

# HI-FI CHOICE

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**amphion**

## Let the sound touch you

Amphion loudspeakers combine award-winning Scandinavian designs with state-of-the-art technology –all in service to the music.

Amphion's Helium 520 and Argon2 Anniversary feature slender, elegant cabinets which will fit in any modern home. Latest-technology drivers, Amphion's proprietary waveguide and low-crossover-frequency technology enable the Amphion's to create engaging, realistic sound, all out of proportion to their size—or price. No longer does "big sound" mean "big boxes".

All the Amphion products are handmade in Finland.



### Helium 520

"Sound is warm, neutral, lively and essentially neutral, with superior musical communication skills"

**Paul Messenger, Hi-Fi Choice**



### Argon<sup>2</sup> Anniversary

"Unstressed yet engaging across all types of music"

**David Price, Hifi World**

"...it is the collection of all of these traits at a mid-level price that makes it an exceptional speaker."

**S. Andrea Sundaram, www.SoundStage.com**



[www.amphion.fi](http://www.amphion.fi)

# WELCOME...

**HI-FI CHOICE MAY 2009 ISSUE 319**

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If this year's Bristol Sound and Vision show is anything to go by, the general mood amongst the buying public is surprisingly upbeat. What is it about our hobby, I wonder, that puts getting great sound above all else – even in these difficult times? The fact that great sound is so important to so many of you is what makes us tick here at *Choice Towers* and we take great

pride in providing you with the best names in hi-fi journalism and the most trusted hi-fi reviews available anywhere.

Speaking of great sound, this month we're spoilt for choice.

This issue, in particular, has an emphasis on value – so turn the page to find some of the best-priced, best-sounding hi-fi on the market today.

*Dan*  
**Dan George** Editor

## WHY WE ARE NO.1 FOR HI-FI...

- Since 1975, *Hi-Fi Choice* has delivered the world's most thorough, most reliable no-nonsense guide to buying high-performance hi-fi.
- Every issue contains a potent mix of the latest hi-fi news, views, music, reviews and in-depth tests, brought to you by a prestigious team of expert writers who are the best audio journalists in the UK.
- Our test regime is the most rigorous in the business and we are the only hi-fi magazine to offer 'blind' listening sessions, along with user-friendly laboratory tests in our six-way *Ultimate Group Test*.
- That's why *Hi-Fi Choice* is...

The Essential Guide To Audio Excellence In The Home



## THE MOST RESPECTED NAMES IN HI-FI JOURNALISM...



### PAUL MESSENGER

A former *Hi-Fi Choice* editor, Paul has been writing about his beloved hi-fi hobby for more than 30 years. In that time he has become one of the world's most respected scribes, and he is undoubtedly 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 and 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 *Hi-Fi Choice*.



### 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* and also writes exclusively for *Hi-Fi Choice*.



### ALVIN GOLD

Alvin has been writing about his obsession for more than 25 years. In that time he has contributed his encyclopedic knowledge to almost every hi-fi periodical you can think of (and several more besides). He is widely regarded as one of Britain's finest hi-fi reviewers.



### JASON KENNEDY

Jason Kennedy was a former editor of *Hi-Fi Choice* and spent an incredible 17 years on the title. Now he's back as HFC's Operations Editor, ensuring that things run smoothly whilst continuing to review and contribute to the UK's best hi-fi title.



### DOMINIC TODD

A highly experienced journalist, Dominic's sharp ears and retail experience are a valuable mix for *Hi-Fi Choice*. Each month, Dom dispenses priceless second-hand buying advice that will save you time, money and a lot of legwork.

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.

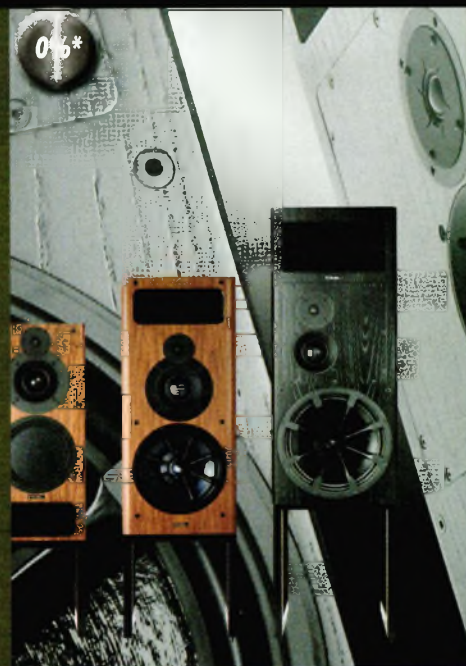


# SHADOW AUDIO

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**Here are our top 75 favourite products bought by customers using our very affordable: 0% Finance\* and Buy Now Pay Later\* Schemes...**

BRAND	MODEL	MRP	10% DEPOSIT	MONTHS	MONTHLY PAYMENT
McIntosh	MCD301 CD Player	£4,795.00	£479.50	24	£179.81
Accoustic Arts	Tube Dac II	£7,050.00	£705.00	36	£176.25
Chord	Indigo 2 1m pair interconnect	£925.00	£92.50	12	£69.38
ADAM	Pencil Active Loudspeakers	£5,999.00	£599.90	36	£149.98
Marantz	SA-751 Legendary Series CD Player	£5,900.00	£590.00	36	£147.50
Clearaudio	Champion Ltd Turntable	£3,510.00	£351.00	12	£263.25
ADAM	Gamma SA Loudspeakers	£9,999.00	£999.90	36	£249.98
ADAM	Tensor Beta A Loudspeakers	£21,499.00	£2,149.90	36	£537.48
Marantz	AV8003 & MM8003 AV Pre-amplifier	£4,098.00	£409.80	12	£307.35
ART	Moderne 8 Loudspeakers	£3,000.00	£300.00	12	£225.00
Wilson Benesch	Discovery Loudspeakers	£6,262.00	£626.20	24	£234.83
ART	Deco 10 Signature Loudspeakers	£12,000.00	£1,200.00	36	£300.00
Accoustic Arts	Drive 1 mk 2 & Dac 1 mk 4 cables	£8,650.00	£865.00	36	£216.25
ART	Deco 20 Signature Loudspeakers	£2,250.00	£225.00	36	£56.25
Audionet	ART G2 CDP CD Player	£4,150.00	£415.00	18	£207.50
EAR/Yoshino	V20 Integrated Amplifier	£4,715.00	£471.50	36	£117.88
Bel Canto	DAC 3	£2,199.00	£219.90	12	£164.93
Bryston	BDA-1 DAC	£2,150.00	£215.00	12	£161.75
SME	30/12 Turntable	£19,189.00	£1,918.90	36	£479.73
ART	Moderne 6 Loudspeakers	£2,400.00	£240.00	12	£180.00
Bryston	4B-S5T2 Power Amplifier	£4,000.00	£400.00	24	£150.00
ART	Deco 6 Signature Loudspeakers	£8,000.00	£800.00	36	£200.00
Chord	Signature Speaker cable 3m pair	£750.00	£75.00	12	£56.25
Clearaudio	Stradivari MC Cartridge	£2,700.00	£270.00	18	£135.00
Gamut	CD3 CD Player	£5,400.00	£540.00	36	£135.00
Clearaudio	Ambient Turntable	£3,990.00	£399.00	24	£149.63
ART	Moderne Stiletto Loudspeakers	£1,950.00	£195.00	12	£146.25
Creek	Destiny amp and Destiny CD	£2,800.00	£280.00	12	£210.00
Aesthetix	Rhea Signature Phono Stage	£6,450.00	£645.00	36	£161.25
EAR/Yoshino	Acute CD Player	£2,838.00	£283.80	18	£141.90
Bryston	BCD-1 CD Player	£2,500.00	£250.00	12	£187.50
Marantz	PM-1152 Premium Series Integrated Amplifier	£3,300.00	£330.00	24	£123.75
Gamut	Di-150 Integrated Amplifier	£8,750.00	£875.00	36	£218.75
Hyperion	938 Loudspeakers	£4,750.00	£475.00	24	£178.13
Nordost	TYR 1m RCA Interconnect	£1,500.00	£150.00	12	£112.50
Clearaudio	Champion Ltd Turntable	£3,510.00	£351.00	12	£263.25
McIntosh	C2300 Pre-amplifier	£6,695.00	£669.50	36	£167.38
Klipsch	La Scala Loudspeakers	£6,000.00	£600.00	36	£150.00
Marantz	TT-1551 Turntable	£1,399.00	£139.90	12	£104.93
Creek	Wyndor TT Turntable	£2,000.00	£200.00	12	£150.00
Marantz	SC-1151 Premium Series Pre-amplifier	£2,899.00	£289.90	24	£108.71
Audionet	Pre 1 G3/AMP1 V2 Power	£8,375.00	£837.50	36	£209.38
Marantz	SM-1151 Premium Series Power Amplifier	£3,300.00	£330.00	24	£123.75
Aesthetix	Rhea Phono Stage	£3,700.00	£370.00	24	£138.75
Marantz	SC-752 Legendary Series Pre-amplifier	£7,999.00	£799.90	36	£199.98
Shanling	CD1500 CD Player	£2,000.00	£200.00	12	£150.00
McIntosh	MC275 Power Amplifier	£4,195.00	£419.50	24	£157.31
Gamut	Phi 3 Loudspeakers	£1,610.00	£161.00	36	£40.25
Aesthetix	Atlas Power Amplifier	£8,200.00	£820.00	36	£205.00
McIntosh	MS750 Music Server	£6,895.00	£689.50	36	£172.38
PMC	PB1i Loudspeakers	£5,500.00	£550.00	36	£137.50
McIntosh	MA7000 Integrated Amplifier	£8,195.00	£819.50	36	£204.88
Shanling	CDS000 Ref CD Player	£3,750.00	£375.00	18	£187.50
Marantz	SA-1152 Premium Series Pre-amplifier	£3,299.00	£329.90	24	£123.71
Wilson Benesch	Curve Loudspeakers	£5,383.00	£538.30	18	£269.15
McIntosh	MC2301 Monoblock Tube Amplifier	£23,790.00	£2,379.00	36	£594.75
Klipsch	Heresy III Loudspeakers	£1,500.00	£150.00	36	£37.50
McIntosh	MA6600 Integrated Amplifier	£6,695.00	£669.50	36	£167.38
Musical Fidelity	Titan Power Amplifier	£19,999.00	£1,999.90	36	£499.98
Nordost	Valhalla 1m RCA Interconnect	£3,300.00	£330.00	24	£123.75
PMC	OB1i Loudspeakers	£3,600.00	£360.00	24	£135.00
ART	Moderne 10 Loudspeakers	£5,000.00	£500.00	24	£187.50
SME	10a Turntable	£4,105.00	£410.50	24	£153.94
EAR/Yoshino	834p Deluxe Phonostage	£1,234.00	£123.40	36	£30.85
Whest	PS30R Phonostage	£1,599.00	£159.90	12	£119.93
Wilson Benesch	ARC Loudspeakers	£2,691.00	£269.10	12	£201.83
Gamut	L5 Loudspeakers	£9,700.00	£970.00	36	£242.50
Wilson Benesch	ACT Loudspeakers	£9,101.00	£910.10	36	£227.53
McIntosh	MCD500 CD Player	£7,195.00	£719.50	36	£179.88
Wilson Benesch	Trinity Speakers & Torus Sub Woofer	£9,728.00	£972.80	36	£243.20
McIntosh	MT-10 Turntable	£10,395.00	£1,039.50	36	£259.88
SME	20/2a Turntable	£7,115.00	£711.50	36	£177.88
Aesthetix	Calypto Pre-amplifier	£4,150.00	£415.00	24	£155.63
PMC	EB1i Loudspeakers	£7,000.00	£700.00	24	£262.50
Marantz	MA-952 Legendary Series Monoblock Amp	£6,999.00	£699.90	36	£174.98



## The new reference – The PMC IB2, MB2 & BB5 join the ranks of the i series range

The astoundingly successful i series upgrade package has been applied to all three models and includes the stunning PMC/SEAS SONOLEX™ domed tweeter unit and dispersion plate that provides the signature pin point imaging and delicately natural open top end. All three models feature PMC's massively engineered soft dome tweeter unit and newly modified thirty two element, twenty four dB per octave, crossover. The sonic integration and dispersion is improved creating an even larger soundstage in all planes. The presentation of delicate nuances is delivered with the utmost subtlety with strident dynamics handled like a veteran loudspeaker range can. The sheer scale of scale, detail and dynamics of these large i series models is truly awe inspiring.

All three models have been based on professionally proven models that are currently serving at King's College / Deutsche Grammophon, Steve Nouri's Wonderland Studios, Kraftwerk's Kling Klang facility and many more world renowned music makers or broadcasters worldwide.

**0% Finance Deals\*: available on all PMC Models. Please call or email for details.**

\*subject to status †subject to conditions

0%\*



**Musical Fidelity TiTAN**

Limited to just 50 pieces world-wide, the TiTAN is the finest amplifier ever made by MF. No expense has been spared in their pursuit to create the finest power amplifier the world has ever seen. Be quick if you want one!

0% Deal\*: Dep: £1,999 + £500.00 for 36 months

0%\*



**(NEW) McIntosh MCD500**

SACD/CD, Digital inputs, Unique parallel DAC, Volume Control and battleship construction add up to one stunning NEW Flagship CD Player from McIntosh. Did we mention that it sounds truly sublime too? One of our best sellers...

0% Deal\*: Dep: £995 + £172.22 for 36 months

0%\*



**Wilson Benesch Combo Trinity Speaker & Torus Sub**

We think it could be the ultimate Speaker Combo! Incredible detail retrieval, incredible speed and incredible dynamics make this speaker system a musical tour de force.

0% Deal\*: Dep: £550 + £137.50 for 36 months

0%\*



**(NEW) McIntosh MC2301**

Never have we laid eyes or ears upon a more beautifully magnificent monoblock tube amplifier! With 300wpc on-demand and one of the quietest tube amps available, you'll hear your music in all its glory on an unprecedented scale!

0% Deal\*: Dep: £995 + £291.66 for 36 months

0%\*



**NEW - ART Moderne Range**

Although diminutive in size, the Moderne range delivers a sound that belies its stature. The soundstage is vast for such a small speaker, and with breathtaking clarity, its perfect for the confines of city living and truly magical in the intimate small hours.

Moderne 4

0% Deal\*: Dep: £195 + £146.25 for 12 months

Moderne 6

0% Deal\*: Dep: £240 + £90 for 24 months

Moderne 8

0% Deal\*: Dep: £300 + £112.50 for 24 months

Moderne 10

0% Deal\*: Dep: £500 + £125 for 36 months

0%\*



**SME 10a**

It is one of our most popular selling turntables, because nothing else comes even close at the price! Loved by reviewers and customers alike, the SME 10a is very special indeed. Buy on our finance scheme and it's even more affordable!

0% Deal\*: Dep: £419 + £157.29 for 24 months

0%\*



**Wilson Benesch ACT**

A masterpiece of carbon fibre and real world engineering, the ACT continues to lead the field not only in its peerless build quality but also in its ability to deliver the most controlled tuneful bass, wide open midrange and crisp, detailed treble.

0% Deal\*: Dep: £910.10 + £227.53 for 36 months

0%\*



**McIntosh MA7000**

Designed to deliver a continuous 250 watts per channel, the MA7000 Integrated Amplifier is the most powerful integrated amplifier McIntosh has ever offered.

0% Deal\*: Dep: £995 + £200 for 36 months

0%\*



**Marantz SA-7S1**

This multiple award-winner is a technical tour de force with one goal - to let you hear more musical detail than you thought possible from CDs and SA-CDs. It does and then some!

0% Deal\*: Dep: £500 + £125 for 36 months

0%\*



**Clearaudio Champion Ltd**

*Includes Satisfy Tonearm*

The Champion Limited Turntable features the base and platter of the Champion Basic, but upgraded with the massive stainless steel feet of the Champion Level 2 for improved resolution, bass, and musicality.

0% Deal\*: Dep: £258 + £96.75 for 24 months

0%\*



**Bel Canto 3 Dac**

The Dac 3 transcends the expected performance from all of your digital audio sources. Providing the functionality of 3 separate audio products: DAC, Master Clock, Pre-amplifier in one product. The Dac 3 provides value rivalled only by its performance. Hear it today and rediscover your music library.

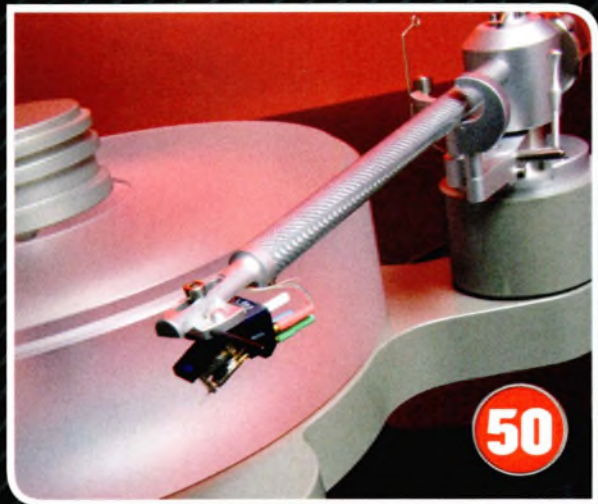
0% Deal\*: Dep: £199 + £150 for 12 months



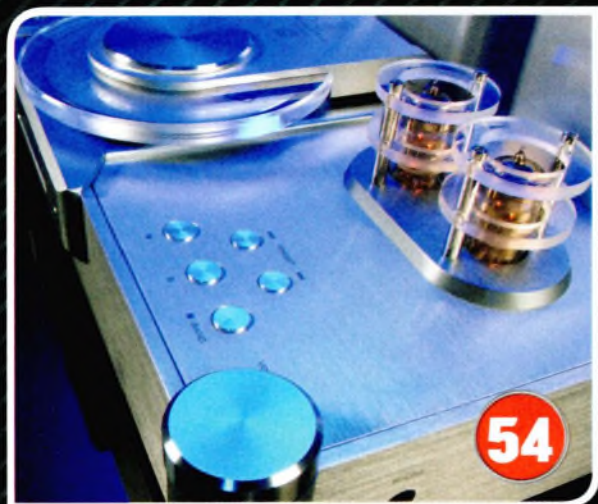
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TURN TO P82 FOR DETAILS



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Ultimate guide to high-performance hi-fi, gathering together all our favourite products for you. Your shortlist starts here...

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120 FREE Readers' classifieds

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# FURUTECH

Pure Transmission Technology

## The Evolution II Cable Line **NEW**



Evolution Power UK



Evolution Audio II (RCA)



Evolution Audio II (XLR)



Evolution Speaker II

## Pure Transmission Performance for value conscious audiophiles

Featuring resonance - damping cable clamps and  
PVC/Carbon powder dielectric



"...Furutech's cables offer great transparency and purity, plus an uncanny ability to block out noise and grunge"

— Chris Martens  
The Absolute Sound 2007  
Editors Choice Awards

## Ag-12 Phono Cable Series



Ag-12 (DIN/RCA)



Ag-12-L (L-DIN/RCA)



Ag-12-R4 (RCA/RCA)



"I don't know if the Furutech Ag-12 is the best phono cable on the market, but it's the best I've heard, a fact made all the more meaningful by its mid-level price. It's one of the phono cables to beat, and it's affordable to boot."

— Marc Mickelson, Soundstage.com Reviews Choice Award

## CF Series **NEW**



CF-102 (R)



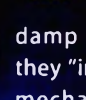
CF-201 (R)



CF-202 (R)

"Elegant, lustrous, non-resonant carbon fiber and nonmagnetic stainless steel bodies plus leading-edge technology and materials for enthusiasts seeking musical perfection."

## FI-50 (R) Piezo Ceramic Series IEC Connectors



Carefully chosen and tested "active" materials mechanically and electrically damp Piezo connectors as they "interconvert" thermal, mechanical, and electrical energy for the finest Furutech Pure Transmission signal imaginable.

Furutech Pure Transmission Technology, improving every element of signal transmission, from the AC to the speaker

**Make a More Powerful Connection with Furutech!**

Connectors and Parts

### Sound Foundations

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Camberley, Surrey, GU17 9AY Great Britain  
Tel: +44(0) 1276 501 392  
info@soundfoundations.co.uk



Cables and Analog Accessories

### Metropolis Music

Firgrove Business Park,  
Firgrove Road, Cross in Hand,  
Nr Heathfield, East Sussex TN21 0QR  
Tel: +44(0) 1323 867 138  
www.metropolis-music.co.uk



## CYRUS XPD SERIES

Three hot new Cyrus amplifiers boast digital input options

Having trickled-down the SE (Servo Evolution) modifications from its CDT SE transport to its CD player range, Cyrus has decided to raise the bar once again, this time with its integrated amplifiers. The new amps have been improved in order to make them transparent enough to reveal the advantages wrought by SE. Work started by taking the preamp section from the range-topping DAC XP (DAC/preamp) and using it within its vs2 amplifiers. Next, the company implemented a new power supply concept it had been working on to isolate control circuitry from audio signals, involving running a completely separate second power supply section from its own transformer. Although costing more (something that's reflected in increased retail prices), Cyrus claims a steep change in power amp performance. The modifications, says Cyrus, also means it has built a future-proofed amplifier platform said to deliver higher performance than the vs2 models being replaced.

Even more radical, is the addition of a digital option, based around a new DAC. Five digital input options (including USB) expand the amp into what Cyrus calls a home audio hub, allowing you to play analogue

and digital sources through a single amplifier component. Naturally, hi-fi sources such as CD players can be accommodated, but it also means that satellite decoders and DVD players, for example, can be fed into the amp, to benefit from its new performance levels.

First up is the base 6 XP model. In standard form, it only has analogue inputs, but it can be upgraded at the factory. It's specified to deliver 40 watts per channel and is the first Cyrus amp we've come across to be devoid of a socket for a PSX-R power supply. Despite this, it can be upgraded all the way through from 8 XPd to Pre XPd status, should funds allow. It's bigger brother, the 8 XPd, is a 70-watt design with digital and analogue inputs, PSX-R upgradability and a preamp-out. Finally, the Pre XPd is based on the DAC XP preamp but has a more affordable DAC, as well as the features of the 8 XPd.

All three models have a customisable menu system that allow users to set up input sensitivity and naming. They are also designed to be used in multiroom set-ups and have two-zone capability built-in.

**Price** (6 XP) £900; (8 XPd) £1,500; (Pre XPd) £1,300 **Due now**  
☎ 01480 435577 • [www.cyrusaudio.com](http://www.cyrusaudio.com)



# Definition

HIGH END 2009

THE BEST SOUND • THE BEST VISION

21-24 MAY 09 M.O.C. MUNICH  
ROOM D112, ATRIUM 3



Definition is an outstanding new range of audiophile loudspeakers from Tannoy. Designed to get the very best from stereo music in the home, Definition distils and refines Tannoy's eight decades of loudspeaker expertise into a design of unrivalled performance value and stunning aesthetics.

## Defining the art of sound

The three strong range features the very latest Tannoy Dual Concentric™ drivers with WideBand™ tweeter technology, innovative ply-wood cabinets and revolutionary Deep Cryogenically Treated crossovers. Capturing the fundamental dynamics of music yet majoring on the finest instrumental detail, Definition defines the art of sound.

[tannoy.com](http://tannoy.com)

**TANNOY**



## NAIM NAIMUNITI



*At last, Naim has joined the one-box hi-fi system club*

Naim is a company traditionally associated with purist, no-frills separates and while this image changed with the introduction of the HDX music server, it has now been challenged further with the latest addition to the range. NaimUniti is said to be the first all-in-one audiophile system to offer CD, DAB/FM/internet radio, MP3/iPod integration and wireless streaming. Naim calls it the music box and with such comprehensive functionality, who are we to argue?

The NaimUniti's CD transport and swing drawer are taken from the CDX2, with the rest of the CD section originating from the CD5i. The amp section is based on the Nait 5i integrated, giving the unit a 50-watt output, three RCA phono inputs, a 3.5mm jack and a DIN socket for use with the Stageline phono stage.

The NaimUniti's internet radio is said to offer a 'wealth of musical options' from thousands of stations. It works with the vTuner system and can access the web either wirelessly, or through a conventional connection. It can search by country, genre etc and with a bit of direct web use, can be provoked into picking up the highest bit-rate streams

for the stations of your choice, supporting WMA, MP3 and MMS streams. The DAB and FM sections share presets with net stations, so cleverly, you can have any station type on any preset.

In digital streaming mode, it supports MP3 and AAC up to 320 kbps (constant and variable bit rate), as well as WMA, WAV, Flac and OGG Vorbis formats. Apple lossless is also supported, but only when streamed from an iPod, and as you would expect, iPods are very well supported. iPod connection via Naim's n-Link connector allows control and display of music content via the display on the NaimUniti. It can also charge the iPod through the same link.

Not only is this the most highly featured product that Naim has ever produced, it is to our knowledge, the most comprehensively equipped single piece of audio componentry made by a British company. Although there is some very healthy competition out there from the £650 Arcam Solo Mini to the £1,500 Primare DVDi10, Naim's offering seems to out-feature everything on the market so far.

**Price** £1,995 **Due now** ☎ 01722 426600 🌐 [www.naimaudio.com](http://www.naimaudio.com)





## Bristol Show '09

The greatest show on the UK hi-fi calendar was full of surprises and intriguing new kit according to **Malcolm Steward**

Over the past few years the Bristol Show has, without any shadow of a doubt, established itself as the premier showcase for audio and video technology in the UK. No other specialist hi-fi or AV event draws anywhere near as many exhibitors nor visitors. This year there were more than 160 brands represented, several of whom were unveiling never-before-seen products. True to form, before 10 o'clock on the show's opening day, there were queues of eager visitors lined up around the block waiting for the doors to open.

One of the most interesting new products on display was the NaimUniti all-in-one music player from **Naim Audio**, which showed that the latest versions of the all-in-one player are far more comprehensively equipped and sophisticated than earlier units in this category. The £1,995 NaimUniti consists of an integrated stereo amplifier (based on the NAIT 5i), a CD player (based on the CD5i), a DAB/FM tuner along with internet radio functionality, an in-built DAC and the ubiquitous and seemingly obligatory iPod connectivity. All that is needed to turn this wireless-enabled box into a complete system is a pair of loudspeakers... and loudspeaker cables, of course.

1. Naim Audio's latest version of the one-box system; the aptly named NaimUniti



Another extremely good-looking and similarly equipped all-in-one music player came from Belgian outfit, **beChocolate** (the manufacturing arm of Totem and Rega distributors, Joenit). Unlike the NaimUniti, this design will play DVD and SACD, as well as regular CDs and can be configured to provide home cinema functionality. There is also a music server option. As you might expect, these enhanced capabilities are reflected in the price, which, depending upon the configuration chosen, falls between £5,000 and £8,000.

Making its UK debut and looking equally striking in its appearance, which is rather industrial compared to the 'softer', more feminine beChocolate, is the **Chord** Indigo preamplifier and digital iPod docking station. This can be supplied with a Chord-modified iPod that promises to deliver genuine high-end audio with the iPod as the source feeding Chord's advanced DAC technology (provided, of course, that uncompressed music files are used. Naturally – because Chord seems to be aiming to make itself a boutique digital technology leader – the Indigo also incorporates the latest

2. The smart-looking all-in-one music player from Belgian manufacturer beChocolate



3. The iPod-docking station is a key feature of Chord Electronics' Indigo preamplifier



custom-designed Bluetooth receiver and wireless developments to stream the finest quality audio from appropriately enabled mobile devices and computers.

While discussing DACs we ought to mention **Naim Audio** again, the company that resolutely railed against stand-alone DACs for many years. Naim surprised many visitors by previewing

4. Naim's work-in-progress DAC unit should be available in the late summer



5. The uniquely designed clear-glass Niagara loudspeakers from Waterfall

its first such device in its 10th-floor room. In truth it is hard for any company to ignore DACs nowadays as hi-fi embraces sources that can take maximum advantage of them. Although the unit being shown was only a work-in-progress – and not even a pre-production prototype – it showed great promise and sounded very respectable, taking the outputs from both a hard disk player and a laptop computer. There were no official announcements about its ETA or likely price but, at the time of writing, we'd imagine that late summer and around £2,000 wouldn't be too far off the mark.

5 Alongside all these bleeding-edge digital products the bulk of the new releases in Bristol still seemed

to be loudspeakers, some of which were extraordinary despite being predominantly conventional designs. The most individual and certainly the most transparent – in the literal sense – of these was the **Waterfall** Niagara: a near four-foot-tall, floorstanding confection with Nappa leather-clad drivers housed inside an inch-thick Diamond Glass cabinet. The treble unit even sits in its own, discrete, horn-loaded, Diamond Glass enclosure. According to the designer, this glass is very expensive to produce, which presumably explains some of the Niagara's £25,000 per pair price tag.

6 At a rather less stratospheric price (£1,995), **Yamaha** was playing tunes through its rather grand-looking, piano black lacquered Soavo-1 loudspeakers, a model representing the evolution of an existing design. Although it is a risky business making judgements about the sound of any components in a show environment it has to be said that these speakers appeared very natural and unforced. Almost certainly the design's lack of any magnetic shielding contributed towards the easy-going clarity of the sound. In fact, speaking to several designers at the show, it appears that shielding is thankfully no longer deemed necessary given that few people are buying CRT televisions.

7 **Spendor** had an even more striking-looking, slim, two-and-a-half-way, floorstanding design on display, the ST (Statement). The 45-litre cabinet construction is cleverly engineered both acoustically and aesthetically, such that when it's playing it sounds excellent and when it's not, it still manages to be equally attractive. The fascia inlay on the piano black lacquer cabinet can even be specially ordered



7. Spendor's luxurious-looking two-and-a-half-way floorstanding loudspeaker

in bespoke materials for that added touch of luxury. The driver array comprises a newly developed 18cm Kevlar composite woofer, an 18cm polymer cone mid-bass and a 29cm wide surround tweeter in an acoustic lens for extended HF response. The ST also uses premium-quality crossover components, silver-plated wiring, WBT Next-Gen terminals and Spendor's linear flow reflex port arrangement that allows for convenient close to wall placement. Prices begin at £5,500 a pair.

8 Not all the sophisticated loudspeakers at the show were floorstanders: **Adam Audio** was demonstrating its Tensor 'Highest End' compact standmounts, the £4,800 Epsilon and £8,400 Delta. The two-way, reflex-loaded, active Epsilon incorporates a 7-inch HexaCone Nomex/Kevlar sandwich driver, and an X-ART tweeter, while the three-way

6. Among its many speakers on display, Yamaha unveiled the Soavo-1 (below left)



8. Adam Audio's amazingly compact Epsilon standmount



Delta employs the same HF unit, an X-ART midrange unit and a larger, 9-inch HexaCone woofer, all driven by three integral, 250-watt, PWM (Pulse Width Modulation) – otherwise known as Class D amplifiers.

**9** The prize for the most comprehensively tweaked room went to Audio Reference, who were showing the £4,500 **GamuT** Phi 7 loudspeakers. Bedecked with carefully oriented Shun Mook discs and having their imaging refined by Shakti Hallograph Soundfield Optimizers (the trident-like constructions standing behind them), they aesthetically may not suit all home environments, even if the sound is truly wonderful.

**10** After an something of a prolonged absence, **Deltec Precision Audio** returned to the fold with a system consisting of the £2,300, six-input, CA-1, stereo preamplifier and the £2,200 MA-1 mono power amplifier, which has as its heart a hybrid voltage amplifier developed by the company itself to outperform conventional equivalent circuits and provide a smoother, sweeter sound quality. The amplifiers were connected to the mains through a £550 Power Plus Triple-channel RF Noise Filter and Power InSlink and OutSlink cables and to each other with Reference Standard Black Slink interconnects (from £350 for a one-metre stereo set).

**11** **The Funk Firm** made a last-minute booking for space at the show in order to display and demonstrate its newest modified product



9. Far left and right, the light wood coloured Phi 7 floorstander from GamuT



10. Stereo preamplifier and mono power amplifier from Deltec Precision Audio

the FXR tonearm, which began life as a lowly Rega, before being treated to a new F-dot-Cross arm tube, skeletal headshell and other improvements. Fitted to a Funk Saffire turntable, like the SME V with which it was compared, the FXR did, indeed, sound very neutral. "That's simply because the arm-tube

does not react like most and ring like a wind chime," explained its designer.

**12** **Russ Andrews** takes the prize for the device whose operation no-one could properly explain to me, the £520 Clarity Pro



11. The Funk Firm's new FXR tonearm is fitted to a Funk Saffire turntable

12. This 'magic' box from Russ Andrews is 'guaranteed' to enhance your home hi-fi

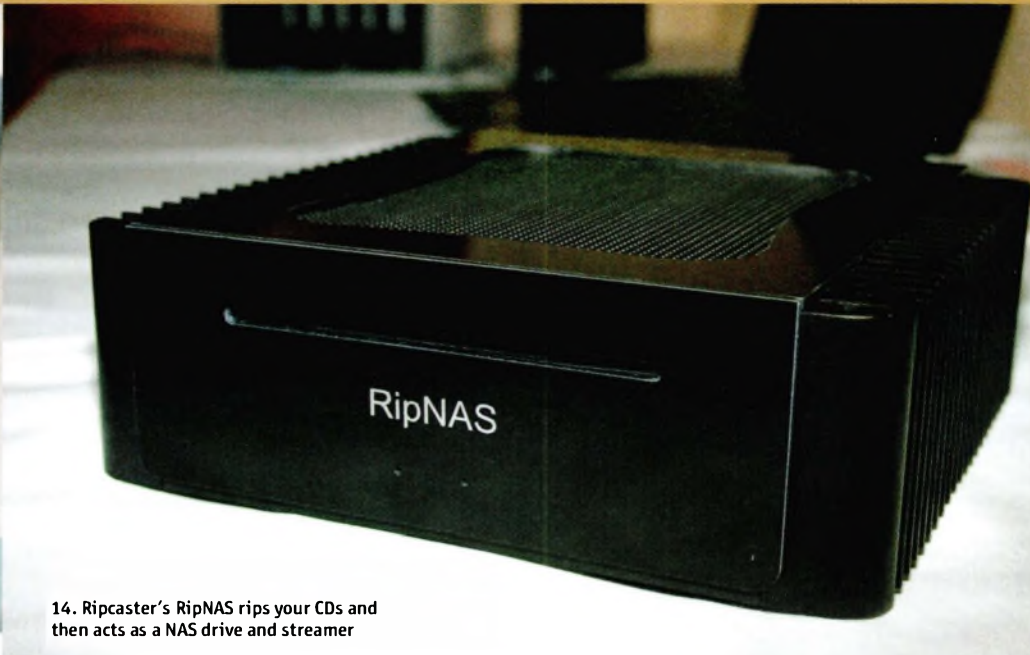


13. The versatile cable burn-in accelerator from Blue Horizon



featuring Coherence Technology. This mains-powered box simply sits on top of or close to your hi-fi and does its stuff, whatever that might be. Without being in any way directly connected to your electronics it is said to enhance your appreciation of your system's sound. Making this weird science weirder still, it has a knob that "allows the control of the strength and size of the comfort zone to accommodate the varying challenges posed by your environment."

**13** The Proburn is a new product from a new company, **Blue Horizon**. The £695 device is a cable burn-in accelerator, designed to get your cables working at their best without the need for leaving your CD player on repeat playing the same old test or burn-in disc all day and night for months. In truth, the Proburn ought to be more effective because it is able to generate a wider range of frequencies than CD can accommodate. It is designed to condition both interconnects and speaker cables.



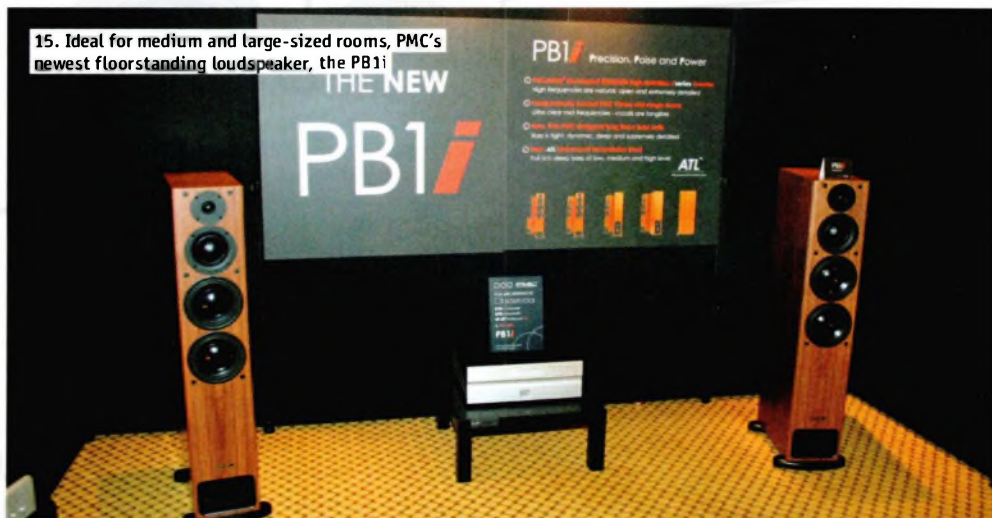
14. Ripcaster's RipNAS rips your CDs and then acts as a NAS drive and streamer

**14** The crowds filling **Ripcaster's** room demonstrated the huge interest that has been created by high-quality computerised audio. Of several products on show, one of the most attractive was the RipNAS, which, as its name suggests, rips your CDs and then acts as a NAS drive and streamer. A compact unit measuring just 24x25x8.9cm, it is fan-less, runs the Windows Media Home Server OS and can store to 7TB, using a matching storage extender box. Prices start at around £585 for a basic 320GB device.

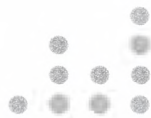
**15** **PMC** launched its new £5,500 PB1i loudspeakers, which the company said will give their best performance in medium and large rooms when driven by quality sources and amplification. Advice that should be taken seriously given the speakers' propensity for dynamics and extreme bass that was witnessed during the demonstration.

Conveniently PMC was also simultaneously launching the new Bryston SST2 (SST Squared) series of high-performance audiophile power amplifiers and was powering the new speakers with £4,000 and 2x300 watts' worth of 4B SST2, which seemed able to deliver the appropriate muscle and grip.

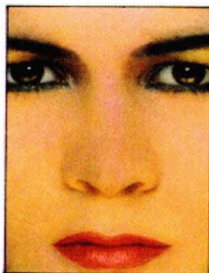
This year's Show, in the newly rejuvenated Bristol town centre, was an enjoyable and heart-warming experience. Enjoyable because hi-fi was not overwhelmed by other types of product. And it was heart-warming because there was no mention anywhere of the credit crunch. Visitor numbers were, I suspect, a little down on previous years, but not so dramatically that you'd be concerned. And all the conversations were about the equipment that the visitors had just heard or seen. Enthusiasm never waned and, in the present economic climate, that can only be to the good. **HFC**



15. Ideal for medium and large-sized rooms, PMC's newest floorstanding loudspeaker, the PB1i



## THE HUMAN LEAGUE *DARE*



**DARE!**  
The Human League  
Virgin

“Recruiting female vocalists to dance on stage was given short shrift by the overly serious music press of the day...”

Words by *Ian Harrison*

## Classic Album

Lin drums. The Korg 770. A Casio VL-1. The Yamaha CS-15. Compared to what any bedroom would-be Phil Spector can do in moments on their laptop in 2009, these bulky, tricky studio fixtures of the early 1980s may as well be clockwork or steam powered. But when used on 1981's revolutionary pop masterpiece *Dare*, they became engines of genius, combining to create one of synth-pop's most enduring and immaculate conceptions. Twelve months before its release however, the smart money said The Human League were finished. Formed in Sheffield in 1978, with the then-bold intention of making pop music electronically, the band released two quite severe LPs before creative tensions caused the musical side of the band, Ian Craig Marsh and Martyn Ware, to jump ship to form Heaven 17. The remaining members – vocalist Phil Oakey and Philip Adrian Wright, whose main role was showing slides in live shows – had just weeks to form a new Human League and go on tour or get sued for £250,000. The way they did it has gone down in pop folklore – after hiring synth man Ian Burden, Oakey chanced upon Suzanne Sulley and Joanne Catherall on the dance floor at Sheffield's Crazy Daisy nightclub. Within a week both were on tour with the group. Recruiting female vocalists to dance on stage was given short shrift by the overly serious music press of the day, but it did at least show the way to *Dare*.

After demo'ing new song *Sound Of The Crowd* in Sheffield, the group, plus ex-Rezillos guitarist Jo Callis, went to producer Martin Rushent. The super-talented and diplomatic Rushent, whose previous clients had included The Stranglers, The Buzzcocks and Shirley Bassey, would be crucial to the album's success; Oakey would later write; “both the record label... and producer were adamant that anything that made the record more saleable must be included.”

Transposing the disciplines and conventions of a pop band to completely electronic means resulted in songs that were hook-filled and whistle-able in the best traditions of the charts. They had a clear and uncluttered, almost mathematical synthetic sound, see the second single *Love Action (I Believe In Love)* or the number one *Don't You Want Me* for this meeting of classic and modern.

But if, on the one hand, it was commercial, the vision was also forward thinking and experimental. The refusal to use any ‘real’ instruments was one aspect of this – Rushent has spoken of how labour intensive getting all the gear to work was – and the other was just how bizarre and, yes, funny, a prospect The Human League were in the pop milieu of 1981. Take vocalist and visual focus Oakey. A large man with a deep voice, whose hobbies included watching *Doctor Who* and riding motorbikes, he would, a full year before the advent of Boy George, appear on TV wearing lipstick and women's high heeled shoes, flicking the jumbo-wedge hairdo he'd devised so people could go into Woolworths and ask for “the record by the guy with the hair on one side.”

They scored three top ten hits from the LP and in 1982 released *Love And Dancing*, which remixed songs from *Dare* for the dance floor. Like its parent LP, it was a startlingly prescient piece of work; voices drop in and out dub-style, rhythms are extended and grooves are accentuated.

For The Human League, the decades that followed saw fluctuating success and they're now a staple of eighties nostalgia tours. But few albums of its time have maintained the lustre of *Dare*, an album where the future is still what it always promised to be. **HFC**



Words by **Richard Black**

# Technology

**M**ore and more products are arriving for review sporting an iPod connection of some sort and while Apple's aspirational little device is far from being the only game in town for portable music storage, it is overall (including all the variants) the most common. But is it in any meaningful sense a hi-fi component, or does its performance bear comparison with cheap cassette players of yesteryear?

Surprisingly, there is little hard information about this from independent sources so, having recently bought an iPod Nano specifically for testing iPod-compatible devices, I thought I'd subject it to the same test routine we apply to CD players. An important variable with any portable device is the format in which music is stored. MP3, AAC and WMA are all lossy systems in their default modes and have their own signature, which will be added to that of any player. However, that's a known quantity in that any compressed file will decode to the same bitstream in any player and that bitstream then gets converted to audio just as if it had originated from a lossless file.

So the only sensible way to test an iPod is with uncompressed data. Anyway, if you really care about quality you'll store your music in that format and put up with having a capacity of only a few hundred, rather than a few thousand, tunes. With that in mind, it was a simple task to copy our standard test CD to the iPod and then simply play it back. For purely practical reasons it was easier to use the headphone output, but the iPod dock connector carries the same, analogue, audio. (Getting a digital output to feed a DAC out of an iPod without guarantee busting modifications is only possible with the Wadia 170i dock, see page 19 for more on this.)

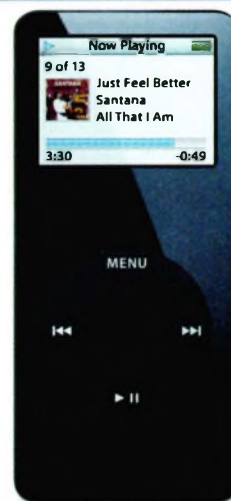
The good news for iPod users is that quality is good. In a few areas it shows signs of compromise due to operation from small,

low-voltage batteries in a tiny space, but in most respects it would not look shabby coming from a CD player costing several hundred pounds. Take distortion, for instance. Many CD players manage figures around 0.001% worst cast, which means that all distortion components are down in the noise floor. The iPod Nano didn't quite manage that, but at 0.002% midband it is very impressive and, as output level drops, the distortion vanishes completely into noise.

Distortion does rise a little at high frequencies, to a shade under 0.01%, but again it soon tails off with level and since full-level 20kHz signals don't occur in real music it's still arguable that the performance is effectively blameless. Jitter is another surprise, again very nearly vanishing. We'd put a figure of about 0.2ns on it, against a measurement limit of about 0.12ns and on the whole that also qualifies as blameless, especially as the character is relatively benign.

One area where performance does lag is noise. The maximum output from an iPod is well under 1V and it's very hard achieving high signal-to-noise ratios with small signals. As a result, noise is about 7dB higher in level than the best CD players can manage – but that's still very good. There is a just-detectable amount of modulation noise, but probably the weakest feature is the digital filter, which allows aliasing to occur at between -60dB (midband) and -45dB (high treble), just enough to cause some slight coarseness with some amps and some speakers.

Nevertheless, if the Nano is typical of iPod behaviour (and quick checks on borrowed machines suggest it is), basic technical performance is good enough to consider an iPod as a hi-fi source when uncompressed files are being played. **HFC**



**iPod: hi-fi or not?**

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# Jason Kennedy

Jason Kennedy began working on *Hi-Fi Choice* two decades ago, eventually rising to the position of Editor. He's currently indulging in his passion as a freelance hi-fi writer

## Dock-Fi

Can iPods and hi-fi co-exist?

"Fortunately it delivers. In fact, the sound is in the same ballpark as a three grand MSB Platinum III transport which is saying something."

When people out in the real world ask me what is the best and most affordable way to have easy access to their music collection I usually run through the computer options, then the hard disk server types and eventually end up establishing that, when all is said and done, you are hard pressed to beat an iPod. I don't own one myself, but I have used them and found them to be almost as good at providing server type services as they are at delivering music on the move. They are not as feature laden as systems like the Imerge or Naim HDX, but they do have a great user interface and can't be beaten on price, except of course by other MP3 players. But Apple products have the advantage over the latter because so many docking products are made for them.

They are, however, the antichrist when it comes to hi-fi, aren't they? Well, yes and no. On the one hand, those who have never owned hi-fi separates see them as the be-all and end-all of musical entertainment, which is not surprising given their flexibility, sex appeal and the plethora of sound docks on the market. Docks and headphones were the biggest selling audio products on the market last year. All but one dock simply passes on the analogue output of the player rather than extracting a digital signal for later conversion. At the opposite end of the scale there are some very serious docking systems coming onto the market that are designed to work with top-notch systems.

Wadia got the ball rolling with the competitively priced 170i (£380) that manages to extract a purely digital output from a standard iPod, while another US digital specialist, MSB, has been modifying players to deliver an S/PDIF signal for use with its iLink dock. A device that is designed to be partnered with its range of high-end DACs (as these are priced from £3,200 upwards, the company must have a lot of faith in the world's favourite personal stereo). The iLink itself is quite pricey at £1,900, including iPod, so one has a right

to expect great things of it and, fortunately, it delivers. In fact, the sound is in the same ballpark as a three grand MSB Platinum III transport which is saying something. The system has the added advantage that you can select tracks and play them whilst its in your hand, thanks to an RF transmitter that plugs into the iPod.

Chord Electronics has licensed iLink technology to achieve the same thing with its new Indigo dock/DAC/preamp/Bluetooth receiver, which is rather more expensive than the MSB. As with the iLink, Chord's system requires that the iPod be modified in order to get a proper digital bitstream out of it, yet Wadia's 170i does not. When I asked UK Wadia distributor MDC about this they explained that Wadia is the only company with a licence from Apple to "interrogate the digital stream" on the iPod's output.

Putting the same question to Larry Gullman at MSB he explained "The Wadia talks to the iPod via USB." Going on to say "Receiving the signal requires far more processing than can be done in a simple RF link. The MSB RF link can only be accomplished because we have a continuous audio output. That can only be acquired by modifying the iPod." Which would seem to make the case for the MSB's RF transmitter, which is indeed useful, albeit not the best possible way to get signal to the dock and thence a DAC.

I plan to get hold of the 170i and compare it with the iLink to see what the sonic difference is and whether it adds up to the fiscal one, which is clearly not small.


So while the iPod might look like an audiophile compromise, it has the potential to be quite the opposite, especially if you throw some money at it. And, hopefully, there's more of that about than the media-at-large would have us believe. **HFC**



The MSB iLink dock

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Hi-Fi Choice - December 2007

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## Paul Messenger

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

# Showtime

Hi-fi shows worth catching in 2009

**"Peter Comeau's plan to put the much-revered Radford STA25 power amplifier back into production seems about to come to fruition."**

**L**ike Malcolm Steward, whose report appears on page 12, I've just returned from a long weekend in Bristol, covering Britain's leading annual hi-fi show.

It's actually quite a good event and the fact that visitor attendance was impressive, despite these financially chaotic times, is very encouraging. But it's also a rather parochial affair, perhaps because ultimately it's a selling show organised by independent dealer group Audio T. And because it is now the country's leading event, it also reminds one of the slow, but steady decline of British hi-fi shows in general.

Several factors including poor facilities and political in-fighting between rival organisers have contributed, but the result is that Europe's biggest hi-fi show now takes place in Munich, under the auspices of the German High End Society, usually starting the day after Ascension Day (22-24 May).

Munich has now taken over to such an extent that there won't even be the traditional September event at Heathrow. Instead a two-dayer is scheduled for 26th/27th September at Whittlebury Hall, a new venue near Silverstone.

Now that North West dealer Practical Hi-Fi has joined up with Audio Excellence under the Audio T banner, I'll be heading to Manchester for the weekend 17th/18th October. But Munich will remain the prime European event, for trade, press and enthusiasts alike.

Back to Bristol 2009, a few things that Malcolm didn't have room for are worth a mention. Such as a new Mk2 version of the Eclipse top-of-the-line TD712z single-driver speaker, which now has a larger 'egg' and a more refined driver.

Members of Tannoy's elegant new Definition-series threesome were making good sounds driven by French designed, Far East built Carat electronics. The large Dual Concentric drivers have wideband tweeters and deep-cryogenically treated crossovers.

Wilson Benesch's updated A.C.T.60 features a number of improvements and now incorporates

super-stiff 'buckyball' nanotubes internally, to reinforce the midrange enclosure.

Leema's top-of-the-line Xanda speaker's deep and shapely enclosure houses no fewer than six drive units and the company's monumentally massive Altair-IV monoblocks appeared in more than one room.

Acoustic Energy's brand new Radiance threesome use a radical dual-radius DXT lens/waveguide around a top quality ring-radiator tweeter to control high-frequency dispersion.

Monitor Audio has now added a £4,750 two-and-a-half-way floorstanding Platinum 200, to bridge the gap between the Platinum 100 standmount and 300 three-way models.

And Dynaudio is replacing its Audience range with a comprehensive collection of Excite models, albeit at rather higher prices.

Among the valve gear, Peter Comeau's plan to put the classic and much-revered Radford STA25 power amplifier back into production seems about to come to fruition, judging by a prototype seen in the Icon Distribution room.

Exposure has taken design elements from its upmarket MCX component amplifier in order to create a much more realistically priced 3010 Mk2 combination, plus two mono power amps, that will sell for around £2,000.

Renaissance Audio and Rountree Acoustics make much better sounding electronics and loudspeakers than their respective interests in the sales and marketing side of the things. The arrival of new kids on the block, Splash Audio as distributors will hopefully supply the requisite extra expertise and enthusiasm.

Those who believe recessions are necessarily a bad thing, should bear in mind that although the last 'big one' in 1973 killed a number of companies, it also saw the birth of several more – Linn, Naim, Rega, Meridian and Arcam, to name but a handful. What was that about clouds and silver linings? **HFC**



Eclipse's Hideto Watanabe with the TD712z Mk II



# 'arc angels'

**"A WINNER AND HIGHLY RECOMMENDED ESPECIALLY AS ITS PRICE TAG IS MUCH LOWER THAN MANY 'HIGH END' COMPETITORS"**  
HI FI CRITIC / APRIL '07 / MARTIN COLLOMS / REF 3

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**"SOLID, FAST AND ROBUST, YET TRANSPARENT AND DELICATE; ONE COULD WANT FOR NOTHING MORE"**  
HI FI NEWS / OCT '08 / KEN KESSLER / VS115

AUDIO RESEARCH VS115 VACUUM TUBE AMPLIFIER

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HI FI CHOICE / NOV '08 / JIMMY HUGHES / CD5

AUDIO RESEARCH CD 5 CD PLAYER

For Audio Research, the knowledge gained through the design process of their Reference series components must benefit every model in their range. Phono stages and digital sources, pre-amplifiers, power amps – Audio Research believes, like Formula 1 car designers, that benefits gained at the cutting edge should be shared.

While the existing Reference 3 pre-amplifier and the REF110, REF210 and REF610t power amplifiers reign supreme for 2009, a host of new, highly-affordable models will deliver a taste of "REF" sonics to a wider audience. For the best value in high performance pre-amplifiers, the fully-featured and supremely functional SP17, with or without phono stage, is a dream match for the VS115 stereo power amplifier.

For Absolute Sounds, the VS115 is one of the most astonishing entry-level Audio Research power amps ever introduced. Its technology has now inspired a new 'baby' stereo power amp, the VS60, and for those who prefer a one-box solution, the VS160 integrated amplifier. Both the VS60 and the amplifier section of the VS160 have new input stages and more robust valves to sound better and last longer. Like their larger siblings, both use classic 6550 output tubes.

For analogue supporters, the all-tube Ref PH7 phono stage is probably the best phono section available. Audio Research still believes in CD, too: not one but three new digital products have joined the family. So commanding was the CD3 Mk II that replacing it required something monumental: enter the CD5 Player/Transport, with balanced and single-ended inputs and outputs. At Reference level, the CD7 has led to the magnificent REF CD8, with new valve line-up, superior chipset and user-dimmable display. And the stand-alone DAC7 digital processor delivers conversion magic to stand-alone transports as well as computers: it offers a front panel USB input.

An Audio Research tradition: The bloodline strengthens.

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



## Alvin Gold

*Alvin Gold began writing about hi-fi more than 25 years ago and has since become one of the most internationally renowned reviewers in the field*

# Pioneering

How safe is the future of high-fidelity in the hands of the market leaders

**"The future that Pioneer has mapped out concentrates on car electronics, an expansion of its nascent two-channel range and other niche activities."**

A recent announcement from Pioneer, blames the current economic crisis for forcing the company to make a number of radical decisions. The dreaded words 'restructuring' and 'streamline' make an appearance in a release that announces the end of Pioneer's plasma display production. The future that Pioneer has mapped out concentrates on car electronics, an expansion of its nascent two-channel range, more activity on the home cinema front and other niche activities. Down sizing will amount to 30% of current production levels, with a loss of 6,000 employees and 400 temporary staff. This is painful even to write about, especially given that Pioneer has long been one of the most inventive of all Japanese producers.

The first time I visited Pioneer on their home turf in Japan, in the mid-90s, it was to hear that the company had mapped out the future and it was to be optical. All kinds of optical discs were promised and demonstrated, including what would eventually become the recordable DVD, which I believe was the first time it had been shown to the outside world.

At the time, Pioneer was the big cheese in LaserDisc (players and discs) and, believe it or not, is only now about to have the plug finally pulled on a market that has long disappeared. I recall that there was considerable excitement within the Pioneer organisation at the time of the visit and the sense that the company really knew which way the market was going, as well as confidence about its market position. And let's not forget that Pioneer was also a force to be reckoned with in high-fidelity components, especially CD players and cassette decks.

They also pioneered (sorry) the development of the high-definition, double-data rate version of DAT, which in its day was highly influential and helped seed the market for HD versions of compact disc. Other developments unveiled on

that single visit included OLED (Organic Light Emitting Diode displays), acoustic standing wave cancellation technology, Legato Link filters and the use of iLink data transmission (since then we have been saddled with HDMI, which is a disaster for audio use due to jitter problems), along with the Pioneer Stable Platter mechanism.

There can be no denying that the company will be slimmed down and diminished in every respect. It is not only plasma TV that has hit the buffers. In a way this was inevitable. In a story that has remained consistent over the years, Pioneer have come up with brilliant ideas and products, but the company just wasn't big enough to enjoy the benefits of scale that would have kept their prices in check. Let's hope that Panasonic, a much bigger operation, will do better with plasma, but they are probably two product generations behind. Pioneer is also pulling out of LCD TV production and it is some time since the company stopped being a source of turnkey production hardware for CD manufacturing.

It will continue with audio hardware production. What this means, in practice, is not very clear, as it's been quite a long time since the company was a force to be reckoned with. But Pioneer is hardly alone in this. Over recent years we have seen major names divesting themselves of much of their interest in component high-fidelity. Sansui and Kenwood did so quite a few years ago and Panasonic did so more recently, while Sony looks decidedly sickly on that front. Meanwhile, Panasonic is apparently instructing its employees to buy £1,000's worth of branded Panasonic products. I can only imagine how this suggestion would be received at a shop stewards meeting in this country! **HFC**



Taking stock of the credit crunch

A y r e

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# WIN!

## An Arcam CD37 SACD player worth £1,100

Arcam is one of the foremost names in hi-fi separates and its CD players have always been considered class acts. The CD37 consolidated that position when it was awarded a Best Buy badge in *HFC 318*, having taken on the strongest contenders in the market place between £900 and £2,350. The CD37's power supply uses two separate toroidal transformers and makes extensive use of damping, both mechanical and electromagnetic. As a result, the sound from this CD/SACD player is extremely satisfying indeed. So much so, that we also awarded it five stars for both sound and value. But don't just take our word for it, find out for yourself by winning one in this month's superb Arcam competition. Good luck!

### QUESTION:

What kind of transformers does the Arcam CD37 have?

A: Torrential B: Toledo C: Toroidal

### HOW TO ENTER:

If you know the answer, text **Arcam A, B or C** to **87474** or visit [www.futurecomps.co.uk/arcamcd](http://www.futurecomps.co.uk/arcamcd) and follow the instructions, leaving your selected choice and details where prompted:

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

To enter the Arcam CD37 competition, you can either (a) text your answer to 87474 at any time between April 2, 2009 and April 29, 2009, or (b) enter online at [www.futurecomps.co.uk/arcamcd](http://www.futurecomps.co.uk/arcamcd) with your entry being received between April 2, 2009 and April 29, 2009. By sending your entry you agree to these competition rules and you confirm you are happy to receive details of future offers and promotions from Future Publishing Limited and carefully selected third parties. If you do not want to receive information relating to future offers and promotions, please include the word STOP at the end of your text message or at the end of your postal entry. Texts will be charged at £1.00 plus your standard network tariff rate.

By taking part in a Competition, you agree to be bound by the Competition Rules, which are summarised below but can be viewed in full at [www.futurenet.com/futureonline/competitionrules.asp](http://www.futurenet.com/futureonline/competitionrules.asp). Late or incomplete entries will be disqualified. Proof of posting (if relevant) shall not be deemed proof of delivery. Entries must be submitted by an individual (not via any agency or similar) and, unless otherwise stated, are limited to one per household. The Company reserves the right in its sole discretion to substitute any prize with cash or a prize of comparable value. Unless otherwise stated, the Competition is open to all GB residents of 18 years and over, except employees of Future Publishing and any party involved in the competition or their households. By entering a Competition you give permission to use your name, likeness and personal information in connection with the Competition and for promotional purposes. All entries will become the property of the Company upon receipt and will not be returned. You warrant that the Competition entry is entirely your own work and not copied or adapted from any other source. If you are a winner, you may have to provide additional information. Details of winners will be available on request within three months of the closing date. If you are a winner, receipt by you of any prize is conditional upon you complying with (amongst other things) the Competition Rules. You acknowledge and agree that neither the Company nor any associated third parties shall have any liability to you in connection with your use and/or possession of your prize.



# Choice Cuts

New music reviewed and rated by our experts

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

COMPACT DISC



## BIC RUNGA

Drive  
SPV  
[www.dramatico.com](http://www.dramatico.com)



**Music:** This re-release was originally the New Zealand singer-songwriter's self-assured debut album some years ago and all the ingredients of future stardom are there – the yearning vocals and arrangements, the tough but tender lyrics and the deceptively simple melodies. The pulsing, feedback-tinged verses of *Heal* even showed she was capable of swapping acoustic for a hint of rock threat when necessary. A minor classic of the late 1990s.

**Sound:** An atmospheric, self-produced gem that's loaded with low-level information and realistic dynamics – play loud and wallow in the subtle audio detail and clarity. Listenable on even a cheap system, this really blossoms on a real hi-fi. **PS**



## CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Complete Works For Piano Vol 3  
Jean-Efflam Bavouzet (piano)  
Chandos [www.chandos.net](http://www.chandos.net)



**Music:** Volume three of an ongoing series is a delicious mix of early and mid-period Debussy and, although no more profound than the Tchaikovsky that appears to have been the main inspiration, these are attractive works which are harmonically intriguing and also have a uniquely quirky charm. They will also be familiar in most cases – *Clair De Lune* (from *Suite Bergamasque*) and *Children's Corner*, in particular.

**Sound:** This is an unusually fine sounding disc. The piano is recorded with a bell-like purity, without sounding excessively close and this suits the music particularly well, as does the clean, percussive sound which is matched by the playing. **AG**



## STARSAILOR

All The Plans  
Virgin  
[www.virginrecords.com](http://www.virginrecords.com)



**Music:** If we are witnessing the death of 'landfill indie', nobody seems to have told Starsailor. Instead of going down with the doomed genre they helped to create, they've chosen this moment to rise up phoenix-like and deliver their most potent set since their debut eight years ago. Clanging rockers, surging epics and yearning ballads are testament to their new-found diversity. Combined with a recent maturity to singer James Walsh's songwriting, it all adds up to an unexpectedly vigorous return.

**Sound:** Clean and uncluttered without sounding over-polished, the dynamics are cleverly varied, ranging from the intimate to the widescreen to suit each song. **NW**



## U2

No Line On The Horizon  
Universal/Island  
[www.u2.com](http://www.u2.com)



**Music:** Five years in the making, straddling three continents and involving three producers, U2's new album is nothing short of a masterpiece. Nirvanic guitars, strings and horns chime with Bono's greatest vocalese as Mullen plays percussion instead of the pounding drums of old. Dreamy, multi-layered, textured and as good as the interplay of the Grateful Dead in 1969, Brian Eno, Daniel Lanois and Steve Lillywhite have produced a completely new form of psychedelia. Yes this is U2's *Sgt Pepper* and their most important release since *The Joshua Tree*.

**Sound:** With huge dynamics and a width and depth in a way that only Eno can attain, this one will be a hi-fi staple for years. **MP**

P J Harvey & John Parish



### PJ HARVEY & JOHN FARRISH

Music Sound ★★★★★

*A Woman A Man Walked By*  
Island  
[www.islandrecords.co.uk](http://www.islandrecords.co.uk)

**Music:** You don't expect easy listening from Polly Harvey, but even by her standards, her first collaboration in a dozen years with long-time colleague Parish is a 'difficult' record. The opener, *Black Hearted Love*, a gloriously surging mainstream rocker, is a deliberately misleading tease; thereafter the guitars get more abrasive, the rhythms increasingly fractured and the vocals more challenging and experimental. True to form though, after repeated plays a jagged fascination dramatically imposes itself through the strangeness.

**Sound:** At times lushly layered and at others transparently simple, in either mode every instrument, voice and texture is given sharp, almost brittle definition. **NW**



### MARIANNE FAITHFULL

Music Sound ★★★★★

*Easy Come, Easy Go*  
Dramatico  
[www.dramatico.com](http://www.dramatico.com)

**Music:** For her 22nd album, Marianne Faithfull has produced a double set of torch songs old and new, with more than a hint of world-weariness and bruised individuality. Joined by such artists as Nick Cave, Cat Power, Jarvis Cocker, Antony Hegarty, Rufus Wainwright, Keith Richards and an orchestra, this album is as enticing a mix of interpretations as she has put together since 1987's *Strange Weather*.

**Sound:** Most of the tracks were cut 'live' in NYC's Sear Sound studio and producer Hal Willner has contrived an arrestingly intimate sound, with Faithfull's vocals very much to the fore front and lots of space for extraneous audio details. **DO**



### LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Music Sound ★★★★★

*Diabelli Variations*  
Stephen Kovacevich (piano)  
[www.onyxclassics.com](http://www.onyxclassics.com)

**Music:** This is the second of two Kovacevich recordings of one of Beethoven's mid-period masterpieces. He originally made a landmark recording of the Diabelli for Philips in the sixties. This one has a more hair-trigger response to dynamics, which has the effect of making the recording sound unusually like the record of a real event, while the playing is unusually idiomatic. Bach's *Partita No 4* is a slightly strange companion, but it is beautifully played and articulated and strikingly elegant as a performance.

**Sound:** One of two superb piano recordings this month and although the other (the Debussy) is sonically superior overall, the margin is small. This one still more than earns its five stars. **AG**



### BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

Music Sound ★★★★★

*Working On A Dream*  
Columbia  
[www.columbiarecords.com](http://www.columbiarecords.com)

**Music:** He may be celebrating 60 this year, but you wouldn't know it from Springsteen's latest album. It may not have the brio of a *Born To Run*, but it's still a powerfully optimistic Springsteen and E Street Band record, brim-full of big chords and bigger dreams. *What Love Can Do* is a late period classic and there's even room for an atypical touch of self-aware humour on tracks such as *Queen Of The Supermarket*

**Sound:** The production is slick, but not overly so, with enough polish to ensure it will fit in well on daytime radio. But it is, perhaps, a little too bright and brittle to really satisfy on the home hi-fi as well as it might. **DO**



**LEO KOTKKE**

6 & 12 String Guitar  
Takoma/Classic Records 200g  
[www.classicrecords.com](http://www.classicrecords.com)



**Music:** Made in 1971, this is one of the finest examples of acoustic guitar ever put on vinyl, Kottke's playing is both incredible, beautiful and engrossing. Because he thought he had a "voice like a bullfrog" Kottke didn't sing, he let his fingers do the talking and the spirit that they convey is often uplifting, never straightforward and always inspiring.

**Sound:** This Clarity SV-PII transparent vinyl pressing has a significantly smoother and cleaner sound, which in turn means more detail and less



**THE SUPREMES**

Sing Holland/Dozier/Holland  
Motown/Speakers Corner 180g  
[www.speakerscorner.de](http://www.speakerscorner.de)



**Music:** This 1967 outing from the most successful girl group of the sixties is pretty well the last great album that they made. With the songwriting of Motown's perfectionist H/D/H trio you are guaranteed quality – that of Supremes' hits and of tunes made famous by label, Ultradisc II gold-plated mates.

**Sound:** The recording is very distinctive with slightly soft bass and thin midrange, but a high degree of polish. If you've only ever heard this stuff on the radio then you're in for a pleasant surprise. *JK*

**HIGH-QUALITY AUDIO**

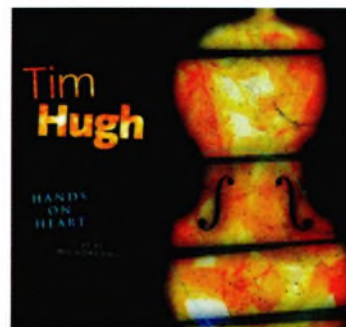
**TIM HUGH**

Hands On Heart  
Naim

CD (and DVD-R)  
[www.thenaimlabel.com](http://www.thenaimlabel.com)

**Music:** As Naim's answer to Reference Records' HRx format, these hi-res data files in WAV form are supplied on a DVD data disc, along with a CD of the same material. Tim Hugh is the principal cellist with the LSO and he has an enviable CV which includes working with most of the top contemporary conductors. For this live set at the Wigmore Hall he was joined by pianist Olga Sitkovetsky and between them they deliver striking interpretations of work by eight composers across 11 pieces.

**Sound:** This hi-def disc is a 24-bit/88.2kHz affair which fits with the 96kHz limit of the HDX and produces a very real, strong and natural sound. A solid-state alternative to valve-like HRx. *JK*



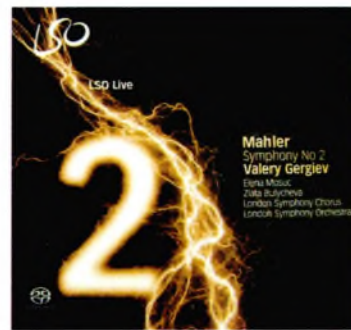
**GUSTAV MAHLER**

Symphony No2  
Valery Gergiev (cond), LSO

SACD (stereo/ multichannel hybrid disc)  
[www.iso.co.uk](http://www.iso.co.uk)

**Music:** Characteristically for Gergiev, the outer movements are painted in bold and sometimes lurid colours, with tempi that are often too fast for no apparent reason except, perhaps, to excite. The relieving effect of the *Andante* is beautifully realised, however, and the final movement is a *tour de force*, especially when judged by the singing and the unusually powerful crescendo.

**Sound:** The recording is superb throughout, with the benefit of excellent multichannel DSD and an unaccustomed warmth of sound from the sometimes 'shut-in' acoustic of the Barbican. Overall an interesting, but ultimately not an entirely convincing account of a true masterpiece. *AG*



**FRANK SINATRA**

Sings For Only The Lonely  
MFSL/Capitol

CD (Ultradisc II gold-plated)  
[www.mofi.com](http://www.mofi.com)

**Music:** This selection of unremittingly melancholy ballads is a long way from the louche Vegas rat pack entertainer of legend (it wouldn't have cut it at The Sands), but it was apparently Sinatra's favourite album. Certainly he's in fine voice throughout: his unique honeyed tenor wrapping itself around lachrymose versions of *Only The Lonely*, *Blues In The Night* and *Willow Weep For Me*. Less songs for swinging lovers as songs for moping melancholics, it's one to listen to alone, at night, preferably when it's raining outside.

**Sound:** Remastered from the original using MFSL's half-speed technique, the balance between voice and strings is well-nigh perfect. *DO*



## Utopia III



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Diablo review, Hifi+ magazine

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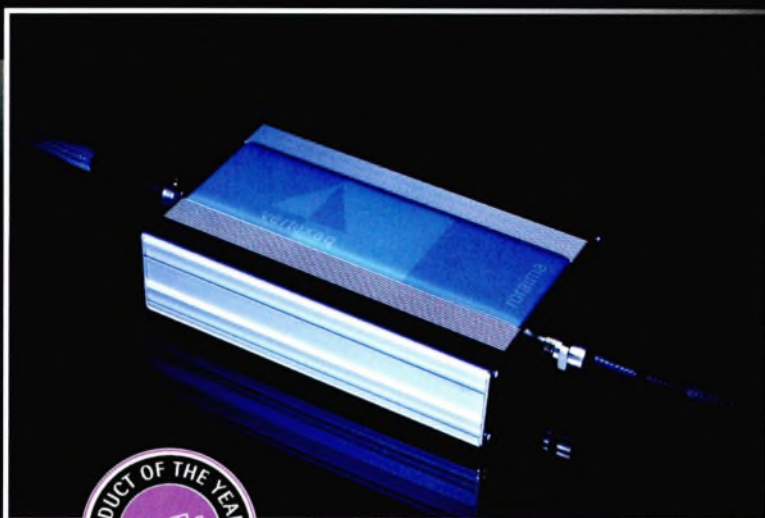
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*"I'm impressed by the way Vertex AQ adopts a holistic system-orientated approach, underpinned by a consistency of philosophy and methodology. But the bottom line is that this stuff really works."*

Paul Messenger, HiFi+ issue 29

*"Once the Vertex AQ kit is in place, there's no going back, which means in some respects it is as fundamental to the sound of the system as the system itself. Oh my!"*

Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi+ issue 48

*"The Vertex components are far from cheap but in purely performance terms they represent a bargain, both as upgrades and in releasing the performance potential in the equipment you have already paid for. At no point in the (review) process did the cost of the upgrade seem expensive given the musical results."*

Roy Gregory, HiFi+ issue 54

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# Choice mail

The pick of this month's best letters

Write to: Letters, Hi-Fi Choice, Future Publishing Ltd, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. Or email your letters to [jason.kennedy@futurenet.com](mailto:jason.kennedy@futurenet.com)

## The way forward?

Interesting to see that PS Audio is making a CD player that rips the contents of each disc to a hard drive prior to playback (CES Show Report, HFC 317). Even more interesting to hear that it can do this with the hi-res WAV files on a Reference Records HRx disc, which are mentioned later on in the same issue. Those files are designed to be played back from an 'audiophile' PC, but putting one of those together does not seem that straightforward. As far as I know, the PS Audio PerfectWave is the only hi-fi oriented product that will rip big WAV files which

makes it a tempting proposition even at the high asking price of £4,000.

Computer audio buffs clearly think that you can produce equally good results for a tenth of the price, but one wonders whether there's something that they are not telling us or that the systems they are listening through aren't giving them the big picture. Sure, you can get pretty good sound with a decent soundcard on an average computer, but the PC itself is usually too noisy to have in the same room as a system. But it's encouraging to read that the PC has the potential to be a high-fidelity source if you throw enough money at it. This

**"...the PC is too noisy to have in the same room as a system."**

may not be good news for CD player makers, but it means that components further along the chain such as DACs, amps and speakers will remain in demand from those wishing to hear what can be done with bit rates above 192kbps.

**Barry Tremaine** via email

Below: PS Audio's PerfectWave



**HFC** The PS Audio PerfectWave is indeed a fascinating, if expensive proposition. Hopefully, this technology will trickle down into more affordable products in the not too distant future. It's not the sort of thing that's likely to sway the computer audio enthusiasts from their course, but it could open up the high-end to high-resolution downloads which, so far, remain difficult to take full advantage of.

## Swedish guru

The second appearance in *Hi-Fi Choice* of the Guru QM10 standmount speaker in recent months, this time in the *Ultimate Group* ▶

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### Mr. FAST

Please let's see more tests in it (*Hi-Fi Choice*) plus 20 more pages in it, not 180 pages, 200 pages or more. Plus lots more test reports (and) less ads. Lots of your (Future Publishing) magazines *T3*, *Home Cinema Choice*, *What Satellite*, *What Plasma & LCD TV* all need revamping. Far too many ads in lots more tests in now, you will sell lot more mags. *Home Cinema Choice*: tons of ads very little tests. All mags need revamping now at high prices. Also let's see packs of three magazines in WH Smith's at a low prices, like *Hi-Fi Choice*, *Home Cinema Choice*,

*What Plasma & LCD*, even last months copies. Thanks.

(name unclear and no address supplied)

**HFC** Thanks for your letter mystery writer, it has been a while. Over the years your comments have been much appreciated and I think our publisher would wholeheartedly agree with some of the points you sort-of make. Especially selling more copies if *HFC* had more pages. We'd very much like to give you your Letter of the month prize (see opposite) but you've omitted your name and address. Do get in touch (again)!

**WIN!**  
**LOUDSPEAKERS:**  
**A VISUAL**  
**HISTORY**  
**A1 POSTER**



Letter of the month winners will receive a limited edition (100) A1 loudspeaker history print, by a former *HFC* staffer. With photographic images of products from 1874 to the present day, this is one audiophile collectible you can't afford to miss. So drop us a line now: [jason.kennedy@futurenet.com](mailto:jason.kennedy@futurenet.com)

Test (HFC 317), where it came out with a Best Buy badge makes me wonder about the difference in approach between this company and most other speaker brands. Of all the speakers in the group, the Guru has the smallest drive units and the most unusual shape and yet, if Paul Messenger is to be believed, it is one of the most "musically engrossing" models of the lot. He obviously preferred the thrill power of the Triangle and the consistency of the Spendor, but he's always had a thing about Spendors.

It's hard to see what it is about the Guru that makes it so entertaining, but I guess that like books you cannot assess hi-fi components on their looks alone, although such things do seem to sway some reviewers.

**Brian Gorland** via email

**HFC** You're not wrong. What a loudspeaker looks like is no real indication as to what it sounds like. In fact, looks can give you a completely false impression of a speaker's likely sound, a fact that gives small speakers a psychological advantage. They look small, so you are impressed when they create a big sound – a situation that has sold an awful lot of Bose Acoustimass systems over the years. This is why we prefer to blind test loudspeakers, this way the listener's opinion is not swayed by expectations good or bad.

### Lucky man

Just writing to say a sincere thank you for the terrific PMC FB1i loudspeakers that I won in your January issue (HFC 315).

## "...mags like *T3* and *Stuff* claim to review hi-fi, but appear to know nothing about the subject."

We collected them from Adventures in Hi-Fi in Chester on Saturday. I have to say that Rob was a real gent, we got chatting for quite some time over our musical tastes; he had trouble getting shot of us in the end. The FB1i speakers need a bit of driving, he gave us a quick listen to the Naim XS and Linn Majik-I amps he had in store. I followed this up yesterday with a longer listening session at Moorgate Acoustics in Sheffield, which is closer to me.

Anyway, it's all been exciting stuff. If the minimum running-in time is 15 hours, then between Saturday evening and bedtime on Sunday that was easily accomplished. Will now try to readjust to some normality – whilst ruminating on the amp upgrade – so it's off to Manchester today for some record shop rummaging.

**David** via email

**HFC** We're glad that you are thrilled by your win David, you did indeed drop lucky there. While the first fifteen hours lets the speaker bed in a bit, you will find that the FB1i will continue to improve over several months, unless you play it at punishing levels 24/7, in which case it will get there a bit quicker.

They do like a bit of power as you have ascertained and you could do worse than try the **Bryston amplification** that PMC distributes in the UK.

### Gadget shmadget

What is it with these gadget mags like *T3* and *Stuff*? – they claim to review hi-fi, but appear to know nothing about the subject. Their assessments seems to be entirely based on what a component looks like and which features it has; I can figure that out for myself. I don't expect them to make definitive statements on the best CD player at a £1,000, but you'd have thought that they could give some idea of the character and balance of components. In future I will stick to the experts at *Hi-Fi Choice*, they may not be so young and pretty, but they know what sounds good.

**Terry Eamons** via email

**HFC** While we appreciate your enthusiasm for our thoroughness, it's a little unfair to criticise gadget mags for a lack of expertise in our field. They are essentially there to highlight the latest shiny gadget and while they do run reviews of hi-fi kit their grasp of the subject is never going to be as good as that of an enthusiast like yourself, let alone professional hi-fi reviewers.

### Collection connection

I occasionally come across references to *Hi-Fi Choice's The Collection* in your pages, but haven't actually seen a magazine of this title. Is this something that you produced in the distant past, but is now no more or did I miss it on the news stand? I can't see it on your back issues page.

**Trevor Jenkins** via email

**HFC** *The Collection* is our annual round-up of all things high-end, the place where we take the opportunity to check out just how good megabucks hi-fi is. It contains 148 pages of in-depth tests and sumptuous photography of some truly spectacular kit, including the likes of Classé, Esoteric, Gamut, Krell, Marantz, Moon, Naim, Quad, SME and Wharfedale. It's a must-have for anyone who is a connoisseur of the audiophile tradition. *The Collection* was published in September 2008, and if you missed it in the shops then you may be able to find a copy by logging on to [www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk](http://www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk). But please be aware that stocks are very limited.

Below: Guru QM10 loudspeaker





# HØRNING

by Tommy Hørning



## Ending the endless search...

**Discerning music lovers and critical reviewers the world over have praised the uniquely natural, effortless and tangible musical illusion created by Hørning speakers with just a few watts of amplifier power.**

High efficiency is a major priority in a **Hørning** loudspeaker, for it allows us to fully exploit the superior sound quality of today's low-powered, single-ended valve amplification.

They are three-way but musically coherent, true full-range emotional communicators. The Aristoteles uses two pairs, the Eufrodite four pairs, of isobarically loaded 8" woofers per cabinet for a fast, tight bass. Definitely no need for subwoofers.

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Tommy Hørning with his world patented H.D.A.Q.C.S. (**Hørning Double Asymmetric Quarter Wave Cabinet enclosure System**), where every driver has its own, tailor-made, rear-loading chamber that ultimately feeds in to a shared hyperbolic horn output with port, has rewritten the rules. Unnatural colourations of any description become a thing of the past...He also believes in stiff drivers with big magnets and short throws. In other words, speed. With speed comes transparency and immediacy. Any type of music is reproduced faithfully at lower or higher volumes with both micro and macro dynamic contrasts intact. And all this comes with no drawbacks or penalties whatsoever.

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Luxman M-800A power amplifier  
Constantine Soo, Dagogo Review, 2008

**LUXMAN**



*"Usher's Dancer CP-8571 is a wonderfully capable speaker... top-tier performance at not too-outlandish a price."*

Chris Martens, The Absolute Sound Magazine

**USHER**



*"... together, the three pieces demonstrate finesse and delicacy on a par with some of my favourite valve amps..."*

Ken Kessler, HiFi News, February 09  
Highly Commended Award

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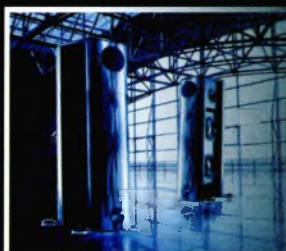
*"The Rienzi is like a chameleon; it works great with anything and blends smoothly into any system."*

The Rienzi in Tone Audio  
2008 - Review by Jeff Dorgay



1) Voted Power Amp of the Year - The Absolute Sound, USA  
2) Grand Prix 2007 (equivalent to Power Amp of the Year) for Reference 9 V2 - HiFi, Japan

**NUFORCE**



In June 2008, Stereoplay magazine carried out an extensive group test of 10 loudspeaker manufacturers including Focal, Kef, Jamo and T+A. agreed the clear winner was Audio Physic.

**[audio physic]**



*"If I were in the market for an integrated amplifier at or near the V-10's asking price, there would be nothing else on the shortlist."*

Ken Kessler, HiFi News.

**T+A**



*"The fantastic Argon2 Anniversary speakers from Amphion get the award of 'Best Buy' from me."*

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



## EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

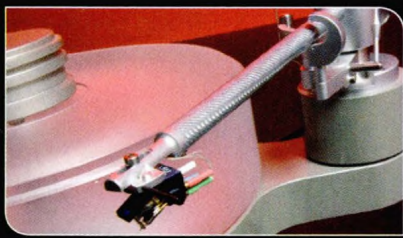
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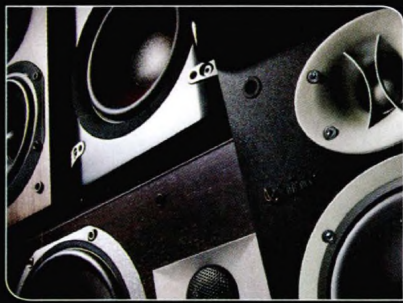


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### OUR RATINGS EXPLAINED

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

Our overall conclusion

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

*Jason Kennedy*

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND</b>	PRO Good build and open, lively sound from a value DAC with plenty of inputs. Transport is also great value for money.
<b>FEATURES</b>	CON Good DAC doesn't engage as well as the transport with loss of weight and power through the bass, unless you prize the quality. Cables cost extra and competition from single-chassis designs won't help.
<b>BUILD</b>	
<b>VALUE</b>	
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	Advance Acoustic is being very ambitious producing a two-box player of this build quality and price. Something just has to give and it is the DAC, which can't do justice to the transport's efforts.

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE** ★★★★★

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 four stars may qualify for an HFC Award Badge

### OUR AWARD BADGES EXPLAINED

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

HI-FI CHOICE  
magazine



# Egg-clipse

*Time Domain accuracy is the obsession behind this stylish speaker*

**PRODUCT** Eclipse TD510

**TYPE** Loudspeaker (floorstander with D6 stand)

**PRICE** £1,800 per pair

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 24x36x34.5cm  
 Ⓞ Weight: 9.3kg Ⓞ Drivers: 100mm solitary wide-bandwidth unit Ⓞ Sensitivity: 83dB Ⓞ Impedance: 6 ohms Ⓞ Hidden integral rear ports Ⓞ Moulded egg-shaped enclosure Ⓞ Colours: black, white or silver

**CONTACT** ☎ 020 7328 4499 # www.eclipse-td.com

Japanese brand names might still be found on many of the electronics components on display in hi-fi shops, but Japanese speaker brands are virtually unknown over here, which is just one factor that makes the Eclipse models, from a subsidiary of a large industrial corporation called Fujitsu-Ten, very unusual indeed.

The Eclipse speaker company has been around for a few years now – we reviewed the £4,000 TD712z in 2005 – while the TD510/D6 would seem to be an attempt to retain many of the TD712z's best qualities in a much less costly package. Certainly it looks very similar to its senior brother and, with its small solitary full-range driver and 'dinosaur egg' type enclosure, entirely different from everything else on the market.

Somewhat ironically, just as we get to review this TD510 'floor' variation, Eclipse has announced a new £5,000 per pair TD712z MK2 replacement for the original TD712z, with extra driver refinements and a rather larger 'egg'. However, the TD510, first introduced late in 2005 primarily as a desktop monitor with a small integrated platform stand, continues much as before, but now comes complete with the much taller D6 stand, effectively becoming a floorstander at a combined price of £1,800 per pair.

The initials TD stand for Time Domain and provide the clue that the prime purpose of this design is to create a speaker that accurately reproduces the timing information that many would argue is the very essence of musical performance. To this end it uses a solitary 'full-range' drive unit (the term is used advisedly), covering the whole audio band with just a single voice coil and no intervening network components. It pretty

much stands to reason that if the whole of the audio signal is fed to a single, solitary voice-coil, most of the timing, at least, will necessarily be spot on. (The extra bass output via the port will undergo a modest phase

nearly 13kg. It has a solitary streamlined central pillar and a flat, but thick and heavy base with a large footprint founded on five rather blunt spikes. The foolproof way of achieving even floor contact is a tripod, so

**“The internal shape disperses reflections and avoids standing waves. The outside shape somewhat resembles a human head.”**

shift.) Regular speakers with more than one drive unit and phase-shifting crossover networks rarely achieve such tight timing.

To operate high into the treble, the solitary drive unit must necessarily have a small, light diaphragm – it's actually woven glassfibre, just 70mm in diameter and has undergone a process of steady development and refinement. However, even with the help of the rearward-firing port, the small driver means that the bass output is bound to be rather limited. At the same time, physics dictates that the top end will tend to 'beam' quite strongly once the wavelength being reproduced is less than the cone diameter, so best results are likely to be found when listening fairly close to the main forward axis.

One thing's pretty certain: the enclosure is unlikely to make any significant contribution to the overall sound, which has got to be a major plus. Reminding us of the midrange 'head' used by Bower & Wilkins in its 800-series, the Eclipse enclosure is an egg-shaped two-piece casting, high pressure injection moulded in a mineral loaded, fibre-reinforced resin, akin to 'artificial marble'. The internal shape disperses reflections and avoids standing waves. The outside shape somewhat resembles a human head, which should assist speech reproduction.

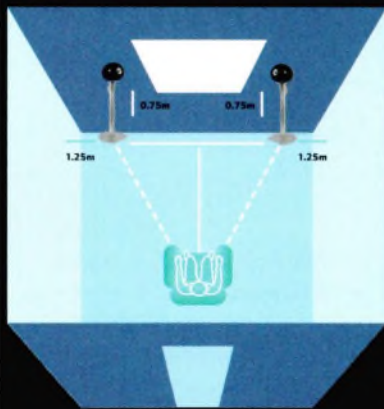
Furthermore, the 'egg' is effectively decoupled mechanically from the vibrations generated by the drive unit and the drive unit itself is mass and, ultimately, stiffness-loaded, via a bracket down through the stand.

The D6 itself is a pretty substantial affair, combining steel and aluminium and weighing

levelling five spikes accurately and evenly was potentially daunting, but in practice proved surprisingly easy, though the lock-nut arrangement might have been improved. Although the height of the stand (70cm) ☐



## SET-UP



### POSITIONING

This is a tricky one. To achieve the optimum positioning of a pair of speakers, one must try and balance a number of factors, some of which may be mutually exclusive. That's particularly true for systems using single full-range drivers, which by their very nature have difficulties as you approach the top end of the audio band and usually have restricted bass weight too.

With most conventional speakers it's usually possible to manipulate positioning to some degree in order to achieve the most neutral perceived tonal balance, but that didn't seem to be the case with the TD510. In free space there's an obvious lack of upper bass warmth and richness, but adding extra bass by close-to-wall siting only served to reduce the splendid coherence and holographic imaging, as well as making the mild lack of top end 'air' more obvious. On balance, best results were obtained by keeping the TD510s well clear of walls and pointed directly towards the listener.

### SYSTEM MATCHING

Power handling is quoted at just 20-40 watts, so some care needs to be exercised with the volume control. The only sensitivity details refer to a relatively low efficiency of 83dB alongside a "perceived in-room efficiency around 87.5dB".

Certainly the broad midband only registers around 83dB under our far-field in-room regime, but the bass peak and especially the upper-mid prominence are up around 88dB.

To put a single figure on it, around 85dB seems appropriate, which is still below average, but not at all bad considering the tiny drive unit and also the very easy amplifier load that is not only exceptionally simple, but also stays comfortably above six ohms.



and head is about the right height to direct the driver axis towards normally seated listeners, the vertical angle at the head can be adjusted via a large bolt.

Anticipating – not without reason – that the TD510 was likely to have limited bass output, we suggested that Eclipse might like to lend us its highly regarded TD725sw subwoofer, to try alongside the TD510s. The TD725sw is a very impressive example of a high-performance, if costly subwoofer. It might be about as ugly as the 'eggs' are

attractive, but it's also one of the best subwoofers around, combining twin reaction-force-cancelling, mechanically decoupled 250mm drivers, with a 500-watt digital amplifier, to deliver plenty of fast, deep bass. However, as it turned out it didn't match up to the TD510s very well in practice for a couple of reasons, more of which later.

### SOUND QUALITY

It's no great surprise to find considerable similarities between this TD510 and the TD712z that we tried rather more than three years ago. Comparing the far-field in-room averaged responses, this less costly variation on the Eclipse theme shows significantly more relative treble output than the earlier model above 7kHz, but is rather less well balanced at the low frequency end of the spectrum and less smooth through the upper midband too.

In fact, it's possible to describe the overall in-room power response as 40Hz-16kHz +/-6dB, which sounds impressive enough and suggests a degree of neutrality. However, this basic statistic does tend to supply a rather optimistic view, whereas the variations within those limits are bound to introduce some character and coloration.

The real problem with the TD510 is that there's too much output at 1-2kHz, a zone where human hearing is at its most sensitive. The peak here is something like 4dB proud of its immediate surroundings, and more like 6dB above the overall average.



Another obvious (+7dB) peak is seen at 52Hz, this time associated with the port, which is tuned to that frequency and further exaggerated by its coincidence with a major room mode. It was this peak that caused problems achieving good integration with the Eclipse subwoofer.

The uneven frequency balance inevitably distorts the tonal balance, so that neutrality is not one of its accomplishments. Happily there's much more to this speaker than basic neutrality and, in several other respects, it turns out to be quite a star.

The combination of magnificent time coherence and the effective elimination of enclosure distortions results in its own impressive believability and realism. Voice band coherence is unequalled, with real and seductive tangibility, though there is a touch of cupped-hands-type 'quack' and also some loss of airiness.

There's no trace of boxiness here, so the stereo imaging is particularly impressive – quite stunning in fact, in the way the tightly focused soundstage simply hangs in the air. Holographic is a term that tends to crop up much too often in the hi-fi press, but on this occasion it seems totally appropriate to the 3-D imaging this speaker pair can supply.

The sound as a whole is quite clean, tidy and sweet and the amount of bass thump available, even with the speakers

### SINGLE DRIVERS

The TD part of this speaker's identification stands for Time Domain, pointing out that this model's prime purpose is to maintain accurate timing, something which is guaranteed, at least to some extent, by using a single voice-coil and drive unit to cover the whole audio band.

It's an approach that many others have tried before – Jordan, Bandor, Lowther and Rehdeko all immediately spring to mind – so Eclipse is by no means the first to attempt the trick. Experience suggests some compromises are bound to be involved, but there's no denying Eclipse has approached the task with very serious intent, notably creative enclosure engineering and not a little success.

However, there's no way of bucking the laws of Physics and, although good time-coherence is certainly largely achieved, the overall tonal balance is far from flat and neutral. Inevitably, perhaps, the midband dominates and there's some lack of top end transparency and bottom end warmth.



**“There is no trace of boxiness here, so the stereo imaging is particularly impressive – quite stunning, in fact.”**

well out from the wall, came as something of a surprise and a very pleasant one at that. However, although that upper mid exaggeration did project vocal detail very effectively, ensuring superior intelligibility even at very low levels, it also meant that the sound could become rather unforgiving and fierce if the volume is turned up high.

Close-to-wall siting did help provide some extra mid-bass 'fill' and introducing the subwoofer certainly added as much extra weight and scale as you could desire. However, neither of these strategies proved wholly satisfactory. Wall reinforcement only served to dilute the very special imaging qualities and overall coherence of these speakers, while boosting the bottom end by either means tended to make the lack of top end airiness that much more obvious. Frankly, in this case

it seemed best to mount the TD510 well clear of walls and simply put up with their tonal balance anomalies. **HFC**

*Paul Messenger*

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	<b>PRO</b> Wonderful coherence with voices in particular, ensuring superior intelligibility even at very low listening levels and a real sense of realism and tangibility.
<b>EASE OF DRIVE</b> ★★★★★	<b>CON</b> Tonal balance anomalies include a too-strong upper midband and lack of top end 'air'. Can sound rather fierce if volume is turned up.
<b>BUILD</b> ★★★★★	
<b>VALUE</b> ★★★★★	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> Striking looking speakers are beautifully made. Sonically, a bit of a mixed bag: exceptional voice band coherence and superb stereo imaging must be set against tonal balance anomalies that include upper mid forwardness and some lack of 'air'.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE</b> ★★★★★	
URL <a href="http://www.techradar.com/96921">www.techradar.com/96921</a>	

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# Antipodean amp

Entry-level Plinius amplifier brings a touch of thunder from down under

**PRODUCT** Plinius 9100

**TYPE** Integrated amplifier

**PRICE** £2,475

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 45.4x10.5x 40cm

⊖ Weight: 10kg ⊖ Inputs: 4x line, 2x tape ⊖ Power output: 120 watts (8 Ohms) ⊖ Outputs: preamp

**CONTACT** ☎ 01452 858269 🌐 www.pliniusaudio.com

**P**linius is a name you may have heard about, but whose kit you may not have experienced directly. The brand was established in the 1980s in New Zealand, and to this day it remains one of NZ's best kept secrets. Take, for example, the 9100. It's an integrated amplifier with a moderate 120-watt output rating, but what you probably don't know is that it is also the entry-level model in an extensive range of two-channel and multichannel power amplifiers, integrations and preamps, some with switchable Class A and Class AB operation. In fact, the circuit of the 9100 is a scaled down version of the one in the company's high-end Odeon power amplifier. There are also other products, notably an appropriately exotic CD player called the CD-101.

On paper, at least, the 9100 follows a path familiar to other high-end producers. There are few frills, although it is equipped with four line inputs and two tape circuits (which can double as line inputs if needed), with a preamp output and bi-wirable sets of solid 4mm binding posts. Mains power is supplied to an IEC input and an earth lift switch is available on the back panel which may well be appreciated by adding a phono step up, but this was not required for this test. The fuses are also externally accessible, along with a mains on/off rocker switch.

The J-FET inputs all offer a 47kOhm input impedance, which will make system matching easier than the usual amplifier with lower input impedance values. The inputs are tailored to be -3dB at 5Hz and 70kHz, so

**“The amplifier doesn't run excessively hot and it's quiet under normal use, this is with the volume set high and no input.”**

the same comment applies here too. Power output is 120 watts into 8 Ohms, 20Hz – 20kHz at <0.2 per cent THD. There are no traps here for the unwary. Our test sample came without a remote control, but we understand that a large brick-like remote is available to control the source input selection and the volume level. Front panel controls are limited to volume, plus record and source selectors with clear markings in each case and internal LED displays.

The most unusual feature of the 9100 is the rounded exterior front panel, which means no sharp edges and an aesthetic character that mirrors the Classé range, albeit in a more elegant, slimline form. It's all beautifully executed from the front, but if any criticism is to be levelled then it's in the use of protruding screws on the top, which are all too clearly visible. Full marks to the rear side extensions, which include small grab handles.

There is little else you need to know. The amplifier doesn't run excessively hot and it's quiet (hum and noise free) under normal use, that is with the volume set high and no input. Just be sure to warm the amplifier for about an hour at the start of a listening session.

For those with greater ambitions than the 9100 will satisfy, take a look at the visually almost identical 9200, which starts out with the same basic configuration, but which adds a balanced input, a processor loop so that it

can cooperate with a multichannel processor or amplifier's volume control and a phono input intended for MM and MC cartridges. Power output is also higher, at a rated 200 watts per channel.

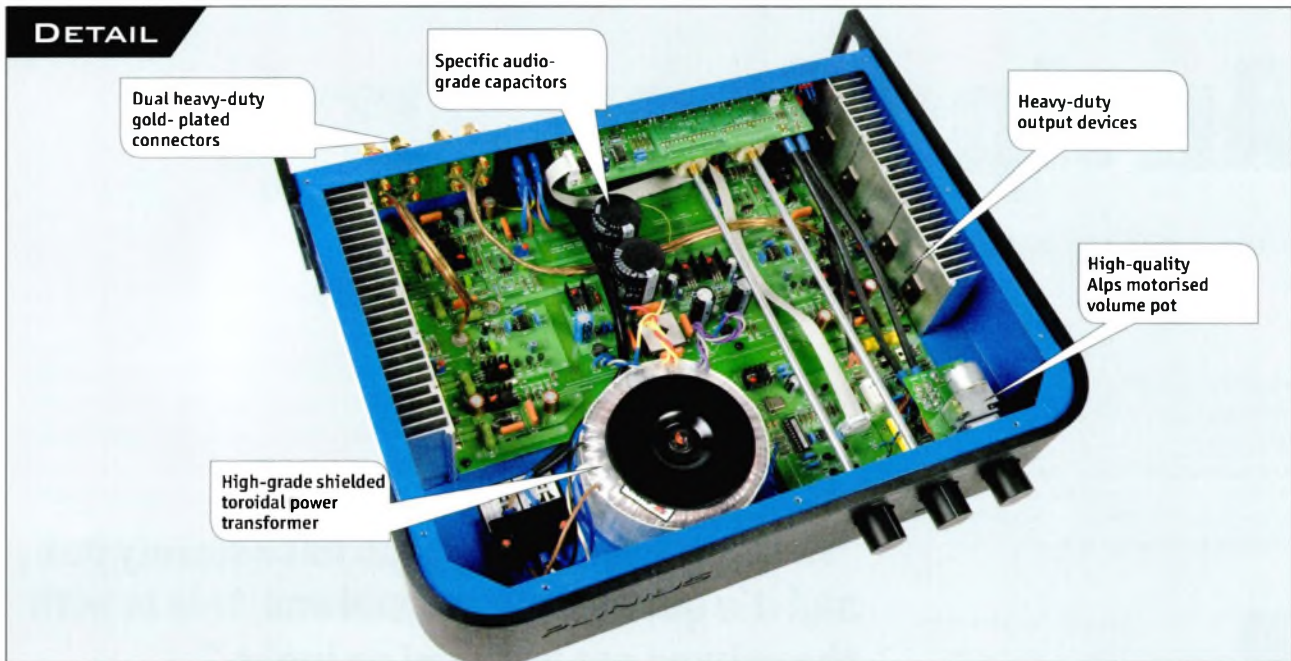
## SOUND QUALITY

Amplifiers come in various guises. Some are transparently neutral, or strive to be. Others have a more deliberate character and this is true of the Plinius 9100.

There is something of a valve-like character to the 9100. OK, perhaps it would be an oversimplification to say that this amplifier has the qualities of a valve amplifier, as there are very few worthwhile designs of that type anywhere near this price and none at all in this price category with the real world power output that this amplifier brings to bear. But, it is hard to gainsay the idea that there really is more than a hint of valves here.

The 9100 is at its best in the middle registers. On a bad day, the Plinius can sound a little bloated at the low frequency extreme, though you can counter this with careful positioning and speaker cables that don't exaggerate the problem – Nordost Valhalla fits the bill extremely well here, not ▶





because it has lean balance, though this is a common accusation, but because it is so well-controlled throughout the audio band. The treble extreme, by contrast, is rather sweet (valve-like) and finely detailed without being particularly demonstrative. If anything, the sound is a little understated in this region. Where the Plinius excels, as noted above, is in the middle registers. This is a sophisticated, expressive sounding amplifier, which invests music with a feeling of solidity and architecture and this definitely is a valve-like attribute, though it is achieved here with little or none of the traditional losses of dynamics and drive.

If anything, it is just the opposite. It's a very well-controlled, but unusually muscular amplifier. Rock material has real strength and solidity: Dire Straits' *Calling Elvis*, for example, comes up smelling of roses, with a real underpinning pulse, where in some systems it can sound a little flabby. And ditto Ry Cooder's wonderfully quirky *3 cool cats* lyrics from *Chavez Ravine*. Similarly, Diana Krall's classic *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* and Marianne Faithful's whisky-flavoured *Alabama Song* from *20th Century Blues* both come across with a touch of electricity, along with the indefinable magic that

## “The treble extreme is rather sweet (valve-like) and finely detailed without being particularly demonstrative.”

through other amplifiers can fade with repeated listening. This remains the case, even with the volume control turned to levels where other similarly rated amplifiers are beginning to sound ill-at-ease.

There is no reason to think that power output is necessarily greater than other similarly rated amplifiers, but the 9100's 120 watts is arguably more useable than most, no matter (within reason) the starting volume level setting.

There were similar results with other music genres, too, not least classical, which is where we tend to start in some reviews. It does a great job with vocal material of all kinds, from Strauss *Four Last Songs* to the equally sprightly Cecilia Bartoli singing Mozart's *Im Uomini, In Solidati* from *Così fan Tutte* (you'll recognise it when you hear it). We were equally impressed with instrumental and full-blooded orchestral material, or nearly as impressed. There is something about the Plinius that empathises particularly well with the human voice.

There are any number of good amplifiers in the same price territory as this one and, to an extent, choosing from among them is a matter of taste as much as anything more objective. But we really like the 9100, which is supremely well-balanced and whose midband, in particular, sings like a thoroughbred. We are now more than a little curious to find out what the senior version, the 9200, can bring to the party. But as it stands, the 9100 is a fine, expressive amplifier with a more than a useful ability to play loud and one which works unusually well with the human voice. **HFC**

Alvin Gold



VERDICT	
<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	<b>PRO</b> Powerful and refined amplifier, that works with most types of music, though voice reproduction appears to be particularly good; also very well built and finished.
<b>FEATURES</b> ★★★★★	<b>CON</b> Protruding case screws are the only minor visual blemish, some occasional signs of bloatedness in extreme bass.
<b>BUILD</b> ★★★★★	
<b>VALUE</b> ★★★★★	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> True audiophile integrated amplifier, which does everything well. There's more than adequate power and finesse and it drives a wide range of speakers with supreme confidence and authority.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE</b> <b>OVERALL SCORE</b> ★★★★★	
URL <a href="http://www.techradar.com/560474">www.techradar.com/560474</a>	



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# Tuned in

Arcam's new FMJ DAB/FM tuner has the added bonus of iPod connectivity

<b>PRODUCT</b> Arcam FMJ T32
<b>TYPE</b> DAB/FM tuner
<b>PRICE</b> £550
<b>KEY FEATURES</b> Size (WxHxD): 43x33x29cm Ⓞ Weight: 5.3kg Ⓞ Outputs: 2x RCA phono Ⓞ Inputs: Infra red control, RS232 r/Dock/rLead for iPod, 1x RCA Ⓞ Wolfson 8740 DAC Ⓞ iPod connectivity
<b>CONTACT</b> ☎ 01223 203200 # www.arcam.co.uk

**A**rcam has a strong history in tuners, both analogue (FM/AM) and digital. So it's no surprise to hear of a new addition to the range, but what's interesting about the T32 is that it features iPod integration, via Arcam's rDock or rLead.

Isn't this an odd thing to build into a tuner, you might ask? But, then again, why not? It's easy enough to build iPod connectivity into anything with some control logic in it, which these days means practically anything.

When we asked Arcam why the company chose a tuner to host this function, the answer was simple: a two-line text display is needed to work an iPod efficiently – ditto for a tuner. Basically, says Arcam, this was the simplest way to build an iPod interface into a simple stereo hi-fi. You do need to add an 'rLead' (£60) or an 'rDock' (£140) though.

You'll need the supplied CD90 universal remote control to get sense out of an iPod and it also helps with radio functions. Basic tuning is arguably easier from the front panel, though, using the 'analogue-like' tuning knob. Manual tuning is brisk and efficient, while presets (100 of them) work in the usual way. DAB tuning, as ever, is a matter of scanning for stations just once, then selecting them by name. In all modes functions are basic but sufficient: the one we missed is any way of fast-forwarding with a track on the iPod.

While many current DAB/FM tuners use a single module for both bands, Arcam has

gone the whole way and fitted completely separate circuits for both. The FM section is not, as is frequent practice, a complete bought-in module, but Arcam's own design based on a small pre-assembled first stage

**“The FM section is not, as is frequent practice, a complete bought-in module, but Arcam's own design.”**

and followed by high-performance decoding chips, including RDS. Audio stuff is handled by high-grade op-amps, while a very good quality DAC converts DAB to analogue. With an eye to international appeal, inputs include Sirius radio (available in the USA). But, there's no digital output.

### SOUND QUALITY

There's no denying that this is one of the best new FM tuners we've heard in a while. It may not have high-end pretensions and it would indeed be seen off by a Magnum Dynalab or something of that ilk, but such models are rare and for a modest sum of money we can't think off-hand of any current tuner that will outclass it for its combination of clarity, natural tonality and freedom from obvious reception nasties. That last point requires some slight clarification, for this is after all not a 'DX' (distant reception) model and needs a reasonable amount of signal to work properly, but given that it is admirably immune to breakup or breakthrough, due to unwanted station frequency being too close to the one tuned in.

We even had fair results in inner London with the supplied wire antenna, but for most listening preferred a rooftop one. Thus equipped, the T32 produced a lively,

energetic sound with impressive discrimination between instruments and particularly fine bass, firm and solid with clean attack and unambiguous pitch. The treble is nearly as good: there's a little more

constriction than we've heard from some high-end tuners, but once again we'd have to say that performance here is about as good as it gets from any sub-£1,000 tuner. Stereo imaging is good with fair depth – a very tricky aspect of FM to get just right.

DAB sound is less clearly differentiated from the competition: it's good, but in our experience if a DAB tuner works basically correctly (and most of them do) the differences in sound from one model to another are smaller than between examples of almost any other item of audio kit. The same is largely true for iPod docks, though differences can be clearer with uncompressed audio. With an rDock, we had some very good results from the T32. FM, though, is the tough test and we're pleased to say the T32 passes it with flying colours. **HFC**

Richard Black



<b>VERDICT</b>	
<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	<b>PRO</b> Very good sound on FM, especially the confident bass and clear, though never oppressive, detail. Good DAB and iPod performance are the icing on the cake.
<b>FEATURES</b> ★★★★★	
<b>BUILD</b> ★★★★☆	<b>CON</b> It seems churlish to mention that we've heard better treble from FM tuners, if only more expensive ones. Some minor ergonomic limitations.
<b>VALUE</b> ★★★★★	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> A highly cost-effective way of optimising the airwaves. Adding iPod functionality clearly makes sense and is very welcome, even if implementation is a little basic in the absence of video screen.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE</b> ★★★★★	
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**T+A**  
MUSIC PLAYER

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DISC MP  
A1 PH  
A2 TV  
A3 TUN  
REC  
MON MUTE / PHONES  
LOUDN PLAT  
BASS TIBBLE  
BALANCE

**T+A**  
POWER PLANT

# Sound solutions

An affordable, flexible server and integrated amplifier with audiophile appeal

**PRODUCT** T+A Music Player and Power Plant

**TYPE** Music server and integrated amplifier

**PRICE** £1,999 (Music Player) £1,499 (Power Plant)

**KEY FEATURES** (Music Player) Size (WxHxD): 4.4x1.2x3.9cm  
 ◉ Weight: 10kg ◉ Digital inputs: 2x SP/DIF  
 ◉ Digital outputs: 1x coaxial ◉ FM radio with RDS  
 ◉ Streaming clients: MP3, WMA, AAC, FLAC, OGG-Vorbis, WAV ◉ Web server remote PC with browser control, vTuner internet radio station database  
 (Power Plant) Size (WxHxD) 4.4x1.2x3.9cm  
 ◉ Weight: 13kg ◉ Rated power: 140 watts (8 Ohms)  
 ◉ Inputs: 5x line ◉ Outputs: preamp and headphones  
 ◉ RS232 control interface

**CONTACT** ☎ 01623 517000 🌐 www.koretrade.co.uk

As a product category, the music server is definitely on the ascendant, but as a group, they tend to under perform musically, for a variety of reasons. Internally, they look like computers, which is not always a good thing where audio sound quality is a major issue. They're also inherently complex, and tend to be pricey. But there is hope...

On one level, the new server introduction from T+A elektroakustik (recently voted Manufacturer of the Year in Germany) looks like many others, in principle anyway, but there are important differences. Called Music Player and nestling amongst T+A's E Series line up, the unit is unusually flexible and very well-priced. It comes with the promise of better-than-usual sound quality, for reasons that will become clear later. It is partnered, for this review, with the Power Plant: T+A's matching Class D stereo power amplifier, which was reviewed

in full in HFC 303, except that some shortcomings have now been addressed.

But it's the Music Player that's of interest here and while it's not a computer, it does have the ability to talk to a computer

**“The Music Player will act as an internet radio when connected to a computer network, with data rates that extend to 320kbps...”**

network. The Music Player is an audio-first component, no matter how you look at it. On one level it is a processor, which will address an arbitrarily large library of music from a number of sources. These sources include compact disc, which it can play using an internal CD player and it also has an FM tuner with RDS and 60 presets. There is a possibility that DAB will eventually become available in the form of a bolt-in module as the DAB aerial input has already been installed. Your iPod can also be connected directly to the server, and controlled by it. Unfortunately, other compressed audio players like the Sony MP3 range are not handled because of the different control protocols involved.

But this is not all. The Music Player will act as an internet radio when connected to a computer network, with access to thousands of stations and with data rates that currently extend to 320kbps, which for many ears, will be pretty close to CD.

Finally, and this is absolutely central to the Music Player's role as a music server, it will also collaborate with your computer's disc burner to provide disc-ripping facilities and the music stored by the hard disc or discs

attached to the computer can be accessed by the Music Player.

Essentially then, the Music Server acts as just another network client with some unusual qualities that suit it to its role. First of all computer data storage is now very cheap, much cheaper than anything similar with an audio manufacturer's name on the bonnet. It's also much more flexible. Add extra storage, a RAID array, for example, (RAID is an acronym for Redundant Array of Inexpensive or, according to some, Independent, Discs) and/or any other backup software/hardware options you prefer to provide redundancy if a hard disc goes down. This way you'll have the basis for a fully customised server solution which can be readily upgraded or extended when the occasion demands.

The matching Power Plant is an integrated Class D stereo amplifier and is of wholly T+A design. Even the Class D circuitry was developed by T+A in-house, the only digital part being the PWM (Pulse Width Modulation) output stage. The preamp (with its attendant ALPs volume control) can be switched on or off independently of the power stages and is automatically disabled when connected to the Music Player. It lives in a box styled similarly to the server and on any rational assessment definitely qualifies as a purist audio component. Changes made since we originally looked at this amp are to output distortion residuals which are now more firmly biased into low (primarily second-order harmonics). 📺



# Q&A

We interviewed T+A's Director of Development, Lothar Wiemann about the music player.



**HFC: What is it that sets the Music Player apart from most other servers?**

**LW:** The Music Player Client has no internal data storage, apart from a few seconds for jitter reduction purposes. The music is stored externally, using the user's computer network and data storage, though it can also use USB hard discs or USB flash memory plugged in directly. Keeping music storage out of the main box is important, because optical and magnetic storage introduces a lot of electrical interference, which may be minimised with integral screening and other measures, but cannot be eliminated. Noise, jitter and the high current demands made by the laser tracking circuits all results in coupling into the analogue circuits.

**Are there other advantages to this topology?**

Delivering music through a network adds flexibility, as the data can be accessed remotely, wherever the computer network is accessible. Doing things this way also means we don't have to reinvent the wheel. Reliability of hard drives is not perfect, so improved fault recovery, by using RAID mirroring, for example, is a major benefit.

There are also some powerful software tools that we co-opt to improve performance. The Exact Audio copy software ([www.exactaudiocopy.de/](http://www.exactaudiocopy.de/)) we specify, for example, makes excellent 1:1 copies, even if the source media is corrupt or damaged, by using error correction and comparisons to data from other users stored on a central database – the Exact Audio website provides a good overview. Similarly, the internet radio software, called Vtuner ([www.vtuner.com](http://www.vtuner.com)), also has an online database that is uploaded to the Music Player every time it is used. These databases are uploaded completely transparently from the users point of view every time the functions are accessed.

**The technologies involved with the Music Player especially are evolving very quickly. So how do you protect against the obvious danger of obsolescence?**

We have instituted a programme of updates designed for exactly this purpose. In general, the updates can be downloaded free of charge and this will remain the case unless additional hardware is required, or any additional licensing costs are involved.



◀ The amplifier features five inputs with record and preamp outputs and has an optional MM/MC phono stage. Both components are exceptionally well built and internally well endowed, and they're both unusually smooth in operation.

## SOUND QUALITY

Unable to test the iPod's functionality with the Music Player for this review, we used a Sony MP3 player instead. As already stated above, it's not directly supported by the Music Player control system, but is compatible as an audio source via the USB 2.0 input and via this connection, it works extremely well.

More centrally to any rounded assessment of the server, CD ripping and internet radio are not directly dependent on the Music Player, they are clients that talk to the Music Player across a network and to a large extent are under the user's control using the client software. But it was clear from our experience with the test equipment that these elements are well designed, with key benefits over the common alternatives, for example in the area of jitter reduction using the online music database.

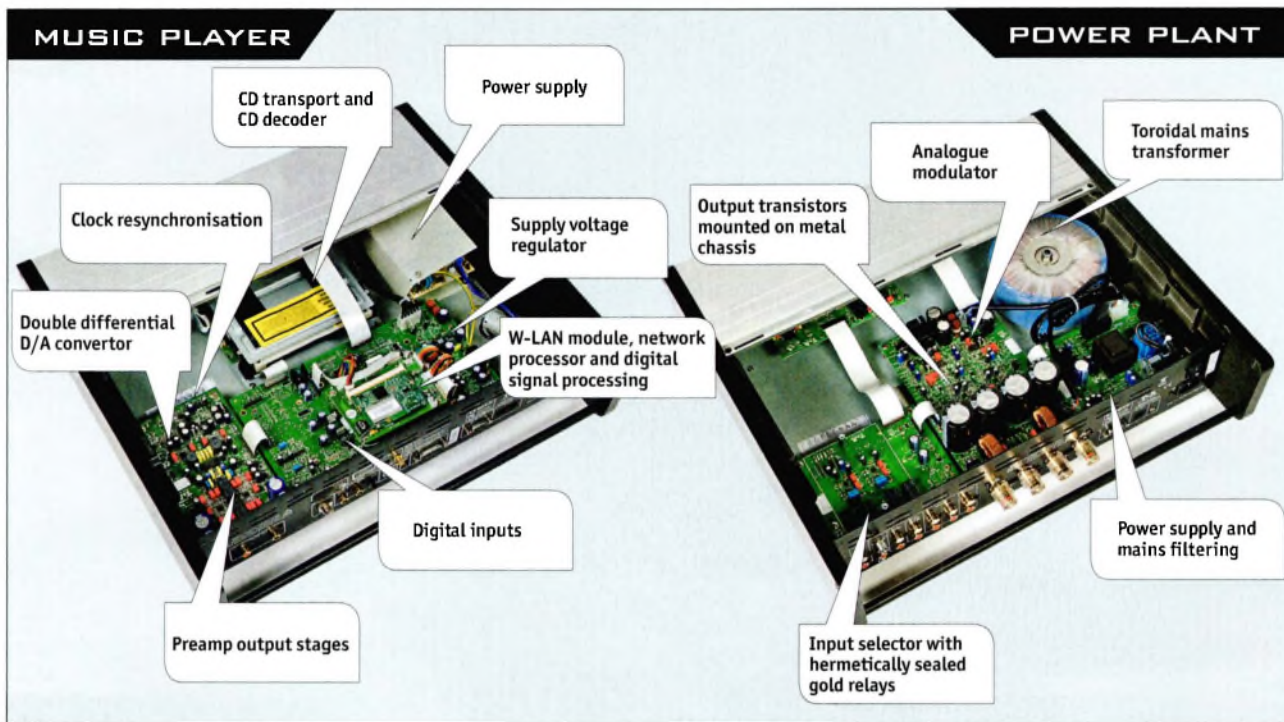
Once we'd acclimatised to the internet radio and the discs stored on the hard discs, they were fairly easy to access and use. But in the long term, the usability of the Music Player is compromised by the lack of a graphical interface, which is currently promised for the future. Many will not be completely satisfied by the ergonomics of the server until this add-on becomes available. But, within the

limits set by the front panel dot-matrix display and the simple control system, the designers have gone a great job. The supplied remote control gives fine grain access to the full feature set, but it is messily implemented and again highlights the need for a better solution.

As already noted, we've looked at the amplifier before, but it was obvious that the Power Plant has changed, and for the better. Initially, we were surprised by its palpably smoother and more expressive quality. It no longer sounds obviously digital or mechanical in origin, a charge that was easily levelled at the earlier version. It is now a more organic, fluid performer, that no longer sounds under stress through louder passages. In fact, it no longer sounds obviously like a digital amplifier, which is a valid criticism of the majority of Class D amplifiers. If anything the sound is slightly soft-edged, which is not only unexpected, but gives the amplifier a far more analogue-like feel. The power stages produce considerable heft and authority, without sounding either hard or aggressive and have a truly organic way of tracking recorded dynamics.

The internet radio is dependent on the data rate currently in use and, of course, you don't have control over this, but the better stations with higher data rates – 192kHz or better – worked better than we have heard internet radio perform in the past, but the reason appears to be better performance at the internet end of the hardware/software chain, rather than the Music Player itself.





The tools available for selecting and memorising stations are easy to access and do a good job. Lower data rate stations had a character that was very iPod-like, in other words scrawny and one-dimensional. The senior sources in the package, FM radio, the internal CD player and streaming from the users own discs, that have been ripped and stored on the users computer are the serious contenders here, of course. In fact, the internal CD player is extremely good and the

**“When you find it impossible to locate discs you want to access, a server-type solution is a natural way of resolving the problem.”**

FM tuner also performed well. The CD player’s character is dominated by the sound of the Power Plant, but happily the latter is fairly transparent. Used together the effect is bold and powerful, with just a hint of the softness identified earlier. The FM tuner is also a serious source, at least it is on BBC Radio 3 and 4, which these days are about the only stations that make a serious attempt at delivering good sound, one of course with music and the other with speech.

This is an intriguing combination. Either product can be used with alternative partners, of course, but they do seem to belong naturally together. The amplifier needs extra warming-up before it fully delivers, which is odd for an amplifier that runs so cool. At power up, the sound balance is a little cold, but within half an hour or so, the system sounds considerably more comfortable.

On balance, this is an excellent system which we regret passing back to the manufacturer. When you consistently find it almost impossible to locate discs you want to access, a server-type solution is a natural way of resolving the problem. In its favour the Music Player is extremely well priced, which makes it a particularly attractive option. But as it stands, the lack of a

graphical interface to help sort through a large disc collection would be a major limitation and, of course, the promised add-on would mean a much higher price, though it should still maintain a useful differential over the obvious competition. **HFC**

*Alvin Gold*

**HOW IT WORKS WITH YOUR COMPUTER**

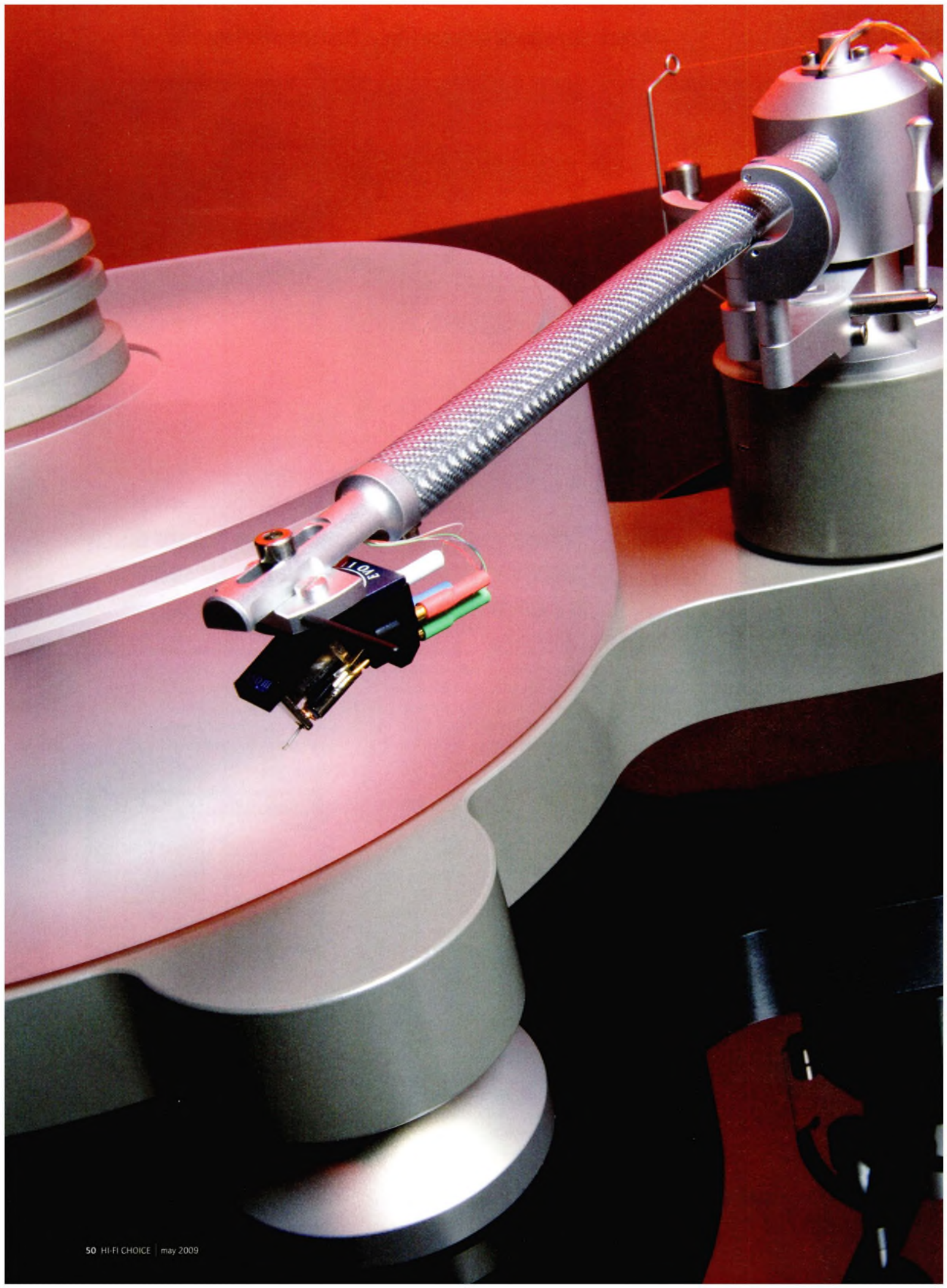
T+A claims to be the first audio company to use RS232 as an audio control system some years ago. To make this clear, the idea is to use your own data storage with a home computer. The Music Player then becomes just another device on your home network, a UPnP-AV server, which may be wired or wirelessly connected. The server looks for a wired connection at power up and in its absence it connects wirelessly. Add a terabyte or so of storage to your computer (large hard discs these days are eminently affordable) and a disc ripping programme, Exact Copy in this case, and you have a fully fledged audio server, with the Music Player acting as the front end interface, thanks to its native controls and text display. A better graphics interface unit is currently being designed and will be available at extra cost, but as it stands right now, an AMX or a Creston (or similar) controller can be connected via the RS-232 interface.

**VERDICT - MUSIC PLAYER**

<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★☆	<b>CONCLUSION</b> Excellent performance and real flexibility from a compact unit. Excellent internal CD player and FM tuner. Internet radio and CD-ripping software is well-chosen.
<b>FEATURES</b> ★★★★☆	
<b>BUILD</b> ★★★★☆	<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE</b> ★★★★★
<b>VALUE</b> ★★★★★	
URL <a href="http://www.techradar.com/560106">www.techradar.com/560106</a>	

**VERDICT - POWER PLANT**

<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★☆	<b>CONCLUSION</b> Reviewed previously, the current version sounds considerably better, with hardly a trace of the slightly mechanical quality of the original sample.
<b>FEATURES</b> ★★★★☆	
<b>BUILD</b> ★★★★★	<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE</b> ★★★★★
<b>VALUE</b> ★★★★★	
URL <a href="http://www.techradar.com/560106">www.techradar.com/560106</a>	



# Space bubble

*A turntable for the space age...*

**PRODUCT** Lumley Heliosphere

**TYPE** Turntable

**PRICE** £2,495 (arm and cartridge extra)

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 15x40x34cm  
 Ⓞ Weight: 14.5kg Ⓞ Arms accommodated: Clearaudio, Rega Ⓞ Speeds: 33.3, 45rpm manual change

**CONTACT** ☎ 01435 867438 🌐 www.metropolis-music.co.uk

Lumley's £14,000 Stratosphere turntable is something of an analogue *tour de force*, with its opposing-magnet suspension and magnificently heavy platter. But, costing as it does, as much as a family hatchback, it's out of reach for the majority. So, Lumley's proprietor, John Jeffries, decided to make a people's Stratosphere, without the astronomical price tag and using a design that he'd evolved through applying years of experience. And so the £2,495 Heliosphere was born...

The similarities between these two turntables are few, as you might expect from the price difference, but they both have a triangular-shaped plinth and support their tonearms on a cylindrical base. The £2,495 Heliosphere is distinguished by an unusually chunky acetal platter – 74mm-thick – a size that you might be able to associate with the more expensive Clearaudio designs, but one that's rarely seen with any regularity. One aesthetic advantage that the substantial

depth of the platter confers is that it allows the drive system to be hidden, despite the fact that this is a largely skeletal design. When it was first set up we assumed the motor would be free-standing and drive the

**“Our sample came equipped with a Clearaudio Unify tonearm and a Sumiko Blue Point Special Evo III moving coil cartridge.”**

periphery of the platter. But you have to lift the 6.3kg slab of acetal to see what makes the thing go round (see Multiple motors box on page 53 for more).

The plinth itself is aluminium, a fact that the painted finish tends to hide. In fact, the finish is very good, but an anodised silver or black would have been nicer. It's something that would, however, have impacted on price which Metropolis was keen to make competitive, a job it seems to have had some success with. The plinth sits on large inverted cone feet that are free standing and have to be carefully positioned so as to intersect with the nylon inserts on the underside of the plinth. This is a tricky job because you have to guess where to position the cones and then align them properly without scratching the underside of the plinth.

There is little to stop energy travelling up through the turntable and into the platter, so this is one of those record players that like many others should be carefully supported away from loudspeakers. Energy excited in

the vinyl by the stylus is partially damped by a large aluminium clamp that uses gravity alone to keep the record flat. This makes for quick disc-changing, but is not as effective as a threaded design in pinning down less than flat LPs.

Our sample came equipped with a Clearaudio Unify tonearm (£1,400) and a Sumiko Blue Point Special Evo III high-output moving coil cartridge (£220), both components selected for value for money. A state of affairs somewhat undermined by the value of the pound which has meant that the tonearm has risen in price by £500 since it was originally selected for the turntable. The Unify is a very well put-together arm with a carbon fibre arm tube, sapphire unipivot bearing and an eccentric counterweight. The

latter can be twisted on the stub in order to make the cartridge body/stylus sit upright in the groove (azimuth). VTA can be adjusted with two grub screws in the collar and the arm wires exit at the top of the arm and go to a connection point with the tonearm cable proper, there is said to be no break in the actual wire itself.

The BPS Evo III is the current version of a classic budget cartridge, it's a moving coil, but has the output characteristics of an MM design. Output is 2.5mV and its preferred input impedance is 47kohms, which means that it works with MM inputs. This turntable would benefit from something more aspirational, but the BPS does not seem to stand in its way. ▶



# Q&A

We spoke to Lumley founder John Jeffries about the Heliosphere.



**HFC: What's the difference between acetal and acrylic?**

**JJ:** I'm not sure. I think that there's a very slight difference, but the main factor was that acetal is cheaper, it was chosen to keep costs down which we wanted to do with this model.

**But why acetal when you appear to use something else on the Stratosphere?**

We have a Nylonite platter on the Strat, but that's a much more expensive material. (Again) Acetal allows us to produce a well-finished platter with high mass at a more affordable price.

**Has anything been shared between the Heliosphere with the Stratosphere?**

A few elements such as the Nylonite inserts that interface with the cone feet. Also both turntables have a titanium nitride coated bearing spindle.

**How heavy is the platter?**

It's 14lbs (6.3kg)!

**Is there a danger of asynchronousity with two motors?**

By using matched and balanced motors we can achieve total speed control without any problems, even without an outboard power supply. We have the Clearaudio Syncro PSU as an option to improve things further, but it's absolutely fine as it is. We addressed this possibility with Rega, who make the motors, and they say that if they are accurately matched this sort of problem should not arise. What they have said is that the machining of the pulleys has to be very accurate, so we are making sure that the tolerance is fantastic.

**Why no speed switching?**

Of all the turntables I've sold through my retail business Sounds of Music, only one of our customers has ever wanted to play 45s, anyone that needs that facility can buy the Clearaudio Syncro that we've chosen because it does an excellent job at a reasonable price, albeit a price that has increased rather dramatically since the demise of the value of the pound.

**Which arms do you make bases for?**

We also do a base for Rega tonearms, but that's all. We didn't want to get into making a huge range of bases as the Rega and Clearaudio arms work very well with this turntable.

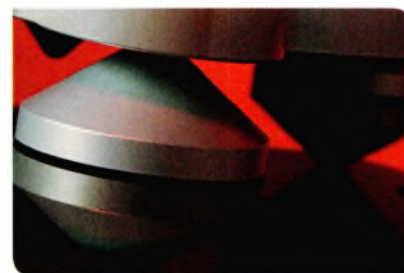


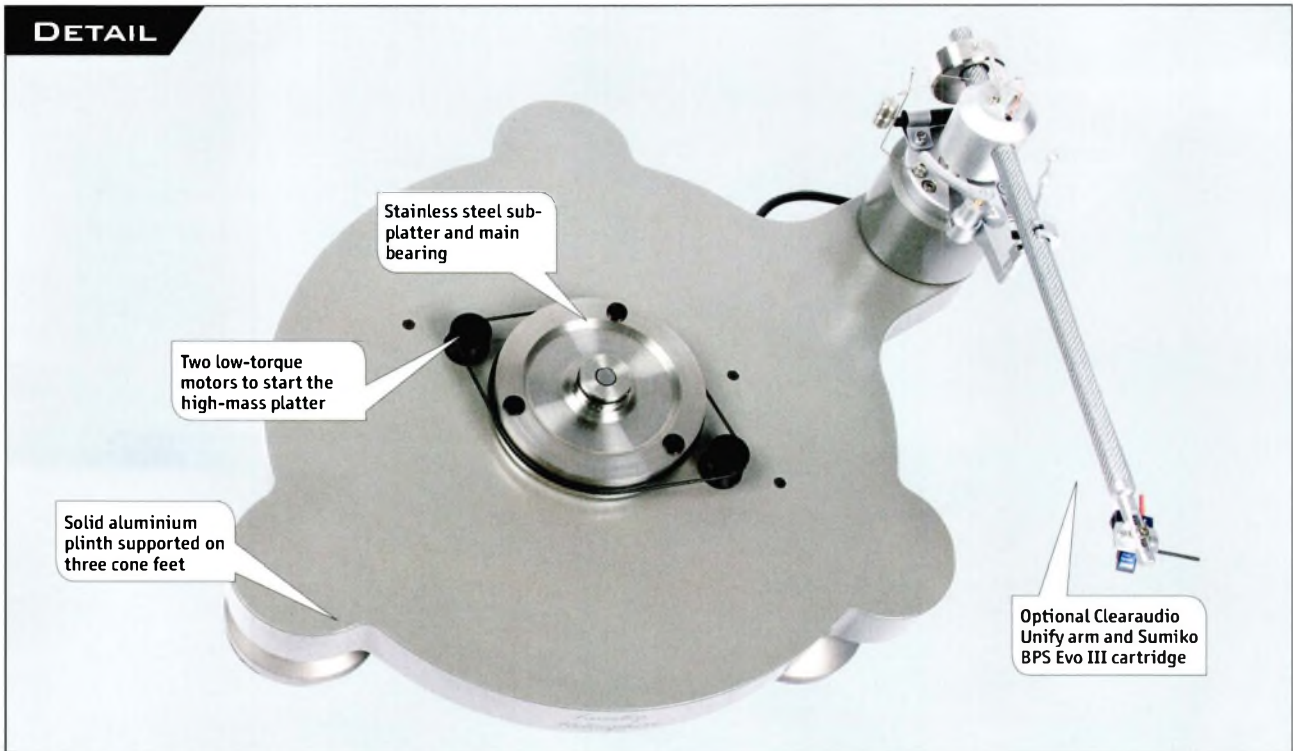
## ❑ SOUND QUALITY

Give it a well-isolated support and the Heliosphere delivers an entertaining result with the arm and cartridge supplied. You can hear the large slab of acetal in a slight midrange coloration that accentuates instruments like pianos and brass, but given how much of the stuff there is, it's well controlled and does not get in the way of the musical message. Thanks to a good sense of timing the Heliosphere is a fine communicator that quickly wraps you up in the groove, especially if it's one that has been created by a musician like Keith Jarrett and his cohorts. His album *Changes* retains all of its nimble and beguiling rhythmic subtleties in the context of

good three-dimensional imaging. The double bass, in particular, seems to come out best in this respect, something that suggests a slight emphasis on the upper bass perhaps. Energy is never in short supply, especially when you play some Muddy Waters, his *I'm Ready* album positively bursting with the stuff on this turntable. At one point we forgot to put the big clamp on and were gratified to hear the increase in solidity that bringing it back in made. But stare at the rubber feet for too long and they appear to go backwards, so best close your eyes and let the music transport you.

Despite its extra motor this is an appealingly quiet turntable, it won't suppress the shortcomings of the vinyl, but that's more a reflection of the cartridge we suspect, it's more that the noise floor is nice and low so that quieter musical elements are easy to follow. Steel guitar strings have a little more zing than usual but this just gives a sense of crispness that's really quite appealing with a good record such as *John Fahey Visits Washington DC*. You can fully appreciate the attack of the picked strings, but that does not mask the decay of the notes, thanks to a cohesive and tidy presentation.





The Sumiko BPS III is a remarkable cartridge for the price. You can hear its limitations on more sumptuous recordings like Rickie Lee Jones' *Flying Cowboys*, where the polish is not quite as high as it could be, but there's plenty of it, nonetheless. More importantly, the turntable reveals the hand of producer Walter Becker (Steely Dan) rather more clearly than usual, the recording's sound being highly reminiscent of the last decent 'Dan album

**“The turntable digs out the bass pedals to trouser flapping effect, but there is plenty of body to the sound and no shortage of energy.”**

**MULTIPLE MOTORS?**

The use of more than one motor to drive a turntable platter is not a new thing, but it's still quite rare, especially on less costly decks. We have come across one other two-motor design, however, such as the long-departed Voyd Valdi. It's design that lives on in the Audio Note TT-2, though, which is more like a dual-motored Systemdek, but does do the two motor thing. Both models use the extra motor for torque, whereas the Heliosphere has two low-powered motors because one alone is not sufficient to get the massive platter up and running. The Heliosphere's two motors drive a stainless steel sub platter which supports the platter on three pads, the two motors are sited close to it and opposite one another, each with its own belt. Each pulley has two gears for 45 and 33.3rpm, speed change is, therefore, a manual affair and a kerfuffle given the weight of the platter. But how many of us still spin 45s these days?

*Gaucho*. Surmounting the the production, of course, is the material – this is superbly played and thanks to Ms Jones' delivery, emotionally charged to a degree that you don't expect of something so slick.

Jeff Buckley's *Mcjo Pin* delivers a wealth of detail in the Heliosphere's arms, a dynamic recording for its type, it combines quiet and intense sections, both of which are well served. Less sophisticated records also fair well, Frank Zappa's 1969 album *Hot Rats* is not the slickest-sounding record, but it's got plenty going on in tracks like *Peaches En Regalia*. This has remarkably cheesy organ and grungy guitar, but there is plenty of body to the sound and no shortage of energy. The turntable also digs out the bass pedals to trouser flapping effect which is most gratifying, it probably helps to have big active ATC speakers to appreciate this but it's not essential. The following track, *Willie the Pimp*, has a pulsating groove and the distinctive vocals of Don van Vliet (AKA Captain Beefheart), a contribution that in these circumstances makes it all the more difficult to get on with the reviewing job in hand.

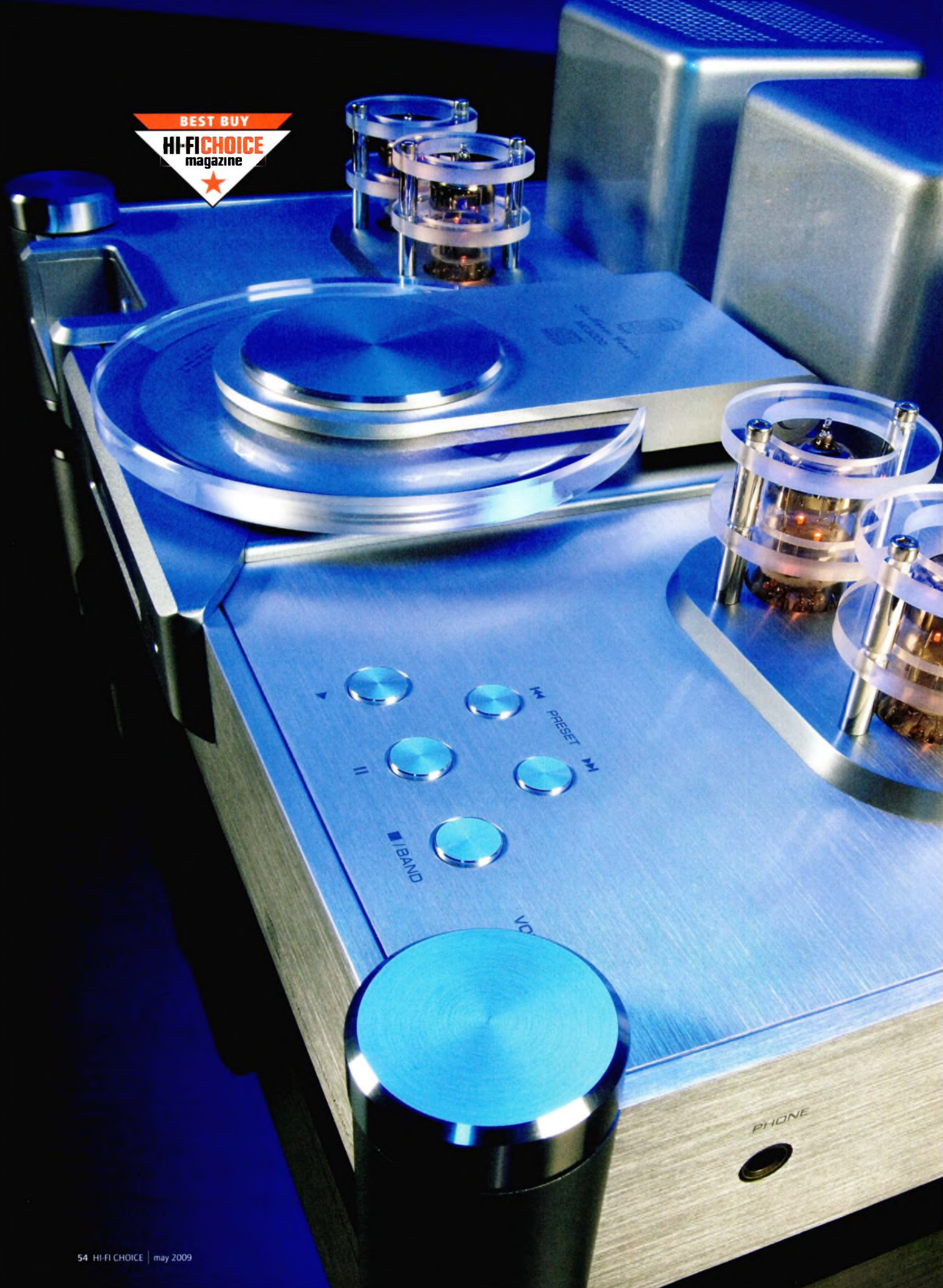
While the experienced ear can detect the character of the platter material on the

Heliosphere, its effects are like those of a valve amplifier, largely euphonic. This is not the most neutral turntable, but neither is it obviously coloured, it has wide bandwidth, good dynamics and great timing and these are the key factors one wants from a record player. We found the Heliosphere both highly entertaining and engaging and considering the great build quality and tidy design, it's hard for us not to recommend it. **HFC**

Jason Kennedy

VERDICT	
<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	<b>PRO</b> Well built and attractively styled, this is a dynamic and engaging turntable with a lot to offer the vinyl aficionado.
<b>FEATURES</b> ★★★★★	<b>CON</b> Needs good isolation for the very best results and the clamp is sadly not totally effective. Limited range of available armboards is also a small shortcoming.
<b>BUILD</b> ★★★★★	
<b>VALUE</b> ★★★★★	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> With its massive acetal platter this is a distinctive-looking turntable with a distinctive sound, one that reflects the vinyl you spin on it with a little bit of extra thrill power thrown in. A combination that, in our book, makes for top entertainment.	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE</b> ★★★★★	
URL <a href="http://www.techradar.com/560765">www.techradar.com/560765</a>	

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



# Centre stage

Fierce competition for the one-box hi-fi market from Shanling

**PRODUCT** Shanling MC3000

**TYPE** One-box hi-fi system

**PRICE** £1,400

**KEY FEATURES** Size (WxHxD): 45x16x33.5cm

⊙ Weight: 11kg ⊙ Digital outputs: 2x line (pre, coaxial)

⊙ Analogue inputs: 3x line (Aux, DVD, tape) ⊙ Rated

power: 60 watts ⊙ CD player/amplifier/FM tuner

**CONTACT** ☎ 01257 473175 # www.realhi-fi.com

The passage of time allows all sorts of things to be forgotten. It really isn't very long since the all-in-one 'hi-fi' system was regarded with the gravest suspicion by any kind of audiophile, while the term 'music centre' was reserved for the most unremittingly awful of the breed. Yet here is a respected audiophile maker proudly printing that very title on the case of what looks, superficially at least, like quite a tasty bit of kit.

Any resemblance to Shanling's single-purpose CD players is obviously no accident, but this machine does a lot more than that. It features a 60-watt amplifier, an FM tuner and an iPod dock, making it truly the only electronic component many folks will need for a stereo sound system in the modern manner.

Just in case you wish to add a few frills there are three line inputs: there is no digital input of any kind, though, so if computer audio's your thing you'll need a good analogue-out sound card or something like the Cambridge Audio DacMagic. You do get a digital output (from the CD player), a preamp output and a

video output, which relays a video iPod's display to a TV screen if required.

At first glance, one might easily think this is an all-valve amplifier. There are certainly some valves there and the three cans at the back

probably not the biggest compromise in the world. What did slightly bother us, though, was the discovery that the FM input socket (and F-type connector aimed at the US market – adaptors to the UK type only cost a couple

**“The CD player board uses four single op-amps of very high performance, really quite a deluxe touch in a product of this price.”**

look for all the world like the classic lineup of mains transformer and two output transformers. But the valves are small-signal devices and power amplification is handled by transistors, the right and left cans housing the relevant circuits and their heatsinks.

The rest of the circuitry is mounted under the top plate on several immaculately assembled boards. Apart from a few components, which are only available as surface-mount types, Shanling has used exclusively through-hole components and we were impressed to find that most of these are of remarkably high quality, especially the op-amps. The CD player board, for instance, uses four single op-amps of very high performance, really quite a deluxe touch in a product at this price.

No doubt in the interests of easy assembly and serviceability, Shanling has linked the circuit boards mostly with push-on connectors. In principle this puts more connections in the signal path than one might wish for, but that's

of pounds) is linked by two distinctly non-ideal bits of wire to the tuner module inside. At FM radio frequencies, even a couple of inches of the wrong type of wire can compromise performance with weak signals. Incidentally, that tuner (a good-quality unit from specialist maker Kwang Sung) does have an AM input, but Shanling has chosen not to enable it.

Operation of the unit is straightforward, and we particularly like the way the input selector and volume control knobs are cunningly disguised as part of the front left and right support cylinders. As is common these days, some functions are only available from the remote control, including manual FM tuning, which means that without the remote the tuner could quickly become completely non-functional – all you can do from the unit itself is change between presets. Unlike several of Shanling's CD-only players, there is no option to select different digital filters. A headphone socket is concealed on the right-hand side. ▣



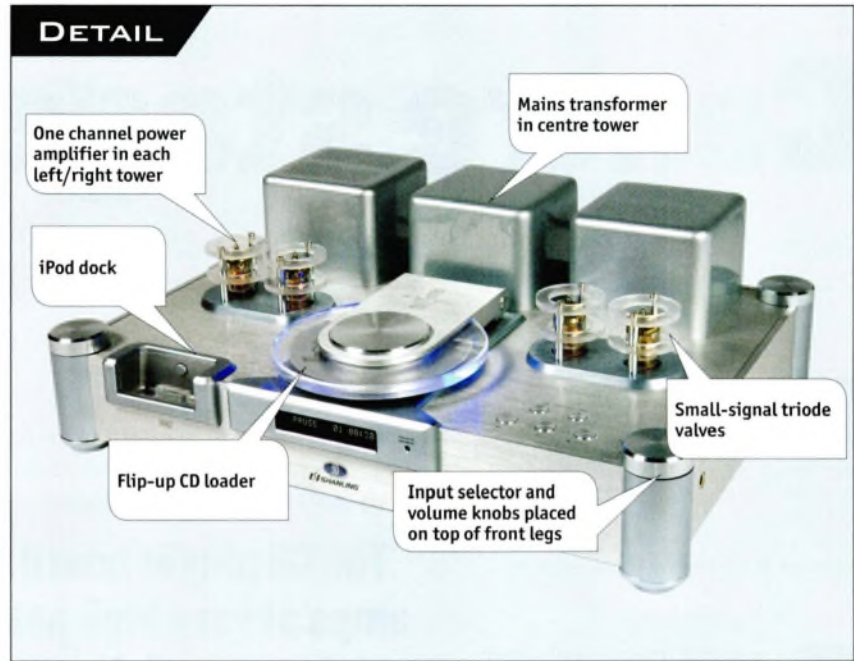
## ■ SOUND QUALITY

With so many options on offer it seems best to start with performance when playing CDs as that is likely to be the core of existence for most MC3000s in the field. And it's a good standard of performance that is offered, one that we feel can probably justify the asking price quite irrespective of FM and iPod capabilities. It does have some slight idiosyncrasies, though...

The most surprising thing we found with the MC3000 is its tonality. Most CD players and amps these days are pretty close to neutral, but in comparisons with various familiar references we consistently felt that this unit had a distinct lift in the upper midrange. For reasons we can only conjecture (measured response is as flat as the proverbial pancake) there's a slight, but consistent lift to female voice and the fundamental frequencies of many melody instruments, which gives the sound a highly appealing lightness of touch.

As a slight potential downside of that, bass isn't necessarily the most immediately gripping we've ever heard, but it's got some decent heft to it when required and unless your speakers are already a bit marginal for bass quantity and quality, it's unlikely to make or break the MC3000's appeal. It's also good to report that there's some fine rhythmic drive in evidence, with plenty of life and 'kick', plus excellent timing integrity between the registers. High treble is clear and precise, not markedly forward or recessed though occasionally a touch dry. Power delivery is assured and confident, though overload is distinctly obvious when it does eventually occur.

That's the nuts and bolts of it. The practical result of all this is a sound that is invariably strong on melody and basic communication, with enough detail and analytical skill to convey accompanying instruments with convincing layering and spatial precision.



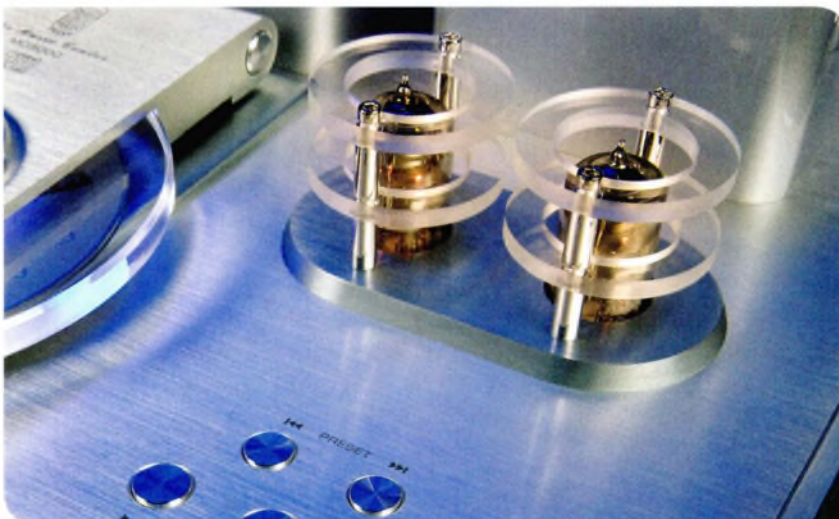
**“...it's a good standard of performance that is offered, one that we feel can probably justify the asking price irrespective of FM and iPod.”**

We have some slight reservations about the ultimate level of detail and for sure there's ground lost in this department to the best standalone CD players and amps in the £500 to £1,000 bracket. The sound is just a little hazy at the edges, not in an offensive or obtrusive way, but just perceptibly on those odd occasions when one tries to hear exactly what is happening in the middle, or at the back, of a mix. We'd hazard a guess that both this and the tonality qualities noted above are down to a small, but not quite vanishing amount of low-harmonic distortion which we found on test – just enough to give a little subtle colour to the sound.

We felt the FM tuner is decent, rather than outstanding – its rejection of interference from nearby stations isn't brilliant and in urban situations this can be an annoying drawback. As for the iPod dock, the sound from it largely follows the performance with CD, suggesting that most of the character is in the amplifier part of the unit.

There are more advanced all-in-one units available, but Shanling's combination of audiophile and user-convenience features is well-judged for the space-constrained audio buff and we're happy to give the MC3000 a cheerful recommendation. **HFC**

*Richard Black*



## VERDICT

### SOUND



### PRO

An appealing combination of melodious sound – with confident underpinning when required – smart looks and thoughtful features, at an attractive price.

### FEATURES



### BUILD



### CON

Not the last word in detail and the slight emphasis on the midrange will not please all tastes, nor ensure the widest speaker compatibility.

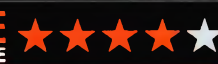
### VALUE



### CONCLUSION

A welcome newcomer to the scene, offering a slightly different take on the all-in-one genre – from both sonic and practical viewpoints. Self-sufficient, but also upgradeable, it should serve both well and long.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
**OVERALL SCORE**



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# Audio-Technica ATH-CK10

**TYPE** In-ear headphone

**PRICE** £279

**CONTACT** ☎ 0113 2771441 🌐 www.audio-technica.com

**A**udio-Technica has a long history with headphones and currently offers a wide range in most styles. Among in-ear models, this is the current top dog. Technical information on it seems surprisingly modest – for instance, the brochure quotes a frequency response only up to 15kHz and unusually low power handling, both of which we reckon are either back-covering understatements or simple error. The transducer uses 'dual balanced armature drivers', dividing the frequency range almost (but not quite) like a two-way loudspeaker and is enclosed in a notably small housing which can take three different sizes of soft rubber earpiece. Impedance is higher than most in-ear 'phones, placing less load on whatever drives it but slightly reducing effective sensitivity in most applications.

We were delighted to find that this model seems relatively unfussy about earpieces, although there was still some mileage in

swapping around. Having found the optimum, we were rewarded with a big, slightly bass-rich sound which seems to have a less bright treble than many earphones. At first, it can make the sound seem lacking in detail, but in fact the reverse is true: this model is capable of revealing a great deal of detail right across the frequency range. It has good attack and immediacy and imaging is clear and not too 'in-the-head'. We were particularly impressed with dynamics, which have the large, effortless and, at the same time, subtle range that live music always offers, but recordings often struggle to recreate. Listening over a longer period, we found our admiration for this model only grew: it is possibly not the easiest to like immediately, but is well worth persevering with. **HFC**



## VERDICT

Can seem quite underwhelming at first, but the enforced detail, natural dynamics and clarity of the model make for a remarkably involving listen.



# Denon AH-C751

**TYPE** In-ear headphones

**PRICE** £180

**CONTACT** ☎ 01753 680568 🌐 www.denon.co.uk

**A**nother range-topper, this model has a metal body and is supplied with three sizes of earpiece. The cable exits from the side of the cylindrical body and we had some trouble finding the right angle at which to insert the 'phones into the ear so that they sat securely and the lead did not tend to pull them out. Technical characteristics are typical, with a 16-ohm impedance and power handling of 250mW which, even with the slightly below-average sensitivity that we experienced, would fairly take anyone's head off. An unusually short cable is fitted, terminated in a very nice metal-bodied plug: an extension cable is also provided, along with a very nice hard carry case.

No one transducer is ever going to please all tastes, so it's good to report that this model has distinctively different sound from the others in this group. Most immediately noticeable is the bass, which is strong and full, perhaps too much so for some listeners

though we're sure it will bring a smile to many faces. Treble is quite lively though not unpleasantly bright, while the midrange seems generally neutral. If we've a slight concern about the sound then it's in regard to detail, which seems to lag a little behind the other models here. It's not quite so easy to hear right into a mix and imaging is less precise too, though in making that comparison we are applying very high standards. Anyone coming to the C751 from cheap giveaway 'phones is likely to be shocked at the amount of detail on offer. The sound is generally very impressive. If the thought of killer bass doesn't put you right off, there is a lot to enjoy from this model. **HFC**



## VERDICT

With a rather bottom-heavy balance, the C751 nevertheless offers plenty of information about familiar recordings – just not quite as much as some.



# Etymotic ER-4P

**TYPE** In-ear headphone  
**PRICE** £195  
**CONTACT** ☎ 0845 055 0005 # www.etymotic.com

**E**tymotic was an early entrant in the high-end in-ear headphone stakes, with a background in scientific hearing investigation. For many, the brand has come to be the yardstick for performance, so it was good to be able to include a model here. The range is not vast and it's not always obvious what are the advantages of each model, though this one is clearly aimed at the portable music market. Its sensitivity is high and it has slightly more bass output than other ER-4 variants, suiting it to what one might call 'mass-market' musical tastes. Four styles of earpiece are supplied, together with replacement filters. One of Etymotic's particular claims is for very high isolation from outside noise and this reaches an astonishing 42dB – in the same ballpark as industrial hearing protectors! This makes for comfortable listening in noisy environments and also ensures practically no music leaks out to annoy others.



One feature we've found consistently with Etymotic models is that they are incredibly fussy about positioning in the ear. It takes both experimentation and practice to get this right and until one does the sound is frankly horrid, all upper midrange and with little detail. Once the perfect fit has been achieved, though, everything changes dramatically, so persevere!

It may say something about other in-ear headphones that even this 'enhanced bass' model didn't seem remarkably bass-rich, though comparison with over-ear headphones did suggest it's just a shade lifted. There is also a slight lift in the presence region, but what's most noticeable about the ER-4P is the extraordinary amount of detail it reveals about recordings. It is analytical to a degree that some may find almost oppressive and it will tell you all about the quality of the source



too – poor MP3 files are revealed in all their questionable glory. For purist audiophilia on the move, hard to beat. **HFC**

**VERDICT**  
 Be prepared to spend some time fiddling with earpieces and angles of approach: you will eventually be repaid with super-detailed sound.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
 ★★★★★

# Sennheiser IE8

**TYPE** In-ear headphone  
**PRICE** £260  
**CONTACT** ☎ 01494 551551 # www.sennheiser.co.uk

**T**his is a fairly recent model from the biggest name in hi-fi headphones and marks the top of the company's in-ear range. It uses a single drive unit on each side, the design apparently benefitting from Sennheiser's experience with in-ear monitoring for musicians on stage. Isolation from outside sound is high (though not quite on a par with Etymotic) and a vast range of earpieces is supplied to ensure compatibility with any size or shape of ear. Indeed, this model comes with an impressive array of accessories and tools, including some very natty over-ear supports which we particularly liked. In-ear transducers like these rely critically on fit and anything that helps stop them becoming dislodged is good news. Sennheiser claims that the cables are particularly resistant to transmitting mechanical noise to the ears, a claim we found justified. A small screwdriver adjustment on each unit allows tweaking of bass level.



We found a bass setting just slightly above minimum suited our tastes, but whatever one ends up with on that score will have little effect on the overall impression of this model, which is extremely positive. Midrange and treble tonality seems to us the best we've yet encountered from any in-ear transducer, similar indeed to very fine over-ear headphones. That, of course, helps the IE8 make a good initial impression, but the long-term experience is just as good, thanks to excellent detail and imaging – again, perhaps, the best we've heard from such a device. In this case, the detail is unfussy and presented without forcing itself on the listener. One can choose whether to listen specifically to it, or simply to enjoy the mellifluous and musical performance. **HFC**

*Richard Black*



**VERDICT**  
 With its combination of neutral midrange and treble, bass and effortless detail, this is arguably the model to beat for all-round sound.

**HI-FI CHOICE**  
 ★★★★★

GROUP TEST & LAB REPORTS: PAUL MESSENGER

# LOUDSPEAKERS

Great-sounding speakers for second systems and 'one-box' hi-fis

This month's *Ultimate Group Test* looks at a cluster of speakers that fall within a quite tight band in both price and size. The least expensive is the £299 Dali from the company's new budget Lektor range, while the most costly is the stylish £400 Infinity.

These aren't, therefore, the cheapest small speakers on the market by any means – they cost two or three times the price of the little Q Acoustics 1020i we reviewed recently (*HFC* 318). But they're also by no means the most costly either: witness the excellent Spondor SA1 sub-miniature (reviewed in *HFC* 314) at around three times the price of the models in this group.

Most fit more or less into the 'miniature' category, with an internal volume of around 7 litres and a port-loaded 130mm bass/mid drive unit. The Focal is a little larger than that and the Tannoy rather smaller, but the other four fit the stereotype pretty closely and a very effective stereotype it can be, too.

Although ultimate bass weight and grip are inevitably sacrificed, experience has shown that a well-designed pair of miniatures mounted close to a wall can deliver a very even in-room tonal balance, with a fine midband and little cabinet coloration.

What we have, therefore, is a collection of six small standmounts, priced competitively enough, but not to the point where all the interesting features and individuality has to be eliminated.

Several have some 'previous' in terms of antecedents or kindred, though only the Focal has actually appeared in an earlier *Ultimate Group Test*. The Audio Pro is very similar to its luxury DC variant we reviewed in *HFC* 299. The Rega RS1 has much in common with the earlier R1 (*HFC* 269), but features Rega's radical new tweeter.

Both the Dali and the Infinity are brand new, both conceptually and to *Hi-Fi Choice*. Both are manufactured in China, to Danish and US designs, respectively. Both also have quite

distinctive design features, especially the imaginative Infinity which looks like no other speaker on the market. **HFC**

## EQUIPMENT USED

- Ⓢ Naim CDS 3/555 PS CD player
- Ⓢ Burmester 001 CD player
- Ⓢ Linn Sondek LP12/Rega RB1000 turntable/arm
- Ⓢ Soundsmith Strain Gauge cartridge
- Ⓢ Magnum Dynalab MD 106T tuner
- Ⓢ Naim NAC552 preamp
- Ⓢ Naim NAP500 power amp
- Ⓢ Cables from Vertex AQ and The Chord Company

## MUSIC USED

- Ⓢ Be Good Tanyas *Hello Love*
- Ⓢ Bob Dylan *Modern Times*
- Ⓢ Lowell George *Thanks, I'll Eat it Here*
- Ⓢ Laurie Anderson *Mister Heartbreak*
- Ⓢ Sibelius *Symphonies/VPO Maazel*

BBC Radios 3 and 4 were also used extensively

## ON TEST



AudioPro Avanti A.10  
£349



Dali Lektor 2  
£299



Focal Chorus 706V  
£389



Infinity Classia C205  
£400



Rega RS1  
£398



Tannoy Revolution DC4  
£349

## LISTENING TESTS

Loudspeaker listening poses an altogether more complex set of problems from those involved in assessing components further up the hi-fi chain. Loudspeakers vary dramatically in size, type and tonal balance, and also interact strongly and often unpredictably with the room, according to where they're placed. The fatal difficulty facing sequential unsighted loudspeaker presentations is the strong tendency to judge each example according to how its balance differs from the model that preceded it. Accordingly, extended hands-on listening sessions were adopted, giving proper scope to adjust to the inevitable changes in balance and also to experiment with the positioning of different models.

## LAB TESTS

The speakers were tested under in-room conditions, in order to be as representative as possible of real world operating conditions. The test equipment used was a Neutrik Audiograph analogue signal generator with synchronised pen recorder, and this was used to plot the far-field in-room averaged response traces, as well as the impedance plots, which provide the core of the measurement work. Pair-matching was also checked at one metre.

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

## LAB REPORTS: THE BAR GRAPH

**1] Sensitivity:** Sensitivity is a measure of how loud a speaker will go for a given voltage from the amplifier. It's scaled to 2.83V at 1m (corresponding to one watt of power for an eight-ohm load).

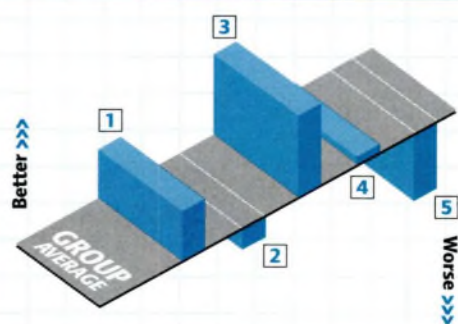
**2] Bass extension:** The bass behaviour of loudspeakers is heavily modified by the room in which they're used. To replicate 'real world' conditions, our figure represents the averaged bass roll-off frequency at -6dB with reference to the broad midband, measured across the far field for a stereo pair in a 4.3x2.6x5.5m room.

**3] Ease of drive:** The lower the impedance of a speaker, the more current it will extract from the driving amplifier for a given voltage (volume) setting. Lower-impedance designs are therefore theoretically harder to drive, but they also tend to be more sensitive.

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

**5] Response smoothness:** Beyond the overall tonal balance of the speaker, small-scale smoothness has much to do with sound and harmonic shading.

## OUR BAR GRAPHS: AN EXAMPLE



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SEE PAGES 50-53

Read the review in  
this issue, featuring the  
Stratosphere's NEW  
sibling - Heliosphere.



Stratosphere shown

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# AUDIOPRO AVANTI A.10

*Tasty Swede with a real-wood finish*

**K**nown originally as a subwoofer specialist, due to its impressive ACE-Bass technology that first appeared in the 1970s, Swedish operation Audio Pro remains active in subwoofery, but has subsequently added loads of regular loudspeakers to an exceptionally extensive portfolio of products. Indeed, the current UK importer CSE lists around fifty different Audio Pro models in total, although a number are variations on the same theme.

Some eighteen months back (HFC 299), we reviewed an Avanti A.10 DC, where the DC postscript stood for the company's premium price Design Collection. This came in a high-gloss black lacquer finish and did rather well at £450 per pair, so the portents look pretty good for this non-DC equivalent at a less costly £350 per pair.

Despite the Swedish ancestry, all the cues suggest that this speaker, like so many these days, is probably made in the Far East. It's a small and simple two-way standmount, with a 130mm paper cone bass/mid drive unit using a diaphragm roughly 100mm in diameter. The tweeter is smaller than most, with a fabric diaphragm around 20mm in diameter. The narrow back accommodates a tiny port, tuned to around 42Hz and a single terminal pair, arranged vertically, is fixed straight through the woodwork.

The result is a very attractive speaker. Its MDF enclosure is very compact and physically discreet and distinguished by dramatically curved sides that give a boat-shaped plan view and virtually eliminate a back panel entirely. Such a shape has the multiple advantages of

diffusing rear-panel reflections and internal standing waves, as well as increasing stiffness.

### SOUND QUALITY

Positioning the A.10 proved a little tricky, as it's one of those (all too common) models that tends to thump a bit when close to a wall, but sounds a little lacking in bass drive and enthusiasm if it's sited in free space. Finding the happy medium proved tricky in our particular room, but speaker/room interaction is an unpredictable and fickle phenomenon, so do take the time and effort to try and achieve the smoothest results.

Under our test conditions, best results were obtained with the speakers about 25cm out from the wall. The bass still sounds a bit resonant and weak in harmonic warmth and richness, but the overall sound – probably assisted by the slightly forward and peaky midrange – is delightfully entertaining and communicative.

It's fair to say that the sound isn't the sweetest around, but it is essentially smooth and very even-handed, with a lively and expressive disposition and an impressive openness that is particularly engaging with voices in general, but especially on speech.

Thanks to the fine acoustic behaviour of the enclosure, there's a commendable lack of boxiness here. Overall coherence is very good, too and stereo images are well focused with good airy spaciousness.

With its attractive shape, engagingly lively yet substantially smooth and open sound quality, criticisms are minor and a Best Buy seems appropriate at the price. **HFC**



### LAB REPORT

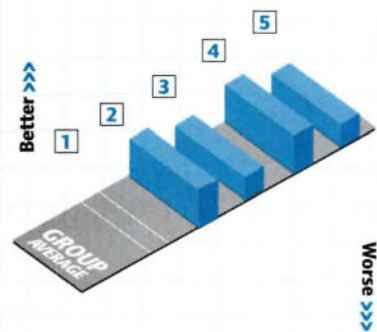
There are many similarities between this A.10 and the high-gloss version we reviewed in HFC 299, though there are some subtle differences too, especially the observation that the relative treble is now just a little lower than before.

The specified 87dB sensitivity is just about achieved in the midband, where output peaks up at around 700-900Hz, but the overall frequency response, measured under far-field in-room conditions, is rather lean through the upper bass and lower midband.

Deciding the best siting is difficult, as the port ensures ample output 45-55Hz, so close-to-wall positioning can lead to a slightly thumpy character. Free space, however, leaves a bit of a hole 70-120Hz, so it's best to experiment.

The impedance looks quite easy to drive, but the pair-matching might have been closer and a resonance at 380Hz is also clearly visible.

### HOW IT COMPARES



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

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	87dB	87dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	4ohms	8/6 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)		38Hz

### VERDICT

**SOUND**  
★★★★☆  
A tough and effective little box, thanks to strongly curved sides. Midband detail is a little hyped, but the overall balance is quite smooth and even and the end result is entertaining and communicative.

**PRACTICALITY**  
★★★★★

**BUILD**  
★★★★★

**VALUE**  
★★★★★

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE**  
★★★★★





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## DALI LEKTOR 2

*DALI's newcomer is a mixture of cool, competitive and traditional*

**D**anish Audiophile Loudspeaker Industries (DALI) has many speaker ranges that cover the whole marketplace. At the budget end of things, the Ikons were conspicuously successful three or four years back, but the brand new Lektors are even more competitively priced, thanks to the cost benefits of Far East manufacturing. Will they repeat the Ikons' success? Portents are mixed.

The £300 Lektor 2 looks very similar to the Lektor 1; its enclosure, main driver and price are just slightly larger, though you'd be hard pressed to tell the difference between the two from a couple of paces and the price, significantly below the others in this test group, is certainly very competitive.

It's a chunky little two-way standmount, primarily intended for close-to-wall siting. The enclosure proper comes in either mid-brown or black vinyl woodprint, the former a rather undistinguished and anonymous example of the art. The black painted front panel looks a little more interesting, as its vertical edges are gently chamfered and decoration is applied by four shiny grille mounting lugs and a rectangular badge around the tweeter.

Although the speaker is made in a low wage zone, the design input comes from Denmark. The main bass/mid drive unit clearly originates from the House of DALI, as it has the company's characteristic purplish-brown dish-shaped cone, made from a mixture of paper pulp and wood fibres. Said driver has a 130mm frame and a 97mm cone, with a polished dust cover. The tweeter has a plasticised fabric dome around 27mm in

diameter, while a pair of flared ports located between the two drivers preserve a nice symmetry. A single terminal pair connect to the speaker cable.

### SOUND QUALITY

Measurement and listening confirmed that the Lektor 2 benefits from some close-to-wall reinforcement in order to add a little extra bass. That said, if too close, there's a tendency towards mild mid-bass thump, while in free space it's a little undernourished through the bass region, so it's best to leave a gap of, say, 20-30cm to achieve the best all-round tonality.

This is an inescapably small loudspeaker – so deep and powerful bass is never going to be on the agenda – but once a decent alignment is achieved, the overall sound through the bass and midband is very nicely ordered and even, with just enough projection of musical detail and good stereo imaging.

The problem comes in the presence zone, at the top of the midband, where the sharp-edged consonants and sibilants that are so important to speech clarity are found (or, in this case, not found; at any rate rather obviously lacking). Although the top end proper is well-judged with good air, voices sound a little 'shut in' and recessed, reducing intelligibility when the system is operating at low levels.

As a result, this is a speaker that prefers to be driven quite hard and can indeed be driven hard without any real risk of sounding edgy or aggressive. Its appeal, therefore, is likely to be greatest among those who favour music over speech and enjoy winding up the volume. **HFC**



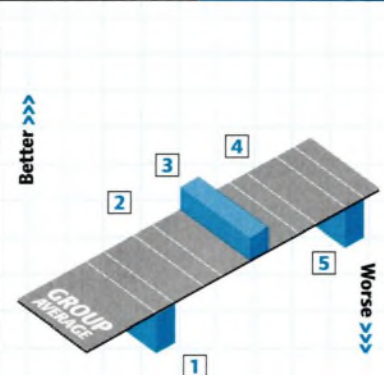
### LAB REPORT

DALI specifies a modest 85dB and being in a generous mood we'll give it 86dB, while also noting that the impedance has a relatively easy to drive minimum of 6 ohms and that the 45Hz port tuning frequency gives decent in-room output down to around 35Hz.

Close-to-wall siting is advocated, but care must be taken to avoid midbass 'thump', since the ports deliver ample output around 50Hz even with the speakers in free space. However, without wall reinforcement a bit of a hole is developed between 60Hz and 90Hz, so some experimentation is advised.

Although the broad bass and midrange balance is very well ordered, things go wrong above 1.7kHz, our far-field in-room 'power' response showing a rather dramatic 5-6dB drop which is bound to have unfortunate subjective consequences.

### HOW IT COMPARES



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

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	85dB	86dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	6 ohms	8/6 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	49Hz	35Hz

### VERDICT

#### SOUND



#### PRACTICALITY



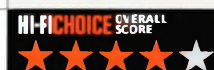
#### BUILD



#### VALUE



This chunky little standmount is nicely presented. With careful positioning, the bass and midrange are well balanced, but a lack of presence hampers voice intelligibility and means it works best at higher levels.



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## FOCAL CHORUS 706V

Does size matter? This speaker is significantly larger than most

**F**ocal, which used to be known as JMLab, is France's leading hi-fi speaker system manufacturer and is proud of the fact that it continues to make even its less costly Chorus range products in France.

This £389 Chorus 706V has been around the block since it was launched amongst no fewer than ten Chorus stereo pairs in 2006. We reviewed it very favourably a year ago (*HFC* 307), when it cost £20 less, but thought its inclusion in this latest group test was worthwhile, in order to provide continuity and context for the more recent arrivals.

Ten Chorus models in total might seem like overkill, though in fact they're split into two groups of five – the less costly Chorus 700s and the more elaborate Chorus 800s. Although it costs much the same as the others in this test group, the 706V is one step up from the smallest (the 705V reviewed in *HFC* 294) and it proved a very worthwhile step too, sonically speaking.

All the panels are finished in a rather dull Amati vinyl woodprint. However, they are a substantial 20.25mm thick and the side panels are tapered, so that the internal faces are not parallel and, therefore, the frequency focusing of internal standing waves and the consequent boxiness is reduced.

The cone driver has a 165mm cast-alloy frame and a 120mm diameter Polyglass cone (made of paper coated with glass 'micro-sphere' damping). Focal's familiar inverted-dome tweeter has a 25mm alloy diaphragm, driven by a rather smaller voice coil. It's mounted in a rigid L-shaped cast chassis at the top edge of the enclosure, unobstructed by a

visually rather striking V-shaped grille; a small optional protective mesh is supplied.

A front port provides bass reflex loading and signal is applied via a single terminal pair.

### SOUND QUALITY

Positioning is important here. The 706V likes some assistance from a nearby wall, but can get to sound too heavy if placed too close. Having got the positioning right, the speaker really starts to punch out of its class. It's still an inexpensive speaker at heart, but within its modest performance envelope it does very little wrong and many things rather well.

The overall tonal balance is very well-judged and essentially neutral, while the fact that its main driver and box are significantly larger than the group give it a real head start in terms of dynamic expression and vigour, as well as a greater comfort zone when the volume is turned up.

Voices have good integrity and coherence, with no unpleasant forwardness or 'shouty' tendencies and there's little evidence of unwelcome time-smear. The bass is agile, communicating rhythms and tonal subtleties rather well, as well as the intentions of the musicians.

The top end is sweet, delicate and airy – never unnecessarily drawing attention to itself, yet delivering plenty of fine detail.

Although it's not our normal policy to return to models that have previously been covered in an *Ultimate Group Test*, as a one-off, the exercise is interesting and it's encouraging that the 706V has very much repeated its earlier success this time around. **HFC**

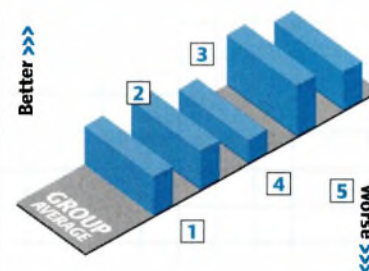


### LAB REPORT

Focal still claims an ambitious 90dB sensitivity for this model and we still get a much more realistic 88dB, though this remains a very respectable figure, especially in the context of a load that stays above 5 ohms throughout and respectable bass output down to 38Hz. Interestingly, the evidence of our latest samples is that the bass end is now a little better damped than before. The port tuning frequency is 43Hz, and the pair match was rather good.

Measured under in-room fair-field conditions, the 'power' frequency response is very well ordered from 100Hz up to the limit of audibility, with just a little restraint at 3.5kHz. Care needs to be taken with positioning, as the bottom end is rather dry with the speakers clear of walls, and a little too strong when placed close to a wall: a 30-40cm gap gave the best overall results under our test conditions.

### HOW IT COMPARES



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

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	90dB	88dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/3.6 ohms	8/6 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	55Hz	27Hz

### VERDICT

#### SOUND



#### PRACTICALITY



#### BUILD



#### VALUE



Classy drive units and an effective, if rather prosaically finished enclosure delivers an impressively neutral tonality with little trace of boxiness. Good dynamic behaviour for a speaker of its price.

**HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE**  
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# INFINITY CLASSIA C205

Unusual styling distinguishes this new Infinity from the herd

Infinity is a stablemate of the even more famous JBL brand and both of them operate under the large and well resourced Harman International umbrella. While the two brands operate largely independently, one occasionally notices evidence of similar thinking. Although several JBLs have come our way recently, this is actually the first Infinity to come in for *Hi-Fi Choice* scrutiny in more than five years.

That may well be because the Classia series is new, even if some of the ingredients seem somewhat familiar. What is certain, is that the styling and presentation, inspired by the Cascade series, are totally radical.

This little £400 per pair C205 two-way standmount comes in two versions. Both have painted near-black front, back and sides, deeply inscribed with vertical grooves giving a striped effect. The enclosure is slightly tapered, so that the rear is a little narrower at the back, and the rear vertical edges are post-formed.

The most striking feature is the top, which is oversize, shaped and strongly tilted downwards towards the front. This does, of course, mean you can't put things (like the post) on the top, as they just slide off! On our sample this is finished in high-gloss black, though cherry real-wood veneer is also available. An oversize black grille, decorated top and bottom with shiny metal strips, nestles against the bottom edge of the oversize top. The back panel has two mounting lugs that can fit over screw heads protruding from a wall, so close-to-wall siting is clearly indicated.

The 133mm bass/mid driver has a deep-anodised alloy cone/dome diaphragm 95mm

in diameter. Infinity calls this a CMMD (Ceramic Metal Matrix Diaphragm), as the anodising process provides a thick oxide skin over the alloy substrate, considerably increasing stiffness. The 25mm tweeter also has a CMMD diaphragm and is front-loaded by a waveguide. A port sits alongside the drivers.

## SOUND QUALITY

Close-to-wall placement provides just about the right amount of bass reinforcement here, giving a fine overall balance with quite good smoothness and plenty of warmth and richness too, even though ultimate bass weight and scale is inevitably limited.

Stereo imaging is pretty good, with some evidence of depth perspectives, but the overall sound is rather restrained, giving a rather matter-of-fact delivery.

The bass certainly impresses on first acquaintance, because it's essentially smooth and warm, delivering a good impression of solidity and a surprisingly effective impression of size and spaciousness. But dynamic authority is a bit weak, the dynamic range is only competent and the overall sonic effect is just a bit lazy.

Fed with relatively undemanding material, such as AV sources where the moving picture tends to dominate the perception, the C205 delivers eminently satisfactory results – clean, evenhanded and smooth, with little evident coloration and low distortion. But with audio-only music sources, a mild degree of congestion and thickening plus a limited dynamic incisiveness does tend to dilute the experience. **HFC**



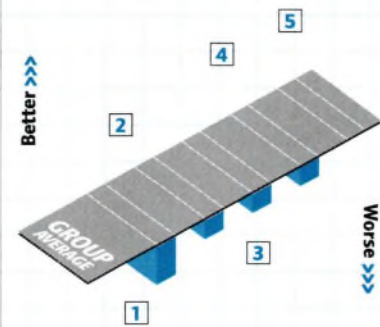
## LAB REPORT

The back of this speaker has mounting lugs to hang it on a wall, so it's fair to assume it's intended for close-to-wall positioning, and it does indeed show a fine bass alignment under these conditions. Indeed, the overall in-room far-field 'power' response stays within impressive +/-4dB limits right across the audio band.

Within that overall range, the two octaves 50-200Hz are a little strong, the subsequent zone (200-600Hz) a little lean, while the upper midband (800Hz-1.2kHz) is a trifle prominent. The treble looks slightly restrained above 1.5kHz, but is very well controlled.

Infinity claims a sensitivity of 88dB, which seems rather optimistic: our figure is more like 86dB, which is respectable enough considering the impedance is an easy-to-drive 6+ ohms throughout. The pair-match looked very good, and the port here is tuned to a fairly high 58Hz.

## HOW IT COMPARES



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

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	88dB	86dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/- ohms	8/6 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	55Hz	40Hz

## VERDICT

### SOUND



### PRACTICALITY



### BUILD



### VALUE



Strikingly unusual styling gives this little speaker its own uniquely attractive appeal. The sound quality is exceptionally well-balanced, with low coloration and fine imaging, but dynamic expression is a little weak.



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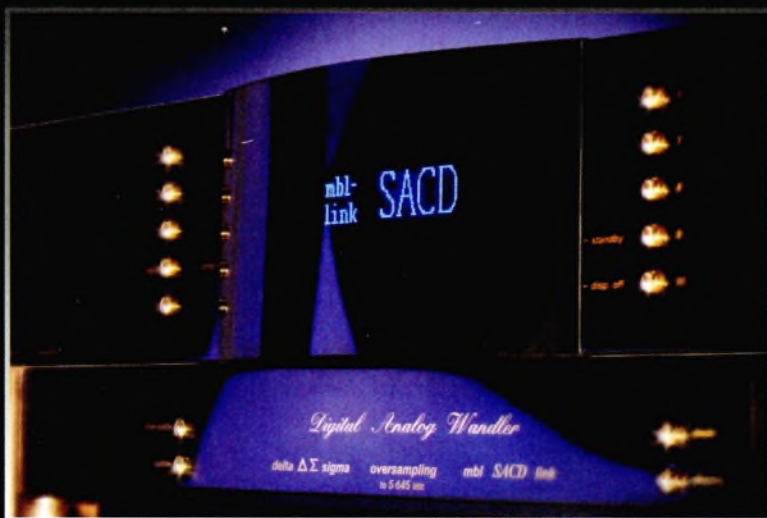
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## REGA RS1

*A radical new tweeter lies at the heart of Rega's new RS range*

**R**ega might have started out as a vinyl turntable specialist, beloved of those with limited means who put musical performance ahead of hype, but the company has moved steadily into all types of hi-fi components, usually with products that combine considerable innovation with affordable pricetags.

This £398 RS1 looks almost identical to the R1 we reviewed some four years ago (*HFC* 269) and as before, it's the smallest, the most conventional and the only standmount in the range. Indeed, this simple two-way can also be seen as a direct descendant of Rega's earlier Kyte and Ara models.

Although the new model has undergone other subtle changes, the RS1 differs from the R1 in two key areas: its gone up by £100; and it now incorporates Rega's radical new tweeter.

Coping with the rear radiation generated behind a tweeter's dome diaphragm has been an issue with speaker designers for years. Many drill a hole through the polepiece to avoid pressure build-up, but Rega has gone much further by drilling most of the polepiece out and leaving just a thin cylinder of metal instead of the usual thick rod. By using powerful magnets, Rega's 19mm tweeter now has a 16mm-diameter hole through its polepiece, so the fabric dome effectively operates in free air and the rearward radiation passes through the motor into a generous cavity, shaped to avoid reflections.

For the rest, this unusually slim speaker comes with decent-quality real-wood veneer on all six faces, as well as neatly rebated drivers and the grille removed. Bass and midrange

duties are handled by Rega's well-established RR125 main driver, a cast-alloy chassis 135mm unit with a solid central phase plug and a 90mm paper cone, driven from a 19mm voice coil. Though slim, the enclosure is quite deep, and is loaded by a rear port tuned to 63Hz.

### SOUND QUALITY

The measurements had already demonstrated that the RS1 has a very good bass alignment for close-to-wall siting, though they also showed an associated mild lack of upper bass output. Combine this with quite strong output through the upper mid and treble and the net result emphasises the speaker's best features – it's lively, dynamic and exciting especially with vocals and higher register instruments.

The result is a beautifully coherent and exceptionally informative speaker, but with a rather lightweight character. It sounds wonderful with Alison Krauss, but a little under-nourished when playing bass-rich material like Fatboy Slim or The Prodigy. That said, it might be lightweight, but the RS1's bottom end is very clean and agile, delivering an impressive amount of musical detail.

Although the RS1 worked very well in our quite large room, it seems very likely that it might have delivered an even better overall balance in a rather smaller room, which would probably have imbued the sound with a bit more authority and warmth.

However, the mid and top have the sort of delicacy, dynamic vigour and expression that can put many far more costly speakers to shame and unquestionably ensure the RS1 deserves its Best Buy rating. **HFC**

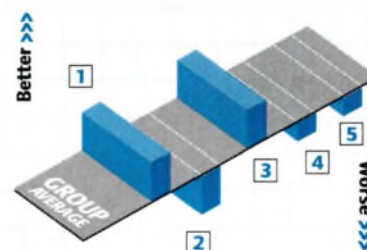


### LAB REPORT

It's particularly interesting to compare the findings of the RS1 with those for its R1 predecessor, as there's actually not a lot of difference between the two. Indeed, the only real change in the far-field frequency balance is that the upper midband is rather stronger between 450Hz and 1.5kHz, which is all to the good as it means that the top end, above 2kHz, is no longer so obviously exposed.

With the port tuned to a relatively high 63Hz, the bass end is very well aligned for close-to-wall siting. Under our room conditions it delivers decent output down to around 45Hz, alongside a very easy amplifier load that stays mostly above 8 ohms. Rega quotes: "(Approx) 90dB" sensitivity; variations with frequency and measurement conditions mean it's never possible to be exact here, but our own approximation is just 88dB.

### HOW IT COMPARES



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

### SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	90dB	88dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/ns ohms	8/6 ohms
Estimated bass extension (6dB)	ns	23Hz

### VERDICT

<b>SOUND</b> ★★★★★	This clever close-to-wall speaker has fine coherence and good communication skills. It somehow manages to sound much bigger than it looks, although the bass can get a bit unruly and voices have some coloration.
<b>PRACTICALITY</b> ★★★★★	
<b>BUILD</b> ★★★★★	
<b>VALUE</b> ★★★★★	
<b>HI-FI CHOICE OVERALL SCORE</b> ★★★★★	



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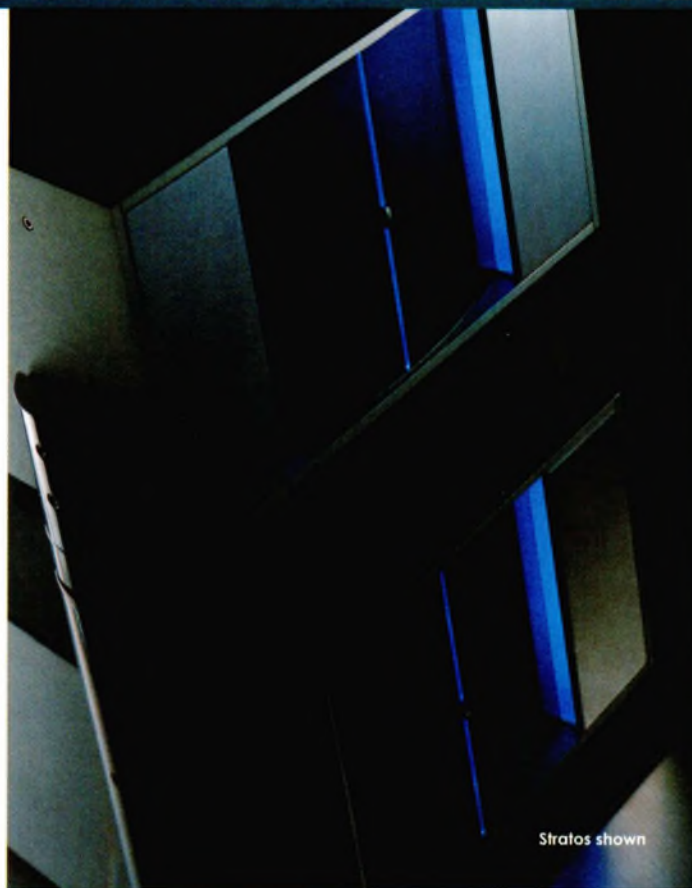
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# TANNOY REVOLUTION DC4

*Tiny Tannoy aims for revolutionary sound quality*

The most famous name in British sound reproduction, Tannoy is better known for its historically large PA and Prestige series loudspeakers than models as tiny as this Revolution DC4. However, the company, currently part of the Danish ProAudio TC Group, has always sought to cover all possible speaker bases, mostly with variations on its long-standing proprietary Dual Concentric drive unit technology.

In their smallest iterations yet, these little 100mm DC drivers are key elements in Tannoy's new Revolution and Revolution Signature ranges. Indeed, versions of this same basic drive unit first appeared in Tannoy's even smaller Arena AV satellite speakers and subsequently appeared in HFC 306 and partnered by an extra bass driver in the Revolution DC4T floorstander (HFC 316).

Now it's the turn of the baby in the line-up, the £349 Revolution DC4, a tiny 3.4 litre standmount with just a solitary 100mm Dual Concentric driver in a ported, tapered sub-miniature enclosure.

The speakers are finished in real wood veneer, with the choice of 'light oak' or dark 'espresso' options. The enclosure back is narrower than the front, so parallel sides are avoided, giving a trapezoidal plan section. The alloy trim used on the front port of the Signatures is here replaced by a simple untrimmed rear port. And the fifth driver-frame earthing terminal has been left out of this less costly model.

The driver has a cone area around 80mm in diameter, roughly two-thirds of those used in the 130mm units most commonly found in

miniature speakers. The driver's coated paper cone diaphragm is driven by a 33mm voice coil, while the tweeter has a 19mm titanium dome, hidden down the tulip waveguide horn.

The outside edge of the drive unit has a shiny trim ring, while the grille is held by magnets hidden beneath the veneer. Twin terminal pairs provide bi-wire or bi-amp options and the internal components have been specifically selected for sound quality.

## SOUND QUALITY

Finding the right place to put these little Tannoys took quite a bit of effort, partly because the best siting turned out to be rather unexpected. You might expect a speaker this small to work well close to a wall, but results were unpromising.

Surprisingly, best results were found with the speakers about 45cm out and on 60cm stands. Now the little DC4 was able to show what it could do, which might be rather limited in terms of bass weight and extension and also dynamic grip and expression, but is essentially very well-balanced, nicely coherent and also quite smooth. As such, it's capable of delivering an attractively neutral and open sound with good stereo imaging.

It's pretty effective at dealing with relatively undemanding, simple material – speech, small acoustic combos and suchlike. What it doesn't do is cope with large scale orchestral, or the organ in a medieval cathedral.

The DC4 doesn't do quite enough on its own, but its progressive rolloff below 90Hz looks perfect for marrying up nicely with a sub. Then it will start to make real sense. **HFC**

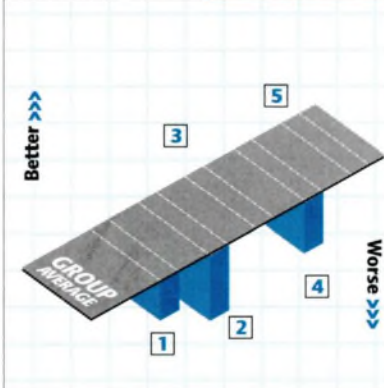


## LAB REPORT

Trying to find the best places to site these tiny loudspeakers proved quite a challenge. Close-to-wall simply didn't work, boosting the lower midband rather than the bass. Free space simply lacked a substantial amount of bass below 150Hz. However, placing the speakers 45cm out from the wall gave a real result, delivering an in-room power response that stayed within +/-4dB from 65Hz up to 14kHz – not bad for a tiddler. Bass extension is inevitably limited, not only because of the small driver, but also because the port is tuned to a high 90Hz.

We're not sure where Tannoy gets an 89dB sensitivity rating from – 86dB is closer to the mark under our measurement regime, though happily the impedance is an easy 8 ohm load. However, it was disappointing to find a poor impedance match between our two samples.

## HOW IT COMPARES



- 1] Sensitivity >> -20%
- 2] Bass extension >> -40%
- 3] Ease of drive >> 0%
- 4] Overall frequency balance >> -30%
- 5] Response smoothness >> 0%

## SPECIFICATIONS

Measurement	Rated	Actual
Sensitivity @ 1m/2.83V	89dB	86dB
Impedance (nominal/minimum)	8/8 ohms	8/6 ohms
Estimated bass extension (-6dB)	68Hz	60Hz

## VERDICT

### SOUND



### PRACTICALITY



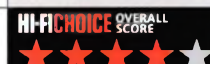
### BUILD



### VALUE



This attractive-looking, loudspeaker is capable of a coherent sound with low coloration and good imaging. But bass is so restricted, it needs a subwoofer to supply the missing bottom octaves.



# CONCLUSIONS

These exceptional standmounts all have something to offer, but one rises above the rest

**A**lthough this group is relatively inexpensive, it doesn't lack originality. Sure, all are port-loaded two-way standmounts with fairly small enclosures and bass/mid drive units. But it's a well-tried formula and one which is often capable of delivering fine sound quality and performance from a compact, cost-effective package, especially when the bass is boosted by close-to-wall positioning.

Naturally there are some limitations, but that's true of all loudspeaker systems to some

extent. These small examples are likely to show some lack of deep bass grunt, weight and scale and also some limitation in dynamic grip and expression. Close-to-wall siting does somewhat constrain stereo depth, but the bass end remains free from boom and there's very little enclosure to add coloration. And if a small main driver inevitably has limited bass grunt, it more than makes up for it by performing better than larger drivers towards the top of its range: in the vital

presence region where the crossover transition takes place, for example

The Tannoy Revolution DC4 is the smallest in our group and a little too small for use without some subwoofer assistance: the DC4T 'Tower' version with its extra bass driver is an altogether better bet.

There's not much difference in size between the Audio Pro, the Dali, the Infinity and the Rega, so their performances are pretty similar, though there are obvious differences in sonic character.

The Avanti A.10 is a fine all-rounder, if a little forward in the midband, whereas Dali's Lektor 2 is much more restrained and shut in. The Infinity Classia C205 has an appealing warmth, but is also a little bland, while the Rega, on the other hand, sounds open and dynamically exciting, if a little lightweight. Focal's Chorus 706V is a little larger than the others, so needs more care in room placement, but also brings some benefits in loudness capability and grip. **HFC**

## TRY THEM WITH THESE

### AMPLIFIERS

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 740A** £500  
Ticks all the boxes for imaging, detail, bass and access to the music.

### CREEK EVO

£500  
Could be more accurate, but its energetic musical presentation is very persuasive.

### CD PLAYERS

**ARCAM CD17** £500  
Its radical CD platform delivers a sound that's civilised and musically convincing.

### REGA APOLLO

£598  
Ahead of its price class, this top-loader has clean and coherent top end detail.

## HINTS AND TIPS

»» Floor-coupling spikes should have tight lock-nuts, but don't over-tighten these or you'll strip the socket threads  
»» Finding the right place to put the loudspeakers acoustically is very important. Do take the time and trouble experimenting.

»» Moving a speaker from a free space location until it's close to a wall will substantially boost the mid-bass  
»» Expect speakers to improve steadily over the first 100 hours or so  
»» Use decent speaker cable, if you want your system to perform at its best.

## LOUDSPEAKERS AT A GLANCE

						
MAKE MODEL	AudioPro Avanti A.10	Dali Lektor 2	Focal Chorus 706V	Infinity Classia C205	Rega RS1	Tannoy Revolution DC4
PRICE	£350	£299	£389	£400	£398	£345
SOUND	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
PRACTICALITY	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
BUILD	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
VALUE	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
OVERALL	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
CONCLUSION	Stylish-shaped enclosure, wood veneer and a very well-balanced sound at a sharp price	Classic Dali ingredients in a cost-effective enclosure, although it sounds a bit shut in	Bigger than the others, with a correspondingly more muscular sound, dynamically speaking	Unique and unusual styling; close-to-wall sound quality is warm and even, if a bit bland	Very expressive through the midband and treble, if a bit light on body and weight	Nice mid/treble coherence, but needs some extra bass weight and scale
<b>KEY FEATURES</b>						
SIZE (WxHxD)	19x29x26cm	31x17.6x22cm	22.2x39x24.8cm	19x38.4x23.5cm	15x32x23.6cm	15.2x27x16.2cm
DRIVER CONFIG	2-way	2-way	2-way	2-way	2-way	2-way
MAIN DRIVER SIZE(S)	1x130mm	1x130mm	1x165mm	1x130mm	1x130mm	1x125mm
STAND/ FLOOR	Stand	Stand	Stand	Stand	Stand	Stand
CABINET FINISH	Real wood	Vinyl	Vinyl	Gloss and matt paint	Real wood	real wood
BI-WIRE	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
<b>LAB CONCLUSIONS</b> E = EXCELLENT · G = GOOD · A = AVERAGE · P = POOR						
SENSITIVITY	87dB <b>A</b>	86dB <b>P</b>	88dB <b>G</b>	86dB <b>P</b>	88 dB <b>G</b>	86dB <b>P</b>
EST. BASS EXTENSION	38Hz <b>A</b>	35Hz <b>A</b>	27Hz <b>A</b>	40Hz <b>P</b>	42Hz <b>P</b>	60Hz <b>P</b>
IMPEDANCE (NOM/ MIN)	8/ 6 ohms <b>G</b>	8/ 6 ohms <b>G</b>	8/ 6 ohms <b>A</b>	8/ 6 ohms <b>G</b>	8/ 6 ohms <b>G</b>	8/ 6 ohms <b>G</b>
FREQUENCY BALANCE	+20% <b>G</b>	0% <b>A</b>	+30% <b>G</b>	-10% <b>A</b>	-10% <b>A</b>	-30% <b>P</b>
RESPONSE SMOOTHNESS	+10% <b>G</b>	-20% <b>P</b>	+20% <b>A</b>	0% <b>A</b>	-10% <b>A</b>	0% <b>A</b>

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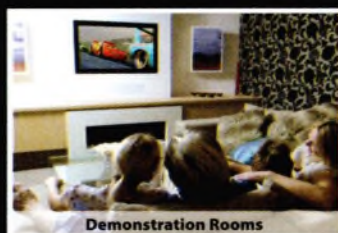
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Artcoustic	Chord Electronics	Goldring	Loewe	Musical Fidelity	Pioneer	QED	Samsung	Sound Org	Teac
Atacama	Cyrus	Grado	Logitech	Nevo	Pixel Magic	Quad	Sennheiser	Sound Style	Toshiba
Audiolab	Da-Lite	In Focus	Marantz	Onkyo	PMC	Quadraspire	Sharp	SpeakerCraft	Van Den Hul
B&W	Denon	Ixos	Meridian	Optimum	Primare	REL	Sim2	Spectral	Yamaha

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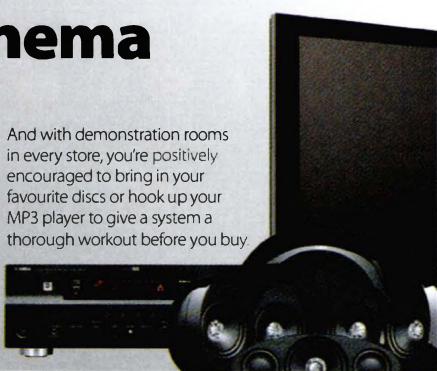
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**Pioneer G9 KURO Series Plasma TVs**  
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**Samsung NEW**  
New range includes both full 1080p LCD and LED models.



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**Panasonic VIERA NEW**  
Panasonic's new 2009 range includes plasma and LCD, full 1080p HD ready, freesat and a variety of screen sizes.

### DLP PROJECTORS

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**Sim2 Grand Cinema HT380**

This award-winning projector has to be seen to be believed.



**InFocus IN80, IN81, IN82 & IN83**

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### HOME CINEMA SEPARATES

**Onkyo NEW**

Onkyo's 2009 range includes the new TX-SR607 - the first product to support Dolby ProLogic IIz which enables two extra front height speakers.



**Yamaha**  
The DSP-AX863SE AV amplifier features full support for HD audio formats ensuring maximum enjoyment of all high definition sources. Also available is the award-winning DSP-AX763 and the flagship DSP-Z11 at selected stores.



**Denon**  
The range includes the award-winning Denon DVD1940 DVD player and outstanding AV amplifiers and receivers including the new AVR-1909 and AVC-1HD.

### BLU-RAY DISC PLAYERS

**Panasonic DMP-BD35**

Conforming to BD profile 2.0 this player delivers outstanding picture and sound quality.

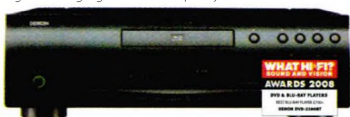


**Pioneer BDP-LX71**

View film exactly as the filmmakers intended; in breathtaking 1080p resolution, at 24 frames per second with Pioneer's new BDP-LX71.



**Denon DVD-2500BT** **BLU-RAY TRANSPORT**  
For faithful transmission of Full HD video and HD audio signals bringing out the full quality of film.



### HI-FI SEPARATES

**Cyrus NEW**

Following the remarkable 'Servo Evolution' CD players, Cyrus has introduced a new range of amplifiers. Featuring circuitry developed for its DAC XP, the **8 XP d** and **Pre XP d** include digital inputs - ideal for playing music stored on your computer - while the entry model, **6 XP**, is based on the 8 XP but without the digital option. These new models also includes two-zone multiroom capability.



The award-winning 'Servo Evolution' CD players - **CD6 SE, CD8 SE & CDX t SE**



**Roksan Kandy K2**  
Roksan replaces its hugely successful Kandy series with the Kandy K2 amplifier and matching CD player.

**Pro-Ject Turntables**

Pro-ject's excellent range includes the multi award-winning Debut, versions include Debut USB - ideal for converting your favourite tracks to your iPod and Debut colour - available in finishes to suit any decor.

**WHAT HI-FI AWARDS 2008**



**Genie 2**  
The new Genie 2 is an ideal choice for vinyl lovers on a budget.

**Marantz CD6002 & PM6002**

This award-winning CD and amplifier from Marantz gives true high-end performance and represents outstanding value for money.



**Arcam FMJ Series**  
Combining sleek design, flexible connectivity and a level of reproduction far beyond that of budget separates systems.

### LOUDSPEAKERS

**B&W 600 Series**

The fourth generation of the 600 series features new drive units, crossovers and a whole new design.

**B&W MiniTheatre MT30**

Award-winning 5.1 speaker system available in silver, black or white.



**Dali Lektor NEW**

Dali complements its range with the Lektor 2. Only slightly larger than the award-winning Lektor 1, this new model represents outstanding value.

**Q Acoustics 1010i 5.1**

Smart styling complements the Q Acoustics' award-winning performance.



**KEF KHT3005SE**

Award-winning 5.1 speaker package available in high gloss black or silver.



**Monitor Audio**

With a choice of sizes and finishes, there's a Monitor Audio speaker to complement any system. Ranges include Bronze BR, Silver RS, Gold Signature, new Radius HD and the flagship Platinum.



**Radius HD**

A new decor matching range of ultra-compact sub/sat speakers replacing the highly acclaimed Radius.



**Spendor A5 and A6 NEW**

The A5 offers exceptional performance in relation to its compact dimensions. New drive units ensure clear and natural mid-range and beautifully open treble. The A6 utilises technology developed whilst developing the ST loudspeaker with its asymmetrically sculptured tweeter faceplate and refined 18cm bass/mid driver.



ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEMS

**Denon D-M37DAB**

Denon's micro systems are back. This award-winning model, available in silver or black, features a CD player, capable of reading MP3 and WMA discs, a DAB tuner, 30W amplifier and optional SC-M37 speakers.



**Teac Reference Series 380**

This new three component system's strong feature set includes DAB/DAB+ and WiFi Internet Radio, MP3 playback from CD or via a front-mounted USB socket, an optional iPod dock, high-quality circuitry, tone and balance controls and CD Direct function.



**Arcam Solo Mini**

Award-winning integrated CD, Radio and Amplifier with iPod control via optional rLead/rDock



WHAT IS IT AWARDS 2008 ALL-IN-ONE SYSTEMS BEST VALUE AWARD

WHAT IS IT AWARDS 2008 THREE COMPONENT SYSTEMS BEST VALUE AWARD

**B&W Zeppelin**

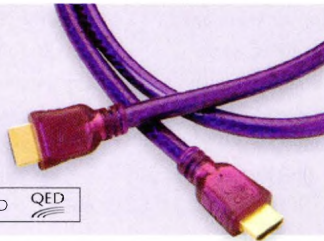
This award-winning iPod docking station ticks all the boxes: it's beautiful, solid as a rock and sounds amazing!



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With Squeezebox™ Duet, you can listen to the music you love in any room of your home. This smart, wireless player delivers your entire music collection to your stereo. The controller then makes it easy to browse, select and play.



**Sonos**

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# ASK US

Got a burning hi-fi question? Find the answer here...

## Send your queries to:

Jason Kennedy, Hi-Fi Choice, Future Publishing Ltd, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW. Or email your queries to [jason.kennedy@futurenet.com](mailto:jason.kennedy@futurenet.com)



**PAUL MESSENGER**

Former Hi-Fi Choice editor Paul is widely regarded as the UK's foremost loudspeaker expert and is on hand to answer your speaker questions.



**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. He's also HFC's 'Mr.Tweaker'.



**RICHARD BLACK**

Richard is a professional musician and recording engineer and a highly knowledgeable hi-fi analyst to boot. If your question is technical, he's your man.



**MALCOLM STEWART**

Former editor of Hi-Fi Review magazine, Malcolm was one of the best-known and most outspoken reviewers of the 1980s and 1990s. Still going strong, he only writes for Hi-Fi Choice.



**ALVIN GOLD**

Alvin has been writing about his obsession for more than 25 years. He has expertise across all product types and despite the photo is 'happy to be of service'.



**JASON KENNEDY**

Jason Kennedy was a former editor of Hi-Fi Choice and spent an incredible 17 years on the title. Now he's back as HFC's Operations Editor and loves giving advice.

## CABLE CONFUSION

I'm trying to get new interconnects and speaker cables for a system consisting of a Cyrus CD6S CD player and FM7.5 tuner, Musical Fidelity X-A1 amplifier and Bowers&Wilkins 602S3 speakers. I don't want too much bass, any ideas? I was thinking Chord Chameleon Silver Plus, Nordost Blue Heaven, DNM Solid Core, Kimber Timbre or Crystal CU for interconnect. For speaker cable there is Chord Carnival Silver Screen, QED Silver Anniversary XT or Kimber 4PR or 4VS. Help I'm confused!

**Boatma** HFC Forum

**HFC** As a general rule we would recommend that you go for interconnect and speaker cable from the same company, that way you can be fairly confident that both links will have the same characteristics. If you want a lean bottom end the DNM Solid Core cables might be best but, although cables do exhibit tonal characteristics, it's their ability to resolve detail that is important. We recommend that you control the amount of bass in the balance by adjusting the placement of speakers and buy cables that will give you the best sound for your money. Of the options you mention, the Kimber and Chord would be our top choices, but the DNM is very good value and times extremely well.

## RUARK STYLE

I have had a pair of Ruark Templar speakers for ten years and whilst I have enjoyed them over the period, I would like to replace them with something more capable. However, my wife flatly refuses to consider any other speaker because she like the styling of the Ruarks so much.

My question is, therefore, are there any alternative speakers with a better sonic performance, but with the same compact and handsome appearance? I use a Meridian 507 CD player and AVI Lab series amplifier.

**Phil Evans** via email

**HFC** The Templar is no longer made by Ruark, but if you like the look and sound of that model then the current Talisman III is a worthy successor. It's slightly larger, but only a few centimetres higher and wider and would probably sit happily in place of the speakers you have. We found it slightly lean in the bass, but with a good sense of pace and a smooth, clean balance.

If your wife can cope with something of a similar size to the Templar, but with more contemporary styling, we can recommend PMC's compact floorstander the GB1i. This is a rather more capable speaker than its diminutive scale would suggest and will deliver a fine result with your electronics.

## CAN DO

I'm thinking about spending some money on a decent headphone set-up. I won't be buying everything in one go, but progressively, as and when I have enough money. I'm thinking of creating a headphone set-up because, (a) I live in a first floor flat and find myself increasingly using my headphones in the evening and (b), I've become so disillusioned with the price of high-end equipment. I've come to the conclusion I'll never be able to save up for, or at least put together a significant deposit towards my next upgrade, so I might as well spend the money on something I'll get enjoyment from now and upgrade my system in a few years' time.

I'm thinking of buying the Sennheiser HD650 (HFC 312). This is the top end of my budget and, as the headphones have received very good reviews, I will probably buy these blind. I need advice on two things, however.

I'll initially be using the headphones on my cheap portable CD player. Failing that I was thinking of (I'm still coming to terms with this!) buying an iPod classic, 160GB, which would mean I could store loads of uncompressed music – although I'm not sure if and how I can transfer my CDs to the machine itself.

Eventually, I'll create a better set-up for serious listening, straight from my CD player. Can anyone recommend a decent headphone amplifier and how important/much of a change would it make?

My budget would be say £350 maximum. I know Musical Fidelity used to have the X-Cans, but I think these are no longer available, which leaves models from Creek, Rega and Graham Slee. I know absolutely nothing about any of these.

**Sometimesuk** HFC Forum

**HFC** The Sennheiser HD650 is indeed a great headphone and will give its best with a decent headphone amplifier. The reasons for using one are a bit like those for using a decent amplifier with loudspeakers – a cheap amp will drive sound through the system, but a decent one will reveal all the fine details that taken together make for high fidelity. So while you can drive headphones with an integrated amplifier and some CD players they will sound better with a dedicated headphone amp. A new model that we



### NOT LOOKING FOR HI-FI

I am not looking to move to PC-based music any time soon, but I do listen to music on the PC in my studio when I am working. I play MP3s with iTunes through a basic, powered 2.1 speaker system – nothing even approaching hi-fi sound – but fine for tunes whilst I work.

However, I do have a pair of Tannoy M1s kicking around gathering dust. What would it take for me to hook these into the PC? Again, I'm not looking to build a hi-fi system here, just utilise some perfectly decent speakers that I have lying around.

My sound card appears to just have a bog-standard 3.5mm line-out jack. Thanks

**Neil** HFC Forum

**HFC** The easy answer to your question is get hold of an integrated amplifier and a



minijack-to-phono cable and connect the PC to a line input on your amp and then hook up the speakers. You could go further and get a better soundcard for your PC, one that gave a digital output on a coax socket would be good, then you could do the D/A in a decent standalone DAC such as the £130 Beresford TC-7510 (HFC 316) or the £200 DAC Magic (HFC 313). As audio from PCs is a growing thing, there are almost no limits to what you can do and ultimately results can be spectacular.

haven't had a chance to listen to, but would be worth seeking out, is the Musical Fidelity V-Can. This is a basic-looking affair priced at £99, if it lives up to the company's reputation it could well be great value. Our favourite sensibly priced unit is the Pro-Ject Head Box SE II (£200), but this has twin outputs with separate volume controls which you probably don't need. There is also a Pro-Ject Headbox 2 at £105, which would probably be more suitable.

With regard to using an iPod with the HD650, this is not such a good plan as iPods tend not to have enough power for full-size headphones, especially the UK variety which are volume limited, thanks to our health and safety nannies in Westminster!

### OLD CHESTNUT

In the February issue (HFC 316) five excellent reviews resulted in two 'four' and two 'five star' scores being achieved by each product in the four individual categories. Surprisingly, however, all five were awarded five stars overall, despite the fact that one had scored only four stars for sound. Although five stars may have been justified, you do state that the "emphasis is on performance" and logically none should have been awarded more than four and a half stars anyway. Surely it would be better if your reviewers' score in all categories were rounded up or down to the nearest half star – effectively a score out of ten. I believe that most readers (and reviewers, perhaps?) would prefer a potentially more accurate and less confusing scoring system. Thanks for producing a great magazine.

**John Griffin** Herts

**HFC** In an attempt to clarify differences in results between components we do not use half stars, our system is a mark out of five. If a product is very good, but not as good as 'best in class' for sound it will be awarded four rather than five stars in order to differentiate it. The overall score reflects all the various aspects of a product including build quality, features etc, so if something gets four stars for sound, but five in the other categories it can warrant a five star overall mark.

Ultimately our star system is a guide, we recommend that you read the review in full to get a proper idea of how a component performs and how it might suit your system and tastes.

### JUKE JIVE

Is there a hi-fi system that you can store your CD collection on without having to use a computer? Is that what Sony's new Gigajuke is?

I also want to know whether you can download your music onto an MP3 player and which MP3 player would you use with it?

**D.Bonnett** East Sussex

**HFC** There are several systems that you can store your CDs on without using a computer, they include the Naim HDX and multiroom audio alternatives from the likes of Imerge and Living Control. The Sony Gigajuke is a micro system with an 80GB hard disk that you can rip your CDs onto without a computer, you can also download music to an MP3 player. There are two models the NAS-E35HD without wireless operation and the NAS-S55HDE which can be used as the hub of a multiroom wireless system. The former, at around £200 would appear to be what you are after.

## WHERE SHOULD I PLACE MY LOUDSPEAKERS?

With most loudspeakers there is no simple answer to this question. On the one hand they will produce sound wherever you put them, but on the other if you don't want boomy bass and you'd like to hear some stereo imaging alongside a reasonably even tonal balance, then care taken with placement will be repaid in full.

The reason there is no simple answer is that rooms tend to vary in their size, shape and furnishing to a large extent. A room with lots of soft furnishings will have a different character to one with a minimalist interior, then there's room shape and construction which has a dramatic effect on the bass in particular.

But there are some simple steps which you can go through to try and establish the best place to put your speakers. Start by finding out how far away from the rear wall (the one behind the speakers) they need to be. What you are aiming for is the most even tonal balance. The bass output of dynamic loudspeakers, those with cones and domes in cabinets as opposed to electrostatics, increases as the space between them and room boundaries decreases. In other words, the closer they are to the wall the more bass you will hear, if you put a speaker in a room corner it will produce boomy bass almost regardless of the speaker size. So avoid corners unless your speakers are very lean in balance and try different distances to the rear wall until you get a good balance between mid and bass, too close to the wall and the imaging will suffer and become indistinct. Too far away and the bass will be reduced and balance become too light.

Humans are fortunately able to adapt to variations in sonic character of different rooms quite easily, so the degree of tonal aberration in a system is, perhaps, less significant than other qualities such as timing, but it is, nonetheless, worthwhile trying in order to achieve a reasonably neutral balance from your speakers. This way you will be able to more thoroughly appreciate the varied colours of the music you play through them.

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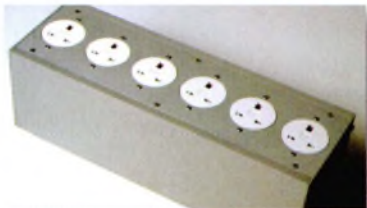
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# HI-FI CHOICE BUYER'S BIBLE



Welcome to the *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Bible* – the ultimate guide to the very best high-performance hi-fi gear that 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 disc players. Whether your hi-fi passion is for high-performance analogue or digital, 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 them with your favourite discs.

Products that score more than four stars 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 niche 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. Many pundits believe that SACD's future lies with classical recordings, a genre that remains buoyant for the format.

## 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, and for 2009 DACs are back!

### 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 75 ohms 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



### Yamaha CD-S700 £400

The CD-S700 is a good, no-frills CD player, without any of the SACD gubbins found in its bigger brothers. It does, however, include a USB port for connecting to an MP3 player.



### Marantz SA8003 £700

Just missing our Awards judging for 2008, the high-scoring SA8003 is our current favourite player under £1,000. Playing both CD and SACD, the 8003 is a class act.

## Our favourite **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
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>												
BB	Arcam CD17	500	Civilised sound, with a positively deluxe treble. Bass is clear, if not the weightiest ever	●	●	●	●					315
BB	Cairn Tornado	850	The Tornado is a full-on experience that shuns compromise and delivers intensely real sound for its price		●	●					●	305
BB	Cambridge Audio Azur 740C	500	Very flexible, this innovative upsampling player sounds exceptionally neutral and highly informative	●	●	●				●		293
BB	Cambridge Audio Azur 840C	750	Ultra-civilised sound is not to every taste: rhythm-lovers may find this player frustrating	●	●	●			●			315
BB	Creek Evo	495	A minute treble lift: otherwise this is a very capable player that offers fine value		●	●	●					285
BB	Cyrus CD6 SE	900	A winning combination of detail and sheer musical energy with more than a hint of high end to the performance			●	●					318
BB	Denon DCD-500AE	160	Cheap, well built and good, if slightly soft-edged sound quality			●	●			●		295
BB	Marantz CD6002	280	A hint of treble unevenness is the only specific flaw: performance is class-leading in most areas		●	●	●	●		●		301
BB	Marantz SA8003	700	Classic Marantz sound in a classy and attractive package. Our favourite sub-£1,000 player.	●	●	●	●					315
BB	Naim CD5i	875	Its strikingly competent musical performance comfortably exceeds the expectations of an entry-level player				●					307
BB	Quad 99CD-S	650	Revels in big music thanks to fearless presentation: smaller-scale works can lack focus			●	●			●		291
BB	Rega Apollo	498	Unless you can't abide top-loaders, check this out: musically it's a highly praiseworthy performer		●		●					285
BB	Roksan Kandy K2	750	State-of-the-art technology and precision engineering produces a fine CD performance		●	●	●			●		315
BB	Yamaha CD-S2000	999	Sophisticated, this is a beautifully controlled, high-resolution player, although SACD is stereo-only	●	●	●	●		●	●		309
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>												
BB	Arcam CD37	1,100	Excellent detail and imaging, neutral tonality and above-average bass resolution	●	●	●	●					318
EC	Audio Research CD5	4,500	Audibly better than most CD players on the market – natural and refined, yet assertive and very dynamic		●	●				●		312
BB	Bryston BCD-1	2,050	Not as open as some but rather more timely than most, it sounds a lot more gripping than it looks		●	●				●		300
BB	Cairn Fog 3	1,995	Ergonomically challenged, high energy player with Gallic charm and digital preamp on board		●	●					●	302
BB	Classé CDP-102	3,000	Rich, dynamic CD/DVD player with a full bottom end, impressive dynamics and a luxurious yet revealing balanced		●	●	●	●		●	●	286
BB	Cyrus Audio CD 8 SE	1,100	A highly civilised player which can, nevertheless, deal convincingly with raw music		●	●	●					310
BB	Cyrus Audio 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	EMM Labs CDSA	9,995	Classy, stripped down to basics SACD/CD player with some excellent engineering below decks	●	●	●	●			●		302
EC	Esoteric X-05	3,495	Superb resolve of fine detail combined with a perfectly judged balance and an ability to draw you into the music	●	●	●	●			●		314
EC	Leema Antila	2,495	Musically engaging player that will have you going through your CDs afresh. Balanced connection is best		●	●	●			●		291
BB	Leema Stream	1,095	The most timely disc player at its price point has tactile imaging and good dynamics, but unusual control system		●		●					306
BB	Linn Akurate CD	3,985	This highly engaging multi-format non-video player doesn't have huge transparency, but is musically addictive	●	●	●	●			●		299
EC	Marantz SA-11S2	2,700	Superb value for money, this well-balanced player features various filter settings to customise performance	●	●	●	●			●		304
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
EC	Meridian G08	2,250	Advanced digital processing with special apodising filter that gives a very clean sound		●	●			●	●		312
EC	Naim HDX	4,500	The HDX hard disk player represents an entirely new paradigm for high-fidelity replay. Who needs CD players?		●	●	●					311
BB	Roksan Caspian M Series-1	1,250	An exceptionally fine CD player that provides a high-end and musically rewarding performance		●	●						307
BB	Shanling CD-T1000SE	1,600	Commendably committed player which gets right to the heart of a wide variety of musical styles		●		●			●	●	306
BB	Sony SCD-XA5400ES	1,199	Elegant, refined control system and very strong CD/SACD performance. Sound is bold with high resolution	●	●	●	●		●	●		313
BB	Unison Research CDE	2,350	Valve CD player with interchangeable DACs that can double as a standalone DAC that oozes musicality		●		●			●	●	318

**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.

## TOP BUYS



**Arcam CD37 £1,100**

A welcome flagship newcomer, with sound that does honours to the venerable CD format, while also helping to prove the worth of SACD. Practical, unfussy and excellent value.



**EMM Labs CDSA £9,995**

Although expensive, the high-end CDSA from Canadian expert EMM Labs manages to redefine the performance of both CD and SACD. A true audiophile piece of kit.



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# VINYL

## Turntables, cartridges and phono stages



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

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

A fourth element is an amp dedicated to the delicate job of amplifying and equalising the cartridge's insubstantial output. This is called a phono stage and can be found in some integrated amplifiers and preamps, but is



### TURNTABLE SET-UP

increasingly purchased separately for use with line-only amps.

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

Setting up a turntable varies from model to model, but the general principle is to level the platter by adjusting the suspension or, 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.

## TOP BUYS



### Dynavector DV-10X5 £250

Although fiddly to mount, this high-output MC cartridge has superb dynamics and equally fine timing, making it well worth the effort of proper fitting.



### Creek Audio OBH15 £220

Practical and highly compatible unit offering fine detail and a pleasing mellow balance. If you actually buy one, ask the supplying dealer what OBH stands for.



### Funk Firm Saffire £1,900

Something of a gem the very individual Saffire is refined and pleasingly neutral with excellent dynamics and very strong timing ability.



### Avid Volvere £2,750

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 EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

# TURNTABLES

### Record players

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER
				SPEEDS	SUSP SUBCHASSIS	SWITCHABLE SPEED CHANGE	SUPPLIED WITH ARM	
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	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
	Clearaudio Emotion	985	Beautifully built with open and clean sound emphasising mid and top, but delivering nice timely bass	33/45			●	309
	Clearaudio Champion	1,365	Small, practical and good-sounding, with impressively 'dead' arm. Isolation recommended	33/45			●	268
	Clearaudio Performance	1,940	Ceramic-magnetic bearing spells a surprisingly uncoloured performance. Good arm and cartridge	33/45			●	295
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Clearaudio Ambient	4,220	Innovative use of materials leads to a fast, precise and thrilling sound (tonearm extra)	33/45	●	●	●	271
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	EAR Disc Master	7,695	Combines new 'no contact' drive technology and high-quality materials to bring state of the art resolution	33/45/78	●	●	opt	276
	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
	The Funk Firm Funk V	750	Vector drive brings a refinement to the standard Funk that increases resolution. For high-class analogue sound, it's a killer	33/45			opt	284
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	The Funk Firm Saffire	1,900	Individual design and a sound that's refined and neutral with strong timing and dynamics	33/45			opt	309
	Goldring GR2	265	Nicely finished Rega-manufactured deck with RB250 arm and an open, engaging sound quality	33/45			●	266
	Michell Tecnodoc	886	Needs careful partnering but can deliver a very sophisticated result for the money	33/45			●	309
	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
	Pro-Ject RPM 5	450	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
	Pro-Ject RPM 6.1	600	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
	Pro-Ject X-Pack	800	Combines some very strong elements (Ortofon Rondo Red) into a killer package with top sound and value	33/45			●	309
	Pro-Ject RPM 9 X	1,200	A gorgeous turntable that sounds as good as it looks – vital and transparent! Price includes carbon fibre arm	33/45			●	268
	Rega P3-24	398	Very competent, uncoloured and musical, much improved by £148 outboard electronic power supply	33/45			opt	298
	Rega P5/RB700	698	Combines a great sense of timing with market-leading resolution and a phenomenal tonearm – a hard act to beat	33/45			opt	257
	Rega P7/RB700	1,298	A highly capable player that could hold its own in the most exalted company – a vivid and natural performer	33/45			opt	257
	Roksan Radius 5/Nima	895	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation (acrylic version tested)	33/45	●	●		248
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	SME Model 10A	3,411	Elegant and extremely capable design, tested here with Series V/309 hybrid arm	33/45	●	●	●	195
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Townshend Rock V/Excalibur II	7,000	If you want to hear everything that's on a record then there's no better machine for the job (includes Excalibur II)	33/45	●	●	●	307

## Our favourite BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

# PHONO CARTRIDGES

### MM and MC cartridges

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			ISSUE NUMBER
				MM	MC	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	
	Denon DL-103R	200	Adds refinement to basic DL-103, at a price. One of the best rock'n'roll cartridges around		●		285
	Dynavector DV-10X5	250	A high-output MC with superb dynamics and fine timing that's difficult to mount, but well worth the effort		●		307
	Grado Prestige Gold	110	Produces rich, open and expansive music with the minimum of fuss	●		●	235
	Ortofon Rondo Red	325	Delivers detail, power and resolution and makes a good case for its price		●		307
	Ortofon Salsa	200	Despite a touch of midrange coloration, this cartridge really involves the listener with good extension and a clean, agile sound		●		290
	Sumiko Blue Point Spec Evo III	239	High-output MC with refinement at high frequencies and a nimble, articulate and revealing sound		●		270
	van den Hul MC One Special	699	A gorgeous cartridge that's worth the price every time you hear a familiar track in a whole new light		●		235
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	van den Hul Condor XCM	2,400	A stunning cartridge with stereo imaging, dynamics and detail resolution to die for		●		265
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Naked Analog	1,450	With its smooth clean highs, transparent midband and nimble bass, this is a lot of performance for the money		●		253

## Our favourite BEST BUY EC EDITOR'S CHOICE

# PHONO STAGES

### Phono stages

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			ISSUE NUMBER
				MM PHONO INPUTS	MC PHONO INPUTS	ADJ GAIN	
	Cambridge Audio 640P	60	An outrageously good bargain that suits budget systems, but can confidently survive upgrades before and after in the chain	●	●		305
	Creek OBH15	220	Practical and highly compatible unit offering fine detail and pleasing, mellow balance	●	●		305
	NAD PP2 phono stage	50	A fine buy for turntable users on a tight budget – open tonality and clarity is distinctly impressive for the money	●	●		245
	Tom Evans Microgroove	400	For dynamics and real bass extension with good tonal colour this is the one to beat. The Plus version (£700) is even better!		●		234
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">EC</span>	Tom Evans The Groove	1,800	Plenty of detail, excellent imaging and almost flawlessly neutral: a good choice for maximum information retrieval off any LP	●			201
	Trichord Dino/Dino+	498	Relaxed yet resolute with very good image depth and natural balance, not to mention great flexibility	●	●	●	234

**TURNTABLES PLUS 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.

**PLUS 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.

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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. However, 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. Sound quality judgements are muddled by listening to different forms of compression and processing at the studio for each station.

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

### RECEPTION

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

### TOP BUYS



**Denon TU-1800DAB £250**  
Combines DAB with FM/AM reception and good all-round design at a tempting price.



**Creek Evolution £285**  
Classy tuner with a sound that's detailed, cohesive and extended tonally.



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



**Onkyo T-4555DAB £350**  
A real radio bargain, this DAB/FM tuner is free from grain and tonal blemishes.

## Our favourite TUNERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### FM & DAB HI-FI SEPARATES

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS
<b>FM TUNERS</b>			
	Creek Audio Evolution	285	Sound is detailed, cohesive and extended both tonally and spatially – very classy
	Creek Audio T50	550	Very fine results indeed with precision, polish and insight added to excellent basics
	Cyrus FM-X	500	A classic no-nonsense FM tuner that achieves gratifying sonic results. Upgradable with PSX-R power supply
	Denon TU-1500AE	130	Well attuned to the crowded modern FM band, this tuner produces clear, detailed sound with plenty of gusto
	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
	Magnum Dynalab MD 90T	1,295	No remote or presets as standard, manual everything and valves... but its sound is simply sublime
	Marantz ST7001	300	FM reception could offer a little more detail and insight. DAB is fine, but near-identical Denon 1800 is cheaper!
	NAD C422	180	Admirably free of roughness or other obvious nasties, with just a slight lack of clarity
	Pure DRX-702ES	210	Apparently good value is restricted by persistent veiling on FM: 'PAC' on DAB mellows sound a little
	Rega Radio 3	398	Strong bass, clear treble and a high enjoyment factor make this an appealing FM performer
	Rotel RT-02	279	A highly competent tuner which always sounds appealing and fuss-free
	T+A T1210R	1,000	High-end looks are matched by the sound, which is detailed and sophisticated, with useful features too

<b>DAB TUNERS</b>						
WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	REMOTE CONTROL	SIGNAL STRENGTH METER	ROTARY TUNING KNOB	SCALE NUMBER
DAB,FM	16					308
DAB	10					251
FM	7					283
FM,M,L	100					281
DAB,FM,M	200					283
FM	opt					257
FM	200					283
FM,M	30					250
DAB,FM,M	99					283
FM,M	20					283
FM,M	30					242
FM	100					283
DAB,FM	16					299
DAB	10					248
DAB,FM,M	200					299
DAB,FM,M	200					299
DAB,FM	30					299
DAB,FM	40					298

**SPECS KEY** WAVEBANDS Which bands are supported: FM, M – medium wave, L – long wave, DAB – digital audio broadcasting. PRESETS How many stations can be stored in memory. RDS Radio Data System – station names and program titles can be displayed among other facilities (FM only, DAB has more comprehensive display potential). REMOTE CONTROL For the couch potato. SIGNAL STRENGTH METER Useful for setting up an aerial. ROTARY TUNING KNOB An ergonomic alternative to buttons.

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS

*Integrated and pre/power amps*



Amplifiers come in two basic forms: integrated and preamplifier (pre) plus power amp. Integrated simply means that both pre and power are in one box. There are definite advantages to separating the 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.

The fundamental of amp/speaker interfacing is power rating and speaker sensitivity. You can drive a high-sensitivity speaker with a 10-watt valve amp, but it takes a 200-watt behemoth to get the best out of speakers which present a difficult load. Although, as a rule, you can't have too much power.

### How to choose an amp

The main areas in which amps vary are: timing, dynamics, stereo imaging and transparency. Timing is the ability to present the attack and decay of each note precisely; amps with strong timing have a snap and coherence that is very appealing.



Dynamics is a general term for the ability to portray variations in level between individual notes and is different to dynamic range (the difference between the loudest and softest notes). Dynamically strong amps tend to have more life and energy.

Stereo imaging is how solid or three-dimensional an instrument or voice sounds. The point of having two rather than one speaker is to make it possible to recreate the soundstage of the original recording, thus amps that have strong imaging skills can create a sonic space that seems to extend the room.

Transparency of detail is the most obvious difference between amps. One amp will present more subtlety than another, but the drawback with using this as your main criterion is that a forward or 'bright' sounding amplifier will emphasise detail at the expense of overall musical coherence.

### Q&A

#### SHOULD I LEAVE MY AMP ON FOR THE BEST RESULTS?

All audio electronics (including amplifiers) perform better when they are warmed up. To help protect the environment, switch your amp on, at least one hour before listening.

#### WHAT IS BI-WIRING AND BI-AMPLING?

Running separate cables to the treble and bass/mid terminals on a speaker is bi-wiring. 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.

#### WHY DO VALVE AMPS HAVE SO LITTLE POWER?

Valve amps are inherently low powered, but when partnered with high-sensitivity loudspeakers, they are quite capable of producing perfectly adequate head-banging levels.

## Our favourite STEREO AMPLIFIERS

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ESQ# NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
	Arcam DIVA A70	500	A smart and practical amp offering good snap and pace, with natural dynamics and good detail	6	MM			60	289
	Adv Acoustic MAP305DA II	600	A lot of amplifier for the money and capable of revealing and exciting sound in the right company. Includes 4 digital inputs	5				100	300
	Arcam DIVA A90	850	Practical, affordable and impressively flexible amp with a laid-back approach but plenty of insight too	7	opt			100	303
	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	A chunky powerhouse with features aplenty, this amp revels in loud music, but also offers detail and delicacy when required	8				120	315
	Creek Audio Evolucion	545	Dynamics can seem understated, but energetic bass and fatigue-free treble make it an enjoyable listen	5	opt			85	311
	Cyrus 6vs2	600	Spunky little amp that reproduces instrumental timbres and acoustic spaces well, with real musical involvement	7				40	293
	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
	Marantz PM8003	630	Detail isn't the utmost, but great vitality makes this amplifier quite thrilling	5	MM			95	315
	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
	Naim Audio NAIT 5i	750	More versatile than previous Nait's, the 5i is a great all-round amplifier that offers vivid insights into all manner of music	4				50	305
	Onkyo A-933	500	Puts the music first, with sound that delivers the basics correctly but above all involves the listener	5				80	278

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY ES EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS

continued

### Integrated amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>									
<small>BB</small>	Roksan Kandy K2	750	Superior design and high performance credentials makes this amplifier a must-have bargain	5	MM		●	125	315
<small>BB</small>	Unison Research Unico P	795	Sound belies indifferent measured performance with good detail, balance and flowing melodic quality	5	MM	●		50	293
<small>BB</small>	Vincent SV-236	999	Valve hybrid whose sound is as idiosyncratic as its styling, short on neutrality but high on sparkle	6		●		100	295
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>									
<small>ES</small>	ATC SIA 2-150	2,248	Revealing, dynamic and powerful amplifier that works with a wide range of speakers. Superb build quality	4			●	150	314
<small>BB</small>	Arcam A38	1,200	A winning combination of sonic virtues including highly developed detail and musicality	7	opt	●	●	105	314
<small>ES</small>	Astin Trew AT2000	1,349	If you prefer the timbral and timing qualities of music to its bone-crunching potential, then this is a serious contender	4		●	●	65	317
<small>BB</small>	Copland CTA405	2,498	A musical and involving amplifier, which also has incredible insight and is user-friendly by valve amp standards	5		●		50	305
<small>BB</small>	Creek Destiny	1,100	A highly assured performer that doesn't superimpose its personality on the music	6		●	●	100	286
<small>ES</small>	Jadis Orchestra DIP	2,995	A smooth, refined, yet dynamic-sounding tube amplifier with the added 'novelty' of an iPod dock	5				40	313
<small>BB</small>	Leema Pulse	1,195	An organic and revealing sound alongside good power reserves and superb features, including a great MM/MC phono stage	5	●	●		80	306
<small>ES</small>	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
<small>ES</small>	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
<small>BB</small>	Mystère ia 11	1,250	Small, deceptively powerful integrated valve amp with a crisp, pacey sound	4				40	302
<small>BB</small>	NAD M3	1,899	Massive and flexible, it goes very loud with fine authority and dynamic range, but lacks some sparkle	7		●		180	285
<small>BB</small>	Naim Audio NAIT XS	1,250	Delivers a spellbinding, refined musical performance that sets a new benchmark for all integrated amplifiers	6	●	●		60	317
<small>ES</small>	Naim Audio SUPERNAIT	2,400	Serious communicative ability meets convenience in this sophisticated and powerful integrated design	6		●	●	80	294
<small>BB</small>	Primare I30	1,500	A smooth, sophisticated yet agile performer, and beautifully built too	6			●	100	267
<small>BB</small>	Pure Sound A30	1,100	Valve integrated, with the accent on music rather than rhythm. Needs more inputs, though	3				30	298
<small>BB</small>	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
<small>ES</small>	Unison Res. Unico Primo	1,450	Line input can be converted to phono (at extra cost). Sonically, this is an excellent mix of valve and solid state virtues	5	●			85	317
<small>ES</small>	Unison Research P70	3,495	Delightful valve amplifier with fine neutrality, sweet midband, impressive bandwidth and ample power	4		●		70	302
<small>BB</small>	Yamaha A-S2000	1,499	One of the few amplifiers to offer the benefit of true balanced operation at this price point	5	opt	●	●	160	309

## Our favourite BB BEST BUY ES EDITOR'S CHOICE

# STEREO AMPLIFIERS

### Pre/power amplifiers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				PRE-AMPLIFIER	POWER AMPLIFIER	LINE INPUTS	PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	POWER OUTPUT (W)	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £2,000</b>										
<small>BB</small>	Advance Acoustic MPP206/MAA406	900	This pair has good build and finish and a balance of qualities that's hard to beat for the price	●	●	4	opt	●	150	309
<small>BB</small>	Cambridge Audio Azur 840E/840W	2,000	Enterprising technology delivers a pre/power combo that always sounds detailed, composed and controlled	●	●	8	opt	●	200	309
<small>ES</small>	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
<small>BB</small>	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
<small>ES</small>	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
<small>ES</small>	Rotel RC-06/RB-06	598	A capable and surprisingly powerful-sounding combination which offers real value	●	●	5	●	●	70	285
<small>BB</small>	Russ Andrews HP-1/PA-1	1,198	Simply featured, but sounds appealingly realistic and solid. Highly capable in all areas design	●	●	2		●	50	303
<b>ABOVE £2,000</b>										
<small>BB</small>	Arcam C31/P38	2,050	Very civilised sound, in the best possible way. Well featured and smartly built	●	●	7	opt	●	100	308
<small>BB</small>	Border Patrol Control Unit	2,995	Bluff looking valve preamp, with one of the most neutral yet dynamic sounds around	●		5	opt			277
<small>BB</small>	Bryston BP26/3B-SST	5,300	The epitome of the iron fist in a velvet glove school of hi-fi. Dynamically superb and very detailed	●	●	8	opt	●	150	308
<small>ES</small>	Bryston BP26 DA/28 SST	5,600	Bryston's top preamp is now a serious competitor. The power amp reveals a lot of signal and serious grunt	●	●	6	opt	●	100	278
<small>ES</small>	Chord Prima/Mezzo 140	6,100	Small, muscular, beautifully made and styled and sounds like a dream	●	●	5		●	120	269
<small>ES</small>	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
<small>ES</small>	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
<small>ES</small>	Densen Beat B-200/B310	2,300	Lively, energetic combination that bring a great sense of scale to familiar recordings	●	●	8		opt	80	276
<small>ES</small>	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
<small>ES</small>	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
<small>ES</small>	Gamut D200 Mk3	3,950	A great power amp that's now even better – one of the best regardless of price		●				200	247
<small>ES</small>	Hovland HP-100/RADIA	12,745	Uncommonly musical valve/transistor hybrid transcends stereotypes, one of the genuine high achievers	●	●	9	opt		125	250
<small>ES</small>	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
<small>ES</small>	Marantz SC11S1/SM-11S1	5,300	Preamp and power amp duo delivers high resolution and is consistent with different loudspeaker loads	●	●	6	●	●	220	304
<small>BB</small>	Roksan Caspian M Series-1	2,245	A well-matched, powerful and enjoyable sounding amplifier combo that brings out the strengths of its CD player	●	●	5		●	85	307

**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 on-board 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.



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# STEREO SPEAKERS

*Speaker pairs for stereo sound*



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

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

## Positioning

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

## Going multichannel

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



## Choosing speakers

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

## Spikes

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

## POWER

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

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

## Q&A

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

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

### WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR SMALL ROOMS?

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

### WHICH SPEAKERS ARE BEST FOR BIG ROOMS?

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

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

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

## TOP BUYS



**KEF**  
iQ50 £489  
Cute styling and beautifully discreet, this latest Uni-Q has attractively spacious imaging, good overall balance, a sweet treble and fine consistency.



**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 6LE £4,000  
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 HI-FI CHOICE BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE STEREO SPEAKERS

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EASE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM WALL	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
<b>UP TO £1,000</b>										
	Advance Acoustic UM20	200	Classy styling and finish, with solid build and fine overall balance when sited close to a wall	18,30,21		A	43			307
	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
	Acoustic Energy Aelite 3	750	Wood-veneered all-rounder has exceptional neutrality with deep smooth bass	20,103,39		A	22			292
	Amphion Helium 520	1,000	Sharp styling and fine value for money with excellent voice band coherence	16,104,22		G	28			314
	Amphion Ion L	750	Sharp styling, fine mid/treble coherence and a sweet treble, but less happy bass alignment in test room	16,23,26,5		A	40			310
	ATC SCM11	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
	Auroual A1	450	Single-driver system is coloured but wonderfully coherent and very effective at communicating emotions	20,5,36,27		A	40			299
	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
	Bowers and Wilkins DM303	180	Chunky looking and lively sounding, with deep bass, a fine midband and a restrained top end	30,33,23		A	23			226
	Bowers and Wilkins CM1	500	Luxury miniature has neutral, laid-back sound, with low coloration, fine imaging but weak dynamics	16,5,28,28		A-	40			279
	Bowers and Wilkins 684	699	A fine all-rounder at a realistic price, this floorstander has a smooth, even and nicely open balance	20,91,30		G	22			315
	Bowers and Wilkins 683	899	A fine all-round performer with high-class drivers at a very realistic price	20,99,34		P	20			304
	DALI Ikon 6	899	Needs care with setup, but rewards you with impressively transparent and almost obsessively detailed sound	19,100,33		A	37			271
	DALI Ikon 7	999	Bulky vinyl floorstander has high sensitivity and a bright sound with superior coherence, delicacy and transparency	20,114,34		A+	22			275
	DALI Monitor 1	1,000	Beautiful miniature with advanced drivers sounds marvellously coherent with fine vocal expression	16,32,24		A	40			296
	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
	Epos M5	349	Gorgeous miniature works well close to wall. Could be smoother but communicates with authority	18,33,21		A-	40			269
	Epos ELS 303	399	Midband is impressively smooth, even and coherent, but the sound lacks some dynamic grip and top end detail	18,85,20		A-	28			273
	Epos M12.2	449	A true classic standmount with lovely presentation, fine sound balance, superior coherence and low coloration	20,37,25		A-	40			265
	Focal Chorus 706V	369	Advanced drivers deliver a smooth, even, overall balance with healthy dynamic expression and tension	22,39,25		A	30			307
	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
	Heco Celan 300	595	Does tone colour, dynamics and detail with aplomb and communicates superbly in its +2dB mode. Sensitive, too	23,36,33		A+	40			301
	JBL Studio L880	700	Good value floorstander with neutrality, massive headroom and plenty of punch. Could be more transparent	22,99,37		A	25			275
	KEF iQ3	280	Shapely, vinyl-covered standmount has lively dynamics and fine imaging, but could be smoother and sweeter	22,37,33		A+	40			284
	KEF iQ50	489	Looks cute and very discreet, with spacious imaging, good balance, a sweet treble, but weak dynamics	17,5,81,5,26		A	23			315
	Mission elan e34	400	A return to form for Mission with a pacey, vibrant sound matched to good looks	35,96,34		A+	48			298
	Monopulse 42A	995	Uniquely different in style and sound, midband time coherence is magnificent but treble is too restrained	26,110,25		A+	28			271
	Monitor Audio BR2	200	Good looking standmount has a muscular sound with superior coherence	18,5,35,25		A-	30			294
	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
	Monitor Audio GS10	800	More neutral tonally than some recent MAs. High-quality stereo design which takes up little room and is easy to drive	20,36,27		A-	40			284
	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
	PMC DB11	825	Could be more neutral, but a very effective musical communicator with fine warmth and sweet treble	15,5,29,23,4		A+	30			310

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

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## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE **STEREO SPEAKERS** *continued*

### Stereo speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (WxHxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EDGE OF DOME	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
MB	PMC TB2+	795	Classy transmission line standmount has superior midband, restrained presence and a bright clean top end	20,40,30		A	28	●	275
BB	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
MB	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
MB	Q Acoustics 1020i	140	Outstanding value for money, the smooth, well-balanced and lively sound makes for a fine communicator	17,5,25,26,5		A+	60	●	318
BB	Quadral Pico	849	Could be more muscular, but neutral and open with spacious imaging and little coloration	19,34,26		A-	30	●	292
BB	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
BB	Russ Andrews SP-1	399	This tweaked Focal 705V RA has a sound that is immediate, engaging and, most importantly, great fun	192,31,5,24,8		A+	65	●	309
BB	Spendor S3/5R	725	Lacks dynamic muscle and loudness potential, but lovely smooth neutrality and good bass extension	16,5,30,5,190		P	25	●	310
BB	Tannoy Revolution DC4T	599	Ultra-compact floorstander that lacks bass weight and dynamic tension, but sounds open and coherent	15,85,16	●	G	40	●	316
BB	Tannoy Revolution DC6	900	Pretty compact standmount likes wall loading, delivering a lively even bass and smooth coherent midband	23,36,5,23		A	40	●	307
MB	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
BB	Wharfedale Diamond 9.1	180	Superior shape and finish at an exceptionally sharp price. Sound is laid back, but free from boxiness	19,5,30,28		A-	45	●	307
BB	Wharfedale Opus2-M1	1,000	Elegant mid to compact three-way, a new direction in recent years for Wharfedale	23,51,36		A-	42	●	302
<b>ABOVE £1,000</b>									
BB	Amphion Argon <sup>2</sup> Anniversary	1,200	Notably superior coherence and focus, fine neutrality and dynamic range with low coloration	19,38,31		A-	24	●	317
BB	Amphion Prio 520	1,600	Gorgeous styling and a lively sound with good voice band integrity and a sweet top end	16,104,22	●	A	40	●	302
BB	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
	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	245,37,31,5		A	26	●	288
BB	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
MB	ATC SCM16A	2,203	Makes a great case for the active speaker. Good value, including built-in amps and fuss-free	27,45,33		ACT	42	●	300
EC	Aurousal VS	1,650	The fine coherence and imaging of a single driver system, plus extra help at the frequency extremes	215,107,5,26,8	●	G	20	●	314
BB	AVI ADM9	1,000	Active mini-monitors that are exceptionally accurate and dynamic, and they give good iPod, too	20,30,26		ACT	60	●	301
BB	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
BB	Bowers and Wilkins 805S	1,600	Classy standmount with excellent coherence and imaging. Can sound laid back but otherwise a real delight	24,39,33		A	25	●	271
EC	Bowers and Wilkins 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
BB	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
BB	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
BB	Focal Chorus 816WSE	1,399	The W cone treatment makes some of the qualities associated with Focal's high-end models more competitive	99,8,28,2,37,5	●	A+	39	●	308
BB	Focal Chorus 836V	1,549	Bulky, sharply priced three-way could be prettier. Has good bass with genuine grip, but top could be sweeter	28,115,38	●	A	28	●	290
EC	Focal 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
BB	Free FS1	3,000	An elegant active design for anyone after the minimum of wiring. Wireless with Sonos or Airport Express	16,87,27	●	ACT	35	●	301
	Gamut Phi5	2,550	Lovely and discreet floorstander has excellent sound and several very clever engineering touches	17,100,24	●	P	20	●	305
BB	Guru QM10	1,695	A very clever close-to-wall standmount with fine imaging, that sounds a lot bigger than it looks	30,25,2,23,2		A	26	●	317
EC	Jamo R 907	5,500	Arguably the more 'chummy' of Jamo's dipole flagships, it offers a powerful bass and open midrange	44,118,9,7	●	A	30	●	317
	Kudos Cardea C1	1,450	A very pretty compact standmount with a delightfully subtle and delicate sound quality	20,35,27		A	40	●	304
	Kudos Cardea C30	5,250	An absolute honey that fully justifies its hefty price tag, lacking only a little dynamic tension	20,112,27	●	G	22	●	310
EC	MartinLogan Source	1,599	Careful install needed, but capable of remarkable transparency at an extremely competitive price	24,120,37	●	A	42	●	303
BB	Monopulse 42A	1,495	Oddball styling, fine bass-to-mid balance and dynamics, and superb voice coherence, but untidy treble	26,110,25	●	A	25	●	302
BB	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	SPECIFICATIONS					
				SIZE (WxHxD) (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	EDGE OF DRIVE	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	CLOSE TO WALL
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Monitor Audio PL300	5,500	Completely new level of sophistication from a brand best known for mainstream, cost-effective designs	41,111,47	●	A-	28	●	301
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Mordaunt-Short Perf 6 LE	4,000	Striking moulded enclosure minimises coloration, while overall balance is smooth, neutral and open	24,115,43	●	A	22	●	308
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Neat Elite SE	1,499	Smooth and natural performer with notably expressive midband. Fine voice articulation and unusual sweetness	20,90,18	●	A	25	●	267
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Neat Momentum 3i	1,745	Sounds a lot bigger than it looks, with good coherence and an impressively wide dynamic range	22,38,27	●	A-	23	●	302
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Opera Callas	2,195	Technically innovative multi-tweeter system, this is a grown up and articulate performer	23,37,5,34	●	B	32	●	311
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Opera Seconda	1,525	Fine styling and finish, plus very superior voicing, if a shade lacking in warmth	24,102,5,31,5	●	A	20	●	314
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	PMC Wafer 2	1,650	Clever 'hang-on-wall' speaker has minimal sonic compromises. Smooth midband delivers impressive stereo imaging	335,57,5,10	●	A+	45	●	285
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	PMC FB1i	1,950	A floorstander that boasts impressive bass extension and a smooth sweet top end	20,100,30	●	G	20	●	311
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	PMC GB1i	1,330	Pretty little floorstander has great class with fine delicacy and sweet detailing	15,5,87,23,4	●	A	30	●	306
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	PMC OB1i	3,200	This floorstander delivers a smooth overall balance with wide bandwidth and dynamic range	20,1025,32,5	●	A	20	●	311
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	PSB Synchrony One	3,000	Slim and discreet floorstander that delivers superb sound quality and flexible bass	22,109,32,5	●	A	45	●	318
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Rega R7	1,498	Super-slim and super-smooth floorstander has fine agility with a slightly bright overall character	27,98,35	●	A	25	●	271
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Rega R9	2,498	This subtle, laid-back but very informative performer has a very superior dynamic range, especially in the bass	17,103,39	●	A	25	●	271
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Revel F32	3,200	Meticulously balanced, tonally neutral design makes for a taut, well-disciplined sound	22,105,39	●	A	20	●	256
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Revel M22	1,800	A remarkably clean and revealing speaker with superb tonal and microdynamic capabilities	22,37,30	●	A-	48	●	274
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Ruark Talisman III	1,499	No bass demon, but a sophisticated and agile speaker epitomising Ruark's design ideals	22,84,31	●	A	22	●	259
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Sonus faber Cremona Audit.	2,690	Open, exciting and with surprisingly good bass. This is 'The Little Speaker That Could' (stands £575 extra)	20,35,37	●	A	50	●	305
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Sonus faber Minima Vintage	2,150	Easy, graceful sounding compact is a natural for acoustic material at moderate volume levels	20,33,27,5	●	A-	55	●	312
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Spendor SP3/1R2	1,600	Conservative styling, superb neutrality and coherence with unusually low coloration	22,40,28	●	A	37	●	317
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Tannoy Giennair 10	2,999	With a 250mm dual concentric driver this is a generously proportioned, highly engaging speaker for a good price	36,100,35	●	P	28	●	314
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Totem Model 1 Signature	1,595	Expensive, but very seductive miniature delivers a beautifully smooth and balanced midband	17,31,23	●	A	35	●	277
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Triangle Genese Quartet	1,995	Great material value and a solid all-round sonic performance with great loudness potential	23,117,37	●	A	25	●	302
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Triangle Cellius Esow	1,395	Not the smoothest sound around, but has great vigour and enthusiasm, plus good scale and weight	20,117,34	●	A	22	●	277
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	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
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Usher Compass CP-6381	2,500	Lots of speaker for your money, with plenty of deep bass, unusual styling and massive build	35,127,65	●	A	20	●	270
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Vivid Audio B1	7,750	Impressive cabinet design combined with hi-tech drivers to make truly world class speaker	27,110,38	●	A-	40	●	261
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Wilson Benesch ACT	8,400	Superb enclosure gives uncanny freedom from 'boxiness'. Well balanced, but top end might be sweeter	23,108,36	●	A	20	●	252
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,000	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package	23,91,37	●	A	28	●	254
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Wharfedale Opus	1,500	Great material value and a solid, if bright and forward sound. Has great loudness potential	26,100,5,41	●	A	23	●	314
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Yamaha Soavo 2	1,200	Cunningly crafted standmount with a beautiful balance that always sounds lively, open and involving	22,38,35	●	A	28	●	296

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

# SUBWOOFERS

### Bass speakers

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS			
				SIZE (WxHxD) (CM)	POWER (W)	BASS FROM (Hz)	ISSUE NUMBER
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	B&W PV1	950	Gorgeously styled sub shakes the air but not the floor, delivering a very clean sound with negligible coloration	29,34,35	500	20	259
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	B&W ASW850	2,000	Does all the things subwoofers should do with music and movies alike, but transparently and seamlessly	53,56,52	1,000	18	246
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Eclipse TD725sw	2,700	Delivers solid meaningful bass, but with unusual tunefulness, speed and articulation	52,47,50	500	40	287
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Monitor Audio ASW100	300	For the price, this compact subwoofer performs particularly well	32,32,34	120	27	225
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	REL 305	795	Landmark mid-price sub, works particularly well with low crossover frequency, looks great too	32,36,34	300	25	284
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	REL Stampede	550	Few subs at this price match the Stampede's subtlety and ease of integration. Much more hi-fi than AV	28,40,29	100	18	257
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	REL T1	595	Standard setter at the price: flexible, easily set up and packs quite a punch	36,40,420	300	25	291
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	REL Strata 5	700	Highly musical sub that integrates well but the REL Stampede offers near-identical performance for less money	32,46,33	150	18	257
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	REL Storm III	900	Excellent sub with powerful, detailed and deep bass. Comprehensive facilities, including flexible filter adjustment	42,62,33	150	18	225
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	REL Storm 5	1,000	Well engineered, good bass depth, appropriate for mixed hi-fi & home cinema/multichannel systems	34,52,37	200	15	267
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	MartinLogan Dynamo	449	Refined, compact sub brings established MartinLogan virtues to a new price and size point	29,35,32	200	25	301
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">●</span>	Velodyne SPL-800R	699	Powerful, highly configurable sub with auto setup feature and attractive, compact packaging	26,27,33	1,000	28	286
<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">EC</span>	Wilson Benesch Torus	5,200	Amp and sub package built like a sophisticated pile driver, with deep, state of the art performance	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.

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# HEADPHONES

For your ears only



Headphones come in several varieties and some are designed for particular usage. The majority of 'cans' use dynamic cone and coil-type drive units and can be used with anything from a personal stereo to a dedicated amplifier. Other types also exist, most significantly electrostatics that use a charged panel membrane to produce a distinctly refined sound. These are supplied with their own dedicated amplifiers, which tends to increase the price.

Cans are split into several types. There are open and closed-back designs, the latter being

best for noisy (or noise sensitive) environments as they minimise leakage and intrusion. Open-back types tend to have a more open, less 'in-head' sound. There are also three variants of earpad design: circumaurals enclose the ear and press on your head, supra-aurals press on the ear and intra-aurals sit in the ear and are particularly popular with personal stereo users.

### Getting the best from your cans

Getting a good result with headphones is not

quite as straightforward as it should be. Merely plugging them into the output on your CD player or amp will not give particularly engaging results unless you are very lucky. If you are planning on serious listening, invest in a dedicated amp – the increase in dynamics is not in the least bit subtle. A variety of models are made and prices start at around £80 for a QED, a little more for designs from, say, Creek or Musical Fidelity. And if you're really into cans, look up the valve-powered Earmax.

## Our favourite HEADPHONES

BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE

### Stereo headphones

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS						
				ELECTROSTATIC	SUPRA-AURAL	CIRCUM-AURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT (g)	3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR
	ACS T2	500	Earcanal earphones display an impressive midband intelligibility and a knack for digging out the detail						28	315
	AKG K1000	650	Neutral, analytical and completely out of the head sound, suitable for connection to speaker outputs only						270	244
	Audio Technica ATH-W1000	400	Superbly comfortable and very revealing. Long listening sessions are a pleasure with new musical insights						250	304
	Beyerdynamic DT770	190	A touch coloured in the mid, but less than most closed cans: detailed and with excellent bass						290	287
	Beyerdynamic DT880	230	Combines musical involvement with a high degree of analytical virtues. Very comfortable						205	312
	Denon AH-D2000	250	Among the best closed-back headphones we've heard and very fine by any standards.						350	309
	Denon AH-D5000	500	Sound is comparable with good open-back models, while isolation both inward and outward is useful						320	312
	Denon AH-D7000	800	One of the best closed-back designs, bearing comparison with the finest open models. Bass, in particular, is excellent						295	314
	Grado GS1000	995	One of the finest transducers on the planet, with detail to die for						250	288
	Sennheiser HD595	160	Technology from upmarket HD650 model makes this a very revealing headphone that's also extremely comfortable						270	266
	Sennheiser PXC450	299	Noise-cancelling model: as good as it gets for making the most of listening in planes, trains and automobiles						240	302
	Sennheiser HD650	330	Clear and detailed, with very natural tonality through bass and midrange and just a little treble coloration						275	312
	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
	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

**SPECS KEY** **ELECTROSTATIC** Uses electrostatic film instead of more common cone or dome dynamics. **SUPRA-AURAL** Earpads sit on ear rather than around it. **CIRCUM-AURAL** 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

### Interconnects and speaker cables

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS	SPECIFICATIONS				ISSUE NUMBER
				STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	
<b>ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS</b>								
	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
EC	Black Rhodium Concert	255	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
EC	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
	Kimber Timbre	118	A very neutral cable that will complement even very upmarket systems	●	●	●		312
	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 Wyewizard Dream	95	Slight lack of precision in extreme treble, otherwise detailed and neutral with authoritative bass	●	●	●		303
	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 EFF-1X	77	Lively-sounding cable which maintains a high level of detail and neutrality. Musically, a great all-rounder	●	●	●		306
	Townshend Isolda DCT100	99	Sound has a particularly enjoyable cohesion and naturalness that makes for a great listener involvement	●	●	●		312
	van den Hul Integrator Hybrid	125	Bass is nothing remarkable, but mid and treble are outstandingly open and clear: very transparent	●	●	●		306
	van den Hul The Wave	100	Generally neutral, with a hint of upper-bass richness: images seem to reside slightly further away than most	●	●	●		312
<b>DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS</b>								
EB	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
	Kimber DV-30	59	A superb performer that lacks very little, even when compared to Kimber's high-end models	●	●	●		E 317
	Merlin Scorpion Digital	130	Reduces distortion, making sound clear with unusually revealing low frequencies	●	●	●		E 317
	SupraAnCo	80	This cable can give a useful filip to a good transport/DAC combination, even in a high-end context	●	●	●		E 304
<b>SPEAKER CABLES (PER METRE)</b>								
	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 Silver Screen	6	Screened speaker cable with excellent treble, but just a little light in the bass at times	●	●	●		310
EC	CrystalCable Piccolo	1,480	A chip off the old block, this speaker cable has a similarly fast, fluid and subtle sound	●	●	●		302
	Kimber 8PR	12	A cable that really enjoys the music, also admirable for the levels of analytical detail it allows through. Excellent value	●	●	●		299
	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
EC	Nordost Heimdall	162	Alternative to Valhalla, silver plated, micro-monofilament construction, low coloration, hi-res and suitable for exacting systems	●	●	●		278
	QED X-Tube XT300	10	A natural and well controlled sounding cable that's cost effective for mid-priced systems	●	●	●		310
	QED Revelation	15	Sensibly priced, this cable offers a performance which is a step-up from budget types	●	●	●		318
EC	Supra Sword	116	Zero inductance construction, medium resolution cable that has an excellent midband and is fundamentally musical	●	●	●		287
EC	Townshend Isolda DCT	50	Cryogenically treated 'impedance matched' cable with stabilising components added: great sound all round	●	●	●		241
	van den Hul The Wind	50	Separate conductors provide plenty of room for experimentation and the conductor quantity keeps resistance low	●	●	●		318
	Wireworld Solstice 5 <sup>2</sup>	45	Rather bulky and awkward, but performance amply justifies it with superb bass solidity	●	●	●		310

**SPECS KEY** **STRANDED** Cable has a number of (usually) twisted strands to conduct the signal. **SOLID CORE** Cable has one or more individually insulated strands to conduct the signal. **COPPER** Material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **SILVER** Alternative material used to form the conducting element of the cable. **DIGITAL CABLE TYPE** E – electrical, O – optical. Cables are one metre length unless otherwise stated.

# STANDS AND SUPPORTS

## Equipment racks and speaker stands



If you want to get the most from your source and amp components, it's important to consider good quality support. Dedicated equipment supports are racks and tables made specifically to hold hi-fi gear, and the best can have a profoundly positive

effect on sound because, for example, they can help to isolate kit from ground-borne vibrations and mechanical or electrical interference. Equally, if you own a pair of small 'bookshelf' or 'standmount' speakers, it's important to place them on good quality, purpose-built speaker stands.

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS

### Equipment supports

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS
	Alphason A5-G	399	Nice looking, very solid and practical with a pretty well balanced sound, but lacks a little detail
	Atacama Equinox	280	Stable, modular design with style. Excellent bass transients and a fresh design concept
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Audiophile Base Std Sup't	1,200	Expensive and quite bulky, but it's all worth it as sound is unusually detailed and resonance-free
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Custom Design Inert Matt	70	Isolation platform that can improve the sound of hi-fi components, but is a bit small for most kit
	Custom Design Icon Signature	330	Gorgeous wood and glass looks: sound lacks a little detail, but is nicely lively
	Custom Design XL4	380	Simple construction pays off in smart looks. Sound contribution is minimal and largely harmless
	Custom Design Milan	449	Respect is due to any stand that looks this good with nothing more to complain of than slight muddying of detail
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Custom Design Icon 400	600	Beautifully built, conveniently adjustable and with little sound of its own, a very classy rack
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Milty Foculpods	19.50	A set of four isolation pads that are amazingly useful for damping vibration and improving sound
	Partington Minim	420	Adds its own character to the benefit of rock, most particularly, but slightly to the detriment of acoustic sounds
	Quadraspire Q4 Reference	480	Excellent performance from the school of wobbly racks. Natural sounding and plenty of detail
<small>BEST BUY</small>	Russ Andrews Torlyte Platform	130	This unassuming platform can be a godsend, cleaning away mid/treble muddle from the sound
	Russ Andrews Torlyte Rack	988	Attractive modular system made of very light Torlyte: a touch of added warmth is its only vice
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	Townshend VSSS	1,300	The Seismic Sink goes all glassy and attractive, yet retains the same excellent vibration-killing sound quality

SPECIFICATIONS				
HEIGHT (CM)	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	WELDED	SHELF TYPE	ISSUE NUMBER
80	66,46		Glass	247
81	50,50	●	Glass	217
57	46,35		MDF	302
	40x25		Metal	311
	56,37		Glass	286
	60,42		Glass	293
57	48,39		Glass	302
75	57,41		Glass	263
2	5		Polymer	311
78	45,37	●	Glass	302
51.5	49,39.5		MDF	217
8	48,36		Torlyte	302
68	54,49		Torlyte	240
76	35,50		Glass	273

## Our favourite BEST BUY EDITOR'S CHOICE SPEAKER STANDS

### Speaker stands

BADGE?	PRODUCT	£	COMMENTS
	Anvil Sound Display Stand	226	A variety of smart looks available – sound is clear and precise
	Custom Design SQ402	100	More a range than a model, capable of fine results especially with Acoustic Steel top plates
	Custom Design RS300	110	An attractive stand whose lack of coloration and ringing suits it to high-resolution systems
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	Custom Design SQ404	200	Robust four-pillar design gives very low coloration and maximises performance of speakers great and small
	Partington Ansa 60	99	Elegant flat-packer 'disappears' sonically; restrained but neutral and coherent
	Partington Dreadnought BS	295	Sound is better defined in almost all areas than cheaper, slimmer stands can offer
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	Partington Heavi II	399	Robust to the nth degree, this stand helps produce very taut, precise bass and detailed upper frequencies
<small>EDITOR'S CHOICE</small>	Russ Andrews Torlyte	299	Very relaxed sound from this metal-free design, with excellent imaging too

SPECIFICATIONS				
HEIGHT (CM)	TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF LEGS
50	20,17	●		1
62	18,16.5	●		2
56	16,5,18	●		1
61	18,16.3	●		4
62	18,15	●		4
62	17,23	●		5
53	31,22	●		6
60,50	15,21			3

**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.

## Equipment Racks

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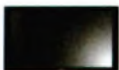
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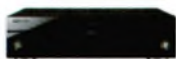
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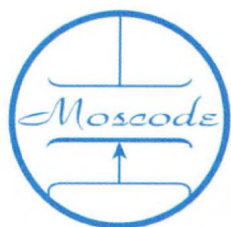
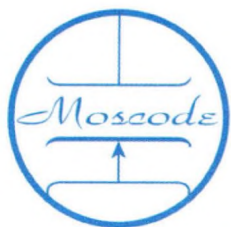
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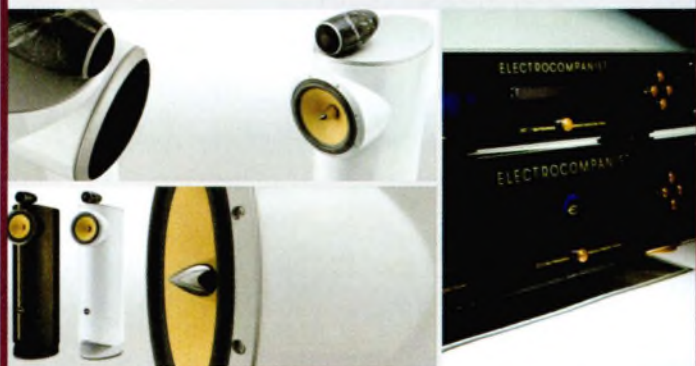
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# GLOSSARY

## TECHNICAL TERMS

**S.1-CHANNEL AUDIO** Six discrete channels, typically front left and right, centre, surround left and right, and LFE (Low Frequency Effects) for a subwoofer

**BALANCE** Most loudspeakers have a characteristic frequency balance resulting from emphasising parts of the audio range and/or de-emphasising others

**BASS** The lowest three octaves of the audio band – 'low bass' refers to the bottom octave (20-40Hz), 'mid-bass' the middle octave (40-80Hz) and 'upper bass' the top octave (80-160Hz)

**BI-AMP** (sometimes tri-amp). Loudspeakers equipped with separate access terminals to each drive unit can be driven by separate (matching) power amplifiers for each driver

**BI-WIRE** (sometimes tri-wire). Loudspeakers with separate access terminals to each drive unit can be driven by separate cable runs between the amp and each driver

**CD-R** Recordable CD that cannot be erased, though discs that have not been completely filled can have tracks added until the disc is finalised

**CD-RW** Re-writable or re-recordable CD, incompatible with older CD players

**CLASS A** The operation of an amplifying stage or device in which current always flows, as opposed to Class B, where some of the devices are effectively turned off some of the time. Class A tends to have the advantage of offering lower distortion, while Class B tends to generate less heat

**CLASS AB** Most practical amps operate in Class A for the first fraction of a watt and Class B thereafter

**CLIPPING** An amplifier's output waveform is 'clipped' if the volume is advanced too far and no more 'volts' are available to sustain ever-increasing power levels. Distortion increases dramatically at this point

**CLOCK** Any electronic oscillator that is used to generate a timing reference signal. Used to synchronise the data being taken from a disc

**CROSSOVER** A simple electrical network which divides the full bandwidth signal received from the power amplifier, apportioning appropriate parts of the spectrum to the various drive units

**DAB** (digital audio broadcasting). Digital radio using frequencies in the 217.5-230MHz band. Broadcasters use varying degrees of compression and offer a broad range of programming

**DAC** or Digital-to-Analogue Converter. The stage in any digital component at which incoming digital data is used to reconstruct a recognisable analogue (music) waveform

**DOLBY DIGITAL** A compressed digital audio format that typically contains five or more entirely discrete channels, eg 7.1 EX where side and rear channels are used.

**DOLBY PRO-LOGIC, DPL** Forerunner to DD that 'steers' information to the front L/R, centre and mono surround channels via an analogue matrix

**DRIVE UNIT/DRIVER** A transducer which converts electrical energy into acoustic energy, eg bass driver, tweeter

**DSD** (direct stream digital) The coding format used for SACD offers a frequency response of over 100kHz and a dynamic range over 120dB. It has over four times the data capacity of CD

**DSP** (digital signal processor). Integrated circuit that handles the decoding of digital audio streams. In 5.1 processors, it separates the left from right and front from rear, while managing the various bass options

**DTS** or Digital Theatre Sound. Competitor to Dolby Digital with a reduced 4:1 compression ratio that, ostensibly, promises higher quality

**DVD-AUDIO** High-resolution variant on DVD offering up to 192kHz bandwidth and 24-bit dynamic range. Discs are compatible with standard DVD players

**ELECTRICAL DIGITAL** Any digital connection that uses an electrical cable rather than optical. Includes the balanced (AES/EBU) interface

**FILTERS** Filters are intrinsic to digital audio, both analogue and digital. These are often very sophisticated in design, and in total they probably have rather more to do with the 'personality' of CD player sound than most other factors

**FREQUENCY RESPONSE** The range of frequencies, from low to high, which a loudspeaker will reproduce

**IMPEDANCE** With speakers, the complex electrical load that a loudspeaker presents to the amplifier driving it

**JITTER** An insidious distortion specific to digital audio caused by imprecision in the clock, used to regulate the conversion of data into analogue audio

**KBPS** (Kilobits per second) Digital data rate measurement system used primarily with highly compressed formats such as MP3, DAB etc. The higher the amount, the better the quality

**LINE LEVEL** Practically every modern source component (except phono cartridges) gives an output in the region of 1-2V, referred to as 'line level'. It follows that all inputs labelled 'CD', 'tuner', 'aux' or 'tape' are designed for this input level and are thus interchangeable

**LOSSLESS COMPRESSION** A method of reducing the number of data bits (density) without corrupting the original description of the musical signal

**LOSSY COMPRESSION** Reduction in data density by recourse to a complex psycho-acoustical model that predicts what is, and what is not, 'audible' within a sequence of music

**MIDRANGE** The middle three or so octaves of the audio band, where the ear

is most sensitive, covering the approximate frequency span from 160Hz up to 3kHz

**MP3** (MPEG layer 3) Lossy compression format for digital audio that drastically reduces data content in order to squeeze music through internet connections or allow hundreds of CDs to be stored on a hard disc

**OUTPUT IMPEDANCE** A measure of resistance to alternating current, a source with low output impedance (below 100 ohms) helps ensure compatibility with most amplifiers, even with long interconnect cables

**PCM** (pulse code modulation) The digital coding system for analogue waveforms used for CD and DVD. Quality is limited by the oversample and bit rates used – CD is 44.1kHz/16-bit while DVD-A is capable of 192kHz/24-bit

**PRESERVE BAND** Critical section of the audio band at the point where midrange and treble meet

**QUANTISATION NOISE** A form of distortion or noise resulting from errors in the description of the musical signal by the digital code

**SACD** (Super Audio CD) was launched in 1999 and is a Sony/Philips format based on DSD coding that offers high resolution stereo and multichannel sound from hybrid discs that can also be played on ordinary CD drives

**SAMPLE RATE** The rate at which the musical waveform is sliced up into discrete chunks. For CD, this is 44.1kHz or once every 0.023msec. DVD will also support 48kHz and 96kHz

**SENSITIVITY** The relative loudness that a speaker generates for a specific voltage input. Expressed in decibels per watt (dB/W), measured 1m from the speaker

**THX** Standards system for home cinema set-ups which includes amplifier power and speaker dispersion characteristics. The latest THX Ultra 2 standard is more stringent than THX Select

**TOSLINK** The proprietary name given by Toshiba to the optical fibre signal transmission system it invented for consumer applications

**TRANSISTOR/MOSFET** The two main types of power semiconductor used in solid state amplifier output stages

**TREBLE** High frequencies, the top end of the audio band, ie above 3kHz

**TWEETER** Treble driver

**TWO/THREE-WAY** Loudspeaker crossovers split the signal into two or three frequency bands, a two-way speaker can have more than two drive units

**WATTS** (per channel) The watt is the unit of electrical power and the WPC rating is the maximum average undistorted power that an amp can deliver to a typical speaker. However, speaker sensitivity variations can make more difference than amplifier output

**WOOFER** Bass driver.

## DESCRIPTIVE TERMS

**AGGRESSIVE** Forward and bright sonic character

**AMBIENCE** The impression of an acoustical space, such as the performing hall in which a recording was made

**ANALYTICAL** Highly detailed

**ARTICULATE** Intelligibility of voice(s) and instruments and the interactions between them

**ATTACK** The leading edge of a note and the ability of a system to reproduce the attack transients in music

**BALANCE** Essentially tonal balance, the degree to which one aspect of the sonic spectrum is emphasised above the rest. Also channel balance, the relative level of the left and right stereo channels

**BODY** Fullness of sound, with particular emphasis on upper bass. Opposite of thin

**BOXY** The sound of a loudspeaker with audible cabinet resonances

**BRIGHT** A sound that emphasises the upper midrange/lower treble

**DARK** A tonal balance that tilts downwards with increasing frequency. Opposite of bright

**DECAY** The fadeout of a note, it follows the attack

**DEFINITION** (or resolution) The ability of a component to reveal the subtle information that is fundamental to high fidelity sound

**DEPTH** (of image) The perception of music being reproduced behind the loudspeakers and inhabiting a reproduction of the acoustic space of the original recording

**DETAIL** The most delicate elements of the original sound and those which are the first to disappear with lesser equipment

**DRY** A sound that is devoid of 'juice', which usually comes across as fine-grained and lean. Also a loss of reverberation as produced by a damped environment

**DYNAMIC** The suggestion of energy and wide dynamic range. Related to perceived speed as well as contrasts in volume both large and small

**EUPHONIC** An appealing form of distortion that generally enhances perceived fidelity, often ascribed to the harmonic elaborations of some valve amps

**FAST** Good reproduction of rapid transients which increase the sense of realism and 'snap'

**FOCUS** A strong, precise sense of image projection

**FORWARD(NESS)** Similar to an aggressive sound, a sense of the image being projected in front of the speakers and of music being forced upon the listener

**GRAINY** A slightly raw, exposed sound which lacks finesse

**GRIP** A sense of control and sturdiness in the bass

**GRUNT** See grip

**HARD** Uncomfortable, forward, aggressive sound with a metallic tinge

**HARSH** Grating, abrasive

**IMAGING** (stereo) The sense that a voice or instrument is in a particular place in the room

**JUICY** Sound that has joie de vivre, energy and life

**LOW-LEVEL DETAIL** The quietest sounds in a recording

**MUSICAL** or musicality. A sense of cohesion and subjective 'rightness' in the sound

**NATURALNESS** Realism

**OPAQUE** Unclear, lacking transparency

**OPEN** Sound which has height and 'air', relates to clean upper midrange and treble

**PACE** Often associated with rhythm, a strong sense of timing and beat

**PRESENCE** A sense of an instrument or voice occupying a place in the listening room

**PRESERVE RANGE** The upper midrange

**SEISMIC** Very low bass that you feel rather than hear

**SIBILANCE** An emphasis of the 'S' sound, often heard on radio

**SNAP** A system with good speed and transient response can deliver the immediacy or 'snap' of live instruments

**SPEED** A fast system with good pace gives the impression of being right on the money in its timing

**STURDY** Solid, powerful, robust sound

**THICK** A lack of articulation and clarity in the bass

**THIN** Bass light

**TIMBRE** The tonal character of an instrument

**TIMING** A sense of precision in tempo. See speed and pace

**TRANSIENT** The leading edge of a percussive sound. Good transient response makes the sound as a whole more live and realistic

**TRANSPARENCY, TRANSPARENT** A hear-through quality that is akin to clarity and reveals all aspects of detail

**TWEAK** To tune a system or component in an attempt to get the best performance from it

**TWEAKER** Someone who enjoys this process

**VEILED** Loss of detail due to limited transparency

**WARM** A fullness in the lower midrange/upper bass

**WEIGHT** A sense of substance and underpinning produced by deep, controlled bass

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Graham Slee Era Gold V, ex demo, as new  
Graham Slee Elevator, ex demo, excellent, boxed  
Koetsu Black, mint  
Linn Linto, excellent, boxed  
Linn LP12, Ittok LV11 and Sumiko BPS really pretty example  
Linn LP12, Cirrus, Lingo, reasonable  
Linn LP12, Ittok LV11 and K18, excellent  
Linn Ekos, excellent  
Michell Tecnoarm, nr mint  
Michell Gyro SE, good order, boxed  
NAIM Armagdon, late olive, excellent, boxed  
Origin Live Silver, mint, boxed, new version  
Origin Live fully modded RB250  
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Rega P3, in green  
Roksan M Series Phono Stage  
Roksan TMS1.5, and DSU, SME cut, boxed, reduced  
Roksan Xerxes Reference Power supply, nr mint, boxed  
Roksan Xerxes20XPS7 as new, used  
Roksan TMS2, as new boxed with power supply  
SME 3009/2 as new, boxed  
Systemdek II (biscuit tin), ADC arm, vgc  
Thorens TD850/RB300, excellent, boxed  
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## Accessories/Cables

Chord - various cables, call for details  
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NAIM Flatcap 2X, ex demo  
Nordost, various, ex demo  
Van den Hul - various, ex demo

## Digital

Acoustic Arts DAC1 Mk4, new save £1000+  
Arcam CD73 black, nr mint with remote  
Cam Fog v2, in silver with Soft upcampling board, BARGAIN!  
Cyrus DACKP, excellent, boxed  
Cyrus DA30Q24, excellent  
Esoteric SA10, ex demo, nr mint  
Esoteric XO3SE, ex demo, nr mint  
Esoteric DV60, ex demo, nr mint  
Esoteric X-01, nr mint, boxed, absolutely stunning  
Esoteric P-03UnV-D-03, nr mint, boxed, absolutely stunning  
Linn Kank, v late version, excellent, boxed  
Linn Numenk, v late SPS version  
Marantz SA1, excellent, boxed  
Marantz CD80, vgc  
Marantz CD63se KI Signature excellent, boxed  
Marantz CD6000 KI Signature, excellent, with remote  
Musical Fidelity NuVista CD, excellent, remote, boxed  
NAIM CDS and PS, due in  
Pathos Digit, superb  
Pathos Endorphin, crated, ex demo unit  
Primare CD31, nr mint, ex demo unit  
Quad 66, excellent, boxed  
Roksan Atessa transport  
Roksan Caspian M Series, excellent, boxed  
Shanling CD780, excellent  
Shanling CD7200, excellent boxed, newer model  
Stello DP200 DAC Preamp, superb build and value  
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## Radio/Recorders

Audiolab 8000T, excellent, boxed  
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## Amplifiers

Acoustic Arts Pre 1 & Amp 2 Power ex demo, boxed, save £1000s  
Acoustic Arts Integrated Amp1 ex demo, boxed, save £1000s  
Arcam C31 and P1 Monos, excellent, boxed  
ATC CA2 preamp, excellent  
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Audio Research VS55, excellent  
Audiolab 8000C, reduced  
Cairn 4808A integrated, nr mint, in black  
Conrad Johnson PV10b, excellent, boxed, super phono stage  
Conrad Johnson PV15, excellent, boxed  
Cyrus Bvs, nr mint, boxed  
Cyrus XPA, Smartpower & Smartpower plus, from  
Cyrus AV Master and ACA7 preamplifiers from  
EAR B34L, decent little valve line preamp  
Graf GM50, nr mint, boxed  
Krell KA300, excellent, with remote  
Krell KS480, excellent  
Linn LK100 and LK140, excellent, from  
Linn Kolaktor ex demo, boxed  
Linn Wakonda, nr mint, boxed, phono boards  
Meridian 551  
Meridian 501/555, excellent, with manuals and remote  
Music First Passive Magnetic Preamp, excellent, boxed  
Musical Fidelity AS Power  
Musical Fidelity F22 preamplifier, remote, boxed, vgc  
NAIM NAC42.5/NAP90, Chrome, boxed, phonoboards, vgc  
NAIM NAP180, Olive, boxed  
NAIM NAIT 3, nr mint, boxed  
NAIM NAIT 5, nr mint, boxed  
NAIM NACS52, approx 2 years old, upgraded to current spec  
Pathos Classic One Mk2, ex demo  
Pioneer A400X, excellent, boxed  
Quad 66/606, pre/power combo, boxed, with tabletop remote  
Quad 44 Preamp, 405 Power amps, NDW from  
Rothwell Indus SE, as new, boxed, passive  
Stello DP200 PreDAC and M200 Monos, ex demo, save £1000  
Tag McLaren, PA20r Preamp and 125M Monoblocks  
Tag McLaren, PA10 Preamp and 60P Poweramp

## Loudspeakers

Art Emotion Monitor Signature, nr mint, boxed, cherry  
AVI Neutron IV, excellent, ex demo units, boxed, in cherry  
Castile Howard choice of 2 pairs  
Dynaudio Focus 110, boxed  
Dynaudio Focus 140, excellent, boxed  
Dynaudio Audience 8 Floorstanders, nr mint, bargain  
JM Lab, 1007Be, excellent, boxed  
Kudos Cardas C20 excellent, boxed, owner upgraded to 30s  
Linn Kalkit, passive, nr mint, tele-versions, with Ku Stone boxed  
Linn Kaber, passive, vgc  
Martin Logan Source, nr mint, ex demo  
Martin Logan Purity, ex demo, for details  
Martin Logan Summit, ex demo slight mark, BARGAIN!  
Mission 752, fair, boxed  
Monitor Audio RSB, ex demo  
Monitor Audio GS10, excellent, BARGAIN  
Proac Response 1SC, excellent, boxed  
NEAT Motive ex demo, excellent  
Opera Callas nr mint, ex demo, boxed  
Opera mini, with dedicated stands  
Peak Consult Princess Signature inc Stands, nr mint, boxed  
Q Acoustics 1010 AV 5.1 speaker package, as new, black  
Quad 21L, in Maple, excellent  
Raga Ela, originals in black  
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Roksan FRS Floorstanders in Piano Black, ex demo  
Sonus Faber Cremona, brand new, boxed  
Sonus Faber Minima Amator, boxed, with ironwood Stands  
Tannoy DC2000, vgc black  
Triangle Genese Quartet, excellent  
Usher Audio X718, excellent, boxed  
Usher Audio S520 in gloss red, excellent, boxed  
Usher Audio CP6371 in black, HIFI + speaker of the year 1299

## SPECIAL SYSTEM DEALS

Esoteric A10 Amplifier and SA10 SACD player, mint, demo units  
Linn Klassik with tuner, nr mint, boxed  
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JM Labs Mezzo Utopias Superb/boxed £2800  
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B&W VM-1 centre speaker mint/boxed £75  
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Tannoy ST-100 super tweeters superb/boxed (£1200) only £495  
B&W DM 1800 speakers with stands £150  
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Mark Levinson ML-40 processor/pre-amp cost new over £30,000  
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Meridian GO-7 CD player, mint/boxed £895  
CEC TLOX belt drive transport AS NEW only £8995  
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Denon DVD3910 multi-format player with HDMI £295  
Panasonic DMREZ-25 DVD recorder HDMI-1080P £99  
Meridian 508 CD player £795  
Tri CD player New £1895  
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## Miscellaneous

Denon TU-1800 DAB/FM/AM tuner mint/boxed £150  
Selection of NEW Madrigal CZ Gel balanced interconnect at 30% discount  
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Sony AM/FM ST-SE370 Tuner £75  
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# 2nd-hand shootout

Classic £1,000 CD players

**W**ith something as comparatively complex as a CD player it can often be worth buying nearly new. That way, you'll save some cash and get the advantage of a warranty and plenty of fuss-free play. And if you decide on this safer option then there are few players better than the Primare CD31.

Launched less than four years ago, older models that are no longer under warranty. Not that it matters, as this Swedish built player appears to be very robust, with very few problems reported. Renowned for its class-leading sound quality in 2005, there's still very little that comes close, especially at the £900 we found one advertised for. The XLR sockets are also an added bonus and bring out the best from the CD31 (the RCA phono outputs just don't sound so good). And it's certainly worth remembering this point when buying an amplifier to match.

As ever, if you're buying from internet sources then do be careful. You may save a few pounds, but there are risks. Damaged or graded goods are occasionally passed off as perfect and there's often no redress. For peace of mind, either pay by insurance backed credit card or PayPal. Better still, buy from a dealer who'll take it back if you're not happy with its performance.

Another good nearly new option is the Cary CDP-1. This American CD player is rare in the UK and is, as a result, often overlooked. Like the CD31, it was launched in 2006 to much acclaim... in the States. But don't let this put you off, for the CDP-1 is a fine sounding CD player. The bass is a little richer than the Primare making it ideally suited to systems that are tonally "dry" or "lean". As with the Primare, the XLR sockets are well worth using in order to obtain the best sound quality.



**Pictured:** The much-sought after Accuphase DP65

A point worth considering is that few dealers in the UK sell this CD player. That's fine if you live in London, but if not you may find servicing or repair requires a long trek or faith in the postal service. And again, take care when buying on the internet. This isn't a Sony, Arcam or Cambridge Audio CD player, that can be taken to any number of UK dealers for repair. Dealers will easily detect any 'unofficial' players and service may be refused. Still, with a cost new of £1,750, the £1,000 player that we saw advertised looked like being a good deal.

For something a little more esoteric, the Shanling SCD-T200 is a worthy contender. First produced in 2003, this stunning player combined SACD with valve output technologies. The original models were produced with a stainless steel chassis and gold accents. Between 2004 and 2005 this became an aluminium chassis and the later model can be identified by the 'C' suffix: SCD-T200C. Other than cosmetic differences there's little to separate these players and both should now be available on our budget.

The SCD-T200 uses two pairs of 6N3P triode valves; two for the analogue output



**Pictured:** The impressive-looking Shanling SCD-T200

and two for the headphone output, making this an excellent choice if you're a headphone fan. The original valves should last at least 2,000 hours, but at less than £10 a pair, replacements won't break the bank. If you want to upgrade the sound, then there's a wide choice of premium valves available. Many reckon the best to be the Bendix 6385, although they're very rare and, hence, expensive. Shanling is distributed by Real Hi-Fi in the UK, who warns against the perils of buying second-hand online. It seems there a quite a few knock offs, so if you're at all unsure then either buy from a recognised dealer or contact Real Hi-Fi with the serial number.

**“As ever, if you're buying from internet sources then do be careful. You may save a few pounds, but there are risks.”**

However, RT Services is keen to stress that it wouldn't service any non-UK model. Our advice then, is to seek the newer DP65V model, as with any CD player the newer the better. This arrived in the UK in 1998 and was discontinued in 2004. Although the spec is pretty much the same as the DP-65, it can be distinguished by its rounded edges. With digital inputs as well as outputs, this is a great machine for looping through your PC, iPod or other digital sources. If this isn't enough the DP-65 also comes with two optional board slots offering even more connections. It might be old-tech now, but the engineering quality is first rate and the sound quality still very competitive. **HFC**

Accuphase is a brand that we've looked at before, although that was in the context of

much more expensive CD players. If you don't mind going for an older player, then our £1,000 will get you the esoteric Japanese company's DP-65. With the original DP-65 being launched in 1993, the UK suppliers (RT Services) advised us that some parts might be hard to track down. Having said that, and although it's heavily modified, the basic laser is a Sony, so spares shouldn't be impossible.

*Dominic Todd*

*Next issue £1,500 amplifiers*

# READER CLASSIFIED

**Welcome** to *Hi-Fi Choice Reader Classified*, the UK's first and best free private ads service for second-hand hi-fi. These pages are a must-read if you're thinking about buying used kit, and if you want to sell something it's definitely the place to be. It's free to place an advertisement – simply submit your ad of up to 30 words,

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## FOR SALE

**HEYBROOK INTEGRA** classic stereo amp, £300. Tandberg TR2055 stereo receiver, needs attention, classic original, service manual, offers over £100. 01566 783199 (Devon).

**ARCAM ALPHA 6** amplifier, Alpha 5 FM tuner, B&W DM4 speakers/stands. Good condition/boxes. Also Alpha 5 CD player (not working) £100 ono. 0151 428 1524 (Merseyside).

**MISSION 751** speakers £50, Chord mains cable 1.5metres £70. No offers. 07868 175364 (W Mids).

**ARCAM DV79** DVD player, black, mint condition, remote, instruction manual, boxed, HDMI interface £275 ono. 01772 745553 (Lancashire).

**QUAD 306** power amp, Quad 34 control unit and Quad FM4 tuner, all with original instruction books, £350. 020 8361 3435 (North London).

**ROKSAN L2.5/ S1.5** pre/power amps with DS1.5 (PSU) £1,100. TEAD Microgroove+ phono stage (0.5mV output) £450. Sony TCK6ES 3H cassette deck, Dolby B, C, S & HX Pro £120. 07805 731653 (Surrey).

**REVEL M22** speakers in maple, immaculate condition, highly recommended standmounts (£1,800) £850. 01872 870602 (Cornwall).

**CYRUS PRE X** preamplifier boxed £350. Rotel RB991 power, 200 watt, £350. Or swap for Naim. 01977 609839 (W Yorks).

**CARY AUDIO CD-308** upsampling CD player, HDCD, remote volume control, high end performance and

construction in black, mint condition, boxed (£800) £345. 07776 143890 (Hants).

**OPERA SECONDA** speakers (cherry) £750. Unison Research hybrid valve equipment; Secondo 120w/ch integrated amplifier £750. Unico FM/RDS tuner £450. All below half price. Chord Rumour 4 bi-wire speaker cable 2x9m £180 (£430). 023 8073 8935 (Hants).

**PROJECT RPM5** turntable, good condition, hardly used, one year old £250 ono. 07946 465191 (N London).

**ACURUS (MONDIAL) RL11** preamp, black with aluminium dials, superb sound, excellent condition, with remote, (£700) £265. 07725 072878 (Leics).

**RUARK TEMPLAR MK2** loudspeakers, rosewood, immaculate, (£626) £199 Bargain. 01702 556116 (Essex).

**ARCAM CD73** CD player, black. Arcam A80 amp, black. Both boxed and in mint condition, £200 each. Buyer collects. 01384 897009 (W Mids).

**LIMITED EDITION A1** poster illustrating the history of the loudspeaker, as seen in *Hi-Fi Choice* Feb issue. Over 100 images of the most groundbreaking, classic and outrageous loudspeakers ever made. Price £20, plus £3 p+p. To order email [d.gentleman@btopenworld.com](mailto:d.gentleman@btopenworld.com) or call 07879 650913 (Herts).

**BENCHMARK DAC1** under 12 months old, bought DAC pre, £390. Chord Signature Digital cable, RCA-BNC, 1m,

£90. 01752 773369 (Devon).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY** Trivistor 300 hybrid integrated amplifier, 300 watts/channel, mint, boxed, new valves, £1,350. Or £6,200 the pair. 07859 388167 (SE London).

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR** 640A amp and 640C v2 CD player, good condition, £160 the pair. Also Yamaha RX-V420RDS AV receiver, £80. 07900 243100 (Lancashire).

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A5** CD player, as new, mint condition, low usage, upgrading to SACD, (£1,500) £800. No offers. 01268 415017 (Essex)

**CHORD MAINS CABLE** 1.5m long, (£160) £75. Apollo Olympus speaker stands with Atacama Atabytes, (£85) £35. 07868 175364 (W. Mids).

**GRADO SR60** headphones, £45. Sennheiser HD 595 headphones, £75. Both highly rated models, boxed and unused. 01943 463510 (W. Yorks).

**LIMITED EDITION A1** poster illustrating the history of the loudspeaker, as seen in *Hi-Fi Choice* Feb issue. Over 100 images of the most groundbreaking, classic and



**Above: Opera Seconda loudspeaker**

outrageous loudspeakers ever made. Price £20, plus £3 p+p. To order email [d.gentleman@btopenworld.com](mailto:d.gentleman@btopenworld.com) or call 07879 650913 (Herts).

**ARCAM FMJ A22** amp with phono board, £350. Arcam FMJ CD 23 CD player, £350. Arcam FMJ T21 tuner, £100. Linn Sondek LP12, £400. Rack, £25. [peter@brookes.org.uk](mailto:peter@brookes.org.uk) or 07966 086593 (W. Mids).

**HEYBROOK INTEGRA** classic stereo amp, £300. Tandberg TR2055 stereo receiver, needs attention, classic original, service manual, offers over £100. 01566 783199 (Devon).

## 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 demo and judge the seller as well as the goods!



## FOR SALE

**B&W 703** loudspeakers, maple finish. Slight damage to cabinet, otherwise excellent. Two years old, £800. Serious offers. 07943 164393 (Kent).

**LINN LK289** power amplifier, more musical than 85/100/140. Excellent condition, Linn box, bargain, £240. Nottingham Analogue Spacedeck with Incognito Rega arm/Tecnoweight plus AT110E cartridge, excellent condition, original boxes, £765. 01243 863371 (Sussex).

**MARANTZ PM7200** amp, little used, but run in, excellent condition. Class A and A+B, £220 ovno. Marantz PM66SE amp, excellent condition, full working order, hardly run in, £80. Yamaha KX393 stereo cassette player (as new), a brilliant piece of kit, £80 ovno. 01685 350176 (Merthyr Tydfil).

**MERIDIAN 566** 24-bit DAC £450, 502 preamp £500, 557 power, £600, Ruark Prologue One speakers, £450, Audiophile Base 3, £450. All pristine. £2,000 the lot. 01392 444182 timiambeing@yahoo.co.uk (Exeter).

**BOSE ACOUSTIMASS** series 5 subwoofer and two satellite speakers with all wiring, excellent condition, £300 ono. 0115 854 9677 (Notts).

**MONITOR AUDIO GR10** loudspeakers, boxed with free cables, £400. 01224 321419 (Aberdeen).

**ARCAM A85** amp, £350. Arcam P85 amp, £300. Arcam

CD93 CD player, £350. PMC TB2+ loudspeakers, £350. All approximately three years old, but not used much due to working away. All mint condition, boxed with original packing, manuals, remotes. Buyer collects. 02392 257626 (Hants).

**MISSION M25AS** active subwoofer, ash black, phase control. 250mm front-ported driver, 100 watts, mint condition, £90 o.n.o. 07814 633624 (Leics)

**MUSICAL FIDELITY A300** amplifier, mint, boxed, 150 wpc. £1,400 new. Will accept £450. Bargain, no offers, buyer collects, upgrading. 01446 741825 (S Wales).

**NAIM NAC 112** preamp, £269. Naim Arriva floorstanding speakers, cherry finish, 2005, £495. Chord Anthem 2 interconnects, RCA factory termination 0.5m, £109. Odyssey 2 loudspeaker cables 3m unterminated, £45. 01984 640588 (Somerset).

**NAIM SUPERNAIT** amplifier, boxed, as new, (£2,350), £1,200. Naim Powercord, 2m, (£350) £180. 01491 614325 (Oxon).

**PMC OB1** speakers, four months old, brand new, still in boxes, light oak, (£2,850) £1,500. Quick sale, inc three year warranty. Bargain. 07920 124888 (London)

**AUDIO RESEARCH REF3** (£8,500), £5,500. Nordost Valhalla power cords (£1,924), £1,200. 5m speaker cable (£9,500), £4,900. 7m

interconnects, XLR (£6,999), £3,900. 1m XLR, 1m RCA (£2,595), £1,290 each. 01797 253073 (Sussex)

**REGA PLANAR 3** turntables (two) with Ortofon cartridges, £140 each. NAD C350 integrated amp, £90. Yamaha KX 393 cassette deck, £30. All excellent condition. 01942 492889 (Lancs)

**ROKSAN KANDY L111** amplifier, 18 months old, perfect, £325. No offers. 01205 724191 (Lincolns).

**CYRUS PRE X** preamplifier £350. Marantz PM66SE Kl Signature amplifier, £175. 01977 609839 (W. Yorks).

**ARCAM ALPHA 7** CD player, £85. Rotel RA971 Mk2 amplifier, £95. Castle Durham 3 speakers, £175. Dynaudio Audience 42 speakers, brand new, £300. All boxed. 07900 866232 (Yorks).

**SAP RELAXA 1** magnetic equipment support, two available, floating platform gives total isolation from external vibration to greatly improve performance of turntables, CD, DVD players. £200 each. 07734 850600 or pcaveller@yahoo.com (Gloucs).

**CHROME MAXELL UDIICD** cassette tapes. Two sealed packs of five 90 minute tapes. 01661 823606 (Northumberland).

**TOWNSHEND SPEAKER** cable 3m (£310), £180. Kimber KCAG interconnect (£416), offers. MIT Z cord 2 power cables 1.5m x2, £70.

Monster Cable 300<sup>2</sup>, four pairs and one pair 400<sup>2</sup>, £12 each + p&p. Stratos 3 (£110), £35. Six-tier equipment support, oak. Offers. All ono. 0115 912 6424 (Notts).

**CREEK OBH-21SE** headphone amp, £100, Sennheiser HD 600 headphones, £90. All fine condition, will demo, no offers. 01483 892955 (Surrey).

**CYRUS CDXT** silver, boxed, as new, can demo, £315 ono. 07766 415325 (W. Mids)

**KEF XQ1** in silver, matching stands, excellent condition, as new, genuine reason for sale, £600 o.n.o. 07766 078281 (London).

**70 LYRITA LPs**, unplayed, so as new, £350, also Cogan Hall loudspeaker cable, £75. 02392 453382. (Hants)

**SICK KRELL 300** CD player with CD drawer stuck closed, otherwise in excellent condition. Does anybody fancy taking it on? Any offers? 01359 259152 (Sussex)

**LINN KATAN** Speakers in piano lacquer white, six months old, still boxed plus corresponding Linn stands. In superb condition, not suitable around young children, hence sale, £500. 01932 849553 (Surrey).

**SUGDEN CD21** great analogue sounding CD player, excellent condition, £495. Arcam AVR300 surround sound receiver in silver, as new, £475. 01403 711778 or 07813 367409 (W Sussex).

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- ☉ Continuum Caliburn turntable
- ☉ PURE Avanti Flow DAB/FM/internet radio
- ☉ Pioneer S8 loudspeaker
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# HI-FI CHOICE

MAY 2009 ISSUE 319

Future Publishing Ltd, 2 Balcombe Street, London NW1 6NW  
☎ +44 (0)20 7042 4000 Fax +44 (0)20 7042 4529

### EDITORIAL

**Editor** Dan George, dgeorge@futurenet.com  
**Art Editor** Conn Skeggs, cskeggs@futurenet.com  
**Production Editor** Richard Holliss, rholliss@futurenet.com  
**Operations Editor** Jason Kennedy, jkennedy@futurenet.com

### CONTRIBUTORS

Richard Black, Alvin Cold, Jason Kennedy, Paul Messenger, Dave Oliver, Mark Prendergast, Malcolm Steward, Phil Strongman, Dominic Todd, Nigel Williamson  
**Photography** Rob Monk, Kevin Nixon, Will Ireland  
**Group Senior Editor** Nick Merritt  
**Group Art Editor** Ian Miller  
**Creative Director** Robin Abbott  
**Design Director** Matthew Williams  
**Editorial Director** Jim Douglas

### SUBSCRIBING

**Advertising Sales Director** Rob Elms, 020 7042 4272, rob.elms@futurenet.com  
**Advertisement Manager** Joe Doveton, 020 7042 4253, jdoveton@futurenet.com  
**Account Sales Manager** Brad Francis, 020 7042 4255, brad.francis@futurenet.com  
**Sales Executive** Tony Martin, 020 7042 4253, tony.martin@futurenet.com  
**Inserts and Direct Marketing Manager** Nick Weatherall, 020 7042 4155, nick.weatherall@futurenet.com  
**London Sales Director** Malcolm Stoodley, mstoodley@futurenet.com

### MARKETING

**Marketing Manager** Libby Latter, llatter@futurenet.com  
**Brand Marketing Director** Matt Woods, mwoods@futurenet.com

### CIRCULATION

**Circulation Manager** John Beeson, jbeeson@futurenet.com  
**Circulation & Trade Marketing Director** Rachael Cock, rcock@futurenet.com

### PRINT & PRODUCTION

**Production Manager** Ralph Stringer, rstringer@futurenet.com  
**Production Coordinator** Roberta Lealand, rlealand@futurenet.com  
**Senior Ad Production Coordinator** Gemma O'Riordan, gorordan@futurenet.com  
**Head of Production** Richard Mason, rmason@futurenet.com

### LICENSING

**Head of International Licensing** Tim Hudson, +44(0)1225 442244, thudson@futurenet.com

### FUTURE PUBLISHING LIMITED

**Group Publisher** Andy Ford, andy.ford@futurenet.com  
**Chief Operating Officer** Simon Wear  
**Chief Executive** Robert Price

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**Chief Executive** Steve Spring  
**Non-executive Chairman** Roger Parry  
**Group Finance Director** John Bowman  
☎ +44 (0)20 7042 4000 (London)  
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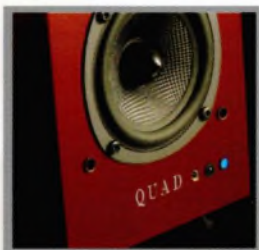
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