it, yet avoiding drawing unwanted attention to itself.

It's simply not practical to mess around with adding and then removing optional damping materials in a review context, especially when undertaking a group test. While there's no denying that adding ballast will improve the physical stability of a floorstander, past experience has indicated that the sonic benefits are less predictable – worth trying for those who have the inclination, but net improvement is by no means guaranteed. In any case, the Entry L without ballast has a very respectable bass performance, lacking a little weight and authority perhaps, but showing good evenness with a lively and purposeful delivery that fits in properly with the rest of this very fine and inexpensive loudspeaker. **HFC**

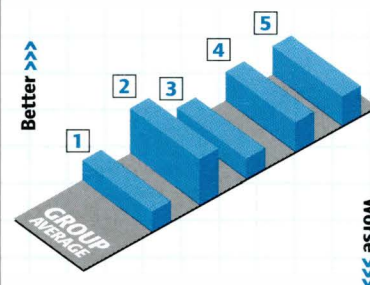


## LAB REPORT

The manufacturer's claim for 90dB sensitivity is close enough to the 89dB recorded under our measurement regime. This is an impressive figure for a metal cone two-way, especially in view of an amplifier load that doesn't look excessively demanding – the 4.5-ohm minima recorded at 38Hz and 200Hz are well in line with the specified 6 ohms nominal – and very respectable bass extension, too. As such, the Entry L will be an ideal match with similarly 'entry-level' amplifiers.

Helped by a 38Hz port tuning that happily sits between major room modes, the bass has a dry alignment under free space conditions, and goes down to a low 25Hz. The broad midband is very even and smooth with it, all the way up to 1.3kHz. There's a slight downtilt of around 2-3dB above that point, but the trace thereafter remains smooth and substantially flat right through the treble region, with no undue emphases.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> +20%
- 2] Bass extension >> +40%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +20%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> +30%
- 5] Response smoothness >> +30%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	90dB	89dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	6/- ohms	6/4 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	40Hz	23Hz

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 85%**

**PRACTICALITY >> 87%**

**BUILD >> 79%**

**VALUE >> 94%**

**OVERALL SCORE 90%**

The Entry L's prosaic styling hides a speaker that is sonically something of a triumph. Beautifully judged overall balance combines excellent neutrality with an impressive degree of delicacy and transparency.



£400 per pair ☎ 01223 203200 🌐 www.arcam.co.uk

## ARCAM ALTO

*This pretty little miniature is Arcam's first speaker for years*

**A** leading British manufacturer of hi-fi electronics since the 1970s, Cambridge-based Arcam has dabbled in the speaker market before, but not for a number of years. In fact, our last review, of the then-popular stand mount Delta 2, dates back a full fifteen years.

The reason for its return to the speaker fray is Arcam's hugely successful Solo system. This combines the functions of CD player, FM/DAB radio tuner and stereo amplifier in a single stylish electronic component, is priced at £1,000 and was tested in *HFC* 268. The little £400 per pair Alto speaker is an obvious companion to the Solo, reflecting a similar preoccupation with high-class performance, alongside diminutive dimensions.

Arcam doesn't actually build the Alto, rather it has picked a partner in Danish speaker specialist Audiovector. The two have worked together to create the Alto, although it is based closely on Audiovector's own pretty sub-miniature, the K1. (We reviewed the Super version of the K1 back in *HFC* 269). However, as the lab tests reveal, although the Alto looks very like a K1 Super, it differs significantly in a number of important respects.

It's a relatively lightweight speaker at just 4kg, and our samples came with a metallic silver paint on the double thickness (20mm) front panel, while the rest is covered in a choice of maple or cherry real-wood veneers. The grille is retained by four shiny little magnets, and covers the two drivers and two tiny ports.

The 130mm main driver has a 95mm diameter diaphragm made from mineral-loaded woven glass fibres, to give a superior combination of high stiffness, low mass and good self-damping. The 25mm fabric dome tweeter

is also carbon loaded. A six-element crossover network is fed from two pairs of very high quality terminals, permitting bi-wiring or even bi-amping, although not using two Solos!

### SOUND QUALITY

Some close-to-wall reinforcement is essential with this tiny speaker, though just how much will depend on the low frequency characteristics of the particular room. Our listening room is on the large side, and it's pretty clear that something as small as Arcam's Alto is likely to be better suited to a smaller room, where the volume and major modes that provide 'room gain' will tend to come into play at somewhat higher frequencies.

There is much to like about this mighty mite, which has fine voice projection and superior all round coherence. Diction is particularly clear when listening to speech, and lyrics are made easily discernible even with what frequently passes for singing in the modern rock idiom. But there's no denying that there's also a significant lack of weight and authority here, and that robs larger scale material of much of its power and majesty.

You get to hear all the harmonics of the bass instruments, for sure, and that provides most of the clues needed to hear what is being played and how it's being played. But few speakers can make a better case for the addition of a subwoofer or two, just to add the sort of gut-wrenching visceral excitement that is a key ingredient in so much recorded material.

It's noteworthy that the Alto seemed to handle close-to-wall siting without apparently suffering a significant increase in midrange coloration, so much so that even Radio 3's *Choral Evensong* was reproduced with great clarity and a convincingly spacious and coherent acoustic.

Indeed, so good is the broad midband and treble coherence and transparency here, it's easy to forget the lack of scale and weight for much of the time during everyday listening. It's only when things start to get serious (perhaps unlikely with the Solo) that limitations start to become apparent. **HFC**



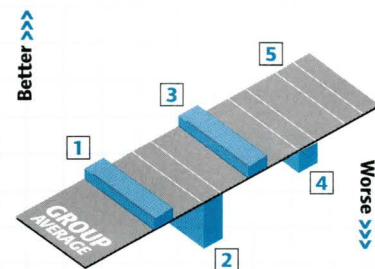
### LAB REPORT

Arcam suggests a degree of close-to-wall bass reinforcement is likely to be beneficial. That definitely corresponds with our measurement findings, though it's important to experiment in situ, as individual circumstances vary. Under our conditions, wall proximity did usefully boost the 50-100Hz octave, but left output a little weak between 100Hz and 300Hz.

Perhaps reflecting the limited bass output, sensitivity actually registered a very respectable 88dB on our measurement. This is a full 3dB more than the spec claims. The minimum impedance of 4 ohms is also more than acceptable. A little worryingly, there was some variation in main driver compliance between our two samples.

Above the bass region, the tonal balance is quite smooth and reasonably flat – a little prominent perhaps through the middle octaves, but impressively seamless through the crossover zone.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> +10%
- 2] Bass extension >> -40%
- 3] Ease of drive >> +10%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> -20%
- 5] Response smoothness >> 0%

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	85dB	88dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	4/-	6/4 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	60Hz	48Hz

### VERDICT

**SOUND >> 78%**



**PRACTICALITY >> 90%**



**BUILD >> 85%**



**VALUE >> 85%**



Cute sub-miniature lacks substantial bass but is smooth and coherent elsewhere. Best suited to smaller rooms and wall proximity, it is never less than entertaining and highly informative.

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





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## New Product: The ECSpre. An audiophile Line Level Pre amplifier

The ECS pre amplifier has been painstakingly developed to meet an exciting performance brief. not only must it complement the current ECS range of amplifier, it is also capable of delivering stunning levels of transparency, stage depth and image pin-point accuracy.

Some remarkable technologies have been brought together to create a product that has enduring classical sound quality virtues and yet is wholly modern in its skilful execution of the user interface, and in its remarkable and versatile facilities.

From the outside the visually striking brushed aluminium, art deco styling complements the rest of the ECS range. The streamlined proportions hide in them a carefully designed user's interface that will provide easy and clear access to all functions. Combined with fully universal learning remote control the ECSpre will provide audiophile world wide, with flexibility, ease of use and ergonomics that will set it apart from it's competitors.

Each pre amplifier will be equipped with a universal learning remote hand set. Modern microprocessor technology, via the remote control, provides the owner with micro-step control of volume and channel balance, and also selection of absolute phase, muting/standby and chosen source inputs.

Great deal of attention been given to features that are designed to enhance the musical presentation.

- The modern micro processor technology allows for the variable change of balance for each separate channel with micro-step control.
- Owner may change absolute phase, muting and display lighting from the programmable universal learning handset.

- Due to the use of transformer to output the signal user can benefit from a fully balanced signal. The circuit offers users the ability to input sound via XLR and output it through RCA connections, or visa versa.
- Three outputs can be utilised to output signal simultaneously
- Additionally, owners will be able to choose from two internal earthing loops that will greatly improve compatibility with valves or solid state amplifiers.
- A monitor loop is provided for those who wish to incorporate their two channel system into a surround sound set up.

The ECSpre is provided with a novel configuration. Operating without a loop negative feedback and with a super high quality air gapped output transformer that are ground isolated. A world first for a high end pre amplifier been set with the incorporation of a "never Connected"™ Technology, tuned for optimised performance for this application, this circuit employs unique FET commutation circuitry to create a virtual battery supply. The result is a stunning level of resolution and stage depth that are rarely exhibited by any pre amplifier regardless of retail value.

The ECSpre will be provided to audio enthusiasts with a great deal of combined support from the manufacturer and Guildford Audio. Future owner will be provided with an exceptional levels of service and assistance. Direct installation services and 5 years warranty are only some of the highlights that where tailored to meet the needs and expectation of today's discerning music lovers. Please contact us to arrange for an audition of this exceptional music reproduction tool.

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- Transformer balanced output on three-pole XLR (selectable)
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- All outputs (3) simultaneously pass signal
- Tape loop/AV loop available
- All signal is processed as balanced, user may choose any input and can use any output (RCA or XLR)
- Multiple power transformers to isolate circuit and functional blocks
- New technology double regulators isolate amplifier circuitry from supply line noise
- Zero-feedback, second stage regulator design for low coloration and enhanced signal dynamics.
- Multiple power supplies keep signal channels separate
- Volume control by precision, discrete, metal-film resistors for low noise and high accuracy, including channel balance.
- Volume resistors and inputs switched by selected, audiophile grade, gold contact, long life, inert gas sealed relays.
- Centralized Star-Ground topology for both channels maximises stereo focus and image depth.
- SE gain 12dB
- IHF sensitivity; 125mV
- Maximum output; 6V
- Volume resolution; typically 0.6dB over main operating range
- Channel Balance; better than 0.2 dB
- Frequency response; 5 Hz to 50 kHz +0.1, -3dB
- Noise; better than -80dB IHF unweighted
- Distortion type ; SE, low order harmonics, primarily second
- Distortion; better than 0.2%, 20Hz to 20 kHz. IHF
- Intermodulation; 19/20kHz tones; better than 0.1%, IHF

£500 per pair ☎ 01903 221500 🌐 www.bwspeakers.com

# B&W CM1

*B&W's new baby looks gorgeous and sounds great*

**W**orld leader in specialist hi-fi loudspeakers, UK-based B&W has featured CM and CDM models in its line-up for around a decade. Pitched at a price a little above its budget 600 Series, but below the 800 Series speaker range, both in terms of price and performance, these models fill a niche for speakers with high-quality design and luxury finish.

That description certainly applies to this £500 per pair CM1. This must be one of the smallest hi-fi speakers B&W has ever produced, yet unquestionably one of the prettiest, too. We looked at this attractive miniature in some detail back in *HFC 277*, sufficiently so as to confirm its credentials and to suggest it should also be subject to *Ultimate Group Test* scrutiny. B&W, like many large speaker companies, does produce smaller speaker designs (like the slinky floorstanding XT4 tested in *HFC 278*), but these are as much home cinema oriented as hi-fi specified.

High-performance miniatures of around five to seven litre enclosure volumes have a history that includes numerous legitimate 'classics', such as the BBC LS3/5a and Acoustic Energy AE1. In that lofty context, the CM1's £500 per pair price tag is by no means excessive, and its classy real wood veneer and shiny driver trim certainly looks the part. Finish options are limited to wenge, rosenut or maple, and the grille is held in place by magnets cleverly secreted beneath the veneer.

Naturally enough, it's a two-way design, with a nominal 130mm main driver equipped with a 95mm woven Kevlar cone and pointed dust cap, plus an unprotected (and potentially vulnerable) 25mm aluminium dome tweeter. The enclosure is very slim, but also nearly as deep as it is tall, giving a total enclosed volume of 6.5 litres, port-loaded by one

of B&W's flared, stippled Flowports set into the rear panel. The tweeter is fitted conventionally into the front of the enclosure here, but it does use an internal Nautilus-style rear loading tube, and a new surround allows a simple first-order feed. Twin terminal pairs offer the bi-wire/bi-amp option, and a hollow foam sleeve may be used to re-tune the port.

### SOUND QUALITY

As the room measurements suggest, this model is primarily aligned for free space siting, though it's possible to use the supplied bungs to adjust the bass alignment. This will make the CM1 better suit the characteristics of a particular room, or closer to wall siting.

The sound is very well balanced, cleverly managing to avoid the slightly 'bleached out' character – with insufficient warmth and richness through the lower midband – that often seems to afflict very small loudspeakers. Very much in the B&W tradition, the presence zone errs on the side of restraint, giving a rather laid back character to voices and speech in particular. But the clean, sweet and well-judged top end assists intelligibility and provides ample fine detail. There's certainly no tendency to make music sound aggressive, even where the recording quality is innately edgy and compressed.

Stereo images are spacious and precise, and cabinet coloration is low – helped no doubt by the fact that there's not a lot of cabinet here to create coloration. Boxiness is also well controlled here, and the sound this little speaker creates has surprising weight and solidity for its size.

Rather less impressive is its dynamic behaviour, where the CM1 – in common with other miniatures – demonstrated a basic

inability to create the sort of dynamic

tension that distinguishes the 'real' from the 'reproduced'. This is not merely due to lack of bass, but because of the dynamic constraints a small box bestows on the sound itself. But, given the size and the tangible benefits elsewhere in the sonic performance, this slight lack of dynamism is utterly forgivable. **HFC**

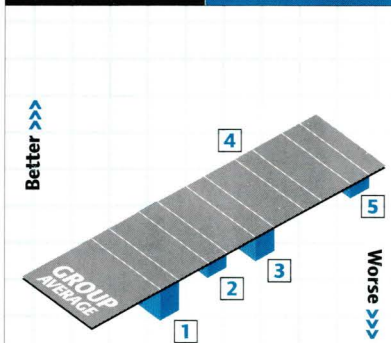


### LAB REPORT

Typical of a 'luxury' (as distinct from 'budget') miniature, the CM1 sacrifices sensitivity in order to give respectable in-room bass output alongside an alignment that is suited to free-space siting. Our measurements show a low(ish) average sensitivity of around 84-85dB, confirming the manufacturer's claim of 84dB. Ultimate loudness is therefore bound to be somewhat limited, and a reasonably powerful amplifier is definitely advisable, but its current demands aren't too demanding, as the load stays above 5 ohms throughout.

Whereas the unobstructed port is tuned to 58Hz, inserting the hollow foam bung re-tunes it to 40Hz, the option providing worthwhile extra flexibility in avoiding the excitation of major room modes. The overall in-room balance is very well judged – notably smooth and even through the broad bass and midband, if rather laid back above 1.5kHz, with just a shallow, broad presence depression.

### HOW IT COMPARES



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

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	84dB	85dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/5.1	7/5 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	45Hz	38Hz

### VERDICT

**SOUND >> 83%**

**PRACTICALITY >> 84%**

**BUILD >> 88%**

**VALUE >> 88%**

Luxury real wood miniature delivers a very well judged, slightly laid back tonal balance with surprising weight and a notably sweet top end. Best used clear of walls, but bass tuning has some flexibility.

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 86%**





"If this is how a good IC-based amplifier measures, we are more than a little impressed!"

Hi-Fi Choice, Apr 2006 - A60 Amplifier (85%)

"Good detail retrieval seems to be a consistent attribute and was mentioned repeatedly by all the listeners."

Hi-Fi Choice, Nov 2005 - A120 Amplifier (85%)

"Bass is a strength, with both depth and control, making this a very apt player for such tricky instruments as plucked double bass."

Hi-Fi Choice, Feb 2006 - CD132 CD Player (82%)

**0% FINANCE**

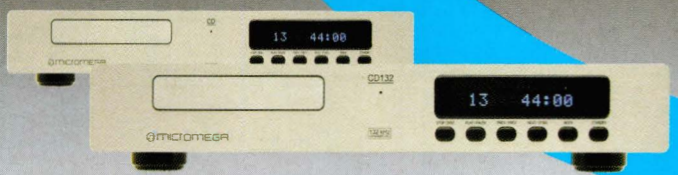
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Example: Micromega A120 - £899.00  
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CDSE CD Player £599.00



A120 Integrated Amplifier £899.00

CD132 CD Player £699.00

\*subject to status

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## DYNAUDIO FOCUS 110

*This stylish miniature is the first of a new range from Dynaudio*

**D**anish brand Dynaudio has always concentrated its efforts on the more upmarket segment of the market, with stereo pair prices ranging from £400 (for the little Audience 42) up to £51,000. Dynaudio has the advantage of building its own drive units, which helps in developing a consistent and good sounding speaker design. This little newcomer is no exception. It is smaller than that Audience 42, yet it's also a whole lot prettier, and more than twice the price. Selling at a considerable £850 per pair, the Focus 110 is one of four models that make up a brand new range, which slots in between Dynaudio's existing Audience and Contour series.

The Focus line-up currently includes three stereo pairs – two standmounts and a floorstander – of which this Focus 110 is comfortably the smallest. The enclosed volume is just 7.5 litres, and the 130mm bass/mid driver has a diaphragm just 95mm in diameter, so this is a genuine miniature in the classic mould. It's also very much a luxury one too, not only because of its elevated price, but also the very classy real-wood veneer finish – available in maple, cherry, rosewood or black ash – and cunningly shaped enclosure.

What looks at first sight like a conventional rectilinear box, on closer scrutiny turns out to be gently tapered from front to rear. This is sufficient to spread out and defocus the internal lateral standing waves. A further refinement is the chamfered front edges, which should smooth the off-axis distribution.

In the Dynaudio tradition, the main driver has a combination cone/dome diaphragm in moulded MSP (magnesium silicate polymer) plastic, driven from a large diameter aluminium wire voice coil. The 25mm doped fabric

dome tweeter is the company's premium quality Esotec+ device. A single pair of terminals feeds first order crossover filters, sharing the rear panel with a flared port. Foam bungs are available to block the latter if desired, and a pillar stand with damped sandwich top and bottom is also available.

### SOUND QUALITY

Unlike the budget variety, which tend to favour close-to-wall bass reinforcement, more costly miniatures like this Focus 110 tend to trade sensitivity for a free-space alignment, in order to minimise midband coloration and maximise imaging properties.

That's certainly the case here, and if genuinely deep bass isn't really on the agenda, the Dynaudio delivers healthy mid-bass punch and drive, even when well clear of walls. Indeed, while the port bungs could well prove useful in some sites and rooms, the mild mid-bass excess provides rather effective subjective compensation for the lack of bottom octave output. While an authoritative delivery of heavyweight material is naturally absent, there's no denying that this speaker actually sounds significantly larger than its modest dimensions might suggest.

With an impressively neutral balance distinguished by a top end that's strong – but very clean and sweet with it – this is a thoroughly involving loudspeaker, even though dynamic tension is a little weak. The clever cabinet design and construction is very effective at banishing any boxy coloration and providing notably precise and out-of-the-box stereo images.

Fine detail is particularly well projected, bringing impressive intelligibility to voices and to speech in

particular, with clean and crisp sibilants and fricatives helping to clarify diction even when playing the system very quietly. Such a character can sound aggressive though, and while it's true that brass and cymbals can be a little insistent when the volume is turned up loud, the all round compromise of the Focus 110 is very hard to beat. **HFC**

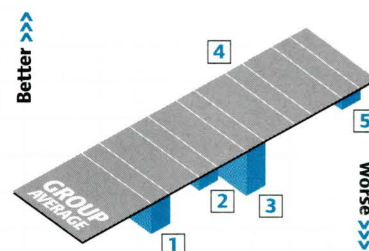


### LAB REPORT

Specified at an 85dB sensitivity alongside a 4-ohm impedance, the manufacturer's figures correspond closely to our measurement findings. They confirm that this design has comfortably below average sensitivity, and is best used alongside a powerful amplifier – fortunately, thermal power handling is no problem with Dynaudio's large diameter voice coil. Although the impedance trace drops to around 4 ohms intermittently at low frequencies, it stays above 6 ohms from 600Hz upwards. Pair matching was perfect, and the port is tuned to 60Hz.

Even sited well clear of walls, the bass was a little strong at 50-80Hz, which should provide some subjective compensation for the lack of extension below 40Hz. The far-field room-averaged balance is impressively ordered and neutral across most of the band, apart from a very obvious 4dB dip centred on 1.8kHz – which surprisingly is significantly below the 2.2kHz crossover point.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> -30%
- 2] Bass extension >> -10%
- 3] Ease of drive >> -40%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> 0%
- 5] Response smoothness >> -10%

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	85dB	85dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	4/- ohms	6/4 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	45Hz	38Hz

### VERDICT

**SOUND >> 85%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

**PRACTICALITY >> 82%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

**BUILD >> 90%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

**VALUE >> 83%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

This luxury miniature has a delicious real wood finish and a tapered enclosure. Sound is very clean and free from boxiness, with a strong but sweet and detailed top end, and plenty of mid-bass punch and drive.

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



Note to self: how can i improve my system without spending a fortune?

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nova



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## MONITOR AUDIO SILVER RS6

*Style and class at a sharp price: does it sound as good as it looks?*

**M**onitor Audio has been in the hi-fi speaker business since 1972, so it must have been doing plenty of things right down the years. The company underwent the transition from original founder to new ownership nearly a decade ago, and its hierarchy of Bronze, Silver and Gold hi-fi oriented ranges continue to prosper.

The Silver RS series represents the third generation of the company's attractively styled mid-price range. And styling is very much at the core of the RS6 agenda, with a nicely grained real-wood veneer covering all surfaces, gently smoothed edges, moulded silver driver trim, and a neat badge mounted on the top surface. A proper plinth finishes things off, supplying good physical stability; it comes with chunky spikes that are locked by large knurled plastic wheels. These look good, work well and avoid putting too much strain on the sockets, as well as ensuring secure floor coupling.

Alongside various home cinema extras, four stereo pairs lie at the heart of the Silver RS line-up – a standmount and three floorstanders, the latter distinguished by the size of their enclosures and



the quantity of bass drivers used. Whereas the RS5 is a straight two-way, with just the one bass/mid driver, this £600 per pair RS6 adds an extra bass-only unit and operates as a two-and-a-half-way; the still larger RS8 (reviewed in *HFC* 276) is a three-way with twin bass drivers alongside a similar size midrange.

All the diaphragms here are aluminium/magnesium alloy, deep anodised to create a ceramic oxide surface coating to increase stiffness and extend the piston operating range. Both the bass-only and bass/mid drivers have 120mm diameter cones in 160mm moulded polymer frames, though they differ in the way the central voice coil cover is handled – a shiny 'bullet' centre plug is used for the bass/mid driver, while the bass-only unit finishes the cone as a dish. Both are separately port-loaded. The tweeter has a 25mm metal dome, derived from that used in the Gold series, while twin terminals are fitted on the rear for bi-wiring or bi-amping.

### SOUND QUALITY

As the in-room measurements indicate, the RS6 is suited to siting well clear of walls, though port-blocking bungs are also supplied if close-to-wall siting is unavoidable. That extra bass-only driver ensures a full and powerful bottom end, with the sort of warmth and tonal richness that is all too often lacking in simpler two-way designs. That said, it can sound too heavy on some recordings, with a tendency to thump at times.

That full bass end balances up with a relatively strong treble output, and while that element of compensation makes plenty of sense, it's also true that the top end is inclined to draw attention to itself. Although the overall tonal balance is impressively neutral, and happily free from the sort of midband emphasis found elsewhere in this group (and common among modestly priced speakers in general), the RS6 is not particularly transparent, and does lack sweetness and delicacy. Its music making is rather matter-of-fact, lacking dynamic tension, and it somehow doesn't manage to touch the listener on an emotional level as effectively as it might.

And while that smooth midband is creditably in proper perspective, it's not without a measure of congestion and nasal coloration. This keeps an otherwise fine speaker from recommendation. **HFC**

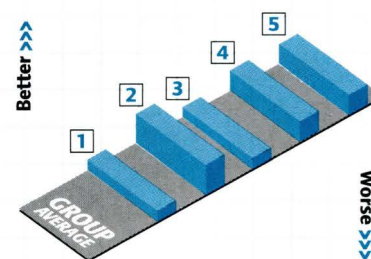


### LAB REPORT

Although Monitor Audio claims a sensitivity of 91dB, under our measurement regime (based on averaged in-room far-field traces) it only achieves 88dB, which is a significant shortfall. The 6-ohm impedance rating was comfortably met though, the minimum of around 4 ohms coinciding with the port tuning frequency of 42Hz.

The advantage of the extra bass driver may be seen in the relatively full and generous output through the bass region, 40-200Hz. While the rest of the audio band holds within tight and impressive +/-2dB limits, it does show certain traits that are likely to affect the character of the reproduced sound. The RS6 lacks a little output 220-600Hz and again 1.3-2.2kHz. However, the lower treble (2.5-5.5kHz) is quite strong. There's also a sharp rise above 17kHz, but this probably above the limit of most people's hearing and is not untypical of metal dome tweeters.

### HOW IT COMPARES



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

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	91dB	88dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	6/- ohms	6/4 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	38Hz	25Hz

### VERDICT

**SOUND >> 79%**



**PRACTICALITY >> 84%**



**BUILD >> 88%**



**VALUE >> 84%**



Very superior styling and perceived value, this elegant 2.5-way has a proper plinth and real wood veneered enclosure. Strong in both bass and treble, the midband is smooth and even, but also a little congested.

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

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# Jas-audio

It was only a matter of time before they matched the sonic performance of their indigenous designs to the astonishing material content and this year we've seen the first evidence. (JAS-Audio Orsa, hi>fi+, issue 43).



### JAS-Audio Orsa (shown above) - £1,399

"In some ways it always feels more rewarding to review a product that punches above its weight and this is a special little speaker that sets a price/performance yardstick that is hard to beat."

Chris Thomas  
Hi>Fi+ Issue 42

"The Orsa is such a good all round speaker that I often found myself comparing it with my Micro Utopias Be's which is both totally unfair given the large price disparity yet still a compliment."

Chris Thomas  
Hi>Fi+ Issue 42

"Impressive sophistication considering the £1,399 per pair asking price, but the build quality and finish are, well bananas."

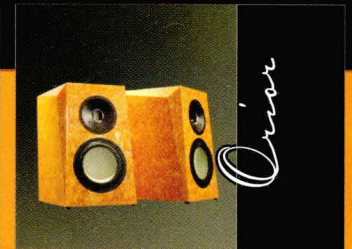
David Vivian  
Hi-Fi Choice March 2006

"Astonishing transparency coupled to beautiful and individual presentation makes for a potent package. Now look at the price. You might not recognise it, but this is the shape of things to come."

2005 Awards Annual  
Hi-Fi+ Issue 43



**Orsus (£2,299 pair)**  
Floor standing speaker



**Orior (£2,299 pair)**  
Reference stand mount



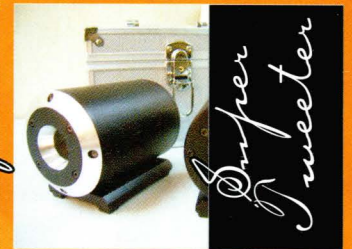
**Orior Grand (£2,995 pair)**  
Floor standing speaker



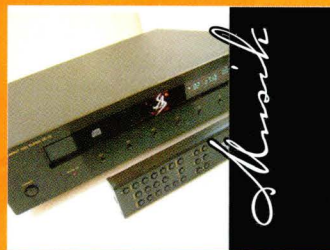
**Odin (£4,495 pair)**  
Floor standing speaker



**Plato reference (£13,995 pair)**  
Reference floor standing speaker



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**Orior, Odin, Orior Grand:** Maple, Maple birds eye, Large pattern birds eye, Piano black, Italian black ash  
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(custom finishes also available for models above)

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# OPERA PRIMA

*Stylish Italians create a classy package from veneer and leather*

This is actually only the second Opera speaker to arrive for formal *Hi-Fi Choice* scrutiny, and carries the same Prima name as our first exposure to the brand back in 1999. Opera is an Italian loudspeaker builder based in Treviso, quite close to Venice, in the north east of the country. And given that country's tradition for style, it's no surprise to find a beautifully crafted cabinet.

Seven years on from that original exposure to Opera speakers, this new Prima model bears very little resemblance to its predecessor, apart from both models being medium size two-way standmounts. Where that earlier Prima used a rectilinear enclosure made from real wood, alongside a 130mm main driver, this new version has elegantly veneered, curved and tapered sides, with leather trim on top, base, back and front, plus a 165mm bass/mid drive unit. It's true that these speakers bear a striking similarity to another Italian luxury speaker brand, but whether that's because of two designers from the same region independently designing similar speakers, or whether the Prima joins the ranks of 'clonus faber' designs remains to be seen.

The veneer is laid in broad horizontal strips, creating an attractive pattern that's further enhanced by a high gloss lacquer finish. And not too surprisingly, given the seven-year interregnum, the price per pair has increased from £495 to £795.

A simple two-way design port-loaded at the front, it has two pairs of chunky terminals fitted directly through the woodwork, permitting bi-wire or bi-amp options, and feeding separate network boards for each driver. The crossover occurs around 2.3kHz, with a fourth-order network feeding the tweeter. Both sourced from SEAS, the main driver has

a cast frame and a flared aluminium cone 120mm in diameter, while the tweeter uses a 25mm soft fabric dome. The tweeter is positioned asymmetrically on the baffle, the better to spread edge reflection standing waves, and the speakers are constructed as mirror image pairs.

## SOUND QUALITY

Finding the best locations for the Primas proved difficult, probably in part because the reflex port is tuned to 47Hz, very close to a major mode in our listening room. While this led to ample output around 50Hz with the speaker well clear of walls, output across the rest of the low frequency portion of the spectrum was rather weak. Moving the speaker closer to the wall provided some compensation, but still left the alignment looking too heavy around 50Hz, and weak in the upper bass. If you try these speakers out, be prepared for some experimentation to seek out the best place for them.

The best compromise in our room was found with the speakers' backs about 0.5m out from the wall. While there was still some bass unevenness here, evident as a mild lack of punch and warmth, the overall sound is mostly positive, with obviously good control over enclosure colorations.

The sound as a whole is generous and powerful in dynamic terms, and the voice band is particularly well projected, with good smoothness, clear diction and fine intelligibility. However, the rather dry, lean and cool character through the lower midband does tend to leave the upper half of the spectrum exposed, and this in turn tends to highlight and emphasise the voice band.

While there's no question that this speaker is very informative and coherent, with good dynamic power and a lovely open clarity, it does have a slightly thin overall sound, the more so because of a slight 'sting' towards the top end of the audio band. And if the low frequencies have adequate weight and heft, they do need to contribute a richer tonal palette through the upper bass region, in order to create properly balanced tonality. **HFC**



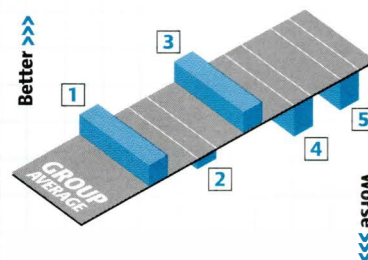
## LAB REPORT

The specification sheet claims a good sensitivity of 89dB, alongside a 4-ohm nominal impedance. The sensitivity figure looks bang on the button, and the impedance stays comfortably above 4 ohms throughout, so the load presented to the driving amplifier should be relatively easy to drive.

Above 250Hz, the Prima's balance is very well ordered, and quite smooth and even, though there is a mild peak at around 850Hz, and another at around 13kHz. Below 250Hz, however, things look less satisfactory using our in-room far-field averaged technique. With the speakers clear of walls, the peaks line up well with the midband datum, but the average output level is decidedly light. This may prove difficult to balance out in room.

Moving the speakers back towards the wall improves average output, but starts to make the 50Hz room mode peak (close to the 47Hz port tuning) look increasingly exposed.

## HOW IT COMPARES



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

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	89dB	89dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	4/3.9 ohms	6/4 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	40Hz	40Hz

## VERDICT

**SOUND >> 80%**

**PRACTICALITY >> 83%**

**BUILD >> 90%**

**VALUE >> 80%**

Chunky standmount looks extremely elegant and delivers a smooth mid and top with some brightness. Bass end has some authority but lacks warmth and richness, and optimum siting proved elusive.

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 80%**

# CONCLUSIONS

These six mid-price speakers deliver the goods in small, elegant packages. Well, sometimes...

**A**fter the dramatic variations between models seen in HFC 277's *Ultimate Group Test*, it was a relief to get back to a semblance of normality and the regular market stereotypes that make up this test group.

Working up the price ladder, the tiny £400 Arcam Alto tries very hard to behave like a larger loudspeaker, and almost succeeds. Size – or rather the lack of it – is the crucial factor with what is really a small room speaker for those who value compactness above bass grunt. Bass aside, it's really rather good, and an ideal

partner for the company's Solo CD/DAB/amplifier system.

The star of the whole group test has got to be the £500 ALR Jordan Entry L, which is unarguably the least interesting stylewise but the most interesting sonically.

Essentially, it's a hugely impressive combination of neutrality and transparency. An obvious Best Buy, especially given the competitive price tag. At the same price point, B&W little CM1 is no less tempting, and likewise deserves Best Buy status, though naturally its miniature dimensions involve some sonic sacrifice.

Top marks for perceived value in the group has got to go to the £600 Monitor Audio RS6, with its extra bass driver, proper plinth, shiny embellishments and real wood veneer, though the sound quality fell somewhat short of the physical promise.

Something of the same is also true of the £795 Opera Prima, which is certainly a gorgeous looking creation, and a very fine performer over the top half of the audio band too. But a lack of consistent output through the lower registers does rather let it down slightly.

At £850, the Dynaudio is unquestionably pricey for such a small speaker (indeed, it's the most expensive model in the group) and – like the B&W – there are sacrifices involved in scaling things down to such a degree. But good things come in small packages. This is unquestionably a thoroughbred design, and its top class drive units – not exactly surprising, given Dynaudio's reputation for drive unit design and manufacture – coupled with a cleverly and elegantly tapered enclosure, demand serious consideration. **HFC**

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A thoroughly competent all-rounder, with a crisp and detailed sound.

#### CYRUS 6VS £600

Natural style partner for the CD player, it sounds agile if a little short of grunt.

## HINTS AND TIPS

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

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

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

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

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

## LOUDSPEAKERS AT A GLANCE



MAKE MODEL	ALR Jordan Entry L	Arcam Alto	B&W CM1	Dynaudio Focus 110	Monitor Audio Silver RS6	Opera Prima
<b>PRICE</b>	£500	£400	£500	£850	£600	£795
<b>SOUND</b>						
<b>PRACTICALITY</b>						
<b>BUILD</b>						
<b>VALUE</b>						
<b>OVERALL</b>						
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	Not pretty... but a sonic triumph, with a beautifully judged balance and impressive transparency.	Cute sub-miniature lacks bass, but is smooth and very coherent elsewhere.	Best suited to smaller rooms, this lovely little real-wood speaker has surprising weight and a sweet top end.	Another luxury real-wood miniature, with a tapered enclosure. Pricey, but its sound is both punchy and sweet.	Super styling and value. Sounds strong in the bass and treble, but midband is a little congested.	Classy striped veneer and leather cabinet. Mid and top are smooth, but bass lacks warmth and richness.
<b>KEY FEATURES</b>						
<b>SIZE (WxHxD)</b>	20.3x86x29cm	14x26x24cm	16.5x28x28cm	17x30.5x28.5cm	18.5x85x25cm	24x37x34cm
<b>DRIVER CONFIG</b>	2-way	2-way	2-way	2-way	2.5-way	2-way
<b>MAIN DRIVER SIZE(S)</b>	1x165mm	1x130mm	1x130mm	1x130mm	3x165mm	1x165mm
<b>STAND/ FLOOR?</b>	Floor	Stand	Stand	Stand	Floor	Stand
<b>CABINET FINISH</b>	Vinyl/textured wood	Real wood	Real wood	Real wood	Real wood	Real wood/leather
<b>BI-WIRE?</b>	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
<b>LAB CONCLUSIONS</b> E = EXCELLENT • G = GOOD • A = AVERAGE • P = POOR						
<b>SENSITIVITY</b>	89dB <b>G</b>	88dB <b>A</b>	85dB <b>P</b>	85dB <b>P</b>	88dB <b>A</b>	89dB <b>G</b>
<b>EST. BASS EXTENSION</b>	23Hz <b>G</b>	48Hz <b>P</b>	38Hz <b>P</b>	38Hz <b>P</b>	26Hz <b>A</b>	40Hz <b>P</b>
<b>IMPEDANCE (NOM/ MIN)</b>	6/4 ohms <b>A</b>	6/4 ohms <b>A</b>	7/5 ohms <b>G</b>	6/4 ohms <b>A</b>	6/4 ohms <b>A</b>	6/4 ohms <b>A</b>
<b>OVERALL FREQ. BALANCE</b>	+40% <b>G</b>	-20% <b>A</b>	0% <b>A</b>	0% <b>A</b>	+20% <b>G</b>	-30% <b>P</b>
<b>RESPONSE SMOOTHNESS</b>	+30% <b>G</b>	0% <b>A</b>	-10% <b>A</b>	-10% <b>A</b>	+20% <b>G</b>	-30% <b>P</b>

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## The New Densen B-110

The B-110 is the successor to the B-100, which became the most sold high-end amplifier ever from a Scandinavian audio manufacturer. The reviews have confirmed the quality of the "old" B-100 by awarding the B-100 a string of very favourable reviews: "You just can't beat it", "rhythmic magic" and "build quality that should embarrass everyone fighting in this price category" – words that tell you it is time to open your ears and listen! Even so the B-110 is in all aspects a giant step forward in terms of musicality, features, user friendliness and upgradability. This completely new design is simply sonically superior because of the high-end details and features it inherits from its close relation to the B-150. The B-110 even comes with lifetime warranty.

The B-110 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!

**Features:**

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- Ready for SAXO electronic crossover
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- Ready for multiroom systems
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B-110 2x60w 8 ohms / 2x120w 4 ohms - £ 1,000  
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The B-150 has already been awarded Best Integrated Amp of the year in Portugal. The B-110 is a down-scaled version of the B-150, so it is a real High End killer!

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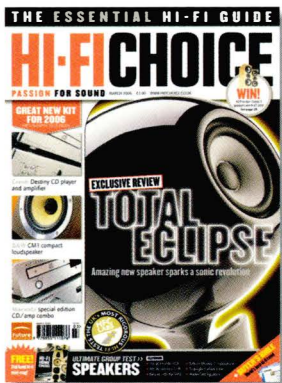
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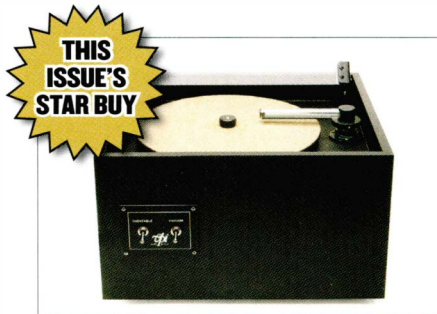


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This issue, serious record collectors are in for a treat, thanks to the VPI HW16.5 record cleaning machine. Even the best turntable is only as good as the records playing on it, and the HW16.5 simply improves the sound of your vinyl. For our full selection, visit our dedicated website: [www.choicebits.co.uk](http://www.choicebits.co.uk)



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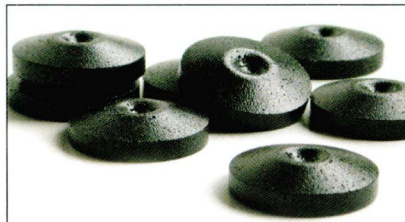
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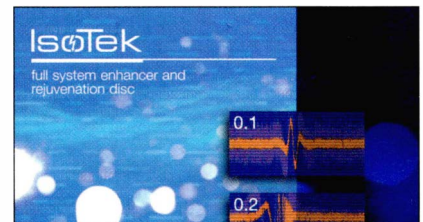
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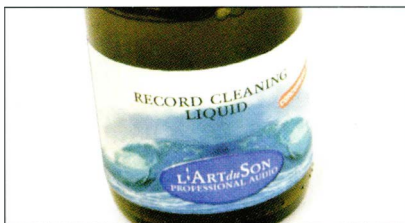
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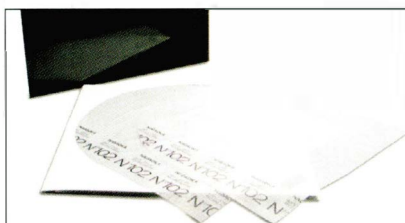
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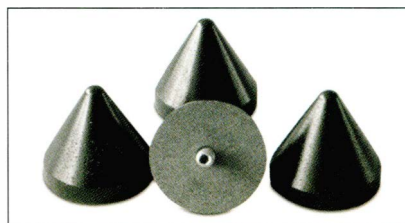
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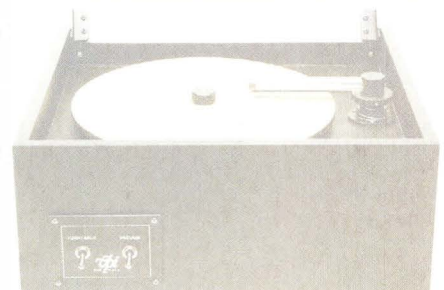
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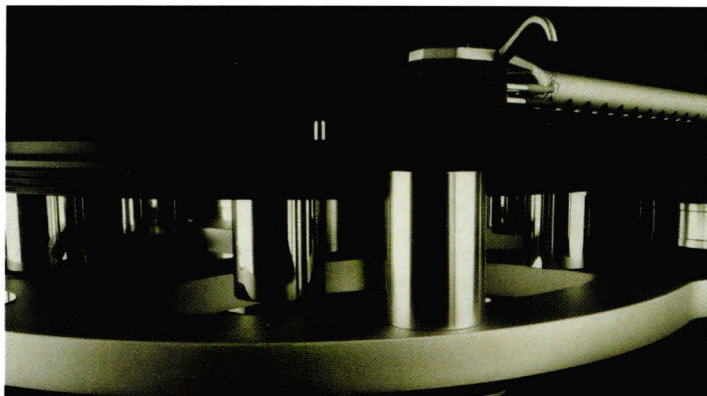
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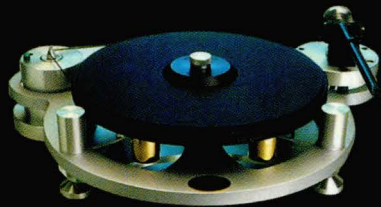
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# HI-FI CHOICE BUYER'S BIBLE



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 BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE **CD PLAYERS**

### 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>											
	Arcam DIVA CD73T	400	Refined and articulate, smooth and dynamic – a finely judged balance for budget to mid-price systems	●	●	●	●				247
	Arcam DIVA CD192	850	Beautifully built, well featured player with clear, open and involving sound	●	●	●	●				264
	Cambridge 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
	Cyrus CD6s	650	Small, efficient and cheerful, with plenty of energy and just the smallest lack of detail		●					●	276
	Cyrus CD8x	1,000	Impressive mix of detail, musicality, analysis and appearance. Even better with the PSX-R power supply (£400)	●	●						270
	Exposure 2010 S	599	Highly communicative sounds with good bass, though not always the most analytical	●	●	●					264
	Marantz CD7300	350	Astonishingly capable sub-£500 player with effortless bass, detailed mid and treble and vast soundstages	●	●	●	●			●	250
	Naim CD5i	825	As idiosyncratic as ever, but sonically the CD5i is the definitive player at the price				●				259
	Roksan Kandy MKIID	650	Clean, tidy and expressive player – a more than worthwhile improvement on previous versions								259
	Sony SCD-XA3000ES	800	A good, if not truly great, all-rounder with CD and fine multi-channel SACD performance	●	●	●	●	●	●		276
<b>ABOVE £1,000</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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	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
	Copland CDA823	1,750	Its ability to resolve micro dynamics and acoustic space is second to none	●						●	267
	Creek Destiny	1,200	A highly capable and particularly smart CD player which is both analytical and musically inviting	●	●	●					277
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Lindemann 820	6,999	Stereo SACD player with sumptuous build and sound, onboard analogue volume control and multiple digital inputs	●	●				●	●	262
	Marantz SA-15 S1	1,200	Some inconsistency over imaging, but enjoyable performance, strong on detail	●	●	●	●				276
	Marantz SA-11 S1	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Meridian 808i Signature	8,250	Stunning CD player with added preamp functions. Versatile and quite delightful	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	263
	Myryad MXC6000	1,400	A highly listenable player with excellent tonal balance and very fine detail	●			●				270
	Naim CD5x	1,450	A genuinely engaging CD player with remarkable musical grip and coherence								264
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Naim CDX2	2,800	Fine quality one-box CD player, but its best feature is upgradeability via outboard XPS supply				●				238
	Primare CD31	1,500	A well made player that may not appeal to timing freaks but does lovely things with large musical forces	●	●	●				●	270
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Resolution Audio Opus 21	2,850	Dynamic, well timed and 3D performance with an analogue volume control and digital input for a second source	●			●			●	244
	Roksan Caspian M Series-1	1,100	The newly tweaked Caspian remains a smooth, cohesive and informative player	●	●	●					278
	Sugden CD21SE	1,395	Delivers its particularly musical touch brilliantly and warrants the attention of all true music lovers	●							271
	Shanling CD-T100	1,650	Stunning-looking player that offers various operating modes: in any, sound is clear and assured	●						●	270
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Wadia 302	3,999	A dynamic and gripping player, with bass to die for and resolution to change your listening habits	●	●	●			●	●	253
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	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

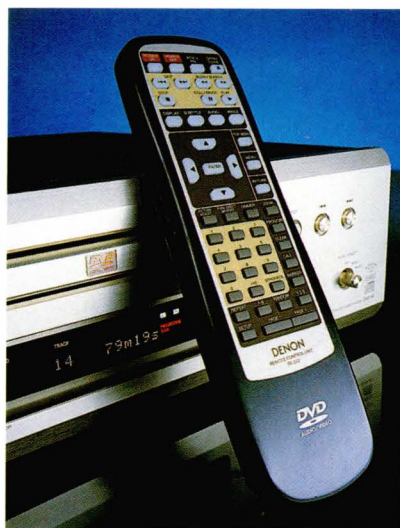
This player is king of subtlety. Outwardly, the music sounds dynamic and well-scaled, but it's the level of inner detail resolved here that is truly outstanding.

# 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

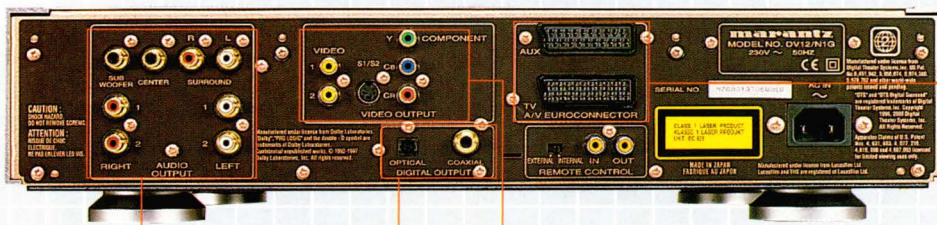


DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player.

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



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

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

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

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



## Our favourite DVD PLAYERS

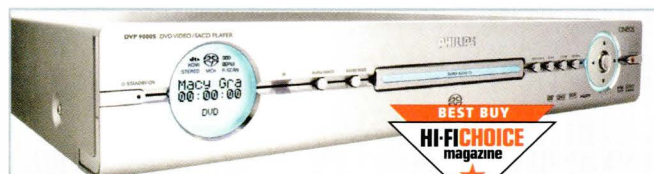
BT BEST BUY
 EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Audio/Video disc players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				DVD-A COMPATIBLE	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BT</span>	Arcam DIVA DV78	700	Imagine almost all of the DV88 Plus at a knock-down price. Top picture and sound performance for the money	●	●	●	●	●	254
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BT</span>	Denon DVD-1920	250	Respectable (if unexciting) and flexible audio player, but something of a star from its HDMI equipped upsampling video subsystem	●	●	●	●	●	276
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BT</span>	Denon DVD-2910	600	Denon's entry-level universal player lives in the shadow of the '3910, especially on CD, but is a fine overall model	●	●	●	●	●	262
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BT</span>	Denon DVD-3910	900	Exceptionally well-specified universal player with a performance to match. A true class-leader	●	●	●	●	●	260
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BT</span>	Marantz DV7600	600	A mid-market cracker, with sound and picture quality that generally exceeds expectations	●	●	●	●	●	274
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BT</span>	Onkyo DV-SP503E	300	Budget Onkyo universal player is a straightforward Pioneer based implementation, which performs well with audio and video	●	●	●	●	●	275
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BT</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BT</span>	Pioneer DV-585A	150	Don't expect tip-top performance for this kind of money – the fact that it's a competent universal player is impressive enough!	●	●	●	●	●	273
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BT</span>	Pioneer DV-868AVI	1,000	State of the art universal player with next-gen digital outputs – HDMI for video and i.Link for high-resolution audio	●	●	●	●	●	252
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BT</span>	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>									
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BT</span>	Arcam FMJ DV29	1,600	An excellent DVD player, very fine with both CD and DVD-Audio music discs and superb in its video role	●	●	●	●	●	263
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BT</span>	Cyrus DVD8	1,200	An impressive step up from the DVD7+, which includes component video outputs	●	●	●	●	●	238
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Denon DVD-A1XV	2,500	Sophisticated universal player with state of the art video processing, high class disc replay, especially SACD	●	●	●	●	●	266
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Linn Unidisk SC	2,995	Groundbreaking universal player with built-in preamplifier, with excellent picture for home cinema and sound for hi-fi	●	●	●	●	●	259
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Meridian G98AH	3,625	Meridian's most widely compatible G-Series DVD player – groundbreaking DVD-Audio replay and a fine CD player too	●	●	●	●	●	265
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Naim DVD5	2,565	Naim's first DVD player is a real success, notable for its class-leading sound with CD and (optional) multichannel DVD-Audio	●	●	●	●	●	263
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Townshend TA 565 CD	3,000	A universal machine that excels with music and is quite exceptional with good ol' stereo CD	●	●	●	●	●	270

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

### TOP BUYS



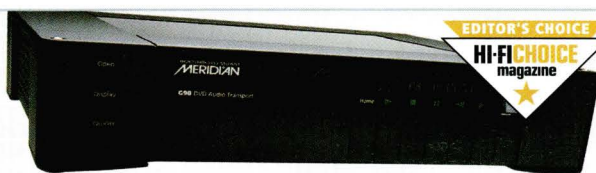
**Philips DVP9000S £400**  
An attractive and well designed DVD player with a great picture and good CD/SACD sound.



**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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SOUND SYSTEMS

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**£1149**

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Ex-Display & Pre-owned bargains can be found in the Marketplace section

Arcam FMJ CD33 CD Player (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .	(1349.00)	<b>£675.00</b>
AVI Lab Series CD Player (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .	(1400.00)	<b>£849.00</b>
Denon DV1400 Multi-format DVD Player (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .	(399.00)	<b>£219.00</b>
KEF Q4 Speakers (Maple) (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .	(399.00)	<b>£199.00</b>
Linn Majik Amplifier - Blk S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .	(945.00)	<b>£375.00</b>
Linn LK100 Power amplifier S/H (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .	(650.00)	<b>£325.00</b>
Naim 112 Preamplifier - New (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .	(660.00)	<b>£425.00</b>
PMC OB1 Speakers - Oak E/D (2Yr G/tee) . . . . .	(2450.00)	<b>£1795.00</b>
Sugden CD21 CD Player As New (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .	(1049.00)	<b>£649.00</b>
Sugden A21a Line Amplifier As New (1Yr G/tee) . . . . .	(949.00)	<b>£595.00</b>

# 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**  
 Technodec £767

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



**Clearaudio**  
 Champion £1,475

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



**Avid**  
 Volvere Sequel £3,500

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

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE TURNTABLES

### Record players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	SUPPLIED WITH CART	ISSUE NUMBER
<span>BB</span>	Avid Diva	1,100	A solid and powerful sounding deck with fine build, requires a smooth, relaxed cartridge for best results	33/45	●				247
<span>EC</span>	Avid Volvere Sequel	3,500	Heavyweight turntable that will deliver more of what's in a vinyl groove than most of the competition	33/45	●	●			229
<span>BB</span>	Clearaudio Champion	1,365	Smart, practical and good-sounding, with impressively 'dead' arm. Isolation recommended	33/45			●		268
<span>EC</span>	Clearaudio Ambient	4,220	Innovative use of materials leads to a fast, precise and thrilling sound (tonearm extra)	33/45		●	●	●	271
<span>EC</span>	EAR Disc Master	7,695	Combines new 'no contact' drive technology and high quality materials to bring state of the art resolution	33/45/78	●	●	opt		276
<span>BB</span>	Goldring GR2	265	Nicely finished Rega-manufactured deck with RB250 arm and an open, engaging sound quality	33/45			●	●	266
<span>BB</span>	Michell Gyro SE	1,058	New DC motor-equipped Gyro offers great looks and even better sound. Price includes RB300 arm	33/45	●		●		239
<span>EC</span>	Michell Orbe SE	2,015	A superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price. Now features new DC motor	33/45	●				235
<span>BB</span>	Michell Technodec	767	Simple and smartly understated, performs above expectations – full-bodied and highly detailed	33/45			●		268
<span>BB</span>	NAD C 555	250	A good budget turntable with plenty of potential for cartridge upgrades. Shames many comparable CD players	33/45			●	●	271
<span>BB</span>	Nottingham Analogue Horizon	529	A fluid midrange and nimble but rich bass are two of the many attributes of this bargain deck (price inc RB250 arm)	33/45			●		253
<span>BB</span>	Pro-Ject Debut SE	200	The best Debut has a quality cartridge and easy upgrade arm cable, it delivers a scale, energy and resolve with ease	33/45			●	●	276
<span>BB</span>	Pro-Ject RPM 9 X	1,000	A gorgeous turntable that sounds as good as it looks – vital and transparent! Price includes carbon-fibre arm	33/45			●		268
<span>BB</span>	Rega P3/RB300	298	Updated Planar 3, building on the strengths of the P2 with added subtlety and detail	33/45			●		214
<span>BB</span>	Rega P5/RB700	698	Combines a great sense of timing with market-leading resolution and a phenomenal tonearm – a hard act to beat	33/45			●	opt	257
<span>BB</span>	Rega P7/RB700	1,298	A highly capable player that could hold its own in the most exalted company – a vivid and natural performer	33/45			●	opt	257
<span>EC</span>	Rega P9/RB1000	2,498	Exceptionally elegant hi-tech player with complex outboard supply, ceramic platter and wonderful RB1000 tonearm	33/45		●	●		228
<span>BB</span>	Roksan Radius 5/Nima	850	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation (acrylic version tested)	33/45	●		●		248
<span>EC</span>	Roksan TMS2/Artemiz	7,500	Typical Roksan sound, but better: pitch-accurate, lean, detailed and controlled, without the 'bloat' of lesser designs	33/45	●	●			246
<span>EC</span>	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V/309 hybrid arm	33/45	●	●	●		195
<span>EC</span>	SME Model 20.2A	5,274	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	33/45/78	●	●	●		186
<span>EC</span>	Townshend Rock Anniversary	4,900	If you want to get to the meat and bones of the music this is a great tool for the job (price inc. Excalibur arm)	33/45	●		●		259

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE PHONO CARTRIDGES

### MM and MC cartridges

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS		
				MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS
<span>BB</span>	Cartridge Man MM III	625	The MM III challenges MCs at twice the price, it produces detail, space and energy and has stunning resolve in the right arm	●		
<span>BB</span>	Grado Prestige Black	40	Offers admirable detail and treble extension, with good bass and ambience too	●		●
<span>BB</span>	Grado Prestige Gold	110	Produces rich, open and expansive music with the minimum of fuss	●		●
<span>EC</span>	Lyra Helikon	1,095	Highly capable and highly neutral, this is a cartridge for all seasons, albeit fussy about vinyl quality	●		
<span>BB</span>	Sumiko Blue Point Spec Evo III	239	High output MC with refinement at high frequencies and a nimble, articulate and revealing sound		●	
<span>BB</span>	van den Hul MC One Special	699	A gorgeous cartridge that's worth the price every time you hear a familiar track in a whole new light		●	
<span>EC</span>	van den Hul Colibri XGP	2,699	Phenomenal resolution, custom building to suit hard and software, but needs 500 ohm loading and is vulnerable to damage		●	
<span>EC</span>	van den Hul Condor XCM	2,400	A stunning cartridge with stereo imaging, dynamics and detail resolution to die for		●	
<span>EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Naked Analog	1,450	With its smooth clean highs, transparent midband and nimble bass, this is a lot of performance for the money		●	

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE PHONO STAGES

### Phono stages

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	AOL GAIN	AOL IMPEDANCE
<span>BB</span>	Cambridge Audio 640P	60	Tested with the almost-as-good £40 540P, this remarkable phono stage brings refinement and bass weight to budget vinyl	●	●		
<span>BB</span>	Clearaudio Smart-Phono	250	Minute and very practical unit with slightly bright, but very detailed and low-noise, sound	●	●		
<span>BB</span>	NAD PP2 phono stage	50	A fine buy for turntable users on a tight budget – open tonality and clarity is distinctly impressive for the money	●	●		
<span>BB</span>	Tom Evans Microgroove	400	For dynamics and real bass extension with good tonal colour this is the one to beat. The Plus version (£700) is even better!		●		
<span>EC</span>	Tom Evans The Groove	1,800	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for maximum information retrieval off any LP	●			
<span>BB</span>	Trichord Dino/Dino+	498	Relaxed yet resolute with very good image depth and natural balance, not to mention great flexibility	●	●	●	●

**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.

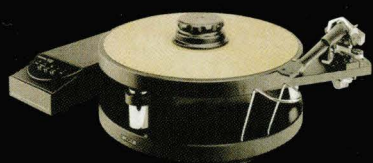
**CARTRIDGE SPECS KEY** **MM** Moving magnet cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type. **MC** Moving coil cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type.

**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



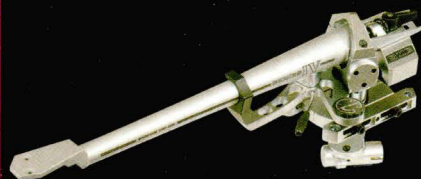
Series M2



Series 300



Series IV



Series V



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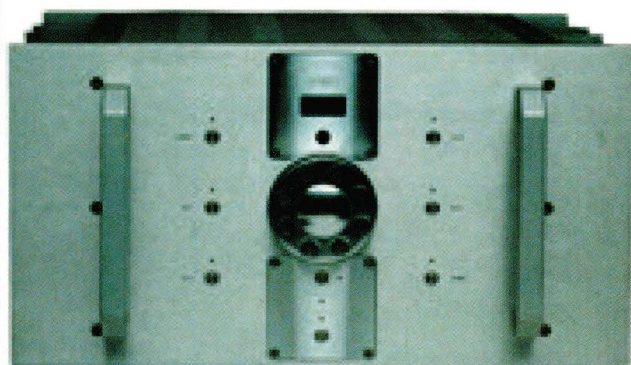
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# RADIO TUNERS

*FM and DAB hi-fi separates*



Radio is a fantastic musical resource that's in danger of being taken for granted, but whatever your tastes there's someone out there catering for it. If you haven't got a decent tuner hooked up to your hi-fi already, you're missing out!

### DAB or FM?

Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) is now said to be available to more than 80 per cent of the population and the long-term plan is to switch public broadcasting over to digital entirely, but hardware prices have yet to come down to a point where this would be acceptable. Its advantages over FM include hiss-free reception, the potential for a wider range of stations and the ability to display comprehensive programming information. FM's RDS system means that station name and occasionally track titles are displayed, but the range of information is fairly limited.

Where FM scores over DAB is in the lower cost of hardware and the greater reception

area. It can also provide higher sound quality if reception conditions are favourable. Absolute sound quality judgements are muddled by the fact that you are listening to different forms of compression and processing at the studio for each station.

What is clear, however, is that there are more and more radio stations broadcasting on DAB that aren't available on FM. So if it's variety of programming you're after, they have a lot to offer.

### RECEPTION

The quality of signal you feed a tuner will dictate its sound quality. So serious FM listeners should get a decent external aerial and connect it with as few junctions and splits as possible. Every time you split the cable (ie take a feed for another tuner) you halve signal strength! With DAB the same applies but get a DAB-specific aerial. See [www.bbc.co.uk/digitalradio](http://www.bbc.co.uk/digitalradio) for details.

### TOP BUYS



**Denon TU260L II £130**

The benchmark for all other budget 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	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>FM TUNERS</b>										
	Creek T50	550	Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics	FM, M, L	128					251
	Denon TU-260L II	130	The return of the all-time favourite, now enhanced with RDS and sounding as fine as ever	FM, M, L	40					193
EC	Magnum Dynalab MD 90T	1,195	No remote or presets as standard, manual everything and valves... but its sound is simply sublime	FM	opt		opt			257
EC	Magnum Dynalab MD 102	2,200	Superb remote control analogue FM tuner delivers a superbly transparent sound that makes radio fun	FM	5					241
	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity	FM, M	30					250
	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.

Oxford Audio  
new buy now pay  
later scheme  
(finance available subject to status)

naim

# 555

The first half of the stunning new top of the range **Naim 555** CD Player is now being shipped; this is the power supply half of the CD Player and is a fantastic upgrade for all owners of CDS3, CDS2, CDX2 and CDX owners; the sonic improvement over the XPS 2 is amazing.

**Price is £3995 plus a new Burndy lead will be required; we will of course be happy to part-exchange your XPS.**



**The rumours are true !!** In April Naim will launch their own Reference DIN-DIN Interconnect Cable.

At £475, its the ultimate Naim upgrade for Naim owners and quite frankly - a real bargain! Place your order early so you don't have to join the queue!

## Oxford Audio Consultants Ltd

### WE LOVE TO LISTEN

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E-308 Integrated Amplifier

japanese symbol for love



May Issue: Read the feature on Peak Consult Loudspeakers.

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email: info@hazlemereaudio.co.uk

#### Other reference brands available:



# 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-HD1500** £599

Combining hard disk with CD-R adds flexibility to digital audio recording.

---



**Cambridge Audio Azur 640H** £600

Rip and store CD tracks on hard disk, create playlists, connect to a PC and more.

Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

## DIGITAL RECORDERS

CD-R/RW, MD and HDD recorders

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				
				DECKS	HD CAPACITY (GB)	OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS	ELEC IN/OUTPUTS	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>CD-R/RW RECORDERS</b>								
	Denon CDR-1000	400	A respectable player and recorder, though some midband congestion was noted when recording	1		●●	●●	218
	Marantz DR6000	400	No frills, but in its fundamentals this is one of the finest CD recorders on the market	1		●●	●●	233
	NAD C660	500	Audiophile twin deck offering high-speed copying, HDCD replay and notably fine recording from analogue	2		●●	●●	243
	Philips CDR802	300	Tacky looks and build notwithstanding, this is a well-equipped and technically sound 3-to-1 autochanger/recorder at a good price	2		●●	●●	233
	Philips CDR951	380	An improvement on previous models, it delivers the musical goods in some style	1		●●	●●	205
	Pioneer PDR-609	270	Classic CD recorder with outstandingly good sound for the money on both record and replay	1		●●	●●	243
	Pioneer PDR-W839	350	Good-quality twin CD burner makes recordings that can be hard to distinguish from the original. Good value too	1		●●	●●	218
<b>MD RECORDERS</b>								
	Pioneer MJ-D508	200	Well equipped, but musically sleep-inducing player that receives its Recommendation owing to the price	1		●●	●●	205
	Sony MDS-JE480	130	Straightforward and effective, but the three real killer features are price, price and price	1		●●	●●	233
<b>HDD RECORDERS</b>								
	Cambridge Audio Azur 640H	600	Not so much a HDD recorder, more a complete audio computer and nerve centre in one useful box. Complex, but worth it	1	160	●●	●●	276
	lmerge S2000	1,599	Intended as the centrepiece of a multi-room installation, this three-output server combines flexibility with good sound	2	80	●●	●●	243
	Yamaha CDR-HD1500	599	Great for archiving a music collection or making compilations without compromising on flexibility or sound quality	1	250	●●	●●	278

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

# SEVENOAKS

## SOUND & VISION

With over 30 years experience, **SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION** is one of the largest and most respected Audio/Visual retailers in the country.

Each Sevenoaks Sound & Vision store stocks a wide range of quality products, covering all categories of specialist home entertainment, from Hi-Fi separates and systems to DVD recorders, widescreen plasma televisions and projection systems.

Our fully trained installation experts can neatly and seamlessly integrate a home cinema or hi-fi system into your home. All electronics can be hidden away, speakers discreetly mounted either in the wall or ceiling and the complete system operated via remote control.

Whatever your requirements, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision has a diverse range of products and the expertise to advise, demonstrate and guide you through the home entertainment jungle.



## Specialist hi-fi & home cinema

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

**The recent growth of DVD** has led to a huge rise in demand for home cinema equipment - DVD players, AV receivers, projectors and plasma screens but, with so many options, it's not easy to know which ones will suit your needs. Indeed, in the face of this quickly evolving and often bemusing array of products, we aim to assist you in assembling a home cinema system to be proud of - one that achieves outstanding picture and sound quality.

## NEW STORES

### LOUGHTON & YEOVIL

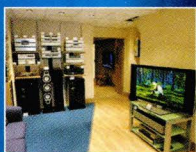
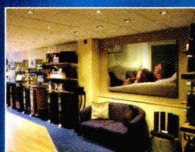
We are pleased to announce that these new stores are now open: -

#### LOUGHTON

7-9 GOLDINGS HILL • 020 8532 0770

#### YEOVIL

14 SILVER STREET • 01935 700078



## Audiolab

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.

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
TURNTABLES  
BEST CD PLAYER  
PROJECT DEBUT HI



## 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 includes the Award-winning Debut (pictured above), Xpression II, Perspective and RPM Series.

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
★★★★★



## 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.

The New XT Series delivers audiophile performance from beautiful and slender cabinets and feature B&W's Nautilus™ Tapering Tude aluminium dome tweeters and bass/midrange units woven from ochre-coloured Kevlar®.

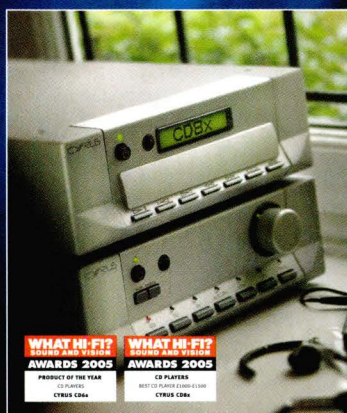


NEW XT4



## 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.



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
CD PLAYERS  
BEST CD PLAYER UNDER £1000  
CYRUS CDA

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
BEST CD PLAYER  
CYRUS CDA

## 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.

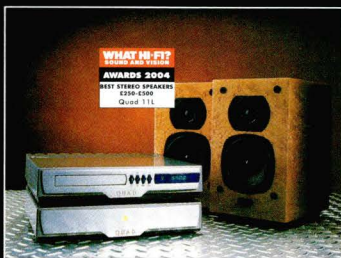
## Award-winning MT30 Speaker System



WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
COMPACT SPEAKER PACKAGES  
BEST COMPACT SPEAKER UNDER £1000  
B&W MT-30

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
SPEAKERS  
BEST COMPACT SPEAKER UNDER £1000  
B&W MT-30





## Quad

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



i-Deck

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
BEST HI-FI DOCKING STATION  
MONITOR AUDIO I-DECK



### NEW Monitor Audio Gold Signature

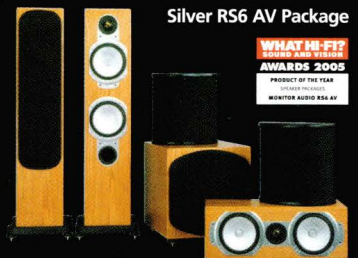
This exciting new range of high quality speakers is now available from selected Sevenoaks stores.

# 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 SIGNATURE, SILVER RS, BRONZE** and **RADIUS** speakers, plus the exciting new **i-Deck** docking station, an excellent any-room companion for your iPod.

## Digital Radio

With Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) capability, these high-quality tuners deliver more stations and offers pure, distortion-free, CD-like sound, while providing useful radio and data services.



Silver RS5 AV Package

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
BEST HI-FI AV SYSTEM  
MONITOR AUDIO RS5 AV



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  
BEST HI-FI SPEAKER UNDER £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  
BEST HI-FI SPEAKER UNDER £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.

Other KEF ranges include XQ, KHT, the Award-winning KIT100 and eye-catching New KHT3000 Series



NEW KHT3000 SERIES



## 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."



### 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 HI-FI FLOORSTANDING SPEAKER  
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 HI-FI COMPACT SPEAKER  
KEF KHT1005



## Arcam

Arcam has spent more than a generation building some of the finest high-fidelity products the world has ever seen. The range includes two-channel hi-fi, complete multi-channel AV and the Solo all-in-one music system.

"Arcam has hit the jackpot with the Solo, offering simplicity, style and performance."

WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
BEST HI-FI AV RECEIVER  
ARCAM SOLO



## 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  
GRADO 1000

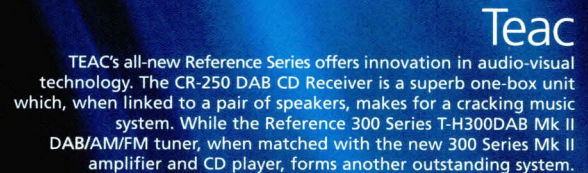
WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION AWARDS 2005  
CABLES  
QED QUICKEST 100M-P



## 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.

Latest additions to its hi-fi range include the CD5001 OSE CD player and PM4001 OSE amplifier offering a taste of high-end audio at an incredibly competitive price.



## Teac

TEAC's all-new Reference Series offers innovation in audio-visual technology. The CR-250 DAB CD Receiver is a superb one-box unit which, when linked to a pair of speakers, makes for a cracking music system. While the Reference 300 Series T-H300DAB Mk II DAB/AM/FM tuner, when matched with the new 300 Series Mk II amplifier and CD player, forms another outstanding system.



PLEASE NOTE Some products/brands are not available at all stores. Please call to confirm or visit our website before travelling.  
\*Added Value Offers - From range available in-store. Not in conjunction with any other offer. ADVERT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 06/04/2006, E&OE.

# Denon

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



**WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2005**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
DVD PLAYER  
DENON DVD-1920



**WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2005**  
SURROUND AMPLIFIER/RECEIVER  
AVR-1905  
DENON AVR-1905

Denon's range includes the award-winning DVD-1920 DVD player and AVR-1905 AV receiver (pictured above) and Smart Life S-301 all-in-one home cinema system.



**DVD-A1XV & AVC-A1XV**  
Award-winning DVD player and AV Amplifier.



**WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2005**  
ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEMS  
DVD & AV AMPLIFIER  
DENON SMART LIFE S-301

**WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2005**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
YAMAHA DIGITAL SOUND PROJECTOR



# Yamaha

Yamaha is recognised as a world leader in the fields of musical instruments and audio equipment, and in more recent years, home cinema. Products include A/V receivers, amplifiers, and DVD players plus the innovative Digital Sound Projector speaker systems.



**WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2005**  
DVD PLAYER  
YAMAHA DVD-S2500



**WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2005**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
YAMAHA DSP-AX757SE



**YAMAHA'S DVD-S2500, DSP-AX757SE & RX-V2600**



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.

# 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,



**WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2004**  
BEST SUBWOOFER  
REL  
REL Stampede

# 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.



Arcam offers the movie and music lover the most complete range of high-performance home entertainment solutions from any specialist manufacturer.

# Arcam

# 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? AWARDS 2005**  
DVD & HARD-DISK RECORDER  
PARASOUND 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? AWARDS 2005**  
CABLE  
QED SOUNDCABLE

**WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2005**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
QED SILVER ANNIVERSARY XT

**WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2005**  
CABLE  
QED SILVER ANNIVERSARY XT

# £ 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 06/04/2006. E+OE.



# Specialist home cinema

At the heart of any home cinema is its screen: Sevenoaks Sound & Vision can put you in the picture with a selection of flat-panel displays and projection systems. LCD and plasma screens are just a few centimetres thick and come in sizes from a 13inch portable to over 60inches.



## Sharp Aquos

Only Sharp Aquos LCD TV offers so much perfection. With supreme styling, the appeal of the Aquos range is obvious. The Titanium Series combines Sharp's sixth-generation LCD panel with stunning, angular-styling, titanium colour-finish and superb build quality to produce a premium class of LCD idTVs

### TITANIUM SERIES LC-45GD1E LCD TV with integrated FREEVIEW

"Sharp's mammoth 45in LCD TV is a testament to the growing viability and performance of large-scale LCD. Its 1,920 x1,080 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.

## 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.

### TH-42PV500 PLASMA TV

"All told, Panasonic's new TH42PV500 is a stunning set that's clearly the new class leader."



### TX-32LXD500 LCD TV

"A classy performer that excels in almost every area and restores Panasonic to LCD's top table."

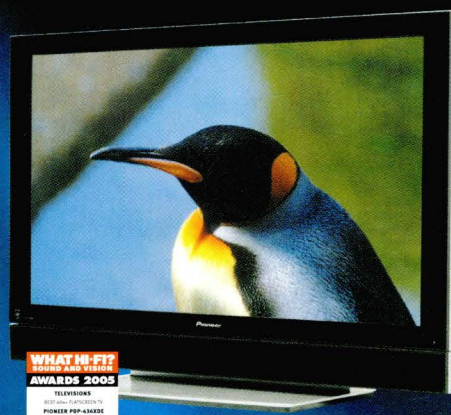
WHAT VIDEO • ISSUE 269



TELEVISIONS  
BEST VALUE FOR MONEY  
PANASONIC TX32PV500

# SEVENOAKS

SOUND & VISION



## 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



## 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.

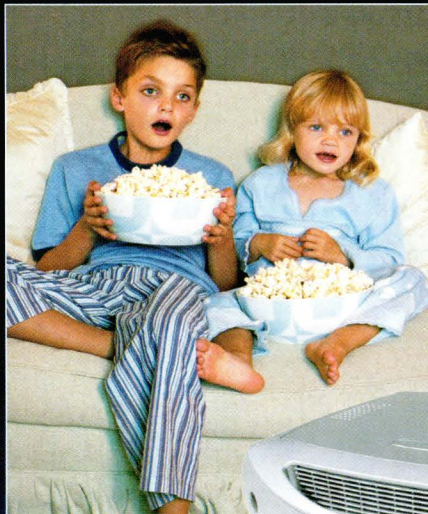


### 32WLT58 LCD TV

"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. The Toshiba 32WLT58 has everything you need at an incredibly reasonable price: can anyone trump that?"

WHAT VIDEO • XMAS 2005 #301





## 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.



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND & VISION  
AWARDS 2005  
PROJECTORS  
BEST PROJECTOR OVER £1000  
SCREENPLAY 7214

**SP7210**

"The new projector's picture is just phenomenal... Looks like ScreenPlay's success story is set to continue."

## ScreenPlay

From the worldwide leader in digital projection technology and solutions, InFocus® ScreenPlay™ DLP™ projectors are changing the face of home cinema offering market-beating performance, specification and value at every price point.



## InFocus NEW

The New InFocus IN72 projector fills your screen with bright, vivid and crisp images, capturing every detail. This affordable 480p resolution projector brings the big picture experience to home entertainment and gaming.

## 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.



**SIM2 C3X LITE**  
"The biggest leap forward in home cinema projection since the birth of DLP technology."  
WHAT HI-FI? SOUND AND VISION  
NOVEMBER 2005

**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.

**H79** "Excellent image quality; strong specification and easy to use - a terrific projector... You must check this one out."



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND & VISION  
★★★★★  
OCTOBER 2004

## £ 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.

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ADVERT VALID UNTIL AT LEAST 06/04/2006, 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 or check your local store's details on our new website for a list of brands that are currently stocked before travelling. [www.ssav.com](http://www.ssav.com)

### TURNTABLES

Linn RANGE  
Michell RANGE  
Project RANGE  
Rolsan Radius 5

### TUNERS

Arcam RANGE  
Cyrus FM X  
Denon RANGE  
Harman Kardon RANGE  
Linn RANGE  
Marantz RANGE  
Pure DRX-701ES DAB  
Pure DRX-702ES DAB/FM  
Rotel RANGE

### CD PLAYERS

Arcam RANGE  
Audiolab RANGE  
Cyrus RANGE  
Denon RANGE  
Linn RANGE  
Marantz RANGE  
Meridian RANGE  
Musical Fidelity RANGE  
NAD RANGE  
Quad RANGE  
Rolsan RANGE  
Rotel RANGE

### CD RECORDERS

Yamaha CDR-HD1500

### AMPLIFIERS

Arcam RANGE  
Audiolab RANGE  
Cyrus RANGE  
Denon RANGE  
Linn RANGE  
Marantz RANGE  
Meridian RANGE  
Musical Fidelity RANGE  
NAD RANGE  
Quad RANGE  
Rolsan RANGE  
Rotel RANGE

### HI-FI SPEAKERS

Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo One  
Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo Three  
Acoustic Energy Aelite RANGE  
Acoustic Energy AE1 MKIII  
AVI Neutron IV  
B&W RANGE  
KEF RANGE  
Linn RANGE  
Meridian RANGE  
Mission RANGE  
Monitor Audio RANGE  
Quad RANGE  
Ruark RANGE  
Wharfedale RANGE

### HI-FI SYSTEMS

Arcam Solo  
Denon RANGE  
Linn Klassik Music  
Monitor Audio i-Deck  
Onkyo CR505DAB  
Teac RANGE  
Yamaha CRX-M170

### DVD SYSTEMS

Denon RANGE  
KEF KIT100  
KEF KIT200  
Teac RANGE

### MULTI-ROOM AUDIO

Cyrus Link RANGE  
Living Control RANGE  
Yamaha MusicCast RANGE

### DVD PLAYERS

REGION 2 & MULTI REGION  
Arcam RANGE  
Cyrus RANGE  
Denon RANGE  
Denon DVD-A1XV  
Harman Kardon RANGE

Marantz RANGE  
Meridian RANGE  
Panasonic RANGE  
Pioneer RANGE  
Samsung DVD-HD950  
Toshiba SD350  
Yamaha RANGE

### DVD RECORDERS

REGION 2 & MULTI REGION  
Panasonic RANGE  
Pioneer RANGE

### A/V AMPLIFIERS & RECEIVERS

Arcam RANGE  
Audiolab RANGE  
Cyrus RANGE  
Denon AVC-A1XV A/V Amplifier  
Denon RANGE  
Harman Kardon RANGE  
Lexicon RANGE  
Marantz RANGE  
Onkyo RANGE  
Pioneer VSX-AX2AVI A/V Receiver  
Pioneer VSX-AX4AVI A/V Receiver  
Pioneer VSA-AX10Ai A/V Amplifier  
Rotel RANGE  
Yamaha DSP-AX757SE A/V Amplifier  
Yamaha RX-V357 A/V Receiver  
Yamaha RX-V557 A/V Receiver  
Yamaha RX-V657 A/V Receiver  
Yamaha RX-V1600 A/V Receiver  
Yamaha RX-V2600 A/V Receiver  
Yamaha RX-V4600 A/V Receiver

### A/V SPEAKERS & PACKAGES

Acoustic Energy Evo 3B  
Artcoustic RANGE  
Audica RANGE  
B&W RANGE  
B&W Mini Theatre RANGE  
KEF KHT1005  
KEF KHT2005.2  
KEF Q7 AV  
M&K RANGE  
Monitor Audio RANGE  
Quad L-Series  
Wharfedale Diamond 9 HCP  
Yamaha YSP RANGE

### SUBWOOFERS

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

### PLASMA

Fujitsu RANGE  
Hitachi RANGE  
LG RANGE  
Loewe RANGE  
Panasonic RANGE  
Pioneer PDP436XDE 43"  
Pioneer PDP506XDE 50"  
Samsung RANGE

### LCD TV

Hitachi RANGE  
LG RANGE  
Loewe RANGE  
Panasonic RANGE  
Philips RANGE  
Samsung RANGE  
Sharp Aquos RANGE  
Toshiba RANGE

### PROJECTORS

Optoma RANGE  
Screenplay RANGE  
ScreenPlay SP5700 (REFURBISHED, LAST FEW)  
Sharp RANGE  
Sim 2 RANGE  
Sim 2 C3X  
ThemeScene RANGE

### 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.

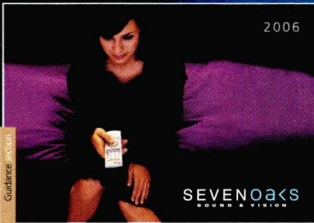
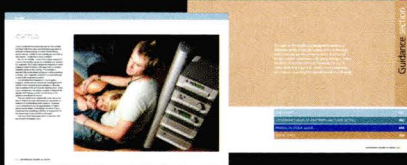
## How to shop at Sevenoaks

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 information on our comprehensive product range plus hundreds of stock clearance items available from our stores nationwide.

To find out more, just click on [www.ssav.com](http://www.ssav.com)

## Custom Install **A Vision for Every Home**

Many people would love to have the latest cutting edge home entertainment technology - but they don't want it at the expense of their living space. Home cinema, high quality hi-fi, DVD recorders and High-Definition TV make viewing and listening a pleasure, but the more kit added to a home, the more cluttered it can become.

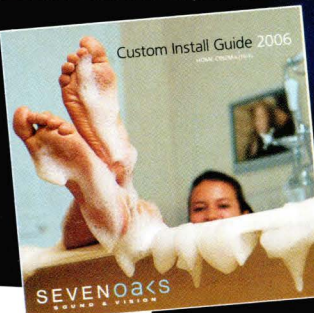
The Sevenoaks Sound & Vision **CUSTOM INSTALL SERVICE** can solve such problems. By working with customers to design their ideal home entertainment set-up, we can hide all the wires and help make the most of any space with a bespoke solution which complements the home rather than fighting against it.

Our service ranges from the most simple, affordable solutions to the most extravagant. We can transform every room and every home, whatever the needs and whatever the budget.

At Sevenoaks, we create bespoke home entertainment systems of the highest quality. We work with individual customers, architects, developers and interior designers to bring you the best in home entertainment. With 49 stores and over 30 years of experience, Sevenoaks creates systems that can transform your life.

## New Custom Install Guide 2006

Our new Custom Install Guide 2006 is now available. Pick-up a copy at your nearest Sevenoaks store **FREE OF CHARGE** or order via [ssav.com](http://ssav.com) (UK mainland addresses only).



# 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

**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 JOHN'S 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



# STEREO AMPLIFIERS

*Integrated and pre/power amps*



Amplifiers come in two basic forms: integrated and preamplifier (pre) plus power amp combinations. Integrated simply means that both pre and power sections are in one box. There are definite advantages to separating the low level, delicate signals in the preamp from the radiations of a power amp, so the more ambitious designs come in two or more cases. In some cases, each channel has its own power amp called a monoblock.

Amplifiers use two basic technologies: transistors or valves. Transistors are popular because of their practical and technical advantages, but valves – aka tubes – live on owing to aspects of sound quality that transistors can't replicate. If you want to play your music loud, use transistors; if you appreciate acoustic music, try valves.

The fundamental of amp/speaker interfacing is power rating and speaker sensitivity. You can drive a high-sensitivity speaker with a ten watt valve amp, but it takes a 200W behemoth to get the best out of speakers which present a difficult load. As a rule, you can't have too much power.

## How to choose an amp

The main areas in which amps vary are: timing, dynamics, stereo imaging and transparency. Timing is the ability to present the attack and decay of each note precisely; amps with strong timing have a snap and coherence that is very appealing.



Dynamics is a general term for the ability to portray variations in level between individual notes and is different to dynamic range (the difference between the loudest and softest notes). Dynamically strong amps tend to have more life and energy.

Stereo imaging is how solid or three-dimensional an instrument or voice sounds. The point of having two rather than one speaker is to make it possible to recreate the soundstage of the original recording, thus amps that have strong imaging skills can create a sonic space that seems to extend the room.

Transparency of detail is the most obvious difference between amps. One amp will present more subtlety than another, but the drawback with using this as your main criterion is that a forward or 'bright' sounding amplifier will emphasise detail at the expense of overall musical coherence.

## HOME CINEMA STEREO

Stereo amps can be used in home cinema set-ups as well. You don't get the surround and centre channels, but well set-up stereo speakers do a remarkably good job of creating atmosphere for movies. Stereo amps

tend to be better at reproducing music as they don't have the (electrical) noise-inducing digital processing of AV amps. AV amps cost three to four times as much as stereo models of a similar quality.

## Q&A

### SHOULD I LEAVE MY AMP ON ALL THE TIME FOR BEST RESULTS?

All audio electronics perform better when they are warmed up, and this is particularly the case when it comes to amplifiers. If there's no way that you can leave it on all the time, make an effort to switch it on at least 20 minutes before listening.

### WHAT IS BI-WIRING AND BI-AMPLING?

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

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

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

## TOP BUYS



**NAD**  
C352 £350

NAD made its name building world-beating budget amps, and the C352 continues that tradition in style – powerful, dynamic and thoroughly enjoyable with all music types.



**Arcam**  
DiVA A90 £890

Top dog in Arcam's DiVA range is this excellent integrated amp. Its strengths include a slick, flexible user interface and beautifully smooth and detailed sound.



**Naim**  
NAC 112x/NAP 150x £1,475

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



**Primare**  
PRE30/A30.2 £2,400

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

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

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS

### Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
	Arcam A65 Plus	400	Occasionally a touch bright, but a good all-rounder with decent detail and plenty of life	5	●	●	●	40	278
	Arcam DiVA A80	600	A very competent mid-range amp with a sophisticated control system and crisp, detailed sound	6	●	●	●	90	251
<span>BB</span>	Arcam DiVA A90	850	Very well specified, well built, a delight to use and a real musical all-rounder	7	opt	●	●	90	273
<span>BB</span>	Audio Analogue Primo	475	Small, stylish amp with a smooth and beguiling sound. Makes a fine partner for AA's equally compact Primo CD player	5	opt	●		70	255
<span>BB</span>	Cambridge Audio Azur 540A	200	A well built and fully featured amplifier that costs this little should not sound this revealing	6	opt	●	●	50	255
	Cyrus 6vs	600	Best seen in a Cyrus rack but capable of sweet sounds elsewhere too. Impressively clean and agile but lacking musical grunt	7		●	●	40	262
	Cyrus 8vs	800	Slightly inferior to Cyrus 6vs, but the tables are turned with the add-on PSX-R power supply – in that form it's a real Best Buy	7		●	●	70	261
<span>BB</span>	Denon PMA-1500AE	500	Well set up to make the most of big-scale music, with copious power and drive, though slightly bright	5	●	●	●	70	278
<span>BB</span>	Exposure 2010 S	599	Beneath the unassuming exterior lurks a very capable performer that's passionate about music	6	opt	●		75	262
	Exposure 3010	1,000	Full-bodied and enjoyable sound; excellent optional phono stage well worth an extra £200	5	opt	●		100	273
<span>BB</span>	Musical Fidelity X-80	600	The entry-level to Musical Fidelity's amplifier range sounds both powerful and refined	4		●		55	255
<span>BB</span>	NAD C352	350	A dynamic and musical amp at a bargain price – another budget classic from NAD	7		●	●	55	253
<span>BB</span>	Naim Nait 5i	699	A trade-off of more power and better connectivity against less inputs works surprisingly well in a grumpy, musical manner	4				50	252
<span>BB</span>	Onkyo A-933	500	Puts the music first, with sound that delivers the basics correctly but above all involves the listener	5	●	●	●	80	278
<span>BB</span>	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
<span>BB</span>	Roksan Caspian M Series-1	1,000	Improved version is as involving as ever but now with added focus and bass depth	5		●		85	278
<span>BB</span>	Sugden A21a	899	This single-ended, Class A transistor amp has exquisite resolving ability and presence – an authentic classic	5				25	224
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>									
<span>BB</span>	Arcam FMJ A32	1,200	Ultra-civilised amp with plenty of features that's also highly revealing and musical	7	●	●	●	100	266
<span>EC</span>	Bryston B100-SST DAC	3,850	A remarkable amplifier which is greatly enhanced by the inclusion of an impressive onboard DAC	6	●	●	●	100	275
<span>BB</span>	Copland CSA29	1,900	A hybrid valve/solid state amplifier that gets close to offering the best of both worlds	6	opt	●		85	255
<span>BB</span>	Creek Destiny	1,100	Adds impressive high-end virtues to the excellent basic performance we've come to expect from Creek	6	opt	●		100	277
	Denon PMA-2000AE	1,200	Unusually refined and detailed medium power design with the attributes necessary for good stereo only SACD replay	5	●			80	275
<span>EC</span>	Densen Beat B150	3,000	Gorgeous bass: slight treble dryness detracts only a little. Good sense of scale and rock-steady rhythms appeal too!	6	opt	opt		100	277
<span>BB</span>	Exposure XXV	1,599	Musical, powerful, tuneful and controlled, though not always the most analytical	6	opt	●		80	271
<span>EC</span>	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
<span>EC</span>	Krell KAV-400xi	2,698	The best integrated Krell yet is quick, agile, solid and finely detailed	5		●		200	247
<span>EC</span>	McIntosh MA2275	5,400	A valve amplifier that doesn't patronise. It's not soft-centred and it understands dynamics	5	●	●		75	271
<span>BB</span>	Marantz PM-11S1	2,500	A good-looking, well-endowed, high-quality amp that's a great match for the impressive SA-11S1 stereo CD/SACD player	6	●	●	●	100	265
<span>BB</span>	Moon i-3	1,595	Powerful Canadian amp whose lively presentation is particularly suited to big-scale music	6		●		100	265
<span>BB</span>	Primare I30	1,500	A smooth, sophisticated yet agile performer, and beautifully built too	6			●	100	267
<span>EC</span>	Sugden A21SE	1,995	Hot-running Class A amplifier that sounds more delicious than most. A definite step up from the classic A21a	4		●		40	268
<span>BB</span>	Unison Research Unico 200	3,000	Hybrid integrated with high power/quality low power modes combines much of the best of solid state and valve design	5			●	200	26

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

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS

### Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £2,000</b>										
<span>BB</span>	Arcam FMJ A32/P35	1,980	One of the few correctly matched integrated/power combinations, the sound has real gravitas and sophistication	●	●	7	●	●	100	227
<span>EC</span>	Cyrus DAC XP	2,200	A knockout DAC/pre with naturalness and resolution to die for and six digital inputs for signals up to 96kHz	●		2		●		266
<span>EC</span>	Densen Beat B-250/B-350	8,200	Upgradeable to surround, with sweet preamp and slightly coloured power amp, but sound is big and assured	●	●	6		●	125	270
<span>BB</span>	Exposure 2010 S Integrated/Power	1,098	Bi-amping with the additional power amp increases the musical communication of an already fine integrated	●	●	6		●	75	264
<span>BB</span>	Naim NAC 112x/NAP 150x	1,475	Up-rated entry-level Naim pre/power is a master of musical communication	●	●	6		●	50	262
<span>BB</span>	Quad 99/909	1,650	Well thought out and well executed, with good strong sound and just a little veiling	●	●	5	●	●	136	256
<b>ABOVE £2,000</b>										
<span>BB</span>	Arcam FMJ C31	1,200	Professionally presented, beautifully built and exceptionally revealing, this preamp achieves much by doing little	●		5	opt	●		273
<span>EC</span>	Border Patrol Control Unit	2,995	Bluff looking valve preamp, with one of the most neutral yet dynamic sounds around	●		5	opt			277
<span>EC</span>	Border Patrol P20	6,750	Muscular 300B push-pull design with fluidity and dynamics to match the best	●	●				20	231

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

Our favourite  BEST BUY  EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS continued

## Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					ISSUE NUMBER	
				PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER-AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL		POWER OUTPUT (W)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bryston BP26 DA/2B SST	5,550	Bryston's top preamp is now a serious competitor. The power amp reveals a lot of signal and delivers serious grunt	●	●	6	opt	●	100	278
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chord Prima/Mezzo 140	6,100	Small, muscular, beautifully made and styled and sounds like a dream	●	●	5		●	120	269
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Densen Beat B-200/B310	2,300	Lively, energetic combination that bring a great sense of scale to familiar recordings	●	●	8		opt	80	276
	EAR 864/534	4,156	Valve combo delivers fine measured and subjective performance and inspires great confidence	●	●	6	●		50	254
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ECS EA-1	6,000	Understated monoblocks with real transparency to the fine detail, passion and energy in your record collection		●				180	253
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gamut D200 Mk3	3,950	A great power amp that's now even better – one of the best regardless of price		●				200	247
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Halcro dm10/dm68	25,550	Extravagant, extreme and massive amp combo will probably polarise opinions, but delivers stunning midrange clarity	●	●	5	●	●	225	243
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hovland HP-100/RADIA	12,745	Uncommonly musical valve/transistor hybrid transcends stereotypes, one of the genuine high achievers	●	●	9	opt		125	250
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Naim NAP 500	11,875	Wonderful neutrality, bandwidth and dynamic range, plus Naim's traditional leading-edge definition		●				140	208
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Naim NAC 552	12,100	Extremely expensive preamp, but still solid value. Magnificent sound – with fine flexibility and convenience	●		6		●		233
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prfmare 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**  
**FMJ AV8/P7** £5,750  
 A fantastic achievement from this respected UK brand – a top-ranking AV processor and seven-channel power amp.

## Our favourite AV AMPLIFIERS

BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Multichannel amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	RECEIVER	LINE INPUTS	7.1 COMPATIBLE	5-CHANNEL POWER (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>MULTICHANNEL INTEGRATED AMPS</b>								
BB	Arcam DiVA AVR300	1,300	Cracking all-round music and movie ability sets the Arcam apart from the AV crowd	●	8	●	100	257
EC	Denon AVC-A11XV	2,500	Sensible, real world derivative of AVC-A1XV, but still immensely flexible, and well endowed with digital i/o		11	●	140	273
EC	Denon AVC-A1XV	4,000	Inelegant, but powerful and effective tool with excellent auto set-up and capable of driving two 5.1 systems simultaneously			●	170	266
EC	Lexicon RV-8	5,000	Classy multi-zone receiver lacks high tech digital attributes (HDMI etc) but majors on very effective audio engineering	●	10	●	140	267
	Marantz SR-12S1	3,000	A multichannel amp that can be taken seriously in stereo too. Resources are in the engineering rather than the gimmickry	●	3	●	160	255
EC	Pathos Cinema-X	4,750	No processing, just sexy Italian style, a sextet of valves and the chance of 450 watts in stereo! Cultured sound, too		5		110	270
EC	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
BB	Sony STR-DB798	250	Cheap but effective, and passably good with pure audio sources, but control system messy	●	7	●	100	273
BB	Sony STR-DB795	300	A superb value little amplifier, well appointed technically and successfully tuned for UK ears	●	7	●	100	260
EC	Sony TA-DA9000ES	2,600	Arguably the first convincing fully digital amplifier, an excellent match for players with i.Link encrypted outputs	●	10	●	200	253
BB	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>								
BB	Arcam A90+7.1 mod, P90/3	1,920	Add Arcam's multichannel module and a P90/3 power amp to the A90 stereo integrated and you've got got superb purist 5.1		8	●	90	250
	Arcam AVP700/P1000	3,000	Cutting-edge processor/tuner with HDMI sounds great, but the matching Class H power amp lacks finess to match its power	●	8	●	135	275
EC	Arcam FMJ AV8/P7	5,750	High-quality preamp/processor (£3,150) and seven-channel power amp (£2,600). An excellent fusion of stereo and surround sound		7	●	180	235
EC	Classé SSP-600/ CA-5200	11,900	Subtle, exacting sound, tremendous flexibility and high power audiophile standard amplifier - lacks high tech digital interfaces		11	●	200	278
EC	Copland CVA306/CVA535	3,748	Tube analogue six-channel pre transforms multichannel audio from a novelty into a genuine advance for the high fidelity art		5		125	236
	Cyrus AV8/3x Smartpower	2,900	Classic Cyrus sound translated to a multichannel arena, limited features and power, but civilised sound		3		105	238
	Linn Exotik	1,750	Is hi-fi ready to make the jump to multichannel music? Linn think so with this musical preamplifier		4			260
EC	Meridian 861	9,833	Powerful surround processor with flexible modular construction, marvellous versatility to drive any speaker configuration		6	●		230
	Naim AV2/NAP175/NAP150	4,175	First truly credible multichannel system from Naim is idiosyncratic but offers excellent basic sound with modest spatial steering		5	●	50	238
EC	Parasound Halo C1/A51	7,500	Powerful and flexible processor/power amp combo with impressive sound. Excellent value – processor includes onboard screen		11	●	250	243
BB	Primare SP31.7/A30.5	4,200	Great all-round system which brings the qualities of good stereo high fidelity to a multichannel world		5	●	120	238

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

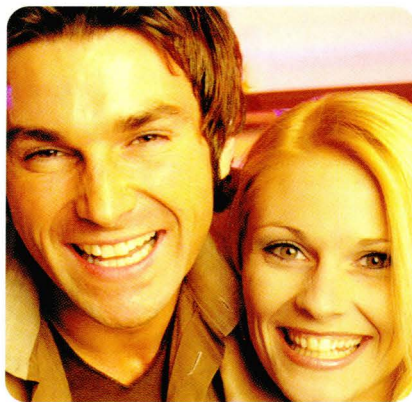
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## What Is HDTV?

**HD ready** The new HD ready televisions are set to take the television industry by storm, with a stunning blend of cutting edge design and state-of-the-art technology to create the audio visual sensation.

The introduction of HD television will enable you to maximise your home theatre system and experience digital content the way it was intended.

Continuous improvements in information communication technology, have delivered significant improvements in areas of TV transmission methods, resolution, aspect ratio, colour, and audio, these advances have made television more exciting to watch, making it a real life experience, the latest being HDTV.

Current TV images are only 720 x 567 pixels. HDTV has a display of 1920 x 1080 pixels; that's up to five times more, an exceptional change in viewing quality. HDTV also provides Dolby 5.1 surround sound, meaning that users will be able to watch DVDs in full home cinema surround, and stunning design, the benefits become very clear.

## What Will I Need?

There is a lot of confusion over which screens will be compatible with the service when it launches. There are a few basic requirements:

- Your LCD, Plasma or DLP must have a minimum resolution of 720 lines in wide aspect ratio (e.g. a 1024 x 768 would be fine).
- There must be a DVI (Digital Video Interface) or HDMI (High Definition Multimedia Interface) connection and it must be HDCP compliant. Although a Component Video input can pass a HDTV signal Sky will not be supporting this method as they feel it is more open to encryption hacks.
- Your screen must support both formats; 1080i and 720p Obviously, you will need a new Sky receiver box but they will provide you with this once you subscribe to their HDTV service.

Any TV that displays the HD Ready logo, shown above, should be guaranteed to work with Sky's service as it must conform to the above criteria to display this badge.

## Panasonic

### 42" Widescreen Plasma Television

- 1024 x 768 Pixel Resolution • Viera 3D Colour Management System • Nicam Digital Stereo Sound with 26w RMS Output • SD Card Slot • 3000:1 Contrast Ratio • PC Input • NTSC Playback • On-Screen Display • Integrated Analogue and Digital TV Tuner, Stereo Speakers and Pedestal Stand
- Model No. TH42PV500PED



empire direct price  
**£2163.07** INC VAT  
MAINLAND UK DELIVERY: £30

directlink 1362

## Panasonic 32" Widescreen LCD Television



directlink 1367

- 1366 x 768 Screen Resolution • Viera Colour Management System • Nicam Stereo Sound with 20w RMS Output • SD Memory Card Slot • NTSC Playback • Integrated Tuner, Speakers and Pedestal Stand
- Model No. TX32LXD500

empire direct price  
**£1452.12** INC VAT  
MAINLAND UK DELIVERY: £15

## LG 42" Widescreen Plasma Television



directlink 1363

- 1024 x 768 Screen Resolution • Nicam Stereo Sound with 30w RMS Output • HDMI Input • NTSC Playback • 5000:1 Contrast Ratio • Sleep Timer • Integrated Tuner, Speakers and Pedestal Stand
- Model No. 42PK5D

empire direct price  
**£1600.61** INC VAT  
MAINLAND UK DELIVERY: £30

## JVC

### Slimline and Stylish 26" Widescreen LCD Television

- 1366 x 768 WXGA Pixel Resolution • Nicam Stereo Sound with 10w RMS Output • DVI Input • Dual SCART Sockets • On-Screen Display • Integrated Tuner, Speakers and Pedestal Stand
- Model No. LT26A61



empire direct price  
**£585.50** INC VAT  
MAINLAND UK DELIVERY: £15

directlink 1368

## SONY Complete Home Theatre Speaker Package

- 5.1 Channel Micro Satellite Speaker System • 100w Power Output Active Subwoofer • 100w Power Handling Speakers Output • 1 Way (Full Range Drive Unit) Satellite Speakers • Comes in Silver Finish
- Model No. SAVE155



directlink 1360

empire direct price  
**£72.01** INC VAT  
MAINLAND UK DELIVERY: £4.99

## YAMAHA Complete Home Theatre Speaker Package

- 100w Main Speaker, 100w Rear Effect Speakers, 100w Centre Speakers and 50w Subwoofer • Auto Standby Mode • Advanced Active Servo Processing Design Subwoofer • Magnetically Shielded Speakers
- Model No. NSP220

directlink 136C

empire direct price  
**£99.55** INC VAT  
MAINLAND UK DELIVERY: £4.99



**YAMAHA****7 Channel Home Theatre Receiver**

directlink 1365

empire direct price  
**£185.87**  
INC VAT  
MAINLAND UK DELIVERY: £4.99

- Dolby Digital II, Dolby Digital and DTS Decoder • 7 x 75w Power Output
- 32-Bit Floating Point SHARC-DSP
- Dolby Digital EX, Complete DTS-ES (Discrete 6.1 & Matrix 6.1) • Auto Delay Adjustment • Built-in AM/FM Tuner **Model No. AVR1706**

**SONY****7 Channel Home Theatre Receiver**

directlink 1366

empire direct price  
**£139.20**  
INC VAT  
MAINLAND UK DELIVERY: £4.99

- Dolby Digital, Dolby Pro-Logic(II) and DTS Decoder • 7 x 100w Power Output • AM/FM/MW Tuner with Radio Data System (RDS) Function • 30 Station Presets • 5.1 Analogue Input
- 2 Component / 2 Composite Inputs **Model No. STRDE698B**

**YAMAHA****Dolby Digital Home Theatre DAB Receiver**

directlink 1369

empire direct price  
**£312.29**  
INC VAT  
MAINLAND UK DELIVERY: £4.99

- Dolby Digital / DTS Decoder • Dolby Digital EX, Pro-Logic IIx Decoding with Cinema and Music Modes • DAB Tuner with Band III Reception Capability • 6 Channel High Power Amplifier Configure
- 14 DSP Modes • 5.1 External Input **Model No. RXV100D-TI**

**YAMAHA****6 Channel Home Theatre Receiver**

directlink 1364

empire direct price  
**£178.97**  
INC VAT  
MAINLAND UK DELIVERY: £4.99

- 6 x 85w RMS Power Output • Dolby Digital EX, Dolby Pro-Logic II and DTS-ES Matrix 6.1 in Phantom Mode • 21 Surround Progs • Silent and Virtual Cinema Modes • AM / FM Tuner • 32-Bit Original LSI • Versatile Digital Inputs **Model No. RXV457BL**

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directlink 136A

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- DVD-RAM, DVD-R(RW) Recording
- 5.1ch Dolby Digital, DTS and Dolby Pro-Logic II Decoder • Omni-Directional Surround Speakers • DV Input • Hand Clap Surround Set-Up • (S)IVCD, CD, CD-R(RW), MP3 CD and JPEG CD Playback **Model No. THR1**

**Pioneer****DVD Recorder Home Theatre System**

directlink 136B

empire direct price  
**£279.97**  
INC VAT  
MAINLAND UK DELIVERY: £4.99

- 620w RMS Output • Up to 12 Hour Recording on to a Single Layer DVD-R / DVD-RW Disc • FM/AM Tuner with RDS Function • Digital Optical / Coaxial Inputs • DVD-R(RW), VCD, CD-R(RW), MP3 CD Playback • Audio and Video **Model No. RC55**

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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.

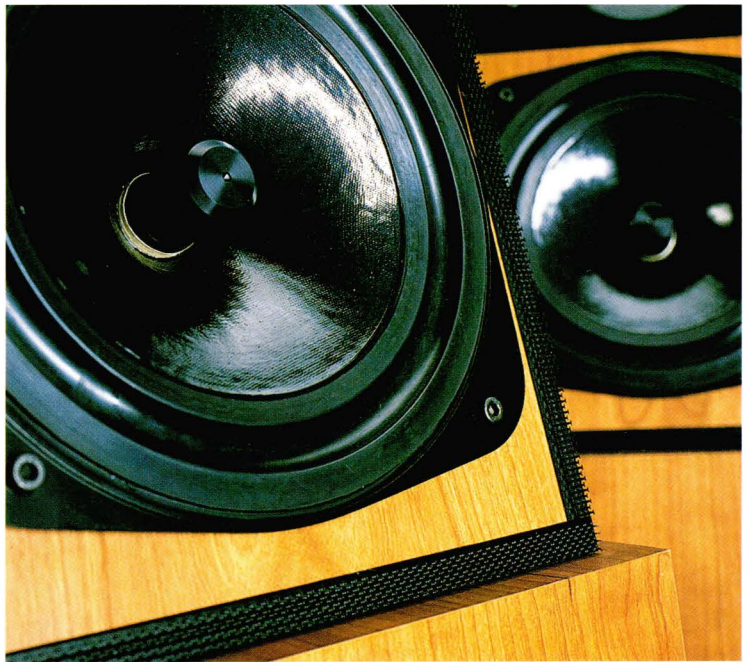
Box speakers are either designed to stand on the floor (floorstanders) or on a stand (stand or shelfmounts). Floorstanders have greater internal volume which can translate into greater efficiency and/or bass extension, but less substantial designs also introduce cabinet resonance and thus distortion.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

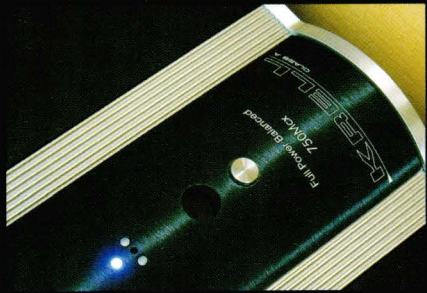
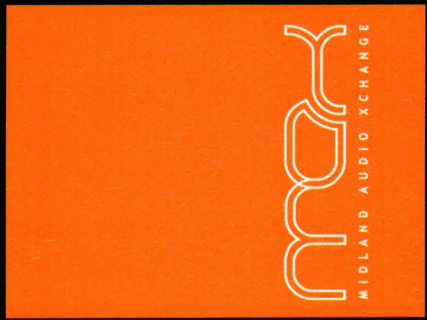
This extraordinary speaker stands at the pinnacle of Mordaunt-Short's current range. State of the art resolution and imaging are among its many attributes.

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO SPEAKERS

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (WXHXD (CM))	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
	Acoustic Energy Aegis Evo 1	180	An unusually classy and sophisticated performer for the price; laid-back sound and good looks too	19,36,24	A	30	●	226	
	Acoustic Energy Linear 1	250	Not at its best with classical but a well integrated, involving, timed aligned speaker nevertheless	19,36,26	A+	50	●	277	
	ATC SCM12	999	Magnificent main driver confers great authority, grip and smoothness, though upper bass a little lean	22,39,26	A-	55	●	253	
	AVI Neutron IV	499	A great example of what can be done with a genuinely small speaker, but the warts-and-all balance won't suit all	15,27,21	A-	65	●	260	
	B&W DM303	180	Chunky looking and lively sounding, with deep bass, a fine midband and a restrained top end	20,33,23	A	23	●	226	
	B&W DM602 S3	300	Old-fashioned size/shape, but this timeless design has a rare combination of grip, authority and headroom	24,49,29	A	25	●	234	
	B&W CM1	499	Luxury miniature has neutral, slightly laid back sound, with low coloration and fine imaging	16,5,28,28	A-	40	●	277	
	B&W DM603 S3	600	Excellent all-rounder, smooth for its price with fine bass and mid, though top might be more refined	20,91,29	●	A-	25	●	231
	B&W 705	900	Deft, delicate and delightful, if a little bass light, with clever enclosure and driver engineering	22,42,29	A	35	●	253	
	Castle Richmond 3i	320	Does most things well and the most important thing - musical communication - remarkably well for the price	17,33,23	A	60	●	260	
	Castle Conway 3	930	Lovely real wood finish and a beautifully balanced sound, fine dynamics and transients, but might have more 'air'	22,91,27	●	A+	30	●	237
	Dali Ikon 6	899	Needs care with setup, but rewards you with impressively transparent and almost obsessively detailed sound	19,100,33	●	A	37	●	271
	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
	Monitor Audio Silver RS8	800	Bold, dynamic sound marks it out from the crowd, and it's an easy load that works well in larger rooms	90,18,27	●	A	33	●	276
	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	21,38,30	A	46	●	275	

**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).



### AUDIO RESEARCH REF. 3

"Breakthrough" is an overused term, but it is the most fitting word to describe the REF3. As you can probably imagine, it is difficult to write about a new product like this without sounding clichéd, but the REF3 is so good that it is startling when you hear it in your system. How is its presentation superior to the great products that have preceded it? Simply, in every way.

The REF3 is more musically transparent. It presents an immense soundstage that makes everything else sound one-dimensional. Voices and instruments have real body and weight, with pinpoint focus. The deep, powerful bass is fast, articulate, and controlled. It possesses a dynamic swing that is breathtaking. And, most importantly, there is a directness and immediacy that connects the listener with the performance. The results are simply thrilling.

### KRELL 750 MCX

Wilson's unique materials research has led to the first new WATT cabinet in its 17-year history. For the first time, the Puppy has a new driver. And to better integrate the two, countless hours were spent refining the crossover.

The changes appear subtle; the difference they make is not. In terms of resolution, coherence, bass speed and impact, an already great loudspeaker has been raised to an astonishing new level. Finally, new styling cues join the WATT and Puppy more beautifully than ever.

It was a painstaking process, but at the end of the day we had to be able to say one thing with confidence: This is the best WATT/Puppy the world has ever known.

### WILSON SYSTEM 7.1

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### THETA GEN. VIII

The Generation VIII is a full differential balanced DAC Preamp featuring custom-designed software-programmable digital filters feeding into two channel digital-to-analogue converters per channel, one for each phase angle. It delivers the most accurate, defined, natural sound digital technology offers.

### TRANSPARENT

Reference XL Speaker Cable transfers the full power of the music along with the finest nuances of instrumental timbre and recording venue, stringent requirements for parts selection and matching, the precision placement of all components required by the XL technology Computer Model, the slow and careful assembly of the elements, and the many measurements taken to verify performance, it takes skilled artisans longer to hand-make a pair of XL cables than some companies take to build an amplifier.

### CABLES / SUPPORTS / ACCESSORIES

Cardas, Clearaudio, Eichman, Finite Elemente, Furatech, Grand Prix Racing, Nordost, Quadrasphere, 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.

### 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

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

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				SIZE (WHD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EDGE-OF-DOME	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	SCALE NUMBER
	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	Tannoy Fusion 4	350	This big d'Appollo twin two-way has fine coherence and dynamics. A neutral and even all-rounder	21,97,29	●	A	20	●		255
	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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>										
<small>EC</small>	Acoustic Energy AE1 MkIII	1,690	Luxury miniature has a laid-back but bouncy sound, a marvellous dynamic range and very superior imaging	19,31,25		A-	30	●		251
	Acoustic Energy AE3 MkIII	4,490	A beautifully neutral speaker with very wide dynamic range and superior imaging, plus lovely Art Deco styling	19,99,29	●	A	20	●		251
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	B&W XT4	1,699	Gorgeous alloy-encased, super-slim floorstander has notably clean bass and a well-balanced, if polite, sound	15,2,114,20	●	A-	25	●		278
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	Eclipse TD510	1,200	Replacement for the TD512 does astonishing things with musical timing. £600 floor stands also recommended	24,36,26		A	45	●		277
	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	Focal-JMLab Electra 1027 Be	4,000	Outstanding mid and top with fine delicacy and low coloration, but lacks some bass grip and drive	26,5,111,35	●	A-	25	●		276
<small>EC</small>	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
	Focal-JMLab Profile 908	1,300	Open and revealing especially of spatial and atmospheric detail, makes up for its bass restraint with joie de vivre	23,39,27,5		A	50	●		274
	Focal Profile 918	1,999	Strikingly original styling, well balanced with sweet treble, but lacks smoothness and presence is very laid back	23,99,35	●	A-	25	●		277
<small>EC</small>	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
<small>EC</small>	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

## hifisound by enthusiasts, for enthusiasts, in the North East

**Acoustic Energy, Apollo, Atacama, Audio Analogue, AVI, Ayre Acoustics, Chord Cable, Consonance, Creaktiv, Custom Design, Esoteric, Grado, Isotek, Nbien, Neat, Opera, Pathos, Pure, Resolution Audio, Revolver, Roksan, Shanling, Standesign, System Audio, Teac, Triangle, Unison Research, Usher Audio, Van Den Hul and more!**

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

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				SIZE (WHD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE-OF-DRIVE	BASS (1/1000 Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
EC	Living Voice Avatar OBX-R2	4,000	Has Dynamics, tonal colour, detail, space and time resolution in spades. External crossovers require extra cabling	22,100,27	●	A+	35	●		244
	MartinLogan Mosaic	1,799	Curious hybrid construction marries many panel speaker-like attributes with moving coil simplicity	24,102,30	●	A-	46	●		257
	MartinLogan Clarity	2,498	Relatively affordable and easy to live with electrostatic hybrid with class-leading resolving power	26,135,31	●	A-	46	●		245
EC	Mordaunt-Short Perf 6	3,500	Revolutionary enclosure design and aspirated tweeter make for a fast, hi-res ride	24,121,37	●	A-	35	●		264
	Naim Ariva	1,275	Cute and discreet floorstander has superb bass and a wide dynamic range, but it could be smoother and sweeter	23,88,31	●	A	25		●	259
	Neat Elite SE	1,499	Smooth and natural performer with notably expressive midband. Fine voice articulation and unusual sweetness	20,90,18	●	A	25	●		267
	Neat Motive 1	1,200	Beautifully neutral balance sounds open without aggression. Fine midband but could be more authoritative	16,92,5,20	●	A-	20	●		276
	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
EC	PMC IB2	6,150	Stunning in an understated way, this speaker creeps up on you and hooks you with its transparency and power	33,74,47		A-	25	●		237
EC	ProAc Response D25	2,995	The traditional ProAc high-end detail mixed with greater efficiency and more pace - a splendid speaker	22,107,25	●	A+	20	●		254
	Rega R7	1,498	Super-slim and super-smooth floorstander has fine agility with a slightly bright overall character	27,98,35	●	A	25	●		271
	Rega R9	2,498	This subtle, laid back but very informative performer has a very superior dynamic range, especially in the bass	17,103,39	●	A	20	●		256
EC	Revel F32	3,200	Meticulously balanced, tonally neutral design makes for a taut, well disciplined sound	22,105,39	●	A	30	●		265
EC	Revel M22	1,800	A remarkably clean and revealing speaker with superb tonal and microdynamic capabilities	22,37,30		A-	48	●	●	274
	Ruark Talisman III	1,499	No bass demon, but a sophisticated and agile speaker epitomising Ruark's design ideals	22,84,31	●	A	22	●		259
	Sonus Faber Concerto Domus	1,799	Great choice, especially for acoustic material, which performs significantly above its price level	21,99,31	●	A	35	●		270
	Sonus Faber Cremona A.	2,149	Standmount 'Auditor' version of the Cremona makes a soundstage bigger and better than its size suggests	19,35,32		A	48	●		246
	Spendor S6e	1,495	Combines deep, powerful bass with an attractively open midband, but perhaps too much restraint up top	30,88,19	●	A+	23	●		257
	Spendor S9e	2,895	An improvement on the original S9 - very entertaining at high levels with a fabulously open and weighty bass	24,101,38	●	A+	40	●		256
EC	Tannoy Dimension TD8	4,000	This stylish speaker is a splendid all-rounder, with fine dynamics, precise imaging and minimal coloration	31,86,30	●	A-	25	●		240
	Totem Model 1 Signature	1,595	Expensive, but very seductive miniature delivers a beautifully smooth and balanced midband	17,31,23	●	A	35	●		277
	Triangle Celiuss ESW	1,395	Not the smoothest sound around, but has great vigour and enthusiasm, plus good scale and weight	20,117,34	●	A	22	●		277
EC	Triangle Magellan Concerto	9,995	Scintillating midrange and treble, with tuneful, well-timed bass - a thoroughly engaging musical ride	28,149,34	●	A	35	●		262
	Usher Compass CP-6381	2,500	Lots of speaker for your money, with plenty of deep bass, unusual styling and massive build	35,127,65		A	20	●		270
EC	Vivid Audio B1	7,750	Impressive cabinet design combined with hi-tech drivers to make truly world class speaker	27,110,38	●	A-	40	●		261
	WEGG3 Stellar 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
EC	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,000	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package	23,91,37	●	A	28	●		254
EC	Wilson Benesch ACT	8,400	Superb enclosure gives uncanny freedom from 'boxiness'. Well balanced, but top end might be sweeter	23,108,36	●	A	20	●		252

# AV SPEAKERS

## Speaker solutions for multichannel surround sound



Multichannel speaker systems have a front left/right (L/R) stereo pair, a centre or dialogue channel, two (5.1) or four (7.1) surround speakers and often a subwoofer. For best results, each of these speakers bar the sub should be identical. The problem is that few surround systems are dedicated to music and perform a home cinematic role as well, meaning the centre speaker has to sit above or below a video

monitor. Centre channels are usually wide and short for this reason.

This should not be a barrier to great surround for music and movies however, as many brands make centre channels with a very close sound to their L/R designs.

### Music vs movies

High-resolution SACD and DVD-A music recordings tend to be mastered with

surround speakers in the ITU standard position which is as far behind the listener as the front channels are in front. 5.1 movie soundtracks tend to place surround channels not so far behind and to the side of listeners. Usually, practical limitations will dictate a limited range of placement options, but if you are a dedicated music fan, check out the ITU set-up regulations in the booklet supplied with SACD discs.

### SET-UP

Ideally you should set up surround speakers with as much care as you would stereo systems, but practical issues tend to have a significant bearing on surround and centre speaker placement. Surround channels can be floorstanding or wallmounted, and centres usually have to perch on the TV or underneath it. Given these limitations, adjust your L/R front

speakers to give the best tonal match with the centre. If there's more than just you listening, 'toe in' the speakers so that their axis crosses in front of the listening position - this gives a wider stereo image. And if there's a subwoofer it should be placed near the front speakers. Use a sound pressure metre (available from Tandy among others) to accurately set levels.

### SUBWOOFERS

Subs start working where stereo speakers run out of steam at low frequencies. The idea is to create deeper, better-controlled bass rather than more of it. They usually have onboard amplification (active) and connect to either the LFE (Low Frequency Effects) channel in a home cinema set-up or the speaker terminals in a stereo set-up.



## TOP BUYS



**B&W**  
600 S3 package £900  
Incorporates 602s, 601s and an LCR 600 centre speaker. Great in both stereo and multichannel surround modes.



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



**ATC**  
Concept 3 £4,877  
It might not look as flashy as some, but the quality of engineering in this ATC package ensures superb all-round performance.



**Linn**  
Akurate package £13,750  
Linn has worked wonders with its new multichannel speaker system – it's not cheap, but its performance is breathtaking.

## Our favourite BEST BUY 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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Naim n-SAT/n-CENT/n-SUB	3,385	Priced here as a 5.1 package, Naim's neat n-SATs and matching sub/centre make an exceptional compact ensemble	A	6	20		●	268
	Tannoy Arena	1,200	Fabulously stylish sub/sats with Dual Concentric drivers. Unusually revealing for the breed, but sub lacks refinement	A	6	29		●	269

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

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

# SUBWOOFERS

### Bass speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				SIZE WxHxD (CM)	POWER (W)	ISSUE NUMBER	
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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 Calibration**.

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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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	AKG K44	20	Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed: a bargain						190		219
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	AKG K270 Studio	129	Pro oriented design which is very transparent and great with acoustic material						270		230
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	AKG K1000	650	Neutral, analytical and completely out of the head sound, suitable for connection to speaker outputs only						270		244
	Audio Technica ATH-D40fs	105	Detailed and involving sound with a professional 'studio' quality appeal						250		194
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Beyerdynamic DT990	160	Impeccable balance, very extended bass and treble, and bags of detail place this model ahead of the pack						250		245
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Grado SR-60	90	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste						200		194
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Grado SR325i	310	Highly sophisticated and detailed sound with great extension: check for comfort						200		270
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sennheiser HD650	300	Astonishing resolution and hardly less impressive tonal balance make this a true hi-fi experience						260		252
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stax SR-001 Mk II	239	Expensive and power hungry, but this electrostatic drags personal stereo into the world of high fidelity						280		268

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

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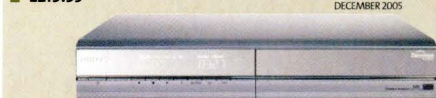
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# CABLES



## Wires to hook your system together



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

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

be fitted with screw or solder-on types.

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

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

## Our favourite CABLES

BEST BUY  EDITOR'S CHOICE

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS							
				STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIGITAL CABLE TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER		
<b>ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS</b>											
	Black Rhodium Illusion	77	An upfront, lively, exciting cable which still manages subtlety when needed. Slight coloration though								248
EC	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
	Chord Company Chorus	215	Very even-handed balance with notably extended bass								259
	Kimber Silver Streak	242	Not the cheapest around, but more than justifies itself with terrific poise and balance of virtues								241
	Kimber Timbre	89	Typical Kimber construction with ditto sound – clean, extended and detailed								248
	Monster Interlink 400 Mk2	70	Really lively and enjoyable sound at a sensible price								224
EC	Nordost Heimdall	370	Micro-monofilament cable, silver plated more affordable alternative to Valhalla, sounds transparent, detailed and neutral								278
	Townshend DCT100	100	Unusual construction with copper strip conductors, giving very detailed sound, but just an occasional hint of hardness								241
EC	Townshend Isolda DCT	300	Unusual construction and cryogenically treated too: whatever the reason, a remarkably capable wire								234
	van den Hul The Bay C5	55	Terrific detail, nice balance – a great cable								224
	van den Hul The Well	85	Hybrid cable with carbon-fibre conductors added. Very slight bass coloration does little to detract from fine performance								241
	van den Hul D102 Mk III	79	Hybrid conductors (carbon and copper) and intelligent construction give strong bass and excellent detail								234
	Wireworld Luna 5	30	Authoritative bass and clear treble outperform many cables at twice the price								273
	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>											
	Black Rhodium Polar Scherzo	135	Highly detailed sound with notably solid and stable stereo imaging							E	270
EC	Clearer Audio Silver-Line	125	Very satisfying performance with finely-etched detail and sweet treble							E	278
EC	Kimber Select KS2020	629	Provides a subtle but rewarding lift in musicality with any DAC, justifying the price							E	260
EC	QED Qunex Signature 75	80	First-rate balance and imaging – ever so nearly as good as it gets at any price							E	265
	QED Qunex SR75	50	Lots of bass and good clear midrange and treble at a sensible price							E	234
	Supra ZAC	32	High grade fibre and quality plugs add up to a noticeable improvement over giveaway optical leads							O	259
	van den Hul Optocoupler II	49	Noticeably has the edge over other optical leads, but still second best to electrical types							O	234
<b>SPEAKER CABLES PRICE PER METRE</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
EC	Electrofluidics 20/20	45	Excellent bass extension and very fine performance elsewhere – one of the best all-round cables available								241
	Kimber 8TC	39	Very capable in all areas, particularly good at imaging and with firm bass. Price for 5m terminated pair								203
EC	Nordost Heimdall	162	Alternative to Valhalla, silver plated, micro-monofilament construction, low colouration, high res and suitable for exacting systems								278
	QED Silver Anniversary XT	5.50	Full bass and nicely detailed treble combine with good imaging - a budget bargain								276
	QED X-Tube XT300	10	A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems								234
EC	Townshend Isolda DCT	50	Cryogenically treated 'impedance matched' cable with stabilising components added: great sound all-round								241
	van den Hul The Bridge	6	Lively, energetic and possessed of fine midrange detail and imaging								277
	Wyrewizard Spellbinder	5.50	Sold off the reel, this entry-level cable is a surprisingly purist performer, lean yet powerful, with good detail resolution.								267
	Wireworld Terra 5	5	Deep powerful bass, clear treble and very solid imaging add up to above-class performance								261
	Wireworld Solstice 5	20	Unfriendly to handle, but makes up for it with very assured sound – heaps of bass and great insight								248
	Wireworld Oasis 5 Biwire	38	Full-bodied and precise sound across the board – an excellent performer in bi-wire or single-wire mode								262

**SPECS KEY** **STRANDED** Cable has a number of (usually) twisted strands to conduct the signal. **SOLID CORE** Cable has one or more individually insulated strands to conduct the signal. **COPPER** Material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **SILVER** Alternative material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **DIGITAL CABLE TYPE** E – electrical, O – optical. Cables are one metre length unless otherwise stated.

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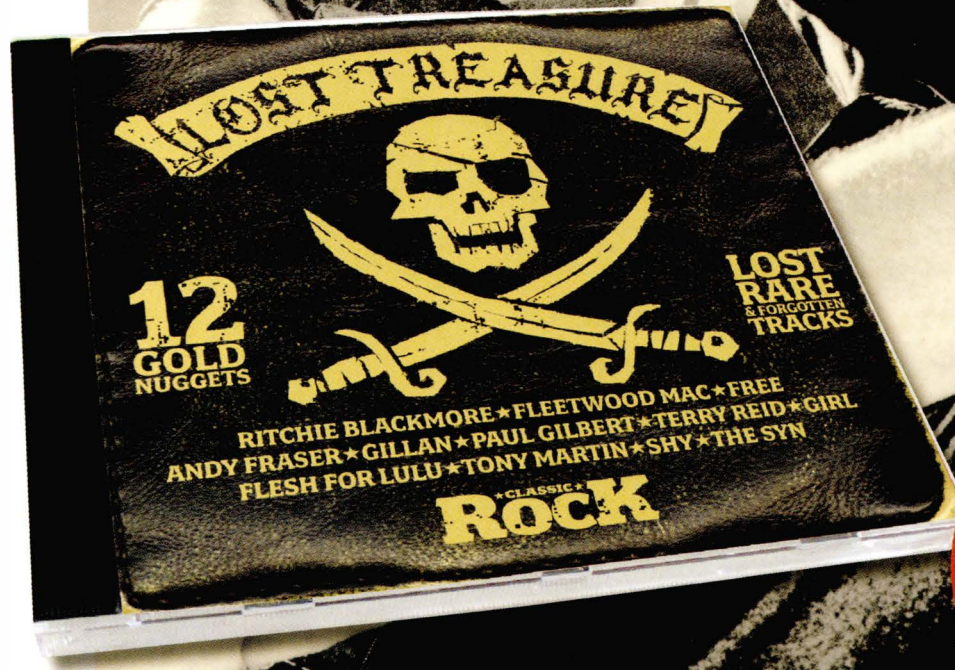
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# STANDS AND SUPPORTS

## Equipment racks and speaker stands



If you want to get the most from your source and amp components, it's important to consider good quality support. Dedicated equipment supports are racks and tables made specifically to hold hi-fi gear, and the best can have a profoundly positive effect on sound

because, for example, they can help to isolate kit from ground-borne vibrations and mechanical or electrical interference. Equally, if you own a pair of small 'bookshelf' or 'standmount' speakers, it's important to place them on good quality, purpose-built speaker stands.

## Our favourite EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Equipment supports

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Naim Fram	1,825	Pricey but very classy looking and sounding, with modular flexibility	96	45,34		5	Glass	232
	Isobue '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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!	92	50,40		5	Glass	217
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Townshend VSSS	1,300	The Seismic Sink goes all glassy and attractive, yet retains the same excellent vibration-killing sound quality	76	35,50		4	Glass	273

## Our favourite SPEAKER STANDS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Speaker stands

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	HEIGHT (CM)	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF LEGS	ISSUE NUMBER
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	Kudos S50	159	Formidable bass with real authority, and a wide dynamic range across a broad bandwidth	61	15, 20	●		1	220
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">BB</span>	Partington Ansa 60	99	Elegant flat-packer 'disappears' sonically; restrained but neutral and coherent	62	18,15	●		4	232
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	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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# GLOSSARY

## TECHNICAL TERMS

**5.1-CHANNEL AUDIO** Six discrete channels, typically front left and right, centre, surround left and right, and LFE (Low Frequency Effects) for a subwoofer.

**BALANCE** Most loudspeakers have a characteristic frequency balance resulting from emphasising parts of the audio range and/or de-emphasising others.

**BASS** The lowest three octaves of the audio band – 'low bass' refers to the bottom octave (20-40Hz), 'mid-bass' the middle octave (40-80Hz) and 'upper bass' the top octave (80-160Hz).

**BI-AMP** (sometimes tri-amp). Loudspeakers equipped with separate access terminals to each drive unit can be driven by separate (matching) power amplifiers for each driver.

**BI-WIRE** (sometimes tri-wire). Loudspeakers with separate access terminals to each drive unit can be driven by separate cable runs between the amp and each driver.

**CD-R** Recordable CD that cannot be erased, though discs that have not been completely filled can have tracks added until the disc is finalised.

**CD-RW** Re-writable or re-recordable CD, incompatible with older CD players.

**CLASS A** The operation of an amplifying stage or device in which current always flows, as opposed to Class B, where some of the devices are effectively turned off some of the time. Class A tends to have the advantage of offering lower distortion, while Class B tends to generate less heat.

**CLASS AB** Most practical amps operate in Class A for the first fraction of a watt and Class B thereafter.

**CLIPPING** An amplifier's output waveform is 'clipped' if the volume is advanced too far and no more 'volts' are available to sustain ever-increasing power levels. Distortion increases dramatically at this point.

**CLOCK** Any electronic oscillator that is used to generate a timing reference signal. Used to synchronise the data being taken from a disc.

**CROSSOVER** A simple electrical network which divides the full bandwidth signal received from the power amplifier, apportioning appropriate parts of the spectrum to the various drive units.

**DAB** (digital audio broadcasting). Digital radio using frequencies in the 217.5-230MHz band. Broadcasters use varying degrees of compression and offer a broad range of programming.

**DAC** or Digital-to-Analogue Converter. The stage in any digital component at which incoming digital data is used to reconstruct a recognisable analogue (music) waveform.

**DOLBY DIGITAL** A compressed digital audio format that typically contains five or more entirely discrete channels, eg 7.1 EX where side and rear channels are used.

**DOLBY PRO-LOGIC, DPL** Forerunner to DD that 'steers' information to the front L/R, centre and mono surround channels via an analogue matrix.

**DRIVE UNIT/DRIVER** A transducer which converts electrical energy into acoustic energy, eg bass driver, tweeter.

**DSD** (direct stream digital) The coding format used for SACD offers a frequency response of over 100kHz and a dynamic range over 120dB. It has over four times the data capacity of CD.

**DSP** (digital signal processor). Integrated circuit that handles the decoding of digital audio streams. In 5.1 processors, it separates the left from right and front from rear, while managing the various bass options.

**DTS** or Digital Theatre Sound. Competitor to Dolby Digital with a reduced 4:1 compression ratio that, ostensibly, promises higher quality.

**DVD-AUDIO** High-resolution variant on DVD offering up to 192kHz bandwidth and 24-bit dynamic range. Discs are compatible with standard DVD players.

**ELECTRICAL DIGITAL** Any digital connection that uses an electrical cable rather than optical. Includes the balanced ('AES/EBU') interface.

**FILTERS** Filters are intrinsic to digital audio, both analogue and digital. These are often very sophisticated in design, and in total they probably have rather more to do with the 'personality' of CD player sound than most other factors.

**FREQUENCY RESPONSE** The range of frequencies, from low to high, which a loudspeaker will reproduce.

**IMPEDANCE** With speakers, the complex electrical load that a loudspeaker presents to the amplifier driving it.

**JITTER** An insidious distortion specific to digital audio caused by imprecision in the clock, used to regulate the conversion of data into analogue audio.

**KBPS** (Kilobits per second) Digital data rate measurement system used primarily with highly compressed formats such as MP3, DAB etc. The higher the amount, the better the quality.

**LINE LEVEL** Practically every modern source component (except phono cartridges) gives an output in the region of 1-2V, referred to as 'line level'. It follows that all inputs labelled 'CD', 'tuner', 'aux' or 'tape' are designed for this input level and are thus interchangeable.

**LOSSLESS COMPRESSION** A method of reducing the number of data bits (density) without corrupting the original description of the musical signal.

**LOSSY COMPRESSION** Reduction in data density by recourse to a complex psycho-acoustical model that predicts what is, and what is not, 'audible' within a sequence of music.

**MIDRANGE** The middle three or so octaves of the audio band, where the ear

is most sensitive, covering the approximate frequency span from 160Hz up to 3kHz.

**MP3** (MPEG layer 3) Lossy compression format for digital audio that drastically reduces data content in order to squeeze music through internet connections or allow hundreds of CDs to be stored on a hard disc.

**OUTPUT IMPEDANCE** A measure of resistance to alternating current, a source with low output impedance (below 100 ohms) helps ensure compatibility with most amplifiers, even with long interconnect cables.

**PCM** (pulse code modulation) The digital coding system for analogue waveforms used for CD and DVD. Quality is limited by the oversample and bit rates used – CD is 44.1kHz/16-bit while DVD-A is capable of 192kHz/24-bit.

**PRESENCE BAND** Critical section of the audio band at the point where midrange and treble meet.

**QUANTISATION NOISE** A form of distortion or noise resulting from errors in the description of the musical signal by the digital code.

**SACD** (Super Audio CD) was launched in 1999 and is a Sony/Philips format based on DSD coding that offers high resolution stereo and multichannel sound from hybrid discs that can also be played on ordinary CD drives.

**SAMPLE RATE** The rate at which the musical waveform is sliced up into discrete chunks. For CD, this is 44.1kHz or once every 0.023msec. DVD will also support 48kHz and 96kHz.

**SENSITIVITY** The relative loudness that a speaker generates for a specific voltage input. Expressed in decibels per watt (dB/W), measured 1m from the speaker.

**THX** Standards system for home cinema set-ups which includes amplifier power and speaker dispersion characteristics. The latest THX Ultra 2 standard is more stringent than THX Select.

**TOSLINK** The proprietary name given by Toshiba to the optical fibre signal transmission system it invented for consumer applications.

**TRANSISTOR/MOSFET** The two main types of power semiconductor used in solid state amplifier output stages.

**TREBLE** High frequencies, the top end of the audio band, ie above 3kHz.

**TWEETER** Treble driver.

**TWO/THREE-WAY** Loudspeaker crossovers split the signal into two or three frequency bands, a two-way speaker can have more than two drive units.

**WATTS** (per channel) The watt is the unit of electrical power and the WPC rating is the maximum average undistorted power that an amp can deliver to a typical speaker. However, speaker sensitivity variations can make more difference than amplifier output.

**WOOFER** Bass driver.

## DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

**AGGRESSIVE** Forward and bright sonic character.

**AMBIENCE** The impression of an acoustical space, such as the performing hall in which a recording was made.

**ANALYTICAL** Highly detailed.

**ARTICULATE** Intelligibility of voice(s) and instruments and the interactions between them.

**ATTACK** The leading edge of a note and the ability of a system to reproduce the attack transients in music.

**BALANCE** Essentially tonal balance, the degree to which one aspect of the sonic spectrum is emphasised above the rest. Also channel balance, the relative level of the left and right stereo channels.

**BODY** Fullness of sound, with particular emphasis on upper bass. Opposite of thin.

**BOXY** The sound of a loudspeaker with audible cabinet resonances.

**BRIGHT** A sound that emphasises the upper midrange/lower treble.

**DARK** A tonal balance that tilts downwards with increasing frequency. Opposite of bright.

**DECAY** The fadeout of a note, it follows the attack.

**DEFINITION** (or resolution) The ability of a component to reveal the subtle information that is fundamental to high fidelity sound.

**DEPTH** (of image) The perception of music being reproduced behind the loudspeakers and inhabiting a reproduction of the acoustic space of the original recording.

**DETAIL** The most delicate elements of the original sound and those which are the first to disappear with lesser equipment.

**DRY** A sound that is devoid of 'juice', which usually comes across as fine-grained and lean. Also a loss of reverberation as produced by a damped environment.

**DYNAMIC** The suggestion of energy and wide dynamic range. Related to perceived speed as well as contrasts in volume both large and small.

**EUPHONIC** An appealing form of distortion that generally enhances perceived fidelity, often ascribed to the harmonic elaborations of some valve amps.

**FAST** Good reproduction of rapid transients which increase the sense of realism and 'snap'.

**FOCUS** A strong, precise sense of image projection.

**FORWARD(NESS)** Similar to an aggressive sound, a sense of the image being projected in front of the speakers and of music being forced upon the listener.

**GRAINY** A slightly raw, exposed sound which lacks finesse.

**GRIP** A sense of control and sturdiness in the bass.

**GRUNT** See grip.

**HARD** Uncomfortable, forward, aggressive sound with a metallic tinge.

**HARSH** Grating, abrasive.

**IMAGING** (stereo) The sense that a voice or instrument is in a particular place in the room.

**JUICY** Sound that has joie de vivre, energy and life.

**LOW-LEVEL DETAIL** The quietest sounds in a recording.

**MUSICAL** or musicality. A sense of cohesion and subjective 'rightness' in the sound.

**NATURALNESS** Realism.

**OPAQUE** Unclear, lacking transparency.

**OPEN** Sound which has height and 'air', relates to clean upper midrange and treble.

**PACE** Often associated with rhythm, a strong sense of timing and beat.

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

**PRESENCE RANGE** The upper midrange.

**SEISMIC** Very low bass that you feel rather than hear.

**SIBILANCE** An emphasis of the 'S' sound, often heard on radio.

**SNAP** A system with good speed and transient response can deliver the immediacy or 'snap' of live instruments.

**SPEED** A fast system with good pace gives the impression of being right on the money in its timing.

**STURDY** Solid, powerful, robust sound.

**THICK** A lack of articulation and clarity in the bass.

**THIN** Bass light.

**TIMBRE** The tonal character of an instrument.

**TIMING** A sense of precision in tempo. See speed and pace.

**TRANSIENT** The leading edge of a percussive sound. Good transient response makes the sound as a whole more live and realistic.

**TRANSPARENCY, TRANSPARENT** A hear-through quality that is akin to clarity and reveals all aspects of detail.

**TWEAK** To tune a system or component in an attempt to get the best performance from it.

**TWEAKER** Someone who enjoys this process.

**VEILED** Loss of detail due to limited transparency.

**WARM** A fullness in the lower midrange/upper bass.

**WEIGHT** A sense of substance and underpinning produced by deep, controlled bass.

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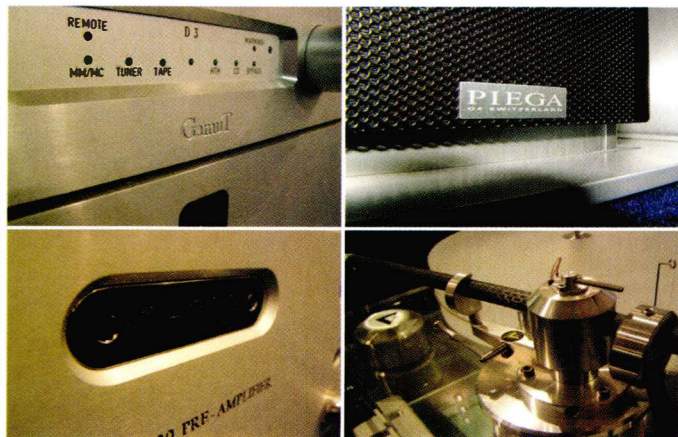
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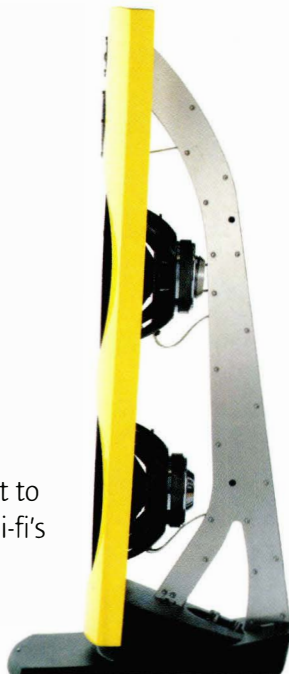
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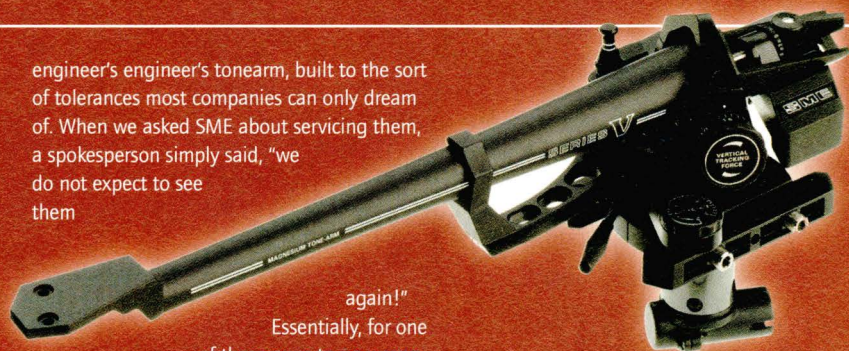
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# A-Z GUIDE TO SECOND-HAND KIT

## #21 SME

**S**ME began life in 1946 as The Scale Model Equipment Company Ltd. In 1959, it moved away from models and precision aircraft components and, for the delectation of audiophiles the world over, began producing tonearms. Perhaps the most famous of these is the 3009, which proved immensely popular during the 1960s and 1970s and only recently went out of production. Actually this model, in all its forms, has something of a cult following, but we're not going to look at it here. The reason we're not focusing upon it is that ever since the advent of eBay, the value of these arms has reached unrealistically high levels. It's a good arm, but you can do much better for the money – take a look at Rega for a start. No, the real SME tonearm that's worth having is

engineer's engineer's tonearm, built to the sort of tolerances most companies can only dream of. When we asked SME about servicing them, a spokesperson simply said, "we do not expect to see them



Above: SME's Model V tonearm

again!" Essentially, for one of these arms to go wrong, you'd have to do something very foolish indeed. Although now nearly 20 years old, prices have held firm. Expect to pay from around £750 unless you're particularly lucky at a car boot sale. For this you'll get a superbly neutral and authoritative sounding arm that should last a lifetime.

**"For one of these arms to go wrong, you'd have to do something very foolish indeed."**

the Series V. Launched in 1986, this tonearm took SME to new heights – both in terms of quality and price – and it has remained unchanged ever since. Still available new, they can sell for up to £2,800 (with gold plating and silver cabling), but then the best never did come cheaply. Of course, not everyone believes that these arms are by any means the best, but then they'd be hard pushed to argue with the level of engineering excellence. This is an

If you've really got the SME bug, then you'll require one of its turntables. We reckon that the best all-rounder is the Model 20 and later 20/2. Launched in 1992, this unobtrusive looking turntable cost £2,500 without an arm or £3,800 including a Series V. The tonearm was and, indeed still is, a specially selected version and can be identified by its gold detailing. Worth noting when buying second hand is that a deck without the arm is known

as the Model 20, while it's called the Model 20A when sold with the Series V. In 1996, the unit was upgraded to version 2 status by the fitment of a more powerful motor and improved power supply. Controversially, some claim that the PSU unit was upgraded as the original didn't meet CE regulations, but SME denies this. Either way, buyers should have no qualms about the safety of the original Model 20. Nor should they worry about reliability. Like the Series V, the Model 20 has been designed to last a lifetime and all it should need is careful setting up. A late 20/20A can be had for around £3,500, but perhaps the best bargain is the original 20A. These can now be had from around £2,000. Considering that some sold, second-hand, for just over £1,000 in the mid-1990's then this is clearly appreciating hi-fi at its best! **HFC**

Dominic Todd  
Next month: Sony ES

## DIY CORNER SPEAKERS

Part 21 Enclosure Subtleties

**T**here are no easy answers with speaker enclosures. You can easily make one stiffer to reduce the amount of vibration and coloration it generates, but you'll increase the frequency at which it occurs in the process.

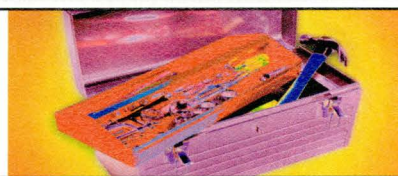
While it may be helpful to reduce the amount of vibration, human hearing is more sensitive to higher frequency sounds, so merely increasing stiffness won't necessarily make cabinet coloration less audible.

Alternative approaches do exist, like the Spendor BC1. A large enclosure by today's standards, with panels 30x60cm and 30x30cm in size, the BC1 used a 'thin wall' enclosure, half the usual thickness at around

10mm (and made from high density Finnish birch ply). Further treatments included fixing substantial 10mm bitumen-loaded felt pads to the insides of each panel, sandwiching a healthy dollop of sticky semi-liquid bitumen sealant between wood and pad.

The intention was to move cabinet colorations down from the critical midband into the less critical bass region, and the efficacy of this approach cannot be denied. The BC1 is noted for the excellence of its midband, and rather less impressive bass reproduction.

Whether this approach is practical for DIY practitioners is doubtful. It's much harder to find high quality, high density birch-ply in



relatively thin sheets than the ubiquitous MDF. And, unlike designs using MDF, a thin-wall enclosure needs to use internal battens to reinforce and fix edges. **HFC**

Paul Messenger

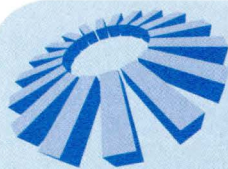
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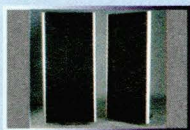
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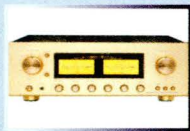
**ASR** has a very definite idea of how an amplifier should sound. The musical reproduction should be homogeneous and natural, combining the harmony and musicality of a superb tube amplifier with the accuracy and power distribution of modern transistor amplifiers. The perfect integrated amplifier? We think so!



**Basis.** The philosophies underlying Basis designs are sound principles of physics; provable concepts that result in the most accurate replay of records possible. Did we mention that they look visually stunning?



**Kings Audio.** We are the south coast main dealer for this exciting new range of electrostatic speakers from Kings Audio. If you love full-range electrostatics you must audition these!



**Luxman** is back in the UK with a vengeance! A range of products are available and we just have to mention the L-509F Integrated model.



**Music First.** David Price says, "The MF Audio pre is extremely open and sophisticated musical performer that betters a number of even more expensive designs." We definitely agree!

Falling in love with the sound of the L-509F Integrated Amplifier is easy but leaving our place without one could prove rather more challenging!

We have an extensive range of used hi-fi equipment. Shown on the right is just a small sample of the products we have.

Visit our web site:  
[www.hifiguy.co.uk](http://www.hifiguy.co.uk)  
as the list changes daily.

Services include  
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**deliver your hi-fi**  
**home installation**

**trade-in**  
**part-exchange**  
**commission sales**



**just a few of our used bargains...**

Accuphase C2000 Preamp [Latest]	£4800	£2,500
Alon Signature Speakers	£8k	£2,750
Audio Artistry Dvorak Speakers	£8k	£2,500
Audio Research VT200 Mk2 Pwramp	£112k	£5,995
Audio Silver Night Monoblocks + two border patrol power supply	£4000+	£1,800
Cadence Arca Electrostatic Spkr	£11k	£2,750
Conrad Johnson Premier 8A mono	£20k	£6,500
DCS Elgar Plus DAC	£9k	£2,995
Gamut CD1 (only 2hrs use)	£3k	£1,400
Goertz Divinity AG3 - 4m sp cable pair		£895
Kondo Kassai Silver	£30k	£12,500
Krell FPB250N	£10k	£4,500
Lumley Lampros 400 mk2S	£8k	£3,400
Marantz CD12 (2 box)		£950
Musical Fidelity CD-Pre 24	£2k	£1,000
Nagra P-PL Preamp	£7,250	£4,500
Nordost SPM Ref 1 x 3m pair spk cable		£1,400
PMC BBS Monitors	£12k	£5,500
Ruark Accolade Speakers	£2.5k+	£850
Sim Audio Moon Eclipse two box	£6k	£2,700
Soundlab A1 Speakers [Very Latest]	£19k	£6,000
Tannoy Canterbury's	£9.5k	£4,995
Tom Evans Groove Phonostage	£1,900	£1,000
Wadia 270/27bx Dac/Trans [Latest]	£18k	£6,500
Wilson Watt/Puppy 3	£16k	£3,500

**HI-CAM**

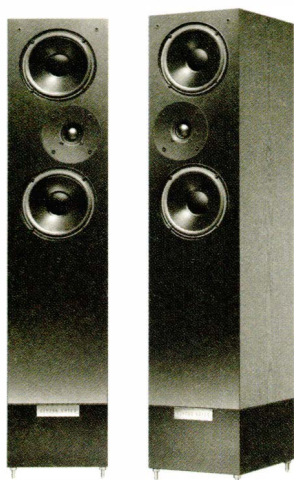
	<b>WAS</b>	<b>NOW</b>
AUDIO ANALOGUE PAGANINI 24/96 CD PLAYER MINT	900	395
UNISON RESEARCH UNICO CD PLAYER	1195	995
ACOUSTICS ARTS POWER 1 INTERGRATED AMP 130WPC	3690	3200
ALPHASON AKROS 2 SPEAKER STANDS BOXED MINT	60	30
AUDIO ANALOGUE BELLINI PRE AMP MM/MC REMOTE	625	350
AUDIO ANALOGUE DONIZETI MONOBLOCKS MINT	1150	495
AUDIO VALVE ASSISTANT 20S INTERGRATED AMP		1500
AUDIO VALVE BALDUR 70 + 70WPC	3100	2600
AUDIO VALVE AVALON MONO POWER AMPS		2450
CLEAR AUDIO SYMPHONO PHONO STAGE M/C		770
EXIMUS SI POWER AMP 200WPC RCA/XLR INPUT		2531
ACCUSTICS ARTS PLAYER 1 24/96	2895	2400
AVI LAB SERIES NEW POWER AMP 200WPC		1299
AUDUSA EUPEN POWER CABLES FULL RANGE		POA
AVI NEW LAB SERIES PRE AMP OPTIONAL PHONO/DAC		1499
AVI LAB SERIES CD PLAYER SUPERB	1469	1200
<b>KIMBERKABLE HERO 1 MTR INTERCONNECT</b>	130	70
AVI LAB SERIES INTERGRATED AMP 200 WPC	1499	1200
ACCOUSTIC SOLID ROUND TURNTABLE		1595
BOSENDOFER V07 LOUDSPEAKERS	FROM	5820
BLACK RHODIUM SYMPHONY 2 MTR PAIR	150	70
ACOUSTIC SOLID ONE TURNTABLE		2825
MONRIO MP2 POWER AMP 135 WPC	1095	795
BLACK RHODIUM POLAR ORATORIO 2 1 MTR PR		697
CROFT TWIN STAR POWER AMPS EX DEM	1500	3600
CROFT DAKSHINI ALL VALVE POWER AMP NEW		1250
CROFT GCI INTERGRATED AMP 40WPC NEW		160
NEW BLACK RHODIUM DCT HARMONY 2 1 MTR PR		6400
ACOUSTIC SOLID ROYAL TURNTABLE		225
NEW BLACK RHODIUM POLAR CONCERTO 1 MTR PR		810
CLEARAUDIO CHAMPION TURNTABLE		1270
ACOUSTIC SOLID SMALL WITH RB250		230
CLEARAUDIO MICRO BASIC PHONO STAGE MM/MC		2400
EAR 324 TRANSISTOR PREAMP NEW		2400
UNISON RESEARCH UNICO DUAL MONO POWER AMP	2000	1395
EAR 834 INT AMP BOXED NEW		2440
TRESHOLD STASIS R 3 PRE AMP		2750
EAR 834P MM/MC PHONOSTAGE NEW		715
BLUENOTE STIBBERT VALVE CD PLAYER		3300
ROTEL RA 1062 INT BOXED/R/C AS NEW	690	450
AVI DUO LOUDSPEAKERS NEW		1200
EAR HEADPHONE AMP HP4 NEW		2275
EAR 864 PRE AMP	1850	1475
ELAC CL 330I JET INC STANDS NEW		2499
AVI LAB SERIES DAB TUNER NEW		795
UNISON RESEARCH UNICO DUAL MONO POWER AMP		599
GRADO RS 1 HEADPHONES NEW		600
LYRA TITAN MC CARTRIDGE		2695
ARCAM 62 CD PLAYER EXCELLENT CONDITION	400	225
HALCRO MCA70 7 CHANNEL POWER AMP		5100
LYRA ARGO MC CARTRIDGE	690	595
LYRA HELIKON MC CARTRIDGE NEW		1145
LYRA HELIKON SL MC CARTRIDGE NEW		1249
LYRA DORIAN MC CARTRIDGE NEW		495
MICHELL HR PSU DC MOTOR NEW		315
EXIMUS DP1 DAC/PRE 24/192 BALANCED CLASS A	4250	3500
MICHELL GYRO SE/RB300 ARM		1128
MICHELL ORBE SME BOARD NEW		2413
CLEARAUDIO BLUEMOTION TURNTABLE 3YEARS WARRANTY		695
CLEARAUDIO EMOTION TURNTABLE 3 YEARS WARRANTY		655
MICHELL TECNODEC WITH RB 300 ARM NEW		700
GOLDRING GRI TURNTABLE CW ARM AND MM CARTRIDGE		140
CABASSE PIANOSA SPEAKERS CHERRY FINISH NEW	595	350
TRANSFIGURATION ARIA MC CARTRIDGE 0.36 MV		690
TRANSFIGURATION TEMPER MC CARTRIDGE 0.38 MV		2250
CABASSE X05 5 WAY SPEAKER SYSTEM INC SUB NEW	895	525
GRAAF GM 50 INTERGRATED AMP 50WPC		3950
VIRTUAL DYNAMICS POWER 3 CABLE 6 FT LONG		125
AUDIO ANALOGUE ARIA MM/MC PHONOSTAGE		495
OPERA CALLAS SPEAKERS	1695	1295
PATHOS CLASSIC ONE INTERGRATED AMP 70 WPC		1325
THRESHOLD STASIS 7 POWER AMP		5800
THRESHOLD S/7000E MONOBLOCKS 600WPC		4900 PAIR
ORIGIN LIVE ILLUSTRIOUS TONE ARM NEW	1570	1570
ORIGIN LIVE RESOLUTION TURNTABLE NEW	1970	1800
UNISON RESEARCH SMART 845 MONOBLOCKS		3750
ARCAM 65+INTERGRATED AMP	400	225
ARCAM P75 POWER AMP	375	200
PSB ALPHA 6 ACTIVE SUBWOOFER AS NEW	500	225
STANDS UNIQUE AV 1SPEAKERS BEECH FINISH AS NEW	399	200
RUARK TALISMAN 111 LOUDSPEAKERS NATURAL OAK	1499	1295
TIVOLI MODEL DAB STEREO		299
SENNHEISER RS85 WIRELESS HEADPHONES NEW		159
SME SERIES IV ARM BOXED UNUSED	1126	1000
SME SERIES V ARM NEVER USED MINT	1615	1400
SME 20/2A TURNTABLE INC SERIES V ARM		5273
WIREWORLD ECLIPSE REFERENCE INT 1 MTR NEW		499
WIREWORLD ALANTIS 5 1 MTR INTERCONNECTS NEW		149
SOUND ORGANISATION FULL RANGE		POA
WIREWORLD EQUINOX 5 FOR NAIM OWNERS DIN/DIN		109
STAX SR 007+SRM007 EARSPEAKERS NEW		2495
STAX SRS 2020 MK2 EARSPEAKERS NEW		349
STAX SRS 4040 SYSTEM SIGNATURE 2 NEW		995
SUMIKO BLACKBIRD MC CARTRIDGE NEW		589
<b>WIREWORLD FULL RANGE OF AWARD WINNING CABLES</b>		
NEW TRICHORD DIABLO PHONO AMP MM/IN LINE PSU		699
AS ABOVE WITH THE NEVER CONNECTED PSU		1198
QED S1 DISCSAVER CONVERTS LINE LEVEL TO ACCEPT MM		35
SHURE FULL RANGE		POA
BLACK RHODIUM SUPER MAINS 13 1.25 MTRS NEW	45	30
<b>MISSION RANGE OF SPEAKERS AVAILABLE</b>		POA
<b>WIREWORLD SOLSTICE 5 SPK CABLE AWARD WINNER</b>		FROM £132
WIREWORLD EQUINOX 5 INTERCONNECT 1 MTR PR		219
<b>WIREWORLD RAINBOW 5 INTERCONNECT</b>		149

AGENTS FOR, EAR, TRICHORD, AUDIONOTE, MICHELL, AVI, STAX, LAT, ELAC, SME, PLINIUS BLACK RHODIUM, LYRA, SUMIKO, QED, GAMUT, ORIGIN LIVE

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# definitive audio

Definitive Audio offers you a fresh and focused way of choosing a sophisticated sound for your home. Our service is bespoke, our philosophy is unique and our reputation peerless. The systems we create are infused with an elusive quality that will expand your musical horizons. We use a judicious selection of the world's most artful and ingenious creations, including the beautiful, beguiling Living Voice loudspeakers from England and Kondo KSL electronics from Japan.



Living Voice IBX-R2

Sale of part exchanged and ex-dem items

Sale New

Voyd Reference turntable. Unique example of this benchmark design. Offered for sale on behalf of the designer - never previously sold. This turntable has a huge specification including, 30mm Lexan platter; massive Papst motor system; extreme power supply; beautiful satin rosewood plinth. Sale includes AudioNote wired Helius Cyalene tonearm and ANUK IO-limited field coil cartridge with PSU (15 hours use). Comes with manufacturers warranty on turntable.	£15000	£7500
Conrad Johnson Premier 140 - 2003 - very good condition	£4500	£7500
Living Voice Avatar Mk1 loudspeaker - cherry	£1500	£2700
Living Voice OBX-R2 loudspeaker - walnut	£3400	£4400
Sugden Bjiou phono amp - new	£400	£600
Pathos 2 box pre-amp with remote control - spotless	£1700	
Audion Golden Night 300B monos - very good condition	£1750	£3200
Unison Simply 845 beefcake integrated amp	£2250	£3750
Cardas Neutral Reference speaker cable - 2 metres - very nearly new	£500	£780
Cardas Neutral Reference interconnect - 1 metre - very nearly new	£350	£500
Border Patrol Control Unit 1 - line pre-amp	£1000	£1700
Border Patrol Control Unit 2 - line pre-amp	£2000	£3000
Art Audio PX25 - 5watts - Single ended flea power for the sensitive type	£3000	£4000
Nottingham Analogue Spacedeck with RB300 & Living Voice Mystic Mat	£700	£1100
Helios Model 1 CD player	£500	£1300
Audio Note Japan M7 pre-amp - line only	£3000	
SJS Arcadia Model 2 line pre-amp - copper chassis - silver wiring - v. good	£750	£2000
Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista M3 CD player (2001) - as new condition - boxed	£1600	£3000
Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista MC integrated amp (2000) - as new - boxed	£1600	£3000
AVI S.2000 M1 integrated amp	£400	£1000
Border Patrol S.20 power amp - mahogany - nearly new	£5000	£7000
Audio Mecca Mephisto CD transport	£1000	£2500
Sugden Masterclass integrated amp	£2200	£3300
Canary Audio 301 300B stereo push-pull power amp	£3400	£5400
Canary Audio 303 [110V] - new - fillet mignon	£3800	£7200
Audio Innovations Series 1000 monos - fully serviced - class A classic	£1900	
AudioNote UK CDT-Two	£1400	£2250
B&W CDM	£250	
Audio Innovations Series 500 integrated - classic - fully serviced	£800	
Aloia pre-amp - very new - very good condition - beautifully made - OK	£900	£2800

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email: [shout@definitiveaudio.co.uk](mailto:shout@definitiveaudio.co.uk)

# Shadow Audio

Call 01592 744 779 for the best part-ex prices!  
List changes daily so visit [www.shadowaudio.co.uk](http://www.shadowaudio.co.uk) regularly!

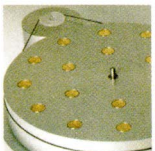
digital	Copland CDA 289 cd player, one owner (£1850)	£849	
	Marantz SA-11S1 Flagship SACD player, only 6 weeks old (£2000)	£1695	
	Audio Analogue Maestro CD player, as new (£1795)	£695	
	Musical Fidelity X-10v3 Tube buffer stage, one owner (£299)	£195	
	Cyrus DAC X in silver, boxed, one owner (£1100)	£699	
	Cyrus CD8x in silver, boxed as new, one owner (£1000)	£649	
	Primare P302, latest model, only a few months old, unmarked (£1500)	£995	
	Sugden Masterclass CD player, one owner, boxed as new, (£2800)	£1595	
	Meridian 508 20-bit cd player, boxed as new, one owner, (£1500)	£695	
	AVI Lab Series CD player, latest spec, 7 months old, one owner (£1499)	£995	
	Resolution Audio CD50 cd player, boxed, finished in black (£3000)	£895	
	Talk Electronics Thunder 4 and Whirlwind 3, cd+ upgrade PSU (£1900)	£695	
	Sony SC-D1, boxed in excellent condition. One owner (£5000)	£1995	
	Audionet ART V2 CD Player, one owner, unmarked, (£2500)	£1695	
	Naim CD1, boxed in excellent condition, one owner from new (£1999)	£499	
	Cyrus CD7 in silver, boxed, one owner, unmarked, (£800)	£449	
	Wadia 302 CD player, boxed as new, only 2 months old (£4000)	£2995	
	Advantage CD15 in black, boxed, just fully serviced (£4955)	£1695	
	Cyrus CD6, latest spec in black (crackle black finish) (£650)	£695	
	Marantz CD94, boxed, manual 9/10 condition, very very rare	£359	
	Bel Canto PL-1, boxed as new, ex-dem. (£6900)	£POA	
	Shanling CDT-100 (3D acoustics UK model) - £1600	£990	
	amplifiers	Audio Analogue Paganini (£950)	£695
		Musical Fidelity A3cr pre and power, boxed, one owner (£2000)	£795
		AVI Lab Series amplifier, boxed as new, one owner (£1500)	£995
		Graaf GM50, award winning valve amplifier in black (£4000)	£2795
		Cyrus 3 integrated amplifier, finishes in black (£500)	£195
		Musical Fidelity A308cr pre-amplifier boxed as new (£2000)	£795
Krell KAV500 integrated, very very rare, boxed, excellent (£5000)		£1995	
Musical Fidelity A308 Integrated, one owner, boxed as new, £2000		£895	
Musical Fidelity kW500, one owner, originally supplied by us new (£4000)		£3199	
Pathos TT-RR integrated amplifier, one owner (£3595)		£1995	
Consonance Cyber 800 Mono Blocks (Valve) absolutely stunning (£3000)		£1995	
McIntosh MA6900 integrated amplifier, one owner (£549)		£2995	
Audio Analogue Azzurri Settanta (£950) ex-dem		£449	
Musical Fidelity A3cr pre-amp. Unmarked condition.		£395	
Stello M200 Monoblocks, in silver, boxed NEW unused (£2300)		£POA	
Unison Research Unico SE integrated amplifier, ex-dem (£1395)		£895	
Audio Note P1SE, power amp, pure valve class A, with volume control		£395	
Croft TS1 hybrid power amplifier, ex-dem (£2000)		£995	
Croft Synintegra hybrid integrated, ex-dem (£2500)		£1250	
Bow ZZ integrated amplifier. Boxed, unmarked in black, (£3350)		£1495	
Musical Fidelity kW750 power amplifier, boxed as new (£5999)		£3995	
Pass Labs X350.5, one owner, supplied by us new (£7600)		£4995	
Chord CPA2200 pre amplifier in silver. Boxed unmarked (£3710)		£1895	
EAR V20 integrated amplifier. Stunning looks and performance (£3595)		£1995	
McIntosh MA2275 valve integrated (£5773) boxed as new, ex-dem		£POA	
McIntosh MA6500 integrated amplifier, ex-dem, boxed as new (£3361)		£2995	
Pathos Classic One mkII, boxed as new, only one month old (£1400)		£995	
McIntosh MHT200 Bx140 watts, home cinema heaven ex-dem (£6503)		£3950	
ATC SPA2 150 power amplifier (£3400)		£1995	
Audio Innovations 2nd Audio Monoblocks (£3000)		£1200	
McIntosh MC252 power amplifier £3852		£2995	
Bel Canto Evo4, boxed as new, ex-dem (£3499)		£2995	
Bel Canto Frez2, boxed as new, ex-dem (£2999)	£POA		
Bel Canto EVO 2t, boxed as new (£2750)	£POA		
AVI Lab Series Integrated amplifier (£1500)	£949		
Conrad Johnson PV14L pre, 2yrs old (£2300)	£1250		
Croft TS1 with Epoch Pre (£3000)	£1795		
Musical Fidelity X-150 v3 (£799)	£650		
Howland HP1 00 pre+built in phstage (£5350)	£3995		
Howland Radia Power amplifier (£7995)	£4995		
Howland HP200 + phono stage (£7325)	£4995		
Audio Analogue New Maestro (£1750)	£1255		
loudspeakers	Zingali Overture 3S, boxed, one owner, as new condition, (£4000)	£1595	
	Naudio Contour 1.8 mklI, in beech, boxed, unmarked (£1900)	£899	
	ART Expression V6, boxed as new, one owner in cherry (£3250)	£1995	
	Usher AC10 loudspeakers. Very rare in Walnut, bargain (£8000)	£2795	
	Gershman A acoustics Avantgarde speakers, Piano Black (£7900)	£2895	
	Wilson Benesch ARCs with stands, silver finish (£2500)	£1690	
	Living Voice Auditorium II in Cherry. Latest spec (£2195)	£495	
	ATC SCM-50ASL, Cherry, boxed as new, 4 months old, (£7947)	£4895	
	Wilson Benesch Discovery, 8 months old, boxed as new (£5700)	£3895	
	Gamut L3, in Rosewood, one owner, boxed as new, (£3750)	£2750	
	ATC SCM-35, one owner, cherry, boxed as new (£1999)	£1395	
	Wilson Benesch Curve speakers, one owner, 4 months old (£5000)	£3495	
	Dali Helios d2, boxed as new, only 2 months old, (£3300)	£1995	
	Ref 3a Dacapo 1, boxed as new in maple, 2 months old, £2700	£1650	
	Triangle Heliade, Champagne finish (£595)	£395	
	Triangle Australe in cherry (£3300)	£1995	
	Living Voice Avatar OBX-R in Cherry	£2895	
	Quad 989 ESL Vintage, new £5000	£3600	
	Quad 988 ESL in Nougat, cost new £3750	£2999	
	Audio Physic Virgo III, Cherry	£2895	
	analogue	Pro-Ject Perspective, one owner, boxed as new (£750)	£350
		Oxford Rothman MC Cartridge, low hiss, one owner (£1195)	£495
		Ortho Record Cleaning machine with dedicated stand + extras. (£450)	£295
		Bluenote Bellaria Reference Tonearm, 3 months old (£1500)	£895
		Mark Levinson JC-1 phono stage, very very rare	£1495
		SME 10, boxed AS NEW (£3600)	£2395
		Michelle Gyrodeck, Origin Live Tonearm, Trichord Never Connected	£1095
		PSU with DC motor, boxed, manuals, one owner, excellent. (£2000+)	
		Benz Micro Glider MC Cartridge, approx 60 hours use, perfect cond	£295
		Tom Evans Micro Groove Plus Phono Stage (£800)	£1450
		Pro-Ject Perspective Turntable, boxed, ex-display, (£750)	£495
		ART Vinyl One phono stage (MM/MC), chrome panel, ex-dem (£1910)	£195
SME 300 series, 309 tonearm, latest spec, boxed, unmarked, (£805)		£499	
Systemdec II in excellent condition, incl cartridge + SME tonearm.		£195	
Krell KPE Reference Phono Stage, boxed, manual, excellent		£1395	
SME 10, boxed AS NEW (£2800)		£1895	
SME 20/2a + SME V tonearm (£5695)		£3695	
Wilson Benesch Full Circle-Py Cart (£2100)		£1499	
Micell Orbe SE boxed as new		£1595	
SME 10A, boxed		£2495	
Nottingham Analogue Spacedec		£695	
Trichord Dino - silver front		£199	
misc		Musical Fidelity X-Cans v2, upgraded to v3, one owner, Bargain	£149
		Musical Fidelity X-10v3 Tube buffer stage, excellent, (£299)	£195
		AVI S2000 tuner, excellent.	£149
		Moorth Record cleaning machine, inc dedicated stand + extras. (£450)	£295
		Kimber Select KS1021 Interconnect 0.5m (£440)	£195
		Purist Audio Dominus 10ft speaker cable (£7000!!)	£1495
	Cyrus PSXR boxed unmarked in black	£249	
	Nordost THOR mains conditioner, supplied by use new (£1799)	£1195	
	Isol8 Cleanline2, boxed as new, ex-display, (£295)	£185	
	Isotek 2K Qube2, boxed, one owner. (£1595) in silver	£795	
	Chord Anthem 1m interconnect, boxed as new one owner (£299)	£199	
	Cyrus PSXR boxed unmarked in silver, one owner	£249	
	Nordost Red Dawn rev11 1.0m interconnect, as new	£150	
	Isol8 2k Qube, boxed as new, one owner, (£1595)	£795	
	Vertex AQ Roraima Plus, mains lead with filter, as new (£490)	£395	
	Isol8 Gil Minisub, boxed as new, ex-display, (£495)	£295	
PS Audio P600 power plant, just serviced, Multiwave model. (£2895)	£1395		
Isol8 Mainline2 digital mains lead, inline filter (£225)	£199		
Kimber ATC 2x 4.5m (£232) Kimbers best selling speaker cable	£145		
Nordost Vishnu 2m mains lead, one owner as new (£450)	£349		
Townshend Super Tweeters in Titanium matt	£650		

# audiolincs

## KR AUDIO

The internationally acclaimed KR Audio VA340 integrated amplifier employs KR 300BXLs valves to deliver higher than average power for a single ended amplifier of this type.

If you're genuinely sensitive to music (rather than hi-fi) you'll fully appreciate the exquisite subtlety and near tangible presence of performances when heard through this quite amazing, remote controlled amplifier.



## ACOUSTIC SIGNATURE

Meticulous engineering, superb materials and massive construction deliver class leading performance with style. Our reference turntable.



## LUXMAN

The new Luxman L-509f integrated amplifier delivers an effortless 150wpc - 225wpc and provides control, flexibility and facilities.

More than this, the L-509f has proved itself effortlessly capable of driving some notoriously difficult loudspeakers so it's something of a bargain in today's market..



## HORNING

Rear mounted, 12" bass drivers of our reference Horning Agathons deliver real bass and lowther midrange plus Lotus hf driver offers valve amps a dream coupling.

LIKE NEW ...  
... NOTHING  
LIKE THE  
PRICE!

ACOUSTIC ZEN Silver Reference Interconnect (£1285)	Mint	£825
ACOUSTIC ZEN Hologram Mk 2 12ft Bi-wires (£1195)	Mint	£795
ART ST1 Loudspeakers Black/slate (£2500)	Mint	£895
ART AUDIO Diavolo 300B Power amplifier	New valves	£1995
AUDION Silver Night Integrated (EL34) amplifier	New valves	£645
AUDIO INNOVATIONS 500 Integrated amp	New valves	£475
AUDIOSTATIC DC1 Wing Loudspeakers (£5,000)	Mint, boxed	£2995
BAT VK-Si Pre-amp (£3,495)	Mint, boxed	£1595
BAT VK-1 50SE Monoblocks (£15,500)	Mint, flight cases	£7995
CARDAS Cross 0.5mtr RCA	Unmarked	£115
C.A.T SLI Ultimate Pre-amp + phono stage (£7000)	Mint, boxed	£3995
CONRAD JOHNSON EF1 Phono-stage (£2000)	Mint, boxed	£795
CUSTOM DESIGN Icon hi-fi rack (£599)	Ex-dem, mint	£350
CONSONANCE Ref 1.2 Pre-amp (£2,995)	Ex-dem, mint	£1995
CYRUS CD6 CD Player	Mint	£525
DENON CD6000 OSE CD Player	Mint, boxed	£125
DIAPASON KARIS Bookshelf Speakers. Beautiful walnut, boxed		£595
GRAAF GM50B Integrated Amp	As new, boxed	£2895
HORNING Zeus (Cherry) Ex-dem	Mint	£1295
KIMBER Kabel Type 8ag Spkr cable 1.6mtr (£3,000)	Boxed	£795
LINN SONDEK LP12 (Trampolin) New Origin Live Ultra DC motor and new origin Live Conqueror arm. (Circa £4,500)	Mint	£2,995
MELOS 402 Monoblocks (Circa £8,000)	As new, boxed	£2895
MYRIAD MP100/MA120 Pre/power amps (Black)	Mint, boxed	£695
QUAD ESL 57 Late series / black	Excellent	£495
ORIGIN LIVE Aurora 1/1 with Silver Mk2 arm (£1595)	New	£1295
RED ROSE Model 5 EL34 Integrated Amp (£5,000)	Mint	£1895
SME IV Tonearm (Less than 12 hrs use)	Mint, boxed	£895
SUMO Gold Valve Pre & 300B Push/Pull monoblocks	Serviced	£1995
TOWNSHEND Isolda Spkr Cables - 3mtr banana	Mint	£375
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XTC CDT1LE CD Transport Remote control.	As new, boxed	£495

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# Enjoying your Music?

The main problem that most customers experience is not really enjoying the music they listen to on their system as much as they feel they should. It's hardly surprising as even walking around the various 'Hi-End' shows, whether here in the UK, or as I've recently done in Las Vegas, it's surprisingly difficult to find a sound that really engages one. One of the problems is invariably the music they play, though frequently exhibitors are borrowing equipment they don't make from other manufacturers/distributors, who seem only too happy to get their products on display as often as possible. It doesn't however mean that it will work in a given system, however good it may be. System matching is vitally important, which is why a complete system from AVI for example, which I am always recommending, will sound great as it was designed as a system. With a CD player and Integrated 200w/ch amplifier at £1,500 each, plus a pair of Duo Floorstanders at £1,300, you have a system for £4,300 plus cables, that you cannot but enjoy. I would still recommend the Abbey Road Cables I referred to in an earlier advert, though they are not cheap. To improve it you only have to go up to the separate Pre/power combo (far more than just the integrated in two boxes (see www.avihifi.com), or either of the larger speakers namely the Trio at £3,250 or the Brio at £4,500. I can also recommend the Nola range of speakers (www.nolaspeakers.com), which also go extremely well with the AVI electronics, and if you have room for the larger Electrocompaniet units, then the EC 4.7 Pre and 220 Power will do a great job. We don't go in for hundreds of makes, but only select a small group of equipment which we have evaluated and know work well together. Soon hope to be trying the Chapter Audio Precis Integrated and will report on that later. But whatever your budget, do give us a call and I'm sure we can sort out a system you will enjoy listening to!

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<b>VALVE AMPS</b>	QUAD ESL 63 Speakers complete service by QUAD.....	£1250
AUDIO RESEARCH LS15, boxed as new.....	QUAD ESL 63 Speakers complete service by ONE THING.....	£1250
BEARD P35 MK1.....	Jordan Watts Modular speakers rare matched pair ex-BBC.....	£295
WORLD AUDIO EL 34 AMP.....	CELESTION VF302 's' shaped style, [£650].....	£325
AUDION EL34 STEREO POWER AMP.....	Monitor Audio Monitor 3 Speakers (Top Tweeter Model).....	£275
AUDION 300B STEREO POWER AMP ex-dem [£2150].....	Epos ES 11 brilliant small stand mouser.....	£245
Black Cat Electronics PK4 Valve, PAIR of MONO bloc's	Epos M 15's excellent all rounder, floor standers.....	£350
Black Cat Electronics stunning Valve line stage/FET Phono stage/PREAMP.....	Lowther/Tannoy.....	£275
Croft Super Micro tube phono/pre-amp.....	Heybrook Quintets gold piezto tweeter (E1450).....	£425
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ANTHEM X1 EL 34 single ended stereo valve integrated amplifier.....	QUAD 11's cherry beautiful.....	£249
BAT 3K1, hybrid, phono stage, boxed.....	JR 149, metal cylindrical speakers like BBC LS3/5a's mint.....	£375
MISTRAL 5881 push-pull 20 watt integrated.....	MERIDIAN M3's, active, as new plus stands and all cables.....	£375
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<b>TRANSISTOR</b>	<b>CD PLAYERS</b>	
ETALON Suprampli remote, 40watts, simply stunning.....	MARANTZ CD17 MKII [£850].....	£595
MVL A1 integrated, class A, 100 watts.....	Audio Innovations fish-eye CD TUNER boxed as new.....	£225
NAIM NAC42, mint.....	CYRUS DAD7 & PSX as new and boxed.....	£725
NAIM NAC 42-S, as new, phono by-pass mod.....	HEARTL CD6000SE LE.....	£750
NAIM SNA35, just serviced.....	SHANLING SCD-T200C [NEW].....	£2150
NAP 110 very nice.....	SHANLING CDT 100 VALVE cd player, as new boxed.....	£1650
MISTRAL integrated, black, warm but dynamic.....	Marantz CD6000 OSE as new boxed.....	£175
CYRUS 1 good classic.....	MYRAD CD10 boxed.....	£215
LINX STRATOS VDH wired pre-amp dual-mono.....	MYRAD CD20 b bed.....	£480
QUAD 66 pre-amp with large console control.....	DPA PDM1 Series 2 DAC.....	£135
QUAD 99 two mono blocks, excellent condition.....	CAIRN FOG 2.....	£1500
Exposure 11 and 12 Pre-amp and Power Supply.....	LECTOR Tube CD Player CDPO 6T.....	£950
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THE ISOLATOR-unbelievable results!!.....	£85
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MERIDIAN 201 pre.....	£970
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Tandberg 3002 Pre Amp.....	£150
ETALON Supraton 1.....	£98
ETALON Supraton 2 very natural sound.....	£940
NAIM Credos in cherry beautiful, boxed.....	£575
KEF 1052 REFERENCE LOUDSPEAKERS, darlek type.....	£419
TOTEM MITES [£499] AS NEW, boxed.....	£970
MONOPULSE 42A's seriously dynamic.....	£1470
QUAD ESL57's black, serviced.....	£444

<b>SPEAKERS</b>	
TANNOY CORNER LANCasters 12" golds.....	£1500
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LOWTHER CORNER ACOUSTAS pm7a's.....	£775
USHER X-719 standmount speakers including stands.....	£975
ETALON Supraton 1.....	£920
ETALON Supraton 2.....	£1950
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KEF 1052 REFERENCE LOUDSPEAKERS, darlek type.....	£450
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## ...what are you up for?

Digital	Amplifiers	Speakers	Analogue
AHI 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 A75+ Integrated, black	249 Acoustic Energy AE1 Mk2 vgc	1249 Audio Research PH3SE, nr mint boxed
Arcam CD72T, black or silver	199 Arcam Alpha 9 Preamp and Power amp, nr mint, boxed	499 Acoustic Energy AE1mk3 ex dem	Call Chord Phono stage, ex boxed
Arcam CD23T, nr mint boxed	549 Arcam Alpha 9 Integrated	279 Acoustic Energy AE2, ex black	799 Clearaudio Emotion package, ex dem
Arcam DV79	779 Arcam Alpha FMJ C30 Preamp	730 Acoustic Energy AE2, ex piano black, c/w stands	999 Electrocompaniet Phono stage, mm/mc, Lynwood p/s
Arcam CD33T, nr mint boxed	649 Arcam AVR200, ex boxed	399 ATC SCA20, Piano black, vgc, boxed stands	349 JBE SlateSeries 3/Mission774 rare as...
Audio Analogue Maestro 192/24 ex dem	Call Audio Analogue Maestro 150w ref, ex, crated	999 AVI Postron, burr finish, ex	299 Kinshaw Perception phono stage and p/s
AVI Laboratory Series, ex boxed	549 Audio Innovations, 200500 pre and power, ex, boxed	Call AVI NuNeutron IV ex, boxed cherry	399 Linn LP12, Lingo 2, Akto, Dynavector DV20, ex boxed
Cyrus CD8, ex, boxed	549 Audiolab 8000A Integrated	249 B&W CDM7NT, ex, boxed	1499 Linn LP12/Valhalla/Akto
Cyrus CD7Q, ex, boxed	549 AudioNote OTO, nr mint a steal at	599 Castle Eden, ex boxed	749 Linn LP12/OL Advanced DC Kit
Cyrus PSXR both colours, from	229 Audio Research VT100 Power, as new boxed	1999 Dahlquist DQ12	Call Linn LP12/Valhalla, IttokLVII, K9 ex
Harmon Kardon HD970	2299 Audio Research LS25 Preamp/Power, as new boxed	2299 Dynaudio Audience 10 ex	199 Linn Ittok, nr mint, the best we've seen
Harmon Kardon DV22, New	Call AVI S2000M Integrated fair	349 KEF Reference 1.2 nr mint boxed	599 Linn Ittok 12"
Marantz CD63KI Signature, ex remote	199 AVI Lab Series integrated, phono stage, ex	498 Nbioen NX6 Stands/mount ex	799 Linn Ekos, nr mint boxed
Marantz CD17 KI nr mint	499 Bryston BP25 and 4BST Pre/Power, mm/mc, remote	549 Proac Studio 125	699 Michell Gyrodec Export
Meridian 200 Transport, ex remote	299 Conrad Johnson Sonographe SA250	599 QUAD ESL63 Floorstander, Quad serviced 2005 REDUCED!!!!	649 Michell Reference Hydraulic/Fluid arm
Meridian 263 DAC	179 Creek 4330Mk2r Integrated, remote as new boxed	249 QUAD ESL63 Floorstander - bargain, for details please	1599 Michell Orbe SE, NC power supply
Micromega Stage 1	179 Croft Lonestage Preamp	499 QUAD 11L Stands/mount, boxed - REDUCED	249 Michell Orbe Full version, cancelled order
Micromega Stage 2 and matching DAC	399 Cyrus XPA, ex boxed	229 QUAD 12L Stands/mount as new	479 Michell Technodoc ex dem
Micromega T-drive and T-dac nr mint boxed	349 Cyrus Power, ex boxed	249 REL Stadium 3 Sub, ex	799 Michell Technoarm early
Micromega Optic bargain intro to Micromega	799 Cyrus 3 Integrated, ex boxed	179 Revolver R33 ex dem, well reviewed bargain	249 Michell Iso/Hera
Monarchy DIP vgc	129 Denon P0A6600 Monoblocks, ex boxed	699 Revolver RW45 ex dem, well reviewed bargain	299 Mission 774 original arm
Musical Fidelity X10x3 ex boxed	149 DNM 3 Twin Preamp	599 Ruark Sabre ex black	149 MFM Source heavyweight suspended deck
Musical Fidelity XDACv3 ex boxed	179 Cyrus XPA, ex boxed	1249 Ruark Equinox vgc, bargain	499 Nottingham Analogue The Foot Tonearm
Musical Fidelity Kw SADC as new REDUCED TO	349 ITL M80/M100/MA100 Pre/Power x2 lovely combo	349 Sonus Faber Concertino c/w stands	2999 Oracle Delphi V, full version, turbo ps, as new
NAD C5411 nr mint boxed	2699 Linn Kairn (late) and LK100 pre power, ex boxed	Call Tannoy Studio Monitor Large!	999 Origin Live Aurora Gold ex dem
NAIM CD3 ex	199 Lumley Reference 120 Monoblocks	1499 Tannoy Chatsworth Floorstander	649 Origin Live Silver as new
NAIM CD3 ex	399 Meridian 555 power	449 Triangle Comete ES, ex dem	429 Ortofon Kontrapunkt B
NAIM CDX2 nr mint boxed s/h 219xxx	1749 Meridian 505 Monoblocks, ex boxed	199 Triangle Titus 202, ex boxed	379 Pink Triangle LPT/RB250, the best I've seen
NVA Transparent Statement, ex crated	699 Meridian 205 Monoblocks, ex	549 Usher Audio X719, ex dem	479 Pink Triangle PT1
Proced P072, nr mint boxed	349 Micromega Tempo 2	Call Warfaldale Diamond series, various	299 Project RPM6SB c/w project arm, ex boxed
Roksan Kandy Mk3, ex dem	299 Musical Fidelity 3a Preamp/P150 Power, ex		799 Project RPM9X NEW, SAVE \$300
Roksan Caspian M series, ex dem	299 Musical Fidelity MA-X50 Monoblocks		499 Project Tube Box, ex
Rotel RCD971 ex, remote	179 Musical Fidelity Pre/Typhoon		199 Project Phonobox SE
Sony CDP333ES cute top loader	329 NAIM 721/180 pre/power combo		Call Rega Planar 2/RB250, vgc
Sony SC0777ES, ex boxed	999 NAIM 92/90 pre/power combo, ex boxed		149 Rega Planar 3/RB300, vgc
TAG McLaren DPA32r with DAB tuner module	Call NAIM 92/90 pre/power combo, ex boxed		179 Rega Planar 3/RB300, vgc
TEAC DV505 new, full warranty, THE BEST!	3399 Pathos Logos, just back from UKD service, ex boxed remote		79 Rotel RQ970
TEAC DV20 new, the best at its price	149 Primare A20 mk2, nr mint integrated		399 Graham Slee Projects, Era Gold/Elevator combo, ex boxed
	299 Quad 50 Monoblocks		Call Graham Slee Reflex, customer return
	149 Quad 34 Preamp and 306 Power amp, each from		179 SME 3009 boxed
	79 Quad 44 Preamp, 405 and 405/2 Power amps from		179 Technics SL110 vgc
	349 Quad 77 Integrated ex with 77 system remote		Call Thorens TD160b boxed
	379 Quad 606, 606mk2 and 707 Power, each from		199 Thorens TD125/SME3009
	749 Quad 909 SEALED BOX		99 Thorens TD160b/Mayware vgc
	399 Roksan Kandy Mk3 superb integrated ex dem		149 Townshend Elite Rock Mk2/Mission 774LC
	199 Rotel RC995 superb preamp with system remote		249 Transcriptors Skeleton/Vestigal
	199 Sugen A21SE, nr mint less than a year old		139 Transcriptors Hydraulic Reference
	89 TAG McLaren 125m monoblocks, nr mint boxed		39 Transcriptors Saturn, vgc
	149 Unison Research Mystery One Preamp - BARGAIN!		349 Trichord Dino ex boxed
	199 Unison Research S6 Integrated		199 Wilson Benesch Act/Act 2 arm ex
			2499

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Arcam T61 nr mint boxed	159
Harman Kardon TU970 DAB/FM New, save loads	199
Marantz ST4000 ex	79
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Nakamichi DR2 ex	199
Pure 701ES ex boxed	89
Quad FM2 the great hybrid, Quad serviced 2005	149
Quad FM4 ex boxed	199

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## FOR SALE

**AMPHION LENON** loudspeakers in birch. One year old, mint condition, (£2,500) £1,250. See [www.amphion.fi](http://www.amphion.fi) for details. 01633 440190 (South Wales).

**ARCAM 75P** plus power amp, silver, (£390) £169. Mission 780SE standmount speakers beech, (£350) £169. Denon DM30 remote, £90, all boxed, mint. 0115 960 3934 (Notts).

**ARCAM A85**, P85, CD73 black, with remotes and in excellent condition, £1,100. 07917 809201 (Bath).

**ARCAM CD82T** CD player. Excellent condition in silver with remote and manual £300. QED Silver Spiral interconnects 1m length, £37.50. QED XT400 speaker cable 2x4m lengths with Airlock terminations, £125. Tony 0151 355 5065 (Chester).

**AUDIO RESEARCH LS7** preamp. As new condition, boxed, classic ARC styling. Comes with Russ Andrews Oak Cone Feet and power cord, (£1,600) £700. Enquiries to Terry 01376 349210 evenings (Essex).

**AUDIONET PRE 1 G2** preamp, £1,800. Amp 1 power amp, £2,700. ART V2 CD player and remote, mint, boxed, £2,000. Tim 07963 467641 (Bolton)

**AURA VA100** amp, £120. Marantz CD6000 KI Signature, £150 with boxes and instructions. Carriage, £10 per item. 07790 767067 (N.Ireland).

**AVI TRIO** floorstanding speakers, cherry colour, almost new, serial number nr 13-07, original boxes and guarantee included, perfect at £2,000. UK transport from Italy not included. Please call for details – Italy +0039-02-2150930 or email [fedepenzo@hotmail.com](mailto:fedepenzo@hotmail.com) (Italy).

**B&W CDM1** speakers, red ash, mint with Audioquest cable, (£665) £200. 020 7679 5888 (Herts)

**BRYSTON 4B ST** amp and BP20 preamp, black, mint, 250W, 20-year warranty, original boxes/manuals, (£5,300) £1,995. REL Strata (Mk2) subwoofer, black, Neutrik Cable, manual, (£600) £240. Marantz CD94 CD player near mint, remote and manual, £275. 01522 510653 or 07909 835883 (Lincoln).

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 640C** CD player, £180. 640T DAB/FM tuner, £180. 540R receiver, £200. All silver, boxed and mint. 01706 873538 (Lancs).

**CLASSE** preamp, (£1,800) £460. Arcam FMJ A32 integrated as new, boxed, (£1,200) £850. 01491 613760 (Oxford)

**CYRUS CD8X** £650. 8vs amp £495. SmartPower amp, £450. Two PSXRs, £225 each. Monitor Audio GR60 speakers, £1,275 also Rega P5 turntable, £425. All as new and boxed 0191 276 1682 or 07761 259403 (Tyne and Wear).

**CYRUS MONO X** 150w monoblock amps in as new condition, smooth black finish, boxed with instructions and power leads as new, £1,700. 07961 454229 (Doncaster).

**CYRUS PRE X VS** preamp and PSX-R power supply. Six months old, boxed with guarantee, (£1,500) £600ono. 07766 415325 or 02476 667877 (Coventry).

**HI-FI MAGAZINES** 12 boxes, mainly 1990-2003. Treat yourself to a good read! Best offer secures. Ring Alan on 01283 820818 for details. (Staffordshire).

**ISOTEK MAINLINE** mains leads with Furutech upgrades. One digital, (£270) £150, two standard, (£245) £130 each. Kimber Select interconnects one metre – KS1030, (£1,100) £650, KS1020, (£500) £300. Kimber Monocle XL speaker cable (8ft pair), £852 £530. Orchid 0.5m digital cable, £110. 01772 314151 or 07974 186026 (Preston).

**KIMBER MONOCLE X** speaker cable, 10 foot, as new, (£650), £400. Sony DVP-NS900V SACD/DVD player, silver, excellent condition, Russ Andrew Oak Cone Feet fitted. Frankenstein CD Enhancer, Dynavector 10X5 MC cartridge. Never used, boxed, call for details 07905 303718 evenings (London).

**LEXICON MC1** processor hi-fi and home cinema bargain, (£5,500) £1,495. KEF Reference 2 speakers in black, excellent sound and ideal for the typical UK lounge, £750. 020 8205 4710 (London)

**LINN GENKI CD** player, black, ex-demo, manual, lead and boxed. Will give demo, excellent condition and a fabulous machine, £550ono. 01384 411914 (West Midlands). ☑

## WANTED

**ARCAM ALPHA 10** tuner must be in good condition. Karl 01942 234927 or email

[karl138ufftt@msn.com](mailto:karl138ufftt@msn.com) (Wigan).

**B&W NAUTILUS HTM1** centre speaker, any finish considered, discontinued model required 01782 256087 (Stoke-on-Trent).

**DENON AU320 MC** transformer. 01942 891741 (Wigan).

**MAGNUM DYNALAB** tuner MD102 and remote 01303 523553 or 07821 863950 (Devon).

**MARANTZ DR4050/ DR6000** player/recorder in black. Must be in perfect working order. 01594 860165 or email [jeremy.friar@gloucestershire.co.uk](mailto:jeremy.friar@gloucestershire.co.uk) evenings (Lydney).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A308CR** power amp. 0115 9126424 (Notts).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY TRI-VISTA** DAC. Will pay good price, but must be excellent condition please. 0121 601 0325 (West Mids).

**ROKSAN CASPIAN** integrated amp. Any age but must be in very good condition please 01243 863371 (W.Sussex).

**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**

❑ **LINN SONDEK LP12**

Nirvana/Valhalla/Basik LVX, walnut, 25 years old but mint, recent service and little used. Dynavector 4x high-output MC, £450. 0121 449 5515 (W.Mids)

**LINN SYSTEM** Karick CD,

Numeric D/A converter, Kairn pro preamp, Kudos tuner, four LK-100 power amplifiers, pair of Keltik loudspeakers in rosewood, 24 Linn K400 speaker cables. Mint condition to sell as a complete system. Demo welcome. Serial nos available. Buyer to collect, £4,750. 0121 240 8443 (West Midlands)

**LOTH-X AMAZE** high sensitivity

bookshelf loudspeakers with stands, cherry finish, £320. 020 8572 2504 (Middx).

**LS3/5A FOUNDATION**

Designer loudspeaker stands in black. 23.5" tall, very heavy, £70. 01502 518938 (Suffolk)

**MERIDIAN 507/24** CD with

MSR, £675. 504 tuner, £375. 501 preamp, £375. 556 amp 100wpc, £400, all in mint, unmarked condition with manuals and original packaging. PMC GB1 speakers in beautiful Cherry wood finish, only several months old with over four years PMC Warranty plus all original packaging, £750. Steve 01707 652985 (Herts).

**MONITOR AUDIO RS8**

floorstanding speakers, couple of months old, as new, cherry veneer, packaging, receipt etc. Reviewed HFC276, selling to upgrade, £695. 01462 680262 (Herts).

**MONITOR AUDIO STUDIO 50**

rosewood, perfect condition, original boxes, £895. 01243 582411 (W.Sussex).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A3.2CR**

pre and power amps, £750. PMC GB1 speakers, £695, all mint and boxed. Will part ex for Castle Conway 3 speakers. 07941 174804 (Berks)

**MUSICAL FIDELITY ELEKTRA**

E100 integrated amplifier, fully serviced by MF December 2005, £250 01491 613760 (Oxford).

**NAIM 82 HICAP 250** £2,200.

Naim SBLs, Mana Sound Bases black, £700. Quad 33 303 FM3 and Rotel 965BX, £475 all boxed. 01722 334694 (Wilts)

**NAIM CD3.5/FLATCAP** CD player and optional PSU, boxed, good condition, DIN power lead and DIN phono adaptor included, £550. 07708 556 951 (Northants)

**NORDOST SOLAR WIND**

speaker cables (5 metre pair) single wired, mint condition, (£415) £150ono. 01792 464001 (Swansea).

**PIONEER 505 PRECISION**

(official Tom Evans badged) CD player (£480) £120. Audioquest Emerald (three of) one metre phono-phono interconnects, (£260) £115. Both items mint and boxed. 01278 782622 (Bridgwater).

**PMC OB1** excellent condition, £2,000ono. 07834 161633 (Bristol).

**PRIMARE PRE 30** £700. A30.2

£700 (black) unmarked. Jamo Concert 11 £1,000. 01803 523553 or 07821 863950 (Devon).

**QED SP** cable six metres, £15.

Ortofon cartridge, as new, £17. Simon 07940 574939 (Leicester).

**QUAD 11L** speakers birds-eye

maple, (£380) £230. Multi-award winners, top sound, top reviews, mint, boxed. Lee 01384 412234 (West Midlands)

**ROKSAN KANDY MKIII**

amplifier, silver, £320. Quad 11 speakers, birds eye, £240. Atacama SE6 silver, filled with soundbytes, £80, all mint boxed as new. Charles 01792 536143 (Swansea).

**ROKSAN M SERIES-1** preamp,

power amp (two of), black, boxed, mint, just three months old, (£2,750) £2,100. 07891 533084 (Wales).

**RUARK CRUSADER II** black ash

veneer, excellent condition, great value at £1,000. 01286 540140 (Essex).

**SANSUI** classics from the 1970s.

SR 525 turntable, 6060 receiver, LM 330 loudspeakers, £110. 0208 673 4768 or 07966 509670 (London)

**SD ACOUSTICS SD1** speakers,

£350ono. Buyer collects 01931 716477 (Cumbria).

**SHUN MOOK MPINGO** disc, boxed, (£50) £30. As new. Stuart, 01384 394441 (West Mids)

**SHANLING CDT100** CD player,

boxed, mint, £750. McIntosh 7100 power amplifier, 100W, balanced input, boxed, £550. 07968 429268 (Birmingham).

**SONILINK CLASSIC SERIES**

A15 integrated amplifier, 5-pin connections (not speakers), free DIN to phono cable supplied, £40. 3m pair Supra 4.0 speaker cables, £25. (01543 258617) (Cannock).

**SONY CDP-XE510** remote CD

player, £45ono. Sony ST-SE500 FM/AM tuner, £40ono.

Sherwood AX-4103 amplifier, £45ono or £115 the lot. All well reviewed and in excellent

condition. Audition possible. Mike 07963 117 341 (Manchester).

**SONY STRDB790** receiver, silver, 100w, boxed, unused, (£300), bargain at £150. Buyer collects or carriage at cost. Rod 01706 345418 (Rochdale)

**SONY XA3000ES SACD** black,

six months old, original box, manual and remote, as new can demo, (£800) £350. 01302 538027 (South Yorkshire).

**SUGDEN AU51** preamp and

Symetra power amp. Pure Class A quality sound. Immaculate, little used, £800ono the pair. Ken 0141 571 0851 (Glasgow).

**T+A V10** valve integrated

amplifier, 80wpc, titanium finish, mint, boxed, five months old, two year transferable warranty, spare valves, read the reviews, (£4,000) £2,350ono. Paul 07733 105800 (Gloucester).

**TARGET TT2** four shelf rack, £45.

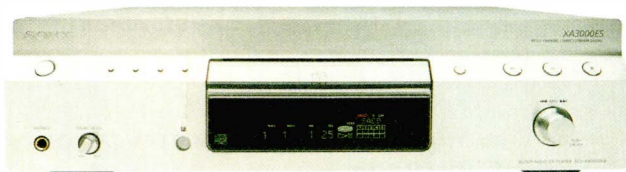
Target wall mounted single shelf, £25. Denon DRM510 cassette deck with manual, excellent condition, £25. John 01943 463510 (West Yorkshire)

**TRIANGLE ZEPHYR**

floorstanders, vgc, one owner, £110ono. NAD 304 amp, £50. 01691 610589 (Shropshire).

**YAMAHA DSP630SE** home

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Above: Sony SCD-XA3000ES

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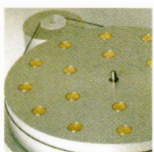
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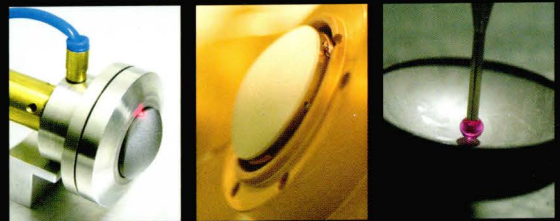
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