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300TH ISSUE

**ANNIVERSARY EDITION:
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Welcome to the issue...

HI-FI CHOICE AWARDS 2007 ISSUE 300

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Welcome to the 300th issue of *Hi-Fi Choice*. Since 1975, *Hi-Fi Choice* has brought invaluable, unbiased buying advice to thousands of audiophiles across the globe and these founding principles are just as important to us today, as they've always been. When these

core values and the best hi-fi writers in the business combine, the most authoritative editorial on the newsstand emerges and it simply cannot be matched. So you know that our advice is the best advice, and you can buy with confidence.

Not only is this a special celebratory edition, it's also our 2007 Awards issue, which is essential reading for anyone considering buying hi-fi in the next 12 months. It's the most comprehensive awards issue in the business and the only such awards with a shortlist derived from *Hi-Fi Choice*'s rigorous test programme, and compiled by democratic vote by our highly experienced team of reviewers. Put simply, these are the products you can trust.

As part of our landmark celebrations, we've also enclosed a special free supplement this issue: *Choice Icons*. This definitive hi-fi guide showcases our favourite products of the

last 300 issues and reveals why they were so important in hi-fi's evolution. It's a packed issue, so enjoy it!

Dan

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

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

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

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

Annotated shots show you what's really going on inside

Interviews with designers give you extra background information

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



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



PAUL MESSENGER
A former *HFC* editor, Paul has been writing about his beloved hi-fi hobby for nearly 30 years. In that time he has become one of the world's most respected scribes and probably the UK's foremost 'loudspeaker reviewer'.



JIMMY HUGHES
With more than 40 years as an enthusiast under his belt, Jimmy is one of the country's best known hi-fi experts. His knowledge of system matching, hi-fi tweaking and record collecting is unmatched in the industry.



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



MALCOLM STEWARD
former editor of *Hi-Fi Review* magazine, Malcolm was one of the best known and most outspoken reviewers of the 1980s and 1990s. He currently edits hi-fi industry bible *The British Audio Journal*.



ALVIN GOLD
Alvin has been writing about his obsession for more than 20 years. In that time he has contributed his encyclopaedic knowledge to almost every hi-fi periodical you can think of (and several more besides).



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



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



DOMINIC TODD
A highly experienced journalist, Dominic's sharp ears and retail experience are a valuable mix for *HFC*. Each month, Dom dispenses priceless second-hand buying advice that always comes in handy.

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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HI-FI CHOICE CASSETTE DECKS

A UNIQUE CONSUMER GUIDE TO £100 STEREO DECKS

BY ANGUS MCKENZIE

£1



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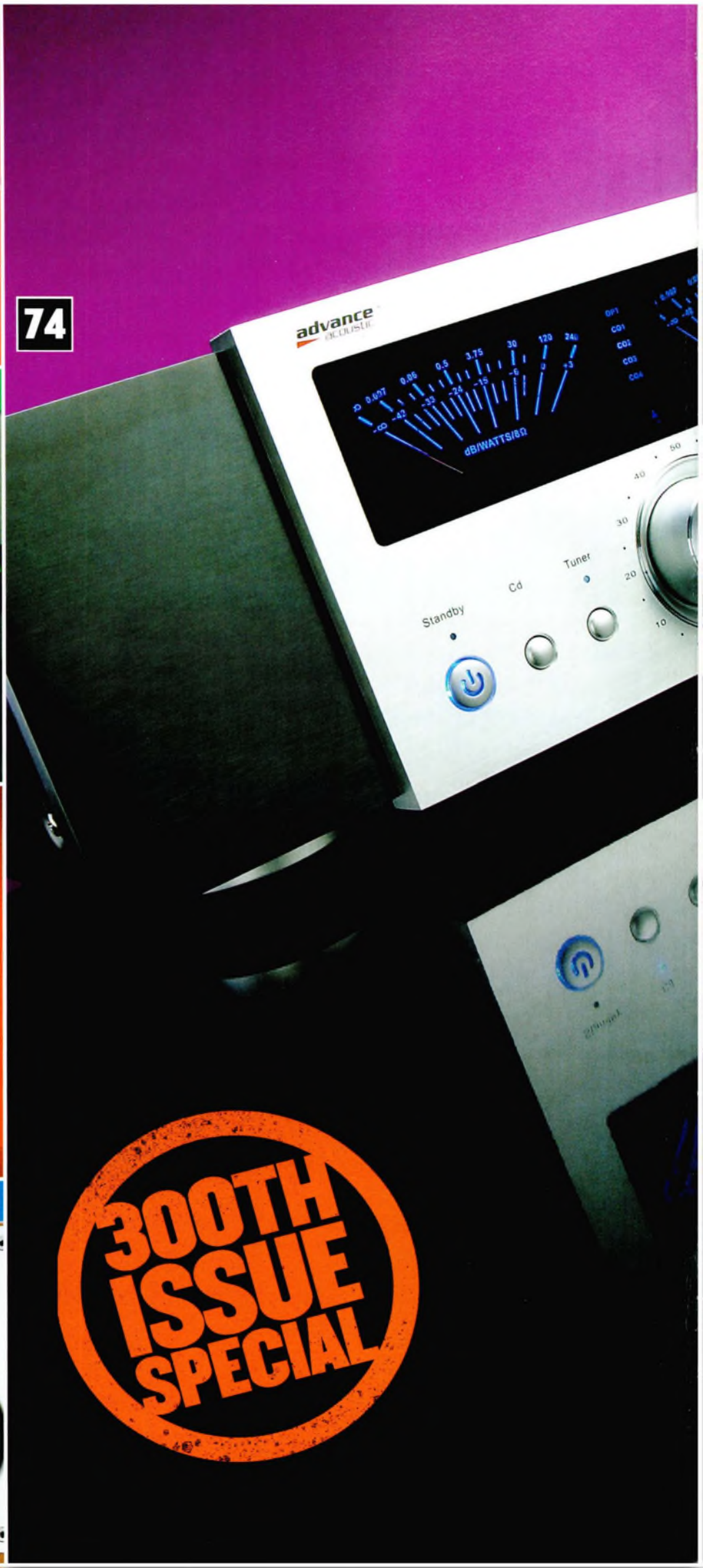
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FREE MINI-MAG!

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

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3 Trading Pages
7 Reader Classified





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FOCAL
the Spirit of Sound



MONITOR AUDIO PLATINUM PL300 LOUDSPEAKER

➤ Monitor Audio has always been at the top of the audiophile tree, and the company's Gold Signature range is often used as a benchmark speaker system. Now, there's an even higher standard to reach, in the shape of Monitor Audio's Platinum Series.

At the top of a four-model range (also featuring a standmount, centre speaker and subwoofer), the PL300 represents the pinnacle of Monitor Audio engineering today. The new three-way is designed to deliver sounds as low as 28Hz and as high as 100kHz and features HiVe II flowed ports, twin 200mm bass drivers and a 100mm

midrange unit – all with Monitor Audio's proprietary Rigid Diaphragm Technology. In a break from the norm, there's also a ribbon tweeter, which is a first for the company.

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

PRODUCT Monitor Audio Platinum PL300

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £5,000 per pair

KEY FEATURES C-CAM ribbon tweeter

• 100mm RDT midrange unit • 2x 200mm RDT bass units • 2x HiVe II ports • 90dB sensitivity

CONTACT ☎ 01268 740580

🌐 www.platinumseries.co.uk

Maria Callas, Metallica, Miles Davis, Muse, Muddy Waters, Madonna, Massive Attack.

Whatever your tastes in music, the Linn Majik System enables you to experience the full emotion of the artist's original performance in your home.

We would normally let the sound speak for itself. However, in this instance it's also worth mentioning that you could own the new Linn Majik System for only **£3500**.

Visit www.linn.co.uk/majikoffer to find out more and arrange a demonstration at your nearest Linn specialist.



The Linn Majik System comprises the Majik CD Player, the new Majik-I Integrated Amplifier, Katan Loudspeakers with stands, installation and a 5 year* warranty. (* when you register your products with Linn)
This exclusive offer must end 31st December 2007.

MARANTZ CD6002 AND PM6002 CD PLAYER AND INTEGRATED AMP

▶ Marantz is redefining the budget hi-fi market with its new CD player and integrated amplifier duo. Taken as a pair, the new CD6002 and PM6002 look set to take on one-box systems at their own game.

Although aimed at an entry-level buyer, the CD6002 is no basic model. It uses technology derived from the company's OSE series players and bristles with audiophile features, such as an oversize transformer, Crystal DAC, high-grade components and even a display-off function!

This is partnered by the PM6002 stereo integrated amp, a 45-watt engine that also

builds upon the strengths of upmarket OSE amp designs. It even features a low impedance large toroidal transformer to deliver speed and power. Cor!

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

PRODUCT Marantz CD6002/PM6002

TYPE CD player/integrated stereo amplifier

PRICE £280 each

KEY FEATURES (CD6002) CD-R playback

▶ OSE-derived design ▶ Crystal CS4398 DAC ▶ HDAM output devices ▶ (PM6002) 45 watts per channel ▶ OSE-derived design ▶ Six line inputs

CONTACT 01753 680868 www.marantz.com



NEW PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS



PIONEER DVD-LX50

▶ Pioneer's latest push back into the specialist end of the audio and video industry now comes under the company's new Kuro banner. Designed to highlight the deep blacks of Pioneer's latest plasma TV screens, the new range is finished in a rich shade of piano-black gloss. The first product of interest out of the Kuro stable is the DV-LX50 universal disc player. It features DVD-Audio and SACD playback and can transfer SACD audio down the HDMI connection. Capable of replaying MP3, WMA and AAC files, and featuring a built-in DTS 96/24 decoder, the new multi-standard player covers all audiophile bases. Video fans will welcome the 1080p video scaler, pure-cinema progressive scan component video output and 216MHz/12-bit video DAC. Finally, with its double-layer chassis, it's claimed to look as good on the inside as it does on the outside.

Price £450 **Due** now

☎ 0870 600 1539 ☎ www.pioneer.co.uk

PURE SOUND 2A3 AND P10

▶ Flush with success from the original A30 integrated amplifier (see HFC 298) and the matching A8000 CD player, Pure Sound has announced a more upmarket valve integrated amplifier and phono stage. As the name suggests, the new 2A3 integrated amplifier uses two 2A3 power valves per side to deliver



18 watts per channel. The three-input amplifier features a high-quality ALPS Blue Velvet volume pot like the A30, but uses a unique choke-loaded driver stage. Also new to the range is the P10 phono stage: a triode-based device capable of supporting MM and high-output moving coil cartridges, that also features a mighty HT power supply.

Price £1,700 (2A3), £400 (P10) **Due** now ☎ 01822 612449 ☎ www.puresound.info

REVOLVER REPLAY

▶ Turntable maker turned speaker manufacturer, Revolver, has gone back to its roots with the Replay. The company's first turntable in almost 20 years owes a lot to the company's superstar deck of the late 1980s and early 1990s – the Rebel. It shares the same self-isolating, split-plinth design concept, but has undergone improvement thanks to new materials that simply weren't available in Thatcher's Britain. The new deck features three chrome-plated pillars, to separate the gloss-black sub-plinth from the marble main plinth, containing the power supply and speed control. A Japanese tonearm completes the deal.

Price £1,500 **Due** now

☎ 01752 847779 ☎ www.revolveraudio.co.uk



MYSTÈRE IA11/IA21

▶ Coming from the same stable as the Prima Luna range, are two new valve integrated amplifiers from Mystère. Finished in piano-black lacquer, both the ia11 and ia21 models sport four line-inputs and use four 6SN7s miniature double-triode valves, with four EL34s output valves in pentode push-pull layout. The ia21 offers an option to switch from EL34s to KT88s to change the characteristics of the sound, (the valves are automatically biased, so swapping them is easy). The ia21 also features a beefier output transformer, giving 50 watts per channel compared to the 40 watts of its little brother. The range is imported by Pistol Music, an arm of Absolute Sounds. Expect a review of the ia11 in the January edition of *Hi-Fi Choice*.

Price £1,250 (ia11), £1,850 (ia21) **Due** now

☎ 020 8971 3909 ☎ www.pistolmusic.co.uk





ESOTERIC SA-60

Esoteric has made a universal disc player with a difference... it plays everything except DVD-Video. The new SA-60 lacks any video processing features, but leaves the audio sections intact to build upon the strengths of the DV-50. The newcomer retains the ability to play CD, SACD and DVD-Audio discs, as well as the audio tracks from DVD-Videos, in stereo and multichannel. The usual high standards of Esoteric are well catered for, with a specially designed VRDS transport mechanism sitting amid a thick alloy chassis. There are also proprietary, user-adjustable filter settings, plus native DSD playback and optional digital word synchronization. **Price** £3,495 **Due** now ☎ 01727 865488 🌐 www.teac.com/esoteric

DCS PAGANINI

Digital expert dCS has launched a 'budget' range to complement its Scarlatti CD/SACD replay system. The new Paganini system follows along the same lines as the company's top system – they both comprise transport, master clock and digital converter – but the new combination undercuts the reference series by a heady £12,000! The Paganini transport features a dual laser, two-channel CD/SACD mechanism with a range of digital audio outputs for connection to the custom-made, Ring DAC-based converter – both devices being re-locked to a precision, temperature-compensated VCXO Paganini Master Clock. All three units are finished in a distinctive and chunky solid aluminium case. **Price** £7,999 (transport), £8,999 (DAC); £3,999 (Master Clock) **Due** now ☎ 01799 531999 🌐 www.dcsLtd.co.uk



DENON SMART S-302

Wi-fi hits the home entertainment market thanks to Denon's new Smart S-302 system. The 2.1 channel all-in-one unit sports a 50-watt amplifier for the stereo speakers, a 100-watt amplifier for the subwoofer and a built-in Audyssey Bass-XT and Dynamic EQ system for an enhanced bottom end. It also features a CD/DVD player and can upscale DVD video signals to 1080p Full-HD through the S-302's HDMI socket, while Denon's new simplified on-screen GUI proves highly intuitive. The S-302's networking capabilities also add a new dimension to the unit by allowing wireless streaming of music from any Mac, PC, network attached storage (NAS) or internet radio source. It can also decode MP3, WMA, AAC, WAV, WMA Lossless and FLAC files. It even comes with a 3.5mm mini-jack for portables. **Price** £1,250 **Due** now ☎ 01234 741200 🌐 www.denon.co.uk



HOUSE OF LINN

Founded by two senior ex-Linn employees, the House of Linn is the ultimate Linn demo facility in the UK. Based in Greater Manchester, it's an independent resource that drinks deep from the Linn fountain, with four permanently installed systems – Komri, Artikulat, Akurate and Majik. All systems are in true living room environments and there are also Linn Knekt multiroom systems dotted around the rest of the house. Taken as a whole, it's a fantastic Linn consultancy service, with plenty of information and advice on tap... and perhaps even a Linn Kuppa. Armed solely with products from Linn, Loewe and Quadraspire, entrance to the House of Linn is by appointment only, so call Linn to arrange an appointment. ☎ 0161 766 1021 🌐 www.houseoflinn.com



Soundbites

ZYX has a new reference moving coil cartridge, called the 4D. The new cartridge is said to offer even better soundstaging and unparalleled time-domain accuracy. In fact, according to ZYX, the £2,250 cartridge has "four-dimensional factors that realize reproducing new three-dimensional music whenever, wherever and repeatedly going beyond time and space". Cor! ☎ 01895 833099



BLACK RHODIUM's new Rondo cable is designed specifically for digital audio connections. Rondo's configuration and geometry is said to be optimised for S/PDIF's 75-ohm impedance requirements and features a 0.65mm central core of copper-coated, silver-plated steel, insulated from the silver-plated braid by low-loss PTFE and housed in a cute shade of green. Prices start from £50 for a 0.5m length. ☎ 01332 342233



ROCKSTARRADIOS is an online charity auction of unique Pure Marshall-Edition Evoke-1 digital radios, autographed by big-name rock stars like Alice Cooper, Noel Gallagher and Paul Weller. The auctions will take place throughout October and proceeds will go to Nordoff-Robbins music therapy, so you can do a little bit for charadee mate, as well as turning it up to 11. But be quick. 🌐 www.rockstarradios.com



SILVERMANN LABORATORIES has developed a range of mains cables designed to offer the benefits of mains-filtered cable, but without the dynamic range limits. The three Clarity designs are claimed to be low resistance, low impedance, highly damped designs and can be fitted with an optional £15 Passive Noise Eliminator for better video performance. Finally, the Clarity 1 and Clarity 2 cables can be supplied in four-way or six-way distribution blocks. Prices range from £60 for Clarity 1, to £350 for a six-way Clarity 2 distribution block. ☎ 08707 747480



SENNHEISER has announced five new in-ear phones for its popular CX line. The CX 400, CXL 400 and CX 500 build upon the strengths of the CX 300 in-ear phone, while the new CX 55 Street is designed especially for the bass-heads. ☎ 01494 551512



HAPPENINGS

SHOW REPORT

Heathrow '07



There was plenty to see at the London Sound & Vision Show 2007 says **Malcolm Steward**

For many years, *Hi-Fi News* staged the annual September show at Heathrow. The event at the Renaissance Hotel became so popular at one point that it overflowed across the road into the Park Inn. Ultimately, the show's size and popularity waned, and last year a new organiser, the Chester Group, staged a separate show – effectively competing with the original – at the Park Inn. This year, with *Hi-Fi*

News no longer running events, Chester Group took control of the Park Inn and hosted the London Sound & Vision 2007 on its own.

The show attracted a fascinating mix of exhibitors but it was as interesting to note who wasn't there as who was. For example, Naim and Meridian were present but Linn, Arcam and Cyrus were not. Bowers & Wilkins, Mission, Wharfedale, Quad and KEF were also no-shows.

1 Luckily for audiophiles, the 'Sound & Vision' show was distinctly sound-oriented and there was no shortage of vinyl front-ends, many of which were sounding particularly fine, it has to be said. Several manufacturers were bolstering this seeming renaissance with a host of new phono stages, including the new Naim SuperLine which made its debut. Vinyl sellers proved popular, too and **Paul Messenger** was buying.

2 With a large number of valves in evidence too, it was all rather warm, cuddly and nostalgic. Adding to that feel in large measure was one particularly famous name making its reappearance at the show: **Transcripator**, the company that gave the world the innovative Hydraulic Reference turntable (hydraulic referring to the paddle and fluid arrangement that allowed users to fine-tune its speed) that featured in Stanley Kubrick's epic 1971 movie, *A Clockwork Orange*. The sons of its designer, the late David Gammon, are releasing new models including the Spider – £1,750

without a tonearm – which they showed alongside their illustrious forebears, including the ingenious Transcriber from 1977, in which the cartridge stayed still while the platter (and disc atop it) moved – making it perhaps the ultimate parallel tracker. If you're one of those people who regret not buying a Hydraulic Reference the first time around, we're told that it will soon be making a return for £3,500.

3 **Pure Sound** was one of the great many companies showing a new phono stage, the £400 P10, but this, by its very nature, was far less interesting to photograph than the £1,699 2A3 line-level integrated. That said, the styling of the new 18-watt, push-pull valve integrated was appropriately restrained and purposeful, allowing the music it was making – rather than flashy aesthetics – to produce the impact.

4 With all the interest being shown in vinyl it was only fitting that there were plenty of accessories to enable users to care for their LPs.



German analogue mavens, **Clearaudio**, had a selection of turntables, phono stages, power supplies and associated ephemera on display, including a device for de-warping records – a kind of sophisticated trouser press for your LPs that costs £1,370. Once your records are flat they might benefit from a clean, and Clearaudio is able service that need too, with its Double Smart Matrix cleaner. The device wet cleans both sides of the disc simultaneously, removing any static build-up before vacuuming it dry all in under a minute. This slick, grey vinyl-washing machine will set you back £1,080.

Tom Tom Audio was playing its usual selection of Naim amplification through the new top-of-the-range **Kudos** C30 loudspeaker, which was being demonstrated in prototype guise. The Kudos designer described the C30 as, “a very simple two-and-a-half-way design, ported through the base using the best quality components and drive units available.” It’s hoped that it will be available before Christmas at an estimated retail price of close to £5,000. It sounded rather appealing on demonstration, coming across as musical and appropriately fast throughout its bandwidth: an excellent match for Naim electronics.

Leema was showing its new ‘budget’ components, which the company hopes will be in the shops in time for Christmas: the £995 Stream CD player, and the £995 Pulse integrated amplifier. The Stream, which is closely based on the more expensive Antila model, is unusual in that it is, quite literally, a multi-DAC device in so much as it employs 16 DAC chips. The player is controlled by a single knob on the fascia that’s described as operating like the BMW iDrive controller.

The truest budget component of all, though, was surely one of the mains upgrades being offered by **Phonosophie**. Just £47.50 buys you a hand-made, high performance, better sounding replacement for your 13A mains plug fuses, sand-filled and complete with silver wire and gold-plated end caps. There was also a range of replacement pure silver fuses for those inside your components available at £37.50 each. We thought it too tweaky to ask whether they were directional like many standard fuses...

Krell provided a surprise in the shape of the KID, an iPod docking station and preamp that aims to give high-end system owners and their families a way to enjoy their iPods through their Krell-amplified systems. Priced at £1,100, KID is a fully balanced differential device with a digital output. It can accept other sources and comes with full remote control. It also sports tone controls and features full RS-232 capability, which is something you probably won’t see on most docks!

Joining Krell in the ‘we never expected to see an iPod dock from you’ camp was French amplifier specialist, **Jadis**, with its Orchestra DiP integrated amplifier. This iconic valve design comes complete with iPod connectivity, although don’t expect a remote control! The Orchestra will set you back £2,500.

In the **Creek** room, the company was showing its now complete Evolution series of electronics – complete in the sense that the final scheduled component, an AM/FM tuner, has been added. The company’s forthcoming turntable is expected to be available in November at a cost of £2,000 and **Hi-Fi Choice** will bring you the world’s first review. **HFC**



Stereo Integrated Amplifier C 315BEE

C315BEE
Stereo Integrated Amplifier

Budget. Reference. Power.

NAD has an enviable reputation for creating some of the best performing budget amplifiers of all time. The lineage is impressive, all the way from the 3020 of 1978 to the current C325BEE, with many "Best Amplifier" Awards and Five-Star ratings along the way. As loudspeaker quality and performance has continued to improve, especially at modest price points, NAD felt there was room for a lower cost amp that could take advantage of these speakers; creating a new entry point for serious musical performance. Enter the C315BEE. The latest incarnation of the world's most famous amplifier incorporates sonic refinements that keep NAD far ahead of the game.

And at a price that belies its extraordinary performance it could only be NAD.



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HAPPENINGS

SHOW REPORT

Berlin IFA, 2007



Hi-Fi Choice picks the cream of the crop at the annual Berlin IFA. Alvin Gold reports.

Every year, tens of thousands of European trade and public visitors make the pilgrimage to the Messe – the vast conference centre in the heart of Berlin – to gaze upon the latest in consumer electronics. The International Funkausstellung (simply 'IFA' to its friends) is like the *Ideal Home* exhibition for TV sets, DVD players and hi-fi systems and the like, and is now increasingly dominated by major distribution groups such as Harman (JBL, Infinity, Harman-Kardon, Lexicon, Becker, AKG and Revel), the D&M group (Denon, Marantz, MacIntosh, Boston Acoustics, Snell Acoustics) and others.

IFA (the name translates as 'international radio exhibition') is not primarily an audio show, but it remains a massive showcase for the consumer electronics industries, and includes a more than respectable representation of purist, as well as more mainstream audio. The show itself is truly massive: figures talk of 103,000 square metres of exhibition space, over 1,200 exhibitors and the probability of the biggest international attendance yet. Which is perhaps why the show went annual last year, no longer having to alternate every other year with the equally-huge Photokina photographic expo.



1 Marantz, riding high on well above expected sales success and press reception for the £5,000 Legendary SA-7S1 SACD player (reviewed in *HFC* 297, and also in *The Collection*) launched a new moderately priced CD player and amplifier combination; the CD6002 CD player (which has previously broken cover) and the PM6002 amplifier. Both cost £280 and will be tested in the next issue. A new series of stereo components is scheduled to launch during the next year or so, in the wake of these successes. One such product is a 'cut-down' version of the SA-7S1 called the SA-11S2. Costing £2,450, it uses much of the same core technology, including the sophisticated CD/SACD disc mechanism.

2 UK-based Armour Home Electronics chose IFA to launch a number of models from its client brands, including the Q Acoustics QAV NXT BMR, which is a novel implementation of a sound bar to fix under your flat screen, that comes with a wall-mount subwoofer. It earns its place in *HFC*, however, as the first-ever product to feature NXT's innovative BMR technology, a drive unit that looks superficially like a conventional moving coil unit, with unusually broad dispersion, which eschews the need for a separate tweeter. Another Armour brand, Myriad, chose IFA to show off its M1 – a 100-watt answer to the Arcam Solo (amp, FM & DAB in a box), costing around £1,200.

3 Denon was a major participant in the D&M corporate showcase, but most of the product of real interest has already been seen, if not

always heard. The company has now nailed its colours to the Blu-ray mast, which, given its previous unaffiliated status, will be of interest to those looking for straws in the burgeoning high-resolution storm.

4 Mordaunt-Short is working on a not too-distant launch of an enhanced limited edition version of the flagship Performance 6 floorstanding loudspeaker, an established *HFC* favourite that will feature improved crossover components and will be identifiable by different colour enclosures. Pricing, availability and other information to follow, so keep an eye on the audiofile 'highlights' pages in the coming months.

Elsewhere, Harman put on its customary massive show within a show that featured all its brands. As regards product news, a new version of the legendary Mark Levinson 390 CD player is in preparation. It will be fully SACD compliant and uses a mechanism sourced from Teac's Esoteric division. Unfortunately, though, the player wasn't on display. The latest generation of Revel speakers, previewed to great effect at January's CES, were confirmed to be on the high seas at show time, so expect to see them in the shops any day now.

In fairness, the bulk of the show was given over to the ever-increasing army of HD-ready disc players, DLP projectors, plasma and LCD screens and all the latest in home cinema technology, as well as computer audio and telecommunications. Regardless, audio's place at IFA is assured. **HFC**

DISPATCHES



Back to the future

30 years of HFC remembered

When I take down my old magazines and leaf through those faded black-and-white pages, I remember how very different hi-fi was in the early 1980s. I'd been editor of *What Hi-Fi?* for three years when I moved across to *Hi-Fi Choice* at the end of 1981. I took over from Paul Messenger (see p20), who was returning to his old ship *Hi-Fi News* as publisher – an offer that was too good for him to refuse.

At that point *Hi-Fi Choice* didn't exist as the full-colour monthly magazine we know now. The *Hi-Fi Choice* of those days was an A5 book, published approximately quarterly, with each issue devoted to a specific separates category.

It all started in 1975, with the one-off *Hi-Fi Choice Cassette Decks*, in which Angus McKenzie tested 52 individual models of £100-plus recorders. "Should you wish to receive details of future editions of *Hi-Fi Choice*", wrote editor Richard Howell hopefully, "please send a stamped addressed envelope. We will forward information as soon as it becomes available."

Fortunately for Howell and his readers, *Cassette Decks* did sell well and so more issues followed, in which Angus tested receivers, loudspeakers, then cassette decks again. After this, while Angus continued to produce an annual cassette decks issue, other authors were introduced, starting with Martin Colloms' *Turntables and Cartridges*, (HFC 005).

Paul Messenger began his inaugural reign as HFC editor on issue 009, in 1978. The *Loudspeakers and Turntables* issues, which Paul put together alongside Martin as author are classics, and still make absorbing reading. But, by the time I joined, times were getting harder in audio.

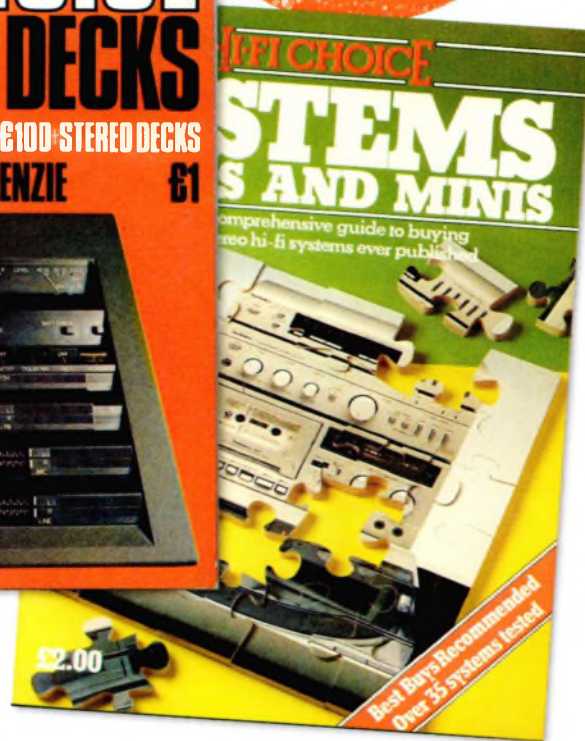
For the man in the street, the excitement of stereo music was forgotten, now that we had the miracle of home video recording, and in any case the UK economy was starting to dive into recession. I'd been attracted to the job by a suggestion that *Hi-Fi Choice* might be

HI-FI CHOICE CASSETTE DECKS

A UNIQUE CONSUMER GUIDE TO £100+ STEREO DECKS
BY ANGUS MCKENZIE £1



300TH
ISSUE
SPECIAL



"Should you wish to receive details of future editions of *Hi-Fi Choice*, please send a stamped addressed envelope."

relaunched as an upmarket monthly, but it soon became obvious that this couldn't happen in the prevailing market conditions. So instead, I dutifully set to work on my first issue, HFC 027, *Systems: Racks and Minis*.

With the hi-fi boom of the 1970s well and truly over, the Japanese majors had moved away from music centres (covered, incidentally, in HFC 008) and were instead trying to package standard-size hi-fi separates for mass sale with domestic acceptability. Hence the 'rack': a waist-high, full-width hi-fi cabinet made of chipboard, covered with wood-effect vinyl to match cheaply made floorstanding speakers.

Remote control was still a rare luxury, so these systems were not very convenient to use, and the poor sound didn't really encourage music listening anyway. Designed to take pride of place in suburban living rooms, in the end they just gathered dust and got in the way, as unwanted as granny's old 1930s sideboard.

HFC 027 wasn't the first issue to cover one-make systems, but I felt that David Prkel's

admirably subjective reviews and Noel Keywood's accessible lab findings were a great improvement. Sadly, after all that effort, David concluded that hardly any of the 'racks' could compete sonically with his reference separates: a Dual 505 turntable with Nagaoka MP-11 cartridge, a NAD 3020 amp and KEF Coda II speakers. More encouraging results came from the handful of mini-systems, like the Technics Mini Serie illustrated in Chris Stevens' brilliant jigsaw-puzzle cover photograph.

It was almost a relief to get back to real hi-fi with HFC 028, *Cartridges and Headphones*. Once again, Chris Stevens did a great job on the cover picture, but I still remember the consternation I felt when the expensive review-sample Mission arm came back from his studio. The captive arm cable had got in the way, so Chris had just snipped it off!

Next came HFC 029, *Cassette Decks and Tapes*. While I wanted to cover more lower-cost, two-head cassette decks, Angus McKenzie always tended to leave these out in favour of luxury three-head models. I eventually guessed

that this was because the off-tape monitoring of the three-head decks made them so much quicker to test, but I never won this argument!

The first *Video Choice* had appeared in the usual A5 size as *HFC 023* in 1981, but in 1982, we were more ambitious. Noel Keywood, then a freelance reviewer, plunged into video testing with great enthusiasm. The result was *The Video Buyer's Guide* in A4 format, which covered virtually all current VHS and Beta video cassette recorders, as well as the ill-fated Philips V2000 models, with graphically presented lab tests and screen shots to show picture noise in fast search and still modes. And, for the first time in my life, I understood how the clever PAL TV scanning system kept colours correct, while NTSC didn't.

It was thanks to CD that prosperity returned to the hi-fi market in the mid-1980s. Midi and mini-systems took off, finally consigning those cumbersome racks to the boot sale. Ironically, the newly booming high end sector was still firmly analogue based. We decided it was time to offer a special issue that would gather together all our high-end reviews and employ correspondingly high production values.

It was Marianne McNicholas' idea to call this special edition *The Collection*. At the time, I thought it was a bit pretentious, with frivolous connotations of fashion and style, rather than serious hi-fi. But, of course, Marianne was right. In any case, she was the publisher...

For feature material, I interviewed the leading high-end distributors of the day. There was Jacob Zelinger, whose company Automation Sciences then imported Conrad-Johnson and Martin Logan. Then there was Brian Smith, who later gave up importing and concentrated on distributing London (Decca) cartridges. Above all, there was Ricardo Franassovici of Absolute Sounds, then already the undisputed doyen of the high end, and even more firmly in command today.

The Collection was a great success, eventually becoming an annual special. But it was my last fling for *Hi-Fi Choice*, because in April 1986, I left for the editor's chair at *Hi-Fi News*. My successor was none other than Paul Messenger, who returned to find that some of the sleazier PR companies were still sending mail addressed to him at *HFC*, more than four years after he'd left the first time.

A year or two later, while I was wrestling with new challenges at *News*, Paul and his colleagues finally did manage to re-create *HFC* as a brand new glossy monthly, and made an incredibly successful job of it too. But I like to think that my efforts with that first *Collection* might have helped pave the way.

Steve Harris has edited a stack of hi-fi magazines including *Hi-Fi Choice*. With over three decades in hi-fi, he has seen it all and wrote the book.

R

RETRO

HI-FI REVISITED

KEF CODA 7
LOUDSPEAKER



The one word that is the key to understanding the KEF Coda range is 'Mission' – as in Mission the loudspeaker company. The

Coda took its cue from the Mission 730 and 731, whose original versions predated the KEF by several years. It was a smallish loudspeaker: a two-way with a reflex-loaded, 130mm coated paper cone bass driver and a laminated 25mm composite soft-dome tweeter, a time-tested recipe that echoes the Mission, not just in its overall geometry, but also in some of its specifics. In particular, the use of a front-facing port to avoid loading up the bass by having a rear-facing port in close proximity to the rear wall, and more importantly, to the Graham Allen-inspired industrial design, whose brief was to bring the simplicity and clarity of thinking that inspired its antecedents from the Mission stable to KEF.

The key point of the Mission design was the use of an ultra simple and elegant enclosure construction that didn't need many parts, which could be used to reduce build costs. This is exactly what the KEF Coda 7 gameplan delivered – in spades. As the picture shows, the baffle is a one-piece component, in which the air-flow port is part of the basic moulding, and to which the bass unit and tweeter are directly attached from the rear, without the need for visible screws or other fixings.

The result displayed a certain innate simplicity that comparable speakers (Mission apart) couldn't match at the time. Even now this kind of honed-down thinking is far from common. The benefits extend beyond the obvious. Not only is this a fruitful way of reducing inherent construction costs by reducing the component count, it also reduces the number of steps in the production process, and moreover, the likelihood of air leaks, for example, in the seals between drivers and baffle. More generally, it should also improve consistency and accuracy, which is always at a premium in loudspeakers, especially low cost ones such as this. Another major moulded enclosure component, the rear panel – with its associated terminal block – was then dropped into a four-sided chipboard frame that constituted the sides, top and bottom of the box, completing the construction. What



“The KEF Coda 7 displayed a certain innate simplicity that comparable speakers couldn't match at the time.”

I've left out of this story is the similarly simple crossover and other internal detailing.

There's nothing particularly glamorous about the Coda. Finish is no better than it should be, and the unit clearly feels mass produced. Subject the enclosure to the time-honoured knuckle rap test and you will instantly detect the rather hollow, woody enclosure feel – even though its probably no worse than the majority of the opposition, and it doesn't seem to have had too much of a negative effect on the sound.

The acoustic design of the KEF did not ape its counterpart from Mission. It has, for example, a significantly deeper enclosure, which means a more solid and substantial bass, rated down to 48Hz at -3dB, which is impressive enough for a system whose vital statistics measure 30x18x23.5cm (HxWxD), and which weighs in at just 3.3kg. It also boasts an impressive 91dB sensitivity at a nominal impedance of six ohms, plus the ability to handle 70 watts or so without sounding too strained. And these are not just claims to which an anonymous engineer has attached his imprimatur. I still have the listening notes that attest to the remarkable ability of this speaker to operate manfully with large scale orchestral recordings at impressive volume levels, which at least some other nominally superior designs from other producers were singularly ill-equipped to handle. **HFC**

Alvin Gold



Alvin Gold

Disc perfect?

Celebrating 25 years of CD

Looking back across 300 issues, the launch of CD still stands out most memorably. I remember all the kerfuffle at the time. CD may have been new, but it was not universally recognised as being better than vinyl, and many held the view that, as a format, it was inferior to what came before. Indeed, many still hold this view and continue to espouse the superiority of vinyl as a music carrier, an argument that has a modicum of merit, as readers of *HFC* will recognise. At the time, CD was seen as a kind of successor to vinyl, a super vinyl format if you like. I remember the official launch in Austria, which was presided over by Herbert von Karajan in unusually imperious form, even by his standards, to which the press was flown in Philips' fleet of executive jets. I also remember that we were handed biographies of Herbert von Karajan that strangely omitted virtually all data from the period surrounding World War II. I also remember a later launch event by a team from Sony UK in which the presenter, whose name I no longer recall, held a CD jewel box in his two hands, but was unable to open it, and had to turn his back on the audience to wrestle with the thing before triumphantly presenting the disc for inspection by the expectant audience. Readers may even remember the early Philips slogan for compact disc – 'Perfect Sound, Forever' – which it never delivered at the time, or even later thanks to a succession of audio formats, many of which didn't even pretend to offer better sound quality than the ones that came before. Indeed, Elcassette did deliver, but it was too little, too late for a format that not many wanted to own, and the same applied to carriers like Sony's MiniDisc format, which used more variants on the ATRAC than you can shake a stick at, plus a reduced data rate which allowed the same playing time as CD, but from a physically smaller disc. The real impact was made by MP3, however, but despite its tremendous success, Sony chose a loser when backing this horse, at a time when Apple backed the AAC format for its all-conquering iPod. It's ironic, however, that AAC is normally referred to as MP3, which it isn't, even though the two are

“CD may have been new, but it was not universally recognised as being better than vinyl, and many held the view that, as a format, it was inferior.”

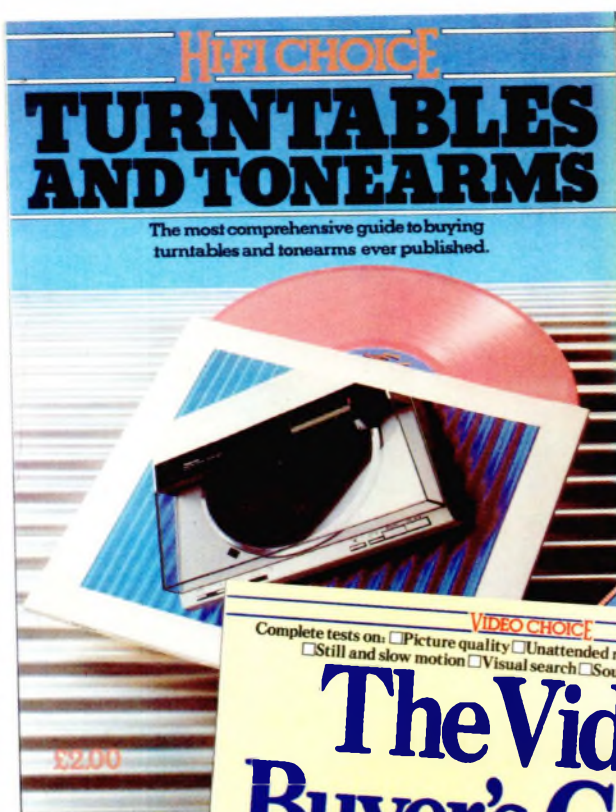
closely related.

But still, the giant leap forward for hi-fi was undoubtedly compact disc. No, it didn't offer perfect sound, either 'forever', or for any other period of time, and it didn't live up to the ridiculous claim (demonstrated on the BBC's *Tomorrow's World*, I believe) of being able to

play through a layer of jam spread over the disc surface. But the real story was impressive enough. CD was based on its packaging ability with mainstream classical music. Indeed, Sony's Aiko Morita, the company CEO of the time, was able to prevail on Philips who developed CD to accommodate Beethoven's *9th*

Symphony on a single disc, with 16- instead of 14-bit coding and Sony's proprietary error correction. Most later audio formats have been oriented more to playing a succession of short popular or rock tracks, with an overall playing time that approximates in length a single record album, and with a level of audio quality that was not necessarily materially better than lowly MP3.

The next really big developments were, of course, SACD and DVD-Audio. The latter



has now largely disappeared by the wayside. The proposition with SACD was simple enough: it was simply a CD plus, which was backwards compatible with CD in its hybrid (two layer) incarnation, with the same playing time, the possibility of multichannel playback and better sound quality. It was a slow starter, but despite attracting much criticism from some quarters, it has been, and continues to be, a qualified success. The other parallel format, DVD-Audio, has by contrast, dropped off of most peoples' radar. Technically, the system is moderately successful, but is designed to handle video material as well as audio, which puts an enormous extra burden on the mastering process, which is too expensive. One solution that was tried about three years ago was DualDisc, a dual-layer disc that used two bonded discs, one supposedly Red Book compatible to handle CD audio, and the other a form of DVD video disc that also accommodated a DVD-Audio data.

The DVD side was designed to full DVD specifications and worked well enough, except that it still incurred very heavy mastering and production costs. The CD side was not the same thickness as a standard CD, and consequently was not fully Red Book compatible, relying instead of production tolerances in the disc standard that would allow it to work satisfactorily most of the time, as long as the playing time of the disc was restricted. This lack of true Red Book compatibility was one of the features that attracted most criticism, and left many wondering why not simply supply two discs in a modified jewel box, one that could be played on a car CD player, and a second that could be used on a home DVD player? Indeed, this has happened, and if this kind of hybrid has a future – which few believe in – this is probably the form it will take.

In the meantime, many wonder if SACD has a future at all and the answer remains far from clear. With SACD apparently unable to fill the shoes of its illustrious predecessor, it will remain a niche product whose fate will probably parallel that of vinyl records, and as we have seen, DVD-Audio appears to be going nowhere fast. This leaves CD as surely the only viable carrier with a long-term future that makes any real sense. It is cheap, has the right capacity and a feature set that suits the majority of listeners most of the time, with SACD filling in the niche requirement for better audio quality and multichannel sound for those who want it: which just happens to be a particularly good fit with the requirements of classical material.

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

M

MUSO

CLASSIC ALBUMS

RICKIE LEE JONES
RICKIE LEE JONES



Rickie Lee Jones had already had a taste of success just before her 1979 debut album allowed her to turn her back on Los Angeles waitressing jobs for good. Her humorous slice of low-life, *Easy Money*, which she'd been playing in clubs as she honed her nascent Beat-influenced live set, caught the ear of Little Feat's Lowell George, who included it on his album *Thanks, I'll Eat It Here*. Others were hearing about her songs, including Emmylou Harris, who considered covering country-flavoured ballad *The Last Chance Texaco*, though she never recorded it.

Both songs, however, appeared on *Rickie Lee Jones*, along with a clutch of other gems that suggested a new star in the City of Angels, including what would be her only real hit, the mellow jazz-tinged *Chuck E's In Love*, about a mutual musician friend of both her and lover Tom Waits, blues legend in waiting, Chuck E Weiss.

That may be the tune that most people think of when Rickie Lee Jones is mentioned, but her debut is chock full of styles and influences, blending rock, jazz, blues, classic pop and R&B with a little smidgen of folk and a dash of country. Despite the variety, it's all held together by the production skills of Russ Titelman and Lenny Waronker, aided by the talent of the same 1970s LA session pool that informed the likes of Steely Dan and Joni Mitchell. Also on the sessions were established stars like Michael McDonald, Randy Newman and Dr John, all of whom remain in the background and never come close to overshadowing the star attraction.

If at times the laid-back, West Coast feel of the production and the playing threatens to create too much of an easy-listening vibe, it's always tempered by Rickie Lee's exceptional voice, which can change in a heartbeat from childlike and innocent to streetwise and sexy, slipping easily from spoken word to soaring leaps and taking in scat timbres, full-throated cries and sensual whispers in-between.

She also manages the trick of making much of her performance sound improvised and indeed she has a live reputation for never

RICKIE LEE JONES



“Rickie Lee’s voice can change in a heartbeat from childlike and innocent to streetwise and sexy.”

performing songs the same way twice. It's this instinctive spontaneity as well as the unique dynamics of her singing (she ascribes the percussive violence in her voice to the influence of iconic jazz stylist Betty Carter), which give the album its edge, as well as its enduring appeal.

Despite the often downbeat tone of the lyrics (and incidentally, there's no shortage of clever wordplay in her characterful tales of LA hipsters and scufflers), the album seems to offer so much hope and possibility from a deep well of talent that has so much to give. But this was before the cocaine, heroin and alcohol years of the 1980s, which saw her continue to experiment and follow her muse wherever it took her. Nonetheless, while she kept the critics interested, she left the majority of the public unmoved.

Her later albums cast her as torch singer, cabaret artiste, electronic experimentalist and Tin Pan Alley revivalist, that iconic red beret fitting less well with each shift in style. She's never lost her way with a melody or that sense of impetuous fun that always characterises her singing, but her debut is where it all came together first and best, pulling together her diverse influences into a beautifully presented portrait of a new artist, full of promise and hope. **HFC**

Dave Oliver



History lesson

A lot can happen in 30 years

It was thirty or so years ago when I first took hold of this title's editorial reins and, apart from a few years in the 1980s, I've been involved with *HFC* ever since. I therefore feel duty-bound to use this extended column to take the long view, sketch out the big picture, and mix a few metaphors along the way.

From its mid-1970s inception until the end of 1987, *HFC* was a very different beast from the magazine you hold in your hands today. The pages were half the size (A5 instead of A4), the schedule irregular, and photography was monochrome. Crucially, each edition reviewed one specific type of hi-fi component in both depth and numbers. Each project took around six months to complete and covered maybe fifty or sixty different models, subjecting every one to detailed comparative lab and listening tests.

The 1970s hi-fi marketplace was also very different from today. The first few editions of *HFC* were devoted to receivers (or tuner-amplifiers, strictly of the two-channel stereophonic variety) and cassette decks, neither of which are easily found, or indeed asked for, these days. Loudspeakers and amplifiers followed, and remain cornerstones, even though both have changed considerably during the intervening three decades. Tuners, turntables, tonearms, cartridges and headphones all came under scrutiny too, either individually or in combination, long before the era when CD became the prime source.

The 1970s was when hi-fi became really hot, even though the UK economy had caught an insufferable cold. Rock music hit its peak, television offered little competition on the entertainment front, and a hi-fi system was one of a rather limited range of temptations for consumers to spend their disposable income on. Japanese multi-nationals dominated the hardware scene, partly because the British government's fiscal policies had done their best to destroy the UK's hi-fi manufacturing base. Our speaker companies survived, but Quad was the only notable electronics brand.

The Japanese brands competed strongly with each other on price, features and finish, but by the end of the decade new British brands



SPECIAL EDITION

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300TH ISSUE SPECIAL

HI-FI CHOICE



BUYER'S BIBLE
 The ultimate hi-fi buyer's guide: all of our favourite gear in one great directory

“Even though I’ll still seek out and spin vinyl for personal pleasure, there’s no doubt in my mind that computers and servers represent the future of hi-fi.”

(Arcam, Linn, Meridian, Naim, Rega) had risen from the ashes of the old, and were providing a new and alternative hi-fi vision based on offering superior sound quality through simplicity. By the end of the decade, I was writing my copy on a nice-but-noisy IBM golf-ball typewriter, and posting it to the magazines.

British brands continued to strengthen through the early 1980s, but the landscape changed dramatically from the mid-1980s onwards, when Philips and Sony introduced compact disc. It's hard to recall that CD was quite a slow-burner in its early days, becoming established largely through the enthusiasm of classical fans for a format free from the irritation of surface noise. By this time I'd graduated from a typewriter to primitive word processing at last, but was still printing out and posting the results.

In 1987 I returned to *HFC* as editor for a couple of years, when we re-launched it as a more conventional, but still premium-quality monthly magazine. I can still recall drafting the first buyer's guide section in mid-air on a long-haul flight to Tokyo. I also remember paying £2,000 for a relatively early fax

machine, allowing me some independence from the postal service.

By 1990 CD was firmly established and vinyl was in retreat. Both home cinema and multi-room custom install were beginning to appear, further muddying the hi-fi pool. John Bamford, my successor as editor, brought down an ageing second-hand Apple Macintosh and showed how to use a 'real' computer – the down side being that it was back to posting the not-so-floppy discs.

The 1990s was a confusing and bitty decade. The music wasn't great, but TV went multi-channel and MTV seduced the youth market, neither of which helped the hi-fi sector. CD became recordable, CD recorders appeared – and disappeared almost immediately, once everyone figured out that computers could do a similar job more cheaply. Just like digital TV, DAB threatened to replace FM radio, offering extra stations alongside inferior quality; happily the in-car factor should keep analogue radio going for many more years.

Attempts to launch better-than-CD digital audio formats like SACD and DVD-A have foundered on consumer apathy and the complexities of DRM (Digital Rights

Management), but many hi-fi enthusiasts are delighted to find that vinyl has been making a steady comeback.

Home cinema might have got underway early in the 1990s with Laserdisc and Dolby Pro-Logic, but it slow-burned until Dolby Digital and DVD appeared on the scene, followed eventually by flat-screen TVs. Multi-room has been massive in the USA for years, but much slower in Britain because of different house construction techniques. Technological evolution via PCs, servers and Wi-Fi are all contributing to make multi-room installation and operation much simpler.

I'm simply not interested in computers, even though I spend much of my life working with one, and have been through six generations in twenty years. I've learned enough to cope with essential tasks, but still feel no empathy for the things, and am helpless if anything goes wrong.

Although I've made no attempt to download any music, I have experimented with using my MacBook Pro as a music storage and replay device, and can fully appreciate the important role the computer will play in the future of domestic hi-fi. Ripping a CD into the hard drive is quick and simple, and with the assistance of an audiophile-oriented streamer – such as the SB+ from UK specialist At-View – very good replay results can be obtained through a top quality hi-fi system.

The SB+ started out as a SqueezeBox, but has been repackaged with superior components, especially on the power-supply side. The sonic performance doesn't quite match up to a classy and costly Naim CD player, and lacks the latter's top-end poise and delicacy, but it's certainly very listenable and definitely deserves its hi-fi label. After discharging the obligatory nit-picking of a serious hi-fi nut, the real strength of the SB+ lies in the sheer convenience and accessibility that computer-based music storage brings to the party.

One reason why CD initially took off as a replacement for vinyl was because it brought full remote control convenience to the masses. Computer-based music storage and replay goes another major step along the same path, in allowing fingertip access to one's entire music library. Even though I'll still seek out and spin vinyl for personal pleasure, there's no doubt in my mind that computers and servers represent the future of hi-fi for the majority of consumers. And, of course, e-mail has dramatically changed my working practices: I'm finishing off this column as dawn is about to break, secure in the knowledge that it will be waiting on the subs' desk first thing in the morning.

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

TECHNO

TECHNOLOGY EXPLORED

SPEAKERS VERSUS HEADPHONES



In an issue that rounds-up four headphones (see p76), it seems appropriate to consider some of

the differences between the approximations to reality created by loudspeakers and headphones. Can we really say that one is better or more truthful than the other?

Headphones have many advantages in terms of requirements. They don't have to work in a wide and unpredictable variety of rooms, and they don't have to generate much in the way of sound pressure levels at a distance either. Because of the much smaller displacements required from a headphone drive unit, distortion is considerably lower than from loudspeakers, especially in the bass. Figures below one per cent under most realistic music conditions are not unusual, and in general, distortion is many dB below that of loudspeakers. Frequency response flatness can be excellent in costly headphones, though cheaper models often have distinctly audible kinks due to in-band resonances of the drive unit diaphragm and/or other parts.

However, the fundamental difference between the two is that headphone drivers address just one ear each, while – in any normal room, at least – both ears hear both loudspeakers. This leads to an unavoidable divergence in the presentation of a stereo image.

There are many different approaches to creating a stereo image on a recording. The most famous is 'Blumlein stereo', which uses two directional microphones angled apart from the same point in space. This leads to amplitude differences between the channels, corresponding to the location of the sound source, but what isn't obvious is that on replay from speakers, those amplitude differences, processed via the difference in distance from each ear to each speaker, convert to time (phase) differences between the sound received by each ear. 'Panpot stereo' created on a mixing desk, works in exactly the same way.

One quite popular stereo mic'ing alternative uses two microphones about eight inches apart, maybe with some sort of baffle between them, typically facing the same way or angled just a little apart. This is a rough simulation of a head and the resultant pickup contains more



“When you pick up a disc you almost invariably have no information about how it was recorded.”

phase than amplitude information. Not surprisingly, it works very well on headphones but can be a little vague over loudspeakers. Conversely, Blumlein stereo on headphones is often not entirely convincing. Human hearing is complex and uses both amplitude and phase cues to determine position, so Blumlein on headphones, or spaced-pair on speakers, still gives something that makes a moderate amount of sense: but if you've compared loudspeaker and headphone presentations of familiar recordings and felt that some work much better on one than the other, this is a highly probable explanation.

An obvious question arising from this is whether Blumlein stereo can be converted to spaced-pair and vice versa, and the answer is 'yes'. Indeed, Blumlein himself had most of the answers, and he and others have demonstrated loudspeaker/headphone converters. The trouble is that when you pick up a favourite disc you almost invariably have no information about how it was recorded. It could be Blumlein, spaced-pair, 'Decca tree' (three widely-spaced mics), or a myriad other options, and the fact that it seems to work pretty well on speakers or headphones proves nothing. So converting from one to t'other is basically guesswork. Frankly, it's just as well that our spatial hearing is pretty forgiving! **HFC**

Richard Black

ChoiceCuts



This month's varied musical morsels

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



AUDIOPHILE VINYL

BUDD JOHNSON

Mr Bechet

Black & Blue/Pure Pleasure
180g vinyl



Music: The late, great Budd Johnson was a tenor sax player who worked with many of the greats from the 1930s to the 1960s. He played

with jazz giants like Louis Armstrong, Coleman Hawkins and Dizzy Gillespie, and was there at the beginning of be-bop. Here, he's accompanied by Earl Hines on piano, Jimmy Leary (bass) and Panama Francis (drums). Surprisingly, given the title, there are no Sydney Bechet tunes included here, but Johnson takes up the soprano horn on the title track in a tribute to that great man. The tunes are largely upbeat, always thoughtful and beautifully played by a master of his craft. ★★★★★

Sound: You don't often come across top-notch recordings of jazz musicians of this calibre, which makes Mr Bechet all the more special. Recorded at the Seed Studio in France, this is expansive and rich, with superb tone and real subtlety. ★★★★★ JK

ANTONIO FORCIONE

Touchwood

Naim

180g vinyl

Music: Touchwood was originally



released on CD in 2003 and finds the guitar virtuoso in the company of Jenny Adejayan on cello, Adriano Pinto on percussion and

Giorgio Serci on guitar. Their sound suggests that the world is a diverse and rich place with many paths to follow and emotional ups and downs on each. The playing is superb, with Forcione at times reminiscent of Michael Hedges, at others of Django Reinhardt, but more usually it is pure Forcione, and when combined with the cello in particular he manages to reveal just how good he is at his craft without appearing to show off. ★★★★★

Sound: At 56 minutes, it was a challenge to get Touchwood onto vinyl, but thanks to Steve Rooke at Abbey Road this DMM pressing is open, dynamic and rich. ★★★★★ JK

These LPs were supplied by Pure Pleasure and Naim
© www.purepleasurerecords.com

COMPACT DISC & VINYL



OSVALDO GOLIJOV

Oceana, Tenebrae, Three Songs

Robert Spano (cond), Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Kronos Quartet
DGG 477 6426

Music: *Oceana* is scored for voice, small boys' choir, double chorus and orchestra and is just 26 minutes long. The much more intense *Tenebrae* is played by the Kronos Quartet, who specialise in modern chamber music, and *Three Songs*, written for soprano and orchestra, is scarcely less concentrated. Osvaldo Golijov, who has worked with such diverse influences as Astor Piazzolla, has come to specialise in liturgical music and opera. This music has an unusually complex, streetwise feel, and often a jazzy patina. ★★★★★

Sound: The music here is original and varied, but is not hard to listen to, and the recordings, all of recent vintage, are of good quality with well varied scoring and powerful dynamics. ★★★★★ AG



JONI MITCHELL

Shine

Hear Music

Music: This is the album Mitchell vowed she'd never make when she retired from the "corrupt cesspit" of the music industry five years ago. Perhaps that's why she's on Starbucks' label. Her voice is now a deep, husky instrument and in her sixties she appears to be more concerned with the state of the planet than affairs of the heart. A remake of *Big Yellow Taxi* and an odd setting of Kipling's *If* might suggest she hasn't much left to say, but new songs such as the title track, *Hana and Bad Dreams Are Good* are fine compositions that find her balancing the angry and the elegiac in compelling style. ★★★★★

Sound: Recorded at her home in British Columbia with nothing more than a piano and an ancient synth, the result is an unhurried, reflective tone that is intimate but rarely warm. ★★★★★ NW



LOVE IS THE SONG WE SING

San Francisco Nuggets 1965-1970

Rhino

Music: Produced by British rock historian Alec Palao, this incredible amalgam of San Franciscan psychedelia covers the earliest acid-folk of Dino Valenti in 1964 to the Latino-frenzy of Santana's debut album of 1970 and beyond. Along the way we get single and rare edits of psych staples like Jefferson Airplane's *White Rabbit* and The Grateful Dead's *Dark Star*. Of the 77 tracks, it's the obscure bands like Salvation and Fifty Foot House that succeed in truly blowing you away. It even comes with a sumptuous 120-page, track-by-track illustrated coffee-table tome. ★★★★★

Sound: From you-are-there live recordings to the high-fidelity of Steve Miller's *Quicksilver Girl* and David Laflamme's *White Bird*, this set will test the range of any system. ★★★★★ MP



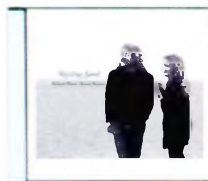
ROBERT PLANT & ALISON KRAUSS

Raising Sand

Rounder

Music: As the Led Zeppelin reunion speculation reached fever pitch, Plant announced that his solo career is in fine working order with a mellow album of rootsy Americana, about as far removed from Zep bombast as it's possible to get. That said, *Raising Sand* is as potent as anything the former god of heavy rock has recorded since the band split more than a quarter of a century ago. Recorded in Nashville with bluegrass champion Krauss, it's all covers save for one Plant retread. But the songs are judiciously selected and interpreted with intuitive understanding, as the boundaries of folk, blues, country, bluegrass and rockabilly are blurred into a shimmering, atmospheric homage. ★★★★★

Sound: More is less in T-Bone Burnett's production, which leaves plenty of space for Plant's tensely controlled but taut vocals to entwine elegantly with Krauss's more ethereal tones. ★★★★★ NW



RICHTER - THE MASTER VOL 5

Schubert: Piano Sonata in G maj D894, Piano Sonata in B maj D575, Piano Sonata in C maj D840 'Reliquie'
Sviatoslav Richter (piano)

Decca 475 8616 2-disc set

Music: Born to an itinerant but musical family, the tastes of the great Russian pianist Sviatoslav Richter embraced many of the classical heavyweights - Schubert, Bach, Beethoven and Handel, and forward to the worlds of Prokofiev, Brahms, Bartok, Stravinsky, Berg, Webern and Hindemith. His talent was colossal, and though it was always his intellect rather than his virtuosity that set him apart, the nearest historical parallel perhaps being Horowitz or Gilels. ★★★★★

Sound: Richter's vision of Schubert is more fully fleshed out here than you may have heard elsewhere, and this communicates well through this compelling set. ★★★★★ AG



THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC HI-FI TEST DISC "The result of considerable playing talent"

LITTLE FEAT *The Last Record Album* Warner Bros

Music: In 1975 this turned out to be the middle of nine albums made by the original Little Feat, a band fronted and produced by the remarkable talents of the late Lowell George. At their best Little Feat combined blues, funk, rock and country influences while delivering a beautifully honed sound that was the result of considerable playing talent from all six members. While not the band's best-known recording, this contains some superb material, especially *Long Distance*

Love, which has a presence and precision that demands attention despite its soft demeanor. This is essential stuff for lovers of 1970s West Coast music. ★★★★★

Sound: The recording quality could be used as a definition of the West Coast sound at its best, not the over polished, smoothed out pastiche that it turned into but a tight and clean but warm and homogenous sound that makes the playing gel. Nice. ★★★★★ JK



MIA

Kala

XL

Music: For her second album, 20-year-old Sri Lankan/west London agitator MIA went on a 'genocide tour' through India, Trinidad, Jamaica, Australia, Japan and the US, recording as she went, seemingly with whoever she found on the way. The result is an infectious mash-up of styles and influences from around the world, Bollywood strings rubbing up against dancehall chants, electro beats battling with baile funk rhythms and much more. This time round she also augments her usual deadpan 'rap' with a bit of actual singing (rather sweetly), notably on Bollywood cover *Jimmy*. ★★★★★

Sound: Fiercely electronic and jagged, this isn't easy listening, but the bubbling stew of clashing styles and mile-a-minute ideas is thrilling. ★★★★★ DO



KEITH JAMES & RICK FOOT

Lorca

Hurdy Gurdy

Music: English guitarist/singer Keith James and bassist Rick Foot's latest project is a musical setting of the verse of Federico Garcia Lorca, Spain's most celebrated poet, who was murdered at the outset of the Spanish Civil War. The arrangements for acoustic guitar and double bass, with percussion and occasional interjections from accordion and organ, are spacious and tasteful, if only rarely approaching the intensity of the dark fire in Lorca's translated words. Among the standouts is *Take This Waltz*, previously translated and recorded by Leonard Cohen. ★★★★★

Sound: The album was recorded in James' own studio and has the intimate mood of a chamber piece, which is as good a way as any to discover Lorca's tortured verse. ★★★★★ DO



VARIOUS

The Roots Of Led Zeppelin

Castle

Music: A sprawling, brawling collection of odds and sods that's coming out just in time – what with the (surviving) Zep dinosaurs gearing up for a one-in-a-million, one-off London gig (in honour of Atlantic records founder, the late Ahmet Ertegun). Fascinating contributions include those from various beat bands (with the mad mods who were Marc Bolan's first band – John's Children – in fine, obscene, form here) although for our money the best cut is from bassist John Paul Jones – the shimmering, pounding instrumental epic that is *Foggy Day In Vietnam*, a 1966 piece that is the closest he or Zeppelin ever got to a protest song. ★★★★★

Sound: Some fine audio archeology has allowed these 35- and 40-year-old gems to shine clearly. ★★★★★ PS

DVD-AUDIO & SACD

THE LEGENDARY EVA TAYLOR

Live At The Pawnshop

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD)

Opus3

Music: This 1976 recording finds the 81-year-old Taylor in the company of Swedish swing era revivalist band Maggies Blues Five. Taylor deserves her epithet, she sang with Louis Armstrong and Sydney Bechet in the 1920s and married pianist Clarence Williams, whose compositions appear among the ten songs here. However, it's the band that are the real stars; they play with a verve and joy that you get a hint of from original recordings, but have the advantage of great sound too. Taylor is truly remarkable, singing with gusto and style while bringing authenticity to this atmospherically fantastic event. ★★★★★

Sound: This is a fabulous analogue recording that really shines through the SACD medium. It has both tremendous vibrancy and full-scale imaging to accompany its incredible tone. ★★★★★ JK



SIR EDWARD ELGAR

Enigma Variations, Introduction & Allegro

Sir Colin David (cond) LSO

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD)

LSO0609

Music: It is almost inconceivable that readers don't have some familiarity with this affectionate but deeply felt portrait of Elgar's friends, yet its fame was sealed at its first production. Sir Colin Davis has always been a much respected Elgar conductor, and the work has rarely been in better hands than here. *The Introduction* and *Allegro for strings* are also well known, the latter has a powerfully astringent quality which stems from the way the brilliantly written string parts are set against each other. ★★★★★

Sound: Both works are powerfully and beautifully played, yet never hackneyed, which would be so easy in such familiar territory. Overall, this disc is hard to fault. The Barbican Hall, which features in all the LSO live recordings, continues to show the improved acoustics of this once much maligned venue, especially in the thoroughly successful multichannel SACD mix. ★★★★★ AG



JAMES CARNEY GROUP

Green-Wood

SACD (stereo/multichannel SACD plus stereo CD)

Songlines

Music: This New York keyboard player joins forces with six of the best names around today, including fellow CalArts alumni Peter Epstein on soprano sax and Tony Malaby on trumpet. Between them, the group takes an eclectic approach to jazz, shifting between and blending elements of be-bop, avant-garde jazz and film soundtracks into an extremely persuasive groove. Opener *Power* is a compelling, electronics-laden dirge, but that's followed by the more soulful stylings of *Smog Cutter*, which wouldn't sound out of place as the soundtrack to a 1970s cop show. *It's Always Cold When You're Leaving* highlights wah-wah trombone – something you won't hear every day – while several of the other tracks feature some terrific ensemble horn playing in the Mingus vein. ★★★★★

Sound: Warm, full and inviting for the most part. Unsurprisingly the surround option opens things out a bit, but it's a subtle use of the format, with most of the music channelled through the front speakers and the surrounds used more for ambient effects. ★★★★★ JK





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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.

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



UPGRADECTOMY

Your review of £1,000-£2,000 amplifiers in *HFC* 297 confirmed my view that a lot of more expensive equipment is aimed solely at those people who like to 'add to' their existing kit. What gets me about certain products is the 'upgradeable' option. Power supplies can be added, boards can be swapped and so on. Surely, if an amplifier was built to a decent standard in the first place, such upgrades wouldn't be needed, would they? Besides which, in the case of the tested Cyrus amp, adding an extra unit changed the sound quality for the worse!

As regards the Sugden A21aL Series 2, your review was the worst that this product has received. Given the reputation of the company, the price seems high for the performance. But then again, there are many of us out here who read the reviews in the various mags and come to the conclusion that a lot of hi-fi gear is overpriced for what is under the bonnet.

Cliff Millward via email

Below: Cyrus Pre vs2/8 Power/PSX-R amp combo

HFC In part, upgradable products are a way for building loyalty in a company's customer base. They are also a method for someone to buy an expensive product in stages, starting at a good level and improving along the way with the minimum of fuss and intermediary product replacement. That's certainly the case with the Cyrus system, and our conclusions suggest the PSX-R did bring improvements, although the panel didn't like the combo's sound in general. The panel also disliked the Sugden in this sitting, but other reviewers have loved this amp for the same reasons the panel disliked it – that would seem to demonstrate that there's no such thing as a product that pleases all the people, all the time. Another sitting, possibly with different listeners and different speakers and the results could come out in an entirely different order. Finally, the hi-fi buying public has a far more Darwinian method of dealing with overpriced products than reading reviews. If a product seems more expensive than its performance

“There's no such thing as a product that pleases all the people, all the time.”

suggests, it has a tendency of not selling. It's survival of the fittest out there.

MENTAL AS ANYTHING

My flatmate has some strange ideas about what to spend money on. It seems every day we have the same argument about my hi-fi equipment. "It's a complete waste of money," he says. "Why not just buy an iPod and save me the hassle of having to clamber all over your wires and crap every day?" It's quite obvious as to why I bought all that stuff. First of all, I want an excuse not to buy all of his drinks, and secondly, the dream of attaining the ultimate home entertainment set-up is one that is not impossible to



Letter of the month



VINYL REVIVAL

After 25 years fantastic service the belt on my Thorens 126 MKII deck finally gave up the ghost. On the advice of *HFC*, I called Sound Academy of Bloxwich, who fixed all the problems with a faultless service. Now, my trusty old deck sounds better than ever. In fact, Ian Hays from Sound Academy told me that his test records sounded better on my revamped deck than on some of his high-end, four-figure ones.

Thanks to everyone at *HFC* for helping me out, and also for producing a great magazine.

Les Sims via email

HFC Thanks Les. We're pleased to hear that your deck is back to its best. In these times of built-in obsolescence and disposable product, it's good to hear that some things just keep getting better and better, and that there was no need to make the jump to a more modern deck. Also, with the wholesale move to online resources, it's reassuring to hear that the local bricks and mortar dealer still has a place, and that the provision of a first-rate service still counts for something.



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...)

Below: Meridian's slot-loading G95 system



“The slot-loader never really took off in hi-fi. Top-loaders are more common.”

obtain, unlike some people's hobbies. But, who cares what he has to say? He's a total mental case, just like every other hi-fi phobe out there.

Angela Brown via email

HFC Get used to the mental cases, Angela. They will hang around like a bad smell in a camper van. For as long as you listen to hi-fi, people will laugh at you for buying big, expensive cables or tall, potent loudspeakers. They will ask you how much your system costs and then giggle at your response. They will invariably point to the latest, teeny-tiny music replay device compare it to your system, irrespective of how good their kit or your kit really is. It sounds like you already have your defence mechanism well constructed, though. Keep it up!

TIME TAKES ITS TOLL

I've bought a Resolution Audio Opus 21 CD player, partly after strong recommendations from *Hi-Fi Choice*, and also after auditioning it against the Ayre CX-7e and Classé CDP-102.

However, I've noticed lately, in the last couple of months, that *Hi-Fi Choice* has dropped the Opus 21 from the *Buyer's Bible*, even though it was previously an Editor's Choice as well as an award winner in 2005 and 2006. Is there any reason why the Opus 21 was left out? Do you see a drop in quality in recent productions, or subtle model changes that consumers do not see?

Christian Lam Chicago, USA

HFC Nothing so obvious, Christian. We have left it out because we have a finite amount of space in our *Buyer's Bible*. We try to keep a balance between classic and recently reviewed products, but there are times when a review from *HFC* 244 must pass into history. There is nothing wrong

with new Opus 21 players and it is still one of the best CD players made today, but our review dates from 2003. To quote Homer: "Every time I learn something new, it pushes some old stuff out of my brain" – that's Homer Simpson, naturally... were you really expecting *The Iliad*? Anyway, we hope to radically revise our *Buyer's Bible* soon to help overcome such limitations on space.

SLOT SPOT

My CD player (a Marantz CD94 and CDA-94) is on its last legs. Among other things, the CD drawer is very arthritic and needs manual help to open and close. Is there a slot-loading CD player on the market that uses the same technology used by laptops and in-car CD players? Or one that uses a sliding door like the Audio Research CD3 MKII? Sadly, I can't afford the Audio Research option.

I wouldn't want to go so far as to choose a CD player purely on the basis of its CD loading mechanism, but I do wonder if the CD player manufacturers have missed a trick by avoiding the simple option.

Simon King via email

HFC The slot-loader never really took off in hi-fi. Meridian uses a slot-loader for its F80, and a few have appeared in other players from time to time, but most use a tray-loading mechanism. Top-loading players are more common, starting with the Rega Apollo and Saturn, although they are a more common sight at loftier price points. Players by 47 Laboratory, Accustic Arts, Audio Note, Bel Canto, MBL Naim Audio, Pathos, Shanling, Zanden and more join Audio Research and Rega in the manufacture of a top-loader. That covers products from under £500 to more than £20,000 and if you can't find the product you need out of that select list, it would be most surprising.

THE MAINS EVENT

I've been reading a lot about power conditioners and their effect on the sound quality of audio systems. What I don't get is: why would you need to 'clean up' the AC signal, when it is converted (by the amp or CD player) to DC to feed the electronics, anyway?

Ivan Haentjens Antwerp, Belgium

HFC Nigel Pearson, IsoTek's chief engineer, replies: "Many factors influence the quality and consistency of the electricity supply as it travels from the power station to your home and then on to each individual wall socket. Noise created by appliances around the home, and even the power supplies of individual components in your hi-fi system, play a fundamental part in polluting the electricity supply, and thus also the audio signal that travels from the source through various stages of amplification and then on to drive your speakers.

"Although the AC mains supply is converted to DC inside the equipment, this conversion is never perfect. It is tricky to measure scientifically, but our hypothesis is that it will always contain some RFI (Radio Frequency Interference) and mains noise residue, the deleterious effects of which are increasing as wireless and cell phone technologies become more prevalent.

"It is well established in the audio world that high-quality power supplies improve audio performance, and this is also true of a clean mains supply. In chemistry, it's understood that not starting with the purest substances will have a profound effect on the overall results. In hi-fi it's the same principal: always start with the purest of everything you can. The best way to prove that a cleaner, more consistent mains supply will significantly improve the sound of a system is with a simple listening test – your ears don't lie.

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WELCOME TO...



Spread across the next 38 pages you'll find our pick of the best hi-fi components currently available, painstakingly plucked from each relevant product category with prices ranging from entry-level to the aspirational high end.

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

THE JUDGING PROCESS

The process we undertake in judging what makes it into our *Awards* issue is painstaking. All the kit has been listened to and measured, and we've sought the opinions of blind listening teams before embarking on extensive

consultation with a judging panel of exceptional experience: the *HFC* reviewing team! Taking into account their feedback, the list has then been gradually whittled down until we've reached a final, democratically agreed selection, with three products in each price category ranked in order of Gold, Silver and Bronze. We've also checked the availability of each product, to ensure that they were widely available in hi-fi dealers up and down the country, and then the final list was complete. The result is an *Awards* edition for those who really care about quality – hi-fi awards you can really trust.

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

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THE JUDGING PANEL



DAN GEORGE
Hi-Fi Choice's current editor-in-chief



PAUL MESSENGER
Former *Hi-Fi Choice* editor, speaker master



ALVIN GOLD
Top hi-fi and home cinema journalist



JASON KENNEDY
Former *Hi-Fi Choice* editor, audio expert



ALAN SIRCOM
Virtuoso hi-fi and home cinema reviewer



RICHARD BLACK
Hi-Fi Choice's resident electronics guru

Key: Source Components Amplifiers Loudspeakers Ancillaries

BEST CD PLAYER UP TO £500



Cambridge Audio Azur 740C

PRICE £500 CONTACT 0870 900 1000 www.cambridgeaudio.com

Cambridge Audio knows a thing or two about making CD players. Recently, it took the award-winning Azur 840C and stripped the specifications down to create the 740C. The player has a different Wolfson

chip, no balanced audio outputs and a slightly simpler analogue filter. Like its bigger brother, it resolves data to 24-bit/384kHz precision. The overall result is stunning sound quality at a new price point. A tough act to follow.

Marantz SA7001

PRICE £400 CONTACT 01753 680868 www.marantz.com



Denon DCD-500AE

PRICE £160 CONTACT 01234 741200 www.denon.co.uk



BEST CD PLAYER £500-£1,000



Cambridge Audio Azur 840C

PRICE £750 CONTACT 0870 900 1000 www.cambridgeaudio.com

Cambridge Audio's top CD player remains the disc spinner to beat at this price, just like last year. It processes CD audio at 24-bit precision and also features balanced and single-ended outputs. It can even function

as a DAC for other digital audio sources. However, viewed simply as a CD player, the Azur 840C's sound is both musical and detailed, with first-rate imaging and clear vocal articulation. This one's a keeper!

Rega Apollo

PRICE £598 CONTACT 01702 333071 www.rega.co.uk



Quad 99CD-S

PRICE £650 CONTACT 01480 447700 www.quad-hifi.co.uk



BEST CD PLAYER £1,000-£2,000



Rega Saturn

PRICE £1,298 CONTACT 01702 333071 www.rega.co.uk

It's clear that Rega thought big when it came to devising the Saturn. The company's top CD player is a top-loader, sporting two parallel Wolfson DACs and a unique clamping system to make the player remarkably adept

at replaying CDs. Many consider it the best value CD player money can buy and it leads the field in terms of poise, subtlety, bass impact and precision. The Saturn remains a true audiophile bargain.

Unison Research Unico CD



Cyrus CD8x/PSX-R



PRICE £1,400 CONTACT 01480 435577 www.cyrusaudio.com

BEST CD PLAYER £2,000-£5,000



Marantz SA-7S1

PRICE £5,000 CONTACT 01753 680868 www.marantz.com

Marantz has a commanding reputation for delivering first-rate disc players, but even that did little to prepare us for the sheer majesty of the SA-7S1. This stereo CD/SACD flagship player received one of the highest

scores ever achieved in HFC history, with a sound our reviewers couldn't find fault with. Its performance is in no way mechanical or processed – this player represents state of the disc-playing art for audio today.

Esoteric X-03SE



Gamut CD3



PRICE £3,500 CONTACT 01252 702705 www.audioreference.co.uk

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Mira mains filter for TV and home cinema

Improved picture quality and an extended product lifespan are two of the key benefits delivered by IsoTek's amazing new Mira mains filter. Whether it is used in a full-blown home cinema system or as a simple upgrade for an LCD or plasma TV, Mira's advanced circuitry delivers immediate and significant improvements to the on-screen performance – crisper and more stable images, deeper blacks and more vibrant, natural colours. And it doesn't just work with LCD and plasma screens – it brings the same improvements to video projectors and traditional CRT televisions too. Picture quality isn't the only thing that Mira improves. Plug in a DVD player or set-top box, and sound is brought into focus, improving definition and detail. This isn't surprising as IsoTek's track record is second to none for designing and manufacturing world-class audio power management systems.



How it Works

The IsoTek Mira is simple to use – first, plug the power cable from your TV or projector into the appropriate socket on the Mira, instead of into the wall socket. Next, if you have a DVD player or set-top box, plug that into MIRA's second socket. If you're using a roof aerial or satellite dish, plug that in too. Finally, plug the Mira into a wall socket using a suitable mains cable... and you're ready to roll!

Key features:

- Improves picture quality and extends the life of all televisions (LCD, plasma or CRT) and projectors.
- 22,500A of instantaneous current absorption; essential for removing high-voltage spikes.
- Massive surge protection (700 Joules – five times greater than that achieved by typical devices)
- Eliminates mains noise including RFI and EMI which degrade sound and picture quality.

More about IsoTek

IsoTek is a UK-based company that specialises in power management systems for hi-fi and home cinema applications. Formed in 2001, the company has rapidly become a world leader in mains conditioning and filtration, developing a wide range of innovative, award-winning products that form complete solutions to suit every pocket. Thanks to IsoTek's painstaking attention to detail, its products significantly improve sound and picture quality, while offering protection from spikes and surges.

Activ Distribution

Tel: 01635 291357 • Fax: 01635 291356

E-Mail: isotek@activdistribution.com • www.activdistribution.com • www.isoteksystems.com

BEST CD PLAYER OVER £5,000



Chord Red Reference CD

PRICE £13,345 CONTACT 01622 72144 www.chordelectronics.co.uk

High-tech expert Chord Electronics is perhaps best known for its switch-mode power amplifiers and chrome Choral range. That belies the remarkable digit-wrangling power of the company's Blu/DAC 64 combo,

but even that didn't prepare us for the majesty of the Red Reference. Showing a clean pair of (beautifully crafted, aluminum) heels to the competition, this is quite simply the best CD player we've ever heard.

Krell Evolution 505



Esoteric X-01D2 Limited



PRICE £9,995 (G-0s Clock Generator, also pictured: £8,995) CONTACT 01727 865488 www.teac.com/esoteric

INFO – DISC PLAYERS

Trends are forever fluid in consumer electronics, and the state of the disc playing market has changed substantially in the last year. Strange as it may seem, it's probably going to end up a change for the better overall. Especially if you are a CD player manufacturer.

Sales of CD media are down once again this year, beset by the ever-increasing dominance of the download. This doesn't tell the whole story, however, because although those under 30 now seem reluctant to buy discs anymore, those over 30 appear to be making up for lost ground and buying discs in great number. This was not enough to have prevented high-street CD purveyor Fopp from closing, although the cause of the closure was more to do with too-rapid expansion of new premises rather than flat CD sales. However, HMV stores do appear to be doing rather better than they expected to do during the summer of 2007. HMV is now in the position to acquire some of the Fopp stores in prime locations.

In addition, it seems the battle between the high-resolution formats is over. For the record, it appears SACD won, or at least was the last disc standing. Nevertheless, this too is good for the greater CD buying market. It's interesting that the award-winning players over £2,000 are both CD/SACD players, but praised as much for their performance with CD as with the high-resolution format. It seems as if the disc purchaser has become pragmatic of late; buying a CD or SACD both make a statement kicking back against downloads, and if the SACD version doesn't exist... well, just be happy with the CD pressing.

With the wider perception of CD and SACD being one of a declining market, companies intent on producing players by the

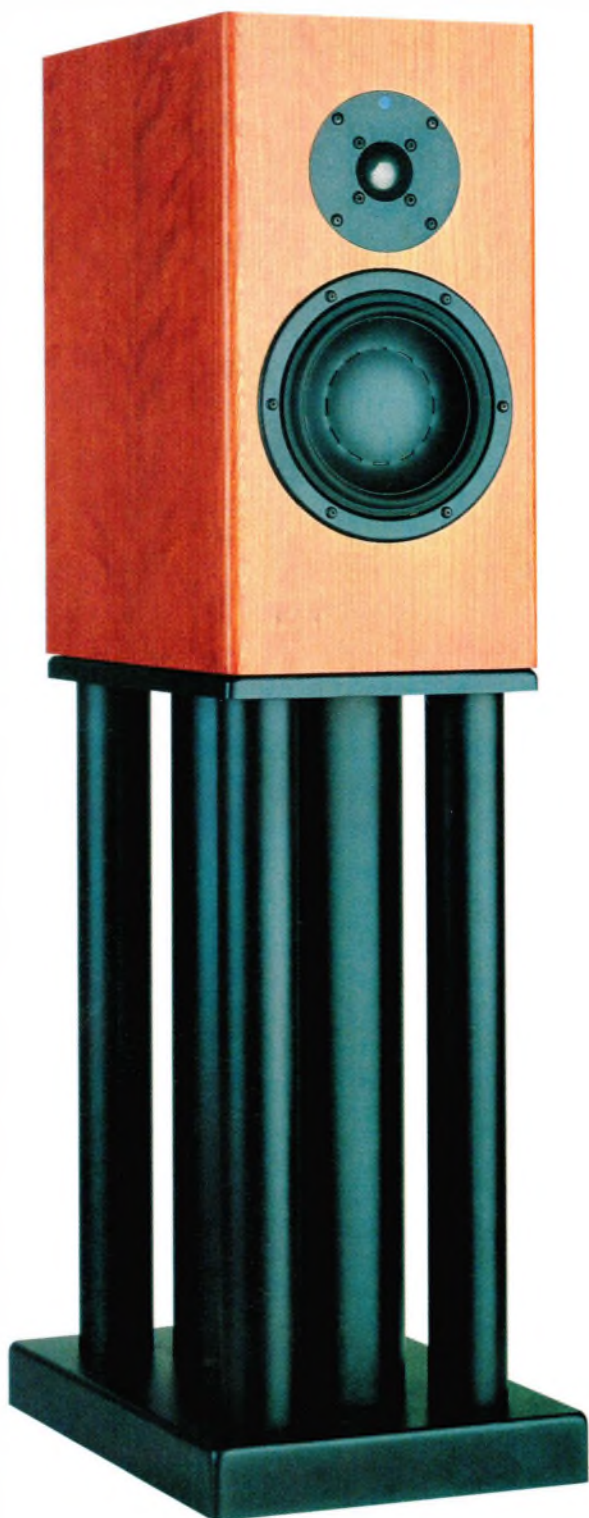
container-load have turned their corporate gaze upon DVD, and now HD DVD and Blu-ray formats. This is a double-edged sword for CD manufacturers; it's a great thing because we will no longer be flooded with cheap, poor quality players, but that also means the cost of key CD components (such as transport mechanisms) rises in the process.

So, why is this possibly a good thing for the CD player maker? Simply because this was precisely the same place turntable manufacturers were in way back in the late 1980s. People have been buying their 'final vinyl' LP systems for more than 20 years and the format shows little sign of flagging yet – at least judging by the number of new and revised turntables seen both on the pages of *HFC* and at hi-fi shows round the world. If the next generation of CD players begin to flag themselves as the 'last CD player you'll ever buy', the chances are people will begin to take note. Soon, just as the phrase 'vinyl sounds better than CD' reached the mainstream, so 'CD sounds better than MP3' will make people reconsider their silver disc collection.

All of which means CD players are back in fashion once more. They may not receive the bulk of the R&D budget anymore (however, this means players tend to stay in the brochures for longer), but there are still innovations in the medium. All of the award winners here ably demonstrate this, with groundbreaking technology a common feature to the best of the CD playing breed. Fortunately, this manifests itself in audio performance, too, with recent CD players sounding far better than any of their forebears ever could.

In other words, check out today's best-of-breed disc spinners... they are fantastic!

Totem Mani-2



Two years of theoretical and practical research were needed to bring this small and remarkable loudspeaker onto the market (1990). Mani-2 was designed as a statement in pure musicality. Regardless of specifications, "Mani-2" channels primal energy and forces it into "being". Some have categorised it beyond the magical, the ethereal... simply, fundamentally visceral.

At Totem, we continue our tradition of aesthetically, exquisite transducers.

Mani-2 is a culmination of several years research into necessarily monitor sized transducers / speakers, capable of both absolute sound staging and fine focus, real, full range sound, commanding your senses.

How to achieve full range, dynamic, distortion free, accurate, focalised music and bass in a small 2 way design?

It is optimised in the "Model one", it is maximised in the "Mani-2", a unique 2 way, 3-driver unit. The "Mani-2" utilises a unique push-pull / vented configuration in which the inner and outer mid-woofer operate in exactly the same "extended" frequency range. The musical energy emitted from the external driver is, therefore, as distortion free as possible.

Proper engineering, special double box configuration and truly superior quality materials and damping procedures have made this possible. They are produced in four prestigious finishes: cherry, mahogany, maple and black ash.

Experience "Mani-2".

Trust your soul; follow your senses; let "Mani-2" steer you. TOTEM exemplifies continuity, non-obsolescence and true value. The musical truth follows.

London Area

O'Brien Hifi, LONDON SW20 OTW, Tel 020 89461528
Cornflake.co.uk, LONDON W1T 2JU, Tel: 0207 6310472
Audio-T, CAMBERLEY, Surrey Tel: 01276 685597

South East

Audio-T, READING, Berkshire Tel: 01189 585463
Studio AV Ltd, ETON, Berkshire Tel: 01753631000
Rayleigh Hi Fi, RAYLEIGH, Essex, Tel: 01268 779762
Rayleigh Hi Fi, CHELMSFORD, Essex, Tel: 01245 265245
Audio-T, TUNBRIDGE WELLS, Kent, Tel: 01892 525666
Rayleigh Hi Fi, SOUTHEND, Essex, Tel: 01702 435255
Rayleigh Hi Fi, COLCHESTER, Essex, Tel: 01206 577682

South

Norman Hobbs, HAYWARDS HEATH, West Sussex, Tel: 01444 413353
Audio-T, EASTBOURNE, Tel: 01323 731336

South West

Audio-T, PORTSMOUTH, Hampshire, Tel: 023 9266 3604
Audio Destination, TIVERTON, Devon, Tel: 01884 243584
Movement Audio, POOLE, Dorset, Tel: 01202 730865/380018
Audio Excellence, BRISTOL, Tel: 0117 926 4975

Midlands

Leicester Hifi, LEICESTER, Tel: 01162 539753
Audio Excellence, WORCESTER, Tel: 01905 619059

North

Audio Counsel, CHEADLE, cheshire, Tel: 01614 916090
The Sound Organisation, YORK, Yorkshire, Tel: 01904 627108
Practical Hifi, WARRINGTON, Cheshire, Tel: 01925 632179

Scotland

Loud & Clear, EDINBURGH, Tel: 0131 5553963

Wales

Loud & Clear, GLASGOW, Tel: 0141 2210221
Audio Excellence, SWANSEA, Tel: 01792 474608

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BEST DVD/UNIVERSAL PLAYER UNDER £500

In association with
What Video
is High Definition TV



Marantz DV6001

PRICE £150 TYPE Universal disc player CONTACT 01753 680868 www.marantz.com

The budget market for DVD and universal disc players is both hotly contended, and driven by value over performance these days. That said, there are gems to be found, and the Marantz DV6001 is a true diamond. Able to

upscale video to 1080p and CD to 192kHz/24-bit performance, and also able to play both SACD and DVD-Audio, the slimline HDMI 1.1-equipped player is one of the best ways to get multichannel audio and video on a budget.

Pioneer DV-400V

PRICE £100 TYPE DVD player CONTACT 01753 789500 www.pioneer.co.uk



Denon DVD-1740

PRICE £150 TYPE DVD player CONTACT 01234 741200 www.denon.co.uk



BEST DVD/UNIVERSAL PLAYER £500-£1,000



NAD T585

PRICE £600 TYPE Universal disc player CONTACT 01279 501111 www.nadelectronics.com

Armed with full 5.1 channel multichannel audio connectivity, an HDMI 1.1 output, support for DVD-Audio, SACD and the usual universal suspects, the T585 features comprehensive bass management, designed

to optimise the audio performance in a multichannel setting. Delivering sublime and powerful CD and DVD-Audio sound, as well as impressive video, this is everything you'd expect from a no-nonsense expert like NAD.

Arcam DiVA DV135

PRICE £900 TYPE Universal disc player CONTACT 01223 203200 www.arcam.co.uk



Marantz DV7001

PRICE £600 TYPE Universal disc player CONTACT 01753 680868 www.marantz.com



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We've claimed that Gold Signature reaches unprecedented standards of design, innovation, performance, technical excellence, build quality and value in its class. But you don't have to take our word for it.

Of the GS10, Hi Fi Choice said '...this one most definitely sings...its appeal is obvious...it is a vice-free, expressive and refined speaker with more than enough subtlety and transparency to suit almost any taste, and the resolving ability required to extract the most from high-quality amplifiers and source components.'

And for Hi Fi World the GS60s 'are a class act...an addictive listen...clear, fast and detailed like little else'. It awards top marks 'for the totality of its engineering, superb finish and great price.'

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or call free on: 0800 0352032



 **MONITOR AUDIO®**

BEST DVD/UNIVERSAL PLAYER £1,000-£2,000



Denon DVD-3930

PRICE £1,100 TYPE Universal player CONTACT 01234 741200 www.denon.co.uk

Unless you are desperate for the next-generation charms of Blu-ray or HD DVD, Denon's big gun is an excellent all-round universal player. The DVD-3930 features a sophisticated video upscaler that

successfully pushes DVD to HDTV quality. Music fans will not be disappointed, either as the player sports a 24-bit/192kHz DAC alongside proprietary AL24 processing to deliver excellent multichannel music.

Arcam DiVA DV137

PRICE £1,300 TYPE Universal player CONTACT 01223 203200 www.arcam.co.uk



Marantz DV9600

PRICE £1,300 TYPE Universal player CONTACT 01753 680868 www.marantz.com



BEST DVD/UNIVERSAL PLAYER OVER £2,000



Accustic Arts Surround-Player 1

PRICE £4,495 TYPE Universal player CONTACT 01252 702705 www.accusticarts.com

Based around Pioneer's popular universal player mechanism, this German top-loader sports a 192kHz Burr-Brown DAC, alongside thoroughly audiophile elements like a 75VA transformer and a solid aluminium case.

These all combine to build a picture and a sound quality that's second to none, with excellent dynamic range and timing. It's one of the few that reaches the standards of dedicated players in each department. Wow!

Linn Akurate CD

PRICE £3,985 TYPE Universal player (audio only) CONTACT 0500 888909 www.linn.co.uk



Meridian G98AH

PRICE £3,625 TYPE DVD-A/V/CD player CONTACT 01480 445678 www.meridian-audio.com



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| What HiFi

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performance, and are remarkable for
their dynamic agility, bottom-end weight
and impact, grain-free reproduction of
timbre, and, particularly, for their clarity
and resolution."*

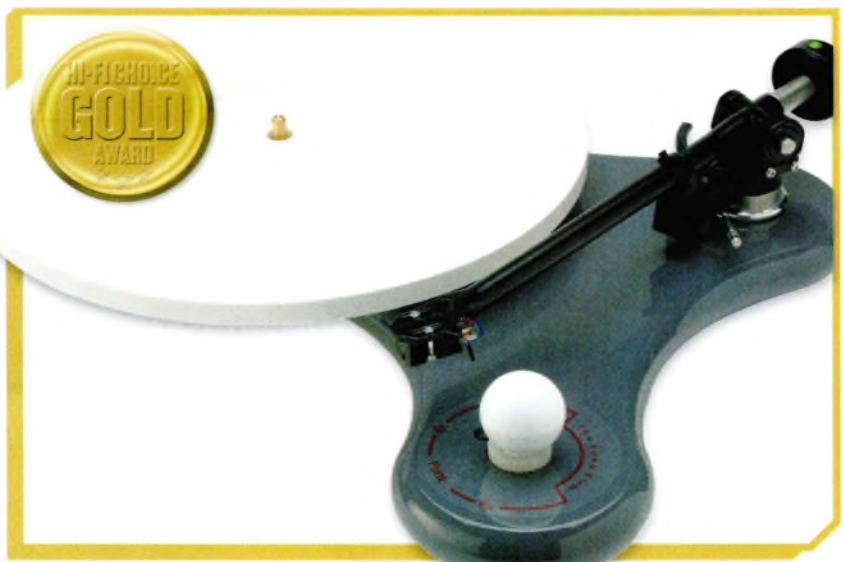
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BEST TURNTABLE UNDER £500



The Funk Firm Funk

PRICE £450 (excluding tonearm/cartridge) **CONTACT** ☎ 020 8697 2705 🌐 www.thefunkfirm.co.uk

Sporting a lightweight vinyl Achroplat platter for perfect mechanical impedance between deck and record, a curvy chassis and resting on three white doorknob feet in Sorbothane, this Funk deck looks like no

other turntable (except possibly its bigger brother). And it sounds like there's no turntable in the way of the music. It's a revolution in record players and remains our top turntable choice at the price.

Rega P3-24

PRICE £398 (including tonearm, £498 including Bias cartridge)
CONTACT ☎ 01702 333071 🌐 www.rega.co.uk

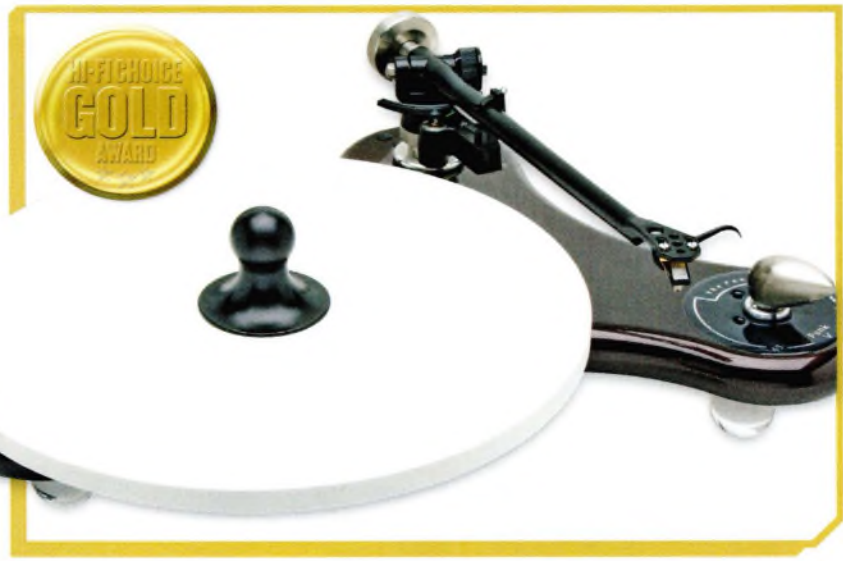


Pro-Ject RPM 5

PRICE £400 (including tonearm and Ortofon OM10 cartridge)
CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 🌐 www.henleydesigns.co.uk



BEST TURNTABLE £500-£1,000



The Funk Firm Funk Vector

PRICE £760 (excluding tonearm/cartridge) **CONTACT** ☎ 020 8697 2705 🌐 www.thefunkfirm.co.uk

Funk's Vector turntable builds upon the considerable strengths of the basic Funk, but hidden under the platter lies the exotic Vector drive. Instead of a single motor pulley, the top Funk features three asymmetrical

pulleys (one motorised) to create the ultimate in low-frequency vinyl resolution. In many respects, the Funk Vector surpasses all other turntables irrespective of price in many key respects. Don't Funk about... try a Vector now!

Michell Tecnodec

PRICE £767 (including Tecno arm, excluding cartridge)
CONTACT ☎ 020 8953 0771 🌐 www.michell-engineering.co.uk



Pro-Ject RPM 6.1

PRICE £550 (including tonearm, excluding cartridge)
CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 🌐 www.henleydesigns.co.uk





P S A U D I O



Rack mount version shown (standard version without side cheeks)



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PS Audio is a recognised leader in power quality and power protection products. If you want to protect the investment in your system, and enjoy a dramatic improvement in your existing components at the same time, try the new **Power Plant Premier**.

The **Power Plant Premier** is the **world's only true AC regenerator** that offers the **full power of the wall**, **low distortion even with difficult loads**, **MultiWave**, **CleanWave**, **remote control**, **true surge protection**, **front panel harmonic power analyzer**, **AC volt meter**, and **outstanding AC isolation**. **All this for just £1,799 represents unbeatable value.**

The Premier Power Plant is now available in the UK with US and UK plug outlets.
Please call for more information.

Digital Link III DAC £799



"The Crowning Jewel... is the Digital Link III."
Absolute Sound, March 2007

GCHA Headphone Amplifier £799



"Brilliant. Loads of power and detail."
ImageXperience, March 2007

GCPH Phono Stage £799



"The Reference Phono."
"The PS Audio is an outstanding design. It gets more from LP than anything I've heard to date."
Christopher Breunig, Hi-Fi News
May 2007 (Score: 20 / 20)

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Dealer enquiries welcome.

BEST TURNTABLE £1,000-£3,000



Clearaudio Performance

PRICE £1,670 (including tonearm/cartridge) CONTACT ☎ 01252 702705 ● www.clearaudio.de

Clearaudio is also always improving its range with innovative developments like the ceramic magnetic bearing found here for the first time (it's an option on many Clearaudios). The pure white deck utilises an

acrylic platter, carbon fibre tonearm and Maestro moving magnet cartridge. The sound is remarkably clean, upbeat and free from coloration. For the next generation in turntable design, it's time to float your vinyl on magnets.

Rega P9

PRICE £2,598 (including tonearm, excluding cartridge)
 CONTACT ☎ 01702 333071 ● www.rega.co.uk



Avid Volvere

PRICE £2,950 (excluding tonearm/cartridge)
 CONTACT ☎ 01480 457300 ● www.auidhifi.co.uk



BEST TURNTABLE OVER £3,000



SME Model 20/12A

PRICE £11,133 (including arm, excluding cartridge) CONTACT ☎ 01903 814321 ● www.sme-hd.uk

This must be one of the biggest turntables in history. It is supplied with a 12" version of the evergreen SME V arm that reduces tracking error and the complete turntable and amp package weighs in at 33.5kg. With

the solidity, bass depth and accuracy of the SME design, coupled with the precision of the longer arm and a build quality that is second to none, this turntable is set to remain at the very top of the tree for years to come.

Brinkmann LaGrange

PRICE £7,895 (including tonearm/cartridge)
 CONTACT ☎ 01727 865488 ● www.brinkmann-audio.com



Avid Acutus

PRICE £7,300 (excluding tonearm/cartridge)
 CONTACT ☎ 01480 457300 ● www.auidhifi.co.uk



www.russandrews.com

0845 345 1550



Nov '07



Ultimate Guide

Upgrade your speaker cable

"8PR has great bass – by some margin, the deepest and clearest of the group – and an effortless command of wide dynamic swings. Its detail is good and imaging highly creditable, while high treble is very open."

HiFi Choice magazine, November 2007

"It's a fast, involving cable, coming into its own when used with gutsy amplification driving speakers that revel in a good dollop of power."

What HiFi Ultimate Guide, October 2006



Kimber 8PR speaker cable £9 per metre
2.5m pair shown, fitted with bananas: £117
Find out more and buy now www.russandrews.com/8pr

Upgrade your interconnects

"It offered a most disconcerting improvement to the performance of several DACs with which we tried it. The old phrase about 'lifting of veils' comes to mind, with details, musical colours and imaging all revealed fresher than ever. Think of it as an integral part of a good, high-end DAC."

HiFi Choice Accessories Supplement, 2006



AWARDS 06



Kimber Select KS-2020 digital interconnect 0.75m £590
Find out more and buy now www.russandrews.com/2020



Want to know more? To request your copy of our **FREE catalogue** which is packed with tips, advice and unique products designed to get the very best from your Hi-Fi or Home Cinema, and a free copy of our quarterly magazine *Connected to Music and Movies*, go to www.russandrews.com/catalogue or call us on **0845 345 1550**

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BEST RADIO TUNER UNDER £500



Onkyo T-4555 DAB

PRICE £350 TYPE DAB/FM CONTACT 01494 681515 www.onkyo.co.uk

Onkyo's T-4555 is a modular tuner and although the base model is purely an AM/FM unit, it can be upgraded to include a DAB tuner module and will presumably include a DAB+ module too, should it

become widely available. The standard DAB model delivers a fine performance, though, and whether on DAB or FM, it remains a tuner with real hi-fi insight – a future-proof masterpiece that's well worth the money.

Denon TU-1800DAB



Marantz ST7001



T+A T1210R



Naim NAT05



BEST RADIO TUNER OVER £500



Magnum Dynalab MD-90T

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

This is the entry point to Magnum Dynalab FM performance and remains our top tuner choice. Don't expect any frills – DAB or RDS are an acronym too far, and even presets and a remote control are optional extras.

What you get instead is a fully analogue, custom-made filter network and a no-feedback triode valve amplifier stage. The sound offers stunning insight into FM radio. Only MD's more upmarket tuners deliver more.

If you've spent more than **£500** on your Hi-Fi, you need one of these

Does your system sound better at some times than at others?

If the answer is yes, you could benefit from a cleaner power supply. The chaotic nature of mains-borne distortion means that your system may be subject to damaging interference effects, sudden power surges and background noise.

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Embracing a wide variety of easy-to-use treatments devised for single source or amplifier components, and accommodating systems of up to twelve devices, the ISOL-8 product range is engineered to allow your system to shine like never before. It could be the best value upgrade you'll ever make.

Visit isol-8.co.uk and read our article, 'Why condition your mains' to find out more, or call **01423 359054** for your nearest ISOL-8 dealer.



Nic Poulson is the designer of all Isol-8 products. An inventive, accomplished designer in fields as diverse as thermionic 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



CleanLine² entry-level, mains power distribution and conditioner unit for up to six components



MainLine² high quality mains supply for individual components



Qube³ mains power conditioner for high power loads

ISOL - 8

Isolate, *ī SŌ-lat, v.t.* to render free from external influence



BEST HARD DISK AUDIO COMPONENT



Imerge SoundServer S3000

PRICE £1,600-£3,800 (depending on storage capacity) CONTACT 01954 783600 www.imerge.co.uk

The Imerge S3000 defines the point where conventional hi-fi meets multiroom. Designed as a XVA-based server, the S3000 can beam up to four distinct and simultaneous music streams from its hard drive, can back up

to a network-attached storage device, and rips discs as WMA, MP3 and uncompressed WAV files. Best of all, its interface is designed as a web browser, so those with a screen can access any disc in a fraction of a second.

Cambridge Audio Azur 640H

PRICE £600 CONTACT 0870 900 1000 www.cambridgeaudio.com



Edirol R-09

PRICE £299 CONTACT 0870 350 1515 www.ediroleurope.com



BEST ONE-BOX CD SYSTEM



Primare CDi10

PRICE £1,200 CONTACT 01423 359054 www.primare.net

Only a few years ago, this category didn't exist. Now, the stores are crammed with systems that take on the micro system... and win. With a 2x 75W Class D amplifier design, an FM/DAB tuner with 50 presets and a CD

player, the CDi10 more than makes the grade. If you want class from a top-flight manufacturer, but don't want a host of boxes, this has the best balance of price, performance and space-saving of any product out there.

Arcam Solo

PRICE £1,000 (for music-only version) CONTACT 01223 203200 www.arcam.co.uk



Meridian G95

PRICE £4,150 (for AM/FM version, or £4,395 for DAB version) CONTACT 01480 445678 www.meridian-audio.com



BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER UP TO £500



Marantz PM7001

PRICE £350 TYPE Integrated amplifier CONTACT 01753 680868 www.marantz.com

The Marantz PM7001 eschews Class A drive – and Class A heat – in favour of a high-bias Class AB circuit. However, this conservatively rated 70-watt integrated amp is exceptionally detailed and communicative

right across the frequency range. It also has excellent dynamic range. All of which makes this amplifier feel and sound like it's far more expensive than it really is. A clear winner for the second year running.

Cambridge Audio Azur 740A

PRICE £500 TYPE Integrated amplifier CONTACT 0870 900 1000 www.cambridgeaudio.com



Creek Evo

PRICE £495 TYPE Integrated amplifier CONTACT 01442 260146 www.creekaudio.com



BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £500-£1,000



Cambridge Audio Azur 840A v2

PRICE £750 TYPE Integrated amplifier CONTACT 0870 900 1000 www.cambridgeaudio.com

Last year, Cambridge Audio wowed us with its incredibly clever Class XD amplifier design. Never one to rest on its laurels, Cambridge Audio improved the design further still. The new amp works even more

like a Class A design, while retaining the environmentally chummy low-heat design of Class XD. With 120 watts on tap, the 840A v2 is as subtle and refined as ever. It remains the amplifier to beat under £1,000.

Cyrus 6vs2

PRICE £1000 TYPE Pre-power amplifier CONTACT 01480 435577 www.cyrusaudio.com



Unison Research Unico P

PRICE £799 TYPE Integrated amplifier CONTACT 01753 652669 www.unisonresearch.com



BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £1,000-£2,000



Cyrus Pre vs2 and 6 power

PRICE £1,000 TYPE Pre/power amplifier CONTACT 01480 435577 www.cyrusaudio.com

Cyrus has always been at the forefront of budget amplification, but with the Pre vs2 and 6 power, the company is setting its sights higher than the sub-£1,000 integrated market. Fully upgradable, with a PSX-R power supply

boosting the preamp, the pre/power combo sports six line inputs, plus a tape monitor on the preamp and 50 watts per channel from the power amp. With a full remote and Cyrus bus compatibility, it sings like a pair of angels

Primare I30

PRICE £1,500 TYPE Integrated amplifier CONTACT 01423 359054 www.primare.net



Naim Audio NAC122x/NAP150x

PRICE £1,600 TYPE Pre/power amplifier CONTACT 01722 426600 www.naim-audio.com



BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER £2,000-£5,000



Naim Audio SuperNait

PRICE £2,350 TYPE Integrated amplifier CONTACT 01722 426600 www.naim-audio.com

Look beneath the spec sheet of this 80 watts per channel amp and you'll find an amplifier that gets back to Naim's roots – powerful, pacy and precise. It can be upgraded with a power supply, or a second

amp and you can bond it into a multiroom system with its RS232 port. It even comes with an iPod mini-jack and a built-in re-clocked DAC. Performance wise, it's gets closer to the music than almost anything else at the price.

Copland CTA405

PRICE £2,498 TYPE Integrated amplifier CONTACT 020 8971 3909 www.copland.dk



Abbingdon Music Research AM-77

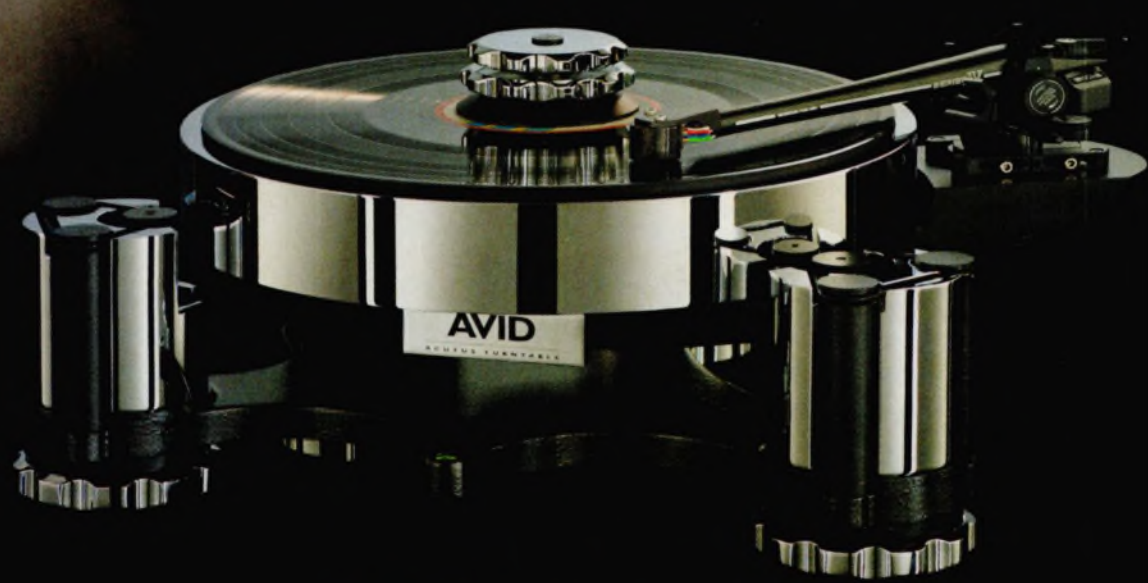
PRICE £4,399 TYPE Integrated amplifier CONTACT 0870 909 6677 www.amr-audio.co.uk





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EDITOR'S CHOICE
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
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New Naim Slide

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E: info@avidhifi.co.uk W: www.avidhifi.co.uk

BEST STEREO AMPLIFIER OVER £5,000



Krell FBI

PRICE £13,949 TYPE Integrated amplifier CONTACT 020 8971 3909 www.krellonline.com

Although it doesn't fit into either of the company's KAV or Evolution ranges, Krell's Fully Balanced Integrated amplifier remains a masterpiece. As a 300-watt Class A amp it can deliver up to 1,200 watts into two ohm

loads and boasts a massive 3kW transformer and huge heatsinks. Best used in XLR balanced mode, or Krell's own CAST connections, this delivers the sort of solidity and resolution expected from Krell. And some.

Classé CP-700/CA-M400

PRICE £13,350 TYPE Pre/power amplifier CONTACT 01903 221500 www.classeaudio.com



Ayre K-1xe/V-1xe

PRICE £11,490 TYPE Pre/power amplifier CONTACT 01727 865488 www.ayre.com



INFO – AMPLIFIERS

Of the group of amplifiers winning awards, two have stayed unchanged this year and another is an upgrade of last year's winner. You could be forgiven for thinking that the amplifier market is static. Nothing could be further from the truth. Behind the scenes, huge changes are taking place in the stereo amplifier world, many of which are coming to fruition.

One of the biggest changes is the influx of good quality valve amplifiers, which are now priced at a fraction of the price of previous models. Amps like the Pure Sound A30 integrated will become typical, designed in the UK and manufactured in China, these products deliver a sound that would have been unattainable a few years ago at anything like the price.

Beyond the high end or even middle market, with valve based products, the lower end of the hi-fi amplifier market has been forever changed by the birth of the Brit fi/China-fi crossover. British names designing in the UK and manufacturing in China have gone from being an exception to being the norm. And the trend will only continue. Some companies (such as Rega and Naim) resolutely refuse to switch production to China, while others (such as Musical Fidelity) have moved much of their manufacture east and still more (notably Creek) produce the entry level range in China and the more up-scale designs locally. This move to Chinese production spells economies of scale, which often mean better products at every price point, even from those who build locally, who have to raise their game to remain competitive.

Another potentially big change is the move to using new technologies inside the amplifier itself. Thus far, the only two we have commented

upon is Class D ('digital' switching amplifier designs, seen in models like those from Flying Mole) and Class XD (as found in the award-winning Azur 840A v2). Hot on the heels of these, come Class T (or Tripath) – as seen in the Audio Research 150M multichannel amp, and the Sonic Impact range of five-watt amps so beloved of the interwebular fraternity – and B&O's IcePower technology, found unsurprisingly in Bang & Olufsen products and Bel Canto's latest amps. Ultra-minimalist chip amps from 47 Laboratory and their home built power amp copies (called a 'gainclone') are becoming a viable alternative to traditional amplifier designs. Whether you consider an amplifier just a 'straight wire with gain' or something more subtly influencing your sound, these amplifier designs deserve to be considered today and are up there on our list of products to evaluate.

But otherwise, it's hard to second guess where the hi-fi amplifier market is going. The limited success of the high resolution multichannel audio market (even SACD is now often touted as a two channel medium) has meant that 7.1 channel audiophile amplification is less important than before. Meanwhile, stereo appears to be having a comeback across the board. In some circles, the need to assimilate your stereo into the multiroom collective is all powerful, in others, the very existence of an RS232 port on the back of an otherwise excellent amp is viewed with great suspicion. Some are packing their amps with endless power and current delivery, while others are cutting back the drive further still, to take advantage of high sensitivity loudspeakers. And still more have returned to their roots, making good, solid amplifiers that fall somewhere between the two.

BEST LOUDSPEAKER UNDER £500

Q Acoustics 1050

PRICE £330 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 01279 501111 www.qacoustics.co.uk

No change at the top. The impressive Q Acoustics brand has redefined the budget end of the loudspeaker market, as this popular floorstander shows. Using British design and Far Eastern construction, the 1050 has got all its sums right. With two 165mm bass units flanking a 25mm tweeter, this 18kg speaker is, materially, incredible value for money. Its well-balanced (if rough-edged), honest and dynamic sound is just as good value, too.



Monitor Audio BR2

PRICE £200 per pair TYPE Standmount CONTACT 01268 740580 www.monitoraudio.co.uk



Tannoy Mercury F4

PRICE £350 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 01236 420199 www.tannoy.com



BEST LOUDSPEAKER £500-£1,000

Bowers & Wilkins 683

PRICE £899 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 01903 221600 www.bw-speakers.com

It's not every day that B&W launches a new range, so when the company changed its ever-popular 600 series, we all took notice. The 683 sits in the middle of the range and features the company's 150mm FST midrange unit found in the more upmarket 800 series. This, coupled to two 165mm aluminium/Kevlar bass units and an aluminium dome tweeter, makes for a dynamic and revealing loudspeaker design that's going to set the standard for years to come.



Acoustic Energy Aelite 3

PRICE £750 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 01285 654432 www.acoustic-energy.co.uk



Focal Chrous 816V

PRICE £999 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 0845 660 2680 www.focal-fr.com



BEST LOUDSPEAKER £1,000-£2,000

Focal Chorus 836V

PRICE £1,549 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 0845 660 2680 www.focal-fr.com

This five driver, three-way top-of-the-range speaker is no beauty, but it makes up for its pedestrian exterior with a 20mm-thick cabinet and internal bracing that's hard to better at the price. With four Focal-built 165mm Polyglass coated paper cones coupled to a 25mm tweeter, you might think this is a powerful, bass-oriented speaker. You'd be wrong; this dynamic, warm-sounding speaker is perfectly integrated across the board. One of the cheapest ways to true high-end glory



DALI Ikon 7

PRICE £1,199 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 0845 6443537 www.dali-uk.co.uk



Yamaha Soavo 2

PRICE £1,200 per pair TYPE Standmount CONTACT 01923 233166 www.yamaha-uk.com



BEST LOUDSPEAKER £2,000-£5,000

Quad ESL 2805

PRICE £4,500 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 01480 447700 www.quad-hifi.co.uk

There's something quintessentially right about a Quad electrostatic. Based upon a 50-year-old design that's been refined (but never bettered) across the years, the ESL 2805 is now braced at the rear for extra stiffness and is mass-loaded for added rigidity. Essentially though, it retains the four large Mylar panels and radiating ring electrostatic design for unparalleled midband clarity and neutrality. Not the first choice for heads-down rock, but the ultimate acoustic speaker.



KEF Reference Model 201/2

PRICE £3,500 per pair TYPE Standmount CONTACT 01622 672261 www.kef.com



Tannoy Glenair 10

PRICE £3,299 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 01236 420199 www.tannoy.com



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Mike Manning Audio

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BEST LOUDSPEAKER OVER £5,000

Bowers & Wilkins 802D

PRICE £8,000 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 01903 221500 www.bw-speakers.com

B&W's innovative diamond tweeter and Kevlar midrange unit impressed us big time in 2005. So much so, it's two years later and still nothing comes close. The 802D combines remarkably effortless sound with a vast sense of scale and makes almost every other speaker seem glaringly false. Despite the titanic scale, the speaker is as entertaining as a small, fast box. A triumph of audio engineering, then and a genuine benchmark loudspeaker.



PMC EB1

PRICE £5,950 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 0870 4441044 www.pmc-speakers.com



Triangle Magellan Concerto SW2

PRICE £14,500 per pair TYPE Floorstander CONTACT 01753 652669 www.triangle-fr.com



INFO – LOUDSPEAKERS

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

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

Some of the best results can be achieved by taking demo speakers home to experiment with. Speak to dealers in your area and see if it's possible to leave a deposit and take a demonstration pair (or two) home to audition. Because speakers are so room-sensitive, what you hear in the dealer's dem-room might not be what you're presented with when you get home. So it's well worth some time spent on the phone to see if you can find a dealer that offers this valuable service. If they don't, try to persuade them.

With high-resolution multichannel music available to the audiophile, it can also be worth considering a 5.1 speaker set-up. This is particularly pertinent if your system also incorporates your TV and DVD player. There are various ways to consider the centre and rear speakers within a multichannel set-up. For music, it's recommended that you choose five identical full-range speakers and place them equidistant from the listener, firing directly towards his/her position in the centre (this is known as the ITU configuration). However, this is often impractical – most multichannel systems also incorporate a video screen and a

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

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

Small sub/sat systems may appeal to some people aesthetically, but rarely will they challenge the coherence of a good, full-range integrated loudspeaker system, which is why you'll find none in this year's Awards. That said, a number of stylish and compact solutions with obvious AV or PC appeal have emerged from some highly reputed brands, and with sound quality certainly improving this is an area to watch. Subwoofers themselves continue to be viewed as largely the preserve of home cinema enthusiasts, but the effect of a 'musical' sub in augmenting the bass and 'driving the room' in cahoots with a good hi-fi system shouldn't be ignored, multichannel or not. Our subwoofer Awards on page 55 hold such ability paramount.

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BEST SUBWOOFER UNDER £1,000

REL T1

PRICE £595 CONTACT 01656 768777 www.rel.net

REL's T1 combines useful connectivity with easier than ever set-up procedures. It's the first REL to sport a forward-firing passive drive unit alongside the down-firing long-throw bass driver more common to the REL breed. It looks different to most REL subs and sounds just as refined as the best bass beasts, with more control and greater extension than any of its peers. One of the most musical subwoofers around and proof that low bass is good for more than just cinema.



B&W PV1

PRICE £950 CONTACT 01903 221500 www.bwospeakers.com



Velodyne SPL-800R

PRICE £699 CONTACT 0131 555 3922 www.velodyne.com



BEST SUBWOOFER OVER £1,000

Wilson Benesch Torus

PRICE £5,240 (with amplifier) CONTACT 01142 852656 www.wilson-benesch.com

This is not yer average big square box powered subwoofer. First, it's not one box, but two – the dedicated Torus amplifier sits outside the main sub, which looks all the world like an up-turned Formula One racing slick. The upward-firing sub is designed to overcome the speed limitations of the large drive unit needed to deliver deep bass, making this one of the fastest, deepest-sounding subwoofers around.



Eclipse 725SW

PRICE £2,700 CONTACT 020 7328 4499 www.eclipse-tsl.com



MartinLogan Descent

PRICE £2,350 CONTACT 020 8971 3909 www.martinlogan.com



BEST SPEAKER CABLE UNDER £10 PER METRE



Kimber 8PR

PRICE £9/m CONTACT 0845 345 1550 www.kimber.com

Kimber's classic cable is hardly exciting looking (in its brown and black livery), but it combines a lot of copper strands, each conductor wrapped in polythene with a clever interference-busting custom woven

layout. This gives the cable a sense of authority and solidity that pushes the competition aside at the money. Treble, bass, dynamic range, soundstaging... all are hard to better for the money.

Wireworld Luna 16/4

PRICE £6/m CONTACT 020 8991 9200 www.wireworldaudio.com



van den Hul The Bridge

PRICE £6/m CONTACT 01235 511166 www.vanden Hul.com



BEST SPEAKER CABLE OVER £10 PER METRE



Townshend Isolda DCT

PRICE £50/m CONTACT 020 8979 2155 www.townshendaudio.com

Four years on and it's still top of the pile... with room to spare. Townshend Audio's Deep Cryogenic Treatment (DCT) loudspeaker cable still manages to ice the competition. With the two thin flat copper conductors,

passive components at either end of the cable and the cool treatment, it's impossible to give this cable a frosty reception. This is still the speaker cable that comes closest to that zen-like 'sound of no cable' ideal.

Atlas Ascent 2.0

PRICE £55/m CONTACT 0800 731 1140 www.atlascables.co.uk



Profigold PGC82546

PRICE £18/m CONTACT 01923 205605 www.profigold.com



BEST INTERCONNECT UNDER £100 PER PAIR



Clearer Audio Copper-line Alpha

PRICE £85 (1m pair) CONTACT 01702 543981 www.clearaudio.com

A stiff, thick copper cable using a pseudo-balanced construction and Eichmann low-metal bullet plugs. This no-nonsense cable design manages to sound far more expensive than it really

is. With an open, airy treble and beautiful midrange, but none of the dryness that can sometimes mar the performance of cheaper interconnects, this is a genuine audiophile bargain.

Black Rhodium Prelude

PRICE £80 (1m pair)
CONTACT 01332 342233 www.blackrhodium.co.uk



Cambridge Audio Azur Reference

PRICE £50 (0.75m pair)
CONTACT 0870 900 1000 www.cambridgeaudio.com



BEST INTERCONNECT OVER £100 PER PAIR



Crystal Cable Connect Piccolo

PRICE £260 (1m pair) CONTACT 020 8371 3909 www.crystalcable.com

Designed by an ex-concert pianist – who just happens to be the wife of the owner of Siltech – you might expect the Dutch Crystal Cable Connect Piccolo to deliver the goods. And it does, beautifully. The

insubstantial-looking cables might not look impressive, but it's what they do with music that counts and here it manages to combine precise, tight bass with plenty of articulation. And that cable design is deceptively robust.

Black Rhodium Coda

PRICE £150 (1m pair)
CONTACT 01332 342233 www.blackrhodium.co.uk



Supra Sword-ISL

PRICE £379 (1m pair)
CONTACT 01223 441299 www.supracables.co.uk



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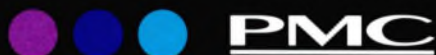
"Combining this openness with deep and powerful bass extension is a good thing and something few designers achieve."

"Revealing and precise."

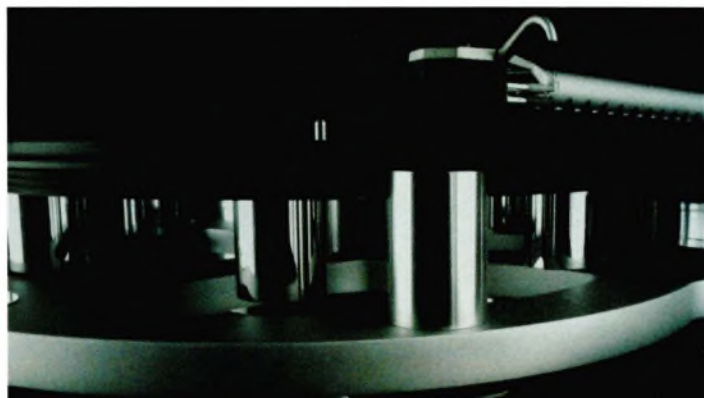
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Jason Kennedy, *HIFI Choice* April 07

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Leeds	Sevenoaks S&V	01132 452775
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Maidenhead	Audio Venue	01628 633995
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BRITISH DESIGN AND
ENGINEERING AT ITS BEST

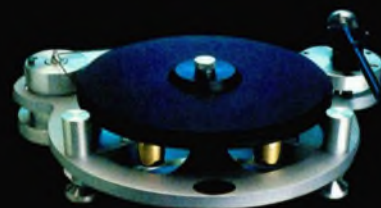
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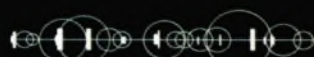


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BEST DIGITAL INTERCONNECT



Kimber Select KS200

PRICE £675 (1m coaxial) CONTACT 0845 345 1550 www.kimber.com

If you take digital audio seriously, then you really should audition this link. Inside the wooden phono plug sleeves are capacitors connected between conductors and connector. These reduce the possibility of stray earth

currents spoiling the digital datastream. We found this cable brought about improvements to even the cheapest transport and decoder, but made a major difference to genuine high-end audio, where it naturally belongs.

Atlas Compass

PRICE £75 (1m coaxial) CONTACT 0800 731 1140 www.hif.org.uk



Audioquest VDM-3

PRICE £82 (1m coaxial) CONTACT 01452 858260 www.audioquest.com



BEST MAINS CONDITIONER/CABLE



IsoTek Sigmas

PRICE £995 CONTACT 0870 241 079

IsoTek's Sigmas builds upon the company's award-winning GII Mini Sub layout, with six output sockets each with separate filtration. The integrated amp-sized component houses two 16A outputs, four 6A outputs and a

special bayonet-lock mains socket with its own, inflexible mains lead. We found the block brought about improvements in detail, precision and soundstaging. A year on and there's still nothing to touch it... yet.

Russ Andrews Ultra Purifier Block

PRICE £325 CONTACT 0845 345 1550 www.russandrews.com



Wireworld Stratus 5

PRICE £100/2m CONTACT 020 8991 9200 www.wireworldaudio.com



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Integrated Amplifier £1000

- Larger power supply
- 110 watts RMS (as compared to 100W for the previous model)
- 6 line inputs, bi-wiring and bi-amping compatible
- Option to fit a MC or MM phono cartridge
- Remote control

Power Amplifier £800

- Larger power supply
- 110 watts RMS (as compared to 100W for the previous model)
- Capable of driving sophisticated speaker systems, in bi-amping mode or monoblock mode
- Clean and extended low frequency response

BEST HEADPHONES UNDER £200

Beyerdynamic DT880

PRICE £199 CONTACT 01444 258258 www.beyerdynamic.co.uk

Beyerdynamic isn't one to change its product names on a whim. The latest DT880 is nothing like previous models with the same code number. This exceptionally comfortable open-backed headphone has a 'loudspeaker-like' balance and approach, though if you like really bass-heavy music you may find the balance just a touch lean. Nevertheless, it's easy to drive (even a CD's headphone output works well) and an ideal neutral, well-built choice.



Sennheiser HD595

PRICE £160 CONTACT 01494 551551 www.sennheiser.co.uk



Sennheiser HD485

PRICE £60 CONTACT 01494 551551 www.sennheiser.co.uk



BEST HEADPHONES OVER £200

Grado GS1000

PRICE £99 CONTACT 01273 501111 www.gradolabs.com

These are not new headphones, but anyone who listens to them ends up falling in love with them. These may cost a hundred times more than the most basic cans, but they deliver some of the finest sounds you can hear through hi-fi, irrespective of whether the music is played through loudspeakers or headphones. Yes, they really are that good. You need to try them out, because their design doesn't suit every head, but if the band fits... wear it!



Sennheiser HD650

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



Shure SE420

PRICE £250 CONTACT 020 8808 2222 www.shure.co.uk



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TUCANA'S VICE LIKE GRIP AND
PRECISE CONTROL OF HIS
LOUDSPEAKERS



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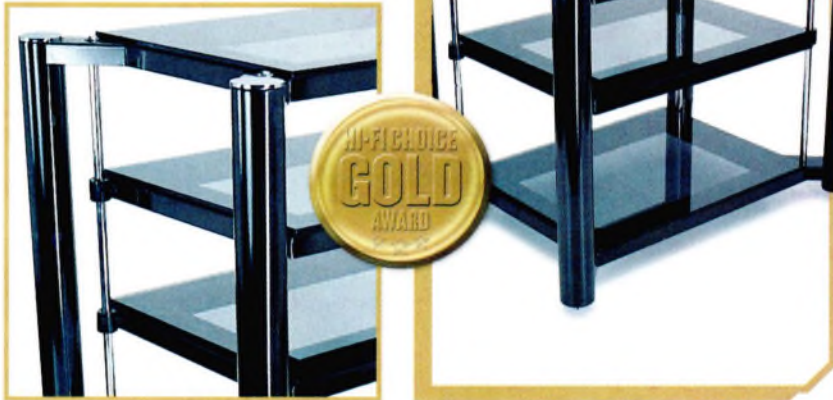
BEAUTIFULLY ENGINEERED SOUND

BEST EQUIPMENT SUPPORT UNDER £500

Partington Minim

PRICE £449 (five shelves) CONTACT 01474 709299 www.partingtonhandco.co.uk

This is a very elegant, deceptively sophisticated equipment support, with the middle two shelves capable of being adjusted to fit any product at the turn of an Allen key. The inner shelves are also acoustically isolated from the main pillars, so no ringing pilot holes in the main uprights. The metal and glass Minim reflects the care and attention put into the design, with a tight, fast and focused sound.



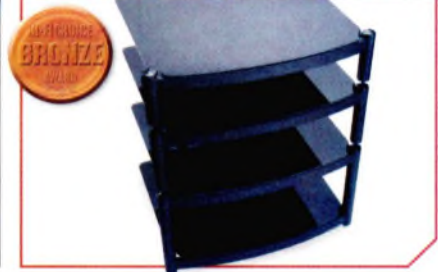
Custom Design Expression Hi-Fi XL4

PRICE £380 CONTACT 0191 262 4646 www.customdesign.co.uk



Atacama Equinox

PRICE £300 (base and two additional shelves) CONTACT 01455 283251 www.atacama-audio.co.uk



BEST EQUIPMENT SUPPORT OVER £500

Custom Design Icon Signature Acoustic

PRICE £600 CONTACT 0191 262 4646 www.customdesign.co.uk

Once again, Custom Design's Icon system offers the buyer a lengthy list of options. Factor in a range of different finishes for the uprights, fully adjustable middle shelves and you have the standard Icon Signature system. Now, add in a quartet of iRAP (isolation resonance-absorbing platform) bases and you have an 'Acoustic' stand that can help bring out the best possible audiophile performance from any CD player, amplifier or electronics component.



Townshend Audio VSSS

PRICE £1350 (four shelf, wide version) CONTACT 020 8979 2155 www.townshendaudio.com



Clearlight Audio Aspekt

PRICE £600 CONTACT 01635 291357 www.clearlight-audio.de



How the new 550K Supercharger from Musical Fidelity turns most hi-fi systems into 550w dynamic power houses.

The new 550K Supercharger is a low gain power amp that is connected to the system just before the loudspeakers.

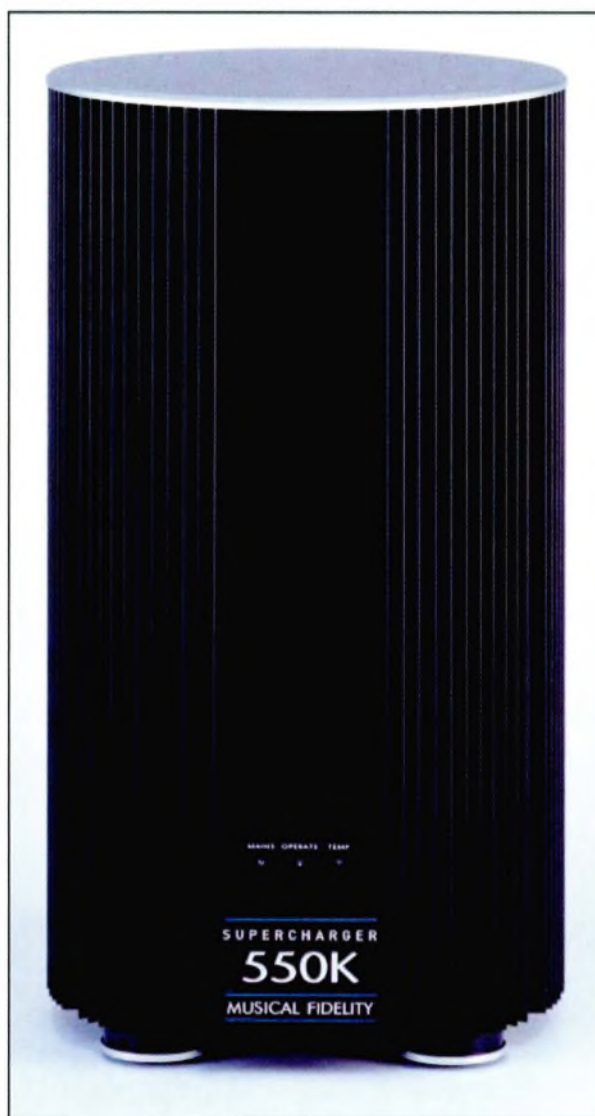
Used in a system with an amp rated between 50 and 200 watts, it will increase its power to 550 watts, and improve the system almost beyond recognition.

It dramatically increases dynamic range and enables the amplifier already in the system to function perfectly.

The 550K turns even a modest integrated amp into a state-of-the-art amplification system.

It works with any make of amp, and it works with valve amps, transistor amps and hybrids.

Visit musicalfidelity.com to find out more about the 550K Supercharger, or contact your audio dealer for an audition.



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BEST SPEAKER STANDS UNDER £150

Custom Design SQ 402

PRICE £100 per pair (51cm) CONTACT 0191 262 4646 www.customdesign.co.uk

The 'Custom' part of Custom Design's name is easy to sport here. This two-pillar loudspeaker stand is part of a highly configurable range of components, so the base model can be enhanced by an 'Acoustic Steel' top plate and the uprights packed with the company's Inert filler. Plus, they look good, too. If you are looking at budget loudspeaker stands, these upgradeable models are the best you can buy today.



Partington Ansa 60

PRICE £113 per pair (60cm) CONTACT 01474 709299 www.partingtonandco.co.uk



Atacama Nexus 6

PRICE £70 per pair (60cm) CONTACT 01455 283251 www.atacama-audio.co.uk



BEST SPEAKER STANDS OVER £150

Partington Heavi II

PRICE £399 per pair (61cm) CONTACT 01474 709299 www.partingtonandco.co.uk

They certainly live up to their name, with 28kg of steel, sand and resin finished in either silver or gloss black. Although they are some of the heaviest speaker stands around, they are also some of the tightest. They control the bass perfectly, with no undue bloom, which extends into the midrange and treble. If you want an uncoloured speaker stand, these are the best we've (not) heard to date. A hidden gem in the Partington range, especially as it's not even listed on the website.



Anvil Sound Display 4 Series

PRICE £226 per pair (60cm) CONTACT 0800 043 1207 www.anvilsound-display.co.uk



Custom Design Reference

PRICE £300 per pair (51/61cm) CONTACT 0191 262 4646 www.customdesign.co.uk



P R I M A R E



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Gold Award, HiFi Choice, October 2008



concept - hi-fi

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REVIEWS

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



EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

- 68** Bryston BCD-1 compact disc player
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ROUND-UP

HEADPHONES £70-£200

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- 78** Beyerdynamic DT880
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- 79** Sennheiser HD600



OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

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

Our overall conclusion

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

VERDICT

SOUND >> 84%

FEATURES >> 85%

BUILD >> 85%

VALUE >> 85%

CONCLUSION

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

The things we like most about the product

The things we think could be better

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

OUR AWARD BADGES EXPLAINED



Best Buy

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



Editor's Choice

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

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



TRACK 3 2:34
PAUSE

BCD-1 CD Player

BRYSTON

PREV NEXT STOP PAUSE

OPEN/CLOSE

BCD-1 CD Player

ОТКРЫТИЕ/ЗАКРЫТИЕ

WALK
MUTE

Right first time

Bryston's first-ever CD player brings class-leading build quality to the £2k sector

PRODUCT Bryston BCD-1

TYPE CD player

PRICE £2,050

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 43.2x79x28.6cm

○ Weight: 8.2kg ○ Crystal 192kHz/24-bit DAC

○ Digital outputs: SPDIF, AES EBU, Toslink ○ Analogue outputs: single-ended RCA phono, balanced XLR

CONTACT ☎ 0870 4441044 # www.bryston.ca

Bryston is a solid, dependable company that offers a 20-year guarantee with all its amplifiers, even though they rarely seem to require any attention during that time, if long-term owners are to be believed. It's this overarching desire to make reliable products that has, perhaps, prevented Bryston from making a CD player until now – 25 years since the format was first introduced. One theory is that Bryston was waiting for components that could match the rock-solid reputation of its amplifiers. If that's the case, then the three-year parts and labour warranty on the BCD-1 would suggest that Bryston's long wait for failsafe componentry was ultimately in vain. In any case, to hear the official line on why it's taken Bryston so long to release a CD player, turn to the James Tanner interview on page 70.

The BCD-1 is a pretty sensible-looking player: it's clearly hardcore and makes few, if any, concessions to audiophile fashion, although it does have a nice bit of laser-cut branding on the front of the disc drawer that's keeps it looking cool. It's a little disappointing that the drawer behind is a regular, plastic variety of the Philips kind, but given that the drawer has little if any effect upon the sound, this shouldn't come as a surprise. Bryston doesn't do things for the sake of showroom appeal, it does them for the right reasons – a lesson learned from years of providing amplifiers for the pro-audio fraternity.

The BCD-1's display is not an off-the-shelf unit, not in the audio world at least, and while it's a little on the small side, you can use it to do unusual things, like turning the 12-volt trigger on and off, as well as the more popular time, repeat and scan displays. If you select a new track while it's playing another, it will display both for the two seconds or thereabouts that it takes to make the change, which, while hardly essential, is quite nice. The remote handset feels reassuringly solid and features a plethora of small buttons like those on the player, albeit

with volume control for a Bryston integrated or preamp such as the BP-26, plus a code facility that allows you to select which component will respond to volume changes and muting. It'll also allow you to change the display brightness.

Inside the steel and aluminium casework, Bryston has gone to great lengths to create a

impedance that the Crystal chip can deliver, which allows maximum ease of flow. As you don't have the same limitations with regard to heat dissipation that you do in a chip, Bryston is able to provide a powerful signal for the balanced and single-ended outputs.

As with most Bryston products there is

“The BCD-1 is a pretty sensible-looking player; it's clearly hardcore and makes few, if any, concessions to audiophile fashion.”

player that avoids the small but significant timing errors introduced by jitter, citing the fact that both transport and DAC have to be run off the same master clock if optimum performance is to be achieved. The engineers at Bryston's Ontario facility selected Crystal's CS4398 digital to analogue converter for this player, a DAC that oversamples at 128 times and uses a hybrid of multi-bit and delta sigma technologies. While the company does its level best to provide this component with the cleanest power supply it possibly can, there are limits to the extent in which it can influence the sound. The output stage, on the other hand, allows more flexibility, especially as it is a discrete (non chip) type built to the high standards associated with Bryston amplifiers.

Bryston claims that the output stage has been tailored to precisely match the requirements of the DAC: specifically to offer

nothing fundamentally different about the way this player has been put together; the brochure details the extent to which the engineers have tried to minimise noise and jitter, but you'll find the same with the competition. What really differentiates this player is Bryston's track record for building very reliable, low coloration amplifiers alongside an approach to aesthetics that is truly hardcore. There is variation available, though, the BCD-1 also comes in silver, and there is the option of a 19-inch rack-mount front panel.

While Bryston is first and foremost an amplifier maker, the BCD-1 is designed to be compatible with all high-quality amplifiers, be they integrated or pre/power, with or without balanced inputs. Having said that, the volume/mute buttons on the BCD-1's remote handset are designed to operate ▶



Q&A

We spoke to James Tanner, vice president of Sales and Marketing at Bryston about the BCD-1.



HFC Why wait 25 years to build your first CD player?

JF We had no intention of getting into the CD player market, but when we designed our internal stereo DAC about three years ago for our preamps, the response in the market was overwhelmingly positive to say the least. Given that most people are fed up with all the 'format wars' we decided – based on our customers input – to offer a state-of-the-art CD player built around our DAC for the thousands of Red Book CDs and CD-Rs that already exist.

Were you not tempted to go down the universal player route?

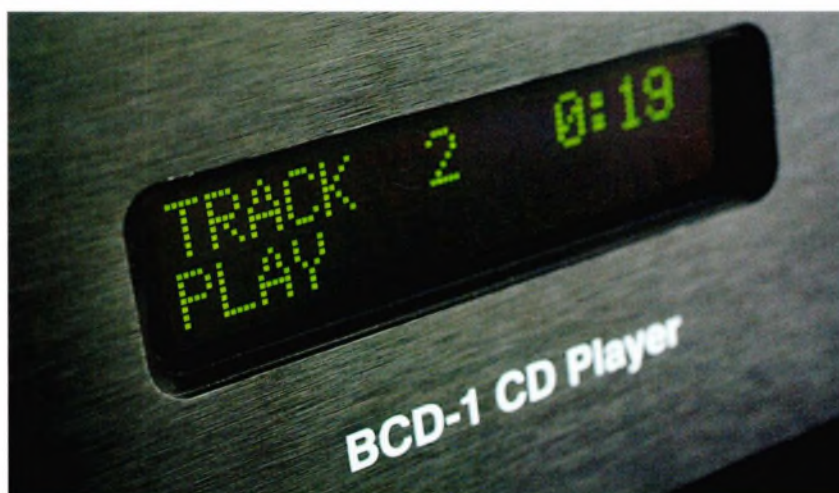
Yes, due to the increase in the home theatre market and the success of our surround-sound processor, we did consider a universal player. Given the continued indecision on which format will win, and when, we decided to steer clear. Also, universal players have issues with 'clocking' at multiples of the CD standard of 44.1kHz due to their video requirements.

What was it that appealed to you about the Crystal DAC you have selected?

We tested a number of DACs when we were designing the internal preamp DAC and felt that the Crystal performed and sounded the best, given our designs. That said, I have to say that most of the quality DACs from the five different manufacturers we looked at performed very well. I think the significant difference in our CD player is the discrete analogue stages around the DAC. The Bryston BCD-1 CD player uses fully discrete Class A operational amplifiers after the DAC, instead of the commonly used integrated circuits.

Can it be upgraded by using the MPS2 power supply?

No, the MPS-2 will not work with the CD player. Originally, we were thinking of going down that road, but discovered that we got much better performance by totally separating the digital power supply section from the analogue power supply section in the CD player. The other big advantage of an internal power supply is that we can optimise the voltage and current required by the CD player.



Bryston components, specifically the BP26 and BP6 preamps, B60R and B100 integrated amplifiers and SP2 preamp/processor. These Bryston amps will also have 12-volt trigger outputs that can be used to automatically turn the BCD-1 on, as they themselves are powered up, and vice versa. This, however, is a feature of many North American amps.

SOUND QUALITY

The player's sound reflects in many ways the build and technology used for the job, by which we mean that it delivers a grounded, solid sound which majors on neutrality at the expense of romance. Bryston amplifiers sound much the same, but where things differ is in

the phenomenal sense of precision and pin-sharp timing. We were actually surprised at how upfront and keen the BCD-1 is; it takes the pace, rhythm and timing qualities so espoused by some hi-fi companies and shows them how such things should be done. It boasts genuine authority too, no doubt a result of the great lengths Bryston has gone to in order to eradicate jitter. Bryston's marketing spiel may not read a great deal different to the efforts of their competitors, but the end result certainly sounds much more solid and compelling.

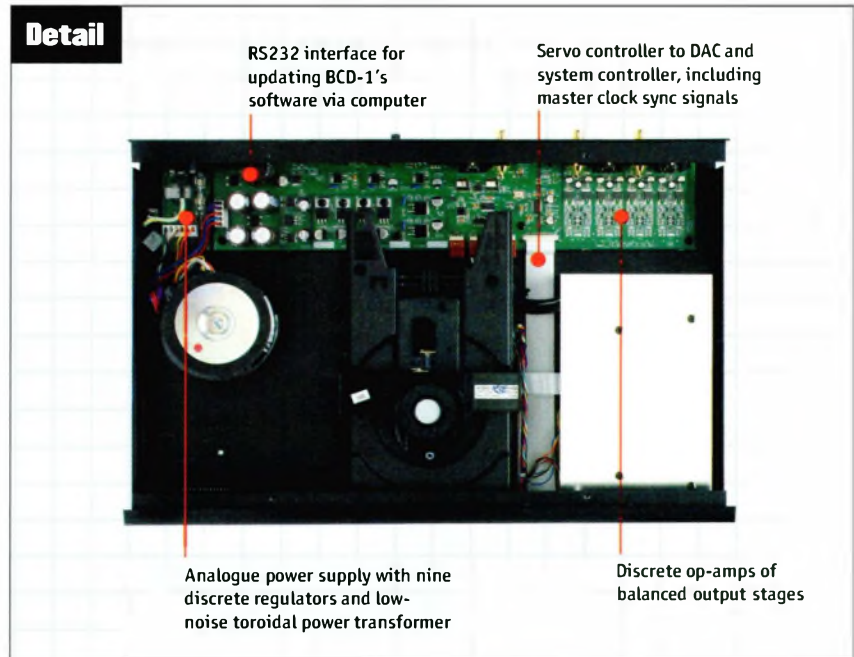
The key lies in the bass, which is the hardest part of the spectrum to make tuneful and tight, or so it would usually seem. Here though, even the thickest, most complicated bass lines are clearly revealed, overcoming what one might otherwise have ascribed as limitations in the amplification or loudspeaker in the process. One track that aptly demonstrates this is Soweto's *Where It's At*, the stand-out piece on *Friends Seen and Unseen* by the Charlie Hunter Trio. With this track the bass line is usually huge and lumbering on nearly everything you play it through, yet in the BCD-1's hands it has a clarity and precision that is quite surprising.



This is partly because the Bryston has a dry balance; its sound is the opposite of the romance you get with a valve output stage, for example. There is, therefore, rather less 'juice' and rather more 'crunch' to the result in tonal terms. Doubtless, there will be those who will find this approach less appealing. When it comes to engagement with the music, however, the BCD-1's approach does the business in no uncertain terms.

Our comparison source, the Resolution Audio Opus 21, costs another thousand pounds and is, therefore, not a direct competitor, although it does put the Bryston into perspective. Next to it, the Opus 21 produces a bigger, more seamless picture with a greater sense of openness, with more convincing imaging as a result. The BCD-1's imaging seems a little restrained by comparison, and the overall sound lacks the degree of finesse on offer from the more expensive machine. Yet while the sonic picture is seemingly more complete with the Opus 21, the Bryston does produce very similar levels of detail when it comes to hard facts. By which we mean notes, noises and suchlike, rather than the more ephemeral (but equally important) sense of acoustic space that is also to be found on the disc.

The Bryston does seem to delve right down into the mix, picking up fine details that are not always apparent. Clearly the work that the company has done to keep noise out of the signal has been effective because the noise floor has obviously been pushed down a long way. Better still, it has managed to do this without letting go of the most important factor – musicality. This nefarious term applies equally as much to transistor radios, yet when it comes to achieving high-resolution, can sometimes get forgotten in the quest for ever lower noise and greater imaging. The Linn Akurate CD that we reviewed (HFC 299) also demonstrates this quality, but in the context of a sonic character that borders on the coloured, Bryston has merely ended up with a slightly dry-sounding player. It is, however, a player that is so good at revealing what every instrument and voice in the mix is



“The BCD-1 reflects its build, delivering a grounded, solid sound which majors on neutrality at the expense of romance.”

doing that it's possible to follow, and even enjoy, the most dense of musical passages. Sean Noonan's *Stories To Tell* can get a bit that way in places, what with so many virtuoso musicians in one place. In the Bryston's hands, however, everything falls into place with a coherence that is locked down by Thierno Camara's bass playing, which the BCD-1 resolves so clearly. And it does so without emphasising that end of the spectrum, *a la* Wadia for instance.

We might be over-emphasising the dryness here: put a luxuriant recording on, such as *Eva Taylor at the Pawnshop* (see *Choice Cuts* p22) and you get a fulsome, warm and expansive soundstage, populated with gorgeous-sounding brass and the remarkable voice of the lady at

the microphone. Ditto Cornelius and his percussive guitar and bass gymnastics, which are served all the better for the Bryston's ability to stop and start so precisely.

If it's not already apparent by now, this is a great CD player. We judged it by standards that are fifty per cent more expensive and found little wanting in terms of musical engagement. In fact, if timing is your bag then you might well prefer the nailed-down approach of the Bryston to competitors at twice the price. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



VERDICT

SOUND >> 89% [Progress bar]	PRO In terms of performance, the BCD-1 boasts solid, superbly timed and uncannily engaging sound. In terms of the build it's as solid as they come, which is backed up by a three year warranty.
FEATURES >> 86% [Progress bar]	CON The slightly dry sound lacks the openness of competitors, while the display is a little difficult to read at a distance.
BUILD >> 92% [Progress bar]	
VALUE >> 90% [Progress bar]	

CONCLUSION
A surprisingly engaging and entertaining CD player that eschews bells and whistles in favour of getting the fundamentals locked down. It's not as open as some, but is rather more timely than most and it sounds as good as it looks.

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



EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE
magazine



Get active

ATC's stylish new active speaker offers an excellent introduction to the active principle

PRODUCT ATC SCM16A

TYPE Active loudspeaker

PRICE £2,203 per pair

KEY FEATURES Size (HxWxD): 45x27x33cm

• Weight: 17.5kg • Built-in power amp (200W+50W)

• 150mm bass/mid driver • 25mm tweeter

• Sensitivity: 0.5V • Input: balanced XLR

CONTACT ☎ 01285 760561 🌐 www.atc.gb.net

We don't get to see many active loudspeakers here at *Hi-Fi Choice*. Despite the assertions of many loudspeaker designers that they are the future, and regardless of their considerable success in the pro-audio world, they just haven't caught on. The most obvious and probably most

important reason is simply that most audiophiles don't like having their choice of amplifier dictated to them. Even if they're happy to take on trust the quality of amps fitted inside a speaker, they probably already own amps that they like and are loath to part with.

That said, ATC and others do sell actives to domestic users. The press release accompanying this new model suggests that it will suit stereo and multi-channel systems in small to medium rooms, or even "the ultimate MP3 PA system!" Well, yes, we suppose so... At the very least you'll need some custom-made adaptor cables, as the SCM16A features only a balanced XLR input – a clear sign of its professional heritage.

As is usual from ATC, the model number refers to internal volume in litres, so this is not a

particularly large speaker. It is heavy, though, due not only to the typically chunky ATC bass driver, but also to the substantial toroidal mains transformer that feeds the internal amp. The enclosure is relatively light, being cast in aluminium along with the fairly gigantic heatsink at the back. Presumably, this cost a bit to tool-up, but it must make manufacture relatively swift and straightforward, and also means that overheating is never likely to be a problem as the enclosure also dumps waste heat from the high-biased Class AB amp. The latter delivers 200 watts into the bass driver and 50 watts into the tweeter, with an electronic crossover separating the frequency bands at small-signal level.

The advantages of that are precision and the

ease with which rapid crossover slopes may be implemented. ATC uses fourth-order slopes, limiting the out-of-band drive to each unit and hence reducing distortion: even faster slopes can have audible ringing effects for listeners placed off the ideal axis of each speaker.

Build-wise, the amplifier is a straightforward affair, very robustly built on a circuit board mounted directly inside the enclosure.

ATC makes all its own bass/mid drivers and this one is a six-inch unit shared with the SCM11 tested recently (*HFC* 293). The unit's heavily doped cone uses constrained layer damping to reduce resonance and hence distortion due to cone break-up at higher frequencies, and its central dust cap doubles as a soft dome. The tweeter is a soft dome type, 25mm in diameter.

In keeping with current curvy trends, the enclosure of the SCM16A is rounded off at the edges of the front baffle, and both curved and tapered towards the rear. While this won't eliminate internal resonance entirely, it is a good way of reducing its effects considerably while also reducing the severity of structural

listened to that piece of music? And those backing vocals – notice how the words are clearer? And how that piano has got a slightly 'dead' register in the upper treble? And so on...

In this case, 'not outstanding' means that it doesn't leap out at you as wildly different from the norm. In terms of resolution from a mid-price speaker, this actually *is* quite outstanding, but you have to listen for a while to get it. Once one does, it's hard to stop listening.

ATC speakers do tend to be good at detail – the SCM16A especially so. This is all the more impressive given how little fuss it makes about things. Occasionally, one comes across hi-fi components which practically assault the listener with detail, but the softly-softly approach is, in the long run, much more satisfying and we're delighted to find it here.

Tonally, we can find little to criticise. The bass trim control is handy when setting up for the most natural results with sounds like plucked double bass and very low notes on the piano, and with past experience of professional monitors we are not surprised to find that the



Voices are often cited as a critical test of any loudspeaker and, again, the SCM16A performs well. There's one notably interesting effect though, which is that vocal recordings on the 'hissy' side seem unusually so with the SCM16A, even though its overall balance is, if anything, mellow – certainly when compared to many other current small to medium-sized speakers. We can only conclude that brighter speakers bring out the high harmonics in everything to a greater degree and render sibilance less obvious by comparison. Don't shoot the messenger and all that, but it seems worth mentioning, if only to warn against over-hasty judgements on that score in demonstrations.

We've saved the best for last, though. In terms of stereo imaging, this is one of the best speakers we've come across in a long time. Possible reasons aren't hard to find, but whatever the cause the SCM16A really pins down the sound sources within an ensemble. Width and depth are at once precise, stable and believable and that is the icing on a very tasty cake. If you've never tried active speakers this is, from every point of view, an excellent place to start. **HFC**

Richard Black

“In terms of resolution from a mid-price speaker, this actually *is* quite outstanding, but you have to listen for a while to get it.”

resonance within the enclosure. Aluminium is not the 'deadest' material around, but a quick check, tapping the side at various places, does confirm that, in this case, it offers very good performance. There is, of course, internal damping in the form of fibre wadding and the front baffle is made of thick MDF and pretty well damped by the combination of its interface to the bass/mid driver and the rest of the enclosure. There is no reflex port, ATC preferring sealed-box construction for all of its smaller models.

Sensitivity is adjustable at the rear of each speaker, over a 20dB range (trim to suit your preamp), and there is also a bass-boost control that is quite subtle and intended as a trim rather than a tone control. Grilles are neither provided nor an option.

best way to set it up is to adjust upwards until its effect seems just audible and then back off a shade – only with speakers jammed into corners might it be completely unwarranted. The midrange seems very uncoloured, while the treble is open but never over-bright.

The SCM16A can manage some impressive playback levels, and blasting out some rock'n'roll at high volume through them is a grin-inducing experience – despite the fact that ATC makes much larger models that are more naturally suited to such frivolity. The various modern styles of computer-generated music are rather less successful, as these often rely on a bit of 'character' in the loudspeaker to complete the music production chain. However, a well-mic'ed drum kit heard through the SCM16As

is really quite something, with full-on impact and drive.



SOUND QUALITY

There's nothing immediately obvious about this speaker that announces its active operation, and that's as it should be. Fed from a decent preamp or variable-output source, it's clearly a good – but perhaps not outstanding – standmount, that displays exactly the kind of traits you would expect in a speaker of this type: it's quite detailed, and the balance is okay. However, listen closer and you start to notice some extra things. Like that horn – was that noticeable last time you



VERDICT

SOUND >> 89% [Progress bar]	PRO Beautifully detailed, with superb imaging, this is an unusually neutral performer with acoustical music that also locks out surprisingly hard.
FEATURES >> 80% [Progress bar]	CON Not suited to large rooms, and takes the fun out of amplifier and speaker cable upgrades. Looks a little industrial and, inexcusably, makes a noise when switched on/off.
BUILD >> 85% [Progress bar]	
VALUE >> 90% [Progress bar]	

CONCLUSION
Makes a very strong case for the active principle and is worth seeking out if you've never tried actives. It's good value for the price, including the built-in power amps, and it offers very fuss-free sound for a range of genres.

HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE >> 90%

BEST BUY

HI-FI CHOICE
magazine



Advance guard

French newcomer Advance Acoustic brings D/A conversion to a £600 integrated amp

PRODUCT Advance Acoustic MAP305DA II

TYPE Integrated stereo amplifier

PRICE £600

KEY FEATURES Size (WxHxD): 44x15.5x45cm

- Weight: 15.5kg
- Power output: 100W/ eight ohms
- Analogue inputs: 5x single-ended, MM/MC phono
- D/A conversion
- Digital inputs: 4x coax, 1x optical

CONTACT ☎ 01623 517000

🌐 www.advance-acoustic.com

Here's a question. What does Naim's Supernait (£2,350) and Musical Fidelity's A1008 (£2,999) have in common, apart from four-figure price tags?

Answer: on-board D/A conversion. But what if £2-3k for an amp is simply too much? Step in little-known French company Advance Acoustic. It started with speakers in 1995 and had some success with its MA 11 model back in 1997, but it wasn't until 2003 that it decided to branch out into electronics. Now the company offers a wide range of integrated and pre/power amps, and a CD player. There's even a transport and DAC coming, which *Hi-Fi Choice* has first. Advance Acoustic also makes a valve preamp with an iPod dock built onto the front, that sells for a mere £250... *pas mal!*

Looking at the MAP305DA II's specs does beg the question "how do they do that?" And, of course, the obvious answer here is that they do it by manufacturing the unit in China. But even that doesn't explain the unit's rated power, size and quality of casework. Nor does it easily explain away the long list of features that, when taken as a whole, are enough to give even Cambridge a run for its money.

In the UK at least, Cambridge has a close ally in the retailing business, so it can keep margins tight. This isn't the case for Advance Acoustic, which comes in via the usual distribution channels and thus must start out very affordable indeed.

So what do you get in this hefty box? Well, the specs quote 100 watts per side, which tallies with the weight at least, but they also go on to suggest a doubling of power into a halving of load (200 watts into four ohms). This strikes us as unlikely, given that you don't usually get this without spending at least four times the asking price here. But just look at the quality of those meters! We've not seen something so saucy since the last Technics power amplifier left the building, and that was in the 1980s. These meters flicker seductively when you turn the wick up a little, but it's hard

to imagine them actually getting to the one watt mark unless you or your speakers are nearly deaf!

The MAP305DA II's name may not have a great deal of *je ne sais quoi*, but it does hint at an unusual feature set for such an affordable amp, namely digital to analogue conversion. This, to our knowledge, puts it in a class of one when it comes to amplifiers under a grand. As a result, it has no fewer than five digital inputs alongside three line-in inputs and an MM/MC phono stage. Fully featured? Certainly.

Other features include 'preamp out' and 'power amp in' sockets, which are bridged in normal use, plus 'tape out' sockets and big conical feet. Advance Acoustic has considered that you might not want to make dents in your Louis 13th equipment rack and so provides plastic receptacles to put under the points.

Little mention is made of the technology inside the box, save that it operates in class AB, has sealed compartments within the cabinet and boasts "ubiquitous use of best quality circuit components". Pretty standard fare, then. However, you might notice that the mains transformer is oriented sideways by conventional standards, which means that the field it produces will be radiating toward the front and rear rather than top and bottom as is usual, something that



“With the amp warmed up, it kicks off in a lively, upfront style that’s high on vitality, if a little short on sophistication.”

might benefit components placed above and below it on an equipment rack.

The on-board DAC is specified as being a 24/192 device that should work with most components, including DVD-A players that can output 24/96 bitstreams. Surprisingly, given Advance Acoustic’s enthusiasm for the iPod, there is no mini-jack input.

PERFORMANCE

All of the MAP305DA II’s inputs are accessible from a metal remote handset. The remote’s aesthetics are only slightly undermined by a lack of volume control subtlety; you have to have a very delicate touch to initiate anything less than a significant change in level. It also seems to have rather a lot of gain, and even with our least sensitive speakers, there wasn’t a lot of range available on the rotary control – which is partly why it’s difficult to initiate small changes with the remote.

With the amp set up and warmed up, it kicks off in a lively, upfront style that’s high on vitality, if a little short on sophistication. This via the taxing load offered by a pair of B&W 802D loudspeakers, which are, perhaps, rather too revealing for an amp of this price. With the Cambridge Audio 840A in its place, there’s a fuller and more detailed sound, albeit one that doesn’t offer any more control in the bass, and, if anything, gives a slightly less comfortable balance at high levels.

A slightly more appropriate speaker – in the form of the ATC SCM19 – suits the Advance Acoustic’s bass rather better. The ATC SCM19

doesn’t extend as far as the 802D and, as a result, the sound is tight and tuneful, although it does reveal a degree of hardness through the midrange. The 840A proves rather more natural in this area and more detailed as before, but it does cost another £150.

The Pioneer A-A9 integrated, on the other hand, is a precise price match, and one that delivers greater bass weight (for a lower specified power), but doesn’t match the Advance Acoustic’s resolve through the midrange, or its precision.

The MAP305DA II does not have the smoothest of top ends and we wonder if the aforementioned footplates could help as they come with stick-on rubber pucks. Placing this damped interface between the Townshend VSS (glass shelf) rack and the amp does seem to smooth out the top a little, however.

Using the digital input and on-board DAC with a Pioneer PD-D6 CD player produces a calmer and more relaxed sound than the player’s analogue signal, but does result in a reduction of low-level detail. Remember, however, that this is a pretty new CD player with a decent sound and not one that is easy to improve upon. Rega’s superb Apollo CD player delivers a more sparkly and open balance via the Advance Acoustic’s converter, but loses the appealingly analogue quality that it usually offers. In both instances the amp’s slightly forward character is more obviously notable via the digital input.

Given that the ATCs are still, perhaps, a little on the expensive (and revealing) side for an

amp at this price, we figured the B&W 683 could do better. They immediately bring out the fulsome brassy sound of Ornette Coleman’s *Change of the Century* and add some most welcome bottom-end too. Just out of curiosity, we also put Cambridge’s 740A integrated amp up for comparison. For its £100 saving over the Advance Acoustic, it delivers a more taut and precise sound with greater bottom-end solidity, but a degree of dryness that sucked some of the life out of brass instruments.

The MAP305DA II is a remarkably competitive amplifier that offers a superb range of features for the money, not forgetting the D/A conversion. It’s dynamic and looks inherently more expensive than it actually is.

Something of a bargain, then. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy



VERDICT

SOUND >> 82%



FEATURES >> 90%



BUILD >> 82%



VALUE >> 88%



PRO

Lively, dynamic sound combined with digital inputs and substantial build quality, not forgetting the VU meters!

CON

There’s a little too much gain for fine use of the remote control, and optimistic power ratings. It also runs pretty hot, too.

CONCLUSION

Advance Acoustic has thrown down the gauntlet to mid-range amplifier makers in no uncertain fashion, this is a lot of amplifier for the money and it’s capable of revealing and exciting sound quality in the right company.

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

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Bigger, but better?

Does a larger 165mm main driver improve Mordaunt-Short's latest two-way Avant floorstander?

PRODUCT Mordaunt-Short Avant 914i

TYPE Floorstanding loudspeaker

PRICE £300 per pair

CONTACT ☎ 01753 680868 @ www.mordaunt-short.co.uk

Operating alongside electronics brands like Cambridge Audio, Mordaunt-Short has been an integral part of Audio Partnership for a number of years. Audio Partnership was one of the first hi-fi companies to appreciate the advantages of combining UK design talent with low Chinese manufacturing costs, accumulating a reassuring amount of experience working alongside its Chinese partners.

There's always a sense of *déjà vu* when a new Mordaunt-Short Avant speaker arrives. We've reviewed a number of examples since the 900-series was first introduced around the Millennium, and all look as though they could have hatched from the same pod.

The original 900 evolved into the Avant 900, and is now the Avant 900i. The overwhelming majority are based on 135mm main drivers, but more recently a larger 165mm driver has started to appear, initially in the 914, and now in this 914i, and its larger 916i brother. All models share very similar and attractively sharp styling on the outside, and the core ingredients inside have also undergone steady refinement.

In terms of pricing, this £300 per pair Avant 914i sits halfway between the two-way 904i and the two-and-a-half-way 906i. Like the 904i, it's a simple two-way design, but has a larger main driver and enclosure. Available in either black, calvados or maple woodprint, part of the enclosure is blanked off near the base, allowing mass loading/damping material to be added.

An aluminum 'skin' covers the upper front section, matching the alloy drive unit diaphragms. The main driver has a 120mm diameter dish-shaped diaphragm, described as a Continuous Profile Cone (CPC), which is reinforced by small radial ribs just in from the edge. The tweeter has a mesh-protected 25mm metal dome. Signal is applied to stylish twin terminal pairs, and moulded 'outrigger' feet improve mechanical stability.

PERFORMANCE

We couldn't match Mordaunt-Short's claim for 90dB sensitivity here – 88dB looks closer to the mark using our far-field in-room averaged technique. However, that's still a respectable enough figure in view of the ingredients, relatively easy load, and good bass extension.

The overall frequency balance isn't all that smooth, but remains pretty well ordered overall. Output is a little lean through the upper bass and lower mid; dips are visible around 600Hz and 5kHz; and the treble looks a little exposed. The impedance traces reveal a modest pair-matching discrepancy at low frequencies. The ports are tuned to 40/43Hz, and the load stays above six ohms across the band, albeit dipping to around four ohms at around 12kHz. Under

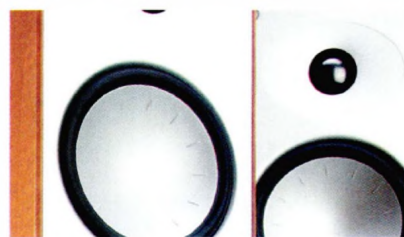
in-room conditions, the bass shows decent extension down to around 25Hz.

The 914i is a thoroughly competent design that disguises its inevitable limitations pretty well. Box colorations are notably well controlled, and if dynamic expression is hardly dramatic, it does seem to offer a significant improvement over the Avant models using the smaller 135mm drivers.

Imaging is very good in terms of lateral positioning, though the modest degree of transparency somewhat inhibits depth perception and precision. Midband colorations seem pretty well controlled, but because consonants are slightly weak, speech does sound a little 'shut in', and intelligibility is slightly affected in consequence.

The midband is where these speakers shine brightest, as the performance tails off somewhat towards the top and bottom ends of the audio band. The top end is not particularly sweet, and it's also a little too exposed, so it does draw rather too much attention to itself. Systems with an inherently bright balance will not make an ideal match. The bottom end isn't too strong, but it does sound a trifle detached, perhaps because some lack of warmth and punch in the upper bass and lower midband. **HFC**

Paul Messenger



VERDICT

SOUND >> 77%



PRO

This sharply styled speaker is very good value for money, with better dynamic performance than the other Avants, and a high level of all-round competence.

PRACTICALITY >> 85%



BUILD >> 80%



CON

Top end is a little exposed and could be sweeter, while the upper bass and lower midband is a little shy, leaving the low/mid bass to shine.

VALUE >> 89%



CONCLUSION

Reassuringly familiar – even with its bigger 165mm driver, the Avant 914i offers good value for money and looks the part while doing so. While the top end is a little exposed and the upper bass and lower mid a bit lacking, the midrange shines brightly.

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

Audio Technica ATH-AD500

TYPE Headphones

PRICE £70

CONTACT ☎ 0113 277 1441 🌐 www.audio-technica.com

As one of the bigger and more dedicated names in headphones, Audio Technica has not always enjoyed the best market visibility in the UK. The current range aims to fix this by offering a selection of audiophile, studio, portable and special-purpose models: the ATH-AD500 is from the middle of the audiophile range.

The earpieces are large and the assembly seems at first rather fussy. However, Audio Technica has come up with something rather clever in the headband design, which uses two hinged 'wings' to rest on the head just away from the crown. This makes for very gentle pressure and avoids the sore spot that can result from a headband resting on the top of the head. The earpieces themselves are soft and comfortable, too.

If there is a giveaway that this is the cheapest model reviewed here, it is the frequency balance, which has a distinct peak in the treble that accentuates hiss in recordings. It's unfortunate but not disastrous: after listening for a few minutes you become accustomed to it. It is then possible to hear past it, to an admirably high level of detail and a very satisfying balance in the bottom two-thirds of the spectrum. Resolution is the star turn of this model, though, and it's one of the most analytical sets of headphones that we've encountered at such a sensible price. Perversely, this is the model that most benefits from a dedicated headphone amp, the sound becomes rather congested via the CD player front-panel outputs we tried. **HFC**



VERDICT	HI-FI CHOICE ➤➤ 84%
CONCLUSION Comfortable, excellent value and with great detail retrieval – as long as the peaky treble doesn't put you off.	

Beyerdynamic DT880

TYPE Headphones

PRICE £230

CONTACT ☎ 01444 258258 🌐 www.beyerdynamic.co.uk

Beyerdynamic appears to have taken a leaf out of the car industry's book by keeping a product name from years ago, but then completely changing the design. No doubt this will ensure havoc on eBay in years to come...

Anyway, this is not the same model we reviewed about a decade ago, although it is closely connected to the (new, 21st-century) DT990 we rather liked a year or two back. It features Beyerdynamic's exceptionally comfortable ear pads and a padded headband, with the latter providing an equal distribution of pressure on the head. This is the least sweat-inducing model in the group.

The first impression when listening to the DT880 is that it somehow contrives to offer a very 'loudspeaker-like' balance and approach, which obviously will endear it to those

listeners who don't want a full-on perspective shift every time they switch from one to the other. Background noise is not unduly emphasised or coloured, and dynamic variations in the music are neither overdone nor suppressed.

As a result, it's easy to find the right listening level – something that's not always true with headphones. Detail is good until the very highest volumes when the sound does thicken up a bit. Still, that should help you avoid dangerous sound pressure levels.

There is no marked preference for any musical style, though, if you like really bass-heavy stuff you may find the balance just a touch lean, and results via a CD player's output are quite similar to those from a headphone amp. **HFC**



VERDICT	HI-FI CHOICE ➤➤ 88%
CONCLUSION A straightforward approach that's informative and neutral. Good for occasional and long-term listening alike.	

van den Hul CS122

TYPE Loudspeaker cable

PRICE £12.50 per metre

CONTACT ☎ 01235 511166 🌐 www.vanden Hul.com

Van den Hul offers one of the most diverse and intriguing ranges of cable on the planet, featuring among other things

conductors of linear structured carbon (LSC) instead of metal. LSC is expensive and bulky when used alone, but this cable adds just a little of it to a more conventional complement of stranded silver-plated copper. This allegedly makes up for some of the deficiencies of metals and "transforms the radiated magnetic field into

an audio signal again". There is little, if any, scientific evidence for the low-level distortions that vdH attributes to metal conductors, but the detailed behaviour of a cable using LSC will be different from metal alone, and we like to keep an open mind. Insulation is 'Hulliflex', a low-loss, halogen-free soft material unique to vdH. The wide conductor spacing makes for quite high inductance and this cable is well suited to 'twitchy' amplifiers like some older

Grado SR225

TYPE Headphones

PRICE £210

CONTACT ☎ 01279 501111 # www.gradolabs.com

Grado is a relatively small manufacturer that specialises in phono cartridges and headphones and makes a virtue of its no-nonsense approach. This extends to the aesthetics, which divides opinion amongst audiophiles. On the other hand, the lack of glitz and glamour can only be good for the final retail price and presumably does no harm to the sound either, as there's less to rattle!

Rather unusually in today's market, this is a 'supra-aural' model, where the pads rest on the ears rather than round them – this approach won't be to everyone's taste. The pads are made of quite firm foam rubber, the headband is a little tight (though it can be reformed by a bit of judicious bending), and there's not much padding for the top of the head, so do try them for size for a while before buying.

As often happens with headphones, the balance can be a slight shock after loudspeakers, and in this case it does seem to bring things forward. It's almost a given that headphones display that tendency to some extent, but with the SR225 it seems extra noticeable. It's not necessarily a drawback (with some recordings it's a definite advantage), but once again, one has to become acclimatised to it before the rest of the model's character becomes apparent. Tonally, the SR225 is neutral with a well-extended bass. Detail is there, but requires a little concentration to be fully appreciated. Ironically, detail is actually better via the CD player's output than via a headphone amp – this model seems to like high-impedance outputs. **HFC**



VERDICT

CONCLUSION
Tonally, this points the way to Grado's GS1000 flagship, but detail and soundstage are not truly class-leading.

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

Sennheiser HD600

TYPE Headphones

PRICE £270

CONTACT ☎ 01494 551551 # www.sennheiser.co.uk

Of all the headphone specialists, Sennheiser probably offers the broadest and most closely spaced range, with something for practically every conceivable application. Once upon a time, the range included a model called the Orpheus that cost around £10,000, however, these days the range tops out just one model above the HD600. Appropriately for such a 'premium' product the HD600 is very smartly turned out and features well-judged ear pads that fit snugly round all the sets of ears we tried, applying firm but not irritating pressure, and maintaining stable positioning under all circumstances. The headband is comfortably padded, too.

Sound is well balanced tonally though a little duller in the treble than the other models in this group. That's worth bearing in mind as it

can make the HD600 sound less involving in a quick listening test, but persevere. The difference is quite small and, as so often happens with tonal variations, one very quickly adjusts to it. Further down the range, the bass is very good indeed; strong and tuneful, but always precise. Midrange seems to us just a little congested by comparison with the others here, but still offers levels of detail which most loudspeakers can only dream of. The stand out feature of this model, though, is the dynamics, which are broad and effortless, with no sense of strain. This makes it a good choice for music with lots of transients. It's great, for example, with well-recorded rock, but perhaps a little less comfortable with classical. Sound seems to vary little between dedicated headphone amp and CD player headphone socket. **HFC**

Richard Black



VERDICT

CONCLUSION
The excellent dynamics and lively sound of this practical model can't quite match the detail of better headphones.

HI-FI CHOICE
>>> **81%**

Naim and Exposure models.

We found the treble of this cable perplexing: it seems well-extended and also tuneful but just a little shut-in, resulting in slightly constricted imaging. Bass is also extended but lacking in weight and tunefulness. Despite that, it has good impact; this is a very rhythmically confident cable. It is not entirely neutral in the midband and seems to favour male voice over female, cellos over violins and so on. Still, that rather

mellow nature is certainly preferable to screech or harshness, of which there is happily no trace. We suspect this cable will have very system-specific success.

VERDICT

CONCLUSION
A refined and detailed cable that handles frequency extremes well, while offering a laid-back tonal balance.

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



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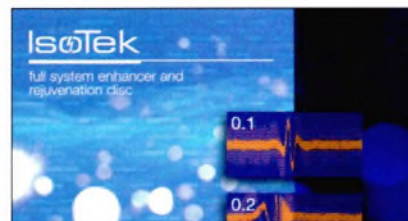
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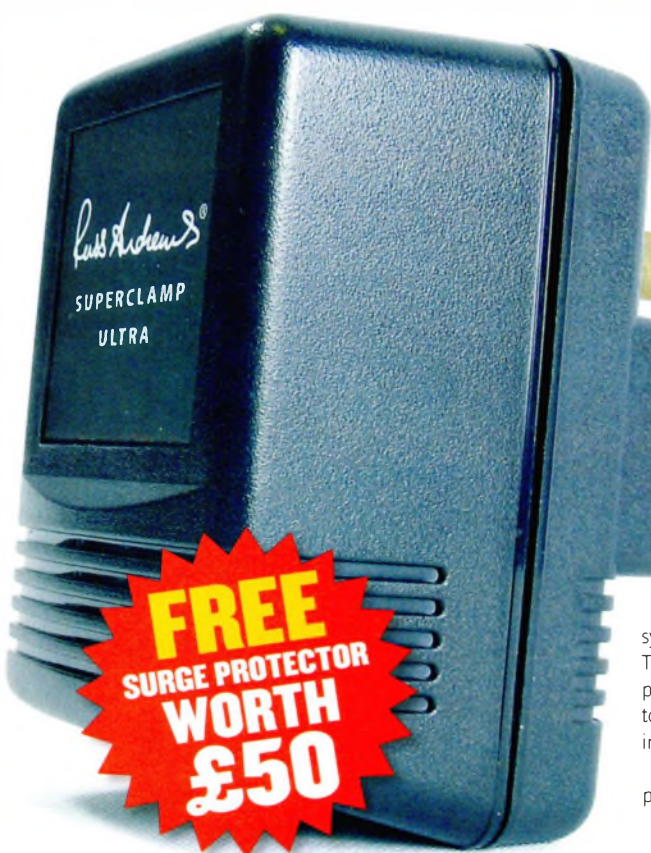
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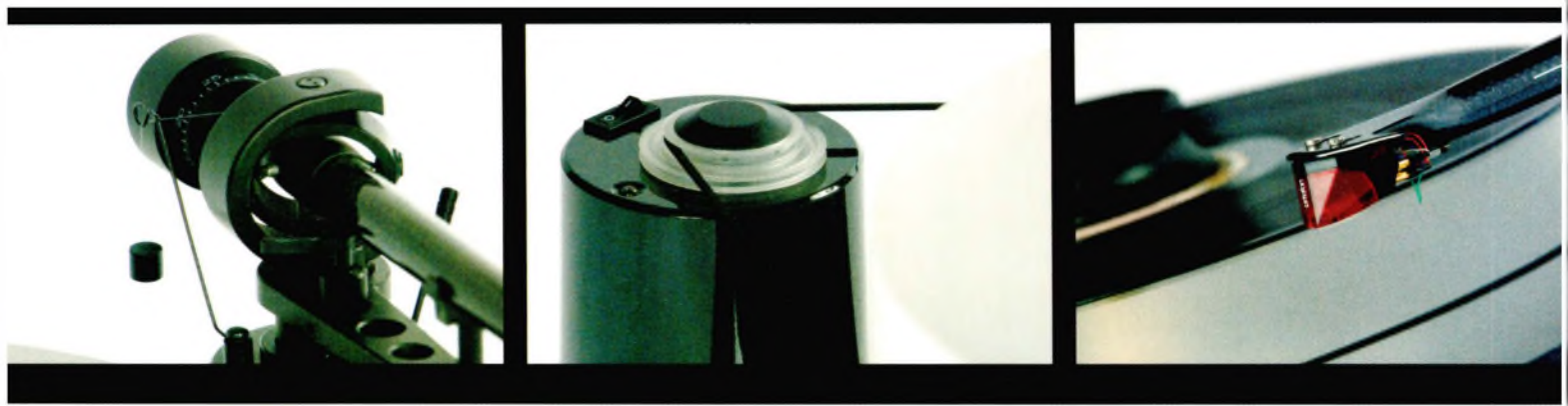


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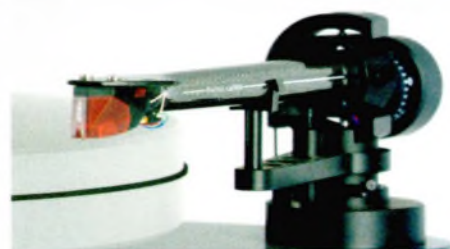


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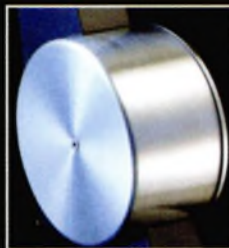
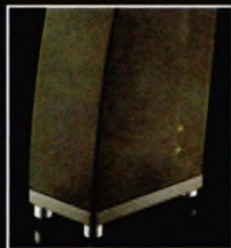
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nonconformist

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

HI-FI CHOICE BUYER'S BIBLE



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

Reviews you can trust

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

How to use this guide

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

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

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CD PLAYERS

Audio disc players for music only



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

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

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



again before being amplified and sent to the output sockets.

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

SUPER AUDIO CD



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

Q&A

WHAT'S A DAC?

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

WHY HAVE SEPARATE TRANSPORTS & DACS?

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

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

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

DO I NEED DIGITAL CABLES FOR A CD PLAYER?

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

WHAT IS OVERSAMPLING/UPSAMPLING?

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

CAN I PLAY SACDS ON A NORMAL CD PLAYER?

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

CAN I PLAY DVDS ON A CD PLAYER?

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

TOP BUYS



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								
				SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	CD-RW COMPATIBLE	CD TEXT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000												
MB	Audio Analogue Rossini	850	Valve-sporting player delivers a warm, engaging sound, but mediocre remote and no optical out may limit appeal									299
MB	Cambridge Audio Azur 640C	250	If you value the effortless flow of musical information, you should certainly hear this player									285
MB	Cambridge Audio Azur 740C	500	Very flexible, this innovative upsampling player sounds exceptionally neutral and highly informative									293
MB	Cambridge Audio Azur 840C	750	Purposefully undemonstrative, combining neutrality, detail and timing, enhanced by flexibility as a DAC									291
MB	Creek Evo	495	A minute treble lift, otherwise this is a very capable player that offers fine value									285
MB	Cyrus CD8x	1,000	Impressive mix of detail, musicality, analysis and appearance. Even better with the PSX-R power supply (£400)									270
MB	Denon DCD-500AE	160	Cheap, well built and good, if slightly soft-edged sound quality									295
MB	Denon DCD-700AE	250	Excellent entry level quality CD player lacks for nothing. Musicians please note: even has variable speed replay									284
MB	Marantz SA7001	430	Easy, relaxed sound arguably lacks true grit, but is extremely listenable from CD and SACD									281
MB	Naim CD5i	825	Bass has great extension but lacks control, slightly. Tonal neutrality higher up is excellent, however									291
MB	Quad 99CD-S	650	Revels in big music thanks to fearless presentation: smaller-scale works can lack focus									291
MB	Rega Apollo	498	Unless you can't abide top-loaders, check this out - musically it's a highly praiseworthy performer									285
MB	Sony SCD-XA3000ES	800	A good, if not truly great, all-rounder with CD and fine multi-channel SACD performance									276
MB	Vincent CD-S6 MkII	999	With its tube output stage, a beguiling midrange, sweet highs and attractively figured lows plus fine dynamics									287
ABOVE £1,000												
MB	Arcam FMJ CD36	1,200	Fine detail, extension, dynamics and neutrality 'bland' or 'honest' according to listener taste!									280
MB	Ayre CX-7e	2,195	If you want a clean-sounding, revealing and entertaining player with fabulous build this is a strong contender									281
EC	Chord Red Reference CD	13,345	The definitive statement in Red Book CD playing, this player's look and sound places it at the top of the tree									299
MB	Classé CDP-102	3,000	Rich, dynamic CD/DVD player with a full bottom end, impressive dynamics and a luxurious yet revealing balanced									286
EC	Classé CDP-202	4,750	CD/DVD-A player with brilliant sound, if sophistication is your bag. Includes S-video and composite outputs									284
MB	Copland CDA823	1,750	Don't let the laid-back character fool you - this player has plenty of insight too									280
MB	Cyrus CD8x/PSX-R	1,400	Lightness of touch is the key here, but there is also good bass and some very fine detail on offer too									295
EC	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
EC	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
EC	Krell Evolution 505 SACD	8,777	Brilliant replacement for SACD Standard, superb musical discrimination. No high-res digital output									289
MB	Leema Antila	2,495	Musically engaging player that will have you going through your CDs afresh. Balanced connection is best									291
MB	Linn Majik	1,950	Compact and capable of most CD formats, it's musically communicative with fine pace and enthusiasm									283
EC	Marantz SA-7S1	5,000	Something of a bargain even at this price, the SA-7S1 sets the benchmark for CD/SACD players of its ilk									297
MB	McIntosh MCD201	3,400	Superb CD performance and even better with SACD which has its own output level control.									284
MB	Meridian G06	1,695	Highly refined player with a combination of analysis and self-effacing response to musical demands									295
EC	Moon Supernova	4,500	Refined, high-performance player offers tremendous transparency and includes coaxial digital input									296
MB	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
MB	Naim CD5x	1,450	Unique design nicely complements a sophisticated and highly capable performance									280
MB	Rega Saturn	1,298	Good detail, lively natural bass, and good integration of musical strands without losing their individual character									295
MB	Unison Research Unico CD	1,495	Strong timing and rhythm, this player is well equipped for more melodic music, with good detail resolution									295

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



Copland CDA823 £1,750
This distinguished, yet minimalist Scandinavian CD player combines a real ear for detail with full-scale dynamics and an effortless musical style. A genuine hi-fi star.



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.

DVD-AUDIO

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

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

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



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.

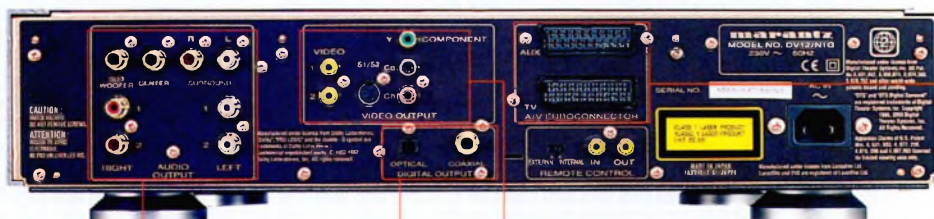
DO I NEED A MULTICHANNEL AMP TO USE A DVD PLAYER?

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.

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					
				DVD-A COMPATIBLE	SACD COMPATIBLE	ELEC DIG OUTPUT	OPT DIG OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000									
🏆	Arcam DiVA DV135	900	Unchanged looks and stereo-only DVD-A/SACD, but the overall performance is great across all formats. Stunning picture, too	●	●	●	●	●	296
🏆	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 DV7001	600	Enhanced model based on DV6001, but with various improvements, including superior CD replay capabilities	●	●	●	●	●	296
🏆	Marantz DV7600	600	A mid-market cracker, with sound and picture quality that generally exceeds expectation	●	●	●	●	●	274
🏆	NAD T585	800	Easy to live with universal player that shows clear signs of rejuvenation of the Classic range	●	●	●	●	●	294
🏆	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
🏆	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
ABOVE £1,000									
📝	Accoustic Arts Surr Player 1	4,495	A very high-quality Pioneer-based machine, excellent sound from both hi-res and regular formats	●	●	●	●	●	299
🏆	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
🏆	Denon DVD-3930	1,100	Well engineered universal player, with useful bypass facilities for pure audio, and unusually powerful video image processing	●	●	●	●	●	287
📝	Linn Akurate CD	3,985	This highly engaging multiformat non-video player doesn't have huge transparency or a fancy box, but is musically addictive	●	●	●	●	●	299
🏆	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 DVD5	2,565	Naim's first DVD player is a real success, notable for its class-leading sound with CD and (optional) multichannel DVD-Audio	●	●	●	●	●	263
🏆	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



Marantz DV7600 £600

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



NAD T585 £800

This universal player borrows from NAD's Masters Series to make a cracking all-rounder.



Arcam DiVA DV135 £900

Stereo-only SACD and DVD-A, but excellent performance with audio and video.



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

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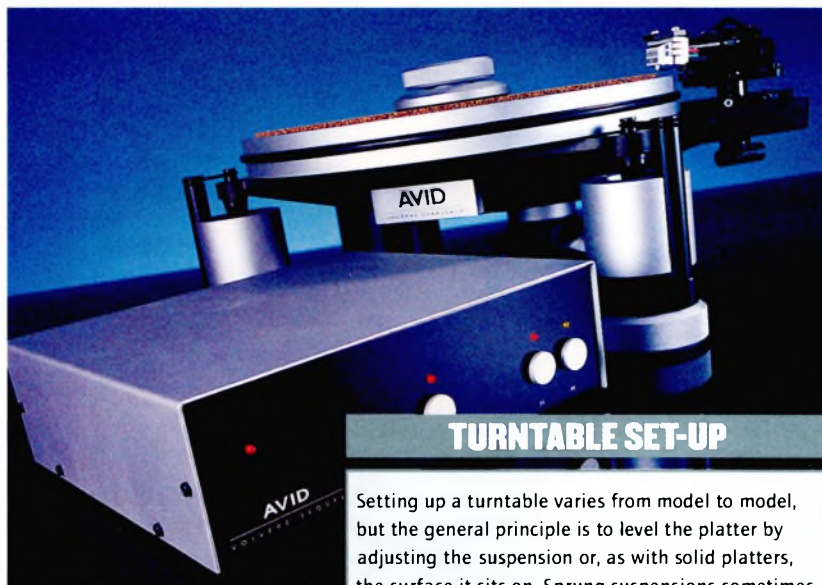


Record players or turntables offer the digital revolution serious competition when it comes to sound quality. Even a modest model can turn musical tricks that most CD players struggle with. Some call it vinyl warmth, but in reality it's a lack of digital hardness that makes the format so engaging. True,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

There are two types of phono



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.

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					
				SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	SUPPLIED WITH CART	SOLE NUMBER
EC	Avid Volvere	2,750	A combination of a heavy platter with a sprung suspension that makes the vinyl it spins sound powerful and solid	33/45	●	●	●	●	298
EC	Avid Volvere Sequel	3,500	Heavyweight turntable that will deliver more of what's in a vinyl groove than most of the competition	33/45	●	●	●	●	229
EC	Clearaudio Champion	1,365	Smart, practical and good-sounding, with impressively 'dead' arm. Isolation recommended	33/45	●	●	●	●	268
EC	Clearaudio Champagne	1,670	Ceramic-magnetic bearing spells a surprisingly uncoloured performance. Good arm and cartridge	33/45	●	●	●	●	295
EC	Clearaudio Ambient	4,220	Innovative use of materials leads to a fast, precise and thrilling sound (tonearm extra)	33/45	●	●	●	●	271
EC	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
EC	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
EC	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	opt	284
EC	Goldring GR2	265	Nicely finished Rega-manufactured deck with RB250 arm and an open, engaging sound quality	33/45	●	●	●	●	266
EC	Michell Technodec	767	Simple and smartly understated, performs above expectations – full-bodied and highly detailed	33/45	●	●	●	●	268
EC	Michell Orbe SE	2,015	A superb turntable, able to mix it with the best at virtually any price. Now features new DC motor	33/45	●	●	●	●	235
EC	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
EC	Pro-Ject 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
EC	Pro-Ject RPM 6.1	550	With its minimal chassis and huge platter this is a steady design that's capable of fine results with a decent cartridge	33/45/78	●	●	●	●	294
EC	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
EC	Rega P3-24	398	Very competent, uncoloured and musical, much improved by £148 outboard electronic power supply	33/45	●	●	opt	●	298
EC	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
EC	Rega P7/RB700	1,298	A highly capable player that could hold its own in the most exalted company – a vivid and natural performer	33/45	●	●	opt	●	257
EC	Rega P9/RB1000	2,498	Exceptionally elegant hi-tech player with complex outboard supply, ceramic platter and wonderful RB1000 tonearm	33/45	●	●	●	●	228
EC	Roksan Radius 5/Nirna	850	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation (acrylic version tested)	33/45	●	●	●	●	248
EC	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V/309 hybrid arm	33/45	●	●	●	●	195
EC	SME 20/12A	11,133	Brings a calmness and precision to vinyl replay that we have rarely encountered, build quality is second to none	33/45/78	●	●	●	●	293
EC	Townshend Rock Anniversary	4,900	If you want to get to the meat and bones of the music this is a great tool for the job (price inc. Excalibur arm)	33/45	●	●	●	●	259

Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE PHONO CARTRIDGES

MM and MC cartridges

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

Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE PHONO STAGES

Phono stages

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				
				MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	AUO GAIN	AUO IMPEDANCE	SOLE NUMBER
EC	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
EC	Clearaudio Smart-Phono	250	Minute and very practical unit with slightly bright, but very detailed and low-noise, sound	●	●	●	●	268
EC	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
EC	Tom Evans Microgroove	400	For dynamics and real bass extension with good tonal colour this is the one to beat. The Plus version (£700) is even better!	●	●	●	●	234
EC	Tom Evans The Groove	1,800	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for maximum information retrieval off any LP	●	●	●	●	201
EC	Trichord Dino/Dino+	498	Relaxed yet resolute with very good image depth and natural balance, not to mention great flexibility	●	●	●	●	234

TURNTABLE SPECS KEY SPEEDS Speeds offered in rpm. **SUSP SUBCHASSIS** Turntables with a sprung or suspended support for the platter and arm. **SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE** Some decks require manual lifting of the belt from one pulley to another to change speed, but not these ones. **SUPPLIED WITH ARM** Deck is supplied complete with tonearm – some require a separate purchase in this department, but the dealer will fit it for you. **SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE** Some decks are supplied with a starter cartridge and this is included in the price shown.

CARTRIDGE SPECS KEY **MM** Moving magnet cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type. **MC** Moving coil cartridge – see amp and phono stage features to match this type. **REPLACEABLE STYLUS** Some cartridges have separate styli for ease of replacement, but it compromises sound quality.

SME

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Model 10A



Model 20/2A



Model 20/12A



Model 30/2A



Series M2



Series 300



Series IV



Series V



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RADIO TUNERS

FM and DAB hi-fi separates

Radio is a fantastic musical resource that's in danger of being taken for granted, but whatever your tastes there's someone out there catering for it. If you haven't got a decent tuner hooked up to your hi-fi already, you're missing out!

DAB or FM?

Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) is now said to be available to more than 80 per cent of the population and the long-term plan is to switch public broadcasting over to digital entirely, but hardware prices have yet to come down to a point where this would be acceptable. Its advantages over FM include hiss-free reception, the potential for a wider range of stations and the ability to display comprehensive programming information. FM's RDS system means that station name and occasionally track titles are displayed, but the range of information is fairly limited.

Where FM scores over DAB is in the lower cost of hardware and the greater reception

area. It can also provide higher sound quality if reception conditions are favourable. Absolute sound quality judgements are muddled by the fact that you are listening to different forms of compression and processing at the studio for each station.

What is clear, however, is that there are more and more radio stations broadcasting on DAB that aren't available on FM. So if it's variety of programming you're after, they have a lot to offer.

RECEPTION

The quality of signal you feed a tuner will dictate its sound quality. So serious FM listeners should get a decent external aerial and connect it with as few junctions and splits as possible. Every time you split the cable (ie take a feed for another tuner) you halve signal strength! With DAB the same applies but get a DAB-specific aerial. See www.bbc.co.uk/digitalradio for details.

TOP BUYS



Denon 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

FM & DAB HI-FI SEPARATES

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIG. STRENGTH METER	ROT. TUNING KNOB	ISSUE NUMBER
FM TUNERS										
	Creek T50	550	Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics	FM,M,L	128					251
	Cyrus FM-X	500	A classic no-nonsense FM tuner that achieves gratifying sonic results. Upgradable with PSX-R power supply	FM	7					283
	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
	Denon TU-1800DAB	250	There's a little grain on FM, but the decent performance on both bands makes this a great dual-band choice	DAB,FM,M	200					283
EC	Magnum Dynalab MD 90T	1,195	No remote or presets as standard, manual everything and valves... but its sound is simply sublime	FM	opt		opt			257
	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
	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity	FM,M	30					250
	Primare T21	600	A very fine tuner – bass and treble are both well extended and detail is excellent	FM	30					230
	Pure DRX-702ES	210	Apparently good value. is restricted by persistent veiling on FM: 'PAC' on DAB mellow sound a little	DAB,FM,M	99					283
	Rega Radio 3	398	Strong bass, clear treble and a high enjoyment factor make this an appealing FM performer	FM,M	20					283
	Rotel RT-02	279	A highly competent tuner which always sounds appealing and fuss-free	FM,M	30					242
	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
DAB TUNERS										
	Arcam DIVA DT91	450	Some grain at low levels, but sound is lively, large in scale and tonally very natural. Very smart!	DAB,FM	16					299
	Cambridge Audio DAB500	150	Very good sound, plus optional response tweaks, and slickest operation yet	DAB	10					248
	Denon TU-1800DAB	200	Very good detail and a highly believable impression of real musicians playing. Imaging can be a little constricted	DAB,FM,M	200					299
	Marantz ST7001	250	Midband detailed and precise: treble can be thick but bass is extended, and sound generally energetic	DAB,FM,M	200					299
	NAD C445	300	FM is laid-back despite bright balance, but has good detail. DAB slightly livelier than most	DAB,FM	30					299
	Onkyo T-4555DAB	350	Admirably free of grain or obvious tonal blemishes, this tuner achieves a high standard in all areas on	DAB,FM	40					299

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 a station. ROTARY TUNING KNOB An ergonomic alternative to buttons.

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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



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.



Imerge
S3000 £2,800
A flexible audio server that's well designed, easy to use and sounds great too!

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	CSSE NUMBER
CD-R/RW RECORDERS								
	Denon CDR-1000	400	A respectable player and recorder, though some midband congestion was noted when recording	1				218
	Marantz DR6000	400	No frills, but in its fundamentals this is one of the finest CD recorders on the market	1				233
	NAD C660	500	Audiophile twin deck offering high-speed copying, HDCD replay and notably fine recording from analogue	2				243
	Philips CDR802	300	Tacky looks and build notwithstanding, this is a well-equipped and technically sound 3-to-1 autochanger/recorder at a good price	2				233
	Philips CDR951	380	An improvement on previous models, it delivers the musical goods in some style	1				205
	Pioneer PDR-609	270	Classic CD recorder with outstandingly good sound for the money on both record and replay	1				243
	Pioneer PDR-W839	350	Good-quality twin CD burner makes recordings that can be hard to distinguish from the original. Good value too	1				218
MD RECORDERS								
	Pioneer MJ-D508	200	Well equipped, but musically sleep-inducingyer that receives its recommendation owing to the price	1				205
	Sony MDS-JE480	130	Straightforward and effective, but the three real killer features are price, price and price	1				233
HDD RECORDERS								
	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.

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-AMPING?

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.



Cyrus 6vs2 £600

The latest 'singing shoebox' from Cyrus is an absolute peach! Strong rhythmic flow, tunefully extended bass and excellent stereo imaging are among the highlights.



Primare I30 £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 STEREO AMPLIFIERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
UP TO £1,000									
	Arcam DIVA A70	500	A smart and practical amp offering good snap and pace, with natural dynamics and good detail	6	MM	●	●	60	289
	Arcam DIVA A90	850	Well-featured amp with little character of its own - highly informative sound	6	opt	●	●	90	286
	Cambridge Audio 640A v2	300	Slightly cheap-feeling controls are the only real downside to this powerful and lively little amp	6		●	●	75	279
	Cambridge Audio Azur 740A	500	Ticks all the boxes for bass, clarity, imaging etc. and invites the listener into the music with uncommon grace	6		●	●	100	294
	Cambridge Audio 840A v2	750	The biggest differences between this and most amps at twice its price are in looks and show-off factor. Powerful and detailed	8		●	●	120	299
	Creek Evo	500	Not the most accurate, strictly, but its lively, energetic musical presentation is entirely lovable	5	opt	●	●	85	283
	Cyrus 6vs2	600	Spunky little amp that reproduces instrumental timbres and acoustic spaces well, with real musical involvement	7			●	40	293
	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
	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
	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
	Marantz PM7001KI	550	A self-effacing amplifier which serves the music admirably with fine bass, sweet treble and unforced detail	5	MM	●	●	70	289
	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
	Onkyo A-933	500	Puts the music first, with sound that delivers the basics correctly but above all involves the listener	5	●	●	●	80	278
	Pioneer A-A9	600	Takes on the mantle of the legendary A400. Not as cuddly, but very resolute and revealing for the money. Has USB input	4	●	●	●	80	296
	Unison Research Unico P	795	Sound belies indifferent measured performance with good detail, balance and flowing melodic quality	5	MM	●		50	293
	Vincent SV-236	999	Valve hybrid whose sound is as idiosyncratic as its styling, short on neutrality but high on sparkle	6		●		100	295
ABOVE £1,000									
	AMR AM-77	4,400	A thrilling amplifier that brings you the dynamics of valves with the power of transistors in a substantial but well featured design	6			●	180	299
	Audia Flight TWO	2,500	Quirky, but musically highly effective model which is expressive and analytical, with some minor operational quirks	8		●		100	280
	Bryston B100-SST DAC	3,850	A remarkable amplifier which is greatly enhanced by the inclusion of an impressive onboard DAC	6	●	●	●	100	275
	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
	Copland CTA405	2,498	Avoids pitfalls of many valve amps, yet retains the euphony typical of the best of breed	6	MM	●		50	286
	Creek Destiny	1,100	A highly assured performer that doesn't superimpose its personality on the music	6		●	●	100	286
	Densen Beat B110	1,200	Great bass provides firm underpinning for involving and enjoyable listening - real 'smile factor'	6	opt	●		60	292
	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
	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
	Lyngdorf TDA 2200	3,875	Sophisticated modular all-digital amp with room EQ, capable of adapting to the listening environment	4		●		200	289
	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
	Musical Fidelity A1008	2,999	With DAC, phono stage and built-in valve buffer, this powerhouse amp can really grab hold of a loudspeaker	4	●	●		250	295
	NAD M3	1,899	Massive and flexible, it goes very loud with fine authority and dynamic range, but lacks some sparkle	7		●		180	285
	Naim SuperNait	2,350	Serious communicative ability meets convenience in this sophisticated and powerful integrated design	6		●	●	80	294
	Primare I30	1,500	A smooth, sophisticated yet agile performer, and beautifully built too	6		●	●	100	267
	Pure Sound A30	1,100	Valve integrated, with the accent on music rather than rhythm. Needs more inputs, though	3				30	298
	Sugden A21aL Series 2	1,299	Lovely solid-state Class A amplifier, sweet as a nut and more powerful than its predecessor	5	opt	●		21	296
	Unison Res. Unico Secondo	1,200	Very good detail and coherence. Tonality is natural, imaging precise and deep, and dynamics are wide and unforced	6	opt	●		110	297
	Unison Res. Performance	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 STEREO AMPLIFIERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)
UP TO £2,000									
	Croft Precession I/Polestar I	1,400	Compact pre/power combo with battery preamp and hybrid power, with freedom from timesmear, bass could be firmer	●	●	6		25	290
	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
	Cyrus DAC XP	2,200	A knockout DAC/pre with naturalness and resolution to die for and six digital inputs for signals up to 96kHz	●	●	2			266
	Densen Beat 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
	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
	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
	Quad 99/909	1,650	Well thought out and well executed, with a strong, engaging sound and just a little veiling	●	●	5	●	136	256
	Rotel RC-06/RB-06	598	A capable and surprisingly powerful-sounding combination which offers real value	●	●	5	●	70	285
	Russ Andrews HP-1/PA-1	1,198	A highly enjoyable pre/power combination with fine levels of detail, good rhythm, stable and precise imaging	●	●	2		50	297

SPECS KEY **LINE INPUTS** Input sockets for source components with a line level output: CD players, DVD players, tape decks, tuners, phono stages etc. **PHONO INPUT** Input sockets and onboard phono stage for a cartridge.

Either MM (moving magnet) or MC (moving coil), occasionally both. **REMOTE CONTROL** A remote control is supplied with the amplifier. **HEADPHONE SOCKET** To drive your cans with.

POWER OUTPUT Manufacturer's rated output in watts per channel.

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

Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				PRE-AMP HER	POWER AMP HER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)
ABOVE £2,000									
	Arcam FMJ C31	1,200	Professionally presented, beautifully built and exceptionally revealing, this preamp achieves much by doing little	●		5	opt	●	273
EC	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
EC	Classé CP-700/CA-M400	13,350	Pre plus mono power combo with superb build, huge power and enormous flexibility. Sounds stunning, too	●		6	opt	●	400 293
	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.



Clas:é
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	£	COMMENTS	RECEIVER	LINE INPUTS	7.1 COMPATIBLE	5-CANNEL POWER (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
MULTICHANNEL INTEGRATED AMPS								
🏆	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
🏆	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
👨‍🔬	Denon AVC-A11XV	2,500	Sensible, real world derivative of AVC-A1XV, but still immensely flexible, and well endowed with digital i/o	●	11	●	140	273
👨‍🔬	Denon AVC-A1XV	4,000	Inelegant, but powerful and effective tool with excellent auto set-up and capable of driving two 5.1 systems simultaneously	●	●	●	170	266
👨‍🔬	Lexicon RV-8	5,000	Classy multi-zone receiver lacks high tech digital attributes (HDMI etc) but majors on very effective audio engineering	●	10	●	140	267
👨‍🔬	Marantz SR-12S1	3,000	A multichannel amp that can be taken seriously in stereo too. Resources are in the engineering rather than the gimmickry	●	3	●	160	255
👨‍🔬	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
👨‍🔬	Pioneer VSA-AX10A	3,000	State of the art one-box amplifier with enhanced sound quality, auto set-up and other enhancements	●	10	●	150	260
🏆	Sony STR-DB798	250	Cheap but effective, and passably good with pure audio sources, but control system messy	●	7	●	100	273
🏆	Sony STR-DB795	300	A superb value little amplifier, well appointed technically and successfully tuned for UK ears	●	7	●	100	260
🏆	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

MULTICHANNEL PREAMPS/PROCESSORS AND POWER AMPS								
👨‍🔬	Arcam A90+7.1 mod. P90/3	1,920	Add Arcam's multichannel module and a P90/3 power amp to the A90 stereo integrated and you've got got superb purist 5.1	●	8	●	90	250
👨‍🔬	Arcam AVP700/P1000	3,000	Cutting-edge processor/tuner with HDMI sounds great, but the matching Class H power amp lacks finesse to match its power	●	8	●	135	275
👨‍🔬	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
👨‍🔬	Clas:é 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
👨‍🔬	Copland CVA306/CVA535	3,748	Tube analogue six-channel pre transforms multichannel audio from a novelty into a genuine advance for the high fidelity art	●	5	●	125	236
👨‍🔬	Linn Exotik	1,750	Is hi-fi ready to make the jump to multichannel music? Linn think so with this musical preamplifier	●	4	●	●	260
👨‍🔬	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
👨‍🔬	Meridian 861	9,833	Powerful surround processor with flexible modular construction, marvellous versatility to drive any speaker configuration	●	6	●	●	230
👨‍🔬	Naim AV2/NAPV175/NAP150	4,175	First truly credible multichannel system from Naim is idiosyncratic but offers excellent basic sound with modest spatial steering	●	5	●	50	238
👨‍🔬	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
🏆	Primare SP31.7/A30.5	4,200	Great all-round system which brings the qualities of good stereo high fidelity to a multichannel world	●	5	●	120	238

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



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Sevenoaks Sound & Vision is the UK's largest specialist retailer of high-quality home entertainment solutions. With stores nationwide and a proud history of satisfied 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 with a unique design and custom installation option available at many of its stores.

All Sevenoaks Stores:

- are staffed by experts in home cinema and hi-fi
- stock leading brands to offer a range of high quality products
- offer impartial and personal service
- have home cinema and hi-fi demonstration rooms

Come and visit us

HOME CINEMA PLASMA AND LCD TV



Pioneer G8 Series 42/50" PLASMA TV • HD READY • FREEVIEW
Featuring Pioneer's new ultra black panel technology and an amazing contrast ratio of 16000:1, this 8th generation 42" plasma screen produces ever deeper blacks than before. Visit your local store and see the difference.



Samsung PS50Q97HDX • 50" PLASMA TV • HD READY • FREEVIEW
This HD ready 50" model features all the latest technology and is guaranteed to deliver an outstanding home cinema experience into your home. Key features include a built-in digital tuner for access to Freeview channels, picture-in-picture and virtual surround sound.



Sony Bravia KDL-40W2000
40" LCD TV • FULL HD READY • FREEVIEW
With a super wide viewing angle giving you a great picture from almost anywhere and a fast response time, this award-winning LCD TV includes a built-in Freeview tuner, 1920 x 1080 resolution and two HDMI inputs.

5 FIVE YEAR WARRANTY
included with all Plasma & LCD televisions purchased at our normal selling price*

CHOOSE MODELS FROM
Loewe, Panasonic, Pioneer, Samsung, Sharp & Sony with a 26" screen or larger

NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER OR PROMOTION. *RRP (SEVENOAKS RETAIL PRICE)



Panasonic Vera TH-37PX70
37" PLASMA TV • HD READY • FREEVIEW
Finished in a classy gloss black finish this screen will blend into any room. With a built-in Freeview tuner and excellent connectivity, this screen effortlessly handles motion and produces vibrant, natural colours. A choice of mounting options and screen sizes are available.

PACKAGE OFFERS
up to a 20% SAVING on selected Screens/TVs when purchased as part of a complete A/V system*

SPEND £1000 on A/V Separates/Speakers at RRP and GET 10% OFF selected Screens/TVs

SPEND £1750 on A/V Separates/Speakers at RRP and GET 15% OFF selected Screens/TVs

SPEND £2500 on A/V Separates/Speakers at RRP and GET 20% OFF selected Screens/TVs

*TV WARRANTY REVERTS TO MANUFACTURERS 1 YEAR PARTS AND LABOUR. NICWADD



Loewe Individual
32" LCD TV • HD READY • FREEVIEW
With a choice of five different front colours and interchangeable side panels in nine different colours, these screens will match any decor. A wide range of mounting options are available.

PURCHASE THE ARCAM SOLO MOVIE 5.1 SYSTEM
with these selected KEF speaker packages and SAVE*

£2249 with KEF KHT2005.2 SAVE £350
£2599 with KEF KHT3005SE SAVE £400
£2799 with KEF KHT5005.2 SAVE £450

*Not in conjunction with any other offer or promotion (NICWADD). Also Available: NEW SOLO MOVIE 2.1. Ask in-store for details



Getting the most from your home cinema

Home cinema has evolved from a simple projector-and-screen set-up to a state-of-the-art way of enjoying TV, DVD and multimedia. Sevenoaks knows the ins and outs of every component and will tailor a system to suit your exact requirements. Whether you're replacing an individual component or taking a first step into home cinema, expert advice is available.

DLP PROJECTION



Sim2 DOMINO D80 1080P FULL HD READY

Sim2 Multimedia is a world-leading manufacturer at the forefront of home cinema technology and a name synonymous with high-end home cinema projection.

"Beautiful colour reproduction with superb detail and dynamics allied to Full HD spec."

InFocus IN81/IN82 1080P FULL HD READY

Two outstanding projectors from InFocus. The IN81 produces a terrific picture with HD content while the IN82 has all the strengths of the IN81 but with an even better picture.



Onkyo

TX-SR875 AV RECEIVER

Exceeding even the highest expectations, the TX-SR875 features on-board decoding for all latest key sound formats.

"Stunning ability and future-proof."

TX-SR605 AV RECEIVER

"With a surfeit of talent, especially where movie sound is concerned, this is a must-hear unit"



HOME CINEMA SEPARATES AND SPEAKERS



Denon

DVD2930 DVD PLAYER AVR2807 AV RECEIVER

Featuring 1080p upscaling, this award-winning DVD player provides first-class picture and sound quality and is compatible with all popular disc formats including SACD and DVD-Audio. The 6.1 channel AVR2807 receiver features two HDMI inputs, one HDMI output and is supplied with a new 'Glo-key' remote control.



Arcam DIVA

DV137 DVD PLAYER AVR280 AV RECEIVER

Delivering 80w across all of its 7 channels, Arcam's new AVR280 produces terrific sound with both movies and music. It is an ideal partner for Arcam's DV137 universal disc player. Compatible with DVD-Audio and SACD discs along with standard DVDs, the '137 impresses with its crisp, vivid images.



Sony

RDR-HDX1065 DVD RECORDER STR-DA5200ES AV RECEIVER

Building on the abilities of Sony's award-winning 'HXD860, this new DVD recorder features twin tuners, an HDMI output, 250GB hard disk plus a USB input. When partnered with the STR-DA5200ES 7.1 channel receiver the combination promises excellent sound and vision performance.



Yamaha

DVD-S1700 DVD PLAYER RX-V1700 AV RECEIVER

Designed for top-notch sound quality, the award-winning Yamaha RX-V1700 delivers a thunderous 130 watts across all seven of its channels. A host of impressive features hides behind its fascia. The multi-format DVD-S1700 disc player is an ideal partner, complementing the 'V1700 with both its looks and performance.

KEF KHT3005SE 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

This revised version of KEF's EISA award-winning KHT3005 backs-up its impressive looks with superb surround-sound. Powerful enough to fill even the largest of rooms, this SE version is a must audition speaker package.

"The new KHT3005SE is sensational"



B&W Mini Theatre

MT-30 • 5.1 SPEAKER PACKAGE

With a combination of the latest R&D techniques and a passion for music, B&W produces a diverse range of products befitting the largest audio manufacturer in the UK.

The Mini Theatre MT-30 delivers excellent performance and is ideal for both home cinema and hi-fi applications.



REL R Series SUBWOOFERS

The R-Series is designed to augment the performance of "full range" speaker systems and to provide linear response down to below 20Hz. The R series comprises the 205, 305 and 505. All models feature class D amplification and are available in a piano black lacquer finish.



Claim FREE Accessories worth up to £300

when you purchase selected hi-fi, A/V separates and speakers at our normal selling price (RRP). Choose from QED, Soundstyle, Grado and more. Ask in-store for details.

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.



PLEASE NOTE

Some products/brands are not available at all stores. Please confirm before travelling. Any published prices were correct at time of going to press. Special or added value offers are not in conjunction with any other offer or promotion (NICWA00).

ADVERT VALID UNTIL 15/11/2007. E&OE.

MORE COMPETITIVE THAN YOU THINK

We always try to ensure our prices are highly competitive. In the event you can find the same products and excellent service at a lower price, please bring it to the store manager's attention.

FLEXIBLE FINANCE OPTIONS*

Spread the cost of buying.

Flexible finance options* are available on the majority of products we stock.

*Written details on request.

Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subject to status.

SEVENOAKS



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.

HI-FI SEPARATES AND SYSTEMS



Onkyo CR-515DAB CD RECEIVER

This award-winning CD system is a rare thing: a truly musical micro system. It delivers a great performance even when compared with budget hi-fi separates. (Excludes Speakers)

Teac REFERENCE 300 MKII MUSIC SYSTEM

Comprising three classy looking units, this CD player, DAB/FM/AM radio and amplifier system combines style with outstanding sound quality. Simply choose speakers from our extensive range in-store.



Arcam SOLO MUSIC SYSTEM Monitor Audio RS1 SPEAKERS

A great package coupling Arcam's award-winning all-in-one hi-fi system with the excellent RS1 speakers.

Ask in-store about our recommended cables and stands.



NEW KEF iQ Series

From the second you spot the soft sheen of titanium on the main driver cones, you know you're in for something special. And you won't be disappointed.

Utilising KEF's trademark Uni-Q technology, the iQ series delivers consistently detailed imaging and unrivalled off-axis response so everyone in the room gets the full benefit, wherever they sit.



iQ5SE

"These SEs are far more entertaining than the originals, yet leave the old speakers' fuss-free nature in tact."



Spendor S Series

Each Spendor 'S' series speaker delivers a balanced energy output to guarantee a consistent sound and a seamless sound stage in a diversity of living environments. Each model features:-

- Hand-made 'e' generation bass-midrange drive units
- Dynamically damped cabinets which reduce energy re-radiation to inaudible levels.



Designed for on-wall installations, the SR5 (above) delivers exceptional sound quality and is ideal for hi-fi and home cinema applications.

Monitor Audio

Across a speaker range rich in its choice of style, shape and application, Monitor Audio's thirty year heritage of technical expertise guarantees great sound with tonal accuracy that is shared by every speaker. From on-wall, in-wall, ceiling and floor, Monitor Audio gives you the freedom to enjoy high-quality sound in every room of your home.



Ranges include Bronze Reference, Silver RS, Gold Signature and Radius

"A new class-leader: a true all-rounder"

MARANTZ CD6002 - WHAT HI-FI OCTOBER 2007



NEW Marantz

Marantz products range from high-end hi-fi to HD-ready DVD players and A/V receivers. Its hi-fi range includes the CD5001OSE and new CD6002 CD players and the PM4001OSE amplifier, offering a taste of high-end audio at an incredibly competitive price.



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.

Rotel 06 Series Bowers & Wilkins 685 Speakers

Excellent performance and exceptional value for money. This combination creates a sound that, the more you hear it, the better it gets.



Pro-ject

Revive your record collection with Pro-ject turntables. The range includes the award-winning Debut III (pictured above). This belt drive, two speed player comes complete with Ortofon cartridge.



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.

- High-definition audio and video performance
- Wide choice of both hi-fi and A/V components
- Uniquely broad upgrade options
- Luxuriously high quality of manufacture

MULTI-ROOM AUDIO



Sonos

This wireless, multi-room digital music system, lets you play your favourite tunes all over the house - and control them from the palm of your hand. You can even play different songs in different rooms.

AUTUMN SAVINGS

just a small selection of our amazing autumn offers

Please note these offers are not in conjunction with any other or promotion (NICWA00)

CLAIM
UP TO
£300

Claim free accessories worth up to £300

When you purchase selected hi-fi and A/V separates or speakers at our normal selling price (RRP). Choose from QED, Soundstyle, Grado and more.

Ask in-store for details (NICWA00)

PURCHASE VALUE (AT RRP)	CLAIM ACCESSORIES WORTH (AT RRP)
£250 - £499	£50 FREE
£500 - £999	£100 FREE
£1000-£1499	£200 FREE
£1500-£1999	£300 FREE

SAVE
15%

Create your own system and SAVE 15% with our HI-FI system builder*

CHOOSE CD + Amplifier + Speakers
ADD their selling prices (RRP) together
DEDUCT 15% from the total

*Includes most, but not all, brands. Contact your local store for details (NICWA00)

SAVE
15%

Create your own system and SAVE 15% with our A/V system builder*

CHOOSE DVD + A/V Amplifier + Speakers
ADD their selling prices (RRP) together
DEDUCT 15% from the total

*Includes most, but not all, brands. Contact your local store for details (NICWA00)

SAVE
10%

10% off RRP when you purchase selected hi-fi amps, CD players and tuners*

*Includes most, but not all, brands. Contact your local store for details (NICWA00)

SAVE
15%

15% off RRP when you purchase selected A/V amps, receivers and DVD players*

*Includes most, but not all, brands. Contact your local store for details (NICWA00)

SAVE
UP TO
20%

Up to 20% off RRP when you purchase selected Hi-Fi and A/V speakers*

*Includes most, but not all, brands. Contact your local store for details (NICWA00)

CLAIM
£200

Claim £200 towards the projection screen of your choice with selected Sim2 and InFocus projectors

When purchased at our normal selling price (RRP). Ask in-store for details (NICWA00)

5 YEAR WARRANTY

Five year warranty included with all plasma and LCD TVs when purchased at our normal selling price*

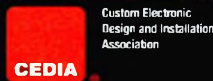
Includes Loewe, Panasonic, Pioneer, Samsung, Sharp and Sony with a 26 inch screen or larger
*SRP (Sevenoaks Retail Price) (NICWA00)



SEVENOAKS

CUSTOM INSTALLATION CENTRES

- Bespoke design and installation service
- Home cinema and multi-room music systems from around £5k to £50k plus
- Project management



Most of our Custom Installation Centres are CEDIA members. See our full store list opposite.



ABERDEEN 57 Crown St 01224 252797	MANCHESTER 69 High Street, City Centre 0161 831 7969
BEDFORD 29-31 St Peters St 01234 272779	NORWICH 29-29a St Giles St 01603 767605
BRIGHTON (HOVE) 57 Western Rd 01273 733338	NOTTINGHAM (SHERWOOD) 597-599 Mansfield Rd 0115 911 2121
BRISTOL 92b Whiteladies Rd, Clifton 0117 974 3727	OXFORD 41 St Clements St 01865 241773
BROMLEY 39a East St 020 8290 1988	PETERBOROUGH 36-38 Park Rd 01733 897697
CAMBRIDGE 17 Burleigh St 01223 304770	PLYMOUTH 107 Cornwall St 01752 226011
CHELSEA 403 King's Rd 020 7352 9466	POOLE Latimer House, 44-46 High St 01202 671677
CHELTENHAM 14 Pittville St 01242 241171	PRESTON 40-41 Lune St 01772 825777
CRAWLEY Closing at the end of November 32 The Boulevard 01293 510777	READING 3-4 The Walk, King St 0118 959 7768
EALING 24 The Green 020 8579 8777	SEVENOAKS 109-113 London Rd 01732 459555
EDINBURGH 5 The Grassmarket 0131 229 7267	SHEFFIELD 635 Queens Rd, Heeley 0114 255 5861
EPSOM 12 Upper High St 01372 720720	SOLIHULL Closing at the end of October 149-151 Stratford Rd 0121 733 3727
EXETER 28 Cowick St 01392 218895	SOUTHAMPTON 33 London Rd 023 8033 7770
GLASGOW 88 Great Western Rd 0141 332 9655	SOUTHGATE 77 Chase Side 020 8886 2777
GUILDFORD 73b North St 01483 536666	STAINES 4 Thames St 01784 460777
HOLBORN 144-148 Grays Inn Rd 020 7837 7540	SWINDON 8-9 Commercial Rd 01793 610992
HULL 1 Savile Row, Savile St 01482 587171	SWISS COTTAGE 21 Northwings Parade, Finchley Rd 020 7722 9777
KINGSTON 43 Fife Rd 020 8547 0717	TUNBRIDGE WELLS 28-30 St Johns Rd 01892 531543
LEEDS 62 North St 0113 245 2775	WATFORD 478 St Albans Rd 01923 213533
LEICESTER 10 Loseby Lane 0116 253 6567	WEYBRIDGE 43 Church St, The Quadrant 01932 828525
LINCOLN 20-22 Corporation St (Off High St) 01522 527397	WITHAM (ESSEX) 1 The Grove Centre 01376 501733
LOUGHTON 7-9 Goldings Hill 020 8532 0770	WOLVERHAMPTON 29-30 Cleveland St 01902 312225
MAIDSTONE 96 Week St 01622 686366	YEOVIL 14 Silver St 01935 700078

FOR OPENING HOURS CALL YOUR LOCAL STORE OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE

● Custom Installation Centre ● Cedia Member ● Open Sunday

PLEASE NOTE

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MORE COMPETITIVE THAN YOU THINK

We always try to ensure our prices are highly competitive. In the event you can find the same products and excellent service at a lower price, please bring it to the store manager's attention.

FLEXIBLE FINANCE OPTIONS*

Spread the cost of buying. Flexible finance options* are available on the majority of products we stock.
*Written details on request.
Licensed credit brokers. Minimum balance £400. Subject to status.

STEREO SPEAKERS

Speaker pairs for stereo sound



While loudspeakers are relatively straightforward in construction, they have one of the most difficult jobs in hi-fi – turning an electrical signal into an acoustic one. Most consist of two or more drive units in a box that usually has a port in it to make life easier for the cone in your mid and/or bass driver. Alternatives to this arrangement include panel speakers, which use electrostatic or ribbon technology, and horns, which use drive units in complex cabinets that greatly improve efficiency.

Box speakers are either designed to stand on the floor (floorstanders) or on a stand (stand or shelfmounts). Floorstanders have greater internal volume which can translate into greater efficiency and/or bass extension, but less substantial designs also introduce cabinet resonance and thus distortion. But they don't need stands and therefore have the aesthetic edge. Standmounts have less cabinet to vibrate and often score in terms of imaging and timing, but need good stands to work well.

Positioning

The closer the speaker is to a wall, the greater the reinforcement of bass. As all rooms differ, there's no simple formula for placement and experimentation will yield the best results. Altering the angle at which the speakers face the listener can also make a difference to balance and stereo image.

Going multichannel

Many stereo speakers can be augmented with centre and surround channels from the same brand to create a multichannel system. The most important element is a centre channel, which needs to match the stereo pair as closely as possible. For the best musical results, surrounds should be as per the front left and right channels, but if space or funds don't permit, smaller designs can be used quite effectively.



Choosing speakers

Because speakers and the rooms they are used in vary so much, choosing a pair tends to be quite subjective. To find some that will suit you, try to listen to a good variety to hear how they differ, and if possible, audition some at home. Tonal balance tends to vary the most, but is less important than more subtle factors such as timing and dynamics. Finally, listen with your ears not your eyes – great-looking speakers aren't necessarily great sounding.

Spikes

Floorstanding speakers and stands have threaded inserts for spikes that allow rigid coupling with the floor. These have the advantage of draining resonance from the speaker and giving tighter bass, but can result in more vibration getting back to the electronics and often cause the floor to resonate as well.

POWER

Though some speakers have a power rating, this isn't as informative as a rating for how difficult they are to drive, nor does it indicate wattage extremes for the partnering amp. In practice, an amplifier cannot be too powerful. Our listings quote ease of drive to indicate how much power

your amp needs to avoid a mismatch. An above-average (A+) speaker will work with amps rated at 25W plus, while an average (A) speaker will need 50W or more, and a below average (A-) speaker could require 100W plus to sound its best. These are guidelines rather than rules.

Q&A

IF SPEAKERS ARE RATED AT 75 WATTS, DOES THAT MEAN I NEED A 75 WATT AMP?

No, see the box on power for the full story.

WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR SMALL ROOMS?

Those designed to work close to the wall will be smoother in confined spaces. Speakers that have relatively dry, tight bass will also sound better.

WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR BIG ROOMS?

Big, efficient, easy-to-drive designs are more likely to be able to fill a room better than compact models.

DO I NEED TO BUY CENTRE AND SURROUND CHANNELS FROM THE SAME BRAND AS MY STEREO SPEAKERS?

Yes, assuming that you're wanting to create a homogenous surround sound experience, where voices don't change when they move from one channel to another.

TOP BUYS



Tannoy
Mercury F4 £350

Tannoy's Mercury speakers have a long history of 'quality' sound at low prices, and the latest range is no exception – this floorstander is thoroughly engaging.



DALI
Ikon 6 £899

Complete with a ribbon super-tweeter, this is an exceptionally capable floorstander for the money, delivering a highly detailed and truly 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 BB BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE **STEREO SPEAKERS**

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE (WxHxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
	UP TO £1,000									
	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
BB	Acoustic Energy Aegis Neo 3	370	Pretty, neutral floorstander sounds open with wide dynamic range and good bass weight	20,90,5,24		A	24			294
BB	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	18,29,5,25,5		A-	45			283
BB	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	24,5,37,31,5		A	26			288
BB	ATC SCM 1	849	A very fine little speaker that's at its best with good, natural recordings where it adds little and reveals much	21,38,25		A-	55			293
EC	Aurousal A1	450	Single-driver system is coloured but wonderfully coherent and very effective at communicating emotions	20,5,36,27		A	40			299
BB	AVI Neutron IV	499	A great example of what can be done with a genuinely small speaker, but the warts-and-all balance won't suit all	15,27,21		A-	65			260
BB	B&W DM303	180	Chunky looking and lively sounding, with deep bass, a fine midband and a restrained top end	20,33,23		A	23			226
BB	B&W CM1	500	Luxury miniature has neutral, laid back sound, with low coloration, fine imaging but weak dynamics	16,5,28,28		A-	40			279
BB	B&W 683	899	We have not come across this level of transparency in a sub-£1,000 speaker before, killer bass is sublime	19,8,98,5,34		A	38			297
BB	B&W 705	900	Deft, delicate and delightful, if a little bass light, with clever enclosure and driver engineering	22,42,29		A	35			253
EC	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
BB	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
BB	DALI Monitor 1	1,000	Beautiful miniature with advanced drivers sounds marvellously coherent with fine vocal expression	16,32,24		A	40			296
BB	Dynaudio DM 2/10	775	Unfashionably bulky standmount has fine dynamics, grip, bass and headroom and is delicate and well-mannered	27,5,45,35		A	22			299
BB	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
BB	Epos M5	349	Gorgeous miniature works well close to wall. Could be smoother but communicates with authority	18,33,21		A-	40			269
BB	Epos M12.2	449	A true classic stand-mount with lovely presentation, fine sound balance, superior coherence and low coloration	20,37,25		A-	40			265
	Epos M22	949	Very classy floorstander has a tricky bass and an edgy top, but a very smooth and even midband	20,88,25		A-	25			275
BB	Focal Chorus 816 V	1,000	Fine, warm balance, superior dynamics, and a sweet top end, but could be smoother	28,100,37,5		A+	20			288
BB	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
BB	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
BB	KEF iQ9	800	Shapely and solid floorstander has wide bandwidth and dynamic range with superior neutrality and sensitivity	22,94,33		A	25			273
	Mission élan e34	400	A return to form for Mission with a pacy, vibrant sound matched to good looks	35,96,34		A+	48			298
BB	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
BB	Monitor Audio BR2	200	Good looking standmount has a muscular sound with superior coherence	18,5,35,25		A-	30			294
BB	Monitor Audio BR5	400	Not the best dressed in its class, but detailed, bold sounding, good value and an easy electrical load	17,85,25		A-	36			293
BB	Monitor Audio GS10	800	More neutral tonally than some recent MAs. Quality stereo design which takes up little room and is easy to drive	20,36,27		A-	40			284
BB	Monitor Audio Silver RS8	800	Bold, dynamic sound marks it out from the crowd, and it's an easy load that works well in larger rooms	90,18,27		A	33			276
BB	Mordaunt-Short Avant 906i	350	The generous, well balanced sound shows good enclosure control, could do with more grip and better spikes!	16,5,85,29,5		A	40			281

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

SEVEN DAYS

SOUND & VISION

STOCK CLEARANCE SAVE UP TO 35%

Time to pick up a bargain. With savings of at least 25% off the original RRP, these end-of-line* hi-fi and home cinema separates, speakers and accessories are outstanding value. But hurry, stocks are limited.

ABERDEEN 01224 252797

- Arcam DVA T61 Tuner £149.00
- Audiolab 8000P Amplifier £299.00
- KEF iQ5 Speakers £259.00
- Mission M Cube AV Speaker Package £515.00
- Panasonic DMRE510 DVD Recorder £135.00
- Yamaha DSPAX756E AV Amplifier £355.00
- Yamaha RXN600D AV Receiver £389.00
- Yamaha YSP800 Digital Sound Projector £389.00
- Yamaha SW1500 Sub Woofer £449.00

BEDFORD 01234 272779

- Arcam DVA DV78 DVD Player £649.00
- Audiolab 8000P Power Amplifier £255.00
- Audiolab 8000Q Pre Amplifier £385.00
- Dah Sune 1.7 Speakers £455.00
- Deema Acoustics Xen Speakers £549.00
- Loewe Xelos A26 LCD TV £975.00

BRIGHTON 01273 733338

- KEF PSW4000 Sub Woofer £795.00
- KEF PSW5000 Sub Woofer £1,895.00
- KEF Reference 202C Centre Speaker £695.00

CAMBRIDGE 01223 304770

- Cyrus 5vs Amplifier £485.00
- Cyrus AVB AV Processor £325.00
- Monitor Audio RSFX Surround Speakers £259.00
- Monitor Audio GRC Centre Speaker £324.00
- Pioneer DV585 DVD Player £109.00
- Sony ST15B920 Tuner £134.00
- Yamaha MCX1000 MusicCAST Server £1,199.00
- Yamaha MCKA10 MusicCAST Client £519.00
- Yamaha YSP1 Digital Surround Projector £519.00

CRAWLEY 01293 510777

- Arcam DVA AVR250 AV Receiver £445.00
- Denon DVD 1930 DVD Player £159.00
- Denon DVD2930 DVD Player £419.00
- Samsung BDP1000 Blu-Ray Player £449.00
- Yamaha DSPAX761 AV Amplifier £319.00
- Yamaha DVDS1700 DVD Player £299.00
- Yamaha DVDS2700 DVD Player £749.00
- Yamaha RXN600D AV Receiver £445.00
- Yamaha RXV1700 AV Receiver £669.00
- Yamaha RXV2700 AV Receiver £969.00

EALING 020 8579 8777

- Fujitsu P42XHA58B Plasma Monitor £1,649.00
- In Focus IN76 DLP Projector £649.00
- Marantz DV6600 DVD Player £135.00
- Monitor Audio i-Deck Compact i-Pod Speaker System £675.00
- Nordost 4 Flat (2m Pair) Speaker Cable £109.00
- Nordost Solar Wind (2m Pair) Speaker Cable £155.00
- Nordost Solar Wind (5m Pair) Speaker Cable £279.00
- Pioneer PDP538 Plasma Accessory Speakers £69.00
- Primare i21 Amplifier £549.00
- Project Debut III Turntable £139.00
- Rel R106 Tuner £195.00
- Rotel RC06 Pre Amplifier £225.00
- Teac ICW5 i-Pod Dock £65.00
- Via R1 Portable Digital Radio £119.00
- Yamaha DSPAX758E AV Receiver £409.00
- Yamaha YSP8000 Digital Surround Projector £299.00
- Yamaha RXV1700 AV Receiver £669.00

EPSOM 01372 720720

- Audiolab 8000S Amplifier £369.00
- Audiolab 8000Q Pre Amplifier £449.00
- Audiolab 8000P Power Amplifier £299.00
- B&W FPM4 Flat Panel Speaker £289.00
- Dali Mentor 2 Speakers £909.00
- Denon AVR2307 AV Receiver £449.00
- Denon DVD2930 DVD Player £719.00
- Marantz TT-15 Turntable £749.00
- Marantz PM-15 Amplifier £749.00
- Marantz SA7001 CD Player £299.00
- M&K K5 Surround Speakers £225.00
- M&K K17 Speakers £109.00
- Monitor Audio RS5 Speakers £289.00
- Monitor Audio QS10 Speakers £519.00
- Monitor Audio QS20 Speakers £969.00
- Monitor Audio GSL CR Centre Speaker £319.00
- Musical Fidelity XT100 Amplifier £669.00
- Pro-Project Korbison II Turntable £185.00
- Sunfire TrueEQ Signature Sub Woofer £1,429.00
- Yamaha DVDS2700 DVD Player £749.00
- Yamaha DVDS1700 DVD Player £299.00
- Yamaha RXV2700 AV Receiver £939.00
- Yamaha RXV1700 AV Receiver £739.00
- Yamaha CDRH01500 CD/HDD Recorder £449.00

EXETER 01392 218895

- Arcam DVA A80 Amplifier £485.00
- B&W DM602.5 (S3) Speakers £259.00
- M&K KX12 Sub Woofer £355.00
- Marantz CD50010SE CD Player £185.00
- Marantz PM40010SE Amplifier £185.00
- Mission CS1 Receiver £1,499.00
- Naim Amxa Speakers £309.00
- REL Stampede Sub Woofer £405.00
- REL Storm 5 Sub Woofer £649.00
- Ruark Crusader 3 Sub Woofer £1,819.00
- Ruark Sabre 3 Speakers £579.00
- Ruark Taimra 3 Speakers £969.00
- Spendor S3e Speakers £519.00

GLASGOW 0141 332 9655

- Arcam DVA A80 Amplifier £409.00
- Arcam DVA AV700P AV Processor £339.00
- Arcam DVA P1000 Power Amplifier £1,099.00
- Audica CS-11 Speakers £339.00
- Audica CS-C1 Centre Speaker £399.00
- Audica CS-S1 Satellite Speakers £499.00
- Audica ST1 Speakers £79.00
- B&W DM600 (S3) Speakers £149.00

- B&W DM601 (S3) Speakers £1,850.00
- BobCarver/WBBC DB Sub Woofer £419.00
- Denon AVR3806 AV Receiver £649.00
- Denon AVR4306 AV Receiver £949.00
- Denon S101 DVD System £579.00
- Denon AVCA11XVA AV Amplifier £1,799.00
- KEF KIT 100 DVD System £649.00
- KEF KIT 100 Stands £95.00
- Marantz SA11 S1 SACD Player £1,299.00
- Marantz PM11 S1 Amplifier £1,599.00
- Monitor Audio i-Deck i-Pod Dock £1,099.00
- Monitor Audio GS20 Speakers £1,125.00
- Musical Fidelity X-Ray V6 CD Player £499.00
- Musical Fidelity XT100 Amplifier £579.00
- Primeau DVD26 DVD Player £649.00
- Primeau SPA21 Amplifier £1,299.00
- Quad 99CDS CD Player £419.00
- Quad 99P Power Amplifier £349.00
- REL Stampede Sub Woofer £335.00
- REL Storm 5 Sub Woofer £499.00
- REL Storm S Sub Woofer £549.00
- Wharfedale SW150 Sub Woofer £159.00
- Yamaha RXV459 AV Receiver £259.00
- Yamaha DVDS559 DVD Player £79.00
- Yamaha DSPAX759 AV Amplifier £349.00
- Yamaha YTSW1500 Sub Woofer £449.00

HOLBORN 020 7837 7540

- B&W AW750 Sub Woofer £779.00
- Denon DVD 1930 DVD Player £1,685.00
- Denon DVD2930 DVD Player £559.00
- Marantz DV6600 DVD Player £1,889.00
- Nevo SL Universal Remote Control £159.00
- Sim2 Domino 35 DLP Projector £1,949.00

HULL 01482 587171

- Acoustic Energy AE1 Classic Speaker £549.00
- Audiolab 8000CD Player £449.00
- Denon DF 102 DAB System £299.00
- Denon TU260 i11 Tuner £69.00
- Q Acoustics Q2000 Speaker £259.00
- KEF Q7 Speakers £238.00
- KEF KIT 100 DVD System £649.00
- Monitor Audio RS6 Speakers £389.00
- PMC DB1 MC Centre Speaker £439.00
- Project RPM9 Turntable £549.00
- Q Acoustics Q2000 Speaker £259.00
- Quad 99 Pre Pre Amplifier £749.00
- Quad CD2 CD / Pre Amplifier £749.00
- Quad ESL2805 Speakers £2,595.00
- REL T2 Sub Woofer £319.00
- Spectra 151 Glass Rack £259.00
- Spectral CL151 Equipment Rack £1,419.00
- Tivoli PAL Portable Analogue Radio £79.00
- Tivoli Model One Portable Analogue Radio £69.00
- Tivoli Model Three Portable Analogue Radio £129.00
- Yamaha YSP11100 Sound Projector £579.00
- Yamaha YSP900 Sound Projector £389.00

KINGSTON 020 8547 0717

- Arcam AVP700 AV Processor £939.00
- Arcam P1000 Power Amplifier £1,095.00
- Audiolab 8000P Pre Amplifier £389.00
- Cyrus Small Power Plus Power Amplifier £449.00
- Cyrus 6 Power Power Amplifier £249.00
- Cyrus 8 Power Power Amplifier £499.00
- REL R305 Sub Woofer £499.00

LEEDS 0113 245 2775

- Artcooustic Mini Diablo Surround Speaker £419.00
- B&W FPM4 Flat Panel Speaker £159.00
- Bose 251 Speakers £239.00
- Base Room Mate AV Speaker Package £699.00
- Bose Sound Dock i-Pod Speaker System £159.00
- Definitive Technology Mythos 1 Speakers £1,349.00
- Denon AVR2307 AV Receiver £379.00
- Denon AVR2807 AV Receiver £519.00
- Denon AVR3806 AV Receiver £649.00
- Denon AVR3006 AV Receiver £549.00
- Denon DVD 1930 DVD Player £159.00
- Denon Fireball 160 CD Music Sever £599.00
- KEF Ci FDT in Wall Speaker £199.00
- KEF KHT3006 AV Speaker Package £599.00
- Pioneer PDP47X0 Plasma TV £329.00
- Q Acoustics 1000s Sub Woofer £1,119.00
- Samsung LE40F71BX LCD TV £999.00
- Samsung HD660 DVD Player £59.00

LEICESTER 0116 253 6567

- Arcam DVA AVR300 AV Receiver £999.00
- Arcam DVA D181 DAB Tuner £485.00
- Arcam FMJ AV6 AV Pre Amplifier £2,359.00
- Arcam FMJ CD30 Pre Amplifier £1,119.00
- Arcam FMJ CD33 CD Player £1,009.00
- Arcam FMJ DV27 DVD Player £1,419.00
- Arcam FMJ P1 Power Amplifier £899.00
- Arcam FMJ P35 Power Amplifier £699.00
- Harman Kardon AVR200 AV Receiver £355.00
- Harman Kardon AVR300 AV Receiver £569.00
- Harman Kardon AVR7300 AV Receiver £1,269.00
- Monitor Audio SFX Surround Speakers £259.00
- Monitor Audio SL CR Centre Speaker £159.00
- Onkyo DV555 DVD Player £289.00
- Onkyo TXDS980 AV Receiver £1,869.00
- Pure DRX70 IES DAB Tuner £119.00
- Vienna Acoustics Shoneburg Speakers £969.00
- Yamaha DVSL100 DVD Player £69.00

LOUGHTON 020 8532 0770

- Denon PMA1500AE Amplifier £409.00
- Denon DCD1500AE CD Player £375.00
- Grado SR60 Headphones £65.00
- Grado SR80 Headphones £79.00
- KEF iQ3 Speakers £1,499.00
- KEF iQ3 Speakers £79.00
- KEF iQ3 Speakers £259.00

- Marantz RC5400 Universal Remote Control £259.00
- Pioneer VSX1016 AV Receiver £375.00
- Pioneer VSXA2 AV Receiver £519.00
- Pioneer DV989 DVD Player £649.00
- REL Storm 5 Sub Woofer £519.00
- Samsung BDP1000 Blu-Ray Player £449.00
- Samsung LE40F71BX LCD TV £1,039.00
- Sennheiser HD485 Headphones £45.00
- Sennheiser HD555 Headphones £75.00

MANCHESTER 0161 831 7969

- Arcam Alto Speakers £285.00
- Castle Compact AV Speaker Package £449.00
- Denon DVD 1930 DVD Player £159.00
- Denon AVR2807 AV Receiver £519.00
- Denon AVR3806 AV Receiver £649.00
- In Focus IN74 DLP Projector £709.00
- KEF KHT2005.2 AV Speaker Package £449.00
- M&K K7 Speaker £1,299.00
- Monitor Audio Bronze BR3 Speakers £149.00
- Monitor Audio RS1 Speakers £259.00
- Pioneer DVR40HX DVD Recorder £229.00
- Primeau DVD26 DVD Player £649.00
- Yamaha DVD 1700 DVD Player £299.00
- Yamaha DVD 2700 DVD Player £749.00
- Yamaha RXV1700 AV Receiver £519.00
- Yamaha RXV2700 AV Receiver £749.00

NORWICH 01603 767605

- Arcam DWA T61 Tuner £175.00
- Atacama SL4000 Speaker Stands £65.00
- Atacama Neus 5 Speaker Stands £45.00
- Audica CS-S1 Satellite Speaker £129.00
- Audio Pro Status Speaker £119.00
- Harman Kardon AVR7300 AV Receiver £2,749.00
- Lexicon RT10 DVD Player £1,779.00
- Lexicon CX7 AV Power Amplifier £2,275.00
- REL Stampede Sub Woofer £449.00
- Rotel RC03 Pre Amplifier £199.00
- Sound Orig Z1 Speaker Stands £54.00
- Spectral PL1 Plasma Stand £289.00
- Van Den Hul The First Interconnect Cable £129.00
- Yamaha MCX1000 MusicCAST Server £1,249.00
- Yamaha YSP1000 Digital Surround Projector £585.00

NOTTINGHAM 0115 911 2121

- Harman Kardon HD970 CD Player £219.00
- Harman Kardon HK970 Amplifier £259.00
- Harman Kardon TU970 Tuner £219.00
- M&K LC1750 II Surround Speakers £389.00
- Spectral PL1 Plasma Stand £289.00
- Van Den Hul The First Interconnect Cable £129.00
- Yamaha MCX1000 MusicCAST Server £1,249.00
- Yamaha YSP1000 Digital Surround Projector £585.00

PETERBOROUGH 01733 897697

- KEF iQ7 Speakers £449.00

PLYMOUTH 01752 226011

- Arcam DVA DV78 DVD Player £519.00
- Denon DVD3910 DVD Player £579.00
- Harman Kardon AVR7300 AV Receiver £1,349.00
- KEF KIT100 DVD System £749.00
- Pioneer DVH630 DVD Recorder £419.00
- Denon DV2930 DVD Player £749.00
- Yamaha DSPAX758E AV Receiver £409.00

READING 0118 959 7768

- Mendian IS1 Receiver £1,399.00
- Mendian G07 CD Player £999.00

SOUTHAMPTON 023 8033 7770

- Arcam DVA DV78 DVD Player £669.00
- B&W GMC Centre Speaker £259.00
- Cyrus 6 Power Power Amplifier £299.00
- Cyrus 8 Power Power Amplifier £519.00
- Cyrus CD65 CD Player £485.00
- Cyrus PSR1 Power Supply £299.00
- Denon DV2930 DVD Player £749.00
- KEF iQ3 Speakers £179.00
- Marantz SR7001 AV Receiver £669.00
- Marantz CD50010SE CD Player £1,185.00
- Marantz PM11 S1 Amplifier £1,619.00
- Marantz KHT3006 AV Speaker Package £599.00
- Marantz PM7001 Amplifier £259.00
- Marantz SA7001 CD Player £299.00
- Marantz SA7001 HI CD Player £449.00
- Marantz SR4001 AV Receiver £279.00
- Marantz SR5001 AV Receiver £259.00
- Marantz SR6001 AV Receiver £319.00
- Marantz SR8001 AV Receiver £899.00
- Marantz ST15 S1 DAB Tuner £519.00
- Marantz VP11 S1 DLP Projector £7,499.00
- Pioneer DV989 AV DVD Player £579.00
- Rel R305 Sub Woofer £185.00
- Samsung PS50P96FX Plasma £1,719.00
- Samsung PS6376FX Plasma £3,519.00
- Yamaha DVDS2700 DVD Player £749.00
- Yamaha RXV1700 AV Receiver £669.00

SOUTHGATE 020 8886 2777

- Denon DVD2910 DVD Player £349.00
- Denon AVR3806 AV Receiver £749.00
- Denon AVR1907 AV Receiver £299.00
- Denon DVD2930 DVD Player £749.00
- Pioneer VSX16 AV Receiver £199.00
- Yamaha RXV359 AV Receiver £149.00

SWINDON 01793 610992

- Arcam DVA DV78 DVD Player £485.00
- Denon AVR1507 AV Receiver £1,685.00
- Denon AVR2807 AV Receiver £599.00
- Denon DVD1930 DVD Player £1,685.00
- Denon DVD2930 DVD Player £485.00
- Quad L-Sub Sub Woofer £249.00
- Roksan KandyVill Amplifier £419.00
- Roksan Kandy Power Amplifier £355.00
- Sim2 Domino D35 DLP Projector £2,249.00
- Toshiba 37ML189 LCD TV £335.00
- Yamaha DSPAX759 AV Amplifier £355.00
- Yamaha DSP25 AV Amplifier £1,949.00
- Yamaha DVDS2500 DVD Player £449.00
- Yamaha DVDS2700 DVD Player £649.00
- Yamaha RXN600 AV/DAB Receiver £449.00
- Yamaha YSP1000 Digital Surround Projector £579.00

WATFORD 01923 213533

- B&W CM7 Speakers £749.00
- Denon AVR1507 AV Receiver £1,685.00
- Fujitsu P42XHA59 Plasma Screen £1,719.00
- KEF Q2c Centre Speaker £385.00
- KEF iQ6c Centre Speaker £1,899.00
- Mendian G56 Power Amplifier £939.00
- Mendian G68HD DVD Transport £2,175.00
- Mendian G01 Pre Amplifier £939.00
- Stansonic Unique Rack £259.00
- Wharfedale Diamond 9 Centre Speaker £459.00
- Wharfedale Diamond 9 Speakers £95.00

WEYBRIDGE 01932 828525

- Arcam Alto Speakers £259.00
- Artcooustic DF55 S0 Speakers £1,299.00
- Harman Kardon AVR7300 AV Receiver £2,749.00
- In Focus IN76 Projector (DLP) £1,269.00
- In Focus IN72 Projector (DLP) £969.00
- KEF K1200 DVD System £669.00
- KEF iQ3 Speakers £179.00
- M&K Surround 25 Surround Speakers £469.00
- M&K LC25 Surround Speaker £159.00
- Monitor DV930HDD/DVD Recorder (Multi Region) £545.00
- Quad S.1 Lite AV Speaker Package £545.00
- Quad L Centre 2 Centre Speaker £225.00
- Sim2 Domino 30H DLP Projector £2,385.00
- Yamaha RXV2600 AV Receiver £519.00
- Yamaha YSP800 Digital Surround Projector £449.00
- Yamaha RXN600 AV/DAB Receiver £449.00

WITHAM 01376 501733

- Arcam DVA T61 Tuner £185.00
- Audiolab 8000CD CD Player £449.00
- Creek Destiny CD CD Player £399.00
- Denon DVD3930 DVD Player £819.00
- Fujitsu P50XHASUBS Plasma Screen £216.00
- In Focus IN76 DLP Projector £1,049.00
- Isotec G11 Mini-Sub Mains Conditioner £189.00
- KEF iQ1 Speakers £1,029.00
- KEF iQ3 Speakers £179.00
- KEF iQ5 Speakers £259.00
- KEF iQ6S Surround Speakers £359.00
- KEF iQ7 Speakers £259.00
- Monitor Audio Silver RSLCR Centre Speaker £1,599.00
- Pioneer PDP57XD Plasma TV £1,589.00
- Primare i21 Amplifier £559.00
- Ruark Taimra 3 Speakers £969.00
- Shiela C205H LCD TV Projector £2,395.00
- Sim2 Domino D35 DLP Projector £2,249.00
- Wharfedale Diamond 9 Centre Speaker £59.00
- Wharfedale Diamond 9 Speakers £59.00
- Yamaha DSPAX758E AV Amplifier £409.00
- Yamaha DVDS2700 DVD Player £749.00
- Yamaha DVX530 DVD System £449.00
- Yamaha RXN600 AV/DAB Receiver £485.00
- Yamaha YSP1000 Digital Surround Projector £1,669.00

WOLVERHAMPTON 01902 312225

- B&W XT2 Speakers (In Stands) £595.00
- B&W XTC Centre Speaker £325.00
- Denon AVR1907 AV Receiver £259.00
- Denon AVR2307 AV Receiver £389.00
- Denon AVR2807 AV Receiver £519.00
- Denon DM35 CD System £189.00
- Denon DVD1930 DVD Player £1,685.00
- Denon TU1500AE Tuner £385.00
- Harman Kardon AVR245 AV Receiver £389.00
- Harman Kardon DVD37 DVD Player £1,189.00
- Harman Kardon DVH47 DVD Player £255.00

YEOVIL 01935 700078

- Acoustic Energy AE1 Speakers £1,299.00
- Audiolab 8000CD CD Player £449.00
- Audiolab i000S Amplifier £375.00
- Denon AVR3806 AV Receiver £649.00
- Denon AVR1907 AV Receiver £259.00
- Denon DVD2930 DVD Player £749.00
- Denon TU1500AE Tuner £385.00
- Harman Kardon AVR245 AV Receiver £389.00
- Harman Kardon DVD37 DVD Player £1,189.00
- Harman Kardon DVH47 DVD Player £255.00

Our favourite  BEST BUY  EDITOR'S CHOICE

STEREO SPEAKERS

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (WxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EDGE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
	PMC DB1+	625	Now with sweeter treble, this fun-size tiny lacks some weight and authority, but is beautifully balanced	16,29,24		A	50		261
	PMC TB2+	795	Classy transmission line stand-mount has superior midband, restrained presence and a bright clean top end	20,40,30		A	28		275
	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
	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
	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
	Quadral Pico	849	Could be more muscular, but neutral and open with spacious imaging and little coloration	19,34,26		A-	30		292
	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
	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
	Revel Concerta F12	900	Massive multi-driver floorstander is not pretty, but has great headroom, bass weight and impressive neutrality	25,108,36		A	22		296
	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
	Tannoy Mercury F4	350	Floorstander has an engrossing sound with good dynamics and a warm, restrained output	20,5,97,29		A+	24		294
	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
	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
	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
	Triangle Comete ES	500	Bulky standmount lacks style but delivers engrossing musical coherence and vivid dynamics	20,42,34		A	40		265
ABOVE £1,000									
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	Dali Helicon 400	2,999	Advanced drivers and enclosure give a generous sound with wide dynamic range and no boxiness	22,103,46		A	20		264
	Dynaudio 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
	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
	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
	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
	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
	Focal Diva Utopia Be	7,599	Lovely slimline speaker combines remarkable transparency with fine dynamics and gorgeous bass	25,110,53		A+	30		255
	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
	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
	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
	KEF Reference Model 2012	3,500	Very classy but costly three-way stand-mount with much improved Uni-Q; could be more transparent	25x42x41		A	30		298
	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
	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
	Opera Seconda	1,295	Classy cabinetwork plus beautifully judged neutrality with crisp, clean and deep bass	24,102,5,31,5		A-	<20		297
	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

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Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

STEREO SPEAKERS

continued

Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE (WxHxD) (cm)	FLOOR/MOUNT	BASS FROM Hz	FREQUENCY	CLOSE TO WALL	SPEAKER NUMBER
EC	Mordaunt-Short Perf 6	3,500	Revolutionary enclosure design and aspirated tweeter make for a fast, hi-res ride	24,121,37	A-	35			264
EC	Neat Elite SE	1,499	Smooth and natural performer with notably expressive midband. Fine voice articulation and unusual sweetness	20,90,18	A	25			267
EC	Neat 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
EC	Neat Momentum 3i	1,745	Classy isobaric standmount sounds surprisingly big, with exceptional coherence and impressive dynamic range	22,38,27	A-	25			299
EC	PMC Wafer 2	1,650	Clever 'hang-on-wall' speaker has minimal sonic compromises. Smooth midband delivers impressive stereo imaging	33,5,57,5,10	A+	45			285
EC	PMC FB1+	1,695	Nicely proportioned floorstander has a sweet top and a beautifully natural, open and restrained midband	20,100,30	A	20			260
EC	PMC EB1	5,950	The best argument for large speakers that we've heard in a long time	29,120,46,5	A-	19			292
EC	ProAc Response D25	2,995	The traditional ProAc high-end detail mixed with greater efficiency and more pace - a splendid speaker	22,107,25	A+	20			254
EC	Quad ESL 2805	4,500	Uniquely wonderful natural realism, exceptional imaging, coherence and low level detailing	70,107,38,5	A-	45			294
EC	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
EC	Rega R9	2,498	This subtle, laid back but very informative performer has a very superior dynamic range, especially in the bass	17,103,39	A	20			256
EC	Revel F32	3,200	Meticulously balanced, tonally neutral design makes for a taut, well disciplined sound	22,105,39	A	30			265
EC	Revel M22	1,800	A remarkably clean and revealing speaker with superb tonal and microdynamic capabilities	22,37,30	A-	48			274
EC	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
EC	Ruark Talisman III	1,499	No bass demon, but a sophisticated and agile speaker epitomising Ruark's design ideals	22,84,31	A	22			259
EC	Sonus Faber Concerto D	1,799	The Concerto Domus performs significantly above its price level, especially with acoustic material	21,99,31	A	35			270
EC	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
EC	Tannoy Glenair 10	2,999	With a 250mm dual concentric driver this is a generously proportioned, highly engaging speaker for a good price	36,100,35	A+	38			295
EC	Totem Model 1 Signature	1,595	Expensive, but very seductive miniature delivers a beautifully smooth and balanced midband	17,31,23	A	35			277
EC	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
EC	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
EC	Usher Compass CP-6381	2,500	Lots of speaker for your money, with plenty of deep bass, unusual styling and massive build	35,127,65	A	20			270
EC	Vivid Audio B1	7,750	Impressive cabinet design combined with hi-tech drivers to make truly world class speaker	27,110,38	A-	40			261
EC	Wharfedale Airedale Neo	9,000	Expansive yet relaxed sounding, the Neo is a coloured but surprisingly musical and enjoyable speaker	52,115,45	A-	25			296
EC	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,000	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package	23,91,37	A	28			254
EC	Yamaha Soavo 2	1,200	Cunningly crafted stand-mount with a beautiful balance that always sounds lively, open and involving	22,38,35	A	28			296

AV SPEAKERS

Speaker solutions for multichannel surround sound



Multichannel speaker systems have a front left/right (L/R) stereo pair, a centre or dialogue channel, two (5.1) or four (7.1) surround speakers and often a subwoofer. For best results, each of these speakers bar the sub should be identical. The problem is that few surround systems are dedicated to music and perform a home cinematic role as well, meaning the centre speaker has to sit above or below a video

monitor. Centre channels are usually wide and short for this reason.

This should not be a barrier to great surround for music and movies however, as many brands make centre channels with a very close sound to their L/R designs.

Music vs movies

High-resolution SACD and DVD-A music recordings tend to be mastered with

surround speakers in the ITU standard position which is as far behind the listener as the front channels are in front. 5.1 movie soundtracks tend to place surround channels not so far behind and to the side of listeners. Usually, practical limitations will dictate a limited range of placement options, but if you are a dedicated music fan, check out the ITU set-up regulations in the booklet supplied with SACD discs.

SET-UP

Ideally you should set up surround speakers with as much care as you would stereo systems, but practical issues tend to have a significant bearing on surround and centre speaker placement. Surround channels can be floorstanding or wallmounted, and centres usually have to perch on the TV or underneath it. Given these limitations, adjust your L/R front

speakers to give the best tonal match with the centre. If there's more than just you listening, 'toe in' the speakers so that their axis crosses in front of the listening position - this gives a wider stereo image. And if there's a subwoofer it should be placed near the front speakers. Use a sound pressure metre (available from Tandy among others) to accurately set levels.

SUBWOOFERS

Subs start working where stereo speakers run out of steam at low frequencies. The idea is to create deeper, better-controlled bass rather than more of it. They usually have onboard amplification (active) and connect to either the LFE (Low Frequency Effects) channel in a home cinema set-up or the speaker terminals in a stereo set-up.

TOP BUYS



B&W
600 S3 package £900
Incorporates 602s, 601s and an LCR 600 centre speaker. Great in both stereo and multichannel surround modes.



Naim
n-SAT/CENT/SUB £3,385
Five n-SATs, and n-CENT and an n-SUB make a highly engaging and (for Naim) discreet multichannel package.



ATC
Concept 3 £4,877
It might not look as flashy as some, but the quality of engineering in this ATC package ensures superb all-round performance.



Linn
Akurate package £13,750
Linn has worked wonders with its new multichannel speaker system – it's not cheap, but its performance is breathtaking.

Our favourite BT BEST BUY ED EDITOR'S CHOICE AV SPEAKER PACKAGES

Multichannel speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS
BT	ATC Concept 3	4,877	Extremely engaging, revealing and musical multichannel system providing 360 degrees of full-on entertainment
	B&W 300 package	900	An excellent compromise between the requirements of music and those of home cinema (inc. subwoofer)
BT	B&W 600 S3 (602/601/LCR 600)	900	Unquestionably delivers the sonic goods. High-quality drivers in standmount enclosures
	Castle CAV Sterling	1,250	Lovely real wood veneers. Sound has fine dynamic drive and expression, but can sound a little hard
	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
	Final Sound Electrostatic system	4,875	Slim, attractive, electrostatic panels have clever connections, limited loudness but a breathtaking transparency
	Focal-JMlab Electra package	3,017	Bold, solid system, tremendous consistency and easy to expand with an added subwoofer
ED	Linn Akurate (242/212/225/221)	13,750	An extremely capable system that offers new insights into the potential for multichannel audio
	Mirage Omni 2	2,650	Dark tonality, but superb imagery makes this an excellent all-round choice
BT	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
	Mordaunt-Short Genie	800	A prince among sub/sat packages – good integration and impressively little compromise compared to full-size models
	Mordaunt-Short Declaration 500	1,600	Good value vinyl THX Select package with Power Towers. Good authority, but must be 5.1-connected
BT	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
	Tannoy Arena	1,200	Fabulously stylish sub/sats with Dual Concentric drivers. Unusually revealing for the breed, but sub lacks refinement

SPECIFICATIONS					
EASE-OF-DRIVE	NUMBER OF SPEAKERS	BASS FROM (HZ)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE 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

SPECS KEY **EASE OF DRIVE** How much power the amplifier needs (approximately) to drive the loudspeaker effectively: **A+** 25 watts plus **A** 50 watts plus **A-** 100 watts plus.

NUMBER OF SPEAKERS The amount of individual loudspeakers in the package. **BASS FROM** How low the speaker goes, the smaller the number the deeper the bass.

FREE SPACE The speakers work best away from wall(s). **CLOSE TO WALL** The speakers will work best when up against a wall (but avoid corners)

Our favourite BT BEST BUY ED EDITOR'S CHOICE SUBWOOFERS

Bass speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS
BT	B&W PV1	950	Gorgeously styled sub shakes the air but not the floor, delivering a very clean sound with negligible coloration
ED	B&W ASW850	2,000	Does all the things subwoofers should do with music and movies alike, but transparently and seamlessly
ED	Eclipse TD725sw	2,700	Delivers solid meaningful bass, but with unusual tunefulness, speed and articulation
	Monitor Audio ASW100	300	For the price, this compact subwoofer performs particularly well
ED	REL 305	795	Landmark mid-price sub, works particularly well with low crossover frequency, looks great too
BT	REL Stampede	550	Few subs at this price match the Stampede's subtlety and ease of integration. Much more hi-fi than AV
BT	REL T1	595	Standard setter at the price: flexible, easily set up and packs quite a punch
ED	REL Strata 5	700	Highly musical sub that integrates well but the REL Stampede offers near-identical performance for less money
	REL Storm III	900	Excellent sub with powerful, detailed and deep bass. Comprehensive facilities, including flexible filter adjustment
	REL Storm 5	1,000	Well engineered, good bass depth, appropriate for mixed hi-fi & home cinema/multichannel systems
ED	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
	Velodyne SPL-800R	699	Powerful, highly configurable sub with auto setup feature and attractive, compact packaging
ED	Wilson Benesch Torus	5,200	Amp and sub package built like a sophisticated pile driver, with deep, state of the art performance

SPECIFICATIONS				
SIZE (WxHxD) (CM)	POWER (W)	BASS FROM (HZ)	ISSUE 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	
45,33,45	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.

STOCK CLEARANCE AT LEAST 35% OFF THE ORIGINAL RRP ON THESE PRODUCTS

There's at least 50% off the original RRP on these end-of-line* hi-fi and home cinema separates, speakers and accessories. Stock is very limited, so hurry.

BROMLEY 020 8290 1988
GUILDFORD 01483 536666
SEVENOAKS 01732 459555
TUNBRIDGE WELLS 01892 511543

Arcam Alto Speakers	£199.00
Arcam DVA AVR250 AV Receiver	£449.00
Arcam DVA AVR300 AV Receiver	£599.00
Arcam DVA DV78 DVD Player	£349.00
Arcam DVA DV79 DVD Player	£449.00
B&W DS7 Surround Speakers	£399.00
Cyrus DVD B DVD Player	£599.00
Harman Kardon AVR4300 Receiver	£299.00
Imerge S1002-80 Sound Server (80 GB)	£999.00
Infocus SP5700 Projector	£3849.00
KEF 5001 Sat Surround Speaker	£399.00
KEF C1400 Speaker	£299.00
KEF I07 Speaker	£299.00
KEF KH19000ACE Surround Speaker	£279.00
LG 23L1C1 LCD TV	£249.00
LG 32L1810 LCD TV	£399.00
LG 32L220 LCD TV	£349.00
LG 42L1810 LCD TV	£499.00
LG AN110 DLP Projector	£499.00
LG RZ36L250 LCD TV	£349.00
LG RZ36L250 LCD TV	£799.00
Lutron TR500 Dimmer (inc IR Receiver)	£49.00
M&K K15 Surround Speaker	£399.00
M&K K17 Surround Speaker	£399.00
M&K K7 Surround Speaker	£399.00
M&K LCR36 Surround Speaker	£129.00
M&K LCR750 Surround Speakers	£249.00
M&K LCR750C Centre Speaker	£129.00
M&K MP4512 AV Speaker	£299.00
Marantz SR8500 AV Receiver	£449.00
Michell Tecnoam Tonearm	£199.00
Mission M Cube Stands	£79.00
Monitor Audio F-Dies Plus Dock	£39.00
Onkyo DV5933 DVD Player	£499.00
Onkyo DVSP501 DVD Player	£399.00
Panasonic DMRES10 DVD Recorder (Multi Region)	£399.00
Panasonic TH137PX600-CAB Plasma TV	£399.00
Panasonic TH137PX600-PE0 Plasma TV	£399.00
Panasonic TH137PX600-WAL Plasma TV	£399.00
Panasonic TH42PX600-PE0 Plasma TV	£999.00
Panasonic TH42PX600-WAL Plasma TV	£999.00
Panasonic TH42PX600-LCD TV	£699.00
Philips 37PF9731 LCD TV	£999.00
Philips 42PF9731 LCD TV	£1999.00
Pioneer PDP436XE Plasma TV	£899.00
Samsung BDP1000 Blu-Ray Player	£349.00
Samsung HT10100 2.1 Speaker Package	£169.00
Samsung LE23R18X LCD TV	£299.00
Samsung LE46F18X LCD TV	£799.00
Samsung PS425H Plasma TV	£899.00
Samsung PS427HD Plasma TV	£899.00
Samsung PS50P7HD Plasma TV	£1099.00
Sim2 Domino D35	£1499.00
Teac AL700P Power Amplifier	£99.00
Toshiba 20WL156 LCD TV	£249.00
Toshiba 27WL156 LCD TV	£299.00
Toshiba 32WL156 LCD TV	£499.00
Toshiba RDC24 DVD Recorder	£119.00
Toshiba RXD330 DVD Recorder	£299.00
Xantech UXPC2P Learning Remote	£39.00
Yamaha DSPAX759 AV Amplifier	£1999.00
Yamaha DSP29 AV Receiver	£1299.00
Yamaha DVDS1500 DVD Player	£189.00
Yamaha MCXA10 MusicCAST Client	£249.00
Yamaha RXV359AV Receiver	£399.00
Yamaha RXV49D AV Receiver	£1799.00

Yamaha YSP1000 Digital Surround Projector.....£449.00
 Yamaha YSP800 Digital Surround Projector.....£299.00

BEDFORD 01234 272779
M&K K Package Music Package.....£359.00

BRIGHTON 01273 733338
 Arcam DVA AVR250 AV Receiver.....£499.00
 Arcam DVA AVR300 AV Receiver.....£599.00
 Arcam DVA DV79 DVD Player.....£499.00
 Arcam FMU DV29 DVD Player.....£795.00
 KEF 200DS Surround Speakers.....£995.00
 KEF Reference 204C Centre Speaker.....£995.00
 KEF X01 Speakers (inc Stands).....£595.00
 KEF X01 Speakers.....£595.00
 KEF X05 Speakers.....£795.00
 KEF X05 Speakers.....£895.00
 Sicon Scan Ultra HD Line Doubler.....£399.00

CAMBRIDGE 01223 304770
 Marantz DV4100 OSE DVD Player.....£199.00
 Mission E80 Speakers.....£299.00
 Musical Fidelity A3 Tuner.....£299.00
 Roksan Kandy Tuner.....£249.00
 Sim2 Domino 20 Projector (DLP).....£999.00

CRAWLEY 01293 510777
 Mission V6C Centre Speaker.....£99.50
 Pioneer PDP522LR Plasma Accessory Speakers.....£75.00
 Pioneer PDP338 Plasma Accessory Speakers.....£99.00
 Pioneer PDP39 Plasma Accessory Speakers.....£109.00
 Screenplay SP5700 DLP Projector.....£449.00

EXETER 01392 218895
 Fujitsu P50XHA40 Plasma Monitor.....£1,399.00

GLASGOW 0141 332 9655
 Arcam DVA P80 Power Amplifier.....£219.00
 Arcam FMU131 Tuner.....£299.00
 Arcam DVA DV78 DVD Player.....£375.00
 Arcam DVA AVR250 AV Receiver.....£495.00
 Arcam DVA DV79 DVD Player.....£495.00
 Arcam DVA AVR300 AV Receiver.....£649.00
 Arcam FMU131 Tuner.....£299.00
 Denon DVD3300 DVD Player.....£399.00
 Denon DVD3910 DVD Player.....£499.00
 Fujitsu P42HH40 Plasma Monitor.....£1,499.00
 Harman Kardon The Bridge Pod Dock.....£49.00
 Harman Kardon TC1000 Universal Remote Control.....£99.00
 Linn Sekrit in Wall Speaker.....£75.00
 Linn Szmik Sub Woofer.....£499.00
 Loewe Spheros 42 Plasma TV.....£2,999.00
 M&K Vx760 2.1 Sub Woofer.....£349.00
 Marantz RC1400 Universal Remote Control.....£39.00
 Onkyo DV5933 DVD Player.....£499.00
 Marantz DV4200 DVD Player.....£399.00
 Marantz RC5400 Universal Remote Control.....£195.00
 Marantz SR7500 AV Receiver.....£349.00
 Marantz DV9500 DVD Player.....£749.00
 Pioneer PDP2920 Universal Remote Control.....£49.00
 Pioneer PDP47XD Plasma TV.....£1,099.00
 Pioneer PDP507XD Plasma TV.....£1,499.00
 Quadraspire Q4M Mid Rack.....£795.00
 Tasc Light 700 DVD System.....£299.00
 Yamaha YSP1000 Digital Sound Projector.....£449.00

HOLBORN 020 7837 7540
 Arcam DVA DV79 DVD Player.....£999.00
 Arcam FMU131 Tuner.....£299.00
 Screenplay SP7201 DLP Projector.....£1,745.00
 Yamaha DSP29 AV Amplifier.....£1,849.00

KINGSTON 020 8547 0717

Acoustic Energy Evo Centre Centre Speaker.....£74.00
 Denon TU1800 Tuner.....£399.00
 Denon AVR3806 AV Receiver.....£499.00
 In Focus IN72 DLP Projector.....£124.00
 KEF HTC6000 Centre Speaker.....£124.00
 Marantz DV7800 DVD Player.....£299.00
 Mission M-Cube Stands.....£399.00
 Philips RC9800 Universal Remote Control.....£199.00
 Quad L Centre Centre Speaker.....£124.00
 Sim2 Domino 30H DLP Projector.....£1,499.00
 Sim2 Domino 35 DLP Projector.....£1,499.00
 Wharfedale Diamond 9.4 Speakers.....£149.00
 Wharfedale Diamond 9.1 Speakers.....£89.00
 Wharfedale Diamond 9FS Rear Speakers.....£74.00
 Yamaha YSP1000 Digital Surround Projector.....£449.00

LEEDS 0113 245 2775
 Acoustic Energy Evo 7 Centre Speaker.....£69.00
 B&W FPM4 Stands Speaker Stands.....£399.00
 B&W FPM4 Flat Panel Speaker.....£399.00
 Boston Micro CD CD System.....£199.00
 Dal Royal Towers Speakers.....£449.00
 Fujitsu P50XHA40 Plasma Monitor.....£2,799.00
 Harman Kardon PA4000 AV Power Amplifier.....£369.00
 KEF KH11005 AV Speaker Package.....£129.00
 M&K K15 AV Speaker.....£79.00
 M&K LCR25 AV Speaker.....£39.00
 Mission M035 DVD Recorder.....£299.00
 Panasonic DMREX85 HDD/DVD Recorder.....£189.00
 Pioneer PDK1504 Table Top Stand.....£49.00
 Pioneer PDP522LR Plasma Accessory Speakers.....£49.00
 Pioneer DVRS30 DVD Recorder.....£189.00
 Rotel RDV1050 DVD Player.....£279.00
 Wharfedale 9SR Surround Speaker.....£49.00

LEICESTER 0116 253 6567
 Loewe Vros 32 CRT TV.....£349.00
 Loewe Xenos 28 CRT TV.....£349.00
 Yamaha MCX1000 MusicCAST Server.....£795.00
 Yamaha PDM1000 Plasma Monitor.....£2,999.00
 Yamaha PDM1 Plasma TV.....£2,999.00

LOUGHTON 020 8532 0770
 AudioLab 800DS Amplifier.....£249.00
 Audiob 6000G Pre Amplifier.....£299.00
 Fujitsu P50XHA40 Plasma Monitor.....£2,799.00
 Sim 2 Domino 30 DLP Projector.....£1,999.00
 Tivoli Audio i-Pal Portable Analogue Radio.....£69.00

MANCHESTER 0161 331 7969
 Africa CS Sub S. Woofer.....£39.00
 Barco CV70 Ultra Projector.....£2,999.00
 Monitor Audio Radius 270 Speakers.....£249.00

NORWICH 01603 767605
 Acoustic Energy Acite Centre Centre Speaker.....£135.00
 Audio PB Pedestal Stand.....£175.00
 M&K K5 Surround Speaker.....£379.00
 M&K K7 Surround Speaker.....£135.00
 M&K K4 Surround Speaker.....£235.00
 M&K KX10 Sub Woofer.....£269.00
 Roksan Kandy DVD Player.....£325.00
 Screenplay SP5700 DLP Projector.....£1,099.00
 Tannoy Superlink Superlink Cable.....£49.00

NOTTINGHAM 0115 911 2121
 Owl i-Scan Pro Video Processor.....£249.00
 Pioneer PDP522LR Plasma Accessory Speakers.....£89.00
 Systemline NRAM AV Power Amplifier.....£299.00
 Tivoli Songbook Radio.....£79.00

Wharfedale Diamond 9CC Centre Speaker.....£48.00
 Wharfedale Diamond 9.0 Speakers.....£48.00
 Wharfedale Diamond 9.1 Speakers.....£99.00
 Wharfedale Diamond 9.4 Speakers.....£149.00
 Wharfedale Evo 8 Speakers.....£124.00
 Yamaha MCX1000 MusicCAST Server.....£799.00
 Yamaha MCXA10 MusicCAST Client.....£299.00

PETERBOROUGH 01733 897697
 Arcam FMU131 Amplifier.....£1,199.00
 Arcam FMU432 Amplifier.....£649.00
 Arcam FMU P35 Power Amplifier.....£459.00
 Arcam FMU131 Tuner.....£249.00
 Harman Kardon AVR635 AV Receiver.....£499.00
 Living Control Music Box3 (250GB) Music Server.....£1,475.00
 M&K MC2500S5R Sub Woofer.....£725.00
 M&K SS150THX Surround Speakers.....£589.00
 Meridian DSP33 Active Speakers.....£1,295.00
 Meridian DSP5000C Active Centre Speaker.....£1,095.00
 Opus MCU500 Three Zone System.....£1,669.00
 Pioneer PDK1504 Table Stand.....£109.00
 Yamaha MCX2000 MusicCAST Server.....£899.00
 Yamaha MCXA10 MusicCAST Client.....£299.00

PLYMOUTH 01752 228011
 Sony RDRHX900 DVD Recorder.....£449.00

SOUTHAMPTON 023 8035 7770
 Mirage Unibaetee Surround Speaker.....£349.00
 Optima H79 DLP Projector.....£1,099.00
 Pioneer PDK1504 Table Stand.....£109.00
 Pioneer PDK1524 Table Stand.....£79.00
 Pioneer PDP522LR Plasma Accessory Speakers.....£39.00
 Yamaha MC1000 MusicCAST Client.....£699.00
 Sim2 C3X DLP Projector.....£6,499.00
 Yamaha RXV1700AV Receiver.....£449.00

SOUTHGATE 020 3986 2777
 Optimum G5 Mini Equipment Support.....£119.00
 Yamaha MCXA10 MusicCAST Client.....£299.00

SWINDON 01733 810992
 KEF Reference 200 Speakers.....£1,499.00
 Yamaha DSPAX759 AV Amplifier.....£269.00
 Yamaha YSP1000 Digital Surround Projector.....£449.00

WATFORD 01892 213533
 Cyrus X-Arbour Hi-Fi Rack.....£295.00

WITHAM 01878 601733
 Pioneer PDP522LR Plasma Accessory Speakers.....£89.00
 Pioneer PDP522LR Plasma Accessory Speakers.....£99.00

WOLVERHAMPTON 01902 312225
 Arcam DVA A80 Amplifier.....£325.00
 AudioLab 800DS Amplifier.....£249.00
 Denon AVR120 AV Receiver.....£999.00
 Denon DVD1730 DVD Player.....£699.00
 Fujitsu P42HH40 Plasma Monitor.....£1,299.00
 Harman Kardon DV222 DVD Player.....£395.00
 KEF iQ5 Speakers.....£1,990.00
 M&K K5 System (inc Stands).....£1,795.00
 M&K K5 System.....£595.00
 Niles Xenos 26 System.....£1,095.00
 Quad L Centre Speaker.....£195.00
 REL Stampedee Sub Woofer.....£309.00
 Yamaha DSPAX759 AV Amplifier.....£269.00
 Yamaha MusicCAST System.....£1,499.00

YEovil 01935 700078
 B&W DS6 (S3) Surround Speakers.....£249.00
 Samsung LE40M61BX LCD TV.....£899.00

STOCK CLEARANCE AT LEAST 35% OFF THE ORIGINAL RRP ON THESE PRODUCTS

BROMLEY 020 8290 1988
GUILDFORD 01483 536666
SEVENOAKS 01732 459555
TUNBRIDGE WELLS 01892 511543

Arcam A90 7.1 AV Amplifier	£599.00
Arcam FMU DV29 DVD Player	£799.00
Audica CS-System AV Receiver System	£299.00
B&W FPM4 Speakers	£129.00
B&W LCR60 (S3) Centre Speaker	£129.00
B&W LCR60 (S3) Centre Speaker	£199.00
Channel Plus 3425 2 Channel RF Modulator	£249.00
Channel Plus 5515 RF Modulator	£169.00
Channel Plus 5672 Nicam 2 Channel Encoder	£279.00
Cyrus 6VS Amplifier	£399.00
Cyrus 6VS Amplifier	£549.00
Cyrus Link Power Amplifier	£399.00
Cyrus Linkport CD Player	£399.00
Cyrus Linkserver 250 CD Player	£1,999.00
Cyrus Pre VVS Pre Amplifier	£599.00
Cyrus Smart Power Plus Power Amplifier	£399.00
Denon AVX5050 AV System	£299.00
Denon AVR1507 AV Amplifier	£149.00
Denon AVR1707 AV Amplifier	£179.00
Denon AVR1907AV Amplifier	£249.00
Denon AVR2105 AV Receiver	£249.00
Denon AVR2307 AV Receiver	£399.00
Denon AVR2607 AV Receiver	£549.00
Denon AVR3805 AV Amplifier	£599.00
Denon AVR3806 AV Receiver	£699.00
Denon AVR4306 AV Receiver	£999.00
Denon DCD201 CD System	£149.00
Denon DHT1500SD AV System	£249.00
Denon DM31 CD System	£149.00
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Denon DVD2910 DVD Player	£349.00
Denon DVD4100 DVD Player	£1,499.00
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Infocus SP7200 Projector	£1,699.00
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Fujitsu P52A200S Plasma Accessory Speakers	£199.00
Huger P Phone Handset For Mobile Phone	£25.00
Humax HDC2000 HDTV Satellite Receiver	£199.00
Imerge S2002 160GB Harddrive	£119.00
In Focus IN72 DLP Projector	£449.00
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Infocus SP7200 Projector	£1,699.00
Infocus SP7200 Projector	£1,745.00
KEF iQ5 Speakers	£259.00
KEF Model 201 Speakers	£1,099.00
LG 19LS4R LCD TV	£179.00
LG 20C1R18 LCD TV	£199.00
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LG R242PKSD Plasma TV	£999.00
Linn NIHKA Active Bass Module Subwoofer	£799.00
Linn 102 AV Pre Amplifier	£1,999.00
Linn Knekt Line Receiver Knekt Receiver	£299.00
Living Control Display Pad S Display Pad	£199.00
Living Control Music Box 3 Sound Server (120 GB)	£1,499.00
Living Control Music Box Display Pad	£499.00
Lutron EGRX 4S 4 Scene Activator/IR	£49.00

M&K KX10 AV Speakers	£249.00
Marantz CD5000 CSE CD Player	£149.00
Marantz DV600 DVD Player	£349.00
Marantz FM400 OSE Amplifier	£149.00
Marantz RX77 RF Emittor	£399.00
Marantz SR8500 AV Receiver	£249.00
NAD T432T AV Amplifier	£169.00
Niles 12v Speaker A-B Switcher	£49.00
Niles DS6300AT in-Ceiling Speaker	£249.00
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Pioneer DVRS400S HDD/DVD Recorder (500GB)	£299.00
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Samsung HTX100 AV System	£229.00
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Samsung LE32R7ABDX LCD TV	£599.00
Samsung LE37R7ABDX LCD TV	£699.00
Samsung LE46F71BX LCD TV	£1,399.00
Samsung PS50Q7HD Plasma TV	£599.00
Samsung PS50Q7HD Plasma TV	£799.00
Shang LK60XD LCD TV	£399.00
Shang LK52XD LCD TV	£299.00
Sim2 C3X DLP Projector	£6,499.00
Sim2 Domino 20-H DLP Projector	£1,499.00
Sim2 H3000 Xtra DLP Projector	£4,499.00
Tasc LH250 Speakers	£249.00
Teac TH3000 Speaker	£79.00
Tivoli Audio Song Book Portable Radio	£149.00
Yamaha DVX530 AV System	£349.00
Yamaha MCX1000 Hard Disk Server	£799.00
Yamaha MCX510 MusicCAST Speakers	£59.00
Yamaha PDP522LR Plasma Accessory Speakers	£39.00

HEADPHONES

For your ears only



Headphones come in several varieties and some are designed for particular usage. The majority of 'cans' use dynamic cone and coil-type drive units and can be used with anything from a personal stereo to a dedicated amplifier. Other types also exist, most significantly electrostatics that use a charged panel membrane to produce a distinctly refined sound. These are supplied with their own dedicated amplifiers, which tends to increase the price.

Cans are split into several types. There are open and closed-back designs, the latter being

best for noisy (or noise sensitive) environments as they minimise leakage and intrusion. Open-back types tend to have a more open, less 'in-head' sound. There are also three variants of earpad design: circumaurals enclose the ear and press on your head, supra-aurals press on the ear and intra-aurals sit in the ear and are particularly popular with personal stereo users.

Getting the best from your cans

Getting a good result with headphones is not

quite as straightforward as it should be. Merely plugging them into the output on your CD player or amp will not give particularly engaging results unless you are very lucky. If you are planning on serious listening, invest in a dedicated amp – the increase in dynamics is not in the least bit subtle. A variety of models are made and prices start at around £80 for a QED, a little more for designs from, say, Creek or Musical Fidelity. And if you're really into cans, look up the valve-powered Earmax.

Our favourite HEADPHONES

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Stereo headphones

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUMAURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT (g)	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR
	AKG K270 Studio	129	Pro oriented design which is very transparent and great with acoustic material		●				270	230
EC	AKG K1000	650	Neutral, analytical and completely out of the head sound, suitable for connection to speaker outputs only						270	244
	Beyerdynamic DT990	160	Impeccable balance, very extended bass and treble, and bags of detail place this model ahead of the pack						250	245
	Beyerdynamic DT770	190	A touch coloured in the mid, but less than most closed cans: detailed and with excellent bass						290	287
	Grado SR-60	90	For sheer musical enjoyment these are hard to beat. Retro styling may not be to everyone's taste						200	194
EC	Grado SR325i	310	Highly sophisticated and detailed sound with great extension: check for comfort						200	270
EC	Grado GS1000	995	One of the finest transducers on the planet, with detail to die for						250	288
	Philips HP890	70	A remarkably sophisticated and very comfortable headphone						330	219
	Sennheiser LX90	35	Brings recognisably hi-fi sound to in-ear transducers, with surprisingly good resolution						35	290
	Sennheiser HD485	65	A great all-round headphone for occasional or even heavy use, refined in sound and comfortable, too						220	296
	Sennheiser HD595	150	Technology from upmarket HD650 model makes this a very revealing headphone that's also extremely comfortable						270	266
EC	Sennheiser HD650	300	Astonishing resolution and hardly less impressive tonal balance make this a true hi-fi experience						260	252
	Shure SE420	240	Expensive and no replacement for top conventional 'phones, but streets ahead of most in-ears with real refinement						15	295
	Shure E500PTH	420	Sophisticated in-ear design with three drivers, plus switchable 'voiceover' mic in the lead; high-quality stuff						20	285
	Stax SR-001 Mk II	239	Expensive and power hungry, but this electrostatic drags personal stereo into the world of high fidelity	●					280	268
EC	Stax SRS-2020 Basic Sys. II	349	Luxury option at its price, but the sound delivery is five-star quality all the way	●					205	295

SPKES 137 **ELECTROSTATIC** Uses electrostatic film instead of more common cone or dome dynamics. **SUPRA-AURAL** Earpads sit on ear rather than around it. **CIRCUMAURAL** Earpads rest on the head around the ears. **OPEN BACK** Vented capsules let sound in and out. **CLOSED BACK** Sealed capsules. **WEIGHT** in grams. **3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR** Allows connection to personal stereos, computers etc.



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CABLES



Wires to hook your system together



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

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

be fitted with screw or solder-on types.

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

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

Our favourite CABLES

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

				SPECIFICATIONS				
				STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	DIGITAL CABLE TYPE
Interconnects and speaker cables								
BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS					
ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS								
	Atlas Questor	70	Very open and informative at high and mid frequencies, with slightly dry bass. Imaging particularly fine	●	●	●	295	
	Audioquest Sidewinder	45	A lively and detailed cable, with fine tonality and excellent rhythm. Slight added upper-bass warmth does little to detract	●	●	●	297	
	Black Rhodium Prelude	80	Practical and sensibly priced all-rounder that seems happily compatible with a wide range of kit	●	●	●	293	
	Black Rhodium Coda	150	Superb bass and excellently neutral and detailed midrange: treble generally sweet with occasional slight constriction	●	●	●	299	
	Black Rhodium Concerto	225	This DCT cable from the Polar range gives a distinctively dark timbre, rich in detail, with low subjective noise	●	●	●	270	
	Cambridge Azur Reference	50	Performance wouldn't shame a cable at twice the price: especially adept in the treble with no trace of dryness	●	●	●	296	
	Clearer Audio Copper-Line Alpha	50	Sounding like something a good deal dearer, this cable offers near high-end detail and seems highly compatible too	●	●	●	295	
	Clearer Audio Silver-line	244	Complex, well-screened cable which offers good sound all round with exceptional bass – at a price!	●	●	●	279	
	CrystalCable Piccolo	260	Thin cable, but tougher than it looks. Piccolo has some qualities of a solid core type generically - notably resolution, focus and articulation	●	●	●	294	
	Ixos Iotica IX1	200	Notable for its relaxing sound, this cable still presents plenty of analytical detail	●	●	●	283	
	Monster M350i	45	Few cables at this price reveal so much about the recording space. Clear treble, too	●	●	●	281	
	Monster M1000i	200	Very capable, with only a hint of bass dryness to set against excellent results elsewhere	●	●	●	284	
	Nordost Heimdall	370	Micro-monofilament cable, silver plated more affordable alternative to Valhalla, sounds transparent, detailed and neutral	●	●	●	278	
	Oehlbach NF214	63	The bass is a matter of taste, but suits many smaller speakers. Very good mid and treble	●	●	●	281	
	Profigold PGA3000	60	Not the ultimate for lovers of clinical precision, its character is engaging and detail and extension are good	●	●	●	299	
	Supra Sword-ISL	379	Unusual inductance-free design, beautifully built, with bold, finely detailed and outgoing sound quality and excellent discipline	●	●	●	292	
	TCI Tiger	30	Not the most detailed interconnect around, but performance belies its modest price, especially in the bass	●	●	●	285	
	Van den Hul MC Silver IT MkII	2,250	Incredibly resolute and low distortion cable that makes the alternatives sound crude, pity about the price	●	●	●	289	
	Wireworld Luna 5	30	Authoritative bass and clear treble outperform many cables at twice the price	●	●	●	273	
DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS								
	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	
	Clearer Audio Silver-line	125	Very satisfying performance with finely-etched detail and sweet treble	●	●	●	E 278	
	Kimber Select KS2020	629	Provides a subtle but rewarding lift in musicality with any DAC, justifying the price	●	●	●	E 260	
	OED Qunex Signature 75	80	First-rate balance and imaging – ever so nearly as good as it gets at any price	●	●	●	E 265	
	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	
SPEAKER CABLES PRICE PER METRE								
	Atlas Hyper 1.5	10	Don't look to this cable to beef up the bass, but its performance at higher frequencies is revelatory at the price	●	●	●	299	
	Atlas Ascent 2.0	55	A highly analytical cable, with more bass extension than at first appears and very fine detail across the board	●	●	●	294	
	Chord Epic Twin	40	Good all rounder, which generally sounds relaxed and musical, and a full bass that stops the right side of sounding blowsy	●	●	●	287	
	Kimber 8PR	12	A cable that really enjoys the music, also admirable for the levels of analytical detail it allows through. Excellent value	●	●	●	299	
	Kimber 8VS	18	Beautifully full, open and transparent sound right across the board	●	●	●	227	
	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	
	Nordost Heimdall	162	Alternative to Valhalla, silver plated, micro-monofilament construction, low colouration, hi-res and suitable for exacting systems	●	●	●	278	
	OED Silver Anniversary XT	5.50	Full bass and nicely detailed treble combine with good imaging - a budget bargain	●	●	●	276	
	OED X-Tube XT300	10	A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems	●	●	●	234	
	Supra Sword	116	Zero inductance construction, medium resolution cable that has an excellent midband and is fundamentally musical	●	●	●	287	
	Townshend Isolda DCT	50	Cryogenically treated 'impedance matched' cable with stabilising components added: great sound all-round	●	●	●	241	
	van den Hul The Bridge	6	Better bass than treble, with good detail though a touch of constriction at times	●	●	●	291	
	Wireworld Luna 16/4	5	Budget wire cable offering tuneful and extended bass, good treble, and midrange with just a little lack of detail	●	●	●	292	

SPECS KEY **STRANDED** Cable has a number of (usually) twisted strands to conduct the signal. **SOLID CORE** Cable has one or more individually insulated strands to conduct the signal. **COPPER** Material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **SILVER** Alternative material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **DIGITAL CABLE TYPE** E – electrical, O – optical. Cables are one metre length unless otherwise stated.

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STANDS AND SUPPORTS

Equipment racks and speaker stands



If you want to get the most from your source and amp components, it's important to consider good quality support. Dedicated equipment supports are racks and tables made specifically to hold hi-fi gear, and the best can have a profoundly positive effect on sound

because, for example, they can help to isolate kit from ground-borne vibrations and mechanical or electrical interference. Equally, if you own a pair of small 'bookshelf' or 'standmount' speakers, it's important to place them on good quality, purpose-built speaker stands.

Our favourite EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Equipment supports

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT (CM)	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
	Alphason A5-G	399	Nice looking, very solid and practical with a pretty well balanced sound, but lacks a little detail	80	66,46		5	Glass	247
	Atacama Equinox	280	Stable, modular design with style. Excellent bass transients and a fresh design concept	81	50,50		4	Glass	217
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Audiophile Base	615	Price is justified by its earth-shattering sonic abilities – a worthy upgrade	82	43		4	MDF	193
	Avid Isoschelf	1,100	An enthusiast's equipment support stand free from coloration, if a little fiddly to set up	87.5	48		5	MDF	193
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clearight Audio Aspekt	650	Stunning neutrality and detail from a well-damped design. Its performance makes the price tag good value	75	53.5,45		4	MDF	217
	Custom Design Icon Signature	330	Gorgeous wood and glass looks: sound lacks a little detail but is nicely lively	75	56,37		4	Glass	286
	Custom Design XL4	380	Simple construction pays off in smart looks. Sound contribution is minimal and largely harmless	65	60,42		4	Glass	293
<input type="checkbox"/>	Custom Design Icon 400	600	Beautifully built, conveniently adjustable and with little sound of its own, a very classy rack	75	57, 41		5	Glass	263
<input type="checkbox"/>	Custom Design Concept 400	700	Slightly drab looks, but great sound and efficient use of space ('Acoustic' version tested – standard version £300)	74	48,40		4	Metal	247
<input type="checkbox"/>	Custom Design Vantige	449	'Acoustic Aluminium' shelves plus steel supports equal practicality plus musical satisfaction: just a shade bright	62	49,44		4	Metal	271
	Partington Minim	389	Looks good, sounds good and is impressively flexible to boot	75	45,36		5	Glass	261
	Quadraspire Q4 Reference	480	Excellent performance from the school of wobbly racks. Natural sounding and plenty of detail	51.5	49,39.5		4	MDF	217
	Russ Andrews Torlyte Rack	988	Attractive modular system made of very light Torlyte: a touch of added warmth is its only vice	68	54,49		4	Torlyte	240
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sound Organisation Z560	195	Excellent value rack, five shelves too! Well balanced and under 200 quid!	92	50,40		5	Glass	217
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Townshend VSSS	1,300	The Seismic Sink goes all glassy and attractive, yet retains the same excellent vibration-killing sound quality	76	35,50		4	Glass	273

Our favourite SPEAKER STANDS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

Speaker stands

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				HEIGHT (CM)	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF LEGS	ISSUE NUMBER
	Anvil Sound Display Stand	226	A variety of smart looks available - sound is clear and precise	50	20,17		1		293
<input type="checkbox"/>	Custom Design RS300	110	An attractive stand whose lack coloration and ringing makes suits it to high resolution systems, at a tempting price	56	16.5,18		1		281
	Custom Design SQ402	100	More a range than a model, capable of fine results especially with Acoustic Steel top plates	62	18,16.5		2		299
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Custom Design SQ404	200	Robust four-pillar design gives very low coloration and maximises performance of speakers great and small	61	18,16.3		4		283
<input type="checkbox"/>	Partington Ansa 60	99	Elegant flat-packer 'disappears' sonically; restrained but neutral and coherent	62	18,15		4		232
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Partington Dreadnought BS	249	The Dreadnought Broadside is a superb stand for high-class standmount speakers – and it looks great too!	61	17,15		5		261
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Partington Heavi II	399	Robust to the nth degree, this stand helps produce very taut, precise bass and detailed upper frequencies	53	31,22		6		287
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Russ Andrews Torlyte	299	Very relaxed sound from this metal-free design, with excellent imaging too	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.

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INFORMATION

Atacama has always been known for offering customers outstanding value for money and the Nexus is no exception. The complete stand is manufactured from heavy gauge steel and the assembly is made using upgraded high tensile fixings to maintain optimum rigidity.

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INFORMATION

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REFERENCE
300DABMK3 SYSTEM
REF300DABMK3

INFORMATION

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5.1 HOME CINEMA SPEAKER PACKAGE M-Cube 5.1

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INFORMATION

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IKON AV SPEAKER PACKAGE Ikon AV Speaker Package

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INFORMATION

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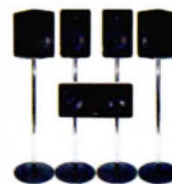
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INFORMATION

This speaker package integrates two pairs of ELS3 speakers, one ELS 3C centre channel and the powerful new ELS subwoofer in order to create this fantastic new system. These full range of high end, high quality Epos speakers are available either individually or as part of this 5.1 package.

5.1 SPEAKER SYSTEM Xeno

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INFORMATION

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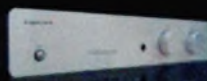
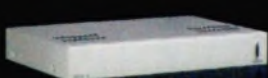
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INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

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STEREO POWER AMPLIFIER

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INFORMATION

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INFORMATION

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INFORMATION

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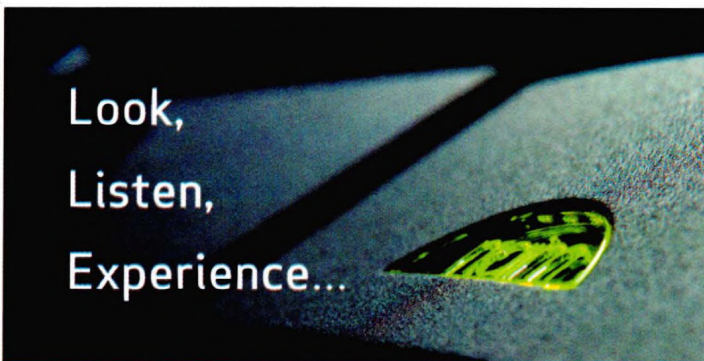
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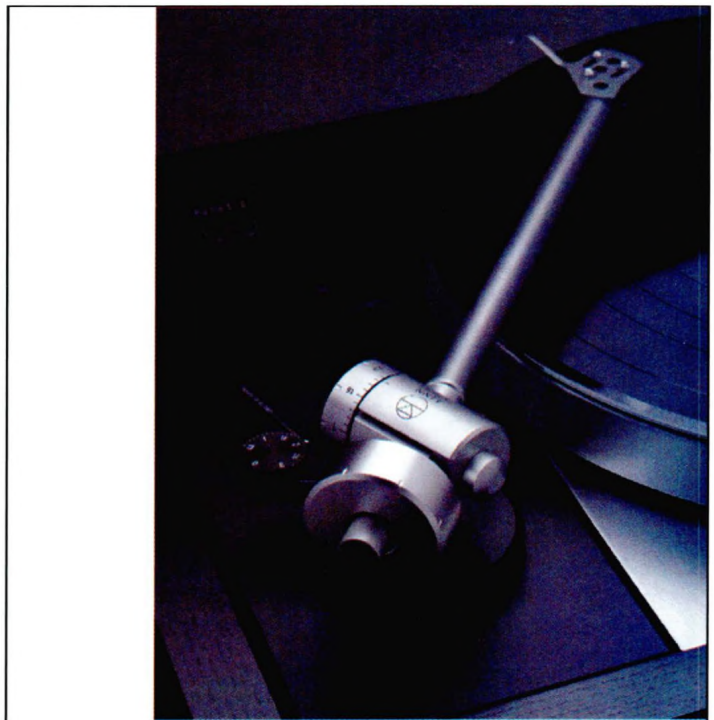
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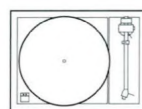
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HI-FI CHOICE

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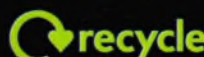
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2nd-hand shootout

Looking for some used speakers for around £1,000? Your money may go further than you think

Spending £1,000 on a pair of second-hand speakers gives a huge range of options. But before spending anything, it's well worth heeding the following three bits of general advice: 1) Don't buy a gargantuan floorstander if you only have a small room. 2) Match the speaker carefully to your amplifier – a single-ended valve amplifier, for example, will typically require speakers of high efficiency. 3) Be aware of drive unit availability and costs, as they vary greatly.

Our first choice is perfect for smaller rooms and powerful amplifiers: the Acoustic Energy AE1. It has been around in various guises for over 20 years now, but our budget is just enough for an early MkIII model. Launched in 2004, the latest version of this compact classic offers all that is best about small speakers. The sound spectrum is near seamless, with great timing and accurate timbre. Considering the size, the bass response is surprisingly deep too – just don't expect the dynamic scale of some of the others here. When buying second-hand there are two aspects to be aware of. The first is to check the glossy black finish for scratches. Although you may not mind a marked cabinet, it will affect the sell-on value. Secondly, make sure you also budget for a suitable stand. The AE1 needs a heavyweight stand around 60cm in height. A replacement driver, though small, will set

you back £220, and a tweeter, £123.

In many respects, the Tannoy D700 is a very different speaker to the AE1. Its large tapered cabinet houses twin ten-inch drivers, one of which is dual concentric unit. These speakers need a large room especially as they sound at their best when at least 30cm from a rear wall. With an exceptional sensitivity of 93dB, the D700 makes a great choice for a low-powered amp. If you're after a speaker that will enliven the overall sound, the D700s are equally good. They may not be the most refined, but when it comes to presence, scale and bass extension, the D700s have few rivals for this sort of money. Earlier models dip well below our budget, but spend £1,000 and you should be guaranteed a pair that are under ten years old and in excellent condition. The real wood veneer is tough, so any splinters, dints or chips show signs of abuse. Do check the drive units are all working correctly, too. Although a woofer re-cone is a reasonable £90, an entire Dual Concentric unit is a

rather more expensive £244.

If the Tannoy option is a little tame for you, then you might like to consider the TDL Reference Monitor. Costing up to £5,000 new, this monster speaker requires a massive room. Given the space, its dynamic range and depth of bass is outstanding, even by today's standards. It's perhaps a little soft of neutral, tending to suit classical more than

rock music, but few can fail to be impressed by the scale of sound.

£1,000 should buy a pair in good condition from the early to mid 1990s. Although the KEF-designed bass units are no longer available (at least new), other components are.

Lockwood Audio supplies pre-1999 TDL parts at a reasonable cost. Lockwood also recommends any potential buyer to inspect the cosmetic condition, as these parts, along with the woofer, are no longer available.

At this point we'd usually recommend the Quad ESL63, but seeing as how they've already been covered in earlier issues, we've selected an alternative. The MartinLogan



Above: TDL Reference Monitor

“The Acoustic Energy AE1 is perfect for smaller rooms and powerful amplifiers.”

Aerius i is not a full electrostatic speaker, but a hybrid. Essentially, a panel handles the midrange and treble with a conventional eight-inch woofer providing the bass. Although a hybrid speaker, the Aerius i is typical of ESL speakers in that it sounds seamless. Staging is broad and with the right positioning, they're quite capable of producing a holographic sound stage. Like other panel speakers, they do need a lot of space around them. Although reasonably sensitive at 89dB, they also tend to be a little current hungry – not a good choice for a single-ended valve amp. Our budget will get us the improved “i” version that was made from around 2000 onwards. Parts are still available, though, and MartinLogan has a good reputation for servicing older models.

Four pairs of speakers, all with much to recommend them: just make sure that you room suits, and you'll be rewarded with an even, balanced sound. **HFC**

Dominic Todd

Next month: £500 turntables



Below: From left to right: MartinLogan Aerius i, Acoustic Energy AE1, Tannoy D700

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ITEM DESCRIPTION	SALE	NEW
Sale of part exchanged and ex-dem items		
Acaphase DD90 / DC91	£4000	£20000
SME Model 10 turntable - boxed - nice	£1800	£2700
Nottingham Analogue Hyperspace with LV mat - 15 months old - perfect	£1400	£2450
Teac P30 CD specific transport - scarce and very good	£1500	
Tube Technology Unisis Signature Integrated - 30 hours use	£1000	£2500
Schroeder DPS 9' tonearm - Bocote wood - hens' teeth	£2000	£3000
Jan Allaerts Finish - light use	£1500	£4000
VDH Various MC cartridges - Frogs, Grasshoppers, Colibris. 10 - 150 hrs use		Please call
Jorma Prime Interconnect 1m XLR - XLR	£1000	£3200
Jorma Prime Interconnect 2m XLR - XLR	£1400	£4200
Hovland HP100 pre-amplifier - factory updated - loved and spotless	£2900	
Kuzma Airline tonearm - Kondo silver internal and external lead - ouch	£3500	£7500
Kuzma Stagi 'S' unipivot tonearm - new - lovely sound - giveaway	£350	£650
Rogue Audio Zeus stereo power amplifier - very big and very heavy	£3000	£7500
Canary 300B monos - 10 watts - excellent condition - giveaway	£800	
Canary 303 monos - 22 watts 300B power with Living Voice upgrade	£3500	£7500
Croft Twinstar IV Power amplifier	£2500	£4500
Croft Epoc Pre-amplifier with built in phono	£1000	£2000
Unison Research Smart 300B class A monos - 12 months use - giveaway	£1800	£4500
Lavardin PE Reference line per-amplifier - 1 lady driver - perfect	£1500	£2400
Lavardin AP power amplifier - spotless as above	£2100	£3400
Exposure 3010 CD player - as new - boxed - 100 hours use	£850	£1400
Audio Aero Capitole CD24 / 192 - factory serviced - vgc	£1700	£4000
Audionet Art V2 CD player - perfect, as new - 6 months old	£1500	£2500
Audionet Art V2 CD player - perfect, as new - 18 months old	£1300	£2500
Audionet SAM integrated amplifier - perfect, as new - 6 months old	£1500	£2500
Art Audio Concerto integrated amplifier - black & chrome	£1900	£4000
Esoteric X03 CD player - perfect - boxed - 200 hours max use	£3750	
Placette passive line stage - 3 inputs - 120v - remote control - 6 months old	£700	£1600
Cardas Golden Reference speaker cable - 3m single set - very light use	£1250	£2250
Border Patrol 300B SE - Western Electric	£1900	
Monarchy Audio SM70 Pro - solid state class A power amp - nice sound	£300	
Art Audio Argento 300B PSE integrated 18w amplifier black & chrome	£5500	£8000
Sugden A21 amplifier - class A - solid state	£500	£950
B&W Nautilus 804 floorstanders - vgc - cherry	£1700	£2700
Canary 608 with LV upgrades and Border Patrol PSU	£2000	£4000
Vitavox S2 pressure drivers - various vintage	POA	
EAR 534 50W EL34 / EAR 864	£2750	£4800
ProAc Response I loudspeakers - yew	£700	£1400
Revel M20 bookshelf loudspeakers - santos rosewood	£800	£2000
Rega Jupiter cd player - professionally clocked + rebuilt with Blackgate cap's	£600	
Rega Jura floorstander loudspeakers - cherry	£450	

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THETA CARMEN CD/DVD TRANSPORT.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£1295
THETA DATA II TRANSPORT (SILVER).....	MINT/BOXED.....	£795
THETA DATA TRANSPORT.....	VGC.....	£495
AUDIO ALCHEMY DDS III CD/TRANSPORT.....	N.O.S.....	£395
MSB LINK DAC 24/96KHZ MODULE.....	MINT/BOXED.....	£375
Z SYSTEMS Z-3S+ UPSAMP EX (E1450 NEW).....	MINT/BOXED.....	£450
AUDIO ALCHEMY DDE V.III HDCD DAC.....	N.O.S.....	£350
AUDIO ALCHEMY DDE V.I.2 HDCD DAC.....	N.O.S.....	£275
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Is this the future?



I have previously referred to the Nola range of speakers, and if you can afford them, it's something you really should hear, but the world according to AVI is changing, and although they manufacture a superb CD player and matching Integrated amp, they have recently produced a small pair of active speakers, including built in DAC (ADM9s), to be driven by the digital output from a computer such as the Mac mini, and controlled via an IR handset (see www.avihifi.co.uk). With the trend towards minimalistic designs, this is certain to catch on, and I can see why AVI are so keen on it, even if it does restrict the sale of their other electronics! So I will be trying to determine just how wonderful such a system can be, especially as I have customers who are going in this direction.

Certainly, now having had more time to evaluate this system, I have to say it would be difficult to beat for the money, a mere £1000, plus whatever you wish to feed it with, say around £400 for a Mac mini computer, or similar cost for a CD/DVD player. A complete system for under £1500, as you also need a connection from source to digital input on the speaker, and possibly a phono/phono lead if wanting to also input an analogue signal. Obviously, being a small speaker the ADM9s won't produce deep bass, but AVI now have their new matching sub-woofer with 10" bass driver, which can be added for an extra £750. Considering the speaker cable I use on my top system costs more than this system, it has to be the bargain of the year! So do phone for more details.

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FOR SALE

ARCAM A85/ P85 amplifiers, silver, pristine. Original packaging, remotes, leads etc. £650 ono. As featured in April issue. Will split. 07766 078281 (London).

ARCAM FMJ A32 integrated amp, boxed, mint, (£1,200), £650. 01491 614325 (Oxon).

ATC SCM 19 speakers, £1,050 (£1,499.) Jas Audio super tweeters £350 (£650). Both only three months old (mint and boxed). 01225 429170 (Bath).

AUDION SILVER NIGHT Premier valve preamplifiers (x2), Audion Sterling valve amplifiers (x2). TEAC P30 CD transport. All very good condition, boxed, can be heard, £2,500. 01252 614055 (Hants).

AUDIO PHYSIC LUNA 2 subwoofer, cherrywood veneer, mint condition, boxed, (£1,650) £850. 07776 143890 (Southampton).

AUDIO RESEARCH LS5 preamp, excellent condition, hardly used, (£5,290) £1,000. ATC 20TASL, (£4,800) £2,000. Part exchange welcome on any hi-f product. 020 8504 1638 or 07812 465326 (Essex).

AUDIOLAB 8000S amplifier, (£750) £250, Audiolab 8000CD player (£1,000) £290. Both items purchased new 1998, boxed, mint, with instructions. Call Peter 07882 791040 or email plapham@mac.com (Highland).

AVI pre/power amplifier 215 watts S21MA V2.0. Brand new line from AVI, almost new, perfect, original boxes, guarantee, only £2,000, Contact fedepenzo@hotmail.com +0039 02 2150930 (Italy).

B&W 804 speakers, cherrywood, bought in February this year, absolutely mint, very little use, boxed, manuals, cleaning cloths, (£2,700) £2,200. Tel 01786 834796 (Kent).

BOSE QUIETCOMFORT 2 headphones, boxed, mint, (£295) £100ono 07891 533084 (Swansea).

BRINKMANN FEIN phono amp, 2006, mint, MC/MM, granite base, great finish in black, (£1,500) £750. 07968 189647 (Herts).

CHAPTER AUDIO PREFACE Plus preamp, Couplet power £4,750. Apogee Stages £500. Kimber 8TC, (5m), £350.

Philosophy speaker cable (5m), £500. Buyer must collect 01843 600722 after 6pm (Kent).

CHORD COMPANY CHORUS 1m pair RCA to RCA, £90. Chord Chorus 0.5m pair RCA to RCA, £65. Naim NAC A5 speaker cable 3.5m pair, Naim termination, £50. 02893 369169 (N Ireland).

CHORD SIGNATURE 2 x 1m interconnects £240 (each). 7m stereo pair single wired speaker cable £650. Only 200 hours use. Mint with boxes and receipt. Steve 0113 2743221 (Leeds).

CLASSIC MERIDIAN M3 active compact monitors, cables, stands, £295. Celestion A1 speakers, matching stands, excellent, boxed, (£1,200) £450. Roksan Kandy integrated, one year old, boxed £325. 01243 863371 (W. Sussex).

COPLAND CDA26 CD player. Lovingly looked after. (£1,200), sell £550 ono. Contact 01225 481055 after 6:30pm or 07962 172782 anytime (Bath).

CYRUS 8VS amplifier plus PSX-R power supply, both black, in excellent condition, £650. 01394 274350 (Suffolk).

DENON 2900 DVD player. Gold finish, boxed, manual, excellent condition. multi-region, £350 ono. Call James 07977 135995 or 01442 234062 (Herts).

DENON TU1800DAB DAB/FM tuner with remote, boxed, one month old, (£250) £100. 01274 598818 (Bradford).

DYNAUDIO CONFIDENCE 5 speakers, black ash, perfect condition, £2,950 ono, 0151 727 3763 (Liverpool).

ELECTROCOMPANET ECI 1 integrated amplifier, 100 watts of Class A superb sound. Good condition. Boxed with instructions, willing to dem, £800, buyer collects. Call Rob 01614 303577 after 6pm or email rob1902@hotmail.com (Cheshire).

EPOS 12.2 standmount mahogany speakers, (£450) plus Epos black speaker stands, (£120). As new condition, boxed, will demo, £395 for both. Adam 07815 046623 (Surrey).

JM-LAB 936 speakers in cherry

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CELESTION SL6, 600 or 100 loudspeakers, working, good condition, unmarked preferred, good price paid, private buyer, will collect. 01946 862815 (Cumbria).

DECCA LONDON international tone arm, metal headshell version with side entry cable connection. Tel 01749 676174 or e-mail: roy.cole@connectfree.co.uk (Wells).

PIONEER A300R precision amplifier. 1970's Sugden A21a. Onyx AO21, Naim Nait amp. Inca Tech Claymore. Sonneteer Campion amp. 07810 103908 (West Yorkshire).

REL / MJ ACOUSTICS subwoofer with remote. Possible part ex for my Quad L-Series sub. 023 8073 8935 (Hants).

WIREWORLD OASIS 5 or Atlantis interconnect in mint condition. Fair price please as currently unemployed. 01323 487640 (Sussex).

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

finish, boxed with manuals, four years old and in good condition, £1,500ono. Buyer collects 01494 521937 or email martin.skipi@btintemet.com (Bucks).

KEF 105/3 REFERENCE speakers in rosewood. Four-way, six-driver design. Excellent condition with original boxes/packaging. (£2,400), £780ono. 07973 220663 (Leicestershire).

KEF Q7 floorstanders, black, excellent, boxed and still under warranty, (£800) £375ono. 01926 402824 or email pcs9@hotmail.co.uk (Warwick).

KEFRDM2 standmount monitors,



Above: PMC GB1 loudspeaker

black with thick high-gloss solid cherry side cheeks. Excellent sound and looks. (£700), £200. 0116 284 9087 (Leicester).

KRELL DVD STANDARD/HTS Processor/Theatre Amplifier Standard. All silver, immaculate, boxed, papers etc. UK supplied (Pinewood). (£27,000) £12,000. Won't split. Call Roger 07801 287409 (London).

LINN LP12 turntable in black finish, with Ittok LVII tonearm, K9 cartridge and box. Purchased new in and all in excellent condition, £700. Call Alex 0118 9834894 or mobile 0777 4057549 (Berks).

MILLER & KREISEL subwoofer, black. Immaculate condition, four years old, (£700) £295. Call Peter 01443 813109 (Mid Glam).

MONITOR AUDIO 700 PMC bookshelf speakers, bi-wire capable, £120. Energy Take 5.2 satellite speakers including stands (1 pair) and Energy centre speaker, excellent condition, £100. 01689 608925 or 07941 107141 (Kent).

MONITOR AUDIO RS6 loudspeakers, 10 months old, dark wood finish, slight scratches to top, hence price. Otherwise excellent condition, superb sound, bargain, £300. 07983 096202 (Kent).

MISSION 780 mint, £60+pp. Tannoy 605II mint, £60+pp. Atacama 50cm stands, £40+pp excellent. QED XT-350 off reel, £8 metre. 07747 664742 or email scotchb@fsmail.net (Scotland).

MUSICAL FIDELITY CDPRE24 CD player/preamp/multi-input

DAC, (£2,000) £800. JVC HM-HDS4EK, 80Gb HDD/S-VHS video recorder, new and unused, (£700) £150. Panasonic NV-SV121 S-VHS VCR, new and unused, (£180) £100. 01424 442802 (Sussex).

MUSICAL FIDELITY KW 500 Integrated amplifier. 15 months old. Only 200 hours use. Excellent condition. Boxed with manuals and receipt. See HFN issue Jan 2006, £1,900. Steve 0113 2743221 (Leeds).

NAIM CDI from 1994. Mint, boxed, all manuals, DIN to DIN lead and remote control. £600 Call 07899 808918 (Kent)

NAIM CDS1 CD player, under guarantee, new, upgraded remote control, as new, boxed, hardly used, £500. Call Chris 01395 513529 (East Devon).

NAIM CDX CD player, £900. Naim NAC82 preamp incl. NAP SC power supply, £900.

Shahinian Compass speaker, cherry, £1,200. Isoblue five tier stand, £100. Linn Ittok VII arm with armboard, £150. All vgc. Andrew 01509 260537 (Leics).

PIONEER PD 8700 CD player, the classic upside down platter model, low use, mint and boxed, £95. 01278 782622 (Somerset).

PLINIUS SA250 MKIV and M8 pre/power, £3,500. Von Schweikert VR4JR speaker, £1,500. All very good condition with crates. Phone Lim on 07884 187203 or email limkc28@hotmail.com (London).

PMC GB1 floorstanding loudspeakers, maple finish, excellent condition, boxed. Sale

due to upgrade, £650. Contact 01792 321809 (evening) or 07843 288719 (daytime) (Swansea).

PRO-JECT RM4 turntable with Ortofon 510 Mk II cartridge. As new, hardly used. Hi-Fi News best buy, £150. 01268 415017 (Essex).

QUAD 34 preamp, DIN. Boxed £100. 01732 882530 Clive (Kent).

QUAD ESL 2905 speakers. Factory sealed cartons. Why wait three months? £4,950. 01903 261931 (W. Sussex)

REGA P2 turntable with Bias 2 cartridge, six months old, excellent, £200. 07780 853839 (London).

REGA PLANAR 3 with RB300 tone arm, vgc with original box, £140. Tannoy Mercury F4 floorstanders (applewood finish), mint and boxed, £120. Tel 01473 410025 (Suffolk).

ROTEL RCD-951 CD player, excellent condition, boxed, £85. Denon PMA350 amplifier, excellent condition, boxed, £65. 020 7859 6652 (London).

SHANLING CDT-300 3Dsonics, £2,350. Transparent Music Link Super 1.5m RCA interconnects, £345. Vertex Kinabula, £190. Excellent condition. All 'ono'. 07810 434589 (Glasgow).

SONY DAT recorder, DTC-60ES, ES Range, £200. Ace video enhancer unit, semi-professional, world TV standards conversion, full colour & timebase correction and much more, as new, (£300) £100. 01424 442802 (Sussex).

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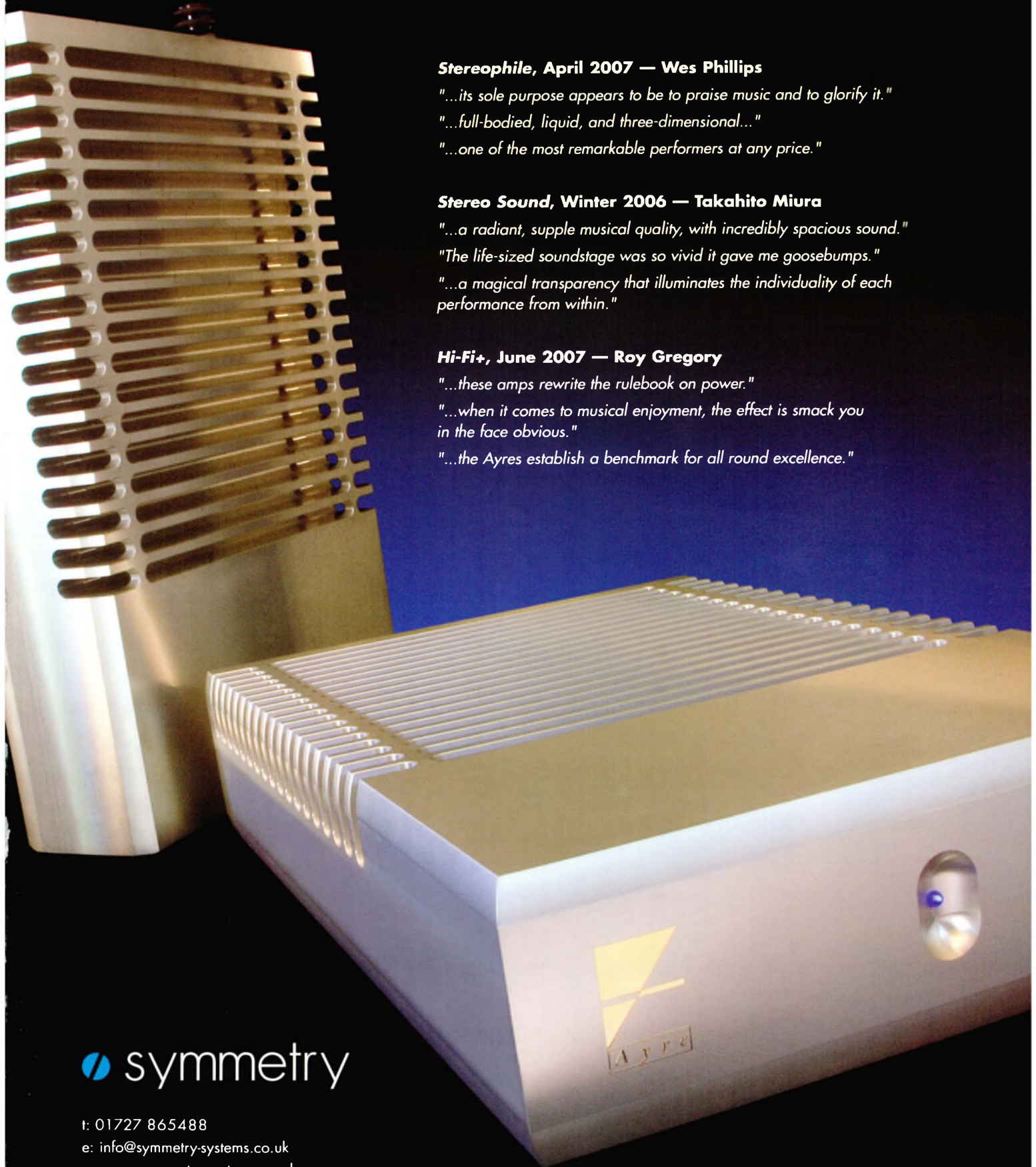
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