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# CLASSE





# Welcome to the issue...

## HI-FI CHOICE MAY 2007 ISSUE 293

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



If you bought last month's *Hi-Fi Choice*, you will have also received a free copy of our *Little Black Book* – a pocket-sized guide to some of the UK's best hi-fi dealers, sponsored by BADA. It seems that this little 'extra' has caused quite a stir, both among readers who have voiced their appreciation, and among members of the hi-fi retail sector... whose reaction, let's say, has been mixed.

**BADA – the British Audio-Visual Dealers Association – is a key industry body, the aim of which is to promote the benefits of specialist hi-fi dealers, in return for a membership fee. From a consumer perspective, there are a number of schemes, guarantees and safeguards that are intended to improve the buying experience and provide additional peace of mind when goods are purchased from a BADA member.**

In giving a personal endorsement of BADA, I appear to have upset a number of stores that, for one reason or another, are not members of the association. This is, perhaps, a scenario that needs clarifying. While I believe that BADA is an organisation that deserves our support, I do not intend to suggest that all non-BADA dealers should be excluded from consideration. This is especially true at hi-fi's high end, where there are a number of excellent retail outlets that have no association with BADA, yet offer a thoroughly commendable buying experience.

At *Hi-Fi Choice*, we're happy to work with any manufacturer, distributor or retailer that we feel is of interest to our readers. BADA has been active in working with us to promote its very worthwhile benefits, and the door is always open for non-BADA retailers to do the same.

*Tim Bown*  
**Tim Bown Editor**

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

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

Wooden it be nice?

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...

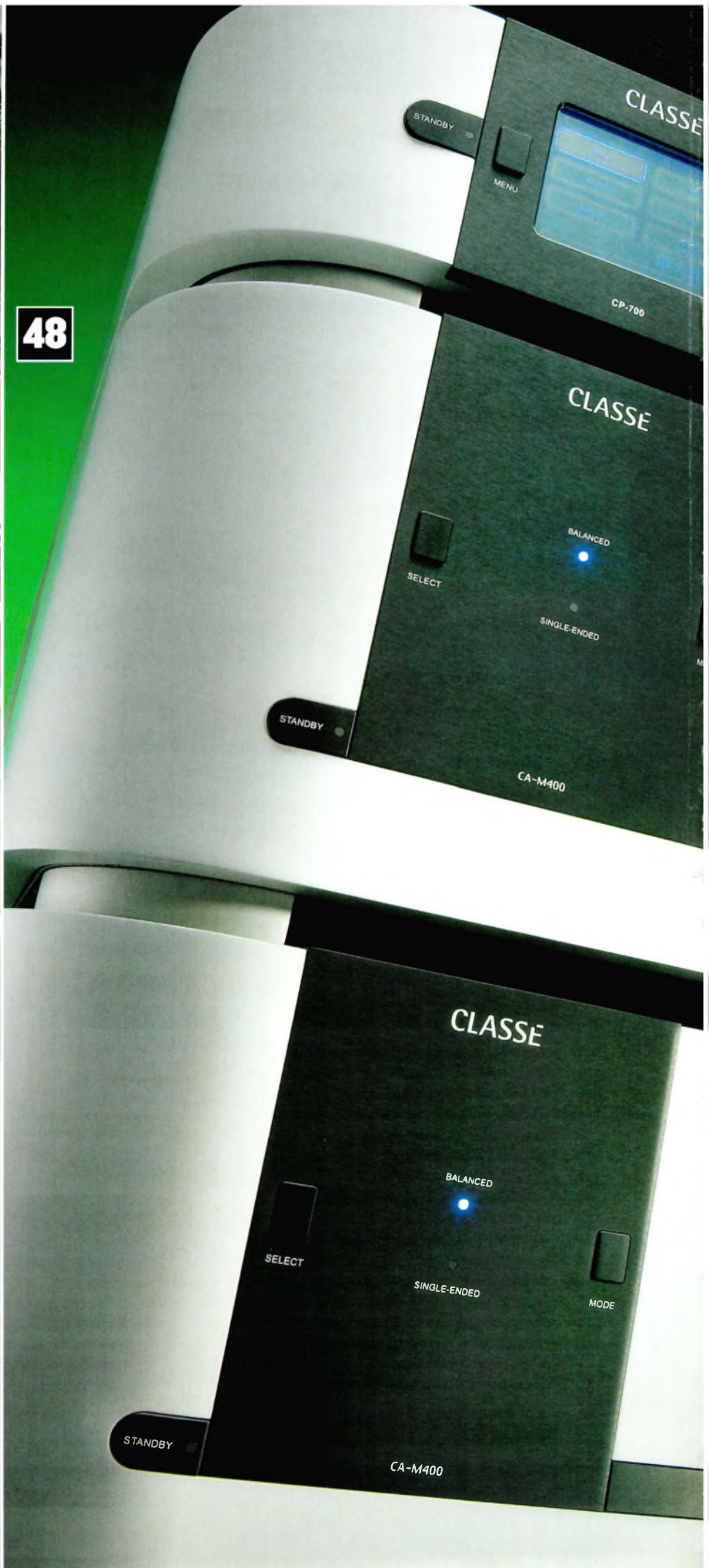
<b>PAUL MESSENGER</b> A former <i>HFC</i> editor, Paul has been writing about his beloved hi-fi hobby for nearly 30 years. In that time he has become one of the world's most respected scribes and probably the UK's foremost loudspeaker reviewer.	<b>DAN GEORGE</b> Dan is <i>HFC</i> 's deputy editor. Armed with a bristling contacts book, an encyclopaedic knowledge of what's what in hi-fi and a pair of razor-sharp ears, he ensures that only interesting products make it into <i>HFC</i> .	<b>RICHARD BLACK</b> 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 <i>HFC</i> .	<b>MALCOLM STEWARD</b> Former editor of <i>Hi-Fi Review</i> magazine, Malcolm was one of the best known and most outspoken reviewers of the 1980s and 1990s. He currently edits hi-fi industry bible <i>The British Audio Journal</i> .	<b>ALVIN GOLD</b> 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).	<b>DAVID VIVIAN</b> An award-winning journalist, David's sharp ears and equally sharp powers of description are a valuable mix for <i>HFC</i> . He also writes about cars, but who needs the latest Lotus when you've got the finest hi-fi to test drive.	<b>JASON KENNEDY</b> Jason previously edited <i>HFC</i> , 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.	<b>KEN KESSLER</b> The hi-fi industry's own <i>Grand Complication</i> , Ken brings decades of high-end experience to the fore in <i>HFC</i> . He has also been to every hi-fi show around the world. Many times over. Yet, he is still a stranger to the beard trimmer.

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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Ultimate guide to high performance hi-fi and AV equipment, gathering together all our favourite products for you.

Your shortlist starts here...

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3 Trading Pages

7 Reader Classified







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the Spirit of Sound





## NAD T585 UNIVERSAL DISC PLAYER

After a considerable wait, NAD has finally introduced a universal disc player to complement its traditional hi-fi line up. Priced at a reassuring £800, the HDMI-equipped player offers audiophiles separate signal processing for DVD-Audio and SACD sources, to maintain the best quality for each format. Purists will welcome the unit's HDCD playback, while modernists will savour its MP3 and WMA compatibility. There's also support for CD-R/RW and DVD+R/-R discs. NAD says its audiophile-quality DACs are well protected from current-based noise and it has chosen high-speed FET output devices to keep the resolution of the hi-res formats intact. It boasts a full compliment of

connectivity options and will upconvert standard DVD pictures to 720p or 1080i, for HDMI-equipped monitors with HDCP encryption. There's full bass management for decoded signals, too.

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

**PRODUCT** NAD T585

**TYPE** Universal disc player

**PRICE** £800

**KEY FEATURES** CD/SACD/DVD-A/DVD-V playback • HDCD compatible • 24-bit/192kHz DACs • HDMI connectivity • Wide range of connections • High-speed FET output devices

**CONTACT** ☎ 01279 501111

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







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because music matters

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## PIONEER PD-D6 CD/SACD PLAYER

▶ Pioneer has once again taken up the two-channel gauntlet. The company's PD-D6 stereo CD/SACD player joins two new stereo amplifiers in signalling the company's welcome return to hi-fi separates (remember fantastic products like the A400 amp?). All three models have been tuned at Air Studios, where master tapes have been used to voice the products as naturally as possible.

The PD-D6 player uses twin Burr-Brown 24-bit/192kHz DACs and a brace of proprietary technology, including the latest version of Pioneer's Legato Link PRO system, to minimize phase shift across the frequency band. The technology is said to offer a 'contouring' digital filtering option, which can be switched on when desired. There's

also single-chip DSD decoding for SACD sources, with lower noise the claimed result. Further features include an aluminium front panel and a 'Pure Audio' listening mode, which switches off the digital circuitry and display for improved performance.

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

**PRODUCT** Pioneer PD-D6

**TYPE** CD/SACD player

**PRICE** £400

**KEY FEATURES** Legato Link PRO filtering system

◉ Twin 24-bit/192kHz DACs ◉ Aluminium front panel ◉ Tuned at Air Studios ◉ Single-chip DSD decoding for SACD sources

**CONTACT** ☎ 0870 600 1539

🌐 www.pioneer.co.uk





## NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS



### LINN LP12 SE

Linn has launched a number of upgrades for its legendary Sondek LP12 turntable. Included in the LP12 SE series upgrades are three key components: the Ekos SE tonearm, Keel one-piece sub-chassis, armboard and collar, and a new metal Trampolin base board. The Ekos SE arm is Linn's flagship tonearm and features a titanium tube for low resonance, with a stainless steel bearing. Equally high-end is the Keel combined sub-chassis, armboard and collar, which is machined from solid aluminium to provide a rigid support for the tonearm and platter. Finally, the Trampolin baseboard is also machined from aluminium for rigidity and acoustically deadened, to further reduce vibration.

**Price** Ekos SE £2,950; Keel £1,950; Trampolin £140 **Due** now  
☎ 0500 888 909 # www.linn.co.uk

### DALI MENTOR 1

Dali's new Mentor 1 standmount loudspeaker brings Mentor ownership to a new audience, thanks to its sub-£1,000 price point. The compact speaker is the entry-level model in the five-strong Mentor range and tips the scales at just over 5kg. It features the latest Dali driver technology, including a new 125mm wood fibre bass/mid unit, plus a proprietary hybrid tweeter, which combines a 28mm soft dome unit with a ribbon system that's said to offer extension to 34kHz. The drivers are baffle-mounted and isolated from the main cabinet. Expect a review soon.

**Price** £999 per pair **Due** now ☎ 0845 6443537 #



### TANNOY GLENAIR 10

Tannoy's slender Glenair 10 is the latest model to join its expanding Prestige series. It uses a trapezoidal plywood cabinet (chosen for its density) with a cherry veneered finish and solid wood mouldings. At its heart lies a 250mm proprietary Dual Concentric drive unit, which integrates the tweeter and bass/mid units at source. Tannoy promises "exceptional power handling and dynamic range" from the driver, which uses a paper pulp cone with a substantial die-cast chassis.

**Price** £3,000 per pair **Due** now  
☎ 01236 420199 # www.tannoy.co.uk



### MERIDIAN F80

Here's a refreshing break from the hi-fi norm: a Ferrari-inspired tabletop hi-fi system from Meridian, complete with DVD playback. Dubbed the F80, the radical and racy new one-box package combines a DAB/FM tuner, CD/DVD player, stereo amplification and high-quality speakers in a 2.1-channel configuration, all within a single enclosure.

Described as "a complete home entertainment system", the

F80 delivers 80 watts of power to full-range, custom-made speakers and an integral subwoofer. It also features Meridian DSP technology, which allows users to tune the unit's output to best suit the environment. See next issue for a full *HFC* review.

**Price** £1,495 **Due** now ☎ 01480 445678 # www.meridian-audio.com





## DENON DVD-2930

Professional-grade video processing technology can be yours for just £650, according to Denon. The company's new DVD-2930 universal disc player features Silicon Optix HQV processing and technology derived from the £2,700 DVD-A1XVA flagship model. For audio, there are five Burr-Brown 24-bit/192kHz DACs, a stereo direct mode and separated audio and video boards with individual power supplies.

**Price** £650 **Due** now ☎ 01234 741200 🌐 www.denon.co.uk



## ARCAM DV135

Arcam's new stereo-only universal disc player could be all the player you'll ever need. Not only does it offer SACD and DVD-Audio playback in addition to CD, it delivers enhanced playback of DVD discs, too. The DV135 uses a brand new Zoran scaling chipset, with upscaling to 1080i for film buffs. Based on the DV137, Arcam boasts of "broadcast quality" video circuitry, and audiophiles are treated to ultra high-precision clocking, plus Wolfson DACs and power supplies. There's also HDCD playback and support for MP3 and WMA files.

**Price** £900 **Due** now

☎ 01223 203200 🌐 www.arcam.co.uk



## NEAT MOMENTUM

Neat's new Momentum line-up fills the gap between its Motive and Ultimatum ranges, with key features including drive units from the top-end range. Momentum currently comprises two models, the 3i standmount and the 4i floorstander, the latter exploiting isobaric principles by using two 165mm bass drivers in a hidden chamber. These are complemented by an "ultimatum type" midrange unit and an inverted dome titanium tweeter.

**Price** 3i £1,745 per pair;

4i £2,695 per pair **Due** now

☎ 01833 631021 🌐 www.neat.co.uk



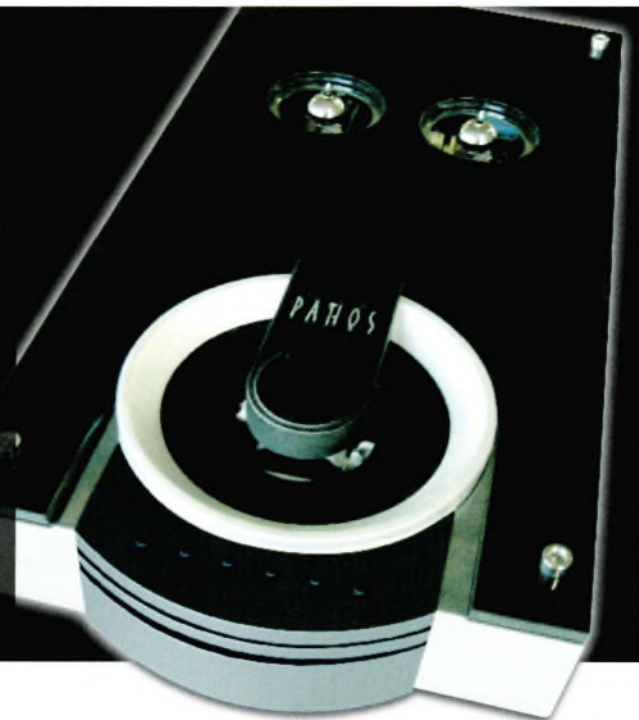
## PATHOS DIGIT

If looks could kill... Pathos' new Digit CD player is a real hi-fi heart-stopper. It shares much of the digital technology seen in the equally stunning Endorphin, with dual-differential 24-bit DACs, plus a fully balanced valve-based output stage. It has been designed to perfectly match the Pathos Classic One amp, which shares the same dimensions and design ethos. Further features include a fully stabilised power supply, XLR balanced and RCA single-ended outputs, plus a coaxial digital output. Expect an exclusive HFC review soon.

**Price** £2,200 **Due** now

☎ 01753 652669

🌐 www.pathosacoustics.com



## Soundbites

**SONY** has launched a new video Walkman MP3 player. The 8GB NW-A800 has a 50mm LCD screen, 30-hour battery life and eight hours continuous video playback. It boasts Bluetooth, allowing you to share music wirelessly. Expect to pay £200.

☎ 08705 111999

**LUMLEY's** high-end Stratosphere turntable is now available in its latest MkII guise, with full production having started on the motor and power supply. The supply is built into solid metal casework, which also allows it to be used as an upgrade to any existing Stratosphere turntable. The new motor assembly utilizes a low-powered motor

with a nylon pulley to drive the main flywheel using a Nylon thread. It is priced at £13,000.

☎ 01435 867438



**CLEARAUDIO** is debuting its new ceramic magnetic bearing in the Performance turntable, supplied with a Satisfy Carbon arm and Maestro MM cartridge for £1,670. The bearing shaft is said to eliminate friction, wear and noise, with significant sonic benefits.

☎ 01252 702705

**KIMBER** has a new top-end interconnect cable called the Kimber Select KS-1036. Using 'Black Pearl' silver conductors, the KS-1036 has 50 per cent more conductors than its predecessor. Prices start at £1,090 for a 0.5m length.

☎ 0845 345 1550

**MONOPULSE** has launched the Model 32S loudspeaker, sporting three drive units in impulse and time alignment. It boasts a piezo super-tweeter, with a frequency response to 30kHz, and comes in a range of colours – all for £895 per pair.

☎ 07785 558238





### The Insider

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

##### ADRIAN LUCAS

**Job Title:** Founder and Head of Marketing  
**Company:** Imerge



#### What is your most exciting product currently in development?

We're following our new MS5000 multiroom audio/video server with a networked media player pretty soon, and this looks very exciting

#### What is the future of hi-fi in the home?

Multiroom access to any piece of recorded music ever created, whether you own, rent or subscribe to a copy of it, together with related imagery and information delivered to a hand-held or wall-mounted screen.

#### What is the best innovation you've encountered recently?

Pandora.com – especially the backstage part of the site. At last, an easier way to find more music that you like.

#### Can 'Generation iPod' be turned on to hi-fi?

I believe if someone gets more enjoyment from their music with higher fidelity equipment then getting turned on to hi-fi will naturally happen.

#### Are audio servers the future?

They are the 'now'. Anyone with a music system or device with instant and random access to their complete collection will know that it can significantly increase enjoyment of their collection. The future of the audio server is that it will likely 'split apart' into component parts of storage, networked players and control: same concept, different implementation.

### Hi-Fi Diary

#### MAY

17-20 High End 2007  
M.O.C. Munich  
www.highendsociety.de  
Europe's leading high-end show

#### JUNE

25-28 CEDIA UK Expo 2007  
ExCel London  
www.cedia.co.uk  
The UK's biggest custom install show

#### SEPTEMBER

21-23 London Sound and Vision Show 2007  
Park Inn, Heathrow  
www.chestergroup.org  
London's finest hi-fi show

## SHOW REPORT

# Bristol Sound & Vision 2007



It was 20 years ago today... Jason Kennedy trawls the 20th Bristol Sound and Vision in search of audiophilia

It was gloomy and wet outside the Bristol Marriott this year, but the foyer was alive with the sound of the annual Sound and Vision show celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Two decades ago, the Linn LP12 was king. This year sees the same turntable get some radical upgrades. The new Keel (£1,950) is a one-piece subchassis, armboard and tonearm collar machined from aluminium, while Ekos SE (£2,950) is a updated version of the classic Linn tonearm with stainless bearing housing and a titanium arm-tube. There's also a new version of the Trampolin (£140) baseboard in aluminium, to complete the revamp.

At the other end of the turntable scale, Rega had a prototype replacement for the P3. It uses the 24-volt motor from the P7/P9 and sports an arm with the working title RB301. This has a three-point mounting, new bearings and upgraded arm cable. The price for the new deck and arm combination will be £400. Rega also showed a prototype phono stage that offers variable gain, loading, DC resistance and filtering.

Pioneer went back to its roots, showing an original A400 amplifier to give us an idea of its aspirations



Chord Electronics revealed two new preamps: the CPA 3000 (£4,999), a slightly cut-down version of the CPA 5000 Reference with AV bypass and four balanced inputs, and the CPA 2500 (£2,999). The latter marks a new 'entry level' for Chord and incorporates its dual bus for independent record and listen facilities. The matching SPM 650 power amp, (£2,990) delivers 130 watts of well-suited power.

## “Two decades ago, the Linn LP12 was king. This year, the same turntable gets radical upgrades.”

for the A-A9 (£699) and A-A6 (£399) amps, with matching PD-D6 (£399) SACD player. The A-A9 is dual-mono right through to its twin toroidal transformers, and offers MM/MC phono inputs with 70 watts of power per side. Another name from the past is Obelisk: an integrated originally made by Ion Systems. This amp is now being made in Hungary by Heed, but with design input from Ion's Richard Hay. The Heed model comes in two variants: Obelisk i (£475) and si (£650) and is a 35-watt design that can be upgraded to 50 watts with the optional xs external power supply (£450).

Exposure revealed decidedly upmarket electronics dubbed MCX, consisting of a CD player, preamp and power amps that are designed to stack, with a cool £15,000 price tag. The player has four separate DAC boards and like the preamp, weighs 20 kilos. The heavier monoblock power amps deliver 300 watts each. Upping the power further still, Bryston showed the mighty 28B SST monoblock (£6,000), which is rated at 1,000 watts and is said to maintain consistent sound from one watt upwards. Needless to say, we want to hear some of that.

AVI talked about its change of philosophy in our April issue (HFC 292) and at Bristol it delivered its AVI-d (for digital) hardware, in the form of the ADM9 monitor (£1,000). This 350-watt active standmount has a built-in DAC and clever onboard amps, accessed via remote control. It is designed to be used with computers as well as hi-fi sources, and has a USB input and output for a subwoofer. More conventional and rather more shiny speakers were found topping out Spendor's range. The ST1 floorstander (£4,500) is inlaid with exotic hardwoods and features a composite Kevlar bass unit and 29mm tweeter, flanking one of the company's trademark translucent midrange cones.

Tannoy finally released its Glenair 10 floorstander (£3,000) with real cherry veneer wrapped around the trapezoidal cabinet. This is the slimmest model in the Prestige range and as the name suggests, carries a ten inch (250mm) variant on Tannoy's established Dual Concentric driver array.

Finally, for entertainment value, Steve Moore and his Free speaker could not be beaten. Steve was dressed like Doug Brady in homage to the dealer's advertising style of the 1980s. Those were the days. **HFC**



## ⊕ New Music

### IN THE STUDIO

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



#### WHITE STRIPES

**Title:** *Icky Thump*

**Due:** summer

The sixth album from Jack and Meg has been recorded in Nashville. Their website offers no explanation of the title other than that "some residents of northern England" might recognise it. Song titles include *Catch Hell Blues*, *Rag And Bone*, and *I'm Slowly Turning Into You*. The same source also reveals that the album will be released "as soon as is corporately possible".

#### DR DRE

**Title:** *Detox*

**Due:** September

The legendary producer and hip-hop's answer to Phil Spector is recording a solo album set to feature cameos from many of the high-profile names whose careers he has assisted, including Snoop, Eminem, 50 Cent, Busta Rhymes, Jay-Z, Mary J Blige and Nas. "I'm trying to get everybody that I've ever worked with over the years to appear," he says.

#### B-52S

**Title:** tbc

**Due:** summer/ autumn

Can it really be 15 years since one-time new wave heroes the B-52s released an album? Indeed it can and the band's Fred Schneider confirms that half of their comeback release has already been recorded at Atlanta's Nickel And Dime Studios. Hopefully that doesn't mean it will be 2022 before the second half of the album is completed.

#### CROWDED HOUSE

**Title:** *Time On Earth*

**Due:** summer

Ten years after they broke up, Neil Finn has announced that Crowded House are reforming. The new line-up includes original member Nick Seymour but not Finn's brother, Tim. When original drummer Paul Hester committed suicide in 2005, Finn



pledged that the band could never reform without him, but has since undergone a change of heart and is currently seeking a new drummer.

#### QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE

**Title:** *Era Vulgaris*

**Due:** June

The wonders of new technology. QOTSA are using their website not only to give fans regular updates on the recording of the follow-up to 2005's *Lullabies To Paralyze* but also to offer in-the-studio video footage of their progress. Guests include members of Nine Inch Nails, the Strokes and ZZ Top and song titles include *Misfit Love*, *Battery Acid* and *Sick, Sick, Sick*.

#### ALSO COMING SOON

##### JAZZ/ CLASSICAL

**Dee Dee Bridgewater** *Red Earth* (Apr); **Jeff Neve Trio** *Nobody Is Illegal* (Apr); **Andrea Bocelli** *Leoncavallo: Pagliacci* (Apr); **Mikhail Pletnev** *Beethoven: Piano Concertos 1 & 3* (Apr)

##### SACD/ DVD-AUDIO

**Lauren White** *At Last* (SACD, Apr); **The Moody Blues** *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (SACD, Apr); **Genesis** *Genesis 1976-1982* (SACD, Apr); **Tonhalle Orchestra (Zinman)** *Mahler: Symphony No 2* (SACD, Apr); **The Pixies** *Surfer Rosa* (SACD, Apr)



1. Bryston 28B SST monoblock power amplifier
2. Chord CPA 2500 preamp and SPM 650 power amp
3. Linn Ekos SE tonearm
4. Pioneer A-A6 integrated amplifier
5. Heed Obelisk si amplifier
6. Steve Moore, with Free loudspeaker
7. Rega's prototype phono stage
8. Exposure MCX system
9. 'New' Rega P3 turntable
10. AVI-d ADM9 monitor





Alan Sircom

## Stereo Stalins

*When good audiophiles turn bad*

**T**here are some times we all seem to forget that this hi-fi stuff is all about enjoying music, having fun and getting girls. Well, enjoying music and having fun; you don't get to impress girls by your infinite knowledge of single-ended triode circuits.

In the process of enjoying music, having fun and (not) getting girls, many of us seem to have lost our way. Suddenly, hi-fi is about the abstract pursuit of a goal of sonic purity. It's about the determination to dig more info from our discs. Somewhere down the audio path, we became a Stereo Stalin.

Uncle Joe destroyed farmland to facilitate a 2,000 per cent increase in the production of tractors; the Stereo Stalin consigns 99.999 per cent of their disc collection to the gulags to find that ten seconds of demonstration-quality

**“It's about the determination to dig more info from our discs. Somewhere down the audio path, we became a Stereo Stalin.”**

sound. Make a critical comment and Stalin would have your head meet with a pistol round; be less than appreciative of the new interconnect cable identifier tags and the Stereo Stalin will spurn you as if you had a combination of leprosy, rabies and halitosis.

Okay, so being a Stalin of the stereo doesn't end with the deaths of tens of millions and comparing being stroppy about hi-fi to one of the world's nastiest dictators is on the offensive side, especially for those who lived to tell the tale. We should never forget that, in a century of genocide, Stalin was more thorough than most. But, the same obsessive, paranoid and almost delusional state that drove Stalin to remove almost anyone who knew him for longer than half an hour is there in the mardy old hi-fi git mentality, only in microcosm.

We should be in almost constant awe that we can drag a diamond through a plastic trench, or turn digital 1s and 0s into analogue electrical signals, and come up with fantastic music as a result. But, because these things are commonplace today, we not only take them for

granted, but also use them to reflect our own misanthropic feelings. I have often experienced the 'were we in the same room?' effect, where everyone else heard hosts of Seraphim and Cherubim, but one guy manages to turn that into "it sounds vile" by sheer strength of will.

I suspect this is jealousy twisting ear canals. It's more comfortable to dislike something you can't afford, than admit you can't afford it. Trouble is, that's only a couple of stages removed from keying the flanks of a parked Porsche, and it's the same justification Stalin used to dispatch Moscow's bright young things to Siberia in the 1930s.

So, if you find people avoid you when you are around hi-fi, stop and think a while. Have you become a Stereo Stalin? If so, play some thoroughly inappropriate music. Try something awful like William Hung, or 'interesting' like Wesley Willis or Joseph Spence. If that won't put a smile back on your face, nothing will.

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





Jon Marks

## Radio rehab

*Trading hi-fi for a bucket of grease*

**H**ave you ever noticed how some people seem to have had their mobile phone permanently grafted on their ear? I count myself as one of those people who would jump at the chance to own a 500kW mobile jammer (sadly illegal) that would terminate within a half-mile radius every conversation that starts, "I'll be home in three minutes, what shall we have for dinner?"

For quite a few people, getting rid of their mobile would be like having a limb amputated (preferably the head, if you can count that as a limb). However, spending a couple of months away from hi-fi has given me the chance to see that I suffer a similar dependency.

One of the problems with owning a fair stack of hi-fi, most of it macho grade, is that when something else bulky turns up chez Marks, there's no more room at the inn. The bulk in question was the latest fix for my other obsession, bicycles. The powers that be had already banned me from dragging any more second-hand audio gear over our threshold, so when a head-turning collection of tasty alloy components and a brand new workstand set my cycling shorts afire, I had to make a tough choice. The result was cold turkey away from my system for a couple of months.

I never thought I could do such a thing, but I found those eight weeks liberating. Since then, all the nightmares about cable choice have disappeared. I no longer wake up in a cold sweat, fists clenching sheets as I realise I forgot to brush the stylus before I went to bed. I don't even worry that my Townshend Seismic stand may be more than 0.01 degrees off level. I'm free to enjoy the music – spending time apart has made me realise that me and my system need our own space from time to time.

I now know that there is a sunlit, tranquil highland of the mind, one where subjectivists and objectivists no longer fight over perceptions and measurements, where DSD and LPCM live happily side by side, where the mains is forever a pure sine-wave unsoftened by RF pollution. For me, it lies in a tub of grease, half-an-acre of bike bits and an entire day spent with a portable, set to Cheesy Tunes FM in

# R

## RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

ARCAM ALPHA 10  
DAB/FM TUNER



In its day, Arcam has been responsible for a surprising number of new and innovative products, often in entirely new areas. Examples include the UK's first (and last) serious cassette deck and a NICAM TV tuner. Its most spectacular coup, however, was the Arcam Alpha 10 DAB tuner – the first domestic tuner to include DAB reception.

The Alpha 10 DAB tuner was first shown in late 1998, and started shipping the following year. As Arcam's founder John Dawson put it to *HFC*: "Like many of our customers, I have grown up with good-quality radio thanks mainly to the BBC, and felt that if we wanted to sell lots of amplifiers we had better be able to supply excellent matching tuners to accompany them. As I saw it at the time, DAB provided, at best, excellent sound quality, ease of use and a wider choice of programmes than FM."

Apart from the formidable set of technical challenges that faced the design team, Arcam realised early on, that ease of use would be a key criterion. The original idea was to produce the tuner as a plug-in PC board that could be simply inserted into the Alpha 10 amplifier. In the end, John Dawson's stroke of genius was to build the tuner into an Arcam Alpha 10 box, using exactly the same front panel as the amplifier, with the same cutouts and controls, but rescreened to suit the new application. This was the reason for the provision of seven presets; the number that could be accommodated within the existing metalwork. Even the two speaker circuit switches were recycled, as FM bypass and a volume knob, and the two-line, twenty character display was rejigged to suit DAB's demands, albeit with a more powerful microprocessor back up. Virtually every DAB tuner that has followed, from other manufacturers as well as Arcam, has used a very similar user interface.

The DAB story was a fraught one for Arcam, and it probably cost the company a lot of money, not just because of the technical challenges involved bringing the enabling technologies to market, but because the early promise of the DAB format, for which John Dawson is an unapologetic enthusiast, were



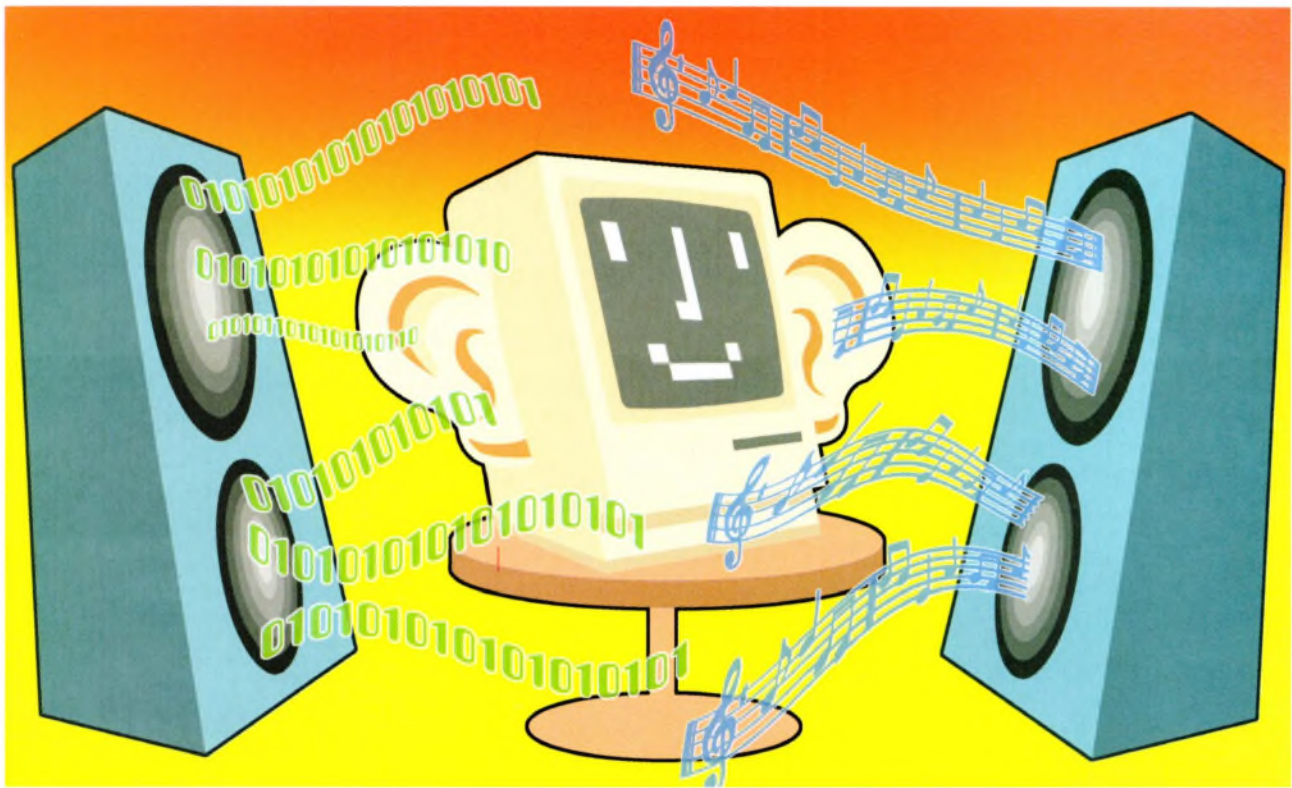
**"Early DAB did not use (as it does now) extensive gain riding to control the overall dynamic range."**

undermined by the broadcast industry's desire to cram too many broadcasts into a narrow frequency spectrum. Early DAB did not use (as it does now) extensive gain riding to control the overall dynamic range, and as John put it, the results at best were awesome. The amount of data reduction involved in the MPEG2 signal processing was also carefully controlled in the early days by using high broadcast data rates, but with the increasing pressure on bandwidth, the inevitable happened, and data rates were trimmed to accommodate the larger number of stations, and sound quality inevitably suffered. It is factors like this that have led to the current poor odour in which DAB broadcasting stands in the audiophile industry. A lot of what is dismissed as bad sound from DAB, may have been through scores of compression and decompression cycles in the studio and transmitter chain before the signal has been broadcast.

Despite the gulf between the early promises for DAB and the current reality, John does not regret the effort that went into the Alpha 10 DAB tuner. Subsequently, Arcam has done well with DAB, and is currently producing a lot of DAB modules for one-box systems like the Solo. Their development was seeded by Arcam's involvement with DAB at the ground floor back with the Alpha 10 project. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*





the background. For others, it may be a long caravanning holiday in Dunstable, or a Polish language course that guarantees some of the best Scrabble hands known to humankind. Whatever your medicine turns out to be, I can confirm there is life beyond hi-fi.

*John 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*



## Freshly squeezed music

*How good are your ears, really?*

It happened; I confess. I tried very hard to be polite, to listen to the arguments, but the fact is that my colleague is a pedant (or a true audiophile, depending on your viewpoint), and I got annoyed. "When it comes to audio, any-and-all compression is bad" is his take on the world. It's a religion. It doesn't matter that he's done no listening tests or analysis; he stands firm.

## "The computer can do the listening tests for me. Opera claims to correlate with results from large groups of human listeners."

I can hear the difference between a CD and the reconstitution that passes for DAB radio, but to say that any sort of compression is bad? So much music is delivered in a compressed format now... can so many people be wrong?

I decided to do some research. Take MP3 encoding, for example. If it's not the most used audio compression method, it's certainly the most well-known. Rumour claims that 320kbps (kilo-bits per second) MP3 is indistinguishable from CD quality by all but 12 people on the entire planet. But just how much can the audio be compressed before it becomes noticeable?

The problem with measuring the audio quality is that, until recently, the only accepted method of doing it was to hold listening tests and I was not going to have the time (or the volunteers) to do much of that – I say 'until recently', because technology has come to our aid in the form of ITU recommendation BS.1387. This describes a computer-based audio-analysis method. It's like this: model human ears on a computer, so allowing the computer to determine how real people would rate the quality of an audio sample. If I give it the right software (I use 'Opera', from German company Opticom), the computer can do the

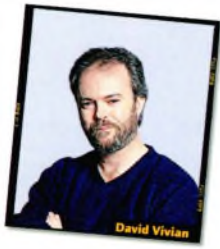
listening tests for me. Opera claims to correlate at 98 per cent with the results from large groups of human listeners.

I sat down in front of my computer with a pile of CDs, my favourite MP3 compression algorithm and a big mug of coffee. We worked our way through several different music genres, a dozen different bit-rates and a significant chunk of my hard disk before we came up with the answer. Not the definitive answer, you understand, for that would depend on the exact listener, but a good guideline. And the answer, as it turns out, is '224'. That's to say that a very large majority of people will be unable to tell the difference between audio compressed in MP3 at 224kbps and the original CD, no matter what type of music is used. Also unless you're one of those blessed with 'golden ears', almost nobody can tell the difference at 320kbps, after all!

So says the computer, anyway. My colleague is unmoved, but I don't get annoyed any more; I know the truth.

*James Clark spent many years working with Arcam. He's now a Cambridge-based Bluetooth technology and applications specialist, but is still fully wired into the world of the audiophile*





## Let them eat cake

*The Hotcake that didn't sell like hot cakes*

**W**ho remembers the Roksan Hotcake? It was described by Roksan back in 1988 as "the versatile loudspeaker for use anywhere in the home". It was cute in its glossy piano black finish, and not bad in its glossy white and graphite finishes, too.

Roksan admitted that, originally, the Hotcake wasn't the sort of product it saw itself selling, but such was the demand from its Japanese distributors for an affordable yet high quality 'applications' speaker, the company went ahead and made one anyway.

We're all familiar with lilliputian satellite speakers packing hi-fi credentials these days; I wrote about Monitor Audio's remarkable Radius 90 pocket rocket a few months ago, but the Hotcakes really were something else. The design depended on being crammed into awkward nooks and crannies to give off its best and its shape – a slightly elongated cube, deeper than it was wide with the forward facing corner sliced off – offered almost limitless possibilities; ranging, literally, from the floor to the ceiling.

It used a single, full range drive unit. This made sense. As well as being cheaper and more space-efficient than multi-driver arrangements, there were sonic benefits, too. The speaker system that doesn't require a crossover network is, like an active system, free from crossover distortion and phase anomalies. As such, it should be more than capable of delivering a cleaner, more immediate and better-integrated sound.

The Hotcake's claimed frequency range (from 90Hz to 22kHz) was nothing to be ashamed of and it was an easy drive with 88dB sensitivity. But did the titchy Hotcakes stand a chance of sounding anything like as good as they looked, or be capable of generating anything that might be mistaken for bass? I hooked them up to my system of the time; Meridian 206 (16-bit) CD player and Naim Nait 2 amplifier, to find out.

First into the drawer was *A Clearer View*, a dazzling but mature jazz fusion set for quintet with leader Jason Rebello on assorted keyboards, acoustic and electronic. And, initially, the Hotcakes sounded simply dreadful, slow, papery and muddled, not unlike a cheap



Many people of a certain age remember the November 1988 edition of *Top Of The Pops* when New Order played their

juddering acid house track *Fine Time*. It wasn't the song's then-novel use of the Roland 303 synthesizer, or its bizarre sampled sheep sound effects that stuck in the memory; rather, it was vocalist Bernard Sumner's freaky dancing.

Suspiciously, there were more than thirty medicinal tablets pictured on the single's cover... were stimulants involved? Welcome to *Fine Time*'s parent album, *Technique*.

In the acid house-soundtracked summer of 1988, Sumner, bassist Peter Hook, drummer Steven Morris and keyboard player Gillian Gilbert, decamped to Ibiza's Mediterranean Studios to record their fifth album.

There had always been a dance element to their rock music – even 1986's downbeat predecessor *Brotherhood* had demonstrated that – but the confluence of ecstasy and the Balearic dance sounds they found on the island would colour *Technique* to a profound degree. "We spent a lot of time there getting off our faces," admitted Sumner in 2001; at least four hire cars were trashed in the process of doing so. Hook agreed "We were out every night with the air-traffic controllers, all dancing, having a great time. We went to every single disco. It was ridiculous."

It's believed that Brian Eno was originally slated to help the group produce the album; when he decided against it, Bez from Happy Mondays came instead. Realising that the lure of perpetual hedonism was not going to give them an album, the band duly completed recording in the less frenzied surroundings of Real World studios in Wiltshire.

But, if only the druggy, lascivious *Fine Time* would count as an out-and-out dance tune, the texture and ambience of *Technique* was defined by the band's two months in Ibiza. It remains a masterful union of technology and songwriting, with some of Sumner's finest guitar playing – on *Vanishing Point* and *All The Way* – the familiar New Order mix of melody, enigma and vulnerability were lightened and warmed up.



**"We were out every night with the air-traffic controllers, all dancing, having a great time."**

Though lyrically weighty – the singer was going through a marital break-up at the time – there is a listener-friendliness that can be gauged by country singer John Denver taking legal action after he thought *Run* was too much like his hit *Leaving On A Jet Plane*.

"It's very much a rock album," Hook would later opine, "but it has the upness, the specialness of all the things that we were in the middle of." Hook would add that the unified quality of mood and sound was thanks to 1960s singer PJ Proby suggesting they make all the songs in the same key (Hook had earlier produced a little-known version of Joy Division's *Love Will Tear Us Apart* for Proby).

In February 1989, *Technique*'s entry into the album charts at number one would mark New Order's commercial zenith. Thereafter, each member took part in side-projects, only to regroup for 1993's underwhelming *Republic*.

By this time the group's co-owned Manchester nightclub the Hacienda had been tainted by a drug-related death and the attentions of local gangsters, and Factory Records had gone to the wall.

*Technique*, however, endures. Interested parties should pay a visit to YouTube and revisit the TOTP-performance of *Fine Time*. Bernard's dancing isn't that outrageous really, but the music still sounds astonishing. **HFC**

Ian Harrison

# M

## MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

NEW ORDER  
TECHNIQUE



office intercom PA system. A little experimentation with positioning, however, worked miracles. Pushed well into the corners of my study, the sound suddenly sprang to life, gaining pace, weight, projection, a convincingly even tonal balance and an easy sense of musical flow. Voice sounded clean and articulate, treble slightly diffuse but well extended and bass surprisingly solid, even making a fair fist of the bottom octave.

In fact, I got very attached to the little Hotcakes and used them for many years after Roksan stopped making them. Where are they now? Perhaps I didn't mention they could handle only 30 watts. One day, when they were playing quietly in the background, my young son James gave a big old tug on the Nait's volume knob and blew the drive units to kingdom come. Hot indeed.

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



## Ecomentalism

*Kill the lightbulb... murder the sound*

Suddenly, light bulbs have made the headlines. The EU had just made an announcement that is ridiculous even by the standards of this ludicrous organisation.

A pillar of the EU's plan to save the planet from global warming is to prohibit the sale of incandescent (tungsten filament) lightbulbs in three years' time, in favour of so-called 'low energy' fluorescent bulbs (each of which uses a miniature 'switch-mode' power supply).

Ironically, four weeks previously, I replaced all the 'low energy' bulbs in my listening room with 'old-fashioned' filament types, to maximise sound quality by reducing the pollution of my household mains. The improvement wasn't dramatic, but it was worthwhile, and only serves to emphasise how modern developments in electronics are often eroding the potential of our hi-fi systems.

I wouldn't go so far as to say that hi-fi is incompatible with low energy lightbulbs, as I'm sure the effects of any interference will vary from one system to another. But enthusiasts would do well to check out whether their own systems are adversely affected.



## "I replaced all the 'low energy' bulbs in my listening room with 'old-fashioned' filament types, to maximise sound quality."

Sure, a fluorescent type will produce more light and less waste heat than an incandescent type of the same power (wattage). This makes lots of sense for street lighting, but in British homes 'waste' heat is only 'wasted' during the summer months, when there's no need to heat the house. During the winter, the heat from lightbulbs has no net impact, merely replacing what would otherwise be supplied by the heating (assuming thermostatic control).

Even if the power consumption factor might save a small amount of electricity during the summer months, other obvious issues show just how poorly thought through the idea of forcing change really is. These complex miniature fluorescents clearly need much greater manufacturing energy input than an incandescent bulb. And their use of toxic mercury vapour adds further environmental concerns over ultimate disposal. Furthermore, nothing has yet been said about the millions of light fittings using spotlight and halogen bulbs, for which no fluorescent equivalent exists: scrapping all these would have enormous political and waste implications.

This lightbulb scenario is just one example of the stupidity of government initiatives, and their negative impact on the hi-fi scene. One could cite other examples, such as the RoHS (Removal of Hazardous Substances) initiative, which has banned the use of relatively tiny amounts of lead in solder and other components, while every rainstorm washes far more off the roofs of our buildings (see Graham Slee's website for a fuller discussion).

My worry is that the ignorance of green headline-grabbing politicians will ultimately find some way of irrevocably and terminally screwing up our hi-fi systems. They are already planning the end of the stand-by button. Don't say you haven't been warned.

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



## Sexytime!

*Is there a link between hi-fi and jiggy-jiggy?*

I looked up from the Editor's email. "Tim wants a *Dispatches* piece. What shall I write about?" "Sex" suggested my wife... I've never yet regretted marrying her.

Leave aside those cheap cracks about 'sexy' appearance, or the manhood enhancement that vast power amps allegedly provide, and consider instead the purpose and value of music. Why do we listen to music? It makes us feel good. But that simple explanation risks



trivialising the art. I like to quote the late composer Alan Bush, a man skilled in both music and rhetoric, who said in a lecture, "There exist in the world, societies in which there is not enough to eat, where the gathering of food is a daily, full-time occupation. These societies still have music. The only possible conclusion one can draw is that music is as important as food."

Many anthropologists have made the connection between music, particularly music to accompany dancing, and sex. Dancing is basically a stylised courtship ritual and music its invariable accompaniment. Singing, too, is often associated with various fertility rites. It's pretty clear that the function of music, when it first appeared on the scene, was not unrelated to reproduction and the cycle of life. If that's its root, then no wonder it is deep-seated within us as something of great importance.

But surely, in this technological age, we've left all that behind? Personally, I'm not so sure. For one thing, there are definitely aspects to humanity that are still distinctly animal, for instance our behaviour in (or in respect of) large groups of people. For another, do you actually want to leave behind all our instincts? In that case, you might as well leave music out of your life altogether.

Technology has not forced us to give up anything from our ancestral heritage, but it has made new things possible including listening to music whenever and wherever we want. So we have this elemental force, intrinsically related to life itself, on tap. Surely that does put some demands on the quality of the reproducing equipment?

What I'm getting around to here is that music is not, and should not be, something vaguely pretty but purely incidental. It is powerful and, in the true sense of the word, essential, and deserves our proper and full attention. Replaying it via the wonders of technology is a privilege and the whole process should be treated with respect (the fact that all of us treat music as a background from time to time doesn't change that).

Using inferior audio equipment is in a very real sense emasculating the music – removing some of the magic that relates it to our deepest feelings including, let's admit it, our sex drive. It's no empty cliché that musicians are a highly-sexed bunch: I've hung around with various bunches of professionals over the years and the musos score highest in that regard by some margin. Yes, hi-fi (like any hobby) can develop into a nerdy obsession, but behind it lies a deep-rooted connection with our most basic urges. Don't frustrate their potency!

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

# TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

HEADROOM



We've touched on subjects related to headroom in earlier *Technos*, but never discussed it explicitly. The term means spare

dynamic range above the maximum expected level. In practice, though, headroom is not always a good or necessary thing. It all depends on what is meant by 'expected'.

At a recording session, the maximum sound level generated by the performers (acoustic ones, anyway) is not fixed. One takes a sound level check by asking them to perform a loud bit, but the experienced engineer knows that this may be exceeded in the heat of the moment and allows some headroom for it. In other words, the recording level is set so that the sound level check causes the meters to peak at something around -3 to -6dB, where 0dB is overload. As a result, there is a notional headroom of between 3 and 6 dB, but there is also a very real possibility of it being used.

The recording is taken away, edited and mastered and in the process the maximum level actually recorded will be obvious. It is usual to boost the overall level of the edited recording so that the loudest moment peaks just below overload, giving a headroom of effectively nothing (0.2dB, or about 2 per cent, is typical). This makes sense as there is obviously no possibility of the level exceeding that unexpectedly. CD players are designed to handle full level without overload, so eliminating headroom simply makes use of the full dynamic range, lowering effective noise levels.

CD players can be designed with the certainty of what constitutes full level because the digital code is limited in its maximum output. Amplifiers need a little headroom on their inputs only because different CD players have slightly different analogue output levels.

LPs are more complicated than CDs, partly because the peak level that can be cut depends on the cutting equipment. The output of cartridges varies a lot too, so amps must be designed to handle this. The balance between gain, noise and headroom is quite a tricky one.



**“At a recording session, the maximum sound level generated by the performers is not fixed.”**

At the amplifier's output, the situation is complicated by the fact that we set volume by ear, to suit our personal preference, but basically if peak output from the CD player, at normal volume setting on the amp, doesn't cause clipping, then any headroom is irrelevant – it will not be used. The same is true of speakers, at least in terms of power handling rather than power output.

So is it worth having any headroom in an amp/speaker combination? Assuming you never want to use it to accompany a noisy party (!), the answer is still yes. The best recordings have a wide dynamic range and you may end up turning up the volume to make quiet and medium-level bits sound plausible.

At peaks, you will need more power than usual, even though it won't sound as 'loud' as compressed pop. But the bottom line is this: for all digital sources at least, there is a volume setting on your amplifier which corresponds to maximum output just short of overload.

Any setting below that point has 'headroom' (or unused dynamic range), any setting above risks distortion at peaks. Analogue sources (including, of course, the analogue output of CD players) and live recordings have their own peculiarities, but for any replay source with an absolute limit on its output, the concept of headroom has limited use. **HFC**

*Richard Black*





# KRELLS ANGELS

## THE EVOLUTION CHAPTER

Since launching the legendary **KSA-50** amplifier a quarter of a century ago, **Krell** have established themselves as the absolute world leaders in the design of high end audio electronics, rocking the establishment over the years with novel technologies that have redefined the way we listen to music.

In 2005, chief designer Dan D'Agostino took the audio community by storm with the introduction of the stunning eight-chassis **Evolution One** and **Evolution Two** amplification systems, a creation that represented his ultimate strike of genius on the high end, and received accolades all over the world.

What's more, it doesn't stop there: this year sees the launch of a complete new range of **Krell Evolution** pre- and power amplifiers - plus two exciting source components and an extraordinary unique integrated amplifier.

Out go the sharp heatsinks, in comes the most beautiful casework ever seen, housing technology that delivers totally lifelike music, with nothing added and nothing taken away. Included in the line-up are the **Evolution 505** CD/SACD player, the **Evolution 525** audio-video source, the **Evolution 202** two-chassis preamplifier with the **Evolution 222** single case version, the **Evolution 402** stereo amplifier plus the incredibly powerful **Evolution 600** and **900** monoblocs.

For the home theatre, there is the powerful **Evolution 403** three-channel amplifier and the **Evolution 707** processor, a reference model that is without equal, and demonstrates Krell's passion for unparalleled performance and innovation.

Attracting huge interest and praise is the unique **FBI** Fully Balanced Integrated amplifier. Aimed at those who desire the superb performance of the long-established Class 'A' Krell **FPB** series in a single chassis, this is the true master of all integrated amplifiers.

**KRELL** the badge of prestige, passion and excellence. Call **Absolute Sounds** for full details.



EVOLUTION 402



EVOLUTION 505



EVOLUTION 222

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www.absolutesounds.com info@absolutesounds.com







# SYSTEM FILE

*John Endicott isn't content with one system... he has four in one room!*

## THE SYSTEMS

**System One:** Marantz CD6000 OSE CD player, PM6010 KI Sig amp, IPL STL3 loudspeakers

**System Two:** Arcam CD73 CD player, A65 amp, Sony STD-777ES tuner, Tannoy Revolution R2 speakers, B&W ASW300 sub

**System Three:** Cambridge Audio 640C CD player, 640A amp, Monitor Audio Bronze B2 speakers, Yamaha VST-SW90 sub

**System Four:** Denon DM31 micro system, KEF Q1 speakers, unnamed Aiwa sub

**Home made:** cables, weights, modifications



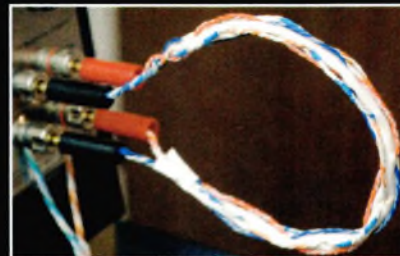
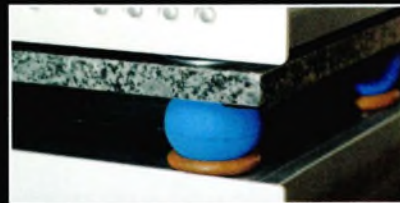
John Endicott is an engineer. Not specifically a hi-fi engineer, but an engineer nonetheless. He approaches all things with the sensibilities of the engineer. And that, perhaps more than anything else, explains John's brace of systems.

You see, where for most people, hi-fi is something to buy and upgrade over the years, John modifies. He rebuilds, remodels and redesigns, approaching good solid engineer's thinking throughout.

That's why every CD player sits on a combination of marble slab, squash balls and curtain rings (to stop the squash balls from wandering). That's why, instead of loading the interior of the loudspeaker with lead shot, diver's weights rest on top of the cabinets. That's why the cables are his own special recipe of winding and weaving and plastic tubing as spacer. Who cares if there's four or more separate systems in the room? Each one's carefully sorted and sounds slightly different.

## EACH TO THEIR OWN

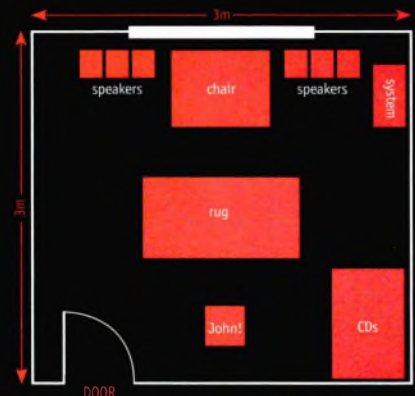
There's the Cambridge Audio/Monitor Audio/Yamaha system, which sounds detailed and extended. There's the Arcam/Tannoy/B&W system, which sounds smoother in the treble but fuller through the midrange. There's the Marantz/IPL system (IPL was the early transmission line specialist), which takes the bass and runs with it, perhaps at the expense of the mid and top. And then there's the Denon/KEF/Aiwa system, which just sounds light and entertaining. Each has its place and each has been extensively modified by John. In fact, the only bit not heavily modded is a Sony tuner. Not that it has stayed untouched!



Remarkably, it all kind of works. John has an eclectic mix of rock music and no one system is good at playing all genres. Yes, he could probably trade in everything and buy a more upmarket system that did more, better. But that would defeat the object... and take away the fun of playing.

There will be no 'one system', then. Everything is a 'work in progress'. John's cables, his speaker modifications and everything else are constantly evolving and improving. Which is all that any good audiophile should strive for. **HFC**

*Alan Sircom*



## C'MON - JOIN IN THE FUN!

If you'd like your system to be featured in *System File*, simply write a 'review' of your system consisting of 500 words or less and send it to: System File, Hi-Fi Choice, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. Or email it to: [hifisub@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:hifisub@futurenet.co.uk) (please include your name and address). If we pick you, you'll get a visit from one of our reviewers, plus a special 'goody bag' consisting of a Hi-Fi Choice T-shirt, IsoTek's System Enhancer CD and Russ Andrews' Sound Solutions book... so get writing!





The world according to...

# John Jeffries

This month, Hi-Fi Choice talks to **John Jeffries**, the hi-fi manufacturer, importer and retailer who runs *Sounds of Music*, *Metropolis* and *Lumley*. Interview: Malcolm Steward

**M**ost people in the hi-fi industry are retailers, manufacturers or distributors: few fall into all three categories. John Jeffries is an exception in that not only is he a successful retailer at his East Sussex-based store, *Sounds of Music*, but he also imports many exotic brands through his distribution company, *Metropolis*. If that were not enough to keep him busy, he also manufactures loudspeakers and a turntable, the Lumley Stratosphere.

Before going to his home to hear the towering, £35,000 Lumley Lampros Concert Grand loudspeakers – in the acoustically engineered living room that doubles as his store's eighth demonstration room, I met John at *Sounds of Music*, which was filled to

overflowing with the sort of exotic that reduces hard-core audiophiles to drooling, gibbering wrecks.

Lest you imagine this is a rich man's playground, John pointed out that his systems start around the £1,500 mark for a Quad or Vincent set-up. After that, though, the sky truly becomes the limit and you could easily dispose of £200,000 for a top of the range system.

**HFC** Let me start by asking how you got to be here: where did your journey into hi-fi begin?

**JJ** I've been involved in hi-fi since the early 1950s. My father had a radio and television shop in Eastbourne that he started in 1936 and I used to help him in that when I was a boy. After I gained an interest in music, I found that I was always involved with it in some way or another. I had the usual pop group, in which I was a budding Clapton, of course, but like millions of others, we never quite made it.

My father introduced me to the famous Pye Black Box, which was like the Dansette. But the Pye was really The Thing in the late 1950s and early 1960s: it was beautifully made and it sounded fantastic – in mono, of course. Then we stocked Heathkit and Sinclair and that was what started me in hi-fi.

My father retired in the early 1970s and I took over the business, turning Jeffries Radio into Jeffries Hi-Fi. We sold Naim and Linn and leading products of the day including the 'ugly frog', which was our name for the Sugden A48. I got out of retail in 1978, when I sold the shop to Kevin Maxfield, and concentrated on making loudspeakers and amplifiers. I also got involved in importing equipment – for example, the Basis turntable and the legendary Dahlquist

loudspeaker, which I still rate as one of the finest speakers of all time – in fact, one loudspeaker I currently import was designed by Lars Hansen who was a Dahlquist employee. Then I bought out Ray Lumley and made the Lumley amplifiers and speakers: we still produce small quantities of the speakers to this day. And that is how I got here.

**HFC** What drove you back to retail?

**JJ** We made the Lumley amplifiers for about 10 years – and I still have the prototype of a single-valve, 100W, single-ended design that I think is the best amplifier I've heard. It was designed by Brighton University with my input, but I couldn't generate enough business to develop the company, so I decided to mix some importing with it. I thought that it would be nice to have an outlet for these other bits and pieces – along with Lumley throughout the country and here in the South East. At that time, I didn't think there were sufficient dealers interested in high-end products. So I started retailing from home, but that really didn't allow me to provide the service that I thought was necessary for high-end equipment. That led me to open a shop in Tunbridge Wells called *Sounds of Music*. That business grew and I had to move to other premises, spread over five floors: that wasn't ideal and I eventually moved the store to its present location.

I felt, five or 10 years ago, that retail premises didn't offer the facilities or wealth of equipment that people might like to compare. Then I found these premises on a small industrial estate, which offer seven demonstration rooms and plenty of storage and, even in these reasonably difficult times, they're working very well for us.



No matter the size of speaker, John Jeffries can tame it with just one elbow

**“I started retailing from home, but that really didn't allow me to provide the service necessary for high-end equipment.”**



**HFC** What do you offer customers that, perhaps, other dealers might not?

**JJ** I don't want to criticise any other retailers, but I don't think that many adopt the right approach to selling high-end equipment: for example, many sell one item against another. We do things slightly differently and I think the success of our methodology is demonstrated by our customer base and the customers who keep coming back to buy more.

**HFC** It seems to me that your customers aren't the type of people who are looking to buy, say, a Denon receiver and a pair of Mission speakers: they're typically looking for something far more esoteric?

**JJ** If I'm honest, we struggle to sell anything under £500 (or even £1,000) per component. We can do a £1,500 to £2,000 system, but we can't do much less. The problem is that you can now buy starter-type systems in a supermarket. And there's no point in trying to compete with Richer Sounds and Sevenoaks. I'm trying to do something different – different to survive in business and different to give something special to the customers.

**HFC** You say that systems are dependant upon the room in which they operate.

**JJ** I believe that the room contributes possibly 90 per cent to the performance of a system. Our rooms are all built to the best specifications, yet I know that our demonstrations are only a representation of how the systems will sound in the purchasers' home. That's why we run our famous Blue Book Trial scheme. When the customer comes to us we try first to establish his budget – and we never try to up-sell him or push his budget up. We then select suitable systems for him to test and to see whether we can get close to the sound he likes in the store. Then we take a non-refundable deposit before delivering the system with other components that the customer might like to compare in his own home. If that system doesn't work, we start again. We virtually always find a system that can satisfy but it might take us quite a long time. When the customer is happy with the sound, he's getting at home, we take his balance payment and replace his system with the same but all-new components.

**HFC** Is most of your business local?

**JJ** Yes, and I try to keep it that way. Having said that, we do business out of the area but it is not Metropolis business: if someone in Newcastle enquires about, say, a Hovland set-up, I refer him to our Newcastle dealer. Should a customer phone Sounds of Music about a Metropolis product, then, again, we refer him to his local dealer. That doesn't mean that we won't deal





with anyone anywhere in the country: we'll sell second-hand products or those that are nothing to do with Metropolis. Even so, we have no desire to flood the country with our products, service or the way we operate. We get the odd customer from outside our area, but mainly we keep to the South East and London and we find that works very well indeed.

**HFC** Sorry, but I'm a little mixed-up here. Can you explain the differences between your various operations?

**JJ** Sounds of Music is the retail business, which deals with products from Quad, Absolute Sounds and others, including Metropolis. Metropolis is my import business, which supplies Sounds of Music and about 20 UK retailers. And I have to point out that many of those retailers are old friends and we get along very well. They know that I don't use my position to undercut them or to steal sales from them. The third 'hat' I wear is Lumley, which is a very small-scale manufacturing business, predominantly producing loudspeakers. I've always been involved with and enjoyed 'playing with' them: remember that I was part of Nightingale Acoustics in the 1970s. Some years ago, however, I designed a turntable and we sold about 20 of them so I recently redesigned it with a new bearing and many special features and it's selling well and has just received a fabulous review.

The best part of all these businesses, though, is the camaraderie that's involved, and banter that comes with it. A lot of people consider the

Lumleys I have at home to be the best loudspeaker they've ever heard, but my colleague, who brings in the Rockport loudspeakers, constantly tells me that I need to get rid of them. Sadly, nothing has beaten them until just recently when I heard the Rockport Altairs: they are quite unbelievable, easily the best loudspeaker I have ever heard. My Lumleys still do things that they Altairs don't, but the Altairs are truly wonderful. But they do cost £62,000 a pair... while the Lumleys are just (!) £35,000.

During the past few years I've continued 'playing' with amplifiers and Brighton University approached me a while ago about funding and helping with a joint venture. The result was a single-ended, single-valve, 100wpc, pure Class-A amplifier, that I have at home in prototype form. I never actually managed to turn it from a prototype into a saleable form at the time, but we're just about to do it: the reasons were the huge costs involved with WEEE and RoHS (legislation). It's such a special beast, though: first of all, it gives three kW on top of the valve, so touch it and you're dead instantly. It has to be well protected, but the sound... amazing!

**HFC** So, you're doing well in the high end and that market is still buoyant?

**JJ** The high end hasn't really changed much: it's always been there and it is, if anything, getting slightly stronger. I don't think that the number of customers is increasing, but I think those that are there are becoming fussier and

want things that are genuinely better: and they can recognise those products that are legitimately better. The high end will be there for a long, long time. Yes, we do a bit of AV, but 90 per cent of our business is stereo: and that's not because we have our heads in the sand; that's just the way the market has gone. Other retailers might criticise me for saying that – probably those that have gone down the AV path – but most of our business is in stereo. And that might well be because we're one of the few dealers who still do stereo properly, which is why people come to us and buy it!

*At this point, we left John's store and drove the short distance to his home where he has his eighth demonstration room, housing the infamous Lumley speakers, for an all-too-brief session raiding his music collection. During this interlude, we discussed the room which has been completely tailored and treated for sound, even to the point of having no central heating radiators, which John described as "a very bad thing to have in a room." Sadly, I neglected to ask whether that was because they adversely affect the sound or merely because he dislikes dry atmospheres. One thing we did discuss, however, was his preference for firing the speakers across the room's short dimension rather than along the length of the room.*

**JJ** Firing down the length of the room is totally wrong. Whenever I go to a customer's house where the speakers are firing down the length of the room, the sound is dreadful. My ideas might well conflict with the 'science' and 'accepted wisdom' but, in all the years during which I've been setting up systems, I've always had the best results with the speakers firing across the room. It loses a lot of the imperfections that the room produces that way.

Anyway, let's listen to some more music before I get started on how dreadful re-issued recordings are – they're all rubbish. I have a lot of original recordings – classical and rock on vinyl – and I've bought re-issues and just could not believe how flat and uninteresting some truly great albums have become. It's the same with CDs where the re-issues seem lifeless and poor compared to the original recordings. I don't know what the engineers are listening on, or for, for that matter!

By this time, the conversation had degenerated to two sad old audiophiles talking about the exuberance of Art Pepper's original *Meets the Rhythm Section*... So I decided it was time to head for home, to allow John and me to get on with our 'real' lives and take our respective wives out for dinner. Subsequent to a quick blast of that marvellous – original – LP, to put me in an appropriately chilled mood. **HFC**

**“It gives three kW on top of the valve, so touch it and you're dead instantly. It has to be well protected, but the sound... amazing!”**



After fifty years in the business, John Jeffries can find the volume control without looking





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# AN IMERGE SOUNDSERVER S3000 WORTH £2,000!



**T**his issue, *Hi-Fi Choice* has a truly exceptional prize for one lucky reader: a 160GB version of Imerge's incredible SoundServer S3000. We were hugely impressed with the S3000 in the March issue (*HFC* 291), concluding that this fabulously flexible music server proves that hard-disk audio and hi-fi can sit side by side. This particular twin-output version gives independent simultaneous outputs to two zones in the home and can store 240 hours (around 300 CDs) of uncompressed music, or around 2,900 hours of MP3 files at 128kbps, (some 40,000 songs). Imerge offers high-quality music server options from as little as £1,600, giving users the option to alter the specification to suit their needs. We didn't hesitate in giving this fabulous player a coveted Editor's Choice badge... and now you can perfectly archive your favourite music in style.

In addition, and making this prize extra special, Imerge will deliver, install and demonstrate the prize in your own home – what a prize! For your chance to win, simply answer the question below. The lucky winner will be drawn at random after the closing date.

## QUESTION:

**What is the Imerge S3000 based on?**

- A:** A hard disk
- B:** A hard cheese
- C:** A hard hat

## TO ENTER:

**By Phone:** Simply call **0906 703 1401** and follow the instructions (maximum cost of call: £1.50).

**By Text:** Simply send the text message **IMERGE** (followed by a space) with the answer A, B or C to **84383**. For example, if you think the answer is C: A hard hat, then text **IMERGE C** to 84383.

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The competition start date is 05 April 2007. The closing date for entries is 02 May 2007. Employees of Future Publishing (including freelancers) and their relatives and any agents involved are ineligible to enter. The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be exchanged for cash. The entries will be judged after the closing date and the winners will be notified by telephone within ten days of that date. Prizes will be sent out within 28 days of notification by the companies involved, not Hi-Fi Choice or Future Publishing. Entering costs – BY TEXT: 1x £1.00 (including VAT) for each entry plus your usual text message cost. This service is available to T-Mobile, Orange, Vodafone and O2 customers only. BY PHONELINE: Each call costs a maximum of £1.50. Please remember to get permission from the person who pays the bill before you enter. No purchase necessary. Alternatively, please send your name, address and telephone number with the correct answer to: Hi-Fi Choice, Future Publishing, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. If you have any problems making your call or sending your text, please contact the service provider, Opal Telecom Tel: 0845 330 5002. Email: [futuresupport@opaltelecom.co.uk](mailto:futuresupport@opaltelecom.co.uk)



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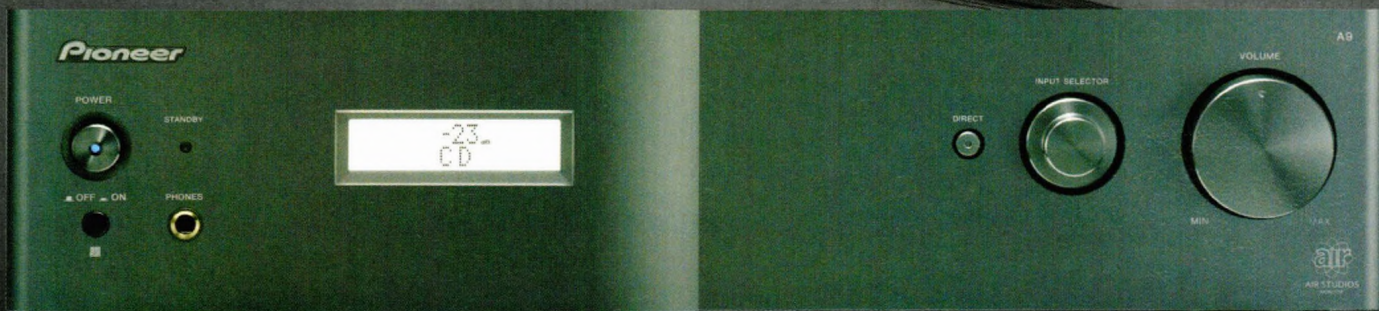
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# ChoiceCuts



This month's varied musical morsels

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



## AUDIOPHILE VINYL

### STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

Texas Flood

Epic/Pure Pleasure

2x180g vinyl



Music: *Texas Flood* not only made Vaughan's name, it also put blues rock back on the map, paving the way for acts like ZZ Top to take the genre to the top of the charts. Originally a

ten track single LP, it now includes a later Epic/Legacy CD, which extends it to four sides. This adds three live tracks and an alternate take of *Tin Pan Alley*. But, even on the original LP, there is some blistering playing on a selection of tunes that are relatively high-tempo but always solid, thanks to the intensity of Double Trouble's backing. If you want tight and powerful blues rock, this is it. ★★★★★

Sound: This is a solid-sounding pressing that outguns the standard issue in terms of focus and bass power. The live tracks are a little compressed, but *Tin Pan Alley* is as open and crisp as ever. ★★★★★ JK

### BUCK CLAYTON

How Hi The Fi

Columbia/Pure Pleasure

2x180g vinyl



Music: This double album was made in 1953/54 by two different line ups, the one man to feature on both sessions was trumpet player Clayton, hence the subtitle A

*Buck Clayton Jam Session*. Many members of Count Basie's band are featured, which is probably why the producer George Avakian describes the playing as Kansas-style. The music was recorded live in front of a small audience and is upbeat and spontaneous – if you want to hear what jazz was before things got heavy, it's a breath of fresh air. ★★★★★

Sound: Given its era, you will not be surprised to hear that this is a mono recording, but as a result there's plenty of timbral and dynamic energy to enjoy. The first two sides, featuring Woody Herman, are a bit stronger than the earlier Kansas style ones but there's no shortage of life in either. ★★★★★ JK

LPs were supplied by Pure Pleasure  
© www.purepleasurerecords.com

## COMPACT DISC & VINYL



### NEIL YOUNG

Live At Massey Hall

Reprise

Music: The blandness of modern male singer-songwriters has devalued the currency of late, so slip back to this magisterial, previously unreleased solo performance from Toronto 1971.

Accompanied by just solo piano or acoustic guitar, Young's intensity is overwhelming, the passion is palpable and there's both magic and real danger in the air on such haunted songs as *Don't Let It Bring You Down* and *The Needle And The Damage Done*. Many of the songs eventually ended up on the multi-platinum *Harvest*, but the spruced-up studio versions didn't sound as riveting as they do here. ★★★★★

Sound: Simple, direct and totally reliant on the ambience of the room, as stoned, rambling intros miraculously give way to pristine songs delivered with a focus that's as sharp as a knife. ★★★★★ NW



### THE CINEMATIC ORCHESTRA

Ma Fleur

Ninja Tune

Music: TCO main man Jason Swinscoe quit Paris for New York last year and the move has inspired yet another 'imaginary movie'. The music is largely instrumental but there are vocal turns from Fontella Bass, Lou Rhodes, Lamb and new tenor warbler Patrick Watson. There are elements of jazz in the brushed drums, double bass and congas, but this is a tightly controlled set with little room for improvisation. The mood is hushed and melancholy, but there's a gentle sense of uplift throughout. ★★★★★

Sound: Recording took place across continents, trading music files with musicians in the UK and US, but this hasn't led to any obvious loss of quality, and there's a broad sense of sweep to the accessible but deceptively complex arrangements. ★★★★★ DO



### THE PENTANGLE

The Time Has Come 1967-1973

Sanctuary

Music: More innovative than Fairport Convention and rockier than Steeleye Span, The Pentangle combined an outright experiment in melding folk, jazz, ethnic, blues and early music. It all came to a head on the tour-de-force 1969 album *Basket Of Light*, but constant touring led to a stifling of creative juices. This box set includes TV and film work, out-takes, B sides, radio sessions and more, all showing The Pentangle were really the British equivalent of The Grateful Dead. ★★★★★

Sound: Compiled by archivist Colin Harper and remastered by Cormac O'Kane in Belfast and Tony Dixon in London, this is the best Pentangle sound ever caught on disc. The upright bass, sitar and drum interplay on, for example, *Once I Had A Sweetheart* is just devastating. ★★★★★ MP



### BEBEL GILBERTO

Momento

Zingiboom/V2

Music: Playing a new record by Gilberto, whose 2000 debut *Tanto Tempo* was the third-biggest selling Brazilian album in chart history, is rather like opening up an expensive box of confectionery. Everything is meltingly rich and exquisitely presented if rather soft-centred, but there's real bite and a profoundly lingering after-taste to her warm, summery bossa nova tunes, too. On her third solo release, her silky, down-tempo voice is beautifully underpinned by shimmering washes of synthesised beats cleverly mixed with organic acoustic instruments. For the first time she's written most of the material herself, although a wonderful bossa-jazz version of Cole Porter's *Night & Day* provides one of the most heart-stopping moments. Sheer class. ★★★★★

Sound: Recorded in London, Rio and New York, British producer Guy Sigsworth is among those adding subtle touches of electronica to the sultry Brazilian rhythms on several tracks. ★★★★★ NW



### VARIOUS ARTISTS

Keeping The Faith – 40 Years Of Northern Soul

Sanctuary

Music: This box set has a hundred indie soul gems from the late 1960s and very early 1970s that would, on original vinyl, set you back five figures – for the artists here include the Show-Stoppers, the tragic Major Lance, the legendary Bobby Womack, George Clinton's funky Parliaments and the passionately soulful JJ Barnes (the man Motown always feared would eclipse Marvin Gaye). All in all, a pretty damn good job of 'keeping the faith'. ★★★★★

Sound: There's a tremendous variance here between those productions that sonically match the very best of the contemporary Atlantic and Stax grooves and those that sound like they were cut in a toilet in Harlem. Play loud and be prepared for surprises. ☆☆☆ PS





## THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "Cleaner, fresher and more open"

**BOB DYLAN** The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 Columbia

**Music:** Bob Dylan's Bootleg Series has run to seven volumes now but the first is still probably the best and contains the broadest selection of his work under one title. These are mostly rarities released for the Dylanophile, yet because of the quality of his output this is all fabulous stuff even for the uninitiated. *Tangled Up in Blue* in its scratchy acoustic guitar-backed form sounds so much clearer than it does on *Blood On The Tracks*, the emotional communication significantly stronger. If you

haven't discovered Dylan, this may not be an obvious starting point but it's a very strong one. If you have, then prepare to be enthralled once again. ★★★★★

**Sound:** The often raw recordings of the Bootleg Series sound cleaner, fresher and more open than the original albums. It also helps that they frequently feature less instrumentation, leaving the voice and guitar to shine through with great clarity and precision. ★★★★★ JK



**ROBERTO FONSECA**  
Zamazu

Enja/Montuno

**Music:** Cuba's Buena Vista Social Club is renowned for the liveliness of its octogenarian performers, including the late singer Ibrahim Ferrer, but several members of the band are much younger. One of the youngest (and arguably one of the coolest, in a line-up of distinctly cool individuals) is pianist Roberto Fonseca, who is only now releasing his debut solo album. He cooks up a compelling stew of traditional Cuban and other Latin rhythms, jazz and a few classical influences in a blend that seems to be constantly fizzing with ideas and possibilities. Other BV members, including bass maestro Cachaito Lopez and singer Omara Portuondo, help out on a record that gives the impression of taking the BV template to the next level. All of which serves to demonstrate that there's more to Cuban music than the older generation. ★★★★★

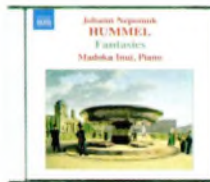
**Sound:** Recorded in Cuba and Brazil, there's a lovely, open and organic sound that genuinely feels as if the listener has stumbled upon a late-night Havana jam session. ★★★★★ DO



**ROBERT SCHUMANN**  
Symphonies 2 and 4 (arr Mahler);  
Genoëva Overture Op. 81  
Riccardo Chailly (cond)  
Gewandhaus Orchester  
Decca 475 8352

**Music:** The changes made by Mahler to Schumann's symphonies are actually relatively modest in scope, mostly with the main aim of improving the clarity of the orchestral part writing and the dynamic flow of the music. The real surprise is that these versions of the scores are not more widely used. ★★★★★

**Sound:** No masterpieces then, but more than routinely enjoyable, and the disc is worth having for the ebullience and warmth of the performances, the clarity of the scores, and the musical quality of the fourth symphony in particular. Sound quality is also very good, and the performances are predictably beyond reproach. ★★★★★ AG



**HUMMEL**  
Fantasies Opus 123, 18, 19, 107, 124;  
Fantasie 'Recollections of Paganini'  
Madoka Inui (piano)  
Naxos 8557836

**Music:** Hummel was something of a musician's musician, though much of his catalogue is unrecorded. He certainly has extensive piano composition credits. The liner notes credit Hummel with anticipating and, to some extent, laying the groundwork for Schumann, Chopin and Schubert. There isn't quite the genius and passion of Schubert (say) at his best, but the works are approachable, and of undisputed quality. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Adding distinction to this recording is the fact that it was played on a Bosendorfer, and the disc was recorded in an ORF studio in what may have been an intense three-day period in mid-2005. ★★★★★ AG

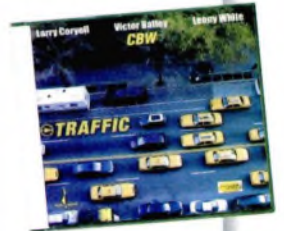
## DVD-AUDIO & SACD

**CORYELL, BAILEY & WHITE**

Traffic  
SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD)  
Chesky

**Music:** This Chesky recording finds the fusion guitarist in the company of drummer Lenny White, who played on Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew*, and bassist Victor Bailey from Weather Report. They play power trio jazz rock with melodic 'detours', as Coryell puts it, and there's a great interpretation of Mingus's *Misterioso*, all laid down live in a New York chapel, which gives the proceedings considerable sonic integrity. There are plenty of 'detours' and even some acoustic guitar, and while the musical direction may not be as focused as it might, there's something for all jazz rock aficionados. ★★★★★

**Sound:** Rarely does a kick drum skin sound this real, and the solidity and the character of each instrument is well captured by Chesky's 'no overdubs, no compression' policy. This can also be heard in the lack of reverb, which makes for a tight, focused sound that rewards realistic playback levels. ★★★★★ JK



**BRAHMS**

Symphony No. 4  
Bernard Haitink (cond), LSO  
SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD)  
LSO Live series LS00547

**Music:** This disc ought to have been a winner, but somehow it just doesn't quite happen in practice. At just over 41 minutes total playing time, the discs provide poor material value, even taking the SACD mix and the low selling price into account. But this is not the whole story by any means, with a performance that appears curiously lacking in stature. There is nothing wrong with the playing, but it all seems rather understated, lacking in vision and ultimately unengaging. ★★★★★

**Sound:** The recording was made live at the Barbican, and although the acoustic doesn't always shine on disc, there are plenty of examples of recordings made in this venue that come across much better than this one. Sadly, the disc is not even rescued by its one clear merit – the multichannel SACD sound, which again is all good intentions rather than delivery, and which ultimately is lacking in drama and short of character. ★★★★★ AG



**BJ COLE**

Trouble In Paradise  
DualDisc (one side DVD-Audio, the other side CD)  
Silverline

**Music:** The popular pedal steel maestro (you'll find him on records by Björk, Beck and The Verve, among others) also pursues his own distinct brand of ambient country when he's not spicing up other people's records with inspired contributions that only occasionally resemble the traditional sound of the instrument. Here he's collaborated with a range of electronic noodlers including Luke Vibert, Bent and Groove Armada, as well as South London country outlaws the Alabama 3, to create a soundtrack for a future cocktail lounge of the imagination – like some twisted ambient dream on the edge of a nightmare. The pedal steel's there on every track, but often squeezed into unusual shapes – processed to sound like a sitar, or reverbed out of all recognition. ★★★★★

**Sound:** This is a heavily layered record with electronic rhythm tracks augmented by acoustic instruments, but the 5.1 mix is a fine example of a well nigh perfect balancing act – tabla, cello, guitars and fiddles mingle effortlessly with the electronics, both complementing each other. ★★★★★ DO





# P R I M A R E



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Gold Award, HiFi Choice, October 2006



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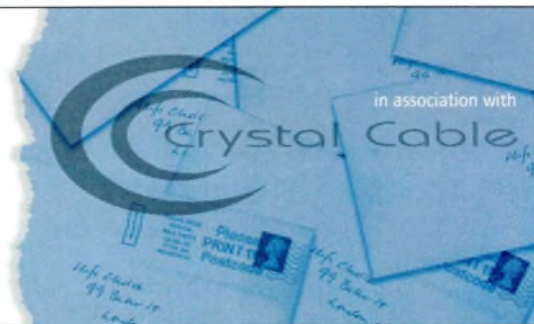


# ChoiceMail



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



## FROM FIVE TO TWO

I read with interest in your Buyer's Bible a boxout entitled, *Hi-Fi Meets Surround* in the AV amplifier section. I have just bought a Cambridge Audio 540R multichannel amp as I wanted something that performed well in stereo, too. Its two-channel performance is astounding, particularly when listening to CDs through headphones. As you state in your magazine, however, the best route for stereo performance is to have a separate stereo amplifier. I have been considering purchasing a Cambridge Audio 640A integrated – for use when listening to CDs – thus keeping the 540R solely for multichannel listening. Could you tell me whether there would be a significant improvement in sound between the 540R and 640A? I'd like to have a clearer idea whether the 640A would significantly enhance CD sound in

comparison to the 540R, or whether I should invest £300 into more albums, instead?

**Paul Soper** Poole

**HFC** We spoke to Simon Hewitt, Marketing Director at Cambridge Audio, who gave the following answer: "We're justly proud of the 540R's ability to handle stereo and reckon it's the most musical AV receiver this side of £500. However, it's important to consider that for under £300, the 540R is tasked with a huge amount more than the 640A v2, which retails for around the same price. It's fair to say that the latter is ultimately a superior two channel amplifier in absolute terms."

## KRELL OR CAYMAN?

Unlike Krell's UK importer Ricardo Franassovici, (*Industry Profile*, Absolute Sounds, HFC 291)

## "Is there a significant improvement in sound between the 540R and 640A?"

I wasn't surprised to hear that a man preferred to buy a hi-fi, rather than upgrade his Porsche. Don't underestimate the call of music – I'd spend £50,000 on hi-fi before I bought my first Porsche. Words are cheap you say, but I recently bought my first 'real' hi-fi and it cost three times that of my car. Have you considered a column where people write in and talk about what their music really does to them through the medium of hi-fi? That would really let potential investors know what expensive hi-fi is truly about, as I've just learnt.

**Steve Heath** Derby



Above: Cambridge Audio Azur 640A integrated amplifier

**HFC** Boxes or a Boxster? Not an easy decision if a spare £35k landed on our desk. Indeed, you could take the Ashley James of AVI route and get an Apple Mac Mini with a pair of AVI-d ADM9 speakers all for £1,500 and put the rest on a curvaceous German ride. Tempting. Thanks for the column idea, too... although sometimes you can have too much of a good thing. ▶

## Letter of the month

### NEW BLOOD, NEW KIT

I'm writing this soon after visiting the Bristol Sound and Vision show for the first time. I've just started reading your magazine and I'm getting into hi-fi. I was encouraged to see a number of budget components at the show from the big brands such as NAD and Pioneer. As a beginner, this is the sort of kit I want to buy, so I hope I can read about it in Hi-Fi Choice soon. I understood the hi-fi market was in decline, if this is the case why is there new budget stuff coming to market?

**Andy Gill** via email

**HFC** You'll be pleased to know that we aim to cover a broad spread of products at various prices, including entry-level. This serves beginners, audiophiles wanting a second system, and readers keen to keep abreast of the wider market and offer recommendations to friends and hi-fi newcomers. Budget gear is making a comeback and manufacturers have clearly forecast demand in this area. There's some great budget hi-fi around that 'generation iPod' can simply plug in to, for little more than the cost of an 80GB model.



**WIN CRYSTAL CABLE PICCOLO INTERCONNECTS!**  
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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: Arcam Solo system

**“It’s a pity that any piece of equipment under £1,000 is out of bounds for Ken.”**

**KEN'S OTHER FAN**

Having read your March 2007 issue (*HFC* 291), I was happy to read Ken Kessler's column and applaud his independent take on the hi-fi world. I notice that you print a disclaimer at the end of his article, stating that his opinions don't reflect those of your staff. Well thank goodness for someone like Ken Kessler who doesn't seem to have an axe to grind. I still feel it's a pity that any piece of equipment under £1,000 is considered out of bounds for Ken. There does seem to be some good stuff coming out of China these days, such as the little Jolida 102B amp (£450) and the Affordable Valve Company amps from around £250 to £600. Much as we all aspire to the high end, I'm sure many find that £1,000 per item is a lot of money, and perhaps KK will one day turn his attention to some decent valve amps we can all afford.

**J. Turkie** London

**HFC** Good to see that Ken has another fan to keep the other one company. He did advocate the valve-based Melody SP3 (£875) in the same column, and has in the past, sung the praises of the Arcam Solo

paired with PMC's DB1+, which comes in at a more reasonable £1,625. It's worth stating that although Chinese brands are very good, buyers should check the UK distribution, warranties, service and parts back-up.

**ULTIMATE CD PLAYER**

I thought I'd write in for once and congratulate you on your fantastic magazine – I'll soon be looking into a subscription. I was happy to see an *Ultimate Group Test* featuring CD players up to £1,000, (*HFC* 291). I was marginally confused, however, to see why you chose some CD players nearer the top of the scale – such as the Vincent CD-S6 – but for the Quad, you chose the bottom of the range model? I would have been interested to see the results regarding the more up-market CDP-2, considering it is still under £1,000. I feel there is a reason the CD-S was chosen instead, maybe because it was cheap at £649? This makes me feel the CDP-2 would have performed just as well, if not better.

**Shaun Bradley** Exeter

**HFC** We always like to feature a broad spread of models and price points in our

*Ultimate Group Tests*, reflective of the marketplace. We always liaise with manufacturers when compiling the tests and in this case with Quad, asked which model it would choose to nominate within our price spread. There was indeed another product from Quad that we could have featured, but the 99CD-S was deemed to be the most competitive model overall for a comparative test. And on this occasion, Quad was right; it won a Best Buy badge.

**DEFECTION CHOICE**

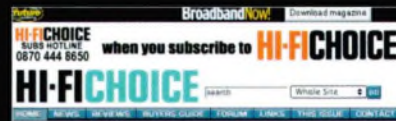
I have just received the April issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* (*HFC* 292) and I note in *Choice Mail*, there is a letter from Bruce Reader of Shropshire, bemoaning one of your rival publications. Like Bruce, I have also contacted 'another' hi-fi magazine to cancel my subscription and I agree entirely with what he says. Although I will not name the magazine in question, there is a Ken Kessler connection.

**Girvan Lyons** Dorset

**HFC** Welcome aboard, Girvan. Going by the recently published ABC (Audited Bureau of Circulation) figures, you're not alone. As a result of this independent auditing, we can proudly say that *Hi-Fi Choice* is officially the UK's only growing hi-fi magazine, and has been for the last three years... we look forward to keeping you entertained and informed for many years to come.

**Online@rum**

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



Are there any essays or articles on the web pertaining to this year's anticipated onslaught of HDMI 1.3-equipped amplifiers? In particular, whether music companies that support SACD and DVD-Audio will now move their recorded catalogue over to the new formats, Blu-Ray and HD DVD?

**Nash**

...Not until they agree on which Blu-ray or HD DVD system they are going for. Plus, they are already talking about a new coloured laser gizmo to supersede Blu-ray!

**Mikehit**

...I suspect the audiophile market is far too small for record companies. The major players want

maximum profit at minimal investment and the audiophile 'slice' of the market is simply not large enough to draw their attention.

**Arthurk74**

Anyone had experience of buying hi-fi in the EU, and know what the tax situation is? I want to buy from Italy, but don't want

any nasty surprises. I don't think you pay VAT in the EU; maybe it's import tax?

**Emporer**

...You have to pay VAT on it this end, but they should sell it to you ex-VAT. Often it will be included in the price as VAT rates are similar throughout Europe.

**AngelFace**

I moved house last Friday and want to keep my system as simple as possible. Any thoughts?

**Nik**

...Check out the stuff by Flying Mole. It was the only thing that caught my attention at the Bristol Sound and Vision show recently.

**Snoo**



# Listen Up...



**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
**AWARDS 2005**  
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR  
SPEAKER PACKAGES  
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Nic Poulson is the designer of all Isol-8 products. An inventive, accomplished designer in fields as diverse as thermonic valve amplification and international airport runway lighting systems, his drive to tackle the huge problem of compromised power supply led to the founding of Isotek in the late nineties.



IsoLink high quality mains leads



CleanLine<sup>2</sup> entry-level, mains power distribution and conditioner unit for up to six components



MainLine<sup>2</sup> high quality mains supply for individual components



Qube<sup>3</sup> mains power conditioner for high power loads

# ISOL - 8

Isolate, *I SŌ-lāt*, v.t. to render free from external influence







# NATURAL BORN KESSLER

This month, **Ken Kessler** (now better known as *iKen*) tries to find a way of opening up those 60 million Apple iPod users to the joys of proper hi-fi sound... or even decent headphones

Logical progressions have never troubled the world of audio. Formats that deserved to succeed, like the rather clever Elcaset, went straight to Hi-Fi Hell. Also, superior technologies consistently fail to replace inferior ones; if that wasn't true, we'd all be listening to ribbon or electrostatic speakers. This applies perfectly to what is currently not just the largest phenomenon in consumer electronics, but possibly the most successful roll-out of all time. And certainly the most selfish.

That's unless you can think of any other product that has exceeded the triumph that is the Apple iPod. 60 million sold in 2006? That's not just phenomenal; that's incredible. But it has singularly failed to lead (logically?) to the next step: a revolution in the status of the headphone. And, by extension, a trickle down to better systems by simple default or even mere association.

True, the likes of Sennheiser and Shure have made serious profits thanks to Apple supplying the various iPods with headphones that barely qualify as risible. Quick to notice they were dire, Shure, Sennheiser and other savvy headphone makers realised it was Sony Walkman time all over again, with another big, fat bite of the headphone cherry. A slap of white, a downsizing, the addition of a lower-case 'i' in front of a model name, and Shazam! A nice sales upturn.

Equally, yes, there's a mini-industry of iPod docking stations designed to transform the iPod from a mere portable into a substitute for the multi-component, bulky and the 'despised

iPods has led every chav, every muffin-top, every slacker, every *Wallpaper* reader and any other iPod-owning stereotype to rush out and buy, at the very least, better headphones, an Arcam Solo and some decent speakers.

Let me qualify this. I do not, for example, expect an increase in the sales of source components, because the whole point of the iPod and the other players spawned in its wake is to replace disc and tape libraries *en masse*. But the iPod, beyond onanistic listening, demands a system if one is to entertain friends. Then again, the jury is out on the mere act of buying an iPod as a means of telling friends you no longer need them.

## "iPod docking stations are hardly what any sane person would call 'hi-fi'."

by everyone bar audiophiles hi-fi system'. Face it, gang: separates hi-fi has never been conducive to domestic harmony, and everyone from landlords to interior designers to decorators to wives/partners has been praying for its demise. But iPod docking stations are hardly what any sane person would call 'hi-fi'.

What the iPod dock makers (except, that is for the most cynical ones of all, the proper hi-fi brands that are jumping – wisely – on a cash-cow/bandwagon) refuse to accept or admit, is that the laws of physics, to say nothing of manufacturing integrity, will forever prevent the iPod from becoming a qualitative substitute for a proper, oversized, complicated, heat-producing, bulky components system. Even if you plug in stunning aftermarket headphones, iPods still sound like crap to me; that is, if crap were to have a sound.

### 60 MILLION MISSING PERSONS

So here's where I am baffled. I'm stumped as to why even a fresh crop of some 60,000,000 iPod owners hasn't caused a major, or even minor upward blip in (genuine) hi-fi sales? I await with bated breath the flood of letters from iPod users, retailers, headphone manufacturers, et al, that I'm completely wrong, and that ownership of

Instead, you have the likes of Steve Jobs, when launching his comical Apple stereo, stating that he's going to chuck out his hi-fi system. You have every miserable, selfish, hi-fi loathing wife from Hell forcing her partner/husband to settle for some crummy little dock with two 75mm 'full range' drivers.

Two trends of late have driven me to distraction when trying to decipher the failure of the iPod to bestow even marginal benefits on audio as a whole. The first is that everyone I've spoken to this year – manufacturers, retailers, distributors – tells me business has never been worse. Blame whatever you like, from taxes to petrol costs, to mere uncertainty about the future, but the fact remains that pure hi-fi, as a hobby and a business, is contracting rapidly, like an iceberg's shrinkage due to global warming.

Secondly, the market has never been so rich in very cool new headphone-related wares, from dedicated and portable amps to better 'phones than have previously been available, full stop. While I'm not naïve enough to expect some baseball-cap-wearing, knapsack-shepping, Coldplay-loving, low-foreheaded slacker to aspire suddenly to Krell or Wilson Audio, one might have hoped that some of them would wish to better their lot beyond the tizz-tizz-tizz that is the sound emanating through most earbuds. But it seems destined not to be. ☹



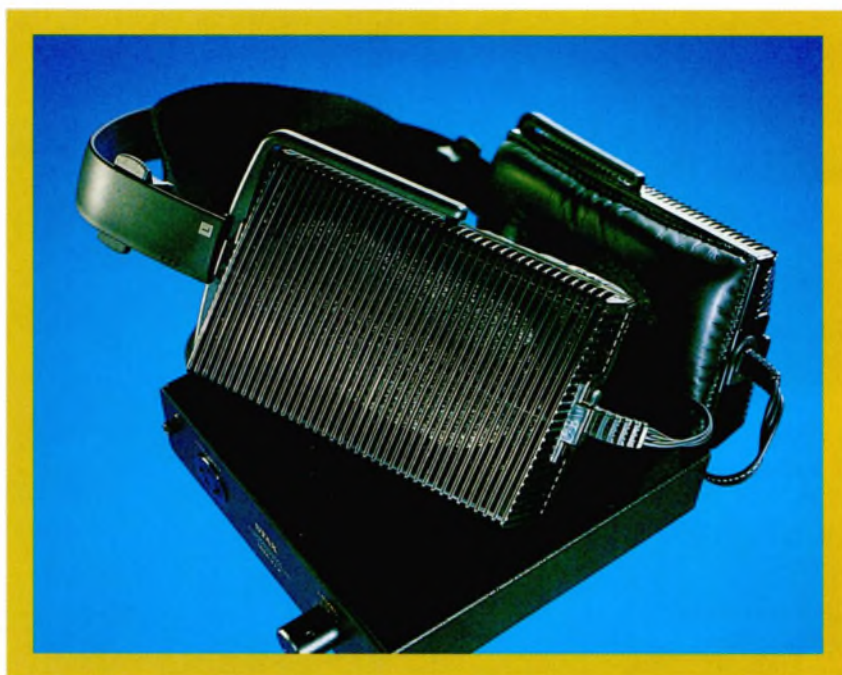
Above: The Apple iPod Nano



**Top:** Stax SRS-2050 electrostatic headphones (earspeakers) still represent the absolute pinnacle of on-head entertainment

**Middle:** Shure's SE530 earbuds are a revelation to anyone with iPod headphones. They may not be cheap, but they are stunning

**Bottom:** Sennheiser HD 414 –the classic yellow headphones, beloved by studios



On the radar, quite clearly, is Shure, a company that has seen its fortunes turn away from phono cartridges as its core domestic audio business, to a range of absolutely delicious in-ear headphones. Stealing a march from Etymotic, who pretty much put the category on the map, Shure has become its main rival, sliding into in-the-ear headphone

manufacture with such skill that I know of more journalists using its products than any others.

#### SHURE THING

I tried the top-of-the-line SE530 and was delighted to find – once I, like everyone else, got used to the notion of shoving the headphones into my ears – that they provided the rare sensation of both excluding the environment AND delivering almost Stax-like sonics. Usually, you get either/or. Shure isn't lying when it promises "natural mids and full-bodied bass".

As with all of these designs, the SE530s act just like an earplug to block background noise with similar benefits to noise-cancelling headphones for in-flight use, without the added grunge of noise-cancelling technology. Shure beefed it up with sophisticated drivers, superb construction, long experience of high-end practice (anyone who disses the last of the V15s is an idiot) and a foolproof system that fits most ears. I would posit that they just may be the best headphone upgrade for on-the-road use because they marry both sublime sound and negligible size.

*(Confession: nearly all of my listening, and certainly all of it on airplanes, is via Sennheisers. I use 414s in the house, and noise-cancellers in flight. For reviewing source components and pre-amps, I'm forever a Stax man. But I still whip out the Wharfedale Isodynamics every once in a while. Again, another case of what might have been ....)*

Back in the home, though, where portability isn't a concern, there are better methods for extracting the sound of an iPod through headphones. Stax itself, probably the greatest headphone manufacturer of all, recently launched the semi-affordable SRS-2050





headphone/energiser system, which it describes as 'basic'. Maybe by its standards. By anyone else's, they're awesome. They're hefty, on-ear types, open-backed, and driven by an energiser that will power only a single set of 'phones. I guess that's what it means by basic. For the vast majority of listeners, they will provide a listening experience that's simply unimaginable: fast, clear, open and so life-like that sound effects are disconcertingly 'real'.

**STAX OF WAX**

Most headphone users – assuming that 'most' today means those who arrived at headphones via digital portables – have no idea what the out-of-the-head experience of open-backs like the Staxes can do for the musical experience. It transforms music from a miniature event to

If you want tubes *and* small size in a headphone amp, then you'll be pleased to know that EarMax – one of the first companies to produce a modern, dedicated, all-valve model – has introduced the Silver Edition, a high-end alternative, with a new power supply. Cute, but big-sounding, it remains the antithesis of the highly accessible and commercial HeadRoom designs: it's almost 'underground'.

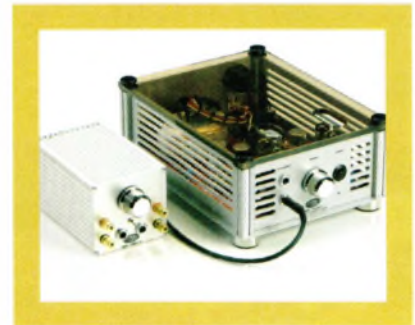
Which is the root of the problem. The sad fact is that 59,000,000 of the 60,000,000 who bought iPods last year have never even heard of Stax, EarMax or maybe even Shure and Sennheiser. High quality sound has gone, in under a decade, from something aspirational to something all but ignored.

So just do this for me. Find the nearest family member who's always glued to his or her iPod.

**Top:** German high-end AudioValve takes home headphones really seriously, and its valve headphone amplifiers push the envelope

**Middle:** HeadRoom's modular Desktop system turns any set of decent cans into the stuff of audiophile dreams

**Bottom:** The EarMax... tiny little triodes of power, a headphone jack and a volume control. What more do you need, people?



**“It transforms music from a miniature event to something ‘full blown’ and authentic.”**

something somehow 'full blown' and more authentic. That, of course, denies the fundamental problem of headphone listening, in that it's intrinsically unrealistic. But this is not a debate about headphones per se. Let's just accept that they're the only means available as of now, for listening without disturbing others.

Which brings us to another forgotten genre of headphone devices: headphone amplifiers. I've long adored the AudioValve headphone amp, which can actually drive loudspeakers, but that's a big, serious, all-tube component. HeadRoom's approach was to keep the size down, always thinking in terms of portability (even for table-top stuff) and to address the sheer funkiness of the genre with products that always elicit the term 'cool'.

Having already introduced a valve-powered range, balanced operation and high-end models (including DACs), the company's latest is an addition to its Desktop range: balanced operation in a unit with a footprint roughly the size of a CD jewel box.

It takes any standard analogue or digital audio signal and converts it to balanced drive for your headphones. According to HeadRoom: "All you need is a pair of balanced headphones and the Desktop Balanced Amp, and your system rivals the best of \$10,000-\$20,000 speaker-based rigs, all for under a couple of grand." You can also add its Balanced DAC option for 'phenomenal computer listening, or use it with any other source featuring USB, optical, or coaxial digital outputs, and enjoy a truly premium listening experience.'

Just feed it through your hi-fi (I'm guessing just about everyone who reads *Hi-Fi Choice* has passed the novice stage, and has a proper system). Gauge their reaction. If there's none, don't waste any more of your time. Or electricity. If you see a glimmer of awareness, an opening of the eyes, take note: proceed with caution. You just may have found a future candidate for a decent sound system. **HFC**

Ken Kessler's opinions do not necessarily reflect those of Hi-Fi Choice or its staff



**THE CASE FOR BAD SOUND**

I know: most computers deliver worse sound than even iPods and MP3 players. But that opens up the debate about the quality of sound cards, the environment in a computer case, *ad nauseum*, which I'll leave to the computer mags.





PRIMARE CD31 CD PLAYER | PRIMARE I30 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER  
ATC SCM19 LOUDSPEAKERS | £4,499



# The right stuff

*A system that floats like a butterfly and stings like a bee... but not in the wallet!*

**A**t the height of his powers, the great Muhammad Ali used to quip: "How can I lose with the stuff I use?" stretching the fourth and eighth words for maximum poetic impact. It was invariably delivered with the playfulness of a glib boast but, in Ali's case, you knew it had its roots in a self belief that couldn't have been anything other than deadly serious.

It seems to be part of what sets the great apart from the good: nothing so fickle as flair; nothing as unpredictable as raw talent; nothing contrived merely to impress or floated on a froth of hype. Just 'the right stuff' from skin to core, unshakeable self belief and a delivery system that doesn't get deflected by the winds of change for change's sake, or the temptations of trendiness.

This *Beautiful System* has exactly that kind of 'can't lose' quality. It's a clearly conveyed message that, while it may not be the sexiest-looking collection of boxes ever to grace the pages of a hi-fi magazine, it's operating with superior 'stuff' that lifts it onto another level.

## BO' SELECTA!

In the case of the softly gleaming but masterfully understated Primare CD31 CD player and I30 integrated amp that front this month's combo, the lofty altitude of that level was envisioned from the start by a man called Bo Christensen. A Danish industrial designer by trade (and passionate audiophile by nature) Christensen's frustration with the sound quality, aesthetics and user interface of what he called "typical audio gear" ignited a quest to do things better. During the late 1980s, he gathered together a team of like-minded designers, including electronics engineer Bent Nielsen, and formed Primare. Christensen pulled

together clean Scandinavian design, simple circuitry and straightforward operation, and arguably, the most effective 'minimalist aesthetic' in affordable modern hi-fi was born.

Although Christensen left Primare in 1994, Nielsen remained, working along side Copland luminary Lars Pedersen and renowned audio engineer Michael Bladelius (formerly of Pass Labs and Threshold among others) to advance and focus Primare's art in the digital and analogue domains.

Primare's dedication to the cause is reflected in the stated aim of the CD31: to 'extract the last elusive nuance from CD and shrink the noise-floor almost to zero'. It uses high-grade discrete circuit components and fully balanced low-noise topology throughout, matching a high quality 24-bit DAC (for 96kHz sampling) with a high performance 24/96 filter, and an ultra low-noise, high-speed output stage. Multiple isolated low-noise power supplies are said to keep the musical signal free of electrical interference and exploit the full potential of the CD31's balanced design. Attention to detail is typically meticulous, right down to the gold-plated analogue, digital and balanced outputs. The weighty robustness of the heavy steel casing inspires bags of confidence, too.

## MEATY SHUNT

But the I30 amp is much, much heavier, as befits a 100 watt design with such a robust power supply. The meaty custom-made toroidal transformer and double active regulators are teamed with local regulators to ensure that all stages receive the current needed without stress or strain. And the smooth-acting 'shunt to ground' type volume control (usually found in much more expensive products, according to Primare) is said to ☐

**"The right stuff from skin to core, unshakeable self belief and a delivery system that doesn't get deflected by the winds of change."**



**Primare CD31 CD player**

**£1,500**

There are flashier looking CD players. Flashier sounding ones, too. But there aren't many with the sonic integrity of this Primare. It does everything a digital source should with none of the nasties.



**Primare I30 integrated amp**

**£1,500**

Like the CD31, this svelte Danish powerhouse puts in a performance that belies its 'modest' 100-watt power rating. Drives even the relatively power hungry ATC speakers like a dream.



**ATC SCM19 loudspeaker**

**£1,499 per pair**

Not the prettiest speakers ever, but capable of superb sound quality when partnered with the right electronics. The naturalness of the midrange and treble are special, bass off the scale.





□ preserve accurate channel balance at low volume levels, an impression of precision massaged by the accompanying digital display. The preamp section offers full remote control of all functions, including switching for its six inputs (including vinyl via the optional phono stage).

The ideal partnership, of course, would be speakers with a matching minimalist aesthetic and single-minded dedication to delivering the sonic goods without agenda or affectation. In the standmount SCM19s from the Acoustic Transducer Company (more commonly known as ATC) we have them.

Like Primare, ATC is a company driven by one man's uncompromising vision. Unlike Primare however, that man – Billy Woodman – is still very much at the helm of the company he formed in 1974. In fact, ATC still operates out of a few unassuming buildings in the heart of the Cotswolds. ATC's reputation, contrastingly, bestrides the domestic/professional sectors like a colossus across the globe and is the envy of many ostensibly bigger hitters. Clients include Sony, Pioneer, Chandos, Nimbus, Telarc, Pink Floyd, Pater Gabriel, the Sydney Opera House, the Royal Opera House



Covent Garden, the BBC and over 1,000 recording studios worldwide – any of whom would happily endorse Woodman's contention that ATC "builds loudspeakers, drive units, complementary electronics (passive and active) and custom installations that deliver nothing less than the best sound reproduction money can buy".

#### OVER THE EDGEWISE

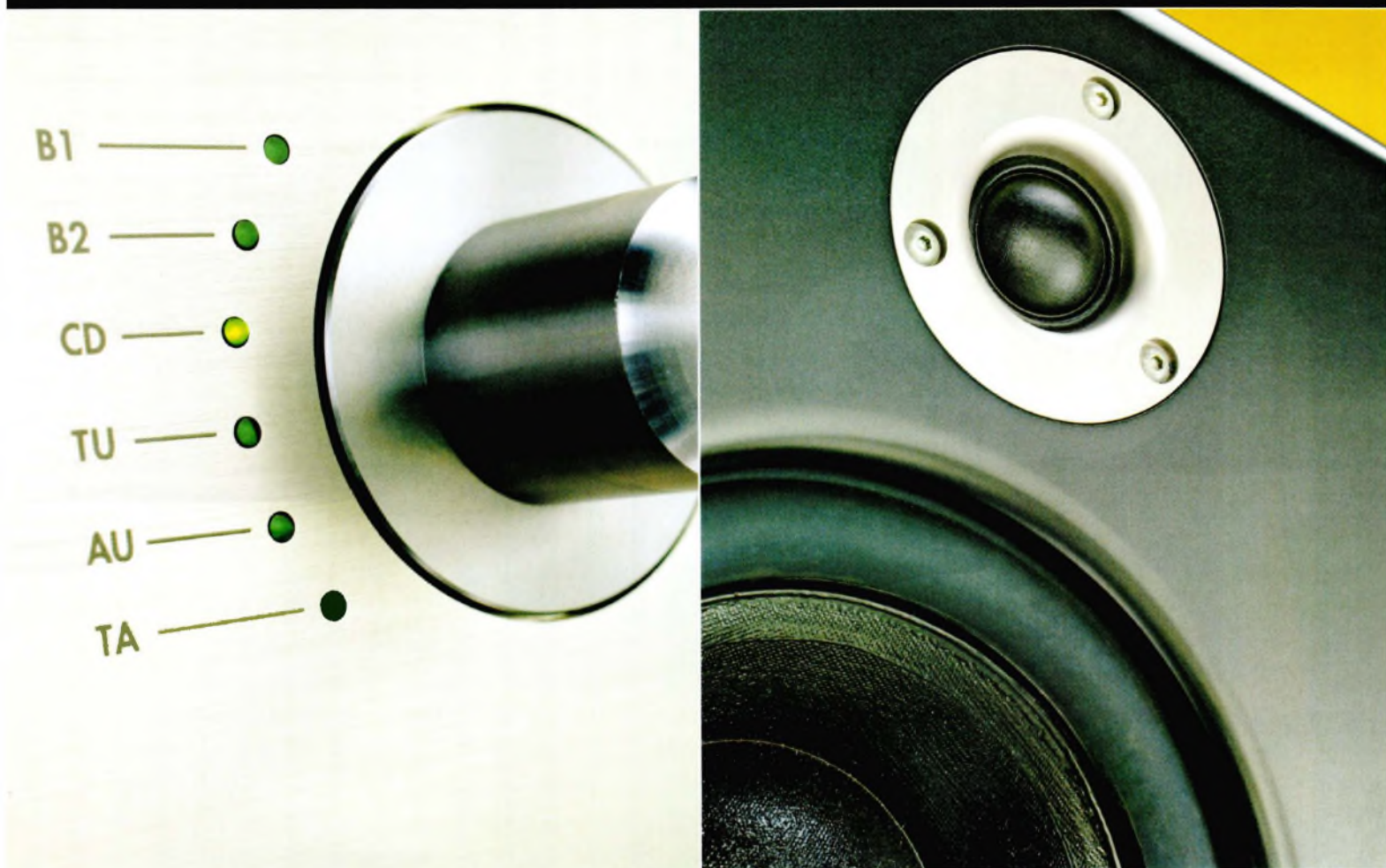
If ATC has a secret weapon, it's probably the way its drive units are engineered. Or rather, deliberately over-engineered. The coils are wound edgewise from specially milled copper wire, providing a higher density of conductor than the norm. Along with new adhesive technology and ultra-fine coil-gap clearances, it allows extremely high power handling and excellent reliability.

ATC's so called 'Super Linear' magnet assemblies – first used in its active studio monitors – are claimed to eliminate distortion caused by eddy currents in the magnet pole piece and front plate. The theory goes that in most speakers this effect is masked by mechanical distortion. But in the ATC bass drivers, its removal leads to greater linearity and low distortion.

The ATC 'look', for the most part, is fiercely functional; indeed, the company proudly wears its 'pro' sensibilities on its sleeve, despite these days selling around half its output to the domestic market. Truth is, ATC doesn't really see eye-to-eye with the tweaky-freaky, 'golden-eared' members of the audiophile community and never has. Although quietly spoken, Australian born and raised Billy Woodman, like many of his countrymen, has a robust disregard for bullshit and, as far as sound reproduction systems go, that means pretty much anything that doesn't survive the rigor of his vertiginous engineering expectations.

Apart from the absence of a separate soft-dome midrange driver – an ATC first and the thing that made it the hero of the pro sector – the two-way, sealed box SCM19 perfectly encapsulates the ATC approach. Not exactly the daintiest of standmounts; each enclosure weighs a barely believable 16 kilos (9kg of which is accounted for by the main driver's motor assembly) and boasts a full Super Linear spec 150mm bass/mid driver (with a 75mm integral soft dome), plus a 25mm soft-dome tweeter with a precision alloy wave-guide. Claimed frequency response (-6dB) is 54Hz to





**“It doesn’t make a play for your attention with the lapel-grabbing verve some systems attempt. But, the longer you listen, the more you appreciate the sheer range of tonal colours in its palette.”**

22kHz and nominal impedance a load-friendly eight ohms, though the slightly below average 85dB sensitivity rules out low-powered amps; ATC recommends between 50 and 300 watts.

#### **QUICK TRACK, GADDY THWACK**

That said, the Primare I30 seems to leap at the chance to show what its 100 watts can do with the solid, muscular feed provided by the CD31 and leaves no one in any doubt that it’s a heavy hitter. The thwack of Steve Gadd’s drumkit on Steely Dan’s re-mastered *Aja* CD sounded palpable through the ATCs yet, at the other end of the musical spectrum – take the swoony string arrangements on Joni Mitchell’s *Both Sides Now* – the system displayed admirable delicacy. Real power, real poise. A great start.

And yet the Primare/ATC combination doesn’t fall into the trap of focusing too hard on resolving detail to the detriment

of the bigger picture. The sound is finely revealing, harmonically rich and rhythmically coherent. Treble has brilliance and definition, but no glare or grain. Bass has speed and shape and plenty of welly. The presentation is technically stunning, yet it doesn’t draw attention to the fact.

Indeed, it doesn’t make a play for your attention with the kind of lapel-grabbing verve some similarly-priced systems might attempt. But the longer you listen, the more you appreciate the sheer range of tonal colours in its palette. On the other hand, with the right material, it can muster quite stunning dynamic clout. The presentation is weighty and controlled and has a fabulously architectural bass performance. There’s something of the proverbial iron fist in a velvet glove about the approach and it draws you in.

So here’s a system with real grip and insight that delivers music in a tangible,

coherent way with fine drive and rhythmic integrity. Better still, it’s an act that doesn’t trade subtlety for scale and impact. It’s true that the ATCs soak up the power but, in practice, the Primare integrated sounds far more muscular than its 100 watts-a-side would suggest. And it backs up its power with a sense of poise and control that’s never found wanting. In every respect, the package exhibits remarkable synergy.

We shouldn’t forget the contribution of the CD31, of course. As with all the very best disc spinners, the solid imaging, air and brilliance it brings to the party is invaluable. But it doesn’t overplay its hand. It’s more concerned with definition than razzle-dazzle and, as such, fits in seamlessly and pulls its weight. But then, you’ll have got the message by now. This is a class act that gets it right where it counts. Rather like the great Ali, it doesn’t put a foot wrong. **HFC**

David Vivian





# Forest

Totem has spared no expense in making the Forest one of the best speakers available at any price... It's a two-way floor standing model that is surprisingly affordable, considering that it is a true super-speaker. The woofer and its aluminium dome tweeter, allow it to cover the full auditory range. Those aren't mere paper specs, either! The response is down only 6 dB at 28 Hz, a frequency most speakers can't reach. Its lock-mitred monocoque chassis, its slanted rear baffle, and its fine hand-crafted construction place it above lesser speakers of its size and price. Much of this is invisible, though by no means inaudible. As usual with Totem speakers, the fine wood veneer is also placed inside the cabinet, to equalise forces on the two sides of the walls. Why it's called the Forest? Well, where would you expect to find a totem? Well, a forest would be a good place to begin your search. However, a forest also imbues mystery, quietness and unpredictable, unexplainable power. In a real forest you are surrounded with sound, which can suddenly appear, surprise and then disappear. It can happen anywhere around you. Let the Totem Forest surprise you in the same way...



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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.



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## OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

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

Our overall conclusion is that the Marantz e800 player, the 17 MkII M, which has excellent build and is a very good impression in HFC 243. At the same price there's also the Cyrus 7, a ring all-rounder in a compact case. After trying the Heart with the standard's we switched over to the Siemens grade, a comparison somewhat muddled by the fact that it was a cold for hot swap – the latter had been in for several days with the tubes shone through. The Siemens-equipped player has an snappier sound with better timing that es with dense material with remarkable confidence and ease. It even seems to be

You can find... 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%

**CONCLUSION**

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

## 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...**



# Maximum mini

*Denon redefines the mini system... and brings 'digital' amps to the party!*

**PRODUCT** Denon CX3 system

**TYPE** CD/SACD player, receiver and speakers

**PRICE** £2,700

**KEY FEATURES** (DCD-CX3 player) Size (WxHxD): 30x8x31cm • Weight: 7.0kg • Compatibility: CD, SACD, MP3, WMA • Analogue outputs: one pair phono sockets • Digital outputs: S/PDIF electrical, Toslink • Nominal output level: 2V • (DRA-CX3 receiver) Size (WxHxD): 30x8x34cm • Weight: 5.5kg • Inputs: Four line-level, phono (MM/MC), iPod (minijack), FM antenna, AM antenna • Outputs: one set speakers, headphones (1/4-inch jack), recording out, iPod dock control • Rated power output: 75 watts per channel (8 ohms) • Radio bands: FM, MW • (SC-CX303 speaker) Size (WxHxD): 18x30x29cm • Weight: 8.7kg • Connections: Bi-wire binding posts/4mm sockets • Nominal sensitivity: 86dB

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

**W**hat do you do if you want real hi-fi sounds but don't want the bulk and hassle of separates kit? Various manufacturers have attempted to answer that with all-in-one systems (Arcam Solo, Linn Classik, Primare CDI10, and let's not forget B&O) but Denon has a different answer: a twin-set of diminutive but robust electronics boxes, coupled with a pair of the prettiest speakers we've seen in a while.

With this brand-new addition to its well-respected stereo range, Denon seeks to give audiophile credibility to the mini system. The basic concept, indeed, is as simple as an all-in-one system, but you can purchase the

parts separately. As a system, they are still delivered in three cartons, if only because the combined weight is nearly 30kg. They come complete with all cables (the speaker cable is rather fancier than the usual bell-wire) and can be set up in under five minutes.

The amp and CD player may be separate boxes but no such extravagance applies to the AM/FM tuner, which is built into the amp. Yes, this is indeed that rare hi-fi beast, a receiver. Frankly, why there aren't more of them we can't imagine, given that FM tuner modules the size of a pack of cards are readily available. Also, the intelligence necessary to control them is built into many amps along with the remote







control receiver – that's how Denon has done it here. Meanwhile, the CD player also packs an unexpected feature as it also plays SACDs, though only in stereo.

We'll come back to the electronics in a minute. Let's first look at most mini-systems' Achilles Heel – the speakers. In the past, it's been known for manufacturers to commission speakers from relatively small specialists to accompany upmarket systems, but Denon has built its own for the CX3, and very impressive they look, too. First and foremost is the quality of the veneer. Japanese woodwork is justly famed for its astounding standard of finish, and Denon fully lives up to that reputation. The surface is so smooth you could use it as a shaving mirror, and the cherry wood gives a gorgeous colour and grain. The corners are gently radiused with what look like fillets of solid timber, so smoothly integrated with the veneered faces that it is quite impossible to feel a join.

The bulk of each cabinet is made of 30mm MDF, a surprisingly thick material for such a small enclosure. On the front face, it supports the usual pair of drivers, the upper one a fabric dome and the lower an unusual looking 150mm bass/mid unit made using carbon fibre. Round at the back is a reflex port (Denon supplies foam damping pads to reduce bass boom when the speakers are placed very close to a wall) and beneath it are bi-wiring terminals. For full audiophile credibility, these are not linked up as supplied but must be joined using the short, pre-stripped wire links included in the accessories pack.

If the speakers are built to no-compromise standards, the amp and CD player hardly lag behind. The enclosures are based on a steel tray with aluminium top and side panels and a

## “The trick is ‘digital’ amplification, a Class D module some five centimetres square, concealed beneath a very modest heatsink.”

thick, engraved aluminium front. A small display serves each unit, and we approve of Denon's choice of a red dot-matrix – it's easy on the eye (and dimmable) and easy to read from any distance or angle. On the other hand, it may be just a little too minimalist – for example, you can show either track number or track time for a CD, but not both.

Denon claims surprisingly high output power for the amplifier. Normally, slimline units less than a foot wide can be expected to put out 50 watts or so, but this one is claimed to be good for 75 watts into eight ohms or 150 watts into four ohms – in fact, we got very nearly 100 watts from it into the usual eight ohms. The trick is 'digital' amplification, a Class D module (we're pretty sure it uses Bang and Olufsen's 'ICEpower' technology) some five centimetres square, which is concealed beneath a very modest heatsink. More high-frequency technology drives the switch-mode power supply, eliminating the requirement for what would otherwise be an inconveniently big mains transformer.

The amp features an electronic volume control with fine (half-dB) steps, meaning you spend quite a lot of time fingering the beautifully finished control knob with its briar-wood inlay – or using the remote. But why separate, similar-looking, remotes for amp and player? Madness. And plenty of functions are only accessible via remote control. Stuff like tone controls, RDS, CD searching...

According to Denon, the units are built with parts selected for high sound quality. That may be so, but in the end most of them are pretty regular commercial grade, including the DAC, op-amps and passive components in both units. The amp's phono stage is the usual couple of transistors and an op-amp, a configuration that has worked well enough for many.

### SOUND QUALITY

If you've tried 'bog-standard' mini systems and been less than impressed by the sonic performance, you'll breathe a sigh of relief on first hearing the CX3. Perhaps most noticeable aspect is that the sound is kept under an order of magnitude tighter control than most such systems seem to manage, and as a result there's some very decent resolution around, well above-average tonal neutrality and a general air of precision that is certainly welcome and somehow seems to accord well with the units' petite and pert appearance.

But at this sort of price, it seems to us that the fairer sonic comparison is not with other mini systems – most of which cost considerably less – but with the sort of separates we habitually cover in these pages, including the current breed of all-in-one electronics solutions suitably matched to speakers. And this is where we start to feel a little uneasy, because despite the precision of this system, we detected a distinct lack of scale and dynamic range to the sound. ▣



## Q&A

We spoke to Roger Batchelor, Denon UK's marketing and training officer, about the development of the CX3 system and its use of 'digital' Class D amplification



**HFC** The Class D amp is a first for Denon's hi-fi line. Is this a taste of things to come?

**RB** In designing the CX3, Denon carefully considered how to provide power and clarity in music playback from such a compact unit. Our first priority was high-quality sound; using a Class D or other type of digital amplifier was not the top priority. The engineers tested many types of digital amplifier and the ones used in the CX3 were chosen and developed with great care. The power stage supplies power in an instant, and as efficiently as possible, to support stable music playback. Also, in order to express a natural sound field it is important to get the engineering of the entire module absolutely right.

**What's special about Class D technology?**

Again, Class D is not the only issue; we considered all factors affecting sound quality in the light of our engineering experience gained over the years. For example, the CX3 uses short signal path design, high-quality relay switching and separate power supplies. Additionally, Denon custom capacitors and anti-vibration construction draw on Denon's hi-fi experience, though the symmetric top cover is a unique new idea. The CD player employs Denon's AL24 digital processing, DAC master clock design and Pure Direct mode.

**We're intrigued by the omission of DAB: practical decision or statement of (lack of) faith in the medium?**

Last year, we introduced two new mini hi-fi systems with DAB and a new concept system, the S-B1 DAB. The CX is Denon's new series as a global strategy product and, although DAB is expanding globally, it is not yet at the same level elsewhere as it is in the UK. However, this is the 'first release' model in this range and, depending on the trend of DAB and the expansion of the CX line-up, there is a good possibility to have DAB products in the CX series in the future.



**“The sound had acquired a whole new level of musical communication. In technical terms, it had deeper and subtler bass.”**

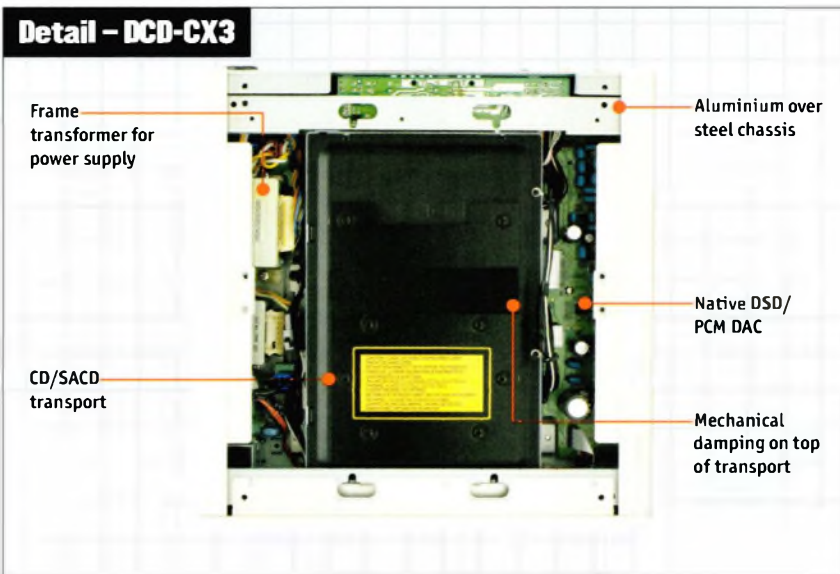
☑ One might argue that a system looking like this is going to spend a lot of its life playing 'dinner jazz' and similarly untaxing stuff, where dynamics are pretty much a no-no. But, apart from the rather patronising implications of that assumption, it's surely not unreasonable to expect that a system should be able at least to make a stab at any style of music, and most styles do indeed need some scale at some point. Classical symphonies, rock, almost anything featuring impassioned vocals – they all need to go loud at some point and most need to go soft for extended periods too, without losing the plot. Having plumbed the CX3 system together and selected a variety of favourite test tracks, we felt that the 'loud' was constrained, while at the same time, the 'soft' was lacking in intimacy.

It's not immediately obvious where the blame lies for this in a system of three parts, so we did some swapping. Out went the speakers, to be replaced by the impressive ATC SCM11s reviewed on p52 of this very issue... now, that's more like it. Suddenly, we could see why Denon is so excited by this system. Despite the (very) slightly lower sensitivity of the ATCs, which limits absolute loudness, we felt that the sound had acquired a whole new level of musical communication. In technical terms, it had deeper and certainly subtler bass, more relaxed treble and – the clincher – a substantial degree of added precision in both tonality and space. This immediately made instruments and voices sound more believable.

In fact, trying established reference speakers soon convinced us that the DRA-CX3 is a





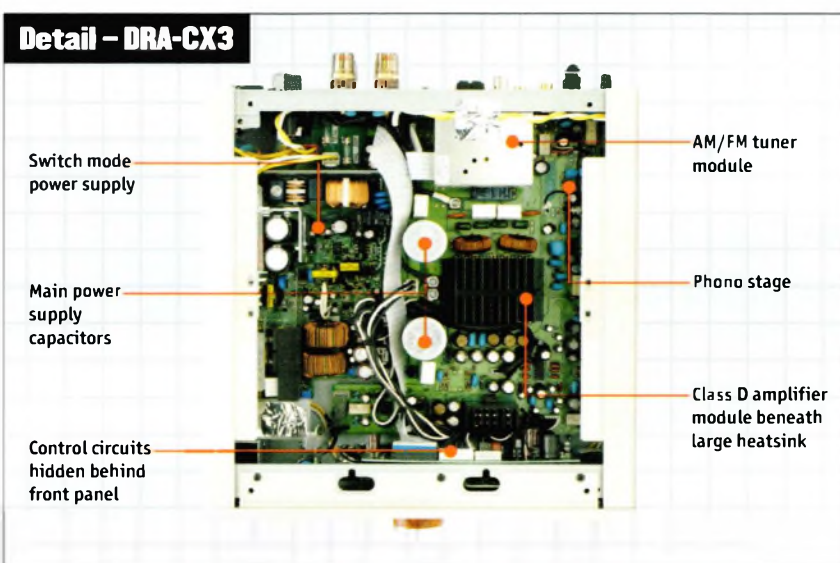


highly capable little amp, which has the potential to win over many doubters to the environmentally-friendly virtues of Class D. It packs a considerable punch and while its bass isn't absolutely the most controlled we've heard, it has good extension and is 'fast'. Treble is clear and in the midrange the imaging is really quite admirable, with extended and stable depth.

We could say much the same for the CD player; it's a particularly civilised-sounding unit that may end up appealing more to classical music lovers than rockers, though probably plenty of the latter will also appreciate its detail and lack of fuss. And then, of course, there's the SACD performance to consider, which is very good indeed, for once clearly (on recordings we know to be fair – level and EQ-matched between CD and SACD versions) superior to CD in terms of overall sweetness and musicality.

We shouldn't forget the radio tuner, of course, which is a little unexciting but generally okay. It seems a little coarse-sounding, particularly in 'busy' areas of the FM spectrum, but there's fair detail and extension.

Not wanting to condemn the speakers without giving them every chance to succeed, we drove them with a variety of amps from budget integrations to upmarket valve monoblocks. In a bizarre twist, they seemed to work rather better with both those extremes than with the more middling qualities of the amp they arrived with. It's quite clear that they need very authoritative driving, but the



cheapest amps, lacking that ability, nevertheless delivered a slightly more tuneful bass that appealed despite being less controlled and presumably less accurate. Ultimately, though, we could never get rid of the feeling that they are just a little too grainy and congested, particularly in the upper midrange, to show off properly what the rest of the system can do.

We aren't necessarily suggesting Denon's CX3 system should be used with the ATC SCM11s, but their performance in context does give us the perfect opportunity to recommend two-thirds of this admittedly very pretty

system. The receiver and CD/SACD player are fine components, no doubt. All the same, they are not cheap and we would advise trying them alongside the Arcam Solo and any other examples of the breed that you can find. **HFC**

*Richard Black*



**VERDICT – DCD-CX3 CD PLAYER**

**SOUND >> 85%**

**FEATURES >> 86%**

**BUILD >> 90%**

**VALUE >> 84%**

**CONCLUSION**  
 A gorgeous little player, which gives little away to full-size models. Its sound is clear and detailed, if not as engaging as the very best around £1,000.

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

**VERDICT – DRA-CX3 RECEIVER**

**SOUND >> 85%**

**FEATURES >> 88%**

**BUILD >> 90%**

**VALUE >> 84%**

**CONCLUSION**  
 Class D amp technology packs a punch. Sound has drive and precision, with good bass; radio and phono performance okay rather than exciting.

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

**VERDICT – SC-CX303 LOUDSPEAKER**

**RESEMBLES >> 77%**

**EASE OF DRIVE >> 80%**

**BUILD >> 91%**

**VALUE >> 74%**

**CONCLUSION**  
 Remarkably pretty and robustly assembled too, these speakers never quite achieve a sonic clarity to match the standard of their looks.

**HI-FI CHOICE >> 72%**



EDITOR'S CHOICE  
**HI-FI CHOICE**  
magazine  
★





# Power and poise

*This sophisticated stereo amp system combines impressive muscle with exceptional refinement*

**PRODUCT** Classé CP-700 and CA-M400

**TYPE** Preamplifier and monoblock power amplifiers

**PRICE** (CP-700) £5,450; (CA-M400) £3,950 each

**KEY FEATURES** (CP-700) Size (WxHxD):

44.5x12.1x41.9cm • Weight: 22.4kg • Inputs: four single-ended (RCA phono), two balanced (XLR)

• Outputs: one single-ended, one balanced, one tape

• (CA-M400) Size (WxHxD): 44.5x22.2x47cm

• Weight: 37kg • Inputs: one single-ended, one

balanced • Rated power: 400 watts per channel (8 ohms)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01903 221500 🌐 www.classeaudio.com

Classé makes two ranges of audio electronics: the top-flight Omega series and the more down to earth, but still aspirational, Delta. This latest preamp and monoblock combination represents the top of the Delta tree.

The distinctive broad radii and contrasting colours of the Delta components are the work of Morton Warren, a name you may recall from the time when B&W launched its original curvy 800 series. While this connection could have been coincidental, the fact that B&W now owns Classé would suggest otherwise.

**“This is a very fine example of what can be achieved with a decent budget and some extra-box thinking.”**

The casework is more than just attractive. It is also designed to isolate the electronics from vibration. To this end, both steel and aluminium are used together and large feet made from a material called Navcom Limbsaver (developed for target shooting and archery) were selected for their ability to offset any resonance within the supporting surface.

The CP-700 preamplifier sports another distinguishing feature of the Delta range in its touchscreen control panel. This is a very fine example of what can be achieved with a decent budget and some extra-box thinking. It's a clever way of addressing the differing control needs of the various components within the range, all the while maintaining consistency of appearance and economy of production. With the DVD players and processors, this screen can be used to view video footage, but with this stereo preamplifier it brings easy access to a wide selection of controls. Touch screens are not quite as tactile

or responsive as mechanical alternatives, but they work well enough once you get the knack.

Among the multitude of options are the ability to set the name, volume offset and balance setting for each input. If you name an input 'SSP', it becomes a unity gain input; in other words, it bypasses the volume control. This is useful when integrating a home cinema system into the hi-fi, but dangerous in the wrong hands.

You can also adjust the rate that the rotary control changes volume, but the standard speed-sensing setting is logical enough – the faster the knob is turned the greater the volume steps. This did catch us out a few times, though; for instance, when the preamp has 'gone to sleep' and turned off its display, one way of awakening it is to turn the knob. This can sometimes send it to 0.0 and be a little reluctant to go back up to the 40-50 range where we wanted it.

The CP-700's back panel features a large multipin socket, which hooks up to an external power supply via a usefully long umbilical cable. This supply houses two boards, one handling the conversion of AC to DC and the

other managing the regulation of the supply to the preamp. Elsewhere on the back panel, you will find balanced and single-ended inputs and outputs, alongside an RS-232 control port, in-/outputs for IR commands and the DC triggers that are popular in the US. Last but not least, there's the remote handset – an attractive and intuitive piece of aluminium and rubber that lights up blue at your touch. Nice.

The CA-M400 monoblock is a hefty lump of a power amplifier that is specified to double its 400-watts-into-eight-ohms output into a halving of load and weighs in at a respectable 37kg. While it has both balanced and single-ended inputs, you need to switch between the two on the front panel. This is something end users won't do as often as reviewers and thus of limited entertainment value, but it looks good. Other connections are for triggers, firmware updates and Classé's bus system. Inside the case, Classé has deployed three types of transistor in order to create a balance



of qualities that it argues a single variety, with its inherent strengths and weaknesses, cannot duplicate. So there are J-FETs in the input stage, MOSFETs in the driver stage and bipolar output devices.

## SOUND QUALITY

With this much power on tap, one thing you are guaranteed is an assured and relaxed sound; the MA-400s are unlikely to break sweat when driving the majority of loudspeakers. But it was encouraging to find this pairing also has an impressively light touch for its class.

They are not the most dynamic-sounding amps on the block. Some of the competition have a more obviously exciting and energetic presentation, but those competitors don't have the same headroom and can't produce high levels with the degree of ease on offer here. On their own terms, the CA-M400s have an uncanny ability to peel apart the elements in a recording to reveal precisely what each one ►



Q&A

We discussed amplifiers with Dave Nauber, vice president of brand development at Classé



**HFC** What effect does vibration have on amplifier electronics?

**DN** The reason we pay attention to the chassis is because microphonic effects can degrade the performance of some circuitry. In other words, as PC boards and components vibrate, there are slight relative movements among the parts, which generate small signals, which are amplified and become part of the music signal. The worst offenders are vacuum tubes. In solid-state electronics, and especially with surface-mount components, the effect is dramatically reduced, but not eliminated. This is why people pay so much attention to equipment stands.

**You use three types of transistor in the CA-M400's signal path. Why?**

The choice of multiple transistor types is made to capitalize on their relative strengths and conceal their weaknesses. A J-FET input stage, for example, is easy to drive, relatively insensitive to interconnect cable variances, very low distortion and very low noise. The J-FET is an excellent voltage gain device. It cannot, however, deliver the current necessary to drive a proper output stage, let alone a loudspeaker. So MOSFET transistors are used after J-FETs because we can design the input stage to easily drive the MOSFET driver stage, which provides some of both voltage and current gain. The MOSFETs can in turn supply enough current to easily drive the bipolar output stage, which is widely recognized as being ideal for linearity and high current.

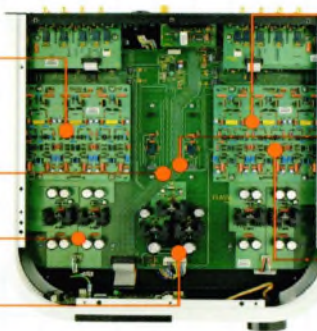
**The Delta preamp topology appears to be completely different to your range-topping Omega preamp. Why?**

The Omega was conceived as a cost-no-object reference preamplifier, yet it is several years older than the CP-700. It uses a resistor ladder network for switching volume and does not offer the isolation between single-ended and balanced outputs that the CP-700 does. On the other hand, the MkIII power supply is more extreme and the chassis more costly. I think of the Omega as a bit more brute force, 'throw money at it until you get the performance' and the CP-700 as more sophisticated and clever. People have different opinions about which is better, but for the money the CP-700 is a real bargain.



**Detail – CP-700**

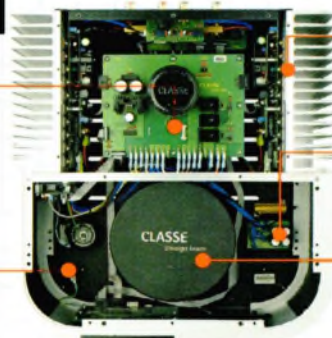
- Four-layer circuit boards for optimum signal routing
- Space for optional phono module (left channel)
- +/- supply voltage regulation for left channel
- Power supply for control and monitoring circuits



- Single-ended output stage
- Left and right channels divided along centre line
- Non-inverting and inverting circuits for balanced output

**Detail – CA-M400**

- Separate secondary power supply for control and monitoring circuits
- Third independent power supply for monitoring/sensor circuits



- Each 'half' of the balanced signal is a 200-watt amplifier module
- Surge resistor provides 'soft-start' feature on power up
- Large 1.35kVA toroidal transformer

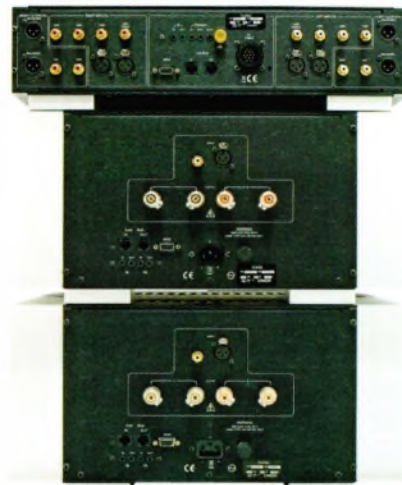
contributes, without making the sound seem analytical. In combination with the preamp, they present the finest nuances in such an effortless fashion that your attention is never distracted from the music and its underlying message.

The Classé combo doesn't make a big thing about grip, speed or slam – it goes about its business in a remarkably neutral and unprepossessing way. This means the music has a better chance than usual of doing precisely what the artist, producer and mastering engineer had in mind. It also means that differences between musicians, instruments and recordings are very clear.

The smoothness on offer can give the impression that clarity is not as great as it might be, yet when you turn up the wick the presentation remains precisely the same. There is no sense of edginess or strain and as a result, high level listening is far more comfortable than usual. In this respect, these amps reflect the character of B&W's 800 Series speakers, which like as not were among the arsenal of transducers used by Classé's engineers. They are seemingly a little polite... and then the fun really starts.

Combining the delicacy of small amps with the power and control of the big boys, Classé's titanic trio covers all the bases. Sure, it's expensive, but it's good enough to compete with the best amp systems money can buy. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



**VERDICT – CP-700 PREAMPLIFIER**

- SOUND >> 95%
- FEATURES >> 96%
- BUILD >> 96%
- VALUE >> 88%

**CONCLUSION**  
Beautifully built, supremely flexible preamp is revealing and coherent. We've used it as a reference for months and don't want it to go!

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
>> 92%

**VERDICT – CA-M400 MONOBLOCK**

- SOUND >> 93%
- FEATURES >> 90%
- BUILD >> 96%
- VALUE >> 86%

**CONCLUSION**  
A behemoth of a monoblock. If you want control without the character that often goes with it, this is a resolute and unflappable powerhouse.

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



# Experience exceptional Sound

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BEST BUY

HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine



# Small is the new big

*A compact speaker that delivers lashings of detail, great imaging... and even weighty bass!*

**PRODUCT** ATC SCM11

**TYPE** Standmount loudspeaker

**PRICE** £849 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 21x38x25cm

- Weight: 8.5kg
- 25mm soft dome tweeter
- 150mm Constrained Layer Damping bass/mid driver
- Sensitivity: 82dB
- Impedance: 8 ohms (nominal)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01285 760561 # www.atc.gb.net

**A**TC may not be the biggest player in loudspeakers, but the company's standing is high. Not just in hi-fi, ATC is well-respected in the pro-audio world, too. Originally the range made absolutely no concessions to budget, with an entry price well over the £1,000 mark, but in recent years a

couple of models have cracked that barrier. Indeed, the SCM12 and SCM7 had been around long enough to warrant some updating and, while the latter remains sufficiently close to its original incarnation to keep the model number, the SCM12's internal volume has now shrunk by one litre to become the SCM11.

By making its own drive units, ATC is able to keep particularly tight control on the performance of the overall product. This is reflected in some of the best-measured specs in the business. The downside, if one might call it that, tends to be exceptionally low sensitivity. ATC correctly points out that, these days, watts are cheap and the speakers are built to handle high power, resulting in a maximum acoustic output that's pretty much par for the course.

Although some refinements – such as ATC's 'Super Linear Technology' distortion-reducing concept – are only applied to upmarket designs, the main driver here is nonetheless innovative in its use of 'Constrained Layer Damping' to reduce resonance within its structure. ATC claims that this both reduces distortion in the critical midband and eases crossover requirements.

The SCM11 is unusual, in being a sealed-box design rather than using a reflex port. The two approaches are sufficiently complex that leading authorities on speaker design fail to agree on them, but reflex loading is generally thought to give slightly better bass extension from a given size of box. Ultimately, though, it's the results that count.





**“For playing classical music or jazz, its open, neutral and extended character serves the music well by doing little to it.”**

The main drive unit features a short voice coil in a long magnet gap. This is very much the expensive way of going about things (a long coil in a short gap is cheaper and much more common) but has distinct advantages in terms of keeping distortion low when the cone is moving a long way, as it must in order to produce high levels of bass. Meanwhile, at the other frequency extreme, treble dispersion is aided by the 'waveguide' profile of the tweeter.

In appearance, the SCM11 is smart rather than beautiful, with wood veneer-effect finish and a removable grille cloth. ATC recommends this be removed for ultimate performance, though we found it negligible in sonic effect. Twin terminals at the back allow for bi-wiring/bi-amping if required. Incidentally, apart from the requirement for plenty of watts, this is not a tricky load to drive.

**SOUND QUALITY**

There are some things one just doesn't expect loudspeakers to do, and producing deep bass from small boxes is one of them. Still, some models do deliver deep bass convincingly. The SCM11 is certainly one of them. And we do mean deep bass: a common demonstration trick is to play bass with rapid impact and rely on that to impress, but what's much harder is gentle, almost background, stuff at near-seismic frequencies. Distant orchestral bass drum, for instance...

Having high hopes for this loudspeaker we started it off with a demanding track, the opening of Mahler's fifth symphony on Water Lily Acoustics. The recording was made

with minimalist microphone techniques and it's all too easy to write off any confusion in the replayed sound as a function of the unusually generous acoustic that results. Repeated hearings via various top-grade speakers and headphones have convinced us that there's a lot of detail there, but we weren't entirely prepared for the amount the SCM11s revealed. Nor were we at all expecting the bass drum – a sufficiently tough test for many components – to have so much weight.

At the outset, then, it looks as if ATC has achieved something impressive. Less surprising, though no less gratifying, was the excellent stereo imaging, one area where small speakers are typically at a bit of an advantage.

Following full orchestra with a selection of piano recordings was no less admirable. Piano possessed considerable weight, but also great clarity and definition, and even scale. In recordings of voice and piano, both retained their individual character and avoided getting in each other's way.

In short, the SCM11 has a lot to recommend it as a speaker for playing classical music or indeed a lot of jazz, where its open, neutral and extended character serves the music well by doing little to it. But, what about rock, pop and other studio-created sounds? Inevitably there's more room for argument here as the

loudspeaker is more part of the creative equation, and if you're looking for high-octane excitement, especially in terms of 'fast' bass and bright treble, you could well find these a little lacking. On the other hand, detail is detail in any music.



We believe strongly that the SCM11 should be considered quite apart from its 'small standmount' physicality. Irrespective of size, if your budget covers it, be sure to try it. All the same, there are limitations, the most obvious being ultimate loudness. We used some meaty amplification of up to 250 high-quality watts courtesy of makes from NAD to EAR and heard some loud sounds as a result, but if you want to listen really, really loud in rooms upwards of thirty square metres you may have to look at a bigger speaker.

If, for some reason, you're downgrading from large, upmarket speakers you'll miss some bass extension, despite our admiration already noted – that's all in context. And if you want artificial excitement, this may not be your bag at all. For simply playing music, though, The SCM11's E849 is money very well spent **HFC**

*Richard Black*



**VERDICT**

**SOUND >>> 87%**



**EASE OF DRIVE >>> 83%**



**BUILD >>> 86%**



**VALUE >>> 87%**



**PRO**  
Very high levels of detail and admirably neutral tonality, open in the treble and surprisingly extended in the bass. Good imaging, too.

**CON**  
Needs a powerful amp and even so, ultimate loudness is somewhat limited. That accuracy can be disappointing with heavily-produced rock and pop studio recordings.

**CONCLUSION**

A very fine little speaker that's at its best with good, natural recordings where it adds little and reveals much. Relatively unfussy about amps and placement, it combines fit 'n' forget convenience with real musical satisfaction.

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



# Chord Epic



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# Strip club

Take an HFC Award-winner, strip it back a little and knock £250 off the price tag... it's the Azur 740C!

**PRODUCT** Cambridge Audio Azur 740C

**TYPE** CD player

**PRICE** £500

**CONTACT** ☎ 0870 900 1000  
 🌐 www.cambridgeaudio.com

**T**wice now, in a solo review in *HFC* 286 and in an *Ultimate Goup Test* five issues later, we've had the pleasure of reviewing Cambridge Audio's hi-tech Azur 840C CD player. At £750, it offers superb value. So what might we say about this newcomer, which at a mere £500, appears to equal the 840C pretty much feature for feature?

Like the 840C, it employs some nifty digital signal processing courtesy of Anagram Technologies to effect upsampling to 384kHz. There's nothing magic about upsampling, but it is a useful technique; and the higher the better, because it makes the analogue filtering that follows less of a headache. In addition, correctly done, it can be a useful extra protective measure against the transfer of jitter from the transport to the analogue output.

One difference between the 840C and 740C models is the DAC chip, which is in this case a slightly cheaper model from Wolfson. As with the Analog Devices chip used in the 840C, it is configured to bypass its internal oversampling filter and despite the slightly lower specification, it's likely to exceed the performance of most other parts of the record/replay chain. Another difference is that the 740C has no balanced output, and we gather that the analogue filter is slightly simpler.

That still leaves a lot in common. Significantly, the 740C also features two digital inputs, making it usable as a DAC with the potential to enhance the sound quality of any device featuring digital output at any of the standard frequencies. Like all the Azur range, it's neatly put together in an all-metal case and, apart from the slightly old-fashioned display, looks very much the upmarket business in either black or silver.

## SOUND QUALITY

Cambridge Audio will have to excuse us if we don't say that this player wipes the floor with the competition, it doesn't, but that's not because it's badly – or indeed, at all – lacking in any area. We've seen many £500-ish players in the last few years that put out a highly admirable performance, and this merely adds to their number. But if pushed, we'd certainly place it at (or very close to) the front of the pack.

Comparing notes from our experiences with the 840C, we found plenty of common ground, but were most struck by the 740C's agility and rapidity of response to changes in dynamics and musical textures. This in turn is evidently due to excellent tonal neutrality, and ironically that may even be an area where it slightly excels the 840C, though there's little in it. In absolute terms, though, this is a very neutral player that combines bass weight, treble extension and an absence of midrange coloration.

Where it does seem to lag the 840C – by a small margin – is in stereo image depth. We had no concerns about this with the dearer player, but the 740C does pull images a little

forward compared to the best references we've heard. As with the 840C, instruments are not always as clearly defined in space as they can be by the very best players, but nothing at this price can embarrass the 740C in this area.

Once more like its bigger brother, the attention to detail and accuracy may seem a touch bland if you're in favour of a spiced-up approach to hi-fi. Overall, though, this is an excellent CD player that should be of interest to anyone who appreciates the finer things... bar those who just like spending money! Bearing in mind that as an add-on DAC it can already justify itself if you've DAB, MD and so on, it's one of the most self-recommending bits of kit we've enjoyed lately. **HFC**

Richard Black

## VERDICT

**SOUND >>> 86%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

**FEATURES >>> 90%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

**BUILD >>> 88%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

**VALUE >>> 95%**

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

### PRO

Very good performance in areas of detail, imaging and bass extension and excellent midband neutrality, plus great flexibility from digital inputs.

### CON

The display's a little naff and there's slightly more mechanical noise from the transport than we'd like, but otherwise, at this price, we can't complain at all.

### CONCLUSION

Even if you've no use for the digital inputs, this is still a must-hear option in the admittedly busy £500 market. Its musical qualities take time to make their mark so don't be hasty in coming to conclusions.

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





EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine



# Size matters

*SME's latest turntable is also its first to be built specifically for twelve-inch arms... and it's a big 'un!*

**PRODUCT** SME Model 20/12A

**TYPE** Turntable and tonearm

**PRICE** £11,133

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 52x17.4x37.5cm

Weight: 33.5kg • Speeds: 33, 45, 78rpm • Model 3125 tonearm, detachable headshell • One-piece record clamp • Four-point damped suspension

**CONTACT** ☎ 01903 814321 🌐 www.sme.ltd.uk

**T**welve-inch tonearms have traditionally been a part of hi-fi's far left field. Perhaps that's why there's no way you can refer to them as '30cm arms', as metric never reached the UK vinyl fraternity. In the past, you would have had to scour the furthest reaches of the audio galaxy to find a turntable designed to accept one, but not any more. SME has been making twelve-inch arms for some time, because they have a cult following in the Far East, and now it has developed a purpose-built deck to go with these longer arm designs.

The long arms have a theoretical advantage over their nine-inch (22.5cm) counterparts, because tracking error is reduced. This is because of the shallower arc that the cartridge follows as it crosses the vinyl. The reason why you don't see many twelve-inchers is that there is a trade-off: the longer an arm is the more likely it is to resonate at a frequency that will affect the stylus. And the fact you need a

turntable plinth the size of Hampshire to house the thing. With its massive, die-cast magnesium beam, the SME Series 300 Model 3125 is designed to give you the benefits of the breed without its shortcomings. Except for size.

Which is where the deck comes into play. The name of the turntable launched to partner this arm, the SME Model 20/12, suggests accurately that it is a version of the SME Model 20 that's been extended to cater for a twelve-inch arm. However, the extra wide newcomer bears very little resemblance to its namesake.

Almost any other company in hi-fi and beyond would have given this turntable another name for clarity's sake as much as that of marketing, but SME does things differently. It builds its components to a standard that Rolls Royce should emulate and it pays more attention to detail than the finest watch makers. Then it arrives at a retail price that takes not the slightest notice of marketing norms. It's enough to make you proud to be British.

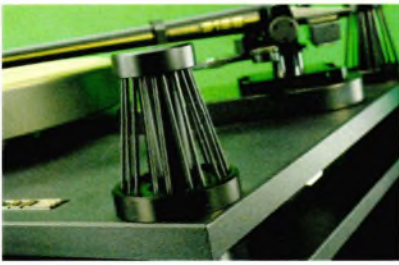
If anything, it actually looks more like a widened SME Model 30. With a 6.5kg platter sitting on a 19mm spindle and an all-up weight of 33.5kg, it comes pretty close to SME's range topper in many respects. In truth, it is a completely new turntable that shares very few parts with either range-mate. The two slabs of machined aluminium that make up its chassis are considerably thicker than the Model

20 (but not as thick as the Model 30) and the suspension towers in each corner fall somewhere between the two designs, too.

Those suspension towers support the top plate on 40 rubber 'O' rings, with high-frequency movement resisted by fluid damping in a central reservoir around the bearing housing (you can see it if you look between the top and bottom plates). The large platter is, at 324mm in diameter, wider than a vinyl LP and has greater inertia as a result. It also makes it a little more difficult to remove a record and discourages non-clamped record changes without stopping the platter. But the sonic benefits of using the clamp make it worth using for all but casual listening – that and the fact that you get to handle a lovely piece of metalwork with a fast acting coarse thread that's a joy to use.

Ritualists will want this turntable purely for the set-up procedure. Many turntables are fiddly things to put together and to set-up properly, but the 20/12A (the 'A' signifies the inclusion of a Model 3125 tonearm) is a pleasure to get going thanks to a comprehensive set of instructions and carefully thought-out procedures for every stage, including the potentially messy business of injecting the bearing oil. A machined and chrome-plated component is especially supplied for this activity, even though most are only likely to use it once.





## “It would seem that when you execute a twelve-inch arm this well, its advantages easily outweigh its limitations.”

The Model 312S arm looks similar to the standard 312 but is made of magnesium like the Series V. It also sports the arm damping system found on that model, plus silver internal and silver-plated copper external wiring from Van den Hul. It can only be purchased with this turntable.

The external power supply is a three-phase device that uses a microprocessor to control speed, the software for which is apparently related to that used in the management of fuel cell engines currently in development. Speed can be adjusted via the buttons for 33, 45 and 78rpm and SME supplies a twelve-inch strobe disc so that this can be done accurately.

### SOUND QUALITY

Having used a Model 20A (Mk1) for many years it was quite surprising how much more revealing and refined the 20/12A proved to be. It would seem that when you execute a twelve-inch arm this well, its advantages easily outweigh its limitations. This is apparent in the total ease with which it reproduces all manner of music and digs out the smallest nuances, while swinging major league dynamics.

In the past, SME's turntables have been criticised for being dull, but in our book this equates to having the minimum of personality,

which is a good thing as we want to hear all the character of the recording and none from the transcription device. The 20/12A does this with astonishing success and makes it very hard to take listening notes that do more than refer to the style and techniques used in the studio and mastering suite where the original sound was created.

We ended up with page of notes on discoveries about the sonic differences between various albums – the way that compression had been used, for example, or the significant differences in absolute clarity that exist between one recording and another.

After a while, we managed to get down to what the 20/12A was doing to achieve these ends. Essentially, it is both cleaner and faster than the competition, while also pushing the noise floor down and taking distortion with it. It might seem as though it lacks the excitement of a regular nine-inch arm turntable, but what you are getting is less distortion; the turntable is remaining 'quieter' and allowing more of the signal to be picked up by the cartridge.

When that cartridge is sensitive enough, which is definitely the case with a Van den Hul Condor (pictured), the results can be staggering in their range and depth.



We wondered whether the guys in the studio could hear the extent of the bass on Stevie Wonder's *Superstition* through the relatively limited bandwidth of their monitors back in the day. Burnt Friedman's rather more recent *Secret Rhythms* did even more to reveal the low frequency prowess of the 20/12A, the bass rippling out into the room in a steady, fluid pulse that vibrates everything in its path.

The way it opens up 'difficult' records is also rewarding, revealing considerably quantities of timbral and spatial information in electronica recordings. It was, however, the genuinely acoustic recordings, the live ones in particular, which delivered the greatest realism – Hot Tuna's debut played on the SME recreates a musical event from nearly 40 years ago as if it had happened yesterday.

The 20/12A is both a superb piece of engineering and an extraordinary transcription device for all vinyl recordings. It delivers both precision and flow whilst delving into the deepest details with ease. If you want to get the best from your record collection and have a wide enough support (and a deep enough bank balance), book a demonstration now! **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

### VERDICT

SOUND >> 97%



#### PRO

This deck's ultra-high resolution, wide bandwidth and dynamic range reveal the music's entirety like few others. Build quality that Rolls-Royce might envy.

FEATURES >> 92%



#### CON

Wide footprint and very high mass necessitate a large, high-quality support, which may be hard to source. Inconveniently expensive.

BUILD >> 98%



VALUE >> 88%



#### CONCLUSION

It's difficult to pin down how much of the 20/12A's sound is due to its engineering and how much to its twelve-inch arm, but the combination brings a calmness and precision to vinyl replay that we have rarely encountered.

**HI-FI CHOICE** >> **93%**  
OVERALL SCORE



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**WHAT HI-FI?**  
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SOUND AND VISION  
**AWARDS 2006**  
CD PLAYER  
BEST CD PLAYER £1000-£1500  
CYRUS CD6s

**WHAT HI-FI?**  
SOUND AND VISION  
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STEREO AMPLIFIERS  
BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £750-£1250  
CYRUS 6vs2



time-shifting DAB radio to suit your lifestyle!

It's a Cyrus tuner, so you know it will sound great. It's bristling with the latest digital technology, like using EPG to select and record shows to an SD card while you're out and about. To find out more about its advanced features visit [www.cyrusaudio.com](http://www.cyrusaudio.com)



# Bronzed beauty

Monitor Audio has buffed up its Bronze range to offer even better value for money

**PRODUCT** Monitor Audio BR5

**TYPE** Floorstanding loudspeaker

**PRICE** £400 per pair

**CONTACT** ☎ 01268 740580

🌐 www.monitoraudio.co.uk

The BR5 is a mid-range model from Monitor Audio's new BR (Bronze Reference) line-up, which replaces the earlier Bronze range. In most cases, the changes are model for model. The BR5, however, is a completely new design, similar in principle to other BR series models, but at a new size and price point. It is, in fact, the smallest of the Monitor Audio floorstanders and costs just a few pence shy of £400, which virtually guarantees it will attract a lot of attention. This before taking any of its other qualities into account.

The original Bronze range was not the most sophisticated of its type in either design or sound quality terms, but it did deliver a solid, dynamic performance at an attractive price. If the model tested here is representative of its kind, the BR range is continuation of the same thinking – it's a kind of super Bronze range on steroids. However you look at it, though, it's clearly an engineer's perception of how a loudspeaker should be, all sharp edges and right angles, (there's a little chamfering around the edges of the front baffle), lots of visible screws, projecting feet and – yes – a decent vinyl wrap enclosure. Close examination shows that the quality of finish is good for the price, and there can be no questioning the BR5's material value for money. Its traditionally shaped, 16.5x85x24.7cm (WxHxD) cabinet may not meet with plasma/LCD TV-led design trends, but it is reassuring from a sonic point of view.

This is a classic two-way design, featuring two 130mm drivers, one for the bass only, the other a mid-bass unit, continuing to the 25mm gold-anodised tweeter. All three drivers are based loosely on the earlier Bronze range designs, but greatly improved in detail and matched to a newly designed crossover. There are also some refinements to the enclosure that have been introduced with this series, including separate internal bass and midrange

chambers. The large driver baskets benefit from more open construction behind the bass and bass/mid cones.

## SOUND QUALITY

Try not to judge this speaker freshly decanted from the box. It will sound cold and aggressive in such circumstances, but an hour's-worth of use knocks the worst edges off, and the usual 50-100 hours will do a much more complete job of sorting the BR5 out.

The end result is a well-rounded loudspeaker, adept at handling complex classical music with a degree of polish, fine detail and even a welcome hint of sparkle from the new tweeter. It also has a lean but modestly well-extended bass, which has useful upper bass warmth, though nothing that could be described as excessive. Tonally, the BR5 is as near neutral as you could wish for, and such was the benefit of an initial warm-up in one session that a searching SACD recording of Hayden string quartets reproduced with real warmth, presence and intimacy.

Overall, this newcomer offers good control and strong dynamics, and it works well across of broad spectrum of music genres. That said, we're not so sure the BR5 shows its best side with mainstream commercial and rock-based material, which often sounds on the raw and synthetic side. If you don't already like the Arctic Monkeys, the BR5 doesn't offer the kind of presentation calculated to win you over. On the other hand, it is sensitive enough to live comfortably with relatively low power amplifiers, and it gives every indication of being easy to drive.

Although this speaker has its limitations, it is all about value for money and overall it offers a winning deal. The neutral tonal balance, dynamic ability, amplifier friendliness and excellent new tweeter are particular attractions, as is the range of matching partners within the BR line-up, enabling a variety of multichannel systems to be assembled. **HFC**

Alvin Gold



VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt;&gt; 83%</b>	<b>PRO</b> Easy and sensitive amplifier load, neutral tonal balance, bold dynamics and strong reproduction of fine detail. Good value for money.
<b>EASE OF DRIVE &gt;&gt;&gt; 85%</b>	<b>CON</b> Too fussy-looking for some settings. Sound veers towards the edgy, analytical side with some material, though extended running in helps. Deep bass is lean in balance.
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt;&gt; 81%</b>	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt;&gt; 94%</b>	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> One of the best value budget floorstanders around – a very good, easy to use compact at a modest price. There are also plenty of similarly voiced companion models, from which a number of bespoke multichannel systems can be assembled.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt;&gt; 88%</b>	



# Do you have a hi-fi system or just an overpriced music centre?

A proper hi-fi system offers full dynamic range and can produce unclipped peaks of 105dB, in room, at about ten feet from the speakers.

## System matching

Most loudspeaker and amplifier combinations cannot do this. System matching is crucial because lower sensitivity loudspeakers need a surprisingly high powered amp to produce 105dB unclipped peaks.

Higher sensitivity loudspeakers need less power to produce those peaks.

The amount of power needed is determined by the laws of physics, and there is no getting around it.

## Underpowered systems

Most loudspeaker sensitivities are in the 85 to 87 dB range. But few amps offer the power that these speakers need to work properly. The result is that many (maybe even most) systems are woefully underpowered and are physically incapable of producing

in-room peaks of 105dB.

You can hear when a hi-fi system is underpowered, because it clips. It limits the dynamic range, the music sounds sharp and edgy, and it feels cramped. In other words, it sounds like a music centre.

## It's not just about going loud...

You may not agree with our view of what defines a hi-fi system. After all, clarity, imaging, subtlety and neutrality are important, too. But if the system is clipping and distorting on dynamic peaks, that will dominate the musical experience.

## How much power do *you* need?

Check the chart to find out how much power you need to turn your existing system into real hi-fi. And relax. You can get all the power you need without chucking out any part of your system.

Visit [musicalfidelity.com](http://musicalfidelity.com) from 10.10am on 1st June 2007 to find out how.

### **How much power you need for a proper hi-fi system.**

#### **Loudspeaker sensitivity    Amp power for 105dB peak**

<b>83dB</b>	<b>800 watts per channel</b>
<b>85dB</b>	<b>500 watts per channel</b>
<b>87dB</b>	<b>320 watts per channel</b>
<b>89dB</b>	<b>200 watts per channel</b>
<b>91dB</b>	<b>130 watts per channel</b>

Reference calculations can be found at [musicalfidelity.com](http://musicalfidelity.com)

**MUSICAL FIDELITY**

Hearing is believing.





# Do it all – for less!

The latest low-cost 'universal' DVD player from Marantz boasts 'high-end' 1080p video upscaling

**PRODUCT** Marantz DV6001  
**TYPE** Universal disc player  
**PRICE** £350  
**CONTACT** 01753 680868 www.marantz.com

**M**arantz has been a strong and continued supporter of multichannel high-resolution audio sources like DVD-Audio and SACD, and its new, low-cost DV6001 universal player continues this trend. Replacing the DV6600, it sports a number of video-related enhancements, including DVD scaling up to 1080p, the pinnacle of what can currently be achieved through HDMI links.

The new player still uses a Faroudja DCDi deinterlacer. The key change to 1080p has meant considerable internal rejigging, however, including a 12-bit/216kHz Analogue Devices video DAC with a Noise Shaped Video (NSV) filter for PAL/NTSC progressive scan.

The audio section remains similar to the previous model, with 24-bit/192kHz conversion available for each of its six output channels. That said, a new DAC is specified, perhaps owing to availability issues as no specific performance advantage is claimed.

A new, clearer remote control wand is packaged with the player, which is also home to the Marantz D-Bus system. This allows Marantz components to talk to each other, and for

remote commands to be routed as appropriate, even between components that don't include an internal remote control receiver. Extending this element of the design further, an RS232 interface and 'flasher' socket allow the player to be plumbed into a multiroom system controller.

## SOUND QUALITY

The overall performance is very respectable. DVD-Audio is lean, clean and CD-like, although not as euphonic-sounding as the senior digital format. SACDs sound good, too, with a trace of the warmth and grace that is customary with Marantz players, though it tends to sound a little less incisive – subject to the near impossibility of directly comparing SACD and DVD-Audio mastered recordings, even when they are the same performance.

But even the most enthusiastic hi-res music collector will still have many CDs. Once again, the typical Marantz euphonic warmth shines through, though one would expect a decent dedicated CD player at the price to deliver more snap and focus, and greater dynamic range – these classic Marantz characteristics are not well represented here.

## VIDEO PERFORMANCE

The change to 12-bit video processing and 1080p upscaling gives this unit strong potential in many replay systems. The picture is punchy, with good colour reproduction and considerable

subtlety, plus good shadow detail. Only a few screens will show any real-world advantage, however, and they're the ones based on panels or projectors that cost an arm and a leg. But Marantz can hardly be held to blame for this.

This wouldn't be our first choice as an audio player, though given its price and overall functionality, its not at all bad as a low-cost, catch-all solution. On the video front, however, the DV6001 is up with the best DVD players at the price, with the bonus of decent CD, SACD and DVD-Audio playback to boot. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 69%</b>	<b>PRO</b> 1080p upscaling. Great value for money, neatly packaged, and close to being a master of all trades, though it doesn't set new standards.
<b>VISION &gt;&gt; 85%</b>	<b>CON</b> The video subsection is not an ideal match for price comparable screens. Musical performance is okay, without ever quite managing to hit the sweet spot.
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 89%</b>	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 88%</b>	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> As a conventional DVD-Video player that will plug that gap until the smoke clears around Blu-ray and HD DVD, this model does the trick and at a very attractive price to boot. But it's out of its depth when used as a surrogate for mid-range audio players.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE &gt;&gt; 83%</b>	



# Black Rhodium Prelude

**TYPE** Analogue interconnect cable

**PRICE** £80 (1m pair)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01332 342233 🌐 www.blackrhodium.co.uk

**T**his new interconnect is marketed partly on the strength of its low 'microphonic distortion'. Microphony in cables is not a new concern, but Black Rhodium claims to have reduced it to lower levels than usual thanks to some confidential technique. It's true that if this cable is connected to an amp input, with the other end left unconnected, and whacked, very little noise comes out – less than with plenty of (but not all) other cables we've tried, but as usual there's probably more to it than that. The use of PTFE insulation, silver-plated conductors and simple coaxial construction is a well-established formula for good cable performance, and the twisting together of the pair can only help reduce hum pickup. Highly flexible, it is terminated in good-quality phono plugs with a split centre pin for extra grip.



The sound of this cable is good in many different ways. The bass is strong, clear and tuneful, while there's no obvious sign of any tonal imbalance in the all-important midband. Perhaps if one is to be ultra-fussy, the 'presence' band (upper midrange) is lifted and the sound has a 'fast' character as a result, but this is really very mild. Treble is on the dry side, we felt, closing in the acoustic space around

instruments in the finest recordings, but on the whole we'd expect to pay more than £80 to improve on that. In line with this finding, detail stops just short of truly excellent, but imaging is precise and deep. **HFC**

*Richard Black*

## VERDICT

**CONCLUSION**  
This is a good all-rounder, happily compatible with a wider range of kit. Practical and sensibly priced.



# Custom Design Expression Hi-Fi XL4

**TYPE** Equipment support

**PRICE** £380 (four shelves)

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

**O**ur first reaction on unpacking this rack (supplied, like most, in kit form) was, 'Where's the frame?' You get wooden legs, glass shelves, and a pack of bolts and bits. And indeed that's all you need. The legs bolt up to top and bottom shelves and the middle shelves are supported on the usual little widgets, which fit to a selection of holes in the legs, making this a flexible design. Putting a load on the glass in this way is basically perfectly sound practice, though we're not sure we'd like to try a really hard sideways push on the top shelf, especially if loaded with the recommended maximum of 40kg.

If, then, this is not the ideal rack for those with hyperactive 10-year-old kids, it does look very, very attractive. You get a choice of finishes on the solid hardwood legs, a choice of grey or clear glass, and the added-cost option of 'iRAP' acoustic dampers for each shelf, making it the 'XL4 Acoustic' version.

As ever, we have doubts about how much the rack influences the sound of the equipment

placed on it (LP players apart!), preferring to believe that it's simply the presence of a somewhat resonant object like this in the room that's audible. And it is audible, but not objectionably so: we detected a slight added 'bloom' in the midrange and a small loss of precision in the tonal definition of instruments and voices. We would definitely not recommend this as a suitable support for any turntable, but for line-level applications it balances looks and (lack of) sound very nicely. **HFC**

*Richard Black*



## VERDICT

**CONCLUSION**  
Smart looks; contribution to the system's sound is minimal. 'Acoustic' version recommended for purists!





# Anvil Sound Display 4 Series

**TYPE** Speaker stand

**PRICE** £226 per pair (as reviewed)

**CONTACT** ☎ 0800 043 1207

☎ www.anvilsound-display.co.uk

**A**nvil Sound Display is a new company to us – a specialist, making speaker stands to order. The design is fixed, but different base plates, heights, spike options and so on make the finished product very flexible. Basically, this is a single-pillar stand, the pillar being made of thick-walled aluminium of square cross-section with some little profile details in it that both look good and help damp resonances. It is fixed to a base of steel or wood (various finishes) and topped with a steel plate. The process of ordering on the web site takes you through a complete configuration process. The pillar has holes top and bottom through which cables can be routed, and while those holes make the use of loose filling impractical, Anvil supplies filling (metal chips) in sealed plastic bags which can be simply dropped inside before the top plate is fitted. Finish and general appearance are very good.

We were pleased with the sound of this stand, which did good service under several

different small and mid-size speakers. It is impressively stable and non-resonant and as a result the sound is clear and precise. It does seem, compared with the best stands we've tried, to have a contribution of its own in the midrange, where there's a touch of colour added to male voice and instruments that occupy that register (tenor sax, for instance). However, it lacks the confusion that plagues many cheap stands; on the contrary, melodic lines are clearly differentiated. The price is attractive and we're happy to recommend the range. **HFC**

Richard Black



## VERDICT

**CONCLUSION**  
Good sound performance, a variety of smart looks and enough options to suit most tastes and applications.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
**85%**

# Pure Evoke-1XT Marshall Edition

**TYPE** Tabletop DAB radio

**PRICE** £100 (optional second speaker £35)

**CONTACT** ☎ 01923 260511 ☎ www.pure.com

**F**rom small, British origins, Pure has built its brand with impressive dexterity. By developing the right ideas at the right time, it rapidly established itself as King of DAB, leaving its rivals playing catch-up ever since. The brand's strength has been forged via a mix of intelligent product design and, by and large, class-leading performance; but to our minds, there's little in the company's portfolio to beat the genius of the Evoke-1XT Marshall Edition.

The well-established '1XT sits in the middle of Pure's current portable range. In standard guise it's a no-nonsense, mains-powered DAB radio, priced at £90 and lacking the hi-tech frills of the range-topping Evoke-3 – pause and rewind, SD card recording and the like. Yet its attractive design, straightforward operation and nicely balanced sound are a winning combination.

Developed in collaboration with legendary guitar amp manufacturer Marshall and DAB station Planet Rock, this special-edition version takes the same basic radio but replaces it with roadie-proof, Marshall amp-style clothing.



**BEST BUY**

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
magazine



Design detail is superb, from the classic Marshall logo to authentic-looking controls; even the volume knob 'goes up to eleven', in true *This is Spinal Tap* tradition.

It sounds great too, especially when upgraded to stereo via the optional second speaker, as pictured – it's similarly styled to make the whole thing look like a miniature Marshall stack. Obviously, we're not talking

hi-fi separates bandwidth here, but very decent punch, clarity and solidity all hoist it well above the portable radio riff-raff. Anyone with a penchant for grin-inducing, rock-inspired design will find it impossible to resist. **HFC**

Tim Bowers

## VERDICT

**CONCLUSION**  
Basic feature set but a pleasure to use, with very decent sound. Marshall styling is a stroke of genius!

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



GROUP TEST AND LAB REPORTS: RICHARD BLACK

# AMPLIFIERS

*These days, the audiophile integrated amplifier conflict starts here*

## ON TEST



Audiolab 8000S  
£500



Cambridge Audio Azur 840R  
£750



Cyrus 6vs2  
£600



Exposure 2010S  
£600



Primare I21  
£750



Unison Research Unico P  
£795

The battle, if one might call it that, for the hearts and minds of audiophiles is fought on different territories from year to year. It seems not very long ago that we were looking with the greatest interest at amplifiers in the sub-£500 bracket, but now the real action seems to be between £500 and £1,000. The shift has a lot less to do with inflation than with a change in attitudes among buyers and creators of audio kit alike. A mood of mature reflection prevails on both sides, as they realise that super-budget kit is all very well, and often good value, but really doesn't offer any scope for aspirational looks and construction, or interesting features – never mind the finesse that marks out true high fidelity, as the term was originally applied.

Yes, we do seriously suggest that at least some of that finesse is to be found in this price bracket. Why not? It's never been a secret that audio, like any area of technology, submits to the law of diminishing returns and whatever the arguments might be in favour of £10,000-worth of amplification should money be no problem, it is simply not going to be ten times better than you'd get for a grand. In fact, in terms of pure audio performance, our experience is that you can get a remarkably high percentage of the ultimate available for very sensible money.

Most designers will concede that going all-out for the 'best' is a bit of an academic exercise, but designing within constraints has more relevance in terms of real sales. So, it is worth some real brain teasing. As a result, some good brains and ears have spent many late

nights pondering how best to allocate a retail budget of £750 or so.

Guess what? That's just where we plumped to base this group test. Just where starter hi-fi's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of high end. You're upgrading? Feel you deserve a treat? Feel your treasured music collection deserves something a bit special in the electronics department? Have a look at the next few pages, consider the findings of our panel of expert listeners, listen to what your dealer has to offer – and enjoy! **HFC**

## EQUIPMENT USED

- ⊕ ATC SCM11 and SCM20 loudspeakers
- ⊕ Denon DCD-CX3 CD player
- ⊕ dCS Elgar D/A converter
- ⊕ Kimber, Furukawa and Bespoke Audio hi-fi cables
- ⊕ Pink Triangle PT TOO turntable with SME309 tonearm and Highphonic MC-A3 cartridge
- ⊕ EAR 'The Head' step-up transformer

## MUSIC USED

- ⊕ Michael Jackson *Thriller*
- ⊕ Bertouch *Trio Sonatas*
- ⊕ Rossini *Petite Messe Solenne*
- ⊕ Little Feat *Feats Don't Fail Me Now*
- ⊕ Guzman *Ambrosio*
- ⊕ Penguin Cafe Orchestra *Concert Programme*

## EARS USED

We are, once again, deeply indebted to our colleagues in the industry who lend their finely-tuned ears in the service of their art (especially Tom, standing in for an indisposed listener at one hour's notice):

- ⊕ David Denyer (David Denyer Public Relations)
- ⊕ Tom Jones (Mordaunt-Short)
- ⊕ Ed Selley (Audio Partnership)



## LISTENING TESTS

In classic *HFC* fashion, the centrepiece of the listening was a 'blind' presentation of each amp to a panel of expert listeners, in an attempt to remain free of prejudices and preconceptions. Listening levels were matched and the same programme of music was played through each amp with minimal distractions. In addition, each amp was auditioned more informally, at different listening levels to suit the particular character of each amp under test.

## LAB TESTS

The amplifiers were measured with a variety of equipment, including a Hameg distortion measuring set and also items of audio equipment (ADCs and DACs) adapted to lab duty and reporting data for analysis to Cool Edit and Mathcad on a PC. This approach enabled us to build up a picture of the amplifiers performance under different conditions of frequency, level and load. This allows truly accurate assessment of published amplifier specifications and precisely determines the amplifier's characteristics under real-world conditions.

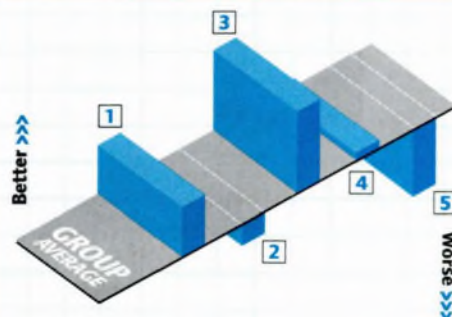
**No other magazine offers an equivalent test and listening programme for comparative tests.**

## LAB REPORTS: THE BAR GRAPH

Our unique 3D bar graphs are a simple way of showing how the products compare across five technical parameters. In each case, a percentage is given that falls above or below the group average.

- 1) Dynamic power:** This reflects an aggregate of continuous and peak (instantaneous) power, giving an indication of power available under realistic conditions.
- 2) Frequency response:** This is a measure of how smooth the frequency response is within the audio band and defines the upper frequency (-3dB point) limit.
- 3) Dynamic range:** An indication of the background hiss level, as compared to maximum power output.
- 4) Distortion:** An aggregate figure of measurements at different frequencies and levels.
- 5) Output impedance:** A measurement of how tight a grip the amplifier has upon the loudspeaker cones.

## OUR BAR GRAPHS: AN EXAMPLE





# SUPER NATURAL WINNERS

## IKON 6 | VOKAL 2 | ON-WALL | SUB

"Massively capable IKON speaker package from Danish company DALI"

"The IKON 5.1 package delivers a beautiful, detailed and dynamic sound"

| What Hi-Fi

## DALI IKON ON-WALL

"The DALI IKONs have the transparency and openness of the IKON speaker system reviewed in the August issue, so it's obviously a family trait"

"Open, airy sound from a compact loudspeaker"

| The Perfect Vision

## DALI IKON 1

"Best Entry Level Speaker"

| Audio & Cinema em Casa

## DALI IKON 2

"We're careful not to let Award-winners' glory to reflect on their siblings, but in the case of the IKON 2s we've no need for caution: these standmounters are every bit as capable as their bigger brother"

| What Hi-Fi

## DALI IKON 6

"We've yet to come across a rival that can match the IKON 6's combination of full-bodied midrange, treble sparkle and crisp timing"

| What Hi-Fi

"A loudspeaker of exceptional resolve for the money, the IKON 6 will show what has been recorded in exquisite detail and with pin-sharp precision."

"The IKON 6 is one of the finest-grained, most exquisitely detailed loudspeakers we've encountered at anywhere near its price"

| Hi-Fi Choice

"Percussion, strings, flutes - everything that has anything with brilliance to do, sparkles fresh and definitely unforced"

| Stereoplay

## DALI IKON 7

Unlike many large speakers, it also shows superior transparency and a lovely coherence"

"From a value for money perspective, the IKON 7 is an obvious frontrunner"

| Hi-Fi Choice



IN ADMIRATION OF MUSIC





£500 ☎ 0845 458 0011 🌐 www.audiolab.co.uk

# AUDIOLAB 8000S

*A classic mid-market amp design returns to the fray*

The revived Audiolab name has also seen a revival of some familiar-looking model names, but the most famous of those, the 8000A, is replaced by the 8000S. The new model is basically a fully traditional integrated amplifier in almost every respect: unlike the old 8000A, it doesn't have a phono stage and it includes remote control. But otherwise, the similarities far outweigh the differences.

Thanks in part to the economies of offshore manufacturing, the case is a deluxe affair with an aluminium extrusion for the front panel, while the rest is steel, the top of which is mechanically damped to prevent ringing. Inside, a single circuit board carries all the components. In keeping with the traditionalist theme, almost all the stages are based on discrete transistors – we spotted just one (good quality) op-amp. Of course, the output transistors (a single pair per channel of large high-speed bipolar types) are mounted on a heatsink. Audiolab has used heatsinking on a number of other components, several of which are also thermally linked together, presumably to maintain matching of characteristics between pairs. This kind of attention to detail can help make an amp more consistent with time and temperature.

The 8000S has separate source switches for listening and recording, a rare feature but one we like. Both are good old-fashioned rotary switches, but the 'listen' one is motorised and hence remote-controllable, and in fact operates relays at the rear of the unit. The volume control is likewise a motorised mechanical part.

## SOUND QUALITY

Unlike the old 8000A, our listeners seemed to find plenty of common ground in describing the 8000S. They all seemed to find its performance dependent on the music playing, with the most successful tracks being those featuring quite small groups of musicians. The Penguin Cafe Orchestra track (which we've found a useful arbiter precisely because it's a



good but not great recording) 'timed' very well and sounded generally lively and energetic. Spatially, it was closed in, but there was still plenty of air around the sound and all the instrumental lines were easy to follow.

Similar comments were made about the baroque chamber piece; vague in imaging, but tonally precise and rhythmically taut, too. There was praise here for the bass, which helped present the full-bodied sound of the harpsichord and cello.

Larger, more complex works drew a mixed reaction. Michael Jackson's dense backing was lacking depth and insight. All the same, the midrange agility and extended bass of the amp again made things clear tonally and melodically. Much the same held true in the opera track, where all agreed there was a nice flow to the track but limited soundstaging detail. It was also felt here that dynamics rather lagged the best of the group.

Our sighted listening to this amp confirmed that it is talented tonally, but less confident in imaging and fine detail. All the same, it passes the long-term listening test very well, with little or no 'listener fatigue' and keeps the listener's attention without intruding. As the cheapest model in the group, it far from disgraced itself and, scoring highly for practicality, clearly merits attention. **HFC**

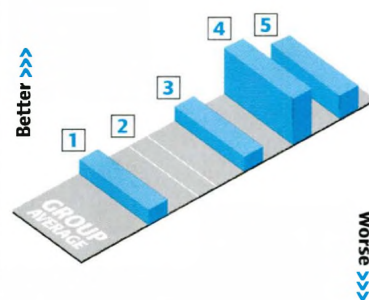
VERDICT	
<b>SOUND &gt;&gt;&gt; 83%</b>	A practical and smart amplifier that won't give any nasty surprises. Tonally it's very good, perhaps a little less so in terms of dynamics and imaging, but never less than pleasant. The 8000A lives on!
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt;&gt; 82%</b>	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt;&gt; 86%</b>	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt;&gt; 88%</b>	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE 85%</b>	



## LAB REPORT

Audiolab quotes two figures for power output, nominal and 'typical', the latter matching our finding exactly. The modest-size mains transformer gives a fair dynamic headroom over and above this, though, with around 100W available for peaks. Not surprisingly, a 4-ohm load will depend even more heavily on that transient ability, but distortion doesn't rise too fast into low impedances. In fact, distortion is very low; kept to sub-0.01% levels under pretty much any conditions of output level and frequency we tried, including at high frequencies, where its level barely exceeds that in the midband, a relatively rare achievement. Frequency response is pretty flat across the audio range, too – perhaps just sufficiently tilted in the high treble to give a slight 'sweetening' at high volume control settings. Noise is good and contains only very low levels of hum, and there is almost no hum modulation. This seems to be a very well designed circuit.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Dynamic power >>> +10%
- 2] Frequency response >>> 0%
- 3] Dynamic range >>> +10%
- 4] Distortion >>> +30%
- 5] Output impedance >>> +15%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Power output (8 ohms)	60W	72W
Distortion (1kHz/8 ohms)	0.07%	0.0025%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	±0.5dB	±0.2dB



Award winning musical sound  
Lifetime warranty  
Sexy design



## The Densen B-150 Integrated Amp

The new reference integrated amplifier from Densen is perhaps the most advanced integrated amp on the market. It is filled with advanced solutions, which all share the goal of giving you even more musicality and flexibility. The B-150 is basically a scaled down version of the B-250 and B-350 (Densen's reference pre/power combo) in one box with all the high end ingredients such as relay driven volume control, zero feedback technology, custom-made components and much more.

However, there is much more to a perfect product than just superior sound quality. It is our intention to make complete products. Not just products that are sonically superior, but complete like a perfect circle. As you learn about Densen, you'll discover that we go the extra mile in every aspect: design, user-friendliness, quality, warranty, upgradeability, production methods and of course sound quality. But you really won't have a clue about it all until you get to hear and see what we're talking about in real life. Then you will know what we mean when we say Air-Guitar factor (say what? check our website). There is one Air-Guitar / Air-Baton included with every Densen product.

Discover why we say:

LIFE IS TOO SHORT FOR BORING HI-FI



Best Integrated Amp  
Portugal 2006

### Authorised dealers:

Acoustic Arts, Bedfordshire, Tel. 01923 245250 - Adventures in Hi-Fi Ltd., Chester, Tel. 01942 234202 - The Audio Room, Hedon, Tel. 01482 891375 - Adams & Jarrett, East Sussex, Tel. 01424 437165 - Divine Audio, Leicestershire, Tel. 01858 432999 - Glasgow Audio, Glasgow, Tel. 01413 324707 - Hi-Fi Studios, Doncaster, Tel. 01302 725550 - Holburn Hi-Fi, Aberdeen, Tel. 01224 585713 - New Audio Frontiers, Loughborough, Tel. 01509 264002 - Phonography, Ringwood, Tel. 01425 461230 - Practical Hi-Fi, Lancaster, Tel. 01524 39657 - Practical Hi-Fi, Manchester, Tel. 01618 398869 - Practical Hi-Fi, Preston, Tel. 01772 883958 - Practical Hi-Fi, Warrington, Tel. 01925 632179 - R.J.F., Cornwall, Tel. 01209 710777 - Sound Seduction, Sevenoaks, Tel. 01732 456573 - VideoTech, Huddersfield, Tel. 01484 516670

Densen Audio Technologies - Phone: (+45) 75 18 12 14 - E-mail: mail@densen.dk

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£750 ☎ 0870 900 1000 🌐 www.cambridgeaudio.com

# CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 840A

There's plenty of cutting-edge tech in Cambridge Audio's top amp

This is a lot of amplifier for the money. It's big and heavy and impressively filled with functional bits, and it houses some genuinely novel technology. We've included it before in a group test, but it reappears here as something of a reference point.

The principal designer behind the 840A is Doug Self. His books on audio design reveal an admirable ability to research and innovate. His stated aim is to produce amplifiers with such low levels of departure from perfection they could reasonably be called 'blameless'. As his research has shown, the best route to this is Class A amplification, but the practical downside of this approach is high power consumption. So, he developed 'Class XD', reducing the effects of crossover distortion in a Class AB amp to very near the levels found in true Class A. It's still not quite as power-efficient as Class AB, but sounds superb.

The heart of the 840A is a vast mains transformer, surrounded by heatsinks, to which are attached the several power transistors required to make Class XD work well. A line-only amp, but there's plenty going on with relay selection of inputs. There are also more relays adjusting volume in 1dB steps, by switching resistors in and out – it may be purist but it's mechanically noisy when you adjust the volume! Build quality is good, with decent components throughout. The front panel display, though not exactly beautiful, gives clear information on what's selected.

## SOUND QUALITY

As sometimes happens, some of our listeners' comments seemed rather at odds with each other when it came to the 840A. They agreed on some areas, though, including a slightly treble-rich balance. Interestingly, none of them ever actually described it as 'bright', but all felt that the treble was strongly presented. At the same time, suggested one of them, the sound managed to be a little slower than with some of the amps in the group. This isn't necessarily



a contradiction in terms as strong treble badly timed could easily make an amp seem slow.

But timing was felt on the whole to be good. On the other hand, the treble wasn't to everyone's liking, being described as 'glassy' in one track. That's hardly a potent criticism, but it does highlight the fact that the treble was clearly more present than the group average.

The bass, however, did properly divide opinion. One listener found it weak, another well extended. Surely it can't be both? Perhaps the key lies in the comment that deep bass is good but upper bass to midrange is less so. Depending on which region your own ear is best attuned to (not to mention the music playing), the overall bass performance will – in that case – seem more or less impressive.

Dynamics attracted favourable comment, and from our own listening we would agree that they manage to be wide but sufficiently effortless not to dominate one's perception of the sound. 'Overstated' dynamics can be wearing as they are usually a symptom of roughness at high levels, and there's no trace of that here. In addition, detail is good at all playback levels. While our last test of the amp produced an arguably more uniform positive response, there's still plenty to recommend it from this outing. **HFC**

### VERDICT

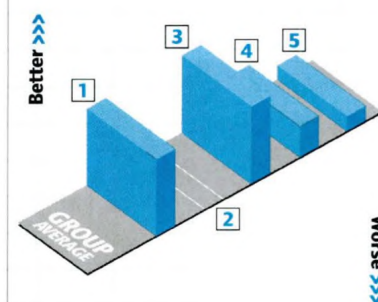
<p><b>SOUND &gt;&gt; 86%</b></p> <p>Clearly excellent material value for money, this is a powerful and capable integrated amplifier with many useful features and clear, dynamic sound that's occasionally a touch unpredictable in the bass.</p>	<p><b>HI-FI CHOICE</b> <b>OVERALL SCORE 88%</b></p>
<p><b>FEATURES &gt;&gt; 90%</b></p>	
<p><b>BUILD &gt;&gt; 88%</b></p>	
<p><b>VALUE &gt;&gt; 90%</b></p>	



## LAB REPORT

Although the performance of the review sample was plenty good enough to pass our 'goods inwards' performance checks, running the full suite of tests after the main listening session showed, in the light of earlier experience of the amp, that this unit either was slightly faulty or had been mis-adjusted somewhere along the line. Its distortion performance was good but not as impressive as the last unit we tested, especially at high frequencies. With 19/20kHz intermodulation, for example, it reached around 0.04% at high output levels, compared with less than a tenth of that last time. Aside from that, frequency response is ruler-flat and noise exceptionally low (though marred just a little by hum harmonics, probably a penalty of that vast transformer). Output is limited by the protection circuit which reduces gain as overload sets in: momentary peaks just crack 140W into 8 ohms, while 4-ohm loads will receive well over 200W sustained.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Dynamic power >> +50%
- 2] Frequency response >> 0%
- 3] Dynamic range >> +50%
- 4] Distortion >> +20%
- 5] Output impedance >> +10%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Power output (8 ohms)	120W	136W
Distortion (1kHz/8 ohms)	0.00015%	0.007%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	±0.3dB	±0.2dB





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# CYRUS 6vs2

*The ever-polished singing shoebox continues to shine*

**P**retty much the other end of the scale from Cambridge's large and butch 840A, the Cyrus 6vs2 does, however, match it in looking modern and hi-tech. That's impressive given the basic case design goes back many years now. In terms of power, the 6vs2 is the most modest amp here – 40 watts doesn't sound like very much in these days of 150-watt-plus integrated amps, but it's worth mentioning that our panel listening test called for less than 20 watts maximum output into one of the least efficient speakers we know of.

Cyrus has assembled the amp using modern surface-mount techniques, enabling a lot of circuit to be contained in a small board area. About half the area inside the unit is taken up with that, the rest being a medium-size mains transformer, control circuits and fresh air. A single pair of output transistors is all that's required for the output, and these are mounted direct to the case.

In addition, integrated circuits look after input selection and volume control. The part Cyrus has used for the former function is able to handle high input levels, so one of the occasional drawbacks of such devices is neatly avoided, and the volume control part is a high-performance component from Wolfson Microelectronics. It has been configured to give volume control steps of 1dB from full level all the way down to -80dB, which is a few turns of the volume control knob – this takes a little getting used to after traditional single-turn controls but the fine resolution at any position is nice. It's good to use, though the controls don't feel as solid as some of the heftier competition.

## SOUND QUALITY

Amps like Cyrus's babies definitely benefit from blind listening. It's just too easy to form preconceptions of physically diminutive amps and eyes very easily deceive ears! Our listeners, however, lacked such disruptive stimuli and came to some conclusions that do a lot to vindicate Cyrus's approach.



It exhibited a finely judged balance of virtues. From the outset, it delivered good treble extension without brightness or glassiness, well integrated lower registers and good dynamics. It didn't have the 'slam' of one or two of the other amps in the group, but it did present some energetic and precisely timed percussion in the Michael Jackson track, all the while keeping subsidiary lines well in place.

Indeed, placing seems to be a key ability of the 6vs2. Stereo imaging is very good, with instruments and voices precisely distributed around the soundstage. This was pointed out in comments on all kinds of music, and it was felt to have highly beneficial effects in terms of balance. When different musical lines emanate from different places they are easier to follow individually, and the way this amplifier distinguished vocals from backing, for instance, without divorcing them from each other, made listening to it a highly informative and pleasing experience.

With good rhythmic flow, tunefully extended deep bass and a high listening comfort factor, plus good looks and nice operation, this diminutive model is clearly among the very best in its class. **HFC**

## VERDICT

**SOUND >>> 87%**

Despite its modest size and 40 watt rating, this is a surprisingly powerful little amp that reproduces instrumental timbres and acoustic spaces very well indeed, with a real sense of musical involvement.

**FEATURES >>> 85%**

**BUILD >>> 85%**

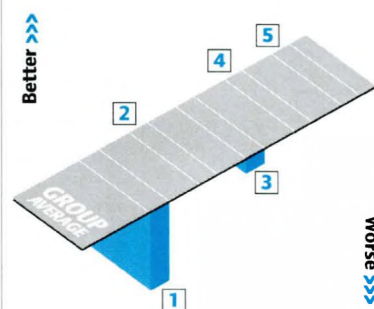
**VALUE >>> 93%**

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

## LAB REPORT

The Cyrus' noise floor is the second-worst in the group at -100dB, which translates in real terms into a just-audible hiss through sensitive speakers. That figure, however, is likely to be drowned by the hiss inherent in the majority of recordings at most replay levels. Its distortion is only middling in a group that is not in any case remarkable for its performance, but despite some high harmonics in the distortion spectrum (which can relate to crossover distortion), the distortion level falls rapidly with output and almost disappears below a couple of watts out. Frequency response is as flat as any. Meanwhile, output power exceeds the rated 40W by around 12% but climbs as high as 65W on brief peaks. The modest mains transformer prevents power from doubling into a 4-ohm load, but again under dynamic conditions there is quite a lot available and the quite low output impedance (including at high frequencies) means that low-impedance loads are handled with confidence.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Dynamic power >>> -50%
- 2] Frequency response >>> 0%
- 3] Dynamic range >>> -10%
- 4] Distortion >>> 0%
- 5] Output impedance >>> 0%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Power output (8 ohms)	40W	45W
Distortion (1kHz/8 ohms)	0.003%	0.02%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	±0.3dB	±0.2dB



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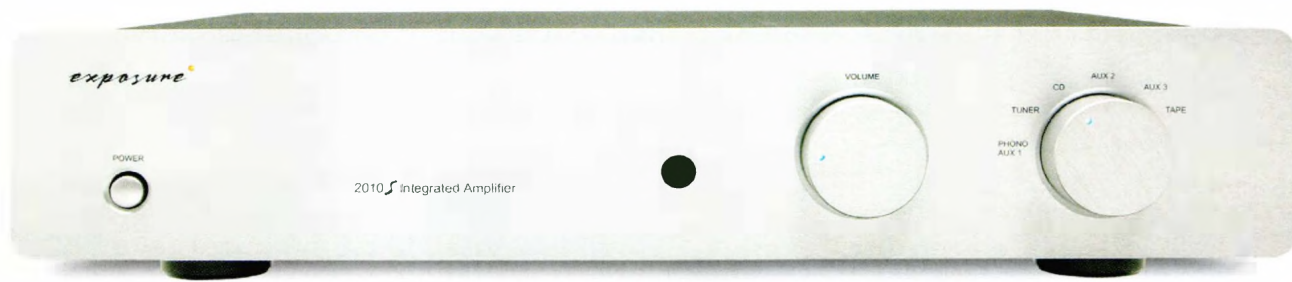
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**EXPOSURE 2010S**

*Exposure takes the traditional route to amplifier design*

**O**f all the amps in this group, this one is the most obviously traditional. Traditional, that is, as long as your idea of 'tradition' goes back about 25 years, to the days when serious integrated amps had no controls bar input selector and volume, and no internal circuitry beyond that required to make the signal big enough to drive speakers. Pull the lid off and you'll find a single-sided circuit board and through-hole components. There are concessions to modernity, though, not least the output transistors, which are funky five-leg parts from Sanken, and of course the motorised volume control and selector switch – both mechanical – for remote-control duty.

The option exists of an internal phono stage, but as standard, the amp is a line-level device that really does make a virtue of simplicity. The amplifying circuits use discrete transistors with just one dual op-amp that we could spot, there appears to be no output protection or other (potentially sonically invasive) fripperies, and the output sockets are hard-wired to the circuit board. The two pairs of sockets are strictly for bi-wiring rather than two sets of speakers.

The unit is assembled in an all-aluminium case, which has no damping applied but is not particularly resonant. There's no heatsink, and Exposure relies on a 'heat spreader', a thick aluminium bar that conducts heat from the output transistors to the bottom of the case. Although this would not provide enough cooling for worst-case conditions that one could cook up in a lab, in music use the amp never got anywhere near alarmingly warm.

**SOUND QUALITY**

If our listeners' reactions are anything to go by, this amp could prove more of a hit with some types of music than others. Specifically, it received a far higher rating while playing rock/pop than when opera was the fare, and its performance went downhill during the test programme presentation (which happened to go in a pop-to-classical direction).



As always, the reasons for this are in the little details of performance. Bass is clear, extended and well controlled, thus providing a solid and rhythmically convincing underpinning for any strongly rhythmic music. Aiding this is a nicely timed midband, together with treble that is for the most part sweet and extended.

On the debit side, however, it seems that detail is not always what it might be. There's a degree of grain that comes between the listener and the subtle sonic cues that distinguish one instrument from another, and it's in classical music (and acoustically recorded jazz) that this is most important. In rock, with its emphasis on big and bold strokes, any weakness in this area is more forgivable and in simple ballad-style stuff, featuring a voice and an instrument or two, such details are far less important.

We did have some success playing classical piano, the amp's tonal qualities serving the complicated balance of percussiveness and melody well. However, one of our test tracks, with contrapuntal strings and harsichord, did seem more than a little confused. Choral voices also lost some precision, while full orchestra sounded 'hard' and ill-defined. We'd have little hesitation in recommending this amp for rockers, but for classical music buffs, on this showing, there may be better kit around. **HFC**

**VERDICT**

**SOUND >>> 83%**

**FEATURES >>> 79%**

**BUILD >>> 86%**

**VALUE >>> 84%**

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

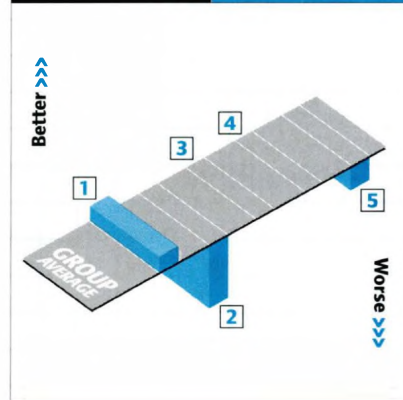
A no-nonsense amp which offers excellent bass but seems a little lacking in terms of detail – a touch of grain in the sound comes between the listener and the music. Can be exciting with rock, though.



**LAB REPORT**

It's far from obvious what lies behind the 2010S's lack of detail and insight. The basics are all there: it's true that the frequency response is rolled off in the treble (-1dB at about 22kHz). But, while that may be audible in A/B comparisons, it's not in our experience enough, on its own, to account for anything but a slight sweetening effect. Normally considerably more treble cut would be required to affect detail in this way. Perhaps the answer lies in distortion, which at high output levels is roughly typical of the group, but which fails to fade away quite as fast as some when output is reduced. This results in slightly below-par performance around 1W output. In addition, it rises at HF and includes a touch of hum modulation, though not at very alarming levels. Phase modulation ('analogue jitter') seems to be higher in level than with most amps, too. Noise performance is good, with very little hum.

**HOW IT COMPARES**



Measurement	Rated	Actual
Power output (8 ohms)	75W	81W
Distortion (1kHz/8 ohms)	0.05%	0.02%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	+0.5dB	±0.8dB



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# PRIMARE I21

*Primare's entry-level amp delivers the brand's customary style*

**O**f the six amps in this group, this one is surely the most high-end in appearance. Primare has the knack of classy visual design, and it's all so efficiently done, too – a plain steel tray for the base, back and sides, with an aluminium front panel added and a distinctive volume knob plus selector buttons, all in stainless steel. The review sample was black, but titanium is also available.

The I21 is heavy, due partly to the case but also to the large mains toroidal transformer that dominates under the lid. There's a fair amount of space inside, though, as Primare's use of surface-mount technology has ensured that the audio circuit board is small. It is neatly sandwiched between the internal heatsinks and the back panel, and all the input and output sockets are mounted directly on the board, eliminating excess wiring and doubtless helping keep costs down, too.

In the interests of channel independence, Primare has opted for 'dual-mono' construction. Each channel has its own transformer winding, as well as rectifier and smoothing capacitors, though a few components are shared, including the electronic volume control. Input switching is also electronic. The output transistors are fast bipolar types, one pair per channel, while the voltage amplifying stages use a typical mix of op-amps and bipolar devices.

Primare may have gone a little too minimalist for some in providing only four line-level inputs (no phono option) and there's just one set of speaker terminals, but you do at least get a preamp output in case you want to bi-amp or upgrade to an external power amplifier.

### SOUND QUALITY

This proved to be another amplifier with a performance that is dependent on the style of music one happens to be playing. In this case, the variable is the bass, which seems to be more confident in big-scale music than in quieter stuff. In the opening track of our blind



listening sequence, Michael Jackson's backing seemed over-rich in bass, though it was well controlled. Later tracks required more subtle bass and seemed lean by contrast.

Timing seems to follow the bass, as it were, making for a lively and energetic experience with rock, but a less toe-tapping time with gentler music. But if that sounds dismissive, it shouldn't overshadow this amp's undoubted abilities in midband and treble tonality and detail. It is very good at distinguishing between lead and backing vocals, for instance, or between different instruments in an ensemble. Our listeners found it particularly good at reproducing string instruments including massed orchestral violins, a difficult sound to get right but here replayed without any of the glassiness that can often plague it.

Imaging was found a little lacking here, with some constriction to the width and not quite the precision in placement fore and aft that some of the amps managed. Dynamics are good, with a fine sense of sweep to the ebb and flow of large-scale works particularly.

Overall, we found this amp a little uninviting; pleasant enough but neither as beguiling nor as analytical as others. As such, we feel this is not the jewel in Primare's (generally very impressive) crown. **HFC**

### VERDICT

<b>SOUND &gt;&gt;&gt; 84%</b>	A frustrating mix of excellent midrange and treble tonality with good detail, which must be tempered by only middling imaging, and bass that performs much better loud than soft; it seems to lack LF subtlety.
<b>FEATURES &gt;&gt;&gt; 76%</b>	
<b>BUILD &gt;&gt;&gt; 89%</b>	
<b>VALUE &gt;&gt;&gt; 84%</b>	

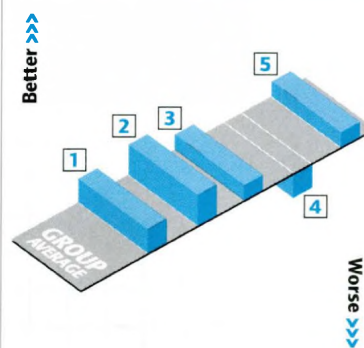
**HI-FI CHOICE**  
**OVERALL SCORE 84%**



### LAB REPORT

It seems highly likely that the key to the I21's sound lies in its distortion characteristic, which is typical of amps with mild crossover distortion. At low and midband frequencies it is quite high in level and doesn't drop off as fast as one might wish with decreasing output. In the high treble, not only does the level of distortion relative to fundamental increase as output decreases, the absolute level of distortion increases. It appears to be due to thermal effects – so expect this amp to benefit from a good warm-up! Another practical tip is to watch out for hum loops. There is very little hum modulation, though, and next to no phase modulation in the distortion spectrum. Noise is low and maximum output is comfortably above the rating. As one expects from a large mains transformer, dynamic headroom is low because there is little 'sagging under load', and output into 4 ohms is confidently maintained, good for nearly 150W.

### HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Dynamic power >>> +15%
- 2] Frequency response >>> +20%
- 3] Dynamic range >>> +10%
- 4] Distortion >>> -15%
- 5] Output impedance >>> +10%

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Power output (8 ohms)	75W	85W
Distortion (1kHz/8 ohms)	0.05%	0.07%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	±1dB	±0.1dB



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# UNISON RESEARCH UNICO P

*Italian style, a phono stage and a valve... what more do you need?*

**U**nison Research is a name very much associated with valves – that, and sumptuous Italian styling. The company's upmarket models are visually striking, and few would deny them the epithet 'gorgeous', too. Unison has inevitably had to make concessions in this, its cheapest amp. Still, the thick aluminium front panel and matching selector and volume knobs give a touch of class that's by no means taken for granted at this price. And as this is the only amp in this group to feature a phono stage as standard, it's clearly no cheapskate on the features front.

There's another distinguishing feature inside. A single ECC82 (a double triode, one section serving each channel) doesn't make this in any very meaningful sense a 'valve amplifier' but if it gives a touch of valve sound that appeals, we won't sniff at it. In any case, it's assisted by an assortment of semiconductors, including a low-noise op-amp doing duty in the phono stage, bipolar transistors at various points and MOSFET output devices. Power for all that lot is sourced from a medium-size toroidal transformer aided by a couple of unusually large smoothing capacitors.

As with most modern integrated amps, two internal heatsinks get rid of waste heat and the main circuit board is mounted to one side of them, with a couple of 'daughterboards' increasing the available area. All audio parts are through-hole types, with a handful of surface-mount components looking after the remote control functions – in this case that means just volume as the selector switch (located at the rear and operated via a long shaft) is not motorised.

## SOUND QUALITY

This amp scored a clear hit with all our listeners. It seems to have ticked all the boxes, and what's more the impression it made started well but got better. The praise began cautiously, with a warning note about slight veiling, but by the third track comments were uniformly positive.



Almost every important area of sonic importance received some specific praise. Tonality, it was thought neutral and well extended at both ends of the spectrum, with good bass weight and clarity. Dynamics were wide but not exaggerated, and it's always a good sign for long-term listening comfort when this is matched by a natural flow from soft to loud and back again. And rhythm was likewise clear and easy to follow without unduly dominating proceedings.

That's not to say that every aspect is best in class. Imaging was praised for its fine lateral resolution, but its depth performance was, we felt subsequently, perhaps the one weakness of the amp – it has vague definition of the distance at which performers are placed from the listener. In all honesty, though, this is not very distressing and probably barely noticeable under any circumstances short of critical comparison with other fine amps, using familiar recordings.

Detail was well liked by our panel, and while it might not satisfy real analysis freaks, we rate it very highly, not least for the unfussy manner in which it is presented. If you don't want to take a recording apart, this amp won't force you to. It's an informative and highly listenable model, which deserves every success. **HFC**

### VERDICT

**SOUND >> 87%**

**FEATURES >> 84%**

**BUILD >> 88%**

**VALUE >> 90%**

Although on paper this amp's performance may not look outstanding, the ears say it is detailed, balanced, mellifluous and basically a delight to listen to. Pretty good at analysis and even the phono stage is handy!

89%

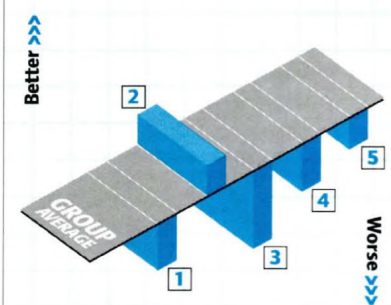
OVERALL SCORE



## LAB REPORT

Everyone who has ever lab-tested audio products will be familiar with the paradox of this amp: arguably the best sonic result but in many ways the weakest set of measurements. Not in all ways, though, for the frequency response is as flat as any (the phono stage is very flat, too) and while the noise floor is a little higher than the others manage, the hum level is very low. There's a little hum modulation, especially at high frequencies, but the main area of concern is distortion. At over 0.1%, even down to output levels of under half a watt, this looks as if it should be distinctly audible. True, it vanishes into noise at very low levels (around the -30dB point, or 50mW if you prefer), but perhaps the more important observation is that it is still lower in level than even good loudspeakers produce. Or, do we just like a touch of distortion? The jury's still out. Output power is fine, dynamic headroom quite high, and output impedance on the high side.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Dynamic power >> -30%
- 2] Frequency response >> +20%
- 3] Dynamic range >> -50%
- 4] Distortion >> -30%
- 5] Output impedance >> -20%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Power output (8 ohms)	50W	66W
Distortion (1kHz/8 ohms)	0.12%	0.16%
Frequency response (20Hz-20kHz)	±0.5dB	±0.1dB



# CONCLUSIONS

A variety of styles both sonic and aesthetic, with some clear stars emerging from the pack

Surveying this group, it's evident that matters have been closely fought, but on this occasion there's a more obvious ranking order than in some previous *Ultimate Group Tests*. We were sorry to mark the Exposure 2010S down compared with the others, as it's been a good friend in the past, but it's simply outshone by more recent models. However, it's about as straightforward as an amp can be today and its very longevity must say something in its favour.

The Audiolab 8000S is either newer than the 2010S or more

venerable, depending on how close a relative one considers it to the old-time Audiolab models. It may have inherited one classic Audiolab characteristic, of being a bit 'boring', but that is not necessarily a criticism. It comes down to whether or not you want your hi-fi to sound 'exciting'. And that's something the Primare's I21 excels at. With an identical overall score to the Audiolab, the Primare is a lover of the big and exciting but a little timid of gentler, subtler sounds. Quite unlike the Audiolab, though, you'll either love it or hate it.

Cyrus sells a good number of its amps as part of systems, the ensemble looking excellent, but we'd certainly advise considering the 6vs2 in the company of fine components from other makes. It may look modest on paper, but it puts out an energetic, spirited version of musical events that one can easily warm to, and its powers of analysis are commendable, too.

Meanwhile, the Cambridge Audio Azur 840A occupies an entirely different planet of ethos, looks and power output but frankly does many of the same things. Of

course, ultimately an output of well over 100 watts means it does kick ass harder than any other here but its finesse is admirable too, despite the apparently slightly sub-standard performance of our review sample.

Perhaps the test's most pleasing discovery, however, is the Unison Research Unico P. In many ways it offers the most rounded performance, with detail, bass and treble extension, tonal and spatial precision and general musical involvement of a high order. The Cyrus pips it on price grounds, but it's a very capable amp indeed. **HFC**

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## HINTS AND TIPS

>> Amps generate heat! In a rack, allow at least three inches clear above any amplifier to dissipate that heat output.

>> Use decent cables in and out, and if your speaker cable has bare ends, be very careful to avoid frayed ends. Tighten terminals occasionally.

>> It's 'greener' to switch an amp off at the mains than via standby. All the amps here kill the audio circuitry in standby so there's no sonic implication.

>> Routing cables neatly together does more than just look good – it helps reduce interference.

## INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS AT A GLANCE



MAKE MODEL	Audiolab 8000S	Cambridge Audio Azur 840A	Cyrus 6vs2	Exposure 2010S	Primare I21	Unison Research Unico P
PRICE	£500	£750	£600	£600	£750	£795
SOUND						
FEATURES						
BUILD						
VALUE						
OVERALL						
CONCLUSION	Practical and smart with no nasty surprises. Good tonally, but perhaps less so dynamically.	Excellent material value – powerful and capable, with many useful features and clear, dynamic sound.	Spunky little amp that reproduces instrumental timbres and acoustic spaces well, with real musical involvement.	No-nonsense amp with excellent bass. May seem lacking in terms of detail by today's standards but can be exciting with rock.	Excellent midrange and treble tonality, good detail, only middling imaging and oddly variable bass.	Sound belies indifferent measurements with good detail and balance, and a flowing melodic quality.

### KEY FEATURES

LINE INPUTS	6	8	7	6	4	5
TAPE OUTPUTS	3	1	1	1	1	1
PHONO INPUT	No	No	No	Optional	No	Yes (MM)
SIZE (WxHxD)	44.5x6.5x30cm	43x11.5x38.5cm	36.5x7.5x21.5cm	44x9x31cm	43x10x38.5cm	43.5x9.5x34cm
WEIGHT	7.4kg	15kg	3.7kg	7kg	13.5kg	12kg
REMOTE CONTROL	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
BALANCED INPUT	No	Yes	No	No	No	No

### LAB CONCLUSIONS E = EXCELLENT · G = GOOD · A = AVERAGE · P = POOR

CLIP POINT (8 OHM)	24V <b>A</b>	33V <b>G</b>	19V <b>A</b>	25.5V <b>G</b>	26V <b>G</b>	23V <b>A</b>
FREQUENCY RESPONSE	±0.2dB <b>G</b>	±0.2dB <b>G</b>	±0.2dB <b>G</b>	±0.8dB <b>A</b>	±0.1dB <b>E</b>	±0.1dB <b>E</b>
DYNAMIC RANGE	102dB <b>A</b>	108dB <b>E</b>	99dB <b>A</b>	103dB <b>G</b>	104dB <b>G</b>	97dB <b>A</b>
DISTORTION	0.0025% <b>E</b>	0.007% <b>G</b>	0.02% <b>G</b>	0.02% <b>G</b>	0.07% <b>A</b>	0.16% <b>P</b>
OUTPUT IMPEDANCE	0.05 ohm <b>G</b>	0.06 ohm <b>G</b>	0.16 ohm <b>A</b>	0.25 ohm <b>A</b>	0.06 ohm <b>G</b>	0.3 ohm <b>A</b>
POWER CONSUMPTION	30W/-	75W/8W	13W/6W	15W/-	21W/15W	32W/-



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*PowerMax review: Hi-Fi Choice, December 2006 (issue 288)*

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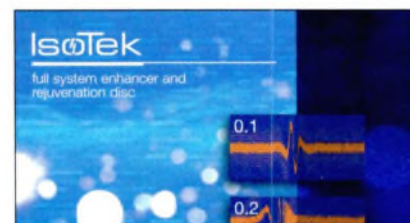
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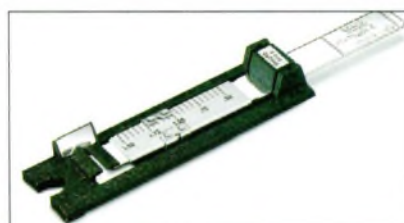
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Specialist Hi-Fi Consultant  
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## FURUTECH deMag LP, DISC and Cable Demagnetizer

*First UK debut*

### Improves Compact Disc!



The Furutech deMag completely demagnetizes LPs and optical disc media such as CD, CD-R, DVD, MD, Game CD, Photo CD, SACD, and DVD Audio. Plus it's an indispensable accessory for keeping interconnect cables, connectors and power cords demagnetized to prevent magnetic signal distortion.

magnetic distortion. Just loop your cables and power cords with their connectors on the deMag and begin treatment.

### Improves Vinyl!



### Disc Magnetization Is No Mystery

The silk-screened label on an optical disc contains chemical compounds such as iron, nickel, and cobalt. These materials are all strongly magnetic and easily remagnetized. The reflective information-bearing surface of optical media contains 99% aluminum, but 1% of these same highly magnetic materials! Even aluminum is considered a weak magnetic conductor.

### The Sound

Demagnetizing both sides of optical media before play results in a greater sense of power, dynamics, and resolution, with cleaner, blacker backgrounds and a larger, more stable soundstage, vivid tonal colors and deeper extension at both ends of the frequency range. Demagnetization also allows the delicacy, refinement and nuance of a performance to shine through, along with micro- and macro-dynamics you need to realize the full potential of music and movies.

### Improves Cables!



### How can an LP be magnetized? It's plastic!

The fact is that pigment added to the plastic during the manufacturing process is the culprit. The minute amount of ferrous material in the pigment causes LPs to become magnetized.

### The Image

Since the deMag Demagnetization Process eliminates all magnetic distortion noise, video displays of all types benefit from less ghosting, color shift, "snow", vertical and horizontal interference lines. After treatment you'll notice a higher resolution picture with more finely graded contrast, clean and precise, with bright, beautifully saturated colors and a more sophisticated color palette.

### Demagnetizing Cables

Electric current generates a magnetic field as it flows through a power cord or conductor. However, magnetic impurities within the materials themselves become magnetized and introduce further

**You will never play CD or Vinyl again without the deMag.**



# 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 44.1 kHz 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



### Rega Apollo £498

Rega's latest entry-level player is a splendidly musical performer, given its modest price. Bass is good, midrange is great and high frequencies are truly exceptional.



### Cambridge Audio Azur 840C £750

Sitting at the top of Cambridge Audio's Azur range, the 840C is a technically innovative player with a sound that belies its sub-£1,000 price – open, subtle and refined.



## 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		VARIABLE OUTPUT
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">MP TO</span>	Cambridge Audio Azur 640C	250	If you value the effortless flow of musical information, you should certainly hear this player									285
	Cambridge Audio Azur 840C	750	Purposefully underdemonstrative, combining neutrality, detail and timing, enhanced by flexibility as a DAC									291
	Creek Evo	495	A minute treble lift; otherwise this is a very capable player that offers fine value									285
	Cyrus CD8x	1,000	Impressive mix of detail, musicality, analysis and appearance. Even better with the PSX-R power supply (£400)									270
	Denon DCD-700AE	250	Excellent entry level quality CD player lacks for nothing. Musicians please note, even has variable speed replay									284
	Marantz SA7001	430	Easy, relaxed sound arguably lacks true grit, but is extremely listenable from CD and SACD									281
	Musical Fidelity X-RAY v8	1,098	Accurate, yet musical performer. £799, but requires £299 TRIPLE-X power supply outside of X-T100 system									288
	Naim CD5i	825	Bass has great extension but lacks control, slightly. Tonal neutrality higher up is excellent, however									291
	Quad 99CD-S	650	Revels in big music thanks to fearless presentation; smaller-scale works can lack focus									291
	Rega Apollo	498	Unless you can't abide top-loaders, check this out. musically it's a highly praiseworthy performer									285
	Sony SCD-XA3000ES	800	A good, if not truly great, all-rounder with CD and fine multi-channel SACD performance									276
	Vincent CD-S6 MkII	999	With its tube output stage, a beguiling midrange, sweet highs and attractively figured lows plus fine dynamics									287
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">BUDGET KING</span>	Arcam FMJ CD36	1,200	Fine detail, extension, dynamics and neutrality; 'bland' or 'honest' according to listener taste!									280
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Audio Research Ref CD7	8,000	Top of the CD playing tree, with a sound as open and musically accomplished as you'll ever find from the format									279
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">MP</span>	Ayre CX-7e	2,195	If you want a clean-sounding, revealing and entertaining player with fabulous build this is a strong contender									281
	Classé CDP-102	3,000	Rich, dynamic CD/DVD player with a full bottom end, impressive dynamics and a luxurious yet revealing balanced									286
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Classé CDP-202	4,750	CD/DVD-A player with brilliant sound, if sophistication is your bag. Includes S-video and composite outputs									284
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">MP</span>	Copland CDA823	1,750	Don't let the laid back character fool you - this player has plenty of insight too									280
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">MP</span>	Cyrus CD X/DAC X	1,900	Greater resolve than the single box competition, and DAC X has six digital inputs for whole system conversion									279
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Esoteric X-03SE	4,995	Resolution and musicality close to the top of the game. For out and out transparency and build quality it's hard to beat									285
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Gamut CD3	3,500	Superb resolve of fine detail combined with a perfectly judged balance and an ability to draw you into the music									289
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Krell Evolution 505 SACD	8,777	Brilliant replacement for SACD Standard, superb musical discrimination. No high-res digital output									289
	LeemaAntila	2,495	Musically engaging player that will have you going through your CDs afresh. Balanced connection is best									291
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">MP</span>	Linn Majik	1,950	Compact and capable of most CD formats, it's musically communicative with fine pace and enthusiasm									283
	McIntosh MCD201	3,400	Superb CD performance and even better with SACD which has its own output level control.									284
	Meridian G06	1,695	Great combination of all-round attainment with superb looks and build quality, plus superb remote control									281
	Naim CD5x	1,450	Unique design nicely complements a sophisticated and highly capable performance									280
<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
	Rega Saturn	1,300	Attractive simple player does the basics superbly, delivering performance with great poise, precision and range									286
<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
	Sugden CD21SE	1,395	Delivers its particularly musical touch brilliantly and warrants the attention of all true music lovers									271
	T+A CD1230R	1,500	Filter options make this a player for all tastes, aided by top quality engineering									280
<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

**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.



**Best Buy**  
**HI-FI CHOICE**  
magazine

**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.



**EDITOR'S CHOICE**  
**HI-FI CHOICE**  
magazine

**Esoteric X-03SE £4,995**  
Esoteric's entry-level CD/SACD player delivers astonishing sonic detail and precision, coupled with a gorgeous sense of musical structure. Truly, it's brilliant.



# 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

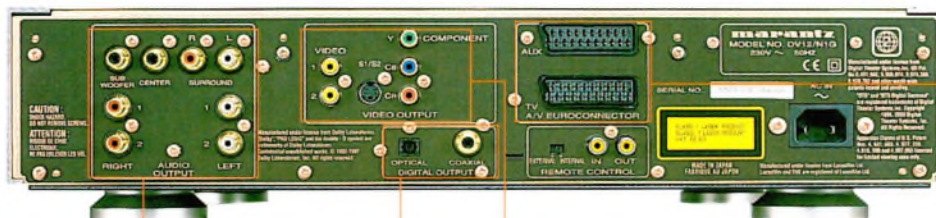
DVD-Audio is a high-resolution format that offers multichannel, stereo and Dolby Digital tracks on dedicated DVD-A discs. The discs can be played on any DVD player, but the CD-beating high-fidelity sound can only be appreciated with a DVD-A player.

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 DVDVideo – 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 BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE DVD PLAYERS

### Audio/Video disc players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	PRICE	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER
				DVD-A COMPATIBLE	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>								
■	Arcam DiVA DV78	700	Imagine almost all of the DV88 Plus at a knock-down price. Top picture and sound performance for the money	●	●	●	●	254
■	Denon DVD-1920	250	Respectable (if unexciting) and flexible audio player, but something of a star from its HDMI equipped upsampling video subsystem	●	●	●	●	276
■	Marantz DV7600	600	A mid-market cracker, with sound and picture quality that generally exceeds expectation	●	●	●	●	274
■	Onkyo DV-SP503E	300	Budget Onkyo universal player is a straightforward Pioneer based implementation, which performs well with audio and video	●	●	●	●	275
■	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
■	Sony DVP-NS9100ES	1,000	Video playback is foremost, with the iLink delivering significantly better sound than the analogue counterparts	●	●	●	●	274
■	Yamaha DVD-S2500	700	Universal player, slightly stronger with video than audio, but well turned out with a wide range of analogue and digital in and outputs	●	●	●	●	280
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>								
■	Arcam DiVA DV137	1,250	Good overall audio performance and excellent upscaling HDMI DVD-Video player, but stereo-only SACD playback at time of writing	●	●	●	●	285
■	Cyrus DVDB	1,200	An impressive step up from the DVD7+, which includes component video outputs	●	●	●	●	238
■	Denon DVD-3930	1,100	Well engineered universal player, with useful bypass facilities for pure audio, and unusually powerful video image processing	●	●	●	●	287
■	Denon DVD-A1XV	2,500	Sophisticated universal player with state of the art video processing, high class disc replay, especially SACD	●	●	●	●	266
■	Linn Unidisk SC	2,995	Groundbreaking universal player with built-in preamplifier, with excellent picture for home cinema and sound for hi-fi	●	●	●	●	259
■	Marantz DV9600	1,500	With excellent, next-generation picture and impressive sound quality on CD and SACD, this sets a very high standard to beat	●	●	●	●	280
■	Meridian G98AH	3,625	Meridian's most widely compatible G-Series DVD player – groundbreaking DVD-Audio replay and a fine CD player too	●	●	●	●	265
■	Naim DVDS	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
■	T+A SACD 1245 R	2,000	Dedicated stereo only/SACD/CD player avoids the usual compromises. It does a limited job, but it does it with fine fidelity	●	●	●	●	279
■	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 DiVA DV137 £1,250**  
The first 'universal' player from this top British brand is a cracker, sonically and visually.



**Meridian G98AH £3,625**  
A digital *tour de force* – as exceptional with both audio and video as you'd expect.

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# VINYL

*Turntables, cartridges and phono stages*



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

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

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



## TURNTABLE SET-UP

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

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

## TOP BUYS



### Pro-Ject RPM 5 £400

Pro-Ject's entry-level RPM deck is a good-looking, great-sounding package that delivers terrific value for money. A class act and no mistake.



### The Funk Firm Funk V £760

The more costly of two turntables from The Funk Firm, the Funk V builds on its sibling's virtues to deliver a sound of sheer class – dynamic, detailed and refined.



### Clearaudio Champion £1,475

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



### Avid Volvere Sequel £3,500

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



## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE **TURNTABLES**

### Record players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER
				SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	
<span>BB</span>	Avic 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>	The Funk Firm Funk	450	You won't find another turntable at the price that can touch the Funk for dynamics, tone colour or detail	33/45		●	opt	279
<span>BB</span>	The Funk Firm Funk V	750	Vector drive brings a refinement to the standard Funk that increases resolution. For high-class analogue sound, it's a killer	33/45		●	opt	284
<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>	Mitchell Tecnodec	767	Simple and smartly understated, performs above expectations – full-bodied and highly detailed	33/45			●	268
<span>BB</span>	Mitchell 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>	Mitchell 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>	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 Expression II	250	A smooth and engaging turntable with the ability to revel in the glory of vinyl, with upgradable arm cable	33/45		●	●	289
<span>BB</span>	Project RPM 5	400	Great looks plus an on the ball, engaging sound that puts it in the serious league, needs good isolation for best results	33/45		●	●	279
<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 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>	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V309 hybrid arm	33/45		●	●	195
<span>EC</span>	SME Model 20.2A	5,274	Beautifully built, extremely neutral damped and suspended deck with superb sound. Inc V arm	33/45/78		●	●	186
<span>EC</span>	Townshend Rock Anniversary	4,900	If you want to get to the meat and bones of the music this is a great tool for the job (price inc. Excalibur arm)	33/45	●	●		259

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE **PHONO CARTRIDGES**

### MM and MC cartridges

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			ISSUE NUMBER
				MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	
<span>BB</span>	Cartridge Man MM III	625	The MM III challenges MCs at twice the price, it produces detail, space and energy and has stunning resolve in the right arm	●			266
<span>BB</span>	Denon DL-103R	200	Adds refinement to basic DL-103, at a price. One of the best rock'n'roll cartridges around		●		285
<span>BB</span>	Grado Prestige Gold	110	Produces rich, open and expansive music with the minimum of fuss			●	235
<span>EC</span>	Lyra Helikon	1,095	Highly capable and highly neutral, this is a cartridge for all seasons, albeit fussy about vinyl quality	●			215
<span>BB</span>	Ortofon Saisa	200	Despite a touch of midrange coloration, this cartridge really involves the listener with good extension and a clean, agile sound		●		290
<span>BB</span>	Sumiko Blue Point Spec Evo III	239	High output MC with refinement at high frequencies and a nimble, articulate and revealing sound		●		270
<span>BB</span>	van den Hul MC One Special	699	A gorgeous cartridge that's worth the price every time you hear a familiar track in a whole new light		●		235
<span>EC</span>	van den Hul Condor XCM	2,400	A stunning cartridge with stereo imaging, dynamics and detail resolution to die for		●		265
<span>EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Naked Analog	1,450	With its smooth clean highs, transparent midband and nimble bass, this is a lot of performance for the money		●		253

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE **PHONO STAGES**

### Phono stages

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER
				MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	AUO GAIN	AUO 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	●	●			277
<span>BB</span>	Clearaudio Smart-Phono	250	Minute and very practical unit with slightly bright, but very detailed and low-noise, sound	●	●			268
<span>BB</span>	NAD PP2 phono stage	50	A fine buy for turntable users on a tight budget – open tonality and clarity is distinctly impressive for the money	●	●			245
<span>BB</span>	Tom Evans Microgroove	400	For dynamics and real bass extension with good tonal colour this is the one to beat. The Plus version (£700) is even better!		●			234
<span>EC</span>	Tom Evans The Groove	1,800	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for maximum information retrieval off any LP	●				201
<span>BB</span>	Trichord Dino/Dino+	498	Relaxed yet resolute with very good image depth and natural balance, not to mention great flexibility	●	●	●	●	234

**TURNABLE SPEEDS** BB 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.

**MOVING MAGNET** BB **MM** Moving magnet cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type. **MC** Moving coil cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type.

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



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Model 20/2



Model 30/2



Series M2



Series 300



Series IV



Series V



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Oehlbach Accessories  
Accessories  
STAX headphones  
Echo Busters  
Arye CD - IsoTek CD  
Oehlbach Phono PreAmp  
Lyra Moving Coil  
Ortofon Moving Coil  
Sumiko Moving Coil

#### Second hand

Sub woofer cables  
Media cables  
iPod cables  
XLR cables  
Pulsar Points  
Component cables  
Digital cables  
DIN cables  
HDMI cables  
DVI cables  
Jumpers  
Optical cables  
Mains & Power cables  
SCART  
S video  
ONLINE SHOP

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NORDOST

analysis plus

STEREOVOX

TOWNSHEND AUDIO

OEHLBACH

ECOSSE REFERENCE CABLE

Purist Audio

HOVLAND COMPANY

audience

ISOteK

ABBEE ROAD CABLE

TANNOY

wyrewizard PROSERIES

van den Hul A Sound Connection



Cable Tower



Cable Burn In



Seismic Sink

Reference cables include free Burn In



# 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.



**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.



**T+A T1210R** £1,000  
This FM tuner looks, feels and sounds top-notch – great detail and imaging.



**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	PRICE	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIGNAL STRENGTH METER	ROTARY TUNING KNOB	SCALE NUMBER
<b>FM TUNERS</b>										
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creek T50	550	Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics	FM, M, L	128					251
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyrus FM-X	500	A classic no-nonsense FM tuner that achieves gratifying sonic results. Upgradable with PSX-R power supply	FM	7					283
<input type="checkbox"/>	Denon TU-1500AE	130	Well attuned to the crowded modern FM band, this tuner produces clear, detailed sound with plenty of gusto	FM, M, L	100					281
<input type="checkbox"/>	Denon TU-1800DAB	250	There's a little grain on FM, the generally decent performance on both bands makes this a great dual-band choice	DAB, FM, M	200					283
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Marantz ST7001	300	FM reception could offer a little more detail and insight. DAB is fine, but near-identical Denon 1800 is cheaper!		200					283
<input type="checkbox"/>	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity	FM, M	30					250
<input type="checkbox"/>	Primare T21	600	A very fine tuner – bass and treble are both well extended and detail is excellent	FM	30					230
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pure DRX-702ES	210	Apparently good value is restricted by persistent veiling on FM: 'PAC' on DAB mellows sound a little	DAB, FM, M	99					283
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rega Radio 3	398	Strong bass, clear treble and a high enjoyment factor make this an appealing FM performer	FM, M	20					283
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rotel RT-02	279	A highly competent tuner which always sounds appealing and fuss-free	FM, M	30					242
<input type="checkbox"/>	T+A T1210R	1,000	High-end looks are matched by the sound, which is detailed and sophisticated, with useful features too	FM	100					283
<b>DAB TUNERS</b>										
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cambridge Audio DAB500	150	Very good sound, plus optional response tweaks, and slickest operation yet	DAB	10					248
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cambridge Azur 640T	200	Slightly ahead of the pack in DAB performance, though FM is never better than decent	DAB, FM	60					260
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.





The Daughters Audio Products

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Following the magnificent Grand Concert and Concerto, Triangle and UKD are proud to announce the arrival of two new models in the Magellan Series - the Quatuor (£7,500 - pictured) and the Cello (£5,500). These have all the quality, finish and technology of their larger brothers. They're luxurious, emotionally involving speakers that will satisfy the most discerning music lovers. As Alvin Gold (Hi Fi Choice/Feb.2007) wrote of the Concerto "it looks fantastic...with a wonderfully passionate style of music-making..."



# PATHOS

Everything that comes from the Pathos factory at Vicenza, Italy has real class about it. A big hit already with audiophiles worldwide, the Endorphin (£4,500) is a fine example of the Pathos commitment to excellence. Other players may have good looks or performance, but none deliver both to the standard of this wonderful player. The Endorphin is a musical treasure, to admire and enjoy. If you're looking for a CD player that delivers the highest performance combined with superlative design and build, look no further.



Unison's goal is simple: beautiful, fine sounding valve amplifiers made for a lifetime of musical enjoyment. The new Preludio keeps faith with this tradition. This £1,795 integrated sets the standard for high-quality, affordable valve amplifiers. As What Hi-Fi noted in the latest issue: "There might be cheaper valve amplifiers but none we've heard come close to this Italian integrated when it comes to all-round talent." Arrange an audition and discover this for yourself!



The latest model in the Final range of high definition flat panels is the 300i. This elegant, slimline floorstander\* offers all the insight and detail of the best electrostatic designs, and at a very attractive price. A stereo pair with matching subwoofer costs under £1,500 - astonishing value for a top quality electrostatic loudspeaker. The 300i is unique - whether used for 2-channel stereo or in a home theatre system. Call your nearest UKD dealer to arrange an audition.



\* 300i can also be wall mounted



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# DIGITAL AUDIO RECORDERS

CD, MiniDisc and hard drive recorders



### MiniDisc

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

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

### Recordable CD

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

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

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

### Hard drive

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

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

TOP BUYS



**Philips CDR802** £300

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



**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.



**Hermstedt Hifidelo Pro** £850

160GB hard disk and CD-R/RW drive in a box – as music servers go, this is a cracker.

Our favourite   BEST BUY   EDITOR'S CHOICE

## DIGITAL RECORDERS

CD-R/RW, MD and HDD recorders

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	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-inducingly 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
✓	Hermstedt Hifidelo Pro	850	Can be used as a CD player, but also as a recorder, and can encode MP3, play AAC and form the heart of a distributed audio system	1	160			280
✓	Imerge S3000	2,800	Thought-out solution to the problem of storing, sorting and accessing a music collection. Sound wouldn't shame a good midrange CD player	1	160			291
✓	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.



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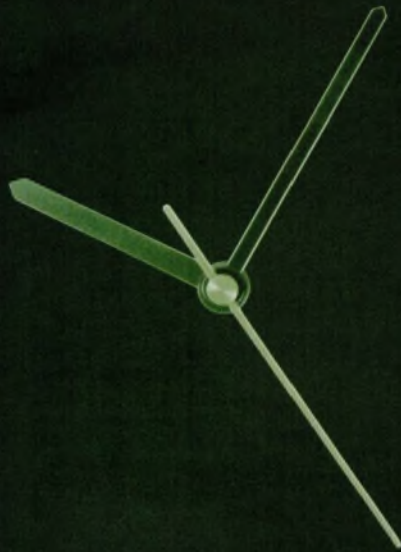
- Analogue
- Cables
- Cleaning
- Mains Conditioning
- Isolation / Support
- Room Acoustics
- Storage

### SELECTED PRODUCTS:

- Lifestyle
- Amplifiers
- CD Players
- Loudspeakers
- Tuners
- Turntables
- Audiophile Recordings (CD, Vinyl)

### SELECTED BRANDS:

- Apollo
- ART Loudspeakers
- Bel Canto
- Black Rhodium
- CEC
- Clearaudio
- Custom Design
- Duevel
- Eastern Electric
- Eclipse Speakers
- JAS Audio
- IsoTek
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- Shanling
- Slim Devices
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**VERDICT**  £



“Something of an unexpected surprise, Eastern Electric has launched a walter of very impressive tube-based separates over the past year. From the decent Phillips CD 12 mech to the fine build and tube output stage, this player has been engineered properly - and it sounds like it too.”

Hi-Fi World January 2007

### The speaker with big balls!

Looks like no other speaker and quite frankly, it beats every other similarly priced one.



Duevel Planets £800/pair

On a completely different planet.

**VERDICT**  £

Duevel's newest model called the 'Planets' brings omni-directional magic to a completely new audience. Visually the 'Planets' will shock and the price will definitely surprise! Retailing at just £800, the beautiful 'Planets' look like no other loudspeaker and sonically they deliver a first rate performance that is nothing short of astonishing.

Hi-tech engineering, unique design, excellent frequency and phase response ensure the 'Planets' deliver a natural sound that can best be described as 'addictive'.

### IsoTek

Free cable and 30-day money back scheme...

### Nordost Valhalla

Full range available.



“Perhaps there are still some undiscovered secrets to mains filtration, but as things stand the benefits are considerable and the value of this unit is not hard to confirm.”

IsoTek Sigmas, Hi-Fi Choice, October 2006

### IsoTek / Nordost Special Offers

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IsoTek Nova	£1695
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IsoTek Sigmas	£995
IsoTek Gil Minisub	£545
IsoTek Gil Solus	£325
Nordost Thor	£1599

FREE IsoTek mains cable worth £49 and a 30-day money back guarantee\*.



2 Flat, 4 Flat, Flatline, Super Flatline, Blue Heaven, Red Dawn, Baldur, Heimdall, Frey, TYR, VALHALLA

### The Transporter

Wireless music streaming of the highest quality...



Slim Devices' Transporter™ was designed to appeal to the most discerning audiophiles and music lovers. It streams digital music with sound quality that surpasses even the most exotic compact disc players.

At the heart of Transporter is a “no compromise” attitude to component selection and electronic design.

Transporter is the network music player audiophiles have been waiting for.

Inspired by music. Engineered to delight.

At £1299 it is a true audiophile bargain!

### Valve Lifestyle Centre

Shanling launch the NEW beautiful MC-3...



Shanling MC-3: £500  
Available: May 2007

MC-3 cleverly combines a high quality CD player, tuner, dedicated i-POD input and tube power amplifier in one chassis. Just add speakers! A brilliant one box solution.

Demand is going to be very high for the MC-3, so place your order early!!



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McIntosh are famous across the world for producing some of the finest Hi-Fi Products available today.

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Interested, curious?

### X-Factor

Musical Fidelity products definitely have that X-Factor.



**BEST BUY**  
**HI-FI CHOICE**  
magazine

“ The beauty of this MF system is that the whole really is greater than the sum of the parts, and these parts are pretty damn good to start with. You could spend hundreds more and get less. ”

Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi Choice Dec 06

### New Baby Integrated

£750 really can buy you a lot of amplifier....



Eastern Electric MiniMax is a wonderful integrated amplifier in a very small package. Its essence is simplicity and attention to detail. The MiniMax is the product of a company that firmly believes in the adage, less is more.

If you are looking for a simple, straight forward path to great sound on a budget, look no further than the MiniMax.

### Treat your speakers to a pair of these

Hear what your loudspeakers are really capable of.

The Bel Canto REF 1000 represents the summit of audio amplifier performance with over 1000 watts of low-distortion, wide-band power available, fully regulated switching power supply, true balanced operation, 2 ohm drive and 120dB of dynamic range capability.

With REF 1000s in your system it will sound like you are connected directly to the music source, the loudspeaker and amplifier effectively disappear in the large and compelling sonic picture. Fidelity and signal clarity is unmatched from the lowest audio frequencies through to the sweetest high frequencies. A magnificent achievement in every respect!



### Shanling sets new standards

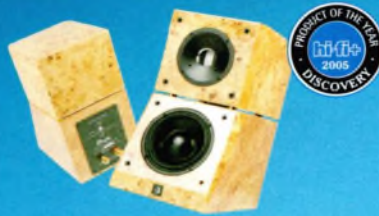
A new reference Amplifier and CD Player...



The Reference CD500 CD Player and Reference A500 Amplifier from Shanling are finally here. Shanling wanted to make a true statement with these flagship products, not just sonically but visually as well. We think they have and even more impressive is the sheer value-for-money. Musically they challenge products at twice the price! Available - now.

### Twin Ribbon Wonder

One of the best small speakers available!



“ 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).



## Used Product Listing

Remember !! List is updated on our web site daily!

### DIGITAL

- Wadia 302, silver, exc cond, fully boxed, manual and R/C. Be quick! (£4000) £1995
- Micromega Aria, black, ex HiFi Choice review model (£2150) £1395
- AudioNet Art V2, silver / blue display, immac cond, boxed, remote (£2400) £1595
- GamuT CD-1, mint condition, only 18 months old, fully boxed (£2995) £1995
- Micromega CD132, ex-dem, black finish, as new condition, boxed (£849) £595
- Audio Research CD3 MK1, excellent condition, black faceplate (£5000) £2295
- Linn Klassik, CD+ Amp+Tuner, All in one system, only 6mths old, black (£995) £749
- Arcam Diva 93t, silver, exc cond, boxed, manual, r/c, 1 yr old, (£1000) £595
- Musical Fidelity DM25 DAC + Transport, only 1 month old (£4000) £3395
- Krell KPS25s, upgraded to SC spec only a year ago, excellent condition (£25k) £4995
- AVI Lab Series CD, current spec, boxed, unmarked condition (£1499) £1195
- Shanling CD300 Omega Drive, ex dem, immaculate cond (£4000) £2995
- Resolution Audio Opus 21, 2 box cd player, boxed, black/silver (£2950) £2295
- AVI S2000 DAC, excellent cond, only 1 owner from new! fully boxed (£995) £249
- AVI Series 21 MC4 CD player, excellent cond, only 1 owner from new (£995) £249
- Marantz SA-11S1, mint, 2mths old, silver finish, boxed (£1995) £1695
- Marantz SA15-S1, silver finish, unmarked condition, high end SACD! (£1100) £795
- Unison Research Unico Valve output CD, only 3mths old, latest ver (£1250) £895

### AMPLIFIERS

- Exposure 23 Pre Amp, mint, boxed, remote (£1400) £795
- Exposure 28 Power Amp, mint, boxed (£1400) £795
- Cairn 4810 Integrated, silver, immaculate cond, just over a year old (£2700) £1795
- Bryston 4B SST Power Amp, 2 months old!, like new, 300wpc (£2750) £2249
- EAR Yoshino 834T Hybrid Int, mint, boxed, 8 months old! Bargain! (£2800) £1995
- Qinpu A1 0x, ex What HiFi review model, boxed in immac cond (£3000) £2295
- Qinpu A-8000 MK II, ex HiFi World review model, boxed as new (£1295) £795
- Parasound A21 Power Amp, immac condition, silver, only 1yr old (£1500) £895
- Musical Fidelity A5 Int, 250wpc, 6 months old, boxed, as new (£1499) £995
- Bryston B-100 SST Int amp + DAC, unmarked condition, boxed (£3750) £2995
- McIntosh C220 Pre, only 2 months old!, boxed, mint. Simply stunning! (£3300) £2795
- Chord CPA2800 pre-amp-phono stage, £2800 new, in black, immac £1295
- Jadis DA30 valve integrated, mint, 2yrs old, fully boxed, 30wpc (£4000) £1995
- Bel Canto Evo 21 Integrated, boxed, mint cond (£2800) £1595
- Quad QC-24 Pre / II Forty Valve Monoblocks, immaculate condition (£4000) £1795
- Linn Kairn Pre, immaculate condition, fully boxed with manual and remote £699
- AVI Lab Series Integrated, immac cond, only a few months old! (£1599) £1095
- AVI Lab Series Power Amp, immac, less than 1yr old, boxed (£1650) £995
- Linn LK280 Power Amp, 2 available, both in excellent condition (price of each) £299
- Pathos Logos, brand new sealed box, canc order, great opportunity (£2700) £2295
- Eastern Electric M520 Int, What Hi-Fi 5 star review, 4 mths old (£1539) £1095
- McIntosh MA2275, immaculate condition, only 1 year old! (£5700) £3995
- McIntosh MCS01 Monoblocks, mint condition - as new (£8050) £5995
- Minimax Power Amp, 1 year old, 1 owner, immaculate condition (£995) £649
- Manley Labs Neo Classic 300b Monoblocks, 25wpc, mint! Sensational! (£5895) £3495
- Marantz PM15-S1 Integrated, silver, unmarked condition (£1100) £795
- Cyrus Pre XVS, immac cond, only 5 mths old!, one prev owner (£1000) £749
- Nagra PSA Power Amp, very rare, only 6 months old!, immac, stunning £3395
- AVI S2000 Pre Amp, excellent condition, only 1 owner from new (£995) £249
- Bel Canto S300 Integrated, mint condition, only 2 months old (£1799) £1495
- Lyngdorf (Tact) TDA2200, digital int, full room correction, excellent (£2395) £1495
- Bow Walrus Power Amp, boxed, exc cond, 150wpc (£3995) £1795
- Bow Warlock Pre, boxed, exc cond, fully balanced, r/c (£3495) £1495
- Pass Labs X1 Pre Amp, mint, less than 1yr old!, sep power supply (£4700) £3495

### LOUDSPEAKERS

- Hyperion 938, gloss black finish, immac cond, very low hours (£3750) £2895
- Quad 989, Vintage finish, only 6 months old, boxed, mint cond (£5000) £3795
- Acoustic Energy AE1 Classic, ex-display, never been played, fully boxed (£845) £650
- Wilson Benesch Arc, silver stands and side cheeks, immac cond (£2600) £1795
- B&W CM4 speakers, in Rosenut, 5 years old, boxed £449
- Sonus Faber Cremona, natural maple finish, 5 mths old, boxed Superb (£5k) £3795
- Thiel CS 0.5, Natural Cherry finish, immaculate condition (£1200) £749
- Ref 3a De Capo-i, redwood finish, superb cond, boxed (£2500) £1695
- Wilson Bensch Discovery, mint, silver stands, silver side cheeks (£5700) £3995
- JM Lab Diva Utopia BE, exc cond, boxed, tweeter covers and spikes (£7500) £3995
- PMC FB1+, cherry, boxed, immac cond, few mnths old! (£1695) £1295
- PMC OB1, in oak, boxed as new, 6 mths old, simply stunning! (£2700) £1995
- JAS Orion, birds eye maple finish, mint, 10 months old, fully boxed (£2300) £1495
- JAS Audio Orsa, ex HiFi Plus review model, poplar tumor (£1399) £1149
- Zingali Overture 3S, cherry, exc cond, orig packaging, 1 year old (£4250) £2250
- ProAc Studio 140, mahogany finish, brand new, never used but box opened, recent 5 stars What Hi-Fi, evenly balanced sound with high quality finish! £1195
- JAS Audio Supertweeters, Review pair, sound awesome! (£649) £495

### ANALOGUE

- SME 20/2A, immac, inc factory silver tonearm wire upgrade!, less than a year old (£6300) £4495
- Trichord Dino Phonostage, black, excellent condition, 1yr old (£325) £225
- Trichord Dino-PSU, silver, excellent condition, 1yr old, box (£249) £175
- Clearaudio Emotion, immaculate condition, only a few months old! (£690) £575
- Wilson Benesch Full Circle, boxed as new, exc cond, Inc Ply Cartridge (£2100) £1495
- Audio Research PHS Phonostage, MM/MC, mint, only 6 months old! (£1800) £1395
- PI Scout inc JMW-9 tonearm, immaculate condition, boxed (£1650) £1195

### MISC

- Nordost Blue Heaven Speaker Cable, ex-dem, 4m pair, bi-wire (£489) £349
- Isotek Gil Minibus, silver front, current spec, immac cond (£545) £395
- Naim Hi-Cap power supply, good condition, serial no. 304xx, superb upgrade £349
- Hovland Reference Speaker Cable, exdem, boxed, 8ft pair, single wired (£1200) £795
- Townshend Supertweeters, titanium finish, boxed as new, exd (£800) £649
- Nordost Thor, ex-dem, immaculate condition, boxed, Valhalla wired (£1600) £1195
- Isotek Titan mains conditioner, few months old, boxed (£1500) £1095
- Nordost Valhalla Speaker Cable, 3m per side, bi-wire with z-plugs (£5700) £3995



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# STEREO AMPLIFIERS

*Integrated and pre/power amps*



Amplifiers come in two basic forms: integrated and preamplifier (pre) plus power amp combinations. Integrated simply means that both pre and power sections are in one box. There are definite advantages to separating the low level, delicate signals in the preamp from the radiations of a power amp, so the more ambitious designs come in two or more cases. In some cases, each channel has its own power amp called a monoblock.

Amplifiers use two basic technologies: transistors or valves. Transistors are popular because of their practical and technical advantages, but valves – aka tubes – live on owing to aspects of sound quality that transistors can't replicate. If you want to play your music loud, use transistors; if you appreciate acoustic music, try valves.

The fundamental of amp/speaker interfacing is power rating and speaker sensitivity. You can drive a high-sensitivity speaker with a ten watt valve amp, but it takes a 200W behemoth to get the best out of speakers which present a difficult load. As a rule, you can't have too much power.

### How to choose an amp

The main areas in which amps vary are: timing, dynamics, stereo imaging and transparency. Timing is the ability to present the attack and decay of each note precisely; amps with strong timing have a snap and coherence that is very appealing.



Dynamics is a general term for the ability to portray variations in level between individual notes and is different to dynamic range (the difference between the loudest and softest notes). Dynamically strong amps tend to have more life and energy.

Stereo imaging is how solid or three-dimensional an instrument or voice sounds. The point of having two rather than one speaker is to make it possible to recreate the soundstage of the original recording, thus amps that have strong imaging skills can create a sonic space that seems to extend the room.

Transparency of detail is the most obvious difference between amps. One amp will present more subtlety than another, but the drawback with using this as your main criterion is that a forward or 'bright' sounding amplifier will emphasise detail at the expense of overall musical coherence.

### HOME CINEMA STEREO

Stereo amps can be used in home cinema set-ups as well. You don't get the surround and centre channels, but well set-up stereo speakers do a remarkably good job of creating atmosphere for movies. Stereo amps

tend to be better at reproducing music as they don't have the (electrical) noise-inducing digital processing of AV amps. AV amps cost three to four times as much as stereo models of a similar quality.

### Q&A

#### SHOULD I LEAVE MY AMP ON ALL THE TIME FOR BEST RESULTS?

All audio electronics perform better when they are warmed up, and this is particularly the case when it comes to amplifiers. If there's no way that you can leave it on all the time, make an effort to switch it on at least 20 minutes before listening.

#### WHAT IS BI-WIRING AND BI-AMPLING?

Bi-wiring is when you run separate cables to the treble and bass/mid terminals on the speaker. In most instances, this improves sound quality so long as identical cables are used. Bi-amping is using two stereo amps to drive one pair of speakers, using one amp to drive the treble and the other for the bass/mid sections of the speakers.

#### WHY DO VALVE AMPS HAVE SO LITTLE POWER?

Valve amps are inherently low powered in absolute terms – at least when you compare them to their transistor-based cousins. But when partnered with high-sensitivity loudspeakers, they are quite capable of producing perfectly adequate head-banging levels.

### TOP BUYS



**Marantz**  
PM7001 £350

If you thought the PM7200 was a great budget amp, just wait until you hear this! Its sound is so detailed and involving, you'll think it costs twice the price.



**Cambridge Audio**  
Azur 840A £750

Like the matching 840C CD player, this is a technically innovative product with a sound so refined it belies its price point – just check out that fantastic midrange!



**Primare**  
130 £1,500

Are you looking for an amp that combines weight and musical gravitas with rhythm, detail and subtlety, with gorgeous build quality to boot? In that case... here it is!



**Copland**  
CTA405 £2,498

This amp's massively enjoyable musicality is hard to beat: all the effusiveness of a great valve amp and none of the stereotypical softness. Brilliant!



## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS

### Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arcam DIVA A70	500	A smart and practical amp offering good snap and pace, with natural dynamics and good detail	6	MM			60	289
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arcam DIVA A90	850	Well-featured amp with little character of its own - highly informative sound	6	opt			90	286
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cambridge Audio 640A V2	300	Nasty-feeling controls are the only real downside to this powerful and lively little amp	6				75	279
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cambridge Audio 840A	750	Detailed and lively, with excellent midrange and treble detail	7				120	286
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creek Evo	500	Not the most accurate, strictly, but its lively, energetic musical presentation is entirely lovable	5	opt			85	283
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Denon PMA-700AE	250	One of a growing number of new low cost amps, it offers good timing and analysis at up to moderately high volume levels	4	MM			50	284
<input type="checkbox"/>	Flying Mole CA-S10	1,000	The Mole makes a mountain of detailed sound from its digital circuitry, if you choose your speakers well it's a short-cut to hi-fi nirvana	3				100	291
<input type="checkbox"/>	Marantz PM7001	350	Detailed and highly communicative amp with fine treble and good bass extension - exceptional value for money	5				70	279
<input type="checkbox"/>	Marantz PM7001 KI	550	A self-effacing amplifier which serves the music admirably with fine bass, sweet treble and unforced detail	5	MM			70	289
<input type="checkbox"/>	Musical Fidelity X-T100	899	By separating amp and TRIPLE-X power supply, this deceptively powerful valve-sporting amplifier is both enticing and musical	3				70	288
<input type="checkbox"/>	Naim Nat 5i	699	A trade-off of more power and better connectivity against less inputs works surprisingly well in a grunty, musical manner	4				50	252
<input type="checkbox"/>	Onkyo A-933	500	Puts the music first, with sound that delivers the basics correctly but above all involves the listener	5				80	278
<input type="checkbox"/>	Primare I21	750	A confident and energetic amp, with just a touch of veiling at times. Great build quality	4				75	273
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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>									
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arcam FMJ A32	1,200	Ultra-civilised amp with plenty of features that's also highly revealing and musical	7				100	266
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Audia Flight TWO	2,500	Quirky, but musically highly effective model which is expressive and analytical, with some minor operational quirks	8				100	280
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bryston B100-SST DAC	3,850	A remarkable amplifier which is greatly enhanced by the inclusion of an impressive onboard DAC	6				100	275
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chapter Précis	3,995	Tight, nimble and dynamic across the board and unusually articulate in the bass, but the ergonomics could be refined	6				130	281
<input type="checkbox"/>	Copland CSA29	1,900	A hybrid valve/solid state amplifier that gets close to offering the best of both worlds	6	opt			85	255
<input type="checkbox"/>	Copland CTA405	2,498	Avoids pitfalls of many valve amps, yet retains the euphony typical of the best of breed	6	MM			50	286
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creek Destiny	1,100	A highly assured performer that doesn't superimpose its personality on the music	6				100	286
<input type="checkbox"/>	Densen Beat B110	1,200	Great bass provides firm underpinning for involving and enjoyable listening - real 'smile factor'	6	opt			60	292
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Krell KAV-400xi	2,698	The best integrated Krell yet is quick, agile, solid and finely detailed	5				200	247
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lyngdorf TDA 2200	3,875	Sophisticated modular all-digital amp with room EQ, capable of adapting to the listening environment	4				200	289
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	McIntosh MA2275	5,400	A valve amplifier that doesn't patronise. It's not soft-centred and it understands dynamics	5				75	271
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Moon Evolution i-7	4,750	Sophisticated, with an elegant build and sound quality, very limited features, even by high-end standards	5				150	288
<input type="checkbox"/>	NAD M3	1,899	Massive and flexible, it goes very loud with fine authority and dynamic range, but lacks some sparkle	7				180	285
<input type="checkbox"/>	Primare I30	1,500	A smooth, sophisticated yet agile performer, and beautifully built too	6				100	267
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unison Research Unico 200	3,000	Hybrid integrated with high power/quality low power modes combines much of the best of solid state and valve design	5				200	269
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unison Research Perform.	5,500	Massive and bulky valve amp sounds brilliant, with good power for a single-ended design, wide bandwidth and fine neutrality	5				40	287

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS

### Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £2,000</b>											
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Croft Precession I/Polestar I	1,400	Compact pre/power combo with battery preamp and hybrid power, with freedom from timesmeat, bass could be firmer			6				25	290
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cyrus Pre Vs2/6 Power	1,000	Pre offers stunning resolution and feature count for the money and power is subtle, open and musical							50	290
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Naim NAC 122x/NAP 150x	1,575	Musically rewarding with outstanding sophistication, grip and insight for such a modestly priced design			6	opt			50	287
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quad 99/909	1,650	Well thought out and well executed, with a strong, engaging sound and just a little veiling			5				136	256
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rotel RC-06/RB-06	598	A capable and surprisingly powerful-sounding combination which offers real value			5				70	285

**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	PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER	
<b>ABOVE £2,000</b>											
	Arcam FMJ C31	1,200	Professionally presented, beautifully built and exceptionally revealing, this preamp achieves much by doing little			5	opt			273	
	Border Patrol Control Unit	2,995	Bluff looking valve preamp, with one of the most neutral yet dynamic sounds around			5	opt			277	
EC	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	
EC	Chapter Preface/II+	9,800	Among the finest amps available, the resolution of this preamp and power amp challenges the best at any price			6			300	249	
EC	Chord Prima/Mezzo 140	6,100	Small, muscular, beautifully made and styled and sounds like a dream			5			120	269	
	Densen Beat B-200/B310	2,300	Lively, energetic combination that bring a great sense of scale to familiar recordings			8	opt		80	276	
EC	ECS EA-1	6,000	Understated monoblocks with real transparency to the fine detail, passion and energy in your record collection						180	253	
EC	Gamut D3	3,430	Creamy smooth, yet lets you hear all the fine detail that goes to making a tonally rich, dynamically strong sound			5	opt			265	
EC	Gamut D200 Mk3	3,950	A great power amp that's now even better – one of the best regardless of price						200	247	
EC	Hovland HP-100/RADIA	12,745	Uncommonly musical valve/transistor hybrid transcends stereotypes, one of the genuine high achievers			9	opt		125	250	
EC	Krell FPB 700cx	14,998	Reference class amplifier may represent overkill in many systems, but when no compromise is called for, this is it						700	234	
EC	Linn Klimax Kontrol	6,000	Beautifully executed example of Scots audio art, sounds as clean as it looks and is a lot more transparent than most			4				238	
EC	Naim NAP 500	11,875	Wonderful neutrality, bandwidth and dynamic range, plus Naim's traditional leading-edge definition						140	208	
EC	Naim NAC 552	12,100	Extremely expensive preamp, but still solid value. Magnificent sound with fine flexibility and convenience			6				233	
	Primare PRE30/A30.2	2,400	Smart kit that lives up to the visual promise with gorgeous sound – a really musical performer			7			128	256	

# 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-AX759SE £550

If you're looking for an affordable multichannel amp that's good with music as well as home cinema, this is a top buy.



**Arcam**  
DiVA AVR350 £1,500

Arcam's latest receiver offers a good helping of processing and connection options, with exceptionally musical sound.



**Denon**  
AVC-A11XVA £2,500

A splendid 7.1-channel amp that packs in the latest digital links and processing formats without sacrificing sound quality.



**Classé**  
SSP-600/CA-5200 £11,900

Anyone seeking a high-end multichannel solution that's equally adept with music and movies should park their ears here.

## Our favourite AV AMPLIFIERS

BEST BUY 
  EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Multichannel amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	PRICE	COMMENTS	RECEIVER	7.1 COMPATIBLE	5-CHANNEL POWER (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>MULTICHANNEL INTEGRATED AMPS</b>							
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arcam DiVA AVR350	1,500	Sets the standard for music and movie performance at the price, although features count low and HDMI limited	7	100	284	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cambridge Audio Azur 640R	600	Simple and elegant receiver. Attributes that reflect in good sound quality without the distracting toys you'll find elsewhere	7	100	292	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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	8	170	266	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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	
<input type="checkbox"/>	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	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sony STR-DB798	250	Cheap but effective, and passably good with pure audio sources, but control system messy	7	100	273	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sony STR-DB795	300	A superb value little amplifier, well appointed technically and successfully tuned for UK ears	7	100	260	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yamaha DSP-AX759SE	500	More a stereo amp with basic multichannel thrown in, but a great performer with music at this price	6	100	287	
<b>MULTICHANNEL PREAMPS/PROCESSORS AND POWER AMPS</b>							
<input type="checkbox"/>	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	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arcam AVP700/P1000	3,000	Cutting-edge processor/tuner with HDMI sounds great, but the matching Class H power amp lacks finesse to match its power	8	135	275	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Classé SSP-600/CA-5200	11,900	Subtle, exacting sound, tremendous flexibility and high power audiophile standard amplifier - lacks hi-tech digital interfaces	11	200	278	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Linn Exotik	1,750	Is hi-fi ready to make the jump to multichannel music? Linn think so with this musical preamplifier	4		260	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Linn Exotik + DA	3,245	Good analogue preamplifier with multichannel in/out up to 7.1 and a home cinema processor of quality combine to make a tempting package	8		291	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Meridian 861	9,833	Powerful surround processor with flexible modular construction, marvellous versatility to drive any speaker configuration	6		230	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Naim AV2/NAPV175/NAP150	4,175	First truly credible multichannel system from Naim is idiosyncratic but offers excellent basic sound with modest spatial steering	5	50	238	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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	
<input type="checkbox"/>	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	

**STATUS 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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FABULOUS **FIVE STAR** SPEAKERS  
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## MONITOR AUDIO RS1 SPEAKERS

- Compact design
- Metal cone technology
- Available in a choice of finishes

*"They're well made and look good, they're laid-back about room position, and they sound just as good as the amplifier that drives them... You need to audition these"*



WHAT HI-FI?  
TESTER AND VISITOR  
★★★★★  
DECEMBER 2005

## SPENDOR S5e SPEAKERS

- Hand-made 'e' generation bass-midrange drive units reward with a uniquely clear and musical sound.
- Natural wood cabinets available in a choice of finishes



WHAT HI-FI?  
TESTER AND VISITOR  
★★★★★  
JULY 2004



## KEF iQ5 SPEAKERS

- Uni-Q design
- Finish options
- Floorstanding
- Award-winning

*"The iQ5s are little stars, providing stunning scale and authority from discreetly sized towers"*

WHAT HI-FI?  
TESTER AND VISITOR  
★★★★★  
AWARDS 2006  
PROVIDED BY THE YEAR  
BEST HI-FI

## MONITOR AUDIO BRONZE BR5 SPEAKERS

The new BR5 is an astonishing mix of clarity, exuberance and power from a deceptively slender loudspeaker.

- 2.5-way design
- Finish options available

*"Unmatchable musical sound from a floorstander under £500 coupled with Monitor Audio's excellent build quality"*

**NEW**

WHAT HI-FI?  
TESTER AND VISITOR  
★★★★★  
MARCH 2006



## MARANTZ

Marantz products range from high-end hi-fi to HD-ready DVD players and AV receivers. Its hi-fi range includes the CD5000 and CD50010SE CD players, the SA7001 SACD player and the PM4001 amplifier, offering a taste of high-end audio at an incredibly competitive price



WHAT HI-FI? **AWARDS 2006**  
★★★★★  
JANUARY 2006

## ROTEL 06 SERIES

Rotel's 06 Series will give you years of enjoyment and offers excellent value for money. This range of separates creates a sound that, the more you hear it, the better it gets.

*"RA05 - Best stereo amplifier under £500 in Awards 2006"*



WHAT HI-FI? **AWARDS 2006**  
BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER  
BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER UNDER £500  
ROTEL RA05

## PRIMARE

With class-leading build quality, and a unique blend of sophisticated Scandinavian design, Primare build elegant, reliable, easy-to-use systems that promise years of high quality performance.



WHAT HI-FI? **AWARDS 2006**  
BEST CD PLAYER  
PRIMARE CD01

WHAT HI-FI? **AWARDS 2006**  
BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER  
PRIMARE 100

## Getting the most from your hi-fi system

Sevenoaks has 34 years' experience in the hi-fi market - and nobody knows more about getting the most from music. With the major brands in stock, Sevenoaks can help you choose individual components or design a complete system from scratch. Just tell our in-store experts what you listen to, when and where.

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# SEVENOAKS

SOUND & VISION

The Experts in Home Entertainment



## Any song. Any room. Anywhere. SONOS Wireless Music System

Sonos is the first wireless, multi-room digital music system that lets you play your favourite tunes all over the house - and control them from the palm of your hand. With a wireless Sonos Controller in hand, you'll have instant access to all your digital music, plus Internet radio, subscriptions to online audio services and even music from your favourite CD or MP3 player. With Sonos ZonePlayers in the rooms of your choice, you can play the same song in different rooms, or different songs in different rooms. To start listening, just grab the colour controller, pick a room, pick a song and simply hit play.

- Built-in wireless system
- Multi-room synchronous playback
- Expandable design, up to 32 rooms
- Familiar, simple user interface

WHAT HI-FI? **AWARDS 2006**  
BEST WIRELESS MUSIC SYSTEM  
SONOS

*"Simple to set-up, great to use...  
Sound quality is first-rate"*



## ARCAM

### SOLO MUSIC SYSTEM

- Amazing sound from an integrated system
- Exceptional quality CD, FM and DAB radio
- Integrated iPod connection
- From Arcam, a great British company

WHAT HI-FI? **AWARDS 2004**  
BEST CD PLAYER  
£250-£500  
ARCAM CD231

## DIVA SERIES

Arcam believes that superb sound quality is vital to the real enjoyment of music. The DIVA range reproduces music at a level that is remarkably true to life

## Don't Forget! Accessories make the difference

The quality of sound and vision a system produces is determined as much by its accessories as its main components. At Sevenoaks, accessories are not an afterthought - our staff can demonstrate the difference the right accessories can make to your home entertainment experience.



QED



*Revive  
your record  
collection*

## PROJECT DEBUT III

- Two speed, belt drive turntable complete with cartridge
- What Hi-Fi? award-winner

WHAT HI-FI? **AWARDS 2006**  
TURNTABLES  
PROJECT DEBUT III



NEW

## 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. **NEW DAB 8.0 TUNER**



# SEVENoaks



Custom Electronic and Design  
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## MEMBERS

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## Design & Custom Install at SEVENoaks



### A vision for every home

Create your dreams with the latest home entertainment technology. Whether it be home cinema, quality hi-fi or multi-room, Sevenoaks will transform your home and increase your viewing and listening pleasure.

Sevenoaks Design and Custom Install provides a solution that meets your exact needs and budget.

At Sevenoaks, we create bespoke home entertainment systems of the highest quality that complement your home and lifestyle.

With 49 stores and over 30 years of experience, Sevenoaks creates systems that will transform your life.

### Multi-room systems

A multi-room system puts all your home cinema and/or hi-fi equipment in one place and gives you control at the touch of a button. Put screens and speakers in as many rooms as you want and control what you listen to or watch from one central hub. With hard-disk technology, you can store your entire DVD and CD collections in one place and play different films or music tracks in different rooms at the same time.

Sevenoaks staff are experienced at installing both simple and complex multi-room systems, and ensuring they integrate with the look and feel of your home as well as being fully functional and easy to operate.

### How it works

The Sevenoaks custom install service takes in everything from initial site visits to designing and planning your system, through to project management and installation to ensure you get the most from your home entertainment system.

**Sevenoaks consults with you at every stage and, if required, will liaise with builders and architects.**



**Call your local SEVENoaks store to book a site survey or a free in-store demonstration**



## SEVENOAKS GUIDE

Pick-up our 2007 Hi-Fi & Home Cinema Guide at your local store. Alternatively, it can be ordered via our Website and posted to you (UK mainland addresses only) FREE OF CHARGE.



## Choose the best in the business

Sevenoaks Sound & Vision is the UK's largest specialist retailer of high-quality home entertainment solutions. With 49 stores nationwide and a proud history of satisfying customers, Sevenoaks has a hard-earned reputation as the most comprehensive provider of home cinema, hi-fi and multi-room audio systems, offering excellence in customer service and a unique design and custom install option.

## Ahead of the field

- **LEADER for quality brands.** Sevenoaks 100 per cent independent status means it can bring together the finest components and systems under one roof.
- **LEADER for quality staff.** Sevenoaks employees are home cinema and hi-fi enthusiasts with a passion for the products and satisfying customers.
- **LEADER for quality service.** At Sevenoaks, customers are treated as individuals and solutions are designed for individual needs.
- **LEADER for custom install.** Few retailers have more experience of designing, installing and optimising bespoke systems in homes.

WHAT HI-FI? AWARDS 2006



### SIM2 DOMINO D35 DLP PROJECTOR

SIM2 is synonymous with the finest quality home cinema projectors and the new D35 model adds to that enviable reputation.

### INFOCUS IN76 DLP PROJECTOR

Fill your screen with bright, vivid, crisp and detailed images with this award-winning, 720p resolution, DLP projector.



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01522 527397

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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



**Q Acoustics**  
1050 £330  
This range-topping floorstander from newcomer Q Acoustics produces an engaging sound with fine dynamics and impressive transparency.



**DALI**  
Ikon 6 £899  
Complete with a ribbon super-tweeter, this is an exceptionally capable floorstander for the money, delivering a highly detailed and thoroughly engrossing sound.



**B&W**  
805S £1,600  
A superbly well-engineered standmount that's capable of delivering magnificent musical communication, alongside superior subtlety and delicacy.



**Mordaunt-Short**  
Performance 6 £3,500  
This extraordinary speaker stands at the pinnacle of Mordaunt-Short's current range. State of the art resolution and imaging are among its many attributes.

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO SPEAKERS

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOOR STANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
	<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Acoustic Energy Aelite 3	750	Wood-veneered all-rounder has exceptional neutrality with deep smooth bass	20,103,39	A	22				292
	Acoustic Energy AE1 Classic	845	Sharply priced classic replica has a beautifully balanced midband, wide dynamic range and little boxiness	18,295,255	A-	45				283
<input type="checkbox"/>	ALR Jordan Entry L	500	Not the most pretty speaker but a sonic triumph, with a beautifully judged balance and impressive transparency	20,86,29	A	23				279
	ALR Jordan Note 3	1,350	Costly but clever; adjustable ABR gives much of the weight of a floorstander with the agility of a standmount	24,537,315	A	26				288
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	B&W CM1	500	Luxury miniature has neutral, laid back sound, with low coloration, fine imaging but weak dynamics	16,5,28,28	A-	40				279
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Castle Richmond 7i	900	Does all the musically important stuff flawlessly. A fine communicator that delivers reassuringly credible bass	18,925,26	A+	47				286
<input type="checkbox"/>	Castle Compact Column	550	Compact, not so much that you need a sub to back up the bass, an elegant and engaging speaker for its size	14,875,16	A-	50				280
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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 Focus 110	850	Luxury real wood miniature with tapered enclosure sounds punchy, sweet and avoids boxiness	17,30,28	A-	38				279
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Epos ELS3	200	Few affordable speakers sound as clean and convincing while taking up so little real estate	18,27,19	A-	60				241
<input type="checkbox"/>	Epos M5	349	Gorgeous miniature works well close to wall. Could be smoother but communicates with authority	18,33,21	A-	40				269
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Focal Chorus 816 V	1,000	Fine, warm balance, superior dynamics, and a sweet top end, but could be smoother	28,100,375	A+	20				288
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	KEF iQ3	280	Shapely, vinyl-covered stand mount has lively dynamics and fine imaging, but could be smoother and sweeter	22,37,33	A+	40				284
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monitor Audio GS10	800	More neutral tonally than some recent MAs. Quality stereo design which take's up little room and is easy to drive	20,36,27	A-	40				284
<input type="checkbox"/>	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	9,18,27	A	33				276
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mordaunt-Short Avant 906i	350	The generous, well balanced sound shows good enclosure control, could do with more grip and better spikes!	165,85,295	A	40				281
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nbien DX-5	250	Unusual shape miniature delivers generous scale, weight and dynamic expression for something so compact	17,5,34,24	A-	40				284
<input type="checkbox"/>	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

**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** 30 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).



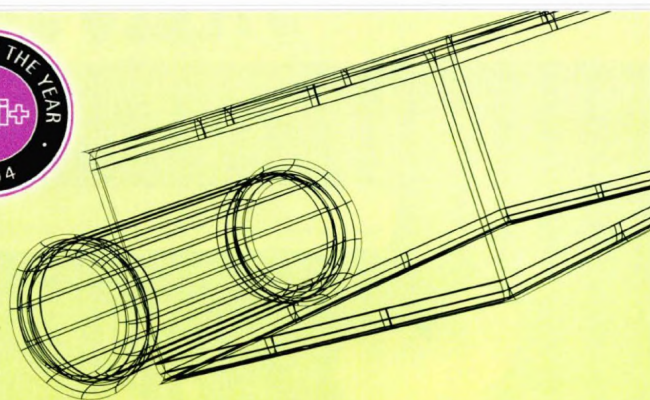
# MAINS FILTERING ■ JAYA

TWO VERSIONS: STANDARD / SILVER

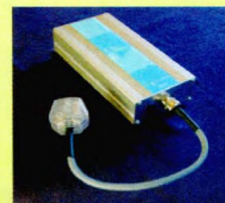
THE KEY TO THE JAYA'S EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE IS THE WAY IT TACKLES NOT ONLY SPIKES, BUT ALSO RADIO FREQUENCY INTERFERENCE (RFI) ON THE MAINS. ON A TYPICAL DOMESTIC SUPPLY THERE IS A VAST AMOUNT OF RFI. AT LOWER FREQUENCIES THERE IS NOISE FROM POWER SUPPLY RECTIFIERS, AND FURTHER UP THE RF SPECTRUM THERE IS NOISE FROM DIGITAL SYSTEMS AND THE INTERFERENCE INJECTED INTO THE MAINS BY MOBILE PHONES. AS WELL AS EMPLOYING HIGH QUALITY ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS FOR THE FILTER NETWORK, THE UNITS INCORPORATE THE ACOUSTIC ABSORPTION TECHNOLOGY FOUND IN OUR OTHER PRODUCTS.

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■ JAYA

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### RECIPE CLIPPINGS

#### Recipe no.3 :-

##### Starter:

1 x Clearaudio Emotion Turntable

##### Main:

1 x Unison Research Secondo Int amp  
1 x IsoTek Sigma conditioner

##### Desert:

1 x Totem Acoustics Rainmaker

Garnish with Van Den Hul Inspiration loudspeaker cable and Integration interconnects.

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### RECIPE CLIPPINGS



#### Recipe No.4 :-

Will follow next month...

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## Our favourite **STEREO SPEAKERS** continued

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				SIZE (WHD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EDGE OF DRIVE	BASS FREQ (HZ)
EC	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
EC	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
EC	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
EC	Q Acoustics 1010	99	Neatly styled miniature has limited bass and power handling but fine midband voicing at a very sharp price	15,21,5,19,5	A	48	286
EC	Q Acoustics 1050	330	Great value, the sound lacks smoothness but has fine dynamics and impressive transparency	19,5,97,5,30	A+	28	284
EC	Quadral Pico	849	Could be more muscular, but neutral and open with spacious imaging and little coloration	19,34,26	A-	30	292
EC	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
EC	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
EC	Revel Concerta F12	900	The money has gone into the active hardware, so cosmetics are plain. Performance is on par with more costly designs	25,108,37	A-	28	283
EC	Ruark Sabre III	799	Straightforward engineering combined with high finish quality that delivers a beautifully timed and engaging sound	20,33,5,27	A-	50	289
EC	Totem Rainmaker	795	Standmount has a big sound, with a smooth midband and bright top. Could have more punch and warmth	17,35,5,23	A	25	291
EC	Triangle Antal Esw	995	Smoother than its predecessors, with a beautifully balanced bass and midband, though the top end is uneven	20,108,34	A	20	288
EC	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
EC	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>							
EC	A2T Mezzo	2,000	Seamless overall coherence, with persuasive monitoring capabilities. Sounds a little mid-forward. Top could be sweeter	27,5,40,26	A+	40	281
EC	Acoustic Energy AE1 MkIII	1,900	Luxury miniature has a laid back but bouncy sound, fine dynamic range and very superior imaging	18,5,31,25	A-	30	281
EC	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
EC	ATC SCM19	1,499	Super linear motor system, heavy weight construction and fabulous veneer that makes the ATC a pro favourite	22,44,31,5	A-	54	285
EC	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
EC	AVI Duo	1,299	Sophisticated floorstander, a natural partner for AVI's electronics. Unusually clean and honest musical presentation	19,77,28	A	50	280
EC	B&W 704	1,400	Cleverly tapered enclosure and external tweeter delivers superior bass and treble, with a laid-back midband	22,96,32	A	20	257
EC	B&W 802D	8,000	Great timing, superior dynamics and a sweet top end all enhance musical communication. Makes sweet music	37,115,56	A	<20	267
EC	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
EC	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
EC	Canton Vento Ref 5DC	3,499	Strikingly handsome speaker has a studiously neutral balance with delightful midband analysis	25,112,35	A	40	283
EC	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
EC	Dynaudio Focus 220	1,850	Cleverly tapered floorstander has a brilliantly smooth, neutral balance and very sweet treble. Could be more dynamic	20,5,98,29,5	A-	<20	281
EC	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
EC	Focal Chorus 826 V	1,250	Times nicely, goes loud with ease and will produce precise imaging if appropriately set up.	28,104,37,5	A	45	287
EC	Focal 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
EC	Focal Chorus 836V	1,549	Bulky, sharply priced three-way could be prettier. Has good bass with genuine grip, but top could be sweeter	28,115,38	A	28	290
EC	Focal 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
EC	Focal 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
EC	Focal Diva Utopia Be	7,599	Lovely slimline speaker combines remarkable transparency with fine dynamics and gorgeous bass	25,110,53	A+	30	255
EC	Focal 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
EC	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
EC	Jamo Reference R909	7,500	Top model (in a class of one) is open, full and easy on the ear, and surely a classic in the making	48,127,54	A-	25	280
EC	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
EC	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	Meridian M3100	1,850	Attractive and capable active (125w) with great imaging and strong bass. High neutrality and good power handling	19,39,25	ACT	45	opt 280



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

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE (WHD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS (FROM Hz)	FREQUENCY	CLOSE TO WALL	SCALE NUMBER
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monopulse 82	2,495	Could be more neutral, but excellent coherence, lively dynamics, fine imaging and a wide dynamic range	27,110,25		A	<20			281
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	PMC Water 2	1,650	Clever 'hang-on-wall' speaker has minimal sonic compromises. Smooth midband delivers impressive stereo imaging	33,557,5,10		A+	45			285
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PMC EB1	5,950	The best argument for large speakers that we've heard in a long time	29,120,46,5		A-	19			292
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Revel F32	3,200	Meticulously balanced, tonally neutral design makes for a taut, well disciplined sound	22,105,39		A	30			265
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Revel M22	1,800	A remarkably clean and revealing speaker with superb tonal and microdynamic capabilities	22,37,30		A-	48			274
<input type="checkbox"/>	Roksan Caspian FR-5	2,000	Sharp looking speaker sounds exceptionally open and lively without aggression. Could be warmer and richer	20,100,25		A	22			290
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sonus Faber Concerto D.	1,799	The Concerto Domus performs significantly above its price level, especially with acoustic material	21,99,31		A	35			270
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sonus Faber Grand Piano D	2,498	The Grand Piano Domus has a fabulous physical appearance and delivers a clean, refined sound	21,106,31		A-	32			283
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Totem Model 1 Signature	1,595	Expensive, but very seductive miniature delivers a beautifully smooth and balanced midband	17,31,23		A	35			277
<input type="checkbox"/>	Triangle Celius 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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Triangle Magellan Concerto	14,750	New 'sw2' version is less immediate than its predecessor, but it's easier to live with and remains highly entertaining	60,160,45		A-	32			290
<input type="checkbox"/>	Usher Compass CP-63E1	2,500	Lots of speaker for your money, with plenty of deep bass, unusual styling and massive build	35,127,65		A	20			270
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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	EDGE-OF-DRIVE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSE 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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Final Sound Electrostatic system	4,875	Slim, attractive, electrostatic panels have clever connections, limited loudness but a breathtaking transparency	A-	6	20			251
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mordaunt-Short Gene	800	A prince among sub/sat packages – good integration and impressively little compromise compared to full-size models	A-	6	38			262
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	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).

### SPECIFICATIONS

EDGE-OF-DRIVE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSE NUMBER
A-	6	12		opt	255
A	6	27			241
A	5	22			224
A	5	28			224
A-	5	53			241
A-	6	20			251
A	5	50			232
A-	6	18			253
A	5	30			232
A	6	28			241
A-	6	38			262
A	5	25			210
A	6	20			268
A	6	29			269

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

# SUBWOOFERS

### Bass speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE (WxHxD (CM))	POWER (W)	BASS FROM (Hz)	ISSE 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	1,000	18	246
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Eclipse TD725sw	2,700	Delivers solid meaningful bass, but with unusual tunefulness, speed and articulation	52,47,50	500	40	287
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monitor Audio ASW100	300	For the price, this compact subwoofer performs particularly well	32,32,34	120	27	225
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	REL 305	795	Landmark mid-price sub, works particularly well with low crossover frequency, looks great too	32,36,34	300	25	284
<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 T1	595	Standard setter at the price: flexible, easily set up and packs quite a punch	36,40,420	300	25	291
<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
<input type="checkbox"/>	REL Storm III	900	Excellent sub with powerful, detailed and deep bass. Comprehensive facilities, including flexible filter adjustment	42,62,33	150	18	225
<input type="checkbox"/>	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
<input type="checkbox"/>	Velodyne SPL-800R	699	Powerful, highly configurable sub with auto setup feature and attractive, compact packaging	26,27,33	1,000	28	286
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wilson Benesch Torus	5,200	Amp and sub package built like a sophisticated pile driver, with deep, state of the art performance	45x33x45	1,000	10	290

**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.

### SPECIFICATIONS

SIZE (WxHxD (CM))	POWER (W)	BASS FROM (Hz)	ISSE NUMBER
29,34,35	500	20	259
53,56,52	1,000	18	246
52,47,50	500	40	287
32,32,34	120	27	225
32,36,34	300	25	284
28,40,29	100	18	257
36,40,420	300	25	291
32,46,33	150	18	257
42,62,33	150	18	225
34,52,37	200	15	267
59,56,39	200	16	217
26,27,33	1,000	28	286
45x33x45	1,000	10	290



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M-Cube 5.1

**FLOOR STANDING SPEAKERS**  
Ikon 6

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**INFORMATION**

Mission's Stunning M-Cube consists of an active 250W subwoofer with 2x200mm (8") bass driver, magnetically shielded centre and satellite speakers and 5 Wall brackets.



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**DALL**

**INFORMATION**

The Award winning IKON 6 utilises the already famed and celebrated Hybrid Tweeter Module and features 2 x 6.5" paper/wood fibre cone IKON drivers. This speaker combines a beautifully crafted exterior with such an impressive sound quality that it will bring a smile to your face.



**Quad**

**INFORMATION**

This 5.1 speaker system is capable of delivering outstanding performance featuring four satellite speakers, a dedicated centre channel and a 300W rms 10" powered subwoofer.



**MJ Acoustics**

**INFORMATION**

The PRO 50 MkII is an awesome addition to complement the most discerning cinema and music system featuring twin crossovers, 120watts of power, new designed 10" driver and Speaker and Line Level inputs with Gain Control Range 80 and 60dB.

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Destiny Series  
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The NAD C720BEE combines the award winning C320BEE amplifier with an RDS AM/FM tuner, it includes a Multi-source Zone facility and features 100W, 150W, 180W, IHF Dynamic power into 8, 4 and 2 ohms, respectively.

C720BEE  
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BRONZE REFERENCE**

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This Bronze Reference system features a blend of high performance driver technology, exceptional build quality and gorgeous finishes.

These components are also available individually in a variety of finishes.

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HOME CINEMA  
PROJECTOR  
IN76



**INFORMATION**

The HDTV-ready IN76 features 1280 x 720 resolution, 1000 lumens and 3000:1 contrast ratio, uses Pixelworks™ DNX™, and 1 x HDMI, 1 x M1-DA/DVI (HDCP), 1 x 3-RCA component port and more making the IN76 fully compatible with DVD players, gaming consoles, cable boxes and satellite.

**Sonos**

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**INFORMATION**

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**Onkyo**

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DAB/CD MINI SYSTEM  
CS-515UK



**INFORMATION**

The award winning CS-515UK CD receiver system features 50 Watts (RMS) power output, DAB Radio, MP3-CD / CD-RV / RV playback, Bass Boost and the audio quality is promoted with the inclusion of a Wolfson® 192 kHz/24-bit DAC.

**InFocus**

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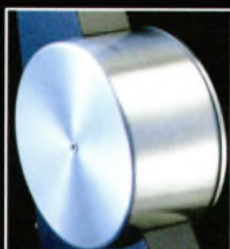
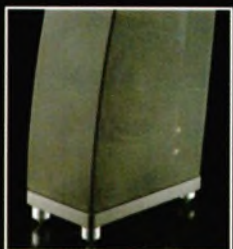
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## The new Reference 3 with CDT II™ Tweeter Technology

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

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



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

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

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# *nonconformist*

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



# 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	ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT (g)	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR	STYLE NUMBER
<input type="checkbox"/>	AKG K44	20	Lively, enjoyable and remarkably detailed: a bargain						190		219
<input 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
<input 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 type="checkbox"/>	Beyerdynamic DT1770	190	A touch coloured in the mid, but less than most closed cans: detailed and with excellent bass						290		287
<input 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"/>	Grado GS1000	995	One of the finest transducers on the planet, with detail to die for						250		288
<input type="checkbox"/>	Philips HP890	70	A remarkably sophisticated and very comfortable headphone						330		219
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sennheiser LX90	35	Brings recognisably hi-fi sound to in-ear transducers, with surprisingly good resolution						35		290
<input type="checkbox"/>	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 type="checkbox"/>	Shure E500PTH	420	Sophisticated in-ear design with three drivers, plus switchable 'voiceover' mic in the lead; high-quality stuff						20		285
<input 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
<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

**SPECS KEY** **ELECTROSTATIC** Uses electrostatic film instead of more common cone or dome dynamics. **SUPRA-AURAL** Earpads sit on ear rather than around it. **CIRCAURAL** 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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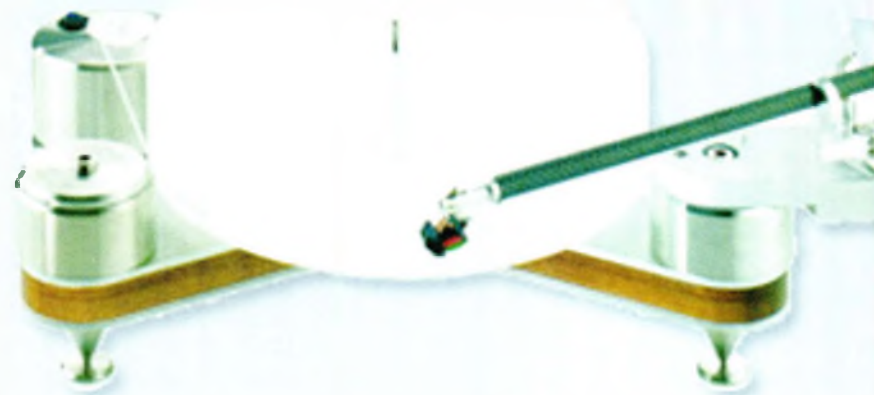
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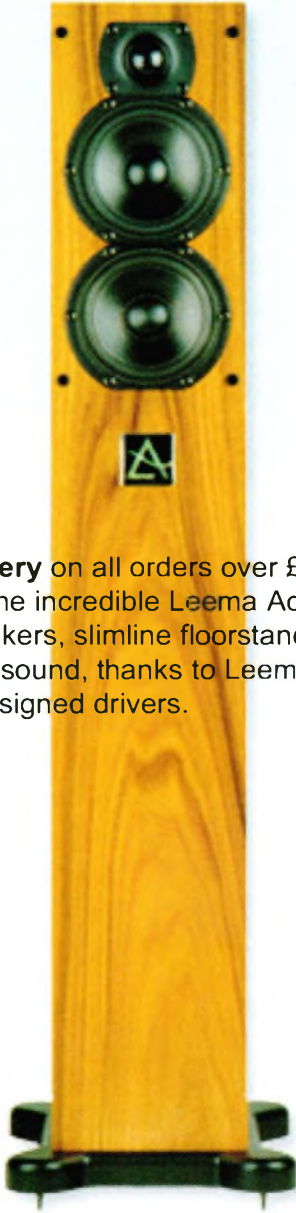
Check out the **reviews and brochure downloads** on our website product listings. Read how the eye-popping Clearaudio Master Solution "lets the music flow in a mesmerizing and totally enjoyable manner" (*Hi-Fi News*).



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# CABLES



## Wires to hook your system together



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

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

be fitted with screw or solder-on types.

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

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

## Our favourite CABLES

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Interconnects and speaker cables

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS</b>				
	Black Rhodium Harmony	60	Clear and well defined sound with good bass and admirable articulation	290
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Black Rhodium Concerto	225	This DCT cable from the Polar range gives a distinctively dark timbre, rich in detail, with low subjective noise	270
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Chord Company Chorus	215	Very even-handed balance with notably extended bass	259
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Clearer Audio Silver-line	244	Complex, well-screened cable which offers good sound all round with exceptional bass – at a price!	279
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Ixos Ixotica IX1	200	Notable for its relaxing sound, this cable still presents plenty of analytical detail	283
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Kimber Timbre	89	Typical Kimber construction with ditto sound – clean, extended and detailed	248
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Monster M350i	45	Few cables at this price reveal so much about the recording space. Clear treble, too	281
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Monster M1000i	200	Very capable, with only a hint of bass dryness to set against excellent results elsewhere	284
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Nordost Heimdall	370	Micro-monofilament cable, silver plated more affordable alternative to Valhalla, sounds transparent, detailed and neutral	278
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Oehlbach NF214	63	The bass is a matter of taste, but suits many smaller speakers. Very good mid and treble	281
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Oehlbach Silver Express +	70	Good, firm bass is accompanied by clear treble and well defined stereo imaging	280
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Supra Sword-ISL	379	Unusual inductance-free design, beautifully built, with bold, finely detailed and outgoing sound quality and excellent discipline	292
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	TCI Tiger	30	Not the most detailed interconnect around, but performance belies its modest price, especially in the bass	285
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Townshend DCT300	300	DCT wire with hum-busting ferrite sleeves. Packed with enough detail to make rivals sound flat	234
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Van den Hul MC Silver IT MkIII	2,250	Incredibly resolute and low distortion cable that makes the alternatives sound crude, pity about the price	289
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Wireworld Luna 5	30	Authoritative bass and clear treble outperform many cables at twice the price	273
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Wireworld Solstice 5	70	A cables with all-round appeal – treble is slightly 'dark' but bass is excellent and the overall balance very good indeed	259
<b>DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS</b>				
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Atlas Compass	50	Slight improvement in detail over giveaway cables, plus distinctly more tuneful bass and more open treble, make this fine value	E 289
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Clearer Audio Silver-line	125	Very satisfying performance with finely-etched detail and sweet treble	E 278
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Kimber Select KS2020	629	Provides a subtle but rewarding lift in musicality with any DAC, justifying the price	E 260
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	QED Qunex Signature 75	80	First-rate balance and imaging – ever so nearly as good as it gets at any price	E 265
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	van den Hul Optocoupler II	49	Noticeably has the edge over other optical leads, but still second best to electrical types	O 234
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Wireworld Starlight 5	90	Clear gains in detail and imaging precision are this cable's main strengths: good value and near-high-end performance	E 279
<b>SPEAKER CABLES PRICE PER METRE</b>				
	Atlas Hyper 2.0	15	A high degree of musical communication; detail is not perfect but one is seldom aware of the shortfall	290
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Chord Epic Twin	80	Good all rounder, which generally sounds relaxed and musical, and a full bass that stops the right side of sounding blowsy	287
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Clearer Audio Copper-line A.	10	Copper-line Alpha's strong, ringing bass and neutral tonality are plus points, but treble is not the purest we've heard	283
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Kimber BVS	18	Beautifully full, open and transparent sound right across the board	227
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Monster MCX-1s	8	Notable for its bass, which is perhaps a touch overdone at times but could be a good foil to small speakers. Good mid and treble	280
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Nordost Heimdall	162	Alternative to Valhalla, silver plated, micro-monofilament construction, low colouration, high res and suitable for exacting systems	278
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	QED Silver Anniversary XT	5.50	Full bass and nicely detailed treble combine with good imaging - a budget bargain	276
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	QED X-Tube XT300	10	A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems	234
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Supra Sword	116	Zero inductance construction, medium resolution cable that has an excellent midband and is fundamentally musical	287
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Townshend Isolda DCT	50	Cryogenically treated 'impedance matched' cable with stabilising components added: great sound all-round	241
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	van den Hul The Bridge	6	Better bass than treble, with good detail though a touch of constriction at times	291
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Wireworld Luna 16/4	5	Budget biwire cable offering tuneful and extended bass, good treble, and midrange with just a little lack of detail	292
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">CB</span>	Wyewizard Spellbinder	5.50	Sold off the reel, this entry-level cable is a surprisingly purist performer, lean yet powerful, with good detail resolution.	267

**SPECS KEY** **STRANDED** Cable has a number of (usually) twisted strands to conduct the signal. **SOLID CORE** Cable has one or more individually insulated strands to conduct the signal. **COPPER** Material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **SILVER** Alternative material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **DIGITAL CABLE TYPE** E – electrical, O – optical. Cables are one metre length unless otherwise stated.



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

*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.

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DVD players: Arcam & **FMJ**, **Cyrus**, Denon, Harman Kardon, Meridian, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**, Yamaha,

Processors: **Arcam FMJ AV8**, **Cyrus**, **Lexicon**, Linn, Meridian, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**.

Amplifiers: Arcam/**FMJ**, **Bryston**, **Cyrus**, Denon, Harman Kardon, **Lexicon**, **Naim**, Rotel, **Tag McLaren**, Yamaha.

Display devices: Plasma screens from Loewe, Panasonic, Pioneer and **Yamaha**. Televisions/LCD: Loewe.

Projectors: **Barco(CRT/DLP)**, **Sim (DLP)**, **Yamaha(DLP/LCD)** Screens: **Stewart/Draper/Vutec** ,

Video Processing: **Faroudja**, **I-Scan**, **Key Digital**, **Lumagen**, **Tag**. Control systems: **Crestron**, Lutron lighting.

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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
	Alphason A5-G	399	Nice looking, very solid and practical with a pretty well balanced sound, but lacks a little detail
	Atacama Equinox	280	Stable, modular design with style. Excellent bass transients and a fresh design concept
ES	Audiophile Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities – a worthy upgrade
	Avid Isosshelf	1,100	An enthusiast's equipment support stand free from coloration, if a little fiddly to set up
	Clearlight Audio Aspekt	650	Stunning neutrality and detail from a well-damped design. Its performance makes the price tag good value
	Custom Design Icon Signature	330	Gorgeous wood and glass looks: sound lacks a little detail but is nicely lively
	Custom Design Icon 400	600	Beautifully built, conveniently adjustable and with little sound of its own, a very classy rack
	Custom Design Concept 400	700	Slightly drab looks, but great sound and efficient use of space ('Acoustic' version tested – standard version £300)
	Custom Design Vantige	449	'Acoustic Aluminium' shelves plus steel supports equal practicality plus musical satisfaction: just a shade bright
	Partington Minim	389	Looks good, sounds good and is impressively flexible to boot
ES	Naim Fram	1,825	Pricey but very classy looking and sounding, with modular flexibility
	Quadraspire Q4 Reference	480	Excellent performance from the school of wobbly racks. Natural sounding and plenty of detail
	Russ Andrews Torlyte Rack	988	Attractive modular system made of very light Torlyte: a touch of added warmth is its only vice
	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!
ES	Townshend VSSS	1,300	The Seismic Sink goes all glassy and attractive, yet retains the same excellent vibration-killing sound quality

SPECIFICATIONS					
HEIGHT (CM)	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	WELDED	SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
80	66,46		5	Glass	247
81	50,50		4	Glass	217
82	43		4	MDF	193
87.5	48		5	MDF	193
75	53,5,45		4	MDF	217
75	56,37		4	Glass	286
75	57, 41		5	Glass	263
74	48,40		4	Metal	247
62	49,44		4	Metal	271
75	45,36		5	Glass	261
96	45,34		5	Glass	232
51.5	49,39.5		4	MDF	217
68	54,49		4	Torlyte	240
92	50,40		5	Glass	217
76	35,50		4	Glass	273

## Our favourite SPEAKER STANDS

BEST BUY  EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Speaker stands

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS
	Custom Design RS300	110	An attractive stand whose lack coloration and ringing makes suits it to high resolution systems, at a tempting price
ES	Custom Design SQ404	200	Robust four-pillar design gives very low coloration and maximises performance of speakers great and small
ES	hne Cableway	395	Looks great, sounds great, so start saving! Clean and sweet, and neutrality is exceptional with orchestral material
	Kudos S50	159	Formidable bass with real authority, and a wide dynamic range across a broad bandwidth
	Partington Ansa 60	99	Elegant flat-packer 'disappears' sonically; restrained but neutral and coherent
ES	Partington Dreadnought BS	249	The Dreadnought Broadside is a superb stand for high-class standmount speakers – and it looks great too!
ES	Partington Heavi II	399	Robust to the nth degree, this stand helps produce very taut, precise bass and detailed upper frequencies
ES	Russ Andrews Torlyte	299	Very relaxed sound from this metal-free design, with excellent imaging too

SPECIFICATIONS					
HEIGHT (CM)	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF LEGS	ISSUE NUMBER
56	16,5,18			1	281
61	18,16,3			4	283
63	17,20			1	220
61	15,20			1	220
62	18,15			4	232
61	17,15			5	261
53	31,22			6	287
60,50	15,21			3	280

**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.



After 5 years in production, the Dino is still one of the most popular phono stages around. Highly versatile with accessible switches on the baseplate to facilitate a wide range cartridges.

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## Dino Phono Amplifier



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HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine





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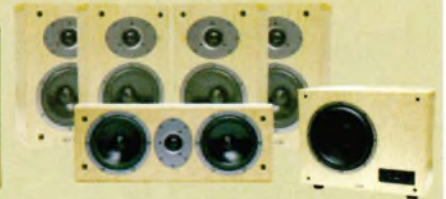


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AWARDS 2006



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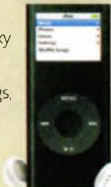
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### DVD/NETWORK PLAYER HELIOS X5000

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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 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 0.0227ms. 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.



# However *you enjoy your* music...

“ Isn't it easy to buy a new system? You read the magazine product reviews, you find out who sells the recommendations, five-star favourites or best buys at the cheapest price, you order the system, get a friend who knows his onions to install it – and live happily ever after.

This is a fairly well-trodden path but it leads to dissatisfaction, endless upgrades and a lot of wasted money. It's likely that the system will help you lose interest in music pretty rapidly. The problem is that there are more myths about hi-fi than Aesop's Fables. CD gives you perfect sound. All CD players sound the same. A £50 CD player plays high fidelity music. All magazine reviewers are experts. Big speakers are always better than small ones. More watts per channel is everything. MP3 format gives you high quality. A collection of 'Best Buy' components will be a great system. And so on and so on.... ALL MYTHS.



## ...get the best Hi-Fi

### Music - the real aim

Our aim must be to buy a hi-fi system that will prove musically satisfying, reliable and deliver true value for money. If the system doesn't excite you musically you've wasted your money. What is even worse is that you may not even realise you've bought a bad egg – you'll just switch the TV on instead and your desire to listen to music will gradually diminish. Have you ever been in a pub or club where you realise it's very difficult to conduct a conversation, even to the extent of being really tiring? A poor quality system continuously distorts but I don't mean it necessarily reaches the point of audibly breaking up. With a top quality system you can play music very loudly and still hold a conversation because it's free of distortion. A poor system is tiring to listen to even when it's played at low volume. If you want proof, go into a shoe or clothes shop where they play background 'music' and try to enjoy listening. It's odds on you'll fail.

### What and Where to buy

The system you think you want may not be right for you. So where do you start? Here's an important tip...don't start with WHAT, start with WHERE. There is only one way to give yourself the best chance of getting it right first time, and that's through a specialist hi-fi dealer. Now it's likely you have preconceived ideas that may put you off visiting one. Although you would welcome the advice and guidance, you don't know the technical jargon. You don't want to be talked down to. Your friend has said they only sell expensive gear and they're not interested if you don't have a big budget. They're expensive. Again, just myths. Most specialist hi-fi dealers are running their business because, above all, they love music. They spend a large portion of their time listening to music and comparing systems to get the best possible result. They know the component combinations which don't gel together and, conversely, they know the combinations which give the best performance within a given price range. But they all also know the system must suit you.



#### STAR QUALITIES

VALUE FOR MONEY .....	★	★	★	★	★
SERVICE .....	★	★	★	★	★
FACILITIES .....	★	★	★	★	★
VERDICT .....	★	★	★	★	★



## Buying or being sold to?

Now there's a group of long-established specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer first. Their idea of 'selling' is to discuss your requirements, offer their advice, give you the best options, then play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge.

Listening to your choice of music in a peaceful, well organised demonstration room, you may be surprised and, almost certainly, relieved to discover how easy it is to hear the differences between components and between systems. You'll be able to make a clear and informed decision about what to buy. It comes down to trusting your own judgement rather than the opinion of a reviewer you've never met ...and who won't refund your money if you're not satisfied or be at the end of a phone to sort out any problem you might encounter.

The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put your hand in your pocket. They won't leave you to set up the system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it sounds great, and make sure you're entirely happy with the way it works. Why? Because a high proportion of these dealers' custom comes through people who have bought from them before, either directly or by commendation. It's vital to them to get it right for you.



## Getting the best deal

Oscar Wilde wrote "...too many people today know the price of everything and the value of nothing." Specialist retailers know that not all potential purchasers will seek them out. They tend to attract the more discerning, thoughtful customers. Let's face it, a good deal is about more than just a good price. After all, unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years. Most of these dealers offer much longer equipment guarantees than provided by the manufacturer, a very worthwhile benefit, but it also makes it in the dealer's interest to ensure high build quality and reliability. Maybe you could save a few pounds by buying piecemeal but you'll lose out on the overall package. As far as the dealers are concerned, maybe they believe that taking care of their customers properly is a nicer way of doing business than just handing over boxes.

# system for your money!

## Ask our Top 20 UK Hi-Fi Dealers

Listed below are **20 OF THE BEST HI-FI SHOPS IN THE COUNTRY.** They have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give them years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.



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**N1**  
**GRAHAMS HI-FI**  
190a New North Road.  
020 7226 5500

**SW11**  
**ORANGES & LEMONS**  
61/63 Webbs Road, Battersea.  
020 7924 2043

### SOUTH

**Ashford, Kent**  
**SOUNDCRAFT HI-FI**  
40 High Street  
01233 624441

**Brighton**  
**THE POWERPLANT**  
40 Church Road, Hove.  
01273 775542

**Chelmsford**  
**RAYLEIGH HI-FI**  
216 Moulsham Street  
01245 265245

**Colchester**  
**RAYLEIGH HI-FI**  
33 Sir Isaac's Walk.  
01206 577682

**Kingston-upon-Thames**  
**INFIDELITY**  
9 High Street Hampton Wick.  
020 8943 3530

### Rayleigh, Essex

**RAYLEIGH HI-FI**  
44a High Street.  
01268 779762

### Southend-on-Sea

**RAYLEIGH HI-FI**  
132/4 London Road.  
01702 435255

**Southampton**  
**PHASE 3 HI-FI**  
37 Bedford Place  
023 8022 8434

**Worthing**  
**PHASE 3 HI-FI**  
213-217 Tarring Road.  
01903 245577

### SOUTH WEST

**Bath**  
**AUDIENCE**  
14 Broad Street.  
01225 333310

### MIDLANDS

**Banbury**  
**OVERTURE**  
3 Church Lane.  
01295 272158

**Birmingham**  
**SOUND ACADEMY**  
152a High Street, Bloxwich.  
01922 493499

### Birmingham

**MUSIC MATTERS**  
363 Hagley Road, Edgbaston.  
0121 429 2811

**Chester**  
**ACOUSTICA**  
17 Hoole Road.  
01244 344227

**Coventry**  
**FRANK HARVEY**  
163 Spon Street.  
024 7652 5200

**Leicester**  
**CYMBIOSIS**  
6 Hotel Street.  
0116 262 3754

**Nottingham**  
**CASTLE SOUND & VISION**  
48/50 Maid Marian Way  
0115 9584404

**Stafford**  
**ACOUSTICA**  
114 Wolverhampton Road.  
01785 258216

**NORTH**  
**Cheadle**  
**THE AUDIO WORKS**  
14 Stockport Road.  
0161 428 7887

### Sheffield

**MOORGATE ACOUSTICS**  
184 Fitzwilliam St  
0114 275 6048

**York**  
**SOUND ORGANISATION**  
2 Gillygate  
01904 627108

**Gateshead**  
**LINTONE AUDIO**  
7-11 Park Lane, Gateshead.  
0191 477 4167

### SCOTLAND

**Glasgow**  
**LOUD & CLEAR**  
520 St Vincent St, Finnieston.  
0141 221 0221

**Edinburgh**  
**LOUD & CLEAR**  
Bonnington Mill,  
72 Newhaven Rd.  
0131 555 3963

### N. IRELAND

**Belfast**  
**LYRIC HI-FI**  
429-431 Lisburn Rd.  
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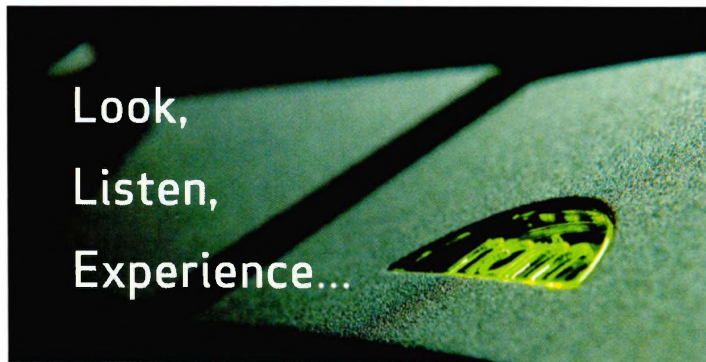
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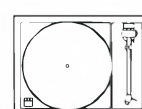


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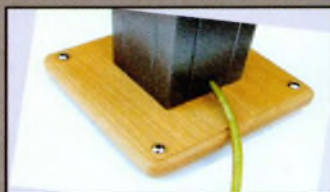
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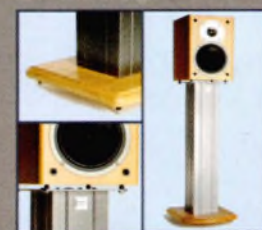
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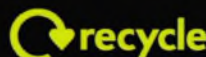
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# 2nd-hand shootout

Some of the very best amplifiers can be yours for £1,500

**2**002/2003 proved to be a golden era for amplification. They may not have much else in common, but this particular quartet of top-flight amps all first saw the light of day during the period.

Despite the rather unfortunate brand name, the Pathos Logos is crafted with effortless Italian style. It's also a very fine sounding amplifier. A valve-based preamp combines with a dual-mono transistor power amp section to provide a dynamic, yet highly textured sound. With 110 watts on tap, it's also rarely phased by tricky speakers. The Philips-based remote control receiver and logic chips can fail, but this is a simple fix and one that may have already been carried out. The Sovtek 6922 valves will eventually need replacing, but at £8 per valve, this is hardly Nu-Vista territory. Good news also comes with the servicing backup. UKD, the UK importer, has its own service

unbeatable at this price. The downsides are that it's not forgiving of weaker sources and nor is it as melifluous sounding as some, Logos included. Krell construction is revered and the KAV400xi shows every sign of long term durability. As it's such a new model, there shouldn't be any problems other than those that may have arisen from owner abuse. Further evidence of this amp being a rival for the Logos comes from its almost identical price. Both are around £2,700 new and, like the Pathos, early 400xis can now be had from £1,500.

If you prefer a 'home grown' sound, then £1,500 gives you a wide choice of British pre/power amplifiers. Probably one of the most highly rated is the Exposure XXIII (23) and XXVIII (28). You should find that, like the others, these amps provide a broad dynamic response. For transistor amps,

**“It was good to see Krell back on ‘entry level’ form with likes of the KAV400xi.”**

department, so that if anything does go wrong, the amp won't have to be sent back to Italy. Although fairly rare on the second hand market, examples are now available at our price point.

At around the same time the Logos was launched, thousands of miles away, Connecticut's master of music, Krell, was busy with its own new range. The late 1990s had seen Krell concentrate on its ultra high end, so it was good to see the company back on 'entry level' form with the likes of the KAV400xi. Replacing the KAV300, the new model had even more power – up 33 per cent to 200 watts – and was designed with high bandwidth in mind. There can be little doubt that if it's dynamic clout and an 'open window' of sound you're after, then the KAV400xi is nigh on

they're also fluent and cohesive. If you find the Krell intolerant of your ancillaries then the 23 or 28 could provide the answer. Although a phono stage was optional, the plug-in board shared components with the company's excellent Phono Pre-amp X and, as such, was one of the best integrated stages in the business. With this being another new-ish design, you shouldn't have any problem with parts or servicing. Exposure keeps spares for 10 to 12 years, so even the oldest should provide plenty of usable life. Should the day come when you fancy a full overhaul, Exposure typically charge around £175. Later Exposure models are more robust than they used to be, but it's still worth checking the power switch and control knobs. Any faults are easily fixed, but should be reflected in the selling



Above: Pathos Logos hybrid valve/solid-state integrated amplifier

price. Exposure has never had the reputation of Naim, and this is reflected in their second-hand prices. Although costing £2,800 new, this combination can now easily be had for half that amount. For a top notch British pre/power that's still fairly new, this has to be great value.

Great value though the Exposure is, it's not the best. That accolade has to go to the Musical Fidelity A308CR. Although this pre/power combination cost over £3,500 new, we've seen several pairs fetch just £1,500 of late. Although it doesn't have the cachet of the company's Nu-Vista range, the A308CRs should not be underestimated. At 250 watts per channel, it's the most powerful here and, like the Krell, distortion and noise levels are stupendously low. What made these amps especially capable were the choke regulated power supplies (the 'CR' part of the name). These help give the big Musical Fidelity's a competition-busting balance of delicacy and insight with huge reserves of current to drive even the most stubborn of speakers. Following on from the Nu-Vista, the A308CRs were developed at a time when MF was highly focused upon build integrity and reliability. It doesn't have the 'hewn from solid' feel of the Krell, the build quality is still aeons ahead of 1980s MF gear. As with the others, parts and servicing shouldn't prove to be a problem.

Here we have four great reasons for buying second-hand. Although only a few years old, these amps will be nicely run-in and offer savings of at least £1,000. One could make a case for any of them but, for outright value, the Musical Fidelity A308CR combo proves the most compelling. **HFC**

Dominic Todd

Next month - £500 speakers



Above: Krell KAV400xi integrated amplifier



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ART Audio, ART Loudspeakers, Audio Analogue, Aurum Cantus, Audio Zone, Audio Physic, Audionet, ATC, AVI, Bal Canto, Black Rhodium, Blue Note, Bryston, CEC, Custom Design, Croft, Dali, DK Design, EAR/Yoshino, Eastern Electric, GamuT, Goldring, Graaf, Hovland, Hyperion, IsoTek, JAS Audio, JungSon, Lumley, Manley Labs, Marantz, McIntosh, Musical Fidelity, Musical First, Nordost, Opera, Origin Live, Ortofon, Pass Labs, Pathos, PMC, Project, QED, Qipu, Ref 3a, Resolution, Roksan, Shanling, Soundstyle, Stello, TacT Audio, Triangle, Trichord, Townshend Audio, Unison Research, Wadla, Whest, Wilson Benesch, Vertex AQ, VPI and many more.

\*subject to conditions

### Used Product Listing

Remember !! List is updated on our web site daily!

<b>DIGITAL</b>	
Micromega Aria, black, ex HiFi Choice review model (£2150)	£1395
Shanling CDT100, exc cond, gold legs, fully boxed (£1650)	£995
Micromega CD132, ex-dem, black finish, as new condition, boxed (£849)	£595
Arcam Diva 93t, silver, exc cond, boxed, manual, r/c, 1 yr old, (£1000)	£595
Musical Fidelity DM25 DAC + Transport, only a few months old (£4000)	£2995
Krell KP525s, upgraded to SC spec only 1 year ago, exc cond, boxed, manual, remote, sublime presentation/detail as you would expect from a £25k player!!	£4995
AVI Lab Series CD, current spec, boxed, unmarked condition (£1499)	£1195
Shanling CDT300 Omega Drive, ex-dem, immaculate cond (£4000)	£2995
Resolution Audio Opus 21, 2 box cd player, boxed, black/silver (£2950)	£2795
AVI S2000 CD player, exc cond, 1 owner from new, original box (£995)	£749
AVI S2000 DAC, exc cond, only 1 owner from new, fully boxed, great (£995)	£249
Marantz SA15-S1, silver finish, unmarked condition, high end SACD! (£1100)	£795
Unison Research Unico Valve output CD, only 3mths old, latest ver (£1250)	£895
<b>AMPLIFIERS</b>	
Exposure 23 Pre Amp, mint, boxed, remote (£1400)	£795
Exposure 28 Power Amp, mint, boxed (£1400)	£795
Bryston 4B-SST Power Amp, 2 months old, like new, 300wpc (£2750)	£2249
EAR Yoshino 834T Hybrid Int, mint, boxed, 8 months old! Bargain! (£2800)	£1995
Qinpu A1.0x, ex What HiFi review model, boxed in immac cond (£300)	£230
Qinpu A-8000 MK II, ex HiFi World review model, boxed as new (£1295)	£795
Parasound A21 Power Amp, immac condition, silver, only 1yr old (£1500)	£895
Musical Fidelity A5 Int, 250wpc, 6 months old, boxed, as new (£1499)	£995
Musical Fidelity A5 Power Amp, 6 months old, boxed, immac (£1499)	£995
Bryston B-100 SST Int amp (inc dac module), unmarked condition, boxed (£3750)	£2995
McIntosh C220 Pre, only 2 months old, boxed, mint, Simply stunning! (£3300)	£2795
Chord CPA2800 pre-amp-phono stage, £2800 new, in black, immac	£1295
Jadis DA30 valve integrated, mint, 2yrs old, fully boxed, 30wpc (£4000)	£1995
Bel Canto Evo 2 Integrated, boxed, mint cond (£2800)	£1695
Arcam FMJ Pre, good cond, boxed, manual, remote, only 1 year old! (£1200)	£795
Arcam FMJ P35 Power Amp, good cond, boxed, manual (£850)	£595
AVI Lab Series integrated, immac, boxed, remote, 200wpc into 8ohms! (£1599)	£995
AVI Lab Series Power Amp, immac, less than 1yr old, boxed (£1650)	£995
Pathos Logos, brand new sealed box!, can order, great opportunity (£2700)	£2295
Eastern Electric M520 Int, What Hi-Fi 5 star review, 4 months old! (£1539)	£1095
Eastern Electric Minimax Pre, ex-dem, mint condition, boxed (£769)	£649
Manley Labs Neo Classic 300b Monoblocks, 25wpc, mint! Sensational! (£5895)	£3995
Krell PAM 5 pre amp with phono stage, exc cond, boxed (£2000)	£549
Cyrus Pre XVS, immac cond, only 5 months old!, one prev owner (£1000)	£749
Nagra PSA Power Amp, very rare, only 6 months old!, immac, stunning	£3395
Quad QC24 Pre / II Forty Monos, exc cond, boxed, manuals, 4 yrs old (£3995)	£1895
AVI S2000 Pre Amp, exc cond, 1 owner from new, fully boxed, superb (£995)	£249
Audionet Sam V2 Integrated, silver, boxed, exc cond (£2400)	£1195
ATC SIA2-150 Integrated, black, mint, as good as new, boxed (£2400)	£1895
ATC SIA2-150 Int amp, black, mint con, as good as brand new (£2400)	£1395
Shanling SP-80C Monoblocks, excellent, gold legs, fully boxed (£2000)	£1295
Lyngdorf (TacT) TDA2200, digital int, full room connection, excellent (£2395)	£1495
Unison Research Unico Line, only 3 months old!, boxed, manual (£950)	£749
Bow Walrus Power Amp, boxed, exc cond, 150wpc (£3995)	£1795
Bow Warlock Pre, boxed, exc cond, fully balanced, r/c (£3495)	£1495
Pass Labs X1 Pre Amp, mint, less than 1yr old!, sep power supply (£4700)	£3495
<b>LOUDSPEAKERS</b>	
Hyperion 93B, gloss black finish, immac cond, very low hours (£3750)	£2895
Quad 989, Vintage finish, only 6 months old, boxed, mint cond (£5000)	£3795
Acoustic Energy AE1 Classic, ex-display, never been played, fully boxed (£845)	£650
Wilson Benesch Arc, silver stands and side cheeks, immac cond (£2600)	£1795
B&W CM4 speakers, in Rosenut, 5 years old, boxed	£449
Sonus Faber Cremona, natural maple finish, 5 months old, boxed, Superb (£5k)	£3795
Thiel CS 1.6, black finish, absolutely unmarked, like new, 6 months old! (£1700)	£1249
Ref 3a De Capo-, redwood finish, superb cond, boxed (£2500)	£1695
JM Lab Diva Utopia BE, exc cond, boxed, tweeter covers and spikes (£7500)	£4250
Art Emotion Signature, maple, 1yr old, boxed with grills, mint (£9000)	£5995
Quad ESL-63 Electrostatics, mint condition!, vintage finish (brown grills)	£1149
PMC FB1+, cherry, boxed, immac cond, few mths old! (£1695)	£1295
Monitor Audio GR20, 2 yrs old, black, boxed, exc cond (£1500)	£795
Monitor Audio GR20, cherry, good cond, orig boxes, great upgrade! (£1500)	£795
PMC OB1, in oak, boxed as new, 6 mths old, simply stunning! (£2700)	£1995
JAS Orior, birds eye maple finish, mint, 10 months old!, fully boxed (£2300)	£1795
JAS Audio Orsa, ex HiFi Plus review model, poplar tumour (£1399)	£1149
Zingali Overture 3S, cherry, exc cond, orig packaging, 1 year old (£4250)	£2250
ART Stiletto 6, maple, ex-dem, as new condition, boxed, wonderful (£2000)	£1395
ProAc Studio 140, mahogany finish, brand new - never used but box opened, recent 5 stars What Hi-Fi, evenly balanced sound with high quality finish!	£1195
JAS Audio Supertweeters, Review pair, sound awesome!! (£649)	£595
<b>ANALOGUE</b>	
Trichord Diablo phono stage, exc cond, only 9mths old, boxed (£750)	£495
Trichord Dino+ PSU, silver, exc cond, 1yr old boxed, manual, superb (£249)	£175
Wilson Benesch Full Circle, boxed as new, exc cond (£2100)	£1495
Audio Research PHS PhonoStage, MM/MC, mint, 6 months old!, fully boxed with manual and remote, incredible phono stage at this price! (£1795)	£1395
VPI Scout inc JMW 9 tonearm, immac cond, boxed, very little usage (£1650)	£1195
<b>MISC</b>	
Nordost Blue Heaven Speaker Cable, ex-dem, 4m pair, bi-wire (£489)	£349
Isotek G1 Minusub, silver front, current spec, immac cond (£545)	£395
Naim Hi-Cap power supply, good condition, serial no 304xx, superb upgrade	£349
Hovland Reference Speaker Cable, exdem, boxed, 8ft pair, single wired (£1200)	£795
Townshend Supertweeters, titanium finish, boxed as new, exd (£649)	£649
Nordost Thor, ex-dem, immaculate condition, boxed, Valhalla wired (£1600)	£1195
Isotek Titan mains conditioner, few months old, boxed (£1500)	£1095
Nordost Valhalla Speaker Cable, 3m per side, bi-wire with z-plugs (£5700)	£3995

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Wireless music streaming of the highest quality...



**Slim Devices' Transporter™** was designed to appeal to the most discerning audiophiles and music lovers. It streams digital music with sound quality that surpasses even the most exotic compact disc players.

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**Feel Your Music** - The new TransNav™ controller uses dynamic tactile feedback to provide fast access to any song even in the largest music collection. The sleek, backlit, infrared remote and dual fluorescent displays make it easy to use from anywhere in the room.

**Quality Connectors** - Transporter's back panel features a complete set of professional-grade connectors, including both balanced and unbalanced signals for its analog and digital interfaces.

**Astounding Analog** - The AK4396 "Miracle DAC" was chosen for its high dynamic range and low distortion. Its low out-of-band noise allows for the use of low-order output filters with higher cutoffs, resulting in preservation of phase and reduced distortion in the audible band. This extraordinary accuracy at higher

frequencies allows Transporter to resolve the exact staging of instruments and the finest details of any recording. In addition, Transporter's digital inputs allow its built-in DAC to be used with other sources.

**Accurate Digital** - Transporter's digital path is not only "bit perfect", but also extremely accurate in timing precision. Clock signals in Transporter are handled not as ones and zeroes, but as precision analog signals. Specialized crystal oscillators, careful clock management, and linear-regulated logic supplies ensure the lowest possible jitter throughout the system.

**Clean Power** - Transporter's DAC and output amplifiers are powered by Super Regulators, based on the legendary design by Walt Jung. These regulators offer lower output impedance, faster response, and better noise rejection than standard three-terminal regulators. The result is an incredibly natural sound, with a pitch-black background and a shocking level of detail.

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## DEFINITIVE AUDIO

Sale of part exchanged and ex-dem items

ITEM DESCRIPTION	SALE	NEW
<b>Craft</b> Charisma X phono/line pre-amp. Ex- dem'.	£1500	£3000
<b>Canary</b> 903 4 box pre-amp - champagne facia - 3 mths old - boxed	£3250	£6500
<b>Canary</b> 608 Integrated amplifier - with LV upgrade VGC - serviced. nice	£1700	
<b>Unison Research</b> Smart 300B class A power amp - 1 year old	£2500	£4500
<b>Art Audio</b> PX25 - 5 watts - single ended stereo	£2500	£4500
<b>Beard</b> integrated amp - beefy boy - needs some help	£350	
<b>Border Patrol</b> 300B SE - Western Electric valves - 8 watts - charmer	£2500	£5000
<b>Mactone</b> MA300B 20 watts 300B power amp - 30 hours use	£2500	£6500
<b>Nottingham Analogue</b> Spacedeck with Rega RB300 tonearm, Reson Reca cartridge and Living Voice mat.	£900	£1633
<b>Tube Technology</b> Prophet pre-amp - 30 hours use	£1250	£2500
<b>Clearaudio</b> Goldfinger cartridge. Brand new, still in sealed box	£3500	£5640
<b>Sugden</b> Bijou mm/mc phono stage - 100 ohms - virtually new	£300	£650
<b>Transfiguration</b> Esprit - 10 hours use - perfect ex-review bargain	£600	
<b>Michell</b> Iso / Hera phono stage	£200	
<b>Border Patrol</b> Control unit - line preamplifier current spec	£1750	£3000
<b>Mactone</b> XX330 line pre-amp - 10 hours use	£2500	£8000
<b>Placette</b> passive line stage - 3 inputs - 120v - remote control - 6 mths old	£700	£1600
<b>Conrad Johnson</b> PV-14L pre amplifier	£1400	
<b>Living Voice</b> Avatar, IBX-R2 / OBX-R2 / Auditorium ex-dem', part-ex, and seconds, from very young to very old.		
	<b>please call</b>	
<b>Sonus Faber</b> Electa Amator - Walnut - no stands	£900	£3500
<b>B &amp; W</b> 704 Cherry, vgc. Less than a year old. Original packaging.	£900	
<b>Horning</b> Agathons Silver - VGC - Oak finish.	£1500	£4000
<b>Audio Note (UK)</b> Ltd ANE loudspeaker	£500	
<b>Ruark Crusader</b> loudspeaker	£600	
<b>Revel</b> M20 bookshelf loudspeakers - Santos Rosewood - with stands	£850	£2000
<b>Avalon</b> Arcus loudspeaker - Maple	£3500	£7000
<b>Shahlan</b> Arc loudspeakers - oak. Good condition.	£1400	
<b>Naim</b> SBL loudspeakers - latest specification	£1000	
<b>Rega</b> Jupiter CD player - professionally clocked + rebuilt with Black Gates	£600	
<b>Mark Levinson</b> ML-39 CD player	£1600	
<b>Pink Triangle</b> Dacapo II CD player	£900	
<b>Townshend Audio</b> Seismik Sink - 3DHD - 100 kilos, 48 x 37 cms	£300	
<b>Townshend Audio</b> Seismik Sink - 3DSS - 12 kilos, 48 x 37 cms	£250	
<b>Naim</b> NAP 180	£600	
<b>Naim</b> NAC 82 inc' MM boards	£1050	
<b>Naim</b> NAT 02	£495	
<b>Naim</b> HI-CAP	£450	
<b>Naim</b> HI-CAP	£450	
<b>Naim</b> NA-HA	£200	
<b>Naim</b> NAPSC x 2	£180	

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## Speakers:

- JM Labs Mezzo Utopia Speakers **£1995**
- B & W 801 Mark 1 speakers **£695**
- B & W 802 Mark 1 speakers **£650**
- Origin Live OL-2 speakers **£250**
- Kef Concord speakers **£150**
- Dynaudio Audience 7 speakers & stands **£395**
- Hales Transcendence 5 Loudspeakers **£2900**
- Tannoy Westminster Royal HE speakers **£9995**

## Pre-amps:

- Naim Nac 92 with Nap 90/3 amp **£595**
- Proceed PAV pre-amp **£995**
- Mark Levinson 26S balanced pre-amp **£2500**
- Mark Levinson ML28 with phono stage **£995**
- Mark Levinson ML380 pre amp **£1995**
- Mark Levinson ML380S pre amp **£3495**
- Audionote M8 pre-amp with phono stage (£19,500) **£9995**
- Audionote Zero remote control pre-amp (new) **£695**

## Amplifiers:

- Audionote Neiro mono-blocks **£5495**
- Classe CA201 amp **£1995**
- Kora Triode 100SB **£3500**
- Lumley Stereo 70 Amp with passive pre-amp **£1595**
- Pair Trilogy 958 monoblocks with Trilogy 902 pre-amp **£1995**
- Nakamichi Amp 1 with Cassette Deck 2 and CD Player 3 **£795**
- Mark Levinson 432 Power Amp **£4995**
- Mark Levinson 11 and 12 pre/power amplifier **£1295**
- Meridian 605 Mono blocks **£795**
- Exposure 15 integrated amp **£345**
- Audionote Kegan monoamps, mint (£28,000) **£11995**

## CD Players, Transports and DACs:

- Denon DCD 590 CD player **£60**
- Sony CDP M41 CD player **£60**
- Sonic Frontiers SFD1 DAC **£795**

## Miscellaneous:

- Hitachi FT5500 Mk11 tuner **£125**
- Sony ST-SE570 tuner **£60**
- Nakamichi 682 Cassette Deck **£395**
- Nakamichi CR 7E Cassette Deck (MINT/Boxed/Remote) **£1095**
- Technics ST-CR7550 tuner **£65**
- Winds stylus gauge **£425**
- JPS 'The Power Plus' 2m power cable **£195**
- Sony FM/AM ST-SE370 Tuner **£75**

## Turntables, Cartridges and Tonearms:

- Audio Tekne cartridge with step-up transformer **£2495**
- My Sonic Eminent cartridge (new) **£2750**
- Thorens TD 160 with Thorens tonearm **£195**

## Main Dealer for:

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### Analogue

- Alphason Xenon, excellent 249
- Anslon RD80, wood finish ex condition 149
- Anslon RB80, black finish ex condition 149
- Anslon RD11S c/w m/nly Back Widow, excellent 249
- Clearaudio Ref. T01 arm, Accurate cart, (new £880) 3999
- Clearaudio Solution AMG Black/Satisty Carbon direct wired 999
- Clearaudio Solution/Satisty Carbon direct wired (£1650) 849
- Clearaudio Start Smart Emolton, inc smartphono & cover 650
- Clearaudio Exact Stylus gauge 79
- Clearaudio Smartphono, as new 179
- Clearaudio Thompson Level 1, Satisty Carbon arm, ex boxed 999
- Electrocompaniet EP1, mm/mc, Lynwood p/s, NOW ONLY 380
- JBE StateSeries 3/Mission774 rare as... 349
- LFD MMO Phono stage 179
- Linn LP12, OL DC Kit 399
- Linn LP12, Vahalla, no arm 349
- Linn Itok 12', VERY VERY RARE ITEM, REDUCED 899
- Linn LP12 i/ox arm, good order 449
- Linn LP12/i/ox, vahalla, excellent 799
- Michell ISO/Heria, excellent groundbreaking phono stage 249
- Michell Gyrodec, PB250, vgc 779
- Michell Transports Reference Hydraulic/Fluid arm, NOW 599
- Michell Gryto SE, DC motor, ex boxed 649
- Mission 774 original arm 149
- MFM Source, c/w large p/s, REDUCED 449
- Origin Live Ultra deck with off board p/s, SME cut NOW 179
- Ordon MC20 Supreme, excellent boxed 249
- Pink Triangle LPT/RB250, the best I've seen 379
- Project RPM5, excellent ex dem 299
- Rega P5/RB700, as new, thankfully in black 499
- Rega Planar 3, OL advanced DC kit, RB300, excellent 399
- Rega Planar 3, RB300, vgc boxed 179
- Rega P25/RB600/Michell toneweight, excellent, boxed 379
- Roksan Xerxes, ex in stunning rosewood, SME cut, NOW 449
- Roksan Xerxes, Tabriz xi, XPS3.5/DSU excellent 549
- SME IV, excellent 799
- SME V excellent boxed 1099
- SME 10 turntable, ex boxed (no arm) 1799
- SME 3009, excellent boxed 249
- SME 3009, excellent 179
- Systemdek IX900 99
- Technics SL1500/SME3009 179
- Technics SL1210mk2 light domestic use only 249
- Thorens TD124, ex serviced 399
- Thorens TD125/SME3009 329
- Thorens TD1600/Mayware vgc 229
- Thorens Microphono, ex dem 449
- Transcriptors Saturn, late, NOW ONLY 299
- Trichord Dabto, add on PSU1 ex dem 199
- Voyd Voyd, Helius Onon excellent c/w offboard p/s 899
- Voyd Voyd, excellent c/w offboard p/s 449
- VPI 16.5 Cleaning Machine, call for details 379
- VPI Scout, c/w JMW arm, ex dem unit as new 999
- Zeta, famous heavyweight arm, excellent 549

### Amplifiers

- Acoustic Arts Amp 1 ex, boxed 1749
- Acoustic Arts Amp 2HP, ex, boxed 3999
- Acoustic Arts Ptg 1 and Pw 1, excellent, £6k + new 3499
- Acrom A32, excellent c/w remote 749
- Arcam P1 Monoblocks, excellent 1299
- Audiolab 8000/8000X7, as new processor/7 channel amp 1249
- Audio Research LS7 Preamp 699
- Audio Research D130 Power, ex 999
- Audio Research D70 Power, ex 899
- Audio Research SP12 Pre, ex 599
- Audio Valve Eclipse Preamp, ex boxed 1249
- Audio Valve Baldur 200 Monoblocks - incredible (£10k new) 4499
- AVI S2000Pre, superb little preamp 749
- Carm Mea Monoblocks, ex in silver 449
- Carm ton T2 Monoblocks, mint in black 499
- Chord SPM1200B, boxed as new in back 1499
- Conrad Johnson P1V12/Premier 1a, as new c/w new valves 2249
- Conrad Johnson P1V12/MJ/R6SE, as new (£3k) boxed 749
- Consonance Signature 10, v lovely 2A3 valve integrated 999
- Consonance Ref B8, c/w remote, uses 6550s to great effect 1199
- Denon 4400A monoblocks lar 429
- Exposure 3010, as new boxed with £200 mm phono stage 649
- ITL MAB0/MA100/MA100 Pre/Power x2 lovely combo NOW 299
- LFD Mistral super little integrated 249
- Linn Klouk power, excellent preamp, ex remote 749
- Macintosh MA6500 integrated, ex remote, boxed 499
- Marantz PM66SE Ki Signature, excellent with remote 149
- Marantz PM7200, ex boxed 199
- Meridian 556, superb power amp 749
- Musical Fidelity B200 excellent 749
- Musical Fidelity A3CR Power - excellent, due in Call
- Musical Fidelity A308 Integrated 899
- Musical Fidelity XAS100 power, ex boxed 499
- Musical Fidelity XP100 pre, ex boxed 279
- Musical Fidelity The Preamp 149
- NAIM NAIT 2, excellent 279
- NAIM 92/90 pre/power combo, ex boxed 379
- NAIM Hicap Olive 499
- NAIM NAP140 Olive, boxed 379
- Pathos Xelos, excellent boxed c/w remote, save £1000 749
- Quad 909 Power, excellent boxed 749
- Quad 66 Preamp, c/w full remote 399
- Quad 50 Monoblocks 149
- Quad 44 Preamp, 405 and 405/2 Power amps NOW from 199
- Quad 33/303, vgc for year fully serviced 299
- Quad 99 Power, as new 349
- Rhodes RB395 with preamps with system remote 449
- Roksan Caspian M1 series integrated, bargain!! 449
- Sonic Frontiers Anthem Pre II, and Power 1, BARGAIN! 999
- Stello DA200D/ACP/RE, 24/192 Upsampling, WOW! 1199
- Stello M200 Monoblocks 1399
- Sugden AU21 Power, vgc in black 299
- Tube Technology Prophet and matching p/s vgc boxed 699
- Usher Audio R1.5, Monster Class A poweramp 949

### Digital

- Arcam DV79 REDUCED AGAIN 599
- Audio Analogue Maestro 192/24 ex dem Call
- Audiomeca Mephisto transport, ex boxed/remote 779
- AVI 2000 Reference CD player 399
- Bow Technologies Z28, beautiful, vgc boxed 1999
- Cam F99 2, as new boxed 249
- Consonance CD120 Linear, litterless DAC, ex demo 599
- Consonance Driplet, ex dem bargain - WOW! 1499
- Cyrus Quattro, c/w luner - UNDER HALF PRICE! 499
- Cyrus CDBX, nr mint boxed 699
- Cyrus CD7, ex c/w remote 379
- Cyrus PSXR in silver excellent boxed 349
- DCS Eiger - due in Call
- DCS Purcell - due in Call
- Electrocompaniet ECM1-UP, superb monster unit, ex boxed 1749
- Esoteric O-X3SE, as new, the best £5k player there is for only 3249
- Esoteric Dv50S new, full warranty, LAST ONE! 2749
- Exposure 3010, as new boxed 599
- Heart Audio CDB000, valve output, superb boxed 449
- Linn Numerik DAC, ex 299
- Meridian 200 Transport, excellent boxed 299
- Meridian 203 Dac, excellent boxed 179
- Micromega T-drive and T-dac nr mint boxed 749
- Micromega Stage 1, excellent 149
- Micromega Stage 3, excellent 299
- Musical Fidelity DM25 transport and DAC, stunning 2599
- Musical Fidelity Kw S4CD as new REDUCED 1999
- Musical Fidelity A30D, excellent 349
- NVA Transparent Statement, ex orated 1499
- Primare CD30 2, ex boxed c/w remote 749
- Primare CD20, ex c/w remote 399
- Proceed PDT2, nr mint boxed 599
- Shanling CD T80 as new 499
- Shanling CD1300UK Omega Drive, as new 2899
- Stello CD T200, superb transport 399
- Sugden Bjuu CD Master, vgc boxed 599
- TEAC D70, as new Mega DAC 3499
- TEAC VRDS9, excellent, remote 499
- TEAC VRDS10SE, vgc, remote 599
- Trichord Pulsar DAC, as new boxed 299
- Wada 302, excellent, due in Call

### Speakers

- Acoustic Energy AE2, ex black 699
- Acoustic Energy Aegis EVO 3 in Maple as new 249
- Acoustic Energy AE1 mk3, very minor marks only BARGAIN!! 999
- Audiorevel M3 Sig, active crossovers, new £4k+, amazing 1699
- AVI Duo, ex dem minor marking 949
- Castle Richmond 3, excellent boxed 149
- Castle Kendal mahogany excellent little floorstander 199
- Castle Howard, mahogany, excellent floorstander, boxed 399
- Celestion SLES, excellent example of seminal standmount 349
- Dynaudio 40, in cherry 179
- JM Lab Micro Utopia, c/w stands amazing monitor 1999
- JM Reynaud Offrande, mint boxed with stands 1749
- Living Voice Auditorium 2, excellent boxed 479
- Martin Logan Acan as new boxed 1749
- Mission 752F, in rosewood excellent 379
- Monitor Audio GR20, vgc in cherry 699
- Monitor Audio Radius 270 excellent 349
- Monitor Audio Bronze 6, last pair as new 349
- Monitor Audio R55, ex dem in cherry 349
- Monsoon Audio FFP1000, excellent, ribbon/dipoles NOW 479
- NAIM Credo in cherry, vgc boxed 599
- Nbien DXS Standmount, ex dem, boxed NOW 199
- Nbien NX6 Standmount, used well reviewed standmount 399
- Neal Acoustics Pehle 3 SE, c/w Ullmann bass drivers NOW 529
- Piega F4XL mk2, stunning floorstander, ex dem save £1000! 1499
- PMC FB1+ in Cherry 999
- PMC TB1 in cherry 449
- Phon Shabo 150, cherry 599
- Revel M20, scruffy with stands Offers
- Revel R33 ex dem, well reviewed bargain 249
- Ruark Sabre, vgc, nce mid sized standmount 199
- Sonus Faber Concerto c/w SF Stands 699
- Spendor LS35a, in black 449
- Spendor BC1, excellent 249
- Spendor BC3, Dual, excellent 399
- Tandberg Studio Monitor Large! 599
- Triangle Tius 202 with matching stands - very cute 299
- Usher Audio R737, ex dem 1199
- Usher Audio AC10, awesome with ceramic mid driver, only 2999
- Usher Audio 8871mk2, display pair, for massive saving Call
- WAD KLS9 kit, professional CNC cabs 179

### Radio and Recorders

- AVI S2000 Tuner vgc boxed 249
- Harman Kardon TU970 DAB/FM New 199
- Linn Kudos excellent 349
- Musical Fidelity FM Tuner 79
- Musical Fidelity E500 c/w remote 149
- Nakamichi CR2E 119
- Pure 701ES, new 149
- Rega Radio 129
- Sony 777ES DAB Tuner REDUCED 249
- Videologic 601 DAB in BLACK 99

### Accessories/Systems

- Carm Fog v2 Cd player and 4808 integrated amp, ex dem Call
- Chord Anthem RCA 1m 199
- Cyrus - PSXR, ex boxed from 229
- H Kardon AVR635 - was £1000 449
- Linn Klassik K with onboard luner, as new boxed 599
- Musical Fidelity XLP5v3 as new boxed 199
- Musical Fidelity XLP5, excellent boxed 129
- Siar Basic system, as new boxed 199
- Tara Labs Ref B Sarr cable 249
- TEAC DV200 DVD player and AG70 6.1 amp w/d save £150 329

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## FOR SALE

**ATC SCM7** cherry, one single, as new, used as centre speaker for one week only, £100 ono. 01225 429170 (Bath)

**AUDIOLAB 8000C** preamp, two 8000P amps, boxed with instructions, £750. Thorens TD160, extra headshell, £80. Pair KEF T27 tweeters, £50. SME flexible link, £25. 020 8590 8530 (Essex).

**AUDIO RESEARCH VSS5** amplifier, £1,300. B&W Nautilus 805 speakers, £950. B&W FSN805 speaker stands, £200. Linn Kan speaker stands, £50. 07940 507215 (Central London).

**AUDIOQUEST EMERALD** interconnects 1m pair (£260) £85. QED Silver Spiral Qunex 1m pair (£90) £35. 01278 782622 (Burnham on Sea).

**B&W DM601 S3** speakers, unmarked, as new condition in sorrento. Boxed etc, £180. Apollo Olympus 50cm stands, mint work very well with B&Ws, £35. May deliver, readvertised due to time waster. Chris 01766 781211 (Harlech)

**B&W 604 S3** black, four months old, boxed, mint condition, (£800) £600. Thomas 07835 056237 (Notts)

**B&W 704** in rich American Walnut. 18 months old, perfect condition and boxed, £800. Naim flatcap x2, 10 months old, only powered CD player, perfect condition, boxed, £400 delivered in UK. 07729 458836 (Northern Ireland)

**DENON CDR-M30** CD recorder £120 (£300). Mint condition & perfect working order. Includes both analogue & digital recording level & CD text input. Selling due to system upgrade.

Can be posted if required. Lee 01384 412234 (West Midlands)

**DENON DAP 550** preamp with built in DAC, door hinge broken but looks OK, £180.

0191 417669 (Tyne & Wear).

**DENON CDR-M30** CD recorder, £120. Nordost Cineflex speaker cable, 2x6m, £50. Toshiba SD350E DVD player, £50. Denon RCD-100 CD/amp/tuner in one box, £175. All excellent condition. 01285 862539 (Cirencester).

**EXPOSURE 17** preamp and two Exposure stereo power amps in mint condition. Four years old, fantastic sounding trio, reluctant sale, (£3,300) £1,500. Alan 01302 739976 or 07936 603015 (Doncaster).

**FOCAL MEZZO UTOPIA** seven years old, one owner, modified, (£7,250) £2,800. Photos available +00352 407702 or +00352 621 500756 or email [barig@internet.lu](mailto:barig@internet.lu) (Luxembourg).

**GARRARD 401** in plinth with lid fitted, SME Series III, £300. Will swap for Thorens 124 in plinth. 01606 784767 (Cheshire)

**GRYPHON CALLISTO 2200** integrated amplifier. 200 watts, vgc, terrific clarity and dynamics. (£4,500) £2,250. 07968 189647 (London)

**KIMBER CABLE KS 1021** RCA 1m length terminated WBT 0108, incredible sound improvement with this top Kimber cable range, possible tests, original box, £275. Contact [fedepenzo@hotmail.com](mailto:fedepenzo@hotmail.com) 0039-02-2150930 (Italy).

**LIZARD WIZARD PMC** amplifier (Serial Number 0003), six months old, hard transport box. 60W into 8ohms. Needs no warm up!

(£2,350) £1,500ono. 07900 248604 (Gloucester).

**LUXMAN D322** CD player with variable output, boxed, in as new condition with manual and remote, £150ono. John 07855 121587 (W.Yorks).

**LS3/ SA ORIGINAL BBC**

Chartwell speakers on stands, offers. KEF Concerto speakers, £80. Marantz CD63 MkII K1, £175. Kenwood KX-5010 cassette recorder, £50. Denon TU660L AM/FM tuner, £55. 01865 882507 (Oxon).

**MARANTZ PM6010 OSE** amp with remote and instructions, ex condition, £85. Will deliver in Midlands area. Call Mike 01543 251848 (Lichfield).

**MARANTZ PM66 KI** amp, £120, Accuphase E202 amp, £350 ono, Tannoy M1 speakers cherry, £50, Technics SUV 900D amp, £120. 01708 457691 (Essex).

**MARANTZ CD17 MK2** CD player, unmarked black model with remote, mains lead, interconnects and original packaging. Build quality unmatched (weight 7.8kg). Excellent HFC reviews, £325. 01924 871782 [stevehi-fi@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:stevehi-fi@tiscali.co.uk) (Wakefield) ☐

## WANTED

**AUDIO TECHNICA AT1100** tonearm, will pay £50. 01462 456006 (Herts).

**BRYSTON 3BST** power amp or larger Bryston power amp(s). 01803 523553 (Devon)

**LINN OR NAIM** speakers. 01793 728103 (Wilts)

**NAIM CDI** in good condition, with box, manual and leads. Cash waiting, for the right player in the right condition. 020 7042 4522 (London)

**PINCH ROLLER** part number 642-001 for Ferrograph Series Y open reel tape deck. 01592 750643 (Fife)

**PIONEER A300R** precision amplifier. 1970's Sugden A21a. Onyx AO21, Naim Nait amp. Inca Tech Claymore. Sonneteer Champion amp. 07810 103908 (West Yorkshire).

**REL / MJ ACOUSTICS** subwoofer with remote. Possible part ex for my Quad L-Series sub. 023 8073 8935 (Hants)

**STAX OMEGA** electrostatic earspeakers up to £1,000 for mint condition example. 01333 311247 (Scotland).

**WHARFEDALE 708** speakers 023 8073 8935 (Essex).

## 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**

❑ **MARANTZ PM6010 OSE** amplifier, Marantz CD6000 OSE CD player, Cambridge DAB500 tuner, all black. Alphason five-tier glass rack with chrome legs. All as new, superb starter hi-fi, £400 ono. Chris 01202 828383 (East Dorset).

**MERIDIAN 508** 24-bit CD, 504 FM tuner, 551 integrated amplifier, AVI Neutron III monitor speakers, Atacama three leg stands, hi-fi cabinet as new, £2,750. 01427 717134 (Lincoln)

**MONITOR AUDIO GR20** floorstanding speakers, cherry wood finish. Excellent condition, (£1,500) £650ono. 07802 936750 (Hampshire).

**NAD 524** CD player, £125. T562 DVD, £125. Both remotes and instructions. Optimum 6000AV stand, chrome legs, £150. Buyer collects 07976 956298 (Devon)

**NAIM 82** MC NAPSC black SNAIC, Hi-Cap, 250

olive facias, boxed, mint, serviced, £2,250. Naim CDI boxed, mint, serviced £500. Chord Anthem DIN-DIN, £125. 01722 334694 (Salisbury).

**NAIM CD5** plus Hi-Cap, £725 ono. 01225 429170 (Bath)

**NAIM 180** power amps (x3), £500 each. Hi-Cap power supply, £400. 102 preamp, £500. Possibly T&G McLaren CD20R DAC20 offers. Mr Harrison 01323 486933 (East Sussex)

**NAIM NAC 82** preamp (1999), with black style NAPSC, remote, leads, plug-ins, manual, box. Can demonstrate, £1,025 ono. 07973 785360 (Sussex)

**NEAT CRITIQUE** speakers, £120. Sony TAF 440E amp, £75, Philips 624 CD player, £50. Various other items 1960s-1990s, some classic, call for information.

01224 646473 (Aberdeen)

**NORDOST RED DAWN REV**

3m pair, 2 to 4 biwire config, £250. Phone Ian on 01789 261585 or 07941 424322 or email ian.brunt@zen.co.uk (Warwickshire).

**NORDOST SOLARWIND**

interco Quad 99 bus leads (2x long type), £30 each. Quad 99 remote, £25. 023 8073 8935 (Hants).

**PRIMARE CDI10** all in one system, excellent condition, £800. Monitor Audio R56 loudspeakers, floorstanders, oak, 9 months old, perfect, £400. 0794 655 3071 or email kesterbantin@hotmail.com (London).

**PROAC STUDIO 125** two-way speakers in rosewood, mint condition, ProAc's winning mid-band, extended bass and bright treble, £500. Also, Wharfedale 2130 subwoofer, £200. Call Coral on 01494 762130 (Bucks)

**QUAD 22** Control Unit and Quad II power amplifiers, the classic valve system, recently serviced, £650. 0113 275 1628 (Leeds)

**REGA 7** turntable, Exact cartridge. Rega phono stage as new, £950. Sony MiniDisc JA3DES plus discs, £175. 07736 773830 (Yorks).

**RUARK SABRE III** speakers, rich walnut, one year old, boxed mint condition, £600. 01970 615386 (Aberystwyth).

**SENNHEISER HD600** headphones, mint, boxed cost £250, sell, £80. 07891 533084 (Swansea).

**SME 20/ 2A** turntable. Boxed as new, £4,000. Tom Evans Groove Phonostage mint, £1,000. Benz-micro Ruby2 cartridge, price negotiable. Loricraft PRC3 record cleaner, boxed, as new, £900. Daniel 01954 715266 (Cambridge).

**STELLO CDT 200** CD transport, silver, two years old, boxed, excellent condition, (£900) £450. David 01926 315981 (Warwickshire).

**TANNOY REVOLUTION 3** speakers in cherry finish, excellent condition, boxed and supplied with 4x2m runs of DNM Reson speaker cable to give a fantastic sound, £245. Chris 07894 683 392 or chris@riddle1403.fsbusiness.co.uk. (Ayrshire).

**TOWNSHEND ISOLDA DCT** speaker cable, multi award winner as best speaker cables in many hi-fi magazines, original boxes, one pair, five metres. Price, £200, tests possible. fedepenzo@hotmail.com (Italy).

**TOWNSHEND UNIVERSAL** disc player modified Pioneer DV-747A. three years old, power supply upgraded to never connected design. Litz link cable. Sounds fabulous as all the reviews say, £1,500 ono. 07900 248604 (Gloucester)

**TRIANGLE VOLANTE** floorstanders, boxed as new, superb sound, amber, upgrading, (£4,500) £2,250. No offers please. Paul 07931 314536 (Oxon)

**USHER 1.5** power amp, 150 watts, pure Class A, both channels, weight 38kilos, (£1,550) £850. Usher P-303 preamp, both items, £1,100. Or preamp, (£1,200) £350. 01491 614325 (Oxford)

**VAN DEN HUL CS122** 2x 4.5m speaker cable, £40. Linn K20 speaker cable 2x 5m, £35. Chord Odyssey bi-wire 2x 1.5m, £25. Mission 771E rosewood speakers, £45. 01384 894284 (Stourbridge).

**YAMAHA CDX 493** CD player, ex condition in black, remote, instructions, original box, c/w Chord Cobra 3 gold plated interconnect phono to DIN, £110, will split. 01656 782523 (Porthcawl).



Above: Ruark Sabre III loudspeaker

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