

Awards special 2010



The results are in! We reveal the kit we love the most – CD, vinyl, amps, speakers and radios

Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

www.hifichoice.co.uk

Issue No. 339

Awards 2010 **£3.99**

Prize fighter

Exclusive: it's British and future-proof. Can Leema's £3,000 combo take the crown from Naim and Cyrus?

COMPETITION

WIN!
£2,500
PMC FB1i
Sig speakers



2011 hi-fi now!

Discover next year's stars fresh from Whittlebury Hall: full report inside

Future
AWARDS 2010
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Does Meridian's £10,000 808.3 take CD as far as it can go?

Pushed to the limit

Tested: Naim UnitiQute: the £1,350 'system' with no CD!

Rega's new entry-level turntable lets you love vinyl for less

"The best nearfield speakers I have ever heard."

Günter Pauler, Stockfisch Records on Amphion Argon3.



Would you like to hear what Mr. Pauler from Stockfisch Records hears in his studio? Now you have access to the same speakers that are used in the recording process of some of the all time audiophile reference recordings.

Even if Mr. Pauler feels Argon3 are the best nearfield speakers he has ever heard, Argon3's were designed to work best in normal acoustically non-treated rooms, where most of the audiophiles enjoy their music.

More information on Amphion products on www.amphion.fi

Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

YOUR EXPERTS



PAUL MESSENGER
EXPERTISE: SPEAKERS

PAUL is the UK's foremost expert on loudspeakers. Having worked as a speaker designer and reviewer for over 30 years Paul is internationally recognised for his ability to assess loudspeaker performance, and report on developments in the field.



JIMMY HUGHES
EXPERTISE: SYSTEM OPTIMISATION

JIMMY has been involved in hi-fi for over 40 years. His knowledge of tweaking and optimising systems is unrivalled in the hi-fi industry and he brings enormous expertise to the pages of Hi-Fi Choice. If anyone can help you improve your set-up, it's him.



RICHARD BLACK
EXPERTISE: TECHNOLOGY

RICHARD writes exclusively for *HFC* and brings his experience as a successful musician and recording engineer to the title. As Technical Consultant, he's our authority on tech testing, ensuring that our verdicts are beyond compare.



ED SELLEY
EXPERTISE: HI-FI TROUBLESHOOTER

ED has spent the best part of decade selling, developing and supporting products from some of the biggest names in audio. As troubleshooter he is on hand to help readers find and eliminate any issues they have with their systems.



ALVIN GOLD
EXPERTISE: PERFORMANCE AUDIO

ALVIN is an internationally respected audio reviewer who has contributed to a huge range of magazines over the years. He has a very full 30 years of reviewing under his belt and has a passion for both high-performance and high-end hi-fi.



JASON KENNEDY
EXPERTISE: TURNTABLES

JASON edited *Hi-Fi Choice* through the Brit-pop era and relinquished the helm after 17 years on the title. A hi-fi addict since his twenties, Jason fell for the beauty of vinyl and has never looked back. He's here to help you get the best from your LPs.



MALCOLM STEWARD
EXPERTISE: EMERGING TECH

MALCOLM is a legend in hi-fi magazine circles. A former editor of *Hi-Fi Review* he was one of the best-known and most outspoken reviewers of the 1980s and 1990s. He now writes exclusively for *Hi-Fi Choice* and he loves being 'back'.

Welcome...

www.hifichoice.co.uk Issue No. **339** Awards 2010



Welcome to the Awards issue 2010, arguably the most important issue of the year for anyone considering buying hi-fi. Inside you'll find our guide to the best products on the

market, as we steer you towards the most fulfilling hi-fi products of today.

We're also delighted to be the first magazine to bring you full coverage of this year's Whittlebury Hall show, which is fast becoming a must-see event for audio enthusiasts. Elsewhere in the issue, we have a cracking exclusive on Meridian's top-of-the-range CD player, the 808.3, as well as Naim's compact streamer the UnitiQute plus our cover star, Leema's new Stream and Pulse CD and amp.

There's a brit theme this month for sure, but will the UK dominate the awards? Go to p67 for the answer.

Dan

Dan George Editor
dan.george@futurenet.co.uk

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HI-FI CHOICE is passionate about high-fidelity. We're dedicated to the very highest standards of sound reproduction. Our commitment is to bring you the most reliable, in-depth hi-fi equipment tests anywhere and we're backed by the UK's biggest technology publisher. Our expert writers will help you get the most from your hi-fi and guide you towards the best-performing products for your budget. Our passion is your passion.



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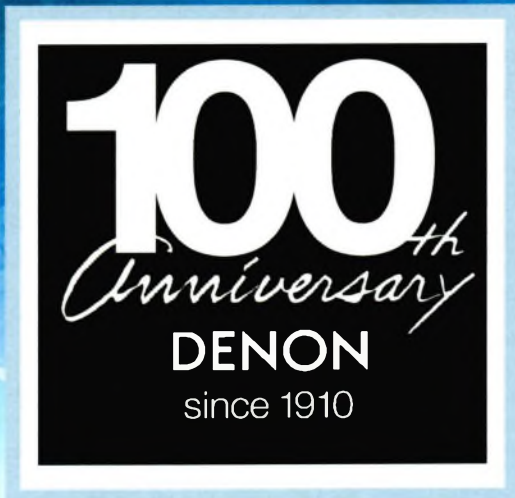
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The Turntable & The Cartridge



The Headphone



The Integrated Amplifier



The A/V Receiver



The Universal Player



The SACD/CD Player

Limited Edition Anniversary Products

During this year Denon will celebrate its 100th anniversary. This is a monumental point in Denon's history and to celebrate, Denon have released a limited edition series of anniversary products.

Each model in the series is a **signature reference product of luxurious quality** and a true quest for perfection. Faithfully reproducing sound the way the original artist intended, the **limited edition anniversary models** are sure to become collectors items that will sell out very quickly.

- Limited Edition
- Products finished in a luxurious gloss finish
- 5-year warranty
- Certificate of Authenticity from the chief product designer
- Includes a beautiful Denon Brand Book

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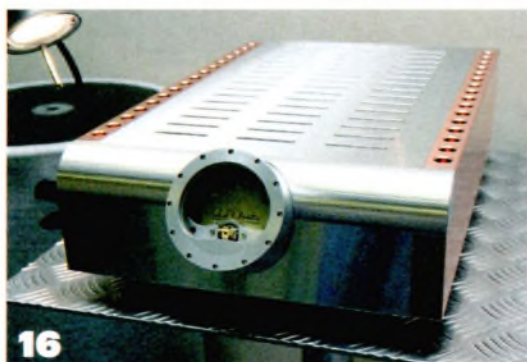
CD Players/Turntables/Phono cartridges/
Radio tuners/Headphones/Integrated &
pre/power amps/Cables/Speakers/
Equipment supports **UPDATED MONTHLY**



WORTH
£2,500

WIN!

59 A pair of
PMC FB1i
Signature
loudspeakers



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Audiofile

All the latest news and views from the hi-fi industry

Naim that tune

Naim announces its first full-size network player

PRICE: £3,000

AVAILABLE: OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

CONTACT: 01722 426673

WEB: NAIMAUDIO.COM

Hot on the heels of the all-in-one UnitiQute streamer, Naim Audio has announced the launch of the NDX Network Player. Naim sees NDX owners using it “primarily, as a high-end-quality streamer, playing back music ripped from CDs or hi-res music downloaded from the many online stores.” In addition to the ability to play back a full range of audio formats, the NDX supports Internet radio and has an optional DAB/FM module and three 24-bit/192kHz capable digital inputs.

Also fitted is the same USB interface we have already seen on the DAC and the UnitiQute, which allows for playback of high-resolution files from USB sticks and direct access of audio from an iPod or iPhone. The NDX is also equipped with a buffered BNC digital out for connection to an external DAC.

Naim has applied its customary care and attention to the construction of the NDX including “Galvanic isolation between key sections of the circuits” and maximum isolation between the digital and the analogue

sections. This is topped off with the customary heavily damped Naim casework with considerable isolation properties. The NDX is fitted with wireless support “for convenience” and with wired Ethernet, which Naim fully recommends.

The NDX’s development is said to have borrowed from the experience gained with the DAC and the product has the same 16-times oversampling process via a SHARC processor that runs into a custom filter arrangement. In the same manner as the Naim DAC, this filter has been refined to the point where it contains only five lines of code.

The “memory method” of jitter-suppression is also retained. This uses a master clock best able to match the timing of the incoming stream to virtually eradicate jitter from the DAC chips. The traditional practice of being able to upgrade via external power supplies continues. The NDX can be powered by both the XPS and the 555PS external power supplies for a useful boost in performance. ●

NAIM’S NEW ERA

THE NDX is the latest part of an increasingly large range of network audio products from Naim. Customers have the choice of adding an NDX to an existing system to put it on a network, whilst the Uniti or Uniti Qute offer network capacity at a lower price.

Naim’s existing HDX can stream music over network whilst also storing rips from its onboard hard drive.

Finally, the Uniti Serv is a dedicated ripping solution for adding material to a network.



Naim sees NDX owners using it
"primarily as a high-end-quality
streamer playing back CD rips"

CYRUS

Power is nothing without control.

Back in 1998 when the first Cyrus Mono X amplifier was launched it was hailed as a breakthrough. Never content to rest on our laurels, we constantly strive to push the boundaries of what is possible within hi-fi. Like our SE CD players that have become a benchmark within the industry, our new Mono X 200 and Mono X 300 Zero Global Feedback power amplifiers are big engineering projects that challenge accepted benchmarks.



Incorporating the newest advances in component technology, our reengineered Zero Feedback platform delivers some very special sonic benefits, resulting in an exceptional musical performance. Both our new Zero Feedback amplifiers retain our famous large sound stage yet drive even demanding loudspeaker loads with perfect control and ease.

These new amplifiers will be available in stores from October. Book a demonstration at your local Cyrus retailer and experience this outstanding technology for yourself.



SE technology award



SE CD player of the year



CD 8 SE CD player of the year



Cyrus 8 XP, November '09



Did You Know

Our R&D, Manufacturing and Servicing are all done at our headquarters in Cambridgeshire, England. Having all these departments in one place enables us to not only design world class components, but also allows us to provide outstanding levels of customer care to all Cyrus owners worldwide.

Designed manufactured and supported in England by Cyrus.
For the latest news on products or to download a brochure, please visit www.cyrusaudio.com
Cyrus sales 01480 435577

100 not out

Denon celebrates its centenary with special edition range

Denon has gone to town to celebrate its centenary with a range of new hi-fi products. Unusually, this is not limited to one or two components, but a complete set of stereo and multichannel components with ancillaries.

The PMA-100 integrated amplifier and DCD-A100 CD/SACD player are improved versions of existing Denon models, but boast 'special anniversary tuning, superior construction and higher sound quality.' The products are topped off with a special high-gloss black finish and 100th anniversary signature badges. Both units are priced at £2,249 each.

Also available is the equally glossy A-H100 headphone and a more unusual addition to

the range; the DL-A100 direct-drive turntable. The DP-A100 is unusual in that it uses a quartz-locked, direct-drive motor to rotate the platter instead of the more common belt-drive approach used by most current turntable manufacturers.

The DP-A100 is fitted with the DL-A100 cartridge as standard, which is a re-worked and retuned version of the DL-103 cartridge that has been in production for nearly fifty years. The range is completed by the AVR-A100 nine-channel AV receiver and the DBP-A100 universal disc player.

The A100 anniversary products are on sale now, but will only be available from selected retailers.



PRICE: £500-£2,249 **AVAILABLE:** NOW
CONTACT: 0800 048 0408 **WEB:** DENON100.COM

Electric Avenue

New integrated amplifier from Norway

Electrocompaniet has undertaken a substantial redesign of its EC15 integrated amplifier and the result is practically an all-new design with only the transformer

being retained. The EC15 MkII uses a Class A-biased preamp connected to a new output stage. Power stays at 120 watts, but there are twice the number of output devices to improve low-end

response. The output stage also does without output relays in order to improve sound quality. Cosmetically, the major difference is a new dimmable display.



PRICE: £2,750 **AVAILABLE:** NOVEMBER **CONTACT:** 020 8893 5835
WEB: ELECTROCOMPANIET.COM



Guaranteed to please

TEUFEL'S new three-strong budget loudspeaker range will bolster its already sizeable portfolio.

The T Series consists of the T300 standmount and the T400 and T500 floorstanding models. All three use a 28mm fabric calotte tweeter with 130mm bass driver in the T300 and T400 and a larger 170mm design in the T500. All three models have a high-gloss front panel and are finished in either black or wenge.

Like all Teufel designs, the T Series is not available through dealers, but is instead sold direct with an eight week right of return period and an extremely impressive 12-year warranty if you decide to keep them.

PRICE: £238-£568. **AVAILABLE:** NOW
CONTACT: 00800 200 300 400
WEB: TEUFELAUDIO.COM



Tempting tuner

TEAC has launched a new £170 tuner. The T-R650DAB supports DAB, FM and AM bands and has a 'good selection' of presets and supports timer and sleep functions. It's also fitted with a digital output for recording purposes or for increasing performance via an external DAC.

The T-R650DAB also makes use of a good-quality quartz locked PLL tuning system, paired with carefully selected components to produce 'a crisp low-distortion sound.'

PRICE: £170 **AVAILABLE:** NOW
CONTACT: 01555 666161
WEB: TEAC.CO.UK



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See www.eclipse-td.net for details.

New season's Apples

New iPod range hits the market

Apple has announced three updates to its all-conquering iPod range.

The new Shuffle retains the VoiceOver technology of the preceding shuffle, but reverts back to having button control as well. The 2GB capacity Shuffle comes in five different finishes and costs £39.

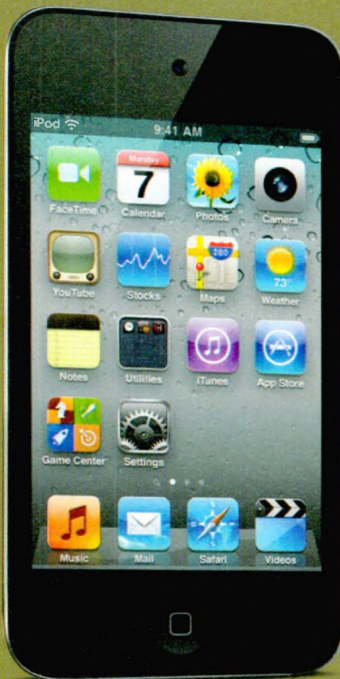
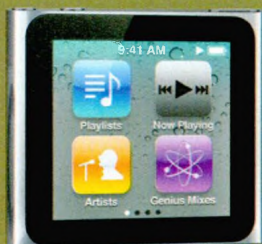
The Nano has undergone a more substantial redesign and has dispensed with the clickwheel control altogether in favour of a touchscreen-style interface that means that the 8GB Nano is only fractionally larger than the

Shuffle. The good news is that the Nano retains the standard connector for use in aftermarket docks. The 8GB model will be £129.

The final update to the range affects the iPod Touch. It borrows heavily from the iPhone 4, with a new Retina display.

Also making its debut is the Ping feature of iTunes 10, which gives live updates about favourite artists.

The 8GB iPod Touch will be £189. The iPod Classic, however, continues on unchanged.



PRICE: £39-£189 AVAILABLE: NOW CONTACT: 0800 048 0408 WEB: APPLE.COM/UK



High-end for less

EMILLÉ AUDIO has dramatically lowered the price of ownership with the new ARA.

The £2,460 amp is several thousand pounds cheaper than the next integrated in the Korean manufacturer's range, but is still made in the same factory as the other models and shares the same distinctive brand styling.

The ARA uses a quartet of 7591A valves to produce 22 watts. The preamp is built around the well-regarded 6922 valve. Like the bigger Emillé models, the ARA uses hand-wired output transformers and this attention to detail extends to a special winding for headphone amplifier.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the ARA – and the most radical departure from the rest of the range – is the on-board DAC. This supports both S/PDIF and USB inputs and complements the two conventional line inputs that are also fitted. The comprehensive specification is topped off with two relatively rare features for a valve amp: a headphone socket and a remote control.

PRICE: £2,460 AVAILABLE: NOW CONTACT: 01923 352479 WEB: EMILLELABS.COM

Just Peachy

American digital audio brand Peachtree arrives in the UK

Offering 'digital music for audiophiles', Peachtree audio has debuted a range of three new amplifiers. All pair a Class A valve preamplifier with a solid-state power section. They also support digital inputs via a high-quality Sabre DAC, as well as analogue inputs. Interestingly, all three models have a cavity at the back that can accept a Sonos zone player.

PRICE: £850-£1,100 AVAILABLE: NOW CONTACT: 020 8358 9593 WEB: PEACHTREEAUDIO.COM



NEWS IN BRIEF

A selection of news-breaking stories on everything hi-fi



•**ARCAM** has announced the rCube iPod sound system (£500). The rCube can stream wirelessly from an iPod via an optional Kleer module.
arcam.com



•**OLIVE** has just launched the 3HD music server (£899) which can hold 5,000 lossless tracks on its 500GB internal hard drive (see p16).
olive.us



•**AKG** has worked with producer Quincy Jones to develop the Q701 headphone – which it claims is the most accurate it has produced.
akg.com



•**DIVINE ACOUSTICS** is a new speaker company from Poland. Its Proxima 2 loudspeaker (£995) is available in the UK now, via Audio Sanctum.
divineacoustics.com



•**I-MEGO** claims that its Earth Series headphone combines stylish design, with the use of environmentally friendly recycled materials. Prices tba.
i-mego.com

Boxing clever

Forty new products over three ranges from expert Canton

Canton has been busy of late, judging by the grand unveiling of forty new products over three ranges at the recent IFA show in Berlin.

The new Karat Series borrows technology from the range-topping Reference models and uses side-firing drivers for a slim front profile, as well as featuring

upgraded crossovers and drivers for improved performance.

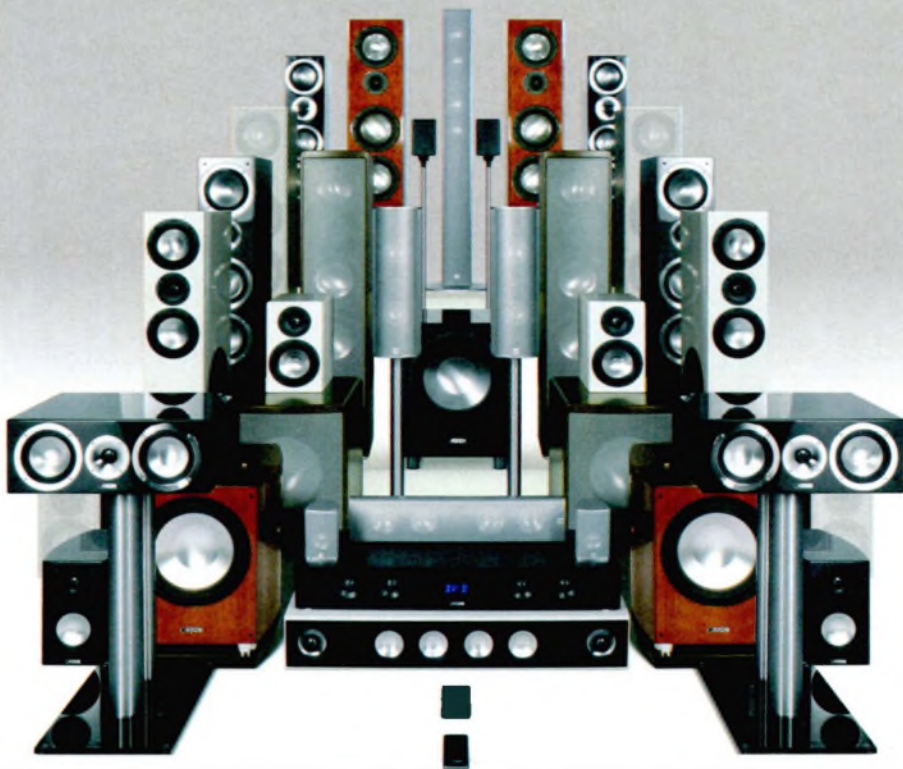
The mid-priced Chrono Series is also completely reworked. The seven-model range makes use of technology from the higher specification SL series, in a more affordable cabinet.

Many of the models also include a downward-

firing cabinet for easier room placement.

The GLE Series is the entry-level range. The six models benefit from new drivers and crossovers resulting in a 'total acoustic makeover.'

Additionally, Canton has announced two new home cinema packages, as well as a soundbar and a pair of subwoofers.



PRICE: £280-£2,400 AVAILABLE: NOW CONTACT: 020 8358 8593 WEB: CANTON.DE

DESERT ISLAND DISCS

Steve Reichert, PR Manager for Armour Home selects his fab four



LINDA RONSTADT
LIVING IN THE USA
I confess I bought this in 1978 on the strength of the advertising posters. Luckily for me, it turned out to be brilliant. She's got a wonderful voice and there's not a duff track on it.



BEETHOVEN
7TH SYMPHONY
It's easy to get all intellectual about classical music, but the bottom line is that Beethoven's 7th is just such a cracking good tune. Perfect for shutting out the world.



VARIOUS ARTISTS
THE OLD GREY WHISTLE TEST (COMPILATION)
No one of a certain age can forget this iconic show. This double CD contains 38 great songs that sustained me in my younger days.



EMMYLOU HARRIS
PIECES OF THE SKY
I love songs that tell a story. *Boulder to Birmingham* is the most wonderful example. It's a lament about the untimely death of Harris' close friend and mentor Gram Parsons.

100th
Anniversary
since 1910

www.denon100.com

DENON

It's a family affair.



Denon D-M38DAB Micro Component System // Following in the footsteps of the What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision award winning D-M37DAB, this new stereo all-rounder from Denon's D-M family comes with even more intelligent features. Most remarkably, the front panel USB port now features iPod/iPhone digital direct connectivity, which truly brings your mobile music libraries to life. Experience the beautiful D-M38DAB at your local Denon dealer. Visit www.denon.co.uk for more details.

Also available in:



Black | Black



Denon is a trademark or registered trademark of D&M Holdings, Inc. iPod is a trademark of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. iPhone is a trademark of Apple Inc. Apple is not responsible for the operation of this device or its compliance with safety and regulatory standards.



SHOW REPORT

Whittlebury Hall, 2010

Jason Kennedy discovers the very latest audio trends from the National Audio Show in Whittlebury

The second National Audio Show in Whittlebury, built on the successes of the previous year and offered visitors more rooms and more exhibitors.

There were quite a few retailers at the show, some taking quite big rooms and effectively representing big brands like Bowers and Wilkins and Focal. In fact, we were surprised to see the former sharing space with

models from Jamo.

The show was also a glass audio-enthusiast's paradise, with at least half the rooms being kept warm with glowing valves. These were naturally partnered by a fantastic array of turntables, several of which were totally new to us. Whittlebury remains a very two-channel-oriented show and there was little in the way of multichannel product on display. Many of the systems

were amongst the most high end exhibited in the UK in recent years and the show represented the opportunity to see some real rarities and esoterica.

This show is all about listening. The well spread out layout of Whittlebury meant that noise pollution was low and this encouraged people to sit down and listen to systems rather than wandering in and out of rooms that are struggling to be heard over the noise of their neighbours, which is a welcome development.

There wasn't a great deal of budget kit on show, but there was plenty for the mid-market even if the sector is, as one exhibitor suggested, 'dying on its feet.'

"The show was a glass audio-enthusiast's paradise, with half the rooms kept warm with valves."

1 CYRUS MONO X

Cyrus has been revising and upgrading its Mono X monoblock power amps, most significantly by making them zero-feedback (ZF) devices, which is an extremely rare thing in solid-state amplification.

There are two new models, the Mono X 200 and 300. The number indicates the power output into eight ohms, which is quite extraordinary given that both inhabit the traditional half-width Cyrus casework! The advantage of ZF operation is relatively unfettered circuit design and very low noise levels. cyrusaudio.com

2 OLIVE 3HD

Olive made a big impression with its 4HD streamer and has now followed it with a more affordable alternative dubbed 3HD. This has the same distinctive wedge-fronted casework, but uses a smaller 500GB internal hard drive. This brings the cost down to £900, less than half that of the 4HD.

It can be operated with a five-inch touch-screen, or driven from

“Many of the systems were amongst the most high end exhibited in the UK in recent years”.



3



4



6



7



5



8

an iPhone or iPod Touch with Olive's Maestro app. Savings have been achieved by omitting digital in and outputs – the output of the Cirrus Logic DAC being limited to analogue RCAs. olive.us

3 DELTEC PRECISION AUDIO PDM3

Deltec is going back to its roots adding a digital to analogue converter called PDM3 to its range. This runs sample rates from 16-bit/44.1kHz to 24-bit/96kHz and accepts signals via optical and coaxial S/PDIF inputs alongside USB.

A unique feature is the Deltran Locked connection. This is designed to link with the player or transport, in order to lock the clocks of the two units together. It's something you see on very high-end transports and DACs and requires that a Deltran emitter be fitted to your player.

Deltec supplies such a part for users or various aftermarket upgraders to install. deltecprecisionaudio.com

4 HI-FI RACKS PODIUM PLATFORM

Hi-Fi Racks' Podium stand made a great impression when we reviewed it last year (*HFC 320*) and its new Podium Platform could well up the ante for wall-mounted shelves. Priced at £189, it's made out of 40mm-thick solid hardwoods and is designed to support components up to 90kg in weight. It also looks rather more attractive than most of the competition.

The company also introduced a wider version of the Podium stand called XL (V), which is 1,200mm wide by 400mm deep and has five solid oak legs available in various lengths. Cost is £299 per tier. hifiracks.co.uk

5 SYSTEMDEK 3D REFERENCE

Last year's show saw the re-emergence of Systemdek on the turntable scene with the 3D Precision. This year it was showing its latest incarnation with the popular Reference sobriquet.

The 3D Reference has an advanced suspension design that can be adjusted from above as per the original Systemdeks, but is this time mass-loaded to give it some stability. The whole turntable weighs an alarming 65kg and was equipped with an Audio Origami PU7 12-inch arm and Transfiguration Orpheus cartridge. Price will be in the region of £20,000. jordanaacoustics.co.uk

6 CANOR AUDIO CD2 VR+

Edgar Audio were responsible for some very interesting valve-powered amps and a CD player, but three years ago the company changed its name to Canor.

It chose the NAS to reveal its CD2 VR+ valve-powered disc-spinner, a refined version of its standard model with Mundorf caps and selected valves alongside the Burr-Brown 24-bit/192kHz DAC.

Making the most of vinyl was the TP306 VR all-valve phono stage. It accepts both MM and MC cartridges with variable gain and impedance for the latter. Inboard

step-up transformers by Lundahl are something of a bonus. canor-audio.com

7 MASTERSOUND PH L5

You can tell Mastersound is an Italian brand by the presence of those walnut slabs on a chassis that house valve electronics (there's nothing quite like glass and hardwood to arouse the emotions). This is Mastersound's goal at least and its new PH L5 (£3,795) is a valve preamplifier with line and MM phono inputs that can do just that with the right music.

The partnering Final 845 monoblocks combine parallel single-ended 845 valves to deliver 50 watts from each 34kg power amp (£9,995). mastersoundsas.it

8 THALES SIMPLICITY

Graham Tricker has added a pair of elegant new German components to the GT Audio portfolio. The Thales Simplicity is a tangential tonearm that adjusts cartridge

SHOW REPORT

WHITTLEBURY HALL NATIONAL AUDIO SHOW



tracking angle as it traverses the record. It's an old idea that has been cleverly revised and refined to produce what its designer calls a tetragon system. It's claimed to reduce tracking error to a mere 0.008 degrees, so no wonder it costs £6,000.

At the other end of the system were a pair of Avantgarde Duo Omega speakers, beautiful high-efficiency designs that incorporate an active subwoofer to give the speaker air-shifting potential. gtaudio.com

9 TRON SEVEN PREAMPLIFIER

Having built a Seven Line stage and a Seven Phono, Tron has taken the step of combining the two in a single box to save some space and money. The Seven Preamplifier is a valve-powered design with four-line inputs, plus phono in one of three variants according to required gain.

Unlike many valve designs, the Seven has a mono/stereo switch, mute and a tape loop. Input

socketry is in silver and the case itself is non-ferrous to minimise eddy currents. Prices start at £2,995. tron-electric.co.uk

10 ICON CDX1

This show is not short on glowing audio and the Icon room glowed more brightly than most, thanks to a plethora of new components.

All but one were amplifiers, the CDX1 CD player being the odd one out, although the size of the tubes on its top might make you think otherwise. Designer David Shaw has made the output stage out of a low-powered tube amplifier using 6SN7 valves and a choke-regulated power supply. Seems like a bargain at £1,000.

Among the slew of amplifiers, two pre-production models stood out because they were running Tung Sol KT120 valves, a brand new high-powered version of the classic KT88. The Icon Audio amps built for this new device are the MB90 MkII monoblocks and Stereo 60 MkIII integrated. iconaudio.co.uk

11 KUDOS TITAN

Kudos was pushing the boundaries with its new range-topping Titan Project. Still at a prototype stage, it was nonetheless making a very compelling sound at the show. Kudos has split the speaker into two cabinets with a pair of bass drivers operating isobaric style in the lower one and the mid-bass and tweeter in the top box.

The cabinet is made by Danish company Hornslet from variable-thickness HDF, a supplier that designer Derek Gilligan chose for its commitment to quality above all else. The Titan is expected to sell for around £13,000. kudosaudio.com

12 AYRE DX-5

Symmetry revealed Ayre's latest entrant to the digital scene, the DX-5. Described as an A/V engine, it plays back 'virtually all' digital formats, be they audio or video, so in effect it's a universal player. It's geared toward computers as well as more conventional sources and has a Streamlength asynchronous

USB receiver. It accepts signals up to 24-bit/192kHz and takes power supplies, isolation of A and V and upscaling very seriously. Conveniently, it will also play all the five-inch optical disc formats known to audio and video. ayre.com

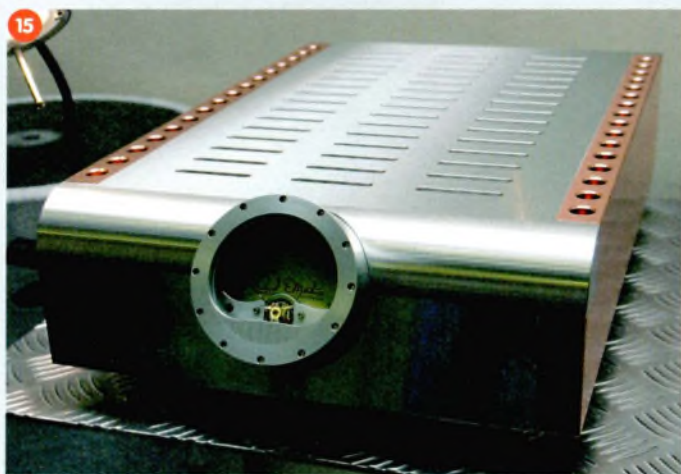
13 SW LOUDSPEAKERS MAGIC FLUTE

One of the most spectacular and, it has to be said, expensive loudspeakers at Whittlebury was the Magic Flute from Sweden. This four-way design houses each driver in its own carbon fibre enclosure with the aim of completely removing reflections or resonances from the cabinet.

The sound it produced with an MSB Platinum V transport and DAC was extremely revealing indeed. But at £50k a pair, one's expectations are naturally high. swspeakers.com

14 STAX SR-507

Electrostatic headphone king Stax unveiled its latest addition to the



Lambda series; the SR-507. This replaces the SR-404 Signature model and has a new thin film diaphragm that is 'practically free from stretching under temperature or humidity'.

It also has a completely new 10-click adjustment system for maximum comfort, the cable uses 6N high-purity copper with silver plating on the outer wires. The earpads are in sheepskin leather and have a more sculpted shape than previous models. stax.co.jp

15 D'AGOSTINO MASTER AUDIO SYSTEM

Dan D'Agostino was the guy that started Krell, but now he works under his own name. The first fruit of his new labours is a distinctly steam punk-styled Master Audio System 300-watt power amplifier. Still at prototype stage there has not been a price announcement, but construction is clearly top-notch with lead and copper heatsinking and a beautifully finished VU meter to indicate power output. absolutesounds.com

16 ACOUSTIC SIGNATURE MANFRED

Astin Trew is getting into vinyl. It's his first foray into hardcore analogue is the AT8800 phono stage, which they showed in prototype form. A dual-mono 'no compromise' design, it has 12 power supply stages, RCA phono and XLR inputs for truly balanced operation and adjustable load, capacitance and gain. Price is expected to be close to £2,000.

Rather more finished is the Acoustic Signature Manfred turntable that A-T is bringing in. This £1,200 German design is available with a Jelco tonearm for £1,600 and has a separate motor and a high-quality finish for the money. astintrew.co.uk

17 DEVORE FIDELITY GIBBON 9

Tom Tom Audio had reconstructed the DeVore Monkeyhaus, according to the notice on the door. A process which involved playing atypical show music through Rega electronics and

DeVore Gibbon 9 speakers. This New York-built floorstander has a separate chamber for the side-firing bass driver and superbly finished cabinet work in a three-way design that's said to be easy to drive. It comes in at £5,495 and its literature describes it as having musicality, playfulness, fidelity and flexibility. devorefidelity.com

18 SRM AREZZO REFERENCE XR

SRM has gone one, well actually two better in the XR version of its Reference turntable. The standard Reference has one flywheel to keep things running smoothly, the £5,998 range-topper has three hefty lumps of stainless steel spinning around the subplatter to give the Delrin the inertia found in high-mass designs without their energy-storing drawbacks. The turntable has sorbothane isolation and runs an extra-long tungsten-steel bearing in a phosphor bronze journal. srm-tech.co.uk

19 DBA ENVY LOUDSPEAKERS

dba stands for 'demand better audio' and its room looked like an explosion in a carbon fibre ball factory. The company has a Formula One background and is clearly adept at building carbon and Kevlar spheres. It makes a number of speakers and electronics and sells them individually or as systems.

The dba amplifier is based on a Hypex class D module and its Envy loudspeakers come in a one-piece

carbon fibre sphere with a variety of drivers including an 80mm carbon/Kevlar wideband unit and a planar ribbon. Prices start at £640 including cabling. demandbetteraudio.co.uk

20 HOWES ACOUSTICS QUARTER WAVE OMNI

John Howes is something of an audio legend. Now he has gone public and is offering his PX4 and PX25 single-ended amplifiers to the public, alongside a very elegant pair of speakers.

Based on a Paul Voigt design, the Quarter Wave Omni has an upward-firing Lowther PM6 A driver and a semi-circular reflector to send the treble and mid into the room. Priced at £4,500. howe-acoustics.co.uk

This was a very aspirational event with very few rooms showing systems below £25k and many breaking the six-figure barrier.

Absolute Sounds made a superb job with the Metronome Kalista Ultimate transport and DAC playing through Dartzeel's new NHB-458 monoblocks and Magico V2 speakers, but that system is as expensive as a serious kitchen!

It was also heartening to see brand new British companies making their debut, and on the formats front, computer audio was clearly making inroads. Sonos was at the show, for instance, but it still has a long way to go before it usurps the beauty of a serious turntable. We love technology, but we love vinyl even more. ●

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*'Seduces the listener with realism and a sense of scale...
The Summit X will own your heart from its first notes'*

Ken Kessler, Hi-Fi News (November 2009)

*'Reference-grade performance that you'd struggle to match
at double the price'*

Alan Sircom, Hi-Fi+ (Issue 66)

*'The Summit X is just too addictive to live without. I'm putting
my money where my mouth is and buying the review pair as
my new reference loudspeakers'*

Howard Kneller, SoundStage! (September 2009)

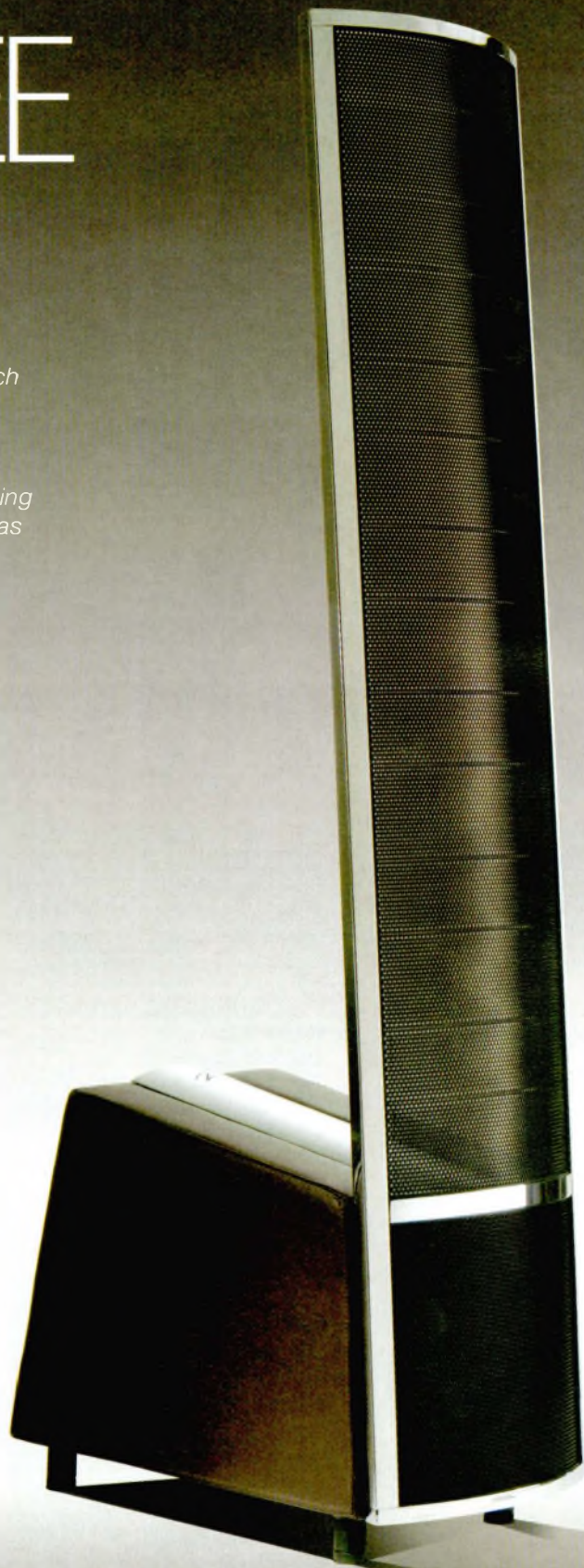
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On the Level

Understanding output level needn't be a headache, as **Richard Black** explains

One of the problems with us nerdy reviewer types is that we sometimes tend to assume readers understand the jargon we use and it can be salutary to discover just what is being misunderstood. (So do please write in and let us know!)

It's clear from correspondence and discussions on web forums that quoted 'output level' is one of the misunderstood terms. It sounds so obvious: this CD player has an output level of 2V, that one has 2.2V. But what does it actually mean? Quite simply, that at maximum output the voltage at the phono sockets is 2V (or whatever). That's an AC (alternating) voltage, of course, so it's strictly 2V RMS, or 'root mean square': for a sine wave (pure tone) output the signal varies between 2.83V positive and 2.83V negative, just as the 240V mains electricity supply swings from about +338V to -338V.

So what we're really saying with the 2V output is that the output can swing as far as $\pm 2.83V$. It's convenient to specify an RMS output for a sine wave, though, because sine waves are easy to produce, reproduce and measure. Other types of waveform, for instance square waves, are very hard to work with because they are sensitive to frequency and phase response and give different answers depending on exactly how one measures them.

Real music is neither sine waves nor square waves, but as long as we know that the maximum output swing is $\pm 2.83V$ we know that is also the limit for musical signals, transient or (relatively) steady. But that 'maximum' thing – for a digital source, it's closely defined by the digits, which can only represent a voltage so big and no bigger. Most of the time the signal is lower in level, so the output voltage will be less; possibly as small as a few millivolts and don't forget that it's always

zooming up and down anyway, so it's frequently precisely zero. If you think of a loudspeaker cone moving in and out, the voltage that's causing it to move is an analogue of the cone's position (that's why it's called analogue audio). Sometimes bigger, sometimes smaller, sometimes nothing at all.

If another CD player has, say, a 3V output, everything is just scaled up by a factor of 1.5. That's absolutely all and really the number isn't of much importance in the daily world. It's only when one compares two CD players that output level is an issue, because higher output level equals louder music, which equals, very often, unfair subjective advantage.

Volume or loudness?

With analogue sources the maximum output isn't strictly limited in the same way, so output level is specified with reference to some arbitrary level. For instance, phono cartridge level is conventionally quoted with reference to 5cm/s modulation level. That's some way below the maximum that can be handled on LP, so maximum level will be considerably higher. It's still true, though, that if one cartridge has an output of 4mV and another 5mV, the only thing that signifies it is that you'll end up listening to the latter with the volume a fraction lower for the same loudness. Any sound quality differences you hear will be due to something else!

That said, just once in a while it happens that an amplifier has inadequate input headroom for a higher-than-usual-output source. These days that's very rare and it's usually obvious because the sound in loud music suffers from nasty overload that doesn't go away when the volume control is wound back. Apart from that and the business of side-by-side comparisons, output level is something you can safely ignore. ●

The problem with us nerdy reviewer types is that we sometimes tend to assume readers understand the jargon we use

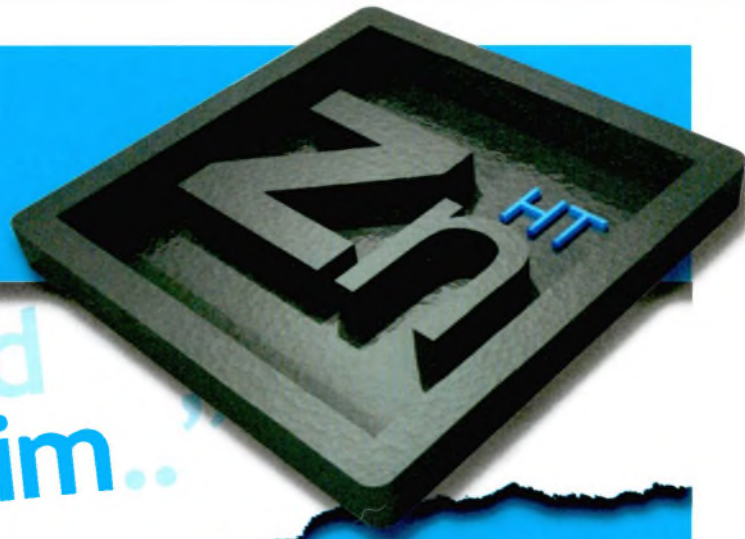
Small variations going in can lead to big variations going out



RICHARD BLACK
A musician and recording engineer, Richard knows a thing or two about hi-fi – he's been writing about it for over two decades

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Preaching to the converted

The current choice of high-resolution music is unlikely to win new converts, says **Ed Selley**

High-resolution digital audio is one of the most exciting developments in audio in the last 20 years. Comfortably superior to CD, the files themselves also avoid many of the pitfalls that sank DVD-Audio and rendered SACD, at best, a fringe interest (even though there is already a large amount of hardware available and able to replay it). There is nothing intrinsically difficult about the process of streaming high-resolution files and the hardware has definitely come of age. My recent experiences with the Naim UnitiQute (reviewed on p46) were extremely positive. The UnitiQute was simplicity itself to setup and use. And yet in spite of both of these positives, I still think we might be about to get it very wrong.

The problem that streaming devices collectively face is that their ability to replay high-quality content has far outpaced the availability of the content itself. For the most part, it is still the case that even the most avid streaming audiophile buys a CD in the same old way before ripping it to a drive. The results offer greater convenience and the opportunity for forums to have multiple-page arguments about jitter and error-correction, but even the most devoted streamer will concede that the effect is, at best, CD done slightly better. There are precious few legal sites where it is possible to download 16-bit /44.1kHz files, that is to say the same as CD. Try to improve on CD and the picture becomes bleaker still.

Going Ga Ga for hi-res

The choice of high-resolution files available to buy remains strictly limited despite some strong efforts from Naim (naimlabel.com), Linn (linnrecords.com) and Bowers and Wilkins (bowers-wilkins.com). The issue even here, in my view, is that the choice itself is unashamedly targeted at people who are already buying this sort of material. Spotify and iTunes have the content but not the bitrate and represent the other possible compromise of choice.

Little attempt is being made to encourage people downloading compressed files to try the same piece in higher quality and hear the benefit. A quick check reveals that I can choose from at least three high-resolution versions of *Ode to Joy*, but not a single version of Lady Ga Ga's *The Fame*. I am not suggesting that the latter stands comparison with the former, but popular media has been the driver for the take-up of formats throughout history and it hard to see where these people will be coming from when the choice of music from the last



Lady Ga Ga: millions of copies sold – none of them as a lossless download

decade, let alone albums that actually charted is negligible.

As a result of this, high-resolution audio could be all set to repeat the reasons for the failure of previous efforts to replace CD. The current approach is akin to the film industry only releasing art house films on Blu-ray and keeping the mass market plodding along with DVD. If the take up of chart albums in hi-res were only five percent of the total online sales, it would still significantly increase the amount of such media actually being purchased. I cannot see the argument that there is no demand for such files being accurate when there are no files available to test the demand.

HFC has tested several superb products recently that are simple to use and capable of great results at relatively real-world prices. Unless you are already an audiophile, however, there is no convincing reason to take the plunge. Right now, we need to show why this technology has so much to offer. Another release of *Brothers in Arms* is not going to achieve this. ●

High-resolution audio could be all set to repeat the failure of previous efforts to replace CD



ED SELLEY

Ed worked in retail before joining some of the biggest names in the hi-fi industry creating and supporting audio products

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Main Image: Living Voice OBX RW loudspeaker in Santos Rosewood



L to R: 1. Living Voice IBX R2 2. Art Audio Concerto integrated amplifier (GE) 3. SME 10 & Series V arm 4. KSL Kondo Neiro integrated amplifier
5. KSL Kondo Gakuoh 300B mono amplifiers 6. Art Audio Argento 300B integrated amplifier (WE) 7. SME 2012 & KSL Kondo lo-J cartridge
8. KSL Kondo Gakuon 211 mono amplifiers 9. Resolution Audio Cantata Music Center 10. KSL Kondo Ongaku 211 integrated amplifier

When radio ruled

In the golden age of stereo FM radio, one Japanese tuner stood out above all others, remembers *Jimmy Hughes*

Back in the 1970s, when things like the internet were still the stuff of science fiction writers, radio was one of the few 'free' sources of music. By the late 1960s, the BBC were regularly broadcasting stereo FM, giving hi-fi enthusiasts access to a high-quality source.

Stereo FM radio was taken very seriously at that time. Indeed, one hi-fi magazine actually ran a regular monthly column discussing the quality of broadcasts for the previous month. While there was plenty of debate about whether or not amplifiers sounded different, few disagreed that tuners varied enormously.

As a result, there were some delectably elaborate and expensive tuners produced for those wanting the best-possible results from FM radio. Among the most aspirational was Yamaha's CT-7000. This was an uncompromising cost-no-object, state-of-the-art design that delivered outstanding sound quality with very low noise.

In the mid 1970s, the CT-7000 was, without question, the tuner by which all others were judged – a true benchmark. And while some radio cognoscenti whispered that tuners like the Sequerra 1, or the old Marantz 10B were even better, it was hard to verify – in the UK/Europe, both were rarer than hen's teeth.

The CT-7000 was both surprisingly large and unusually heavy for a tuner. Internally, it was well-filled. There were no yawning empty spaces inside – virtually every inch was used. All the circuits were shrouded in separate metal screening cases to reduce noise and interference – which partly explains the weight.

By the standards of the day, the CT-7000 looked very cool and simple. Most of the controls (aside from the large, weighty tuning knob and mains on/off) were hidden behind a flap. Unusually, the tuning scale was gently back-lit. This created a clean understated appearance that looked elegant and unfussy.

Back then, virtually every expensive Japanese tuner sported big garish illuminated displays that gave Blackpool competition. With its soft back-lit display and smooth lines, the CT-7000 veritably oozed class. Standard finish was silver, though a few were made in black.

Interestingly, Yamaha never made a matching amplifier. This cemented the impression of the CT-7000 as a Statement product – a solitary gem that came into being purely because Yamaha had the know-how and technology to build it. Every hi-fi enthusiast lusted after one, but the price was high and few could afford it. Nevertheless, a surprising number were sold.



The legendary Yamaha CT-7000, the king of the airwaves

Tonally, the CT-7000 delivered a sweet, open quality of sound that was very smooth and natural. Most tuners sounded slightly dull and closed-in, lacking both fine detail and wide dynamics. But the Yamaha was beautifully airy and crisp, producing a sharp, detailed presentation.

Noiseless

It sounded clean, too (good 19kHz pilot-tone rejection) and very very quiet. It was the absence of hiss (even on weak signals) that really impressed. It was also good at rejecting interference, too. FM tuners were rather prone to this – for example, ticking noises or a sort of warbling known as 'birdies'.

The CT-7000 was blessedly free of such things, but the lack of hiss was its principal virtue. For comparably noise-free sound, it was said that stereo FM tuners needed roughly ten times as much signal compared to mono tuners. However, the CT-7000 could produce low-noise results even with fairly weak signals.

When graced with a good strong signal, the CT-7000 still sounded slightly 'quieter' than nearly all its rivals. It was the combination of low self-noise and open-detailed sound quality that made the Yamaha a reference standard. It made one take very seriously the idea of radio as a hi-fi source.

Sadly for UK users, tuners like the Yamaha CT-7000 might one day be extinct, should the BBC eventually decide to cease transmitting FM signals. But, even if you can't actually use it, many hi-fi enthusiasts would still like to have a CT-7000 just to admire and own. It really is a special piece of kit! ●

In the mid 1970s, the CT-7000 was without question the tuner by which all others were judged – a true benchmark



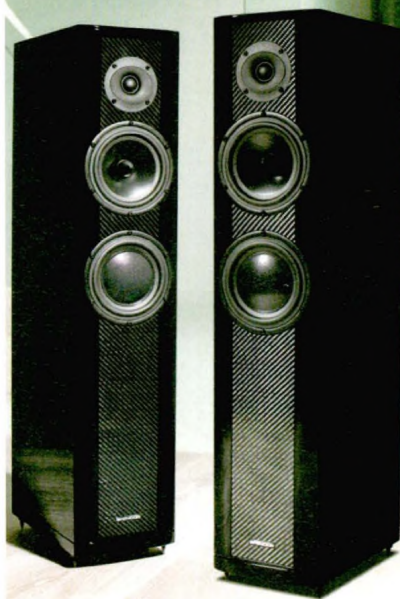
JIMMY HUGHES

A hi-fi enthusiast for four decades, Jimmy's knowledge of system-matching and record-collecting are unmatched in the industry

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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Eiky fan one...

I was very pleased to see the *Opinion* column on the Acoustic Precision Eikos (HFC 337).

Like Jason Kennedy, I had this in my main system and have since moved it to my second system. It has performed perfectly for over 13 years, while about six or seven years ago Tom Evans did the external power upgrade for me.

What is truly extraordinary about this player is that I cannot find anything to touch it as a replacement. I have had around half a dozen players up to £5k on A-B comparison and the blindfold test I have applied to myself always throws up the same result – that the Eikos remains effortlessly musical, breathing life into music that surpasses anything from the current crop of more expensive players.

Not only is the product an icon, I just do not know where I will find anything to exceed this decade-old performance at a comparative price. If you have any ideas or contacts who could assist, kindly let me know.

Nigel Goodall, via email

...two...

I read with interest the recent article by Jason Kennedy regarding his experience with the Acoustic Precision 'Eikos'. Like Jason, I have found the Eikos to be an immensely enjoyable and an exciting listen.

Incidentally, the squash ball feet on my machine collapsed after a few years giving the Eikos a list that was only cured by positioning a set of large Oak Cone Feet (supplied by Russ Andrews) under the platform base. This put things back on an even keel and, if anything, focussed things even more – revealing the old, familiar, detailed and dynamic sound.

I was intrigued by the revelation that of the 400 Eikos players manufactured, a small quantity have been further modified by the inclusion of a substantial power supply and with a separate Lithos 6 regulator.

Please tell me more, together with details of how and where this can be undertaken, as well as cost estimates for such work.

David Hopkin, via email

...and three

Imagine my (pleasant) surprise to see an Eikos get a mention in the October issue. I turned to page 27 and could hardly believe my eyes! Why? Because I have just bought a new Eikos. Yes, in 2010!

At the heart of my system is a DEQX and Tom (Evans) has had it down in his workshop on a couple of occasions to replace the stock power supply with his Lithos 6 and 7 magic. During it's second visit, I was discussing with Tom the best dedicated transport, to feed the DEQX and to replace my ML390s, which had been used in transport-only mode since I installed the DEQX.

I had borrowed some very expensive transports from my local high-end dealer, but was not very impressed. Tom laughed and said that he would make me one that would be "the best". I asked him what it would be based on and he said that he had one new Eikos that had never been finished. His plan was to convert it to be a dedicated transport only, fed by his latest Pulse 2 external power supplies and fitted with my personal choice of AES/EBU digital-out to feed the DEQX. We agreed and a few weeks later I became the proud owner of a brand new Eikos (special edition). To say that the sound is absolutely fabulous is an understatement.

The German transport did not even come close.

From a very happy and contented Tom Evans' customer.

Colin Gray, via email

HFC The Eikos certainly seems to retain a loyal following and the fact that three readers still have running units would suggest that plenty of the original 400 are still alive and well. With regards to any additional work being done on the Eikos, we would suggest contacting Tom Evans Audio directly (audiodesign.co.uk) although we do not know if they are in a position to modify existing units further.

The internet killed the radio star?

I read Mike Booth's letter about using freeview for DAB and felt compelled to write in and ask what's the point?

Sure Freeview can summon up a slightly higher bit rate and improve on DAB's frankly derisory broadcast quality, but it is still not as good (nowhere near in fact) as FM. It is increasingly being overtaken by internet radio services that can equal or better it on quality and destroy it on choice.

I am a classical music devotee and the internet has increased my choice from two stations to well over a hundred with at least ten of them, the broadcast equal of Radio 3 on DAB. All of this is via a Squeezebox Duet that is price-comparable with an ordinary standalone DAB radio. Ditch the



The Acoustic Precision Eikos – still delighting our readers as well as HFC's Jason Kennedy

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

Spot the convert



Spotify is certainly capturing the imagination of some of you

I READ your Insider article on Spotify (HFC 336) with considerable interest. I've had little enthusiasm for computer audio until recently, as I could not understand why I was being asked to pay 90 per cent of the price of an album on physical media for a download that has no physical counterpart.

Spotify has been my route into computer audio because, the price (in my case accepting adverts for two months and then paying £10 for the premium service) is far more in keeping with what I believe the price of non-physical media should be.

I am firmly convinced that this pattern is the future of computer audio, because it plays to the strengths of the technology and offers superb value for money. Should the lossless service go live, I will be at the front of the queue.

T Planer, via email

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The Squeezebox Touch is not just a way of accessing your music, but potentially your next radio as well

DAB and get online!

A Kanagaratnam, via email

HFC Internet radio is coming on in leaps and bounds and the ease which it can be accessed is improving as well. We feel that DAB still has a place as many hi-fis are nowhere near an internet connection and the car is still a tricky place for an internet radio. Nonetheless, for choice alone it is worth experimenting.

Work-life balance

There is very little I can do to make myself sound like anything other than a luddite when writing this, but please stick to reviews that don't always involve computers! I am not a technophobe – given I work in IT, but hi-fi has been my refuge from my work for over a decade now and the idea of dealing with some of the same problems I do at work when indulging in my pastime is a little too much to bear.

The turntable *Blind-listening Group Test* (HFC 338) was a welcome break from the computer audio world and I would welcome more of the same.

David Bozon, via email

HFC As with so many things in life, we need to strike a balancing act between discussing technical changes in the industry, as well as indulging in a spot of vinyl appreciation. We are not going to stop writing about some of the technical developments in audio, but equally we are aware that many of our readers have far more interest in conventional hi-fi and we will keep featuring the best from these categories.

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All round brilliance shines through. Nothing prepared us for the precision and power of the A5s. **What Hi-Fi**



A6

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★★★★★ April 2010

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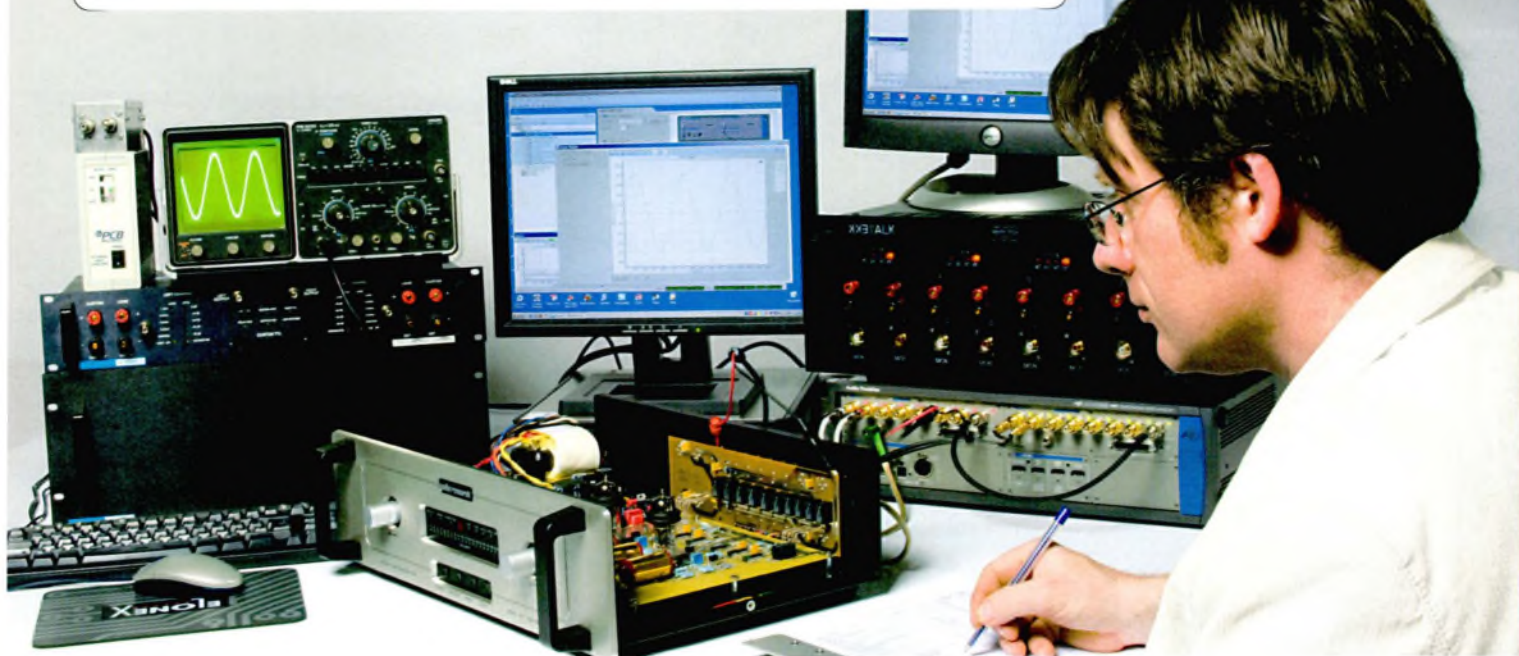
fact3
HAS ARRIVED

The **fact8** in Tiger Ebony

How we test

Hi-Fi Choice employs the most rigorous test and measurement regime in the business and here we explain why our definitive verdicts count

HOW WE TEST



Hi-fi reviews

No other magazine offers a more reliable standard of hi-fi testing. Technical Consultant **Richard Black** explains...

EXPERT TESTING

FOR OVER THREE decades, *Hi-Fi Choice* has been trusted for its combination of subjective and technical review expertise. The crucial consideration for any audio component is how it sounds, but it is important to back this up with laboratory measurements for many reasons – everything from the wish to check basic performance to the possibility of uncovering peculiar behaviour under conditions, perhaps slightly different from those of the subjective tests.

Listening

Subjective testing doesn't necessarily require the world's sharpest ears. What's more important is the experience to analyse the sound arriving from the hi-fi and this is where our subjective reviewers come in: they have been listening critically to audio equipment for aeons and have learned to identify the characteristics that make kit informative, involving or just plain dull.

Measurement

But even the most experienced listener, with a stack of familiar recordings heard in familiar surroundings, can't always know what is causing a particular

characteristic in the sound. Brightness, for instance, may be a function of frequency response or distortion and this is where measurements come in. We analyse a range of parameters to see just where the correlation lies between sound and design. Our test equipment has been tried, tested and added to over the years and again our experience with it is unrivalled.

Straightforward presentation

We call on that experience to boil down the measurements to simple bar charts, which show at a glance how well a component behaves relative to others in its category. It's this combination of subjective and technical expertise that makes our reviews the most useful in the field.

“crucial consideration for any audio component is how it sounds, but it is important to back this up with laboratory measurements...”

OUR AWARDS



EDITOR'S CHOICE: Awarded to those products that are judged to deliver reference-standard performance



RECOMMENDED: The products we feel meet a certain high standard of performance



GROUP TEST WINNER: Comparative tests can only have one true winner, and this badge says it all

STATE-OF-THE-ART HI-FI TECH

HFC's test equipment is the most advanced kit available



AT HI-FI CHOICE, we have access to some of the most advanced test equipment currently available on the market, including the Audio Precision APx585, which you'll find in the labs of many top hi-fi manufacturers. The 585 can be configured to test a variety of key hi-fi products, such as amplifiers, CD players/DACs and – with the help of a specially-calibrated microphone – loudspeakers.

In conjunction with some conventional lab equipment at our disposal, the 585 will also be used to test analogue playback equipment including phono stages and turntables. These objective measurements – which conform to recognised industry standards – are designed to complement subjective evaluations such as the listening panels organised by our internationally respected reviewers.

The standard of our test facilities is unrivalled in the UK press. Quite simply, no other magazine offers this level of cutting-edge testing, making the verdicts in *Hi-Fi Choice* the only ones you can really trust.



Battle of Britain

British-made, upgradable and full of proprietary technology **Jason Kennedy** looks at how Leema is moving in on rivals Cyrus, Naim and Arcam

It's been over two years since Leema Acoustics introduced its entry level Stream CD player and Pulse amplifier, so it's not surprising that such a technologically savvy company would consider the time right for a revision.

What was unexpected is the degree to which they have changed in appearance. Not only do they come in a range of colours, but the Stream CD player now has a slot in place of a drawer, digital in and

outputs (including USB) and a brand new DAC.

The Pulse amp has sprouted an array of digital inputs and an MM/MC phono stage alongside its analogue inputs and is ready for virtually any source you'd care to throw at it. And in true Leema style, both components can be run as one using its LIPS comms bus. The controls have changed, too, instead of regular keys we now have the Navimech, a long name for a circle of five buttons. But why has Leema to a III suffix?

DETAILS

PRODUCT: Leema Stream III and Leema Pulse III
ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: CD player and integrated amplifier

WEIGHT: Stream III 9kg
Pulse III 11kg

DIMENSIONS: (WxHxD) Stream III 90x435x330mm
Pulse III 90x435x375mm

FEATURES:
• (Stream III)
DAC: 4x 24/192
• USB: 16/48

• (Pulse III)
MM/MC phono stage
• Minijack headphone output
• Output: 80 watts (8 ohms), 150 watts (4 ohms)

DISTRIBUTOR: Leema Acoustics
TELEPHONE: 01938 811900

WEBSITE: leema-acoustics.com

Slots a fun

Apparently there was a Stream II in between this model and the original, so logically this should be Stream III and Pulse II but that makes for confusing marketing, so they are now both III. So what's changed apart from the casework? Well the slot will give you a clue that the disc drive is new and has a new servo to match, this being controlled by custom firmware. It feeds Leema's new Quad DAC which comprises a Wolfson receiver designed to minimise jitter and the company's favoured Crystal CS434x converters.

Leema's Mal Nicholls is particularly pleased with this DAC, because its de-jittering skills are applied to all the digital inputs. He reckons that this factor brings the quality available from optical connections in line with those from coaxial ones which are traditionally the best-sounding.

The minimalist button array on the player's Navimech is not the most conventional, nor the easiest to use because there are none of the usual symbols to denote functions due to each button being multipurpose.



The supplied remote also eschews symbols, but is easier to read.

The array of digital connections on the back of the Stream player includes three S/PDIF outputs and one input in coaxial form. It also has a USB output which is something of a rare beast. It's included so that you can make high-quality rips from CD to a PC. Leema recommends Audacity software for this purpose.

The Pulse amp also incorporates a DAC, but the USB connection here is the more conventional bi-directional variety that accepts signals from a computer. According to Mal this is not the usual and fashionable asynchronous variety of USB, but the Wolfson receiver does bring jitter down to levels associated with conventional digital connections. Its only limitation is that the Burr-Brown USB receiver only offers a sample rate up to 48kHz.

The Pulse III amplifier also has a revised power supply, which is said to offer improved transient current capability. It's still specified as 80 watts (into eight ohms) and nearly double that into four, which is a

“This pairing lets the music transport you and makes for highly engaging home entertainment.”

healthy rating and about par for the price. What is above par is the range of inputs on offer – not only are there the four digital inputs, but there are five analogue inputs as well. Of these, AV direct is a unity gain input for an external AV processor and aux/MP3 is an either/or shared input between the front and rear sockets which effectively gives you a sixth input. The phono stage, which accepts both MM and MC cartridges, has benefited from refinements trickled down from Leema's Element phono stage.

Finally, there are the previously mentioned comms link LIPS connectors, which allows one component to control others in the system. This system allows the Stream to control volume, input selection and on/off in the Pulse.

For example, if you are using another input, say tuner, and want to play a CD, simply pressing play will select the CD input on Pulse, set the volume to the default minimum and place the player in play. If you then select another input, the CD will stop automatically. LIPS naturally gets more useful the more Leema components you use.

Cool casework

The paint finish was chosen to keep costs down but it makes for a very smart-looking chassis, the sculpted lines and coherence of the controls bringing the two units into strong aesthetic union. The tiny display is not the easiest to interpret, however, because Leema has had to use some unusual abbreviations to fit certain messages in, but the every day ones are pretty clear.

What's less useful is that the Stream display will only show elapsed track time and not track number whilst in play. On a long disc especially, the latter would be more useful and we're surprised that there isn't the option to display it.



THIS PRICE POINT is approximately where you start to find range-topping European-made integrated amps.

Arcam's A38 has always been particularly strong here and we would expect it to give the Pulse III a run for its money in terms of power and transparency.

Naim's Nait XS is now £1,425 and while it doesn't offer the range of inputs found on the Pulse III it could have the upper hand when it comes to pace and musical honesty.

The Stream III's adversaries include Creek's extremely musical Destiny, which has very little character of its own and the highly detailed Shanling CD-T1000SE.

Q&A...

WE SPOKE TO LEEMA'S TECHNICAL DIRECTOR MALLORY NICHOLLS ABOUT THE STREAM AND PULSE III



HFC: How does the new Quad DAC differ from the DAC in the original Stream and what makes it better?

MN: We used eight chips with sixteen individual DACs as opposed to four. It comes down to the law of diminishing returns. In order to combine those DACs we have to go through a mixer stage and we reasoned that if we could do away with this stage, we could have the advantages of the multi-DAC by using the theoretical ideal number of DACs still generating a balanced signal, but coming straight from the DACs into the unbalancing filters – so we lose a whole stage of analogue electronics in between.

We combine outputs in the digital filter which has been optimised for improved transient response. It's basically a much shorter signal path, but we still have the inaccuracy/rejecting advantage of the balanced DACs.

Are you able to achieve the same sound quality with a slot-loader as you did with the tray-loader?

The optical unit is the same as in the Antila II and more importantly, we're using a completely new servo that we have been jointly been developing with an Austrian company. This has reduced jitter by half compared to the previous Philips drive and this is combined with the Wolfson digital receiver which is also very low in jitter. This gives us a worst-case jitter measurement of 130 picoseconds, which is around a half to a third of what the previous Antila achieved.

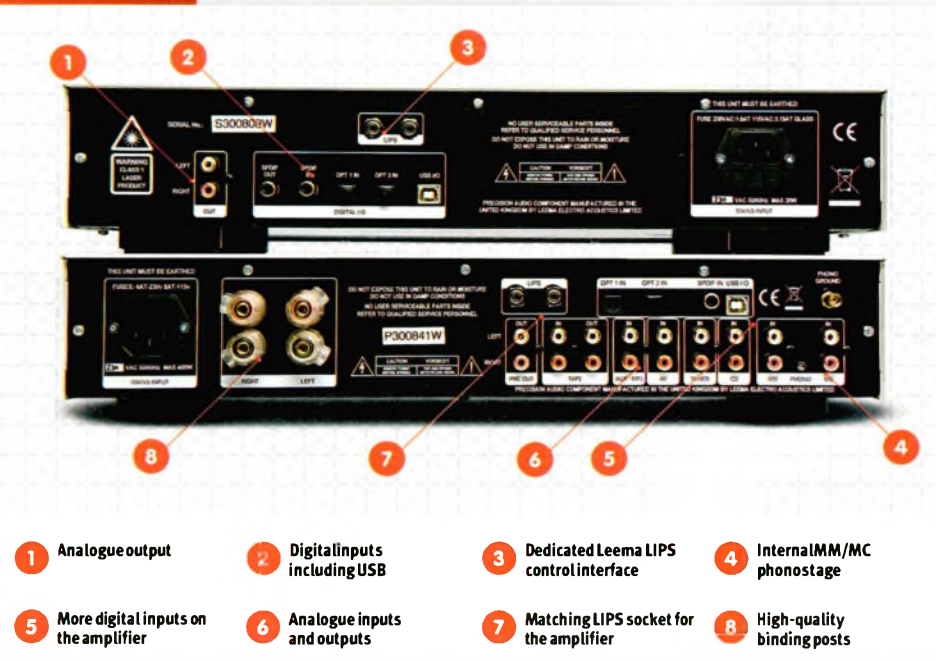
How would you recommend these two components be connected, by analogue or digital cables?

Absolutely in the analogue domain, because the DAC in the player is superior.

Both units are controlled by an ARM 32-bit microprocessor. Can you tell us more about it?

It's a high-power processor. Previous products used an eight-bit PIC, which is a fairly ordinary processor and we needed more power for the new servo and so forth, so we used a much racier processor.

CONNECTIONS



The sheer array of inputs in both number and type is spectacular and should keep the most technophilic enthusiast happy for years to come.

Two-way street

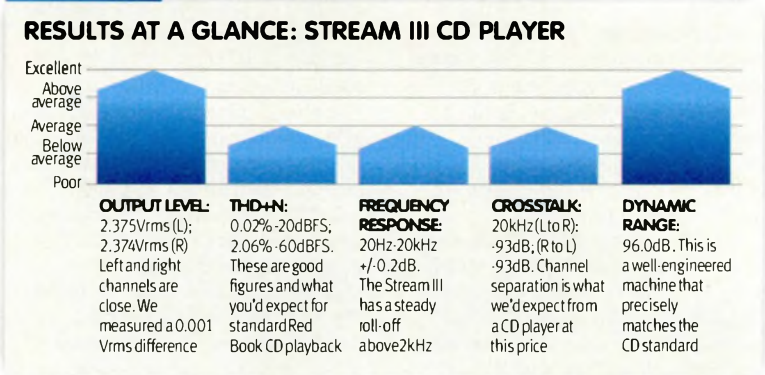
The presence of the same DAC in both components means that you can compare the analogue with the digital input from the Stream via the Pulse and this was duly tried. Once we had got used to the way the amp drops volume when changing inputs (a rather irritating 'safety' feature) it became apparent that the two approaches are very close, but that a digital connection made with a good quality Chord Signature cable has the upper hand when it comes to fine detail and bass power. In theory, the analogue connection should be better as the CD player has the better DAC, so cabling could be the key here. Both routes deliver a superbly timed

and precisely focused sound that can easily distract from the important business of reviewing.

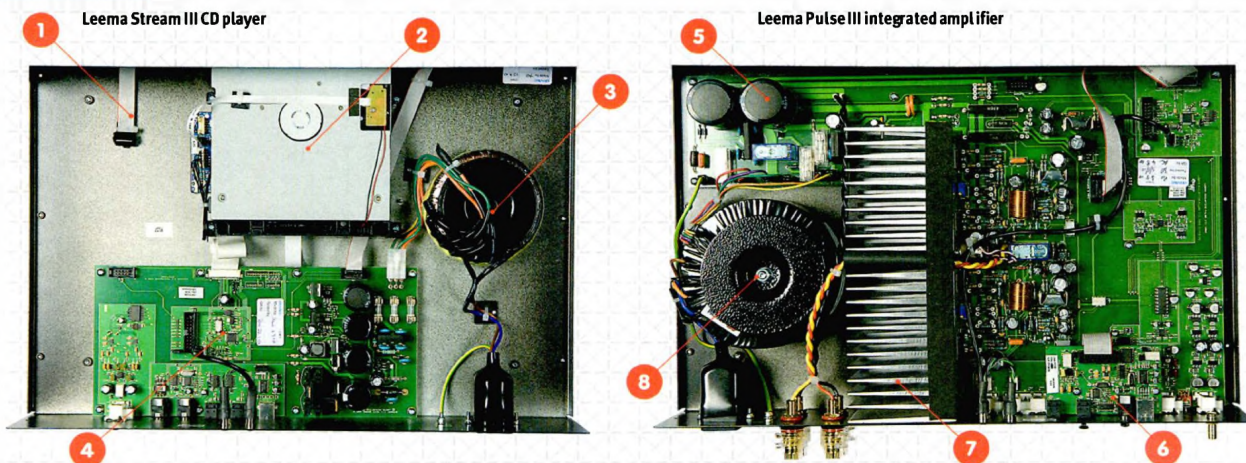
The Stream is a very engaging player, its ergonomics may not be that fabulous, but such foibles are soon forgotten once it has a good disc in its slot. It produces palpable depth and body in the context of an open, transparent presentation that makes the most of fine recordings. Josephine Cronholme's *Your Wild Garden* is one such piece and the way that her crystalline voice is placed solidly between the speakers is entrancing. The player is precise without being edgy, in fact it's relaxed and natural-sounding and while it doesn't have the dynamic thrills of our more expensive reference its refinement is unusually high.

The Pulse has a little more character, inasmuch as its presentation is slightly restrained and a little over-

TECH LABS



HIDDEN TECH



- 1** Patch cables to front panel controls
- 2** 'Inhaler' CD transport
- 3** Toroidal power supply
- 4** DAC board for both internal CDs and digital inputs
- 5** Output caps
- 6** Digital input board
- 7** Substantial internal heatsink
- 8** Power supply with separate output taps

smoothed compared to dearer alternatives. This gives imaging more focus than usual, but also holds back the full scale of the recording's acoustic. On the flipside it means that less refined discs sound just that little bit cleaner, which can be a bonus if your musical tastes are catholic.

There's plenty of detail, too, it's presented in a coherent and timely fashion so that the music comes first, but if you want to listen into the mix there's plenty to find.

In order to get an idea of how well Leema has executed the USB input, we hooked up a laptop using both USB and TOSLINK optical cables and persuaded the PC to swap between the two. The difference was negligible, whereas the last time we tried this the result was night and day in favour of the TOSLINK connection.

The phono stage was also put through its paces with a low output

moving coil cartridge. The gain had to be turned up pretty high, but it delivers a fine, low noise result, nonetheless.

We had the opportunity to listen to the Stream in a completely different system and indulged in some of the more challenging selections from Frank Zappa's back catalogue. This further enhanced the impression of musicality that the player gave with its partnering amp, by delivering a well-articulated, invigorating and musically engaging version of events.

Polished performers

This pairing looks good, is clearly well made and offers great flexibility in terms of integration with other sources of both hi-fi and computer persuasions. But most importantly it lets the music transport you. Its timing skills, in particular, are very strong and this combined with a



WE ASKED MAL Nicholls what speakers he recommends with the Stream and Pulse. He suggested either Leema's Xone or Xeta, opting for the latter model as top preference.

This new £1,995 floorstander is a two-and-a-half way design with two four-inch bass units and a pair of midrange drivers in the same diameter. High frequencies are taken care of by a one-inch silk dome.

Xeta is effectively a bigger Xone and has a separate cabinet for the mid and treble drivers in order to isolate them from the excitations produced by the bass system.

Mal prefers Chord Co. cables and at this price level he finds that Anthem interconnect and Odyssey speaker cable fit the bill very well.

polished presentation makes for highly engaging home entertainment.

Of the pair the Stream III seems slightly the stronger, but they work extremely well together and this, combined with their range of inputs, helps them raise the bar in this sector. ●

TECH LABS

RESULTS AT A GLANCE: PULSE III INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT STREAM III

- SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Strong on timing and transparency with a good range of in and outputs
- VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** No track on display while in play and the use of text rather than symbols is a pain
- BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★
- SPECIFICATIONS** ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** This is a superb CD player, it clearly improves on its predecessor

OVERALL
★★★★★

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT PULSE III

- SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Clean, smooth sound and unusually wide array of inputs
- VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Sound might be a little bit too smooth for some and tendency to drop volume is irksome
- BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★
- SPECIFICATIONS** ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** A remarkably refined amp and capable for the money

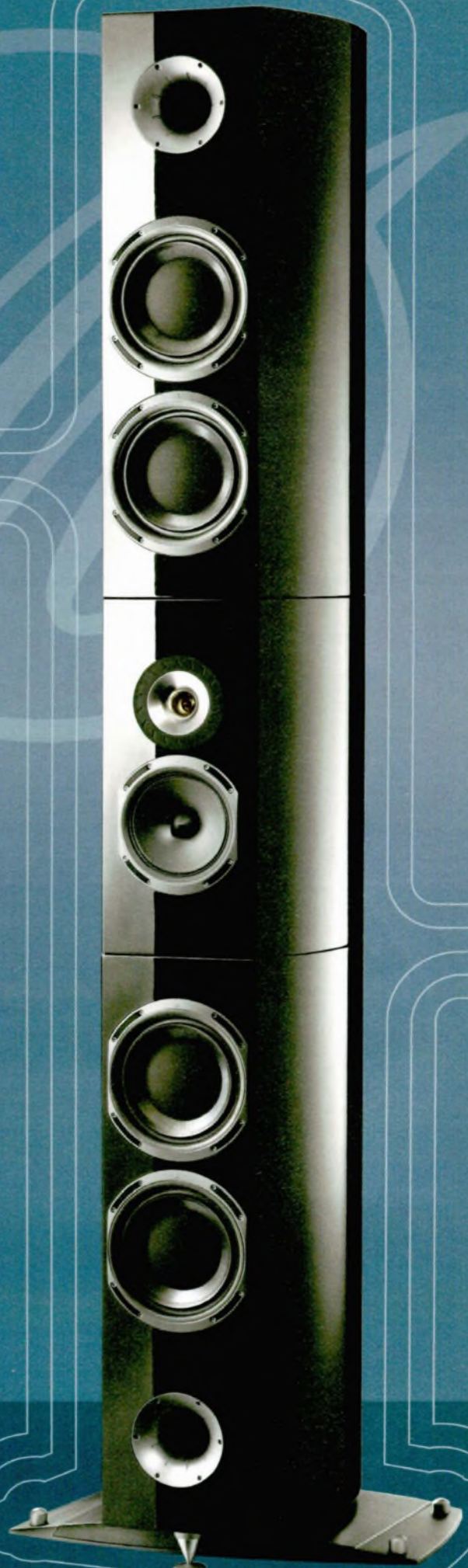
OVERALL
★★★★★

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Rega style for less

Rega has revised its entry-level record player, adding a new tonearm and platter material. **Jason Kennedy** asks if the brand still 'owns' the sector

Rega, once the king of the affordable turntable sector has just reasserted its position in the market a brand-new entry-level model, the RP1. This new turntable replaces the rather dowdy P1 and sports not only a new platter material, but a totally new tonearm to boot, an arm we are told that hints at changes to come across the entire range.

New mould

The platter is now moulded in phenolic resin which was once known as Bakelite; one of the first plastics to be used in manufacturing and usually associated with radios from the forties and fifties. Rega chose it not for its aesthetics, but because it's one of the hardest and stiffest of all plastic materials. It can also be precisely moulded and remains stable over long periods.

The RB101 tonearm replaces the RB100 of the P1 but looks very similar. It is, however, significantly lighter according to Rega, which, all things being equal, suggests a more stable platform for the cartridge.

Its one-piece construction, from headshell to counterweight stub, should also ensure minimal resonance, too. It comes with an Ortofon OM5e moving magnet cartridge already fitted and aligned,

so that all you have to do to get the player up and running is push the counterweight as close to the bearing as it will go and set anti-skate. Which is about as straightforward as set up gets.

Plinth charming

The plinth of the RP1 is painted MDF and is available in three colours: black, silver and white. It supports the arm and main bearing which has a sub-platter that takes the belt drive and the motor. The latter is not decoupled in any way from the plinth, which means it has to run very smoothly if vibration is to be kept at bay.

The deckle sits on three fixed rubber feet and a good-quality clear lid is supplied to keep dust out. Although you are encouraged to close it during use, we found that the sound improved with it fully removed.

Fingerliftin' good

While the fingerlift isn't quite as curvy on the RB101 as the classic RB300/301, it's almost as nice to use and makes for easy cueing with or without the arm-lift.

Once the OM5e is settled in the groove you can hear Rega's trademark musicality straight away. Bandwidth is limited at both

DETAILS

PRODUCT:

Rega RP1

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE:

Turntable, arm and cartridge

WEIGHT: 4kg

DIMENSIONS:

(WxHxD)
120x440x355mm
(inc lid)

FEATURES:

- Speeds: 33/45 manual
 - RB101 tonearm
 - Ortofon OM5e MM cartridge
 - Finishes: cool grey, titanium, white
- DISTRIBUTOR:**
Rega Research
- TELEPHONE:**
01702 333071
- WEBSITE:**
rega.co.uk

extremes – most obviously at the top – but the midband takes you straight to the heart of the matter.

Regas have always put the music before the sound and while this might not be to all tastes it's the key to their enduring appeal. The RP1 could have a bit more sparkle and better image focus, but it draws you into the performance with ease, whether it's Tom Waits or Brendel playing Beethoven you can forget the sound and escape into the music.

It's a cracker

Rega's music-first approach takes a bit of grasping and those coming to vinyl for the first time might find the lack of serious bass and refined highs a little surprising. But give it more time and its tune-playing skills win through. The entry-level cartridge does a decent enough job, but the quality of arm warrants an upgrade in this area and this will give the sound better dynamics and make it less fussy about vinyl – old pressings can show their age as it currently stands.

We think the RP1 is a great turntable and one that will force the competition to up its game. This is, of course, excellent news for vinyl-lovers and all hi-fi aficionados. ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



LIKE: Top engineering and easy to set up

VALUE FOR MONEY



DISLIKE: Needs decent isolation for best results and can't repress pops and clicks all that well

BUILD QUALITY



WE SAY: The RP1 deserves a better cartridge and the arm could easily support one

FEATURES



OVERALL





Pushing the limit

Jason Kennedy looks at Meridian's £10,000 top-of-the-range CD player and asks if we are approaching the performance limits of Red Book CD

Meridian has been at the forefront of CD player technology since 1984 and the 808.3 is its flagship disc spinner, so no digital stone has been left unturned in the quest to make its third incarnation the ultimate.

As early pioneers in technology to reduce the 'ringing effect' of conventional digital filters, the 808.3 makes use of the latest apodising filters (see Talking Point)

and resolution enhancement DSP technology.

Equally significant for Meridian devotees is the 808.3's ability to operate as a bridge or front end for a Sooloos digital media system and to send a digital signal to a pair of Meridian active DSP loudspeakers. The finishing touch is that this is not just a CD player, it's also a preamplifier with digital and analogue inputs.

DETAILS

PRODUCT: Meridian Signature Reference 808.3

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: CD player and preamplifier

WEIGHT: 14kg

DIMENSIONS: (WxHxD) 480x175x411mm

FEATURES:

- Analogue inputs: 6 RCA phono
- Digital inputs: 3x coax, 2x Toslink, Speakerlink
- Meridian Sooloos RJ45 connectivity
- Analogue outputs: XLR, RCA phono
- Digital outputs: coax, 2x RJ45 balanced

DISTRIBUTOR: Meridian

TELEPHONE: 01480 445678

WEBSITE: meridian-audio.com

Cutting edge

The 808.3 looks pretty much like its predecessor, so we asked Meridian's Bob Stuart what had changed since the 808.2. He said that having developed the apodising filter – one that's designed to eliminate pre-ringing in both the digital signal being read off the disc and the ringing produced by filters in the original recording – the software was totally revised in the original 808.

For the 808.3, Meridian has revised all the hardware that runs that software. So the DSP (digital signal processor) remains the same, but the analogue and digital outputs are new and the reference oscillators or clocks have been totally redesigned.

This player still uses a three-stage FIFO clock circuit, but it's a totally new one. Even the transport has been changed to a CD-ROM drive made specifically for Meridian by TEAC, so although an upgrade will be available to take 808.2 players to 808.3 status, it will be a relatively expensive one.

The other significant change is that unlike the earlier version, the new player has a Sooloos board installed as standard, making this machine the highest-resolution playback device available for Meridian's media player. The Sooloos card will play files at up to 24-bit/96kHz, but more importantly, it means that it's possible to compare CD and streamed files on a level playing field, which makes it pretty well unique.

Having spent a lot of time with high-resolution audio developing MLP for DVD-Audio, Meridian has been working on ways to get a hi-res result from CD because of its massive depth of catalogue – after all, no other 'decent' format comes close. For this purpose the 808.3's transport employs a multiple pass ROM drive, in order to recover as much data as it can and uses the aforementioned triple-stage clock circuit to bring jitter levels down to vanishing levels. It then upsamples CD's 44.1kHz to 176.4 and uses its apodising filter to remove any pre-echo or ring with minimum phase. To say that this player is a technical tour-de-force is an understatement, it is bleeding-edge, state-of-the-art.

In terms of the user interface, it's not entirely conventional, either. There is, for instance, no 'on' button. Instead you need to select play or eject from the front panel or choose your source from the enormous,



TALKING POINT
APODISING is a process that's designed to eliminate ringing in conventional brickwall digital filters. This type of filter is ubiquitous in the digital audio world, but it's abrupt nature introduces pre and post echoes or ringing on every musical transient. This is not something that occurs in nature or analogue recordings and is a factor in the edgy sound of early players and recordings.

Meridian and Peter Craven developed the apodising filter and this is incorporated into the 808.3, which has a high-powered central processor in order to deliver the requisite DSP. The actual digital-to-analogue converter that follows the filter is a multibit delta-sigma type rather than the more popular one-bit varieties found in the majority of contemporary CD players.

“In some ways, the 808.3 is a player for the intellect, more than the emotions.”

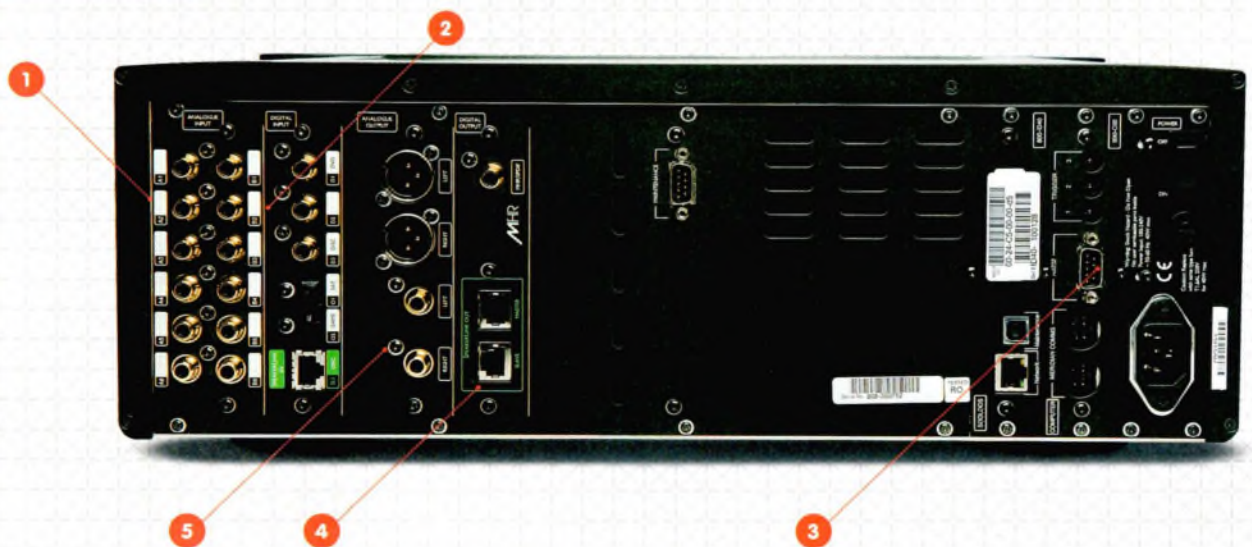
button-festooned, desk-top style remote. Given the level of technology it controls, a touch-screen handset would seem more appropriate. You can, however, change the legends by changing the buttons on the handset. You can also operate the preamp from the unit itself by opening a flap above the control keys. The back panel is quite involved too, with unconventionally arrayed analogue inputs lacking even the usual red and white channel indicators.

First class

The 808.3 is not built in the usual high-end style, there are no elaborately machined slabs of aluminium nor dangerously spiked feet, construction is more akin to the interior of a plush car.

There are three standard finishes, plus a range of Meridian Select colours. This sets the player apart from the crowd, although due to its size we couldn't fit it into the slots on our rack, so it had to sit on top. But build is clearly first class and flexibility in a different league to most – you'd have to look to Naim's HDX or the Resolution Audio Cantata

CONNECTIONS



1 Analogue inputs

2 Digital inputs

3 System control connections

4 Outputs to Meridian active speakers

5 Balanced and unbalanced analogue outputs



The supplied desktop-style remote control befits a £10,000 machine

to come close. But that flexibility is a good deal more useful in a full Meridian system than elsewhere; few others make active speakers with a digital input for instance.

While it is fully equipped for custom install and the Meridian Sooloos media player, it doesn't have anything as basic as a USB input, so you are stuck with relatively expensive routes on the streaming front. That said, this is not a budget product. It is designed to work in high-end systems be they of the same make or otherwise. In the latter case, the onboard preamplifier is very useful, with its six analogue and five digital inputs it is better equipped than many standalone preamps.

It's slew of Meridian-specific features makes it hard to put a value on in terms of features and build per pound, but you are undoubtedly getting top-notch technology for your money and a system that is as future-proofed as they come.

Unmasked

Once warmed up, the 808.3 bathes you in detail whatever the disc and the better the recording, the richer the soundstage becomes. Keith Jarrett's *Jasmine* is a simple piano

and double bass recording, but the sound it reveals is almost orchestral when the full harmonic structure of each instrument is exposed.

It is also great to be able to enjoy the subtleties of timing that the two musicians display so fully, this player is nothing if not great at revealing fine detail. This applies to spatial information too, you can hear all the phase shifts on Radiohead's *In Rainbows*, the degree of manipulation of which being far more extreme and dynamic than most players let you hear.

Swapping from the RCA phono to XLR balanced outputs gives you more power and even great image depth with no apparent trade-off so this is the way to hook up the player if you have the option.

The more we listened, the more we heard with this player, it's uncannily good at exposing the notes that other players can't reach – sounds that are usually masked by louder ones in the mix being particularly apparent. It also allows you to pick out individual instruments or voices and follow them alone or to listen to the music as a whole which is a very good sign. With Kraftwerk's *Tour de France*, the



GIVEN THAT MERIDIAN builds its components as part of a system approach, it makes sense to use this player with other Meridian components.

At its simplest, this could consist of DSP5200 loudspeakers. This is Meridian's most affordable active speaker (£6,750) and all you need to get them up and running is a pair of SpeakerLink cables connected to the back panel of the 808.3.

But, as the player is the range-topper you'd be doing it a disservice by not using the mighty DSP8000 (£30,000), two-box single tower active design that can accept a 24-bit digital signal and has 750 watts on tap to drive its six bass drivers, midrange and tweeter.

Given its rendering capabilities, it also makes sense to add one of Meridian's Sooloos Digital Media Systems, the new Control 15 being the most affordable to date (£4,750). These media systems have a superb interface and with the 808.3's playback capabilities should give any format a run for its money.

vocal is etched into the air between the speakers, shaped and focussed to a degree that's not often encountered and this reveals a lot about the quality of recording in the first place.

What's perhaps even more impressive is the way this player deals with less spectacular recordings. Metallica's *Black* album is quite a nasty-sounding lump, but the 808.3 manages to distract you with some of the most formidable bass on record. It can't remove the excessive compression, but does highlight the way that the drums were recorded for maximum butt-kick and sifts out the many layers of guitar overdubs used to create the 'thickener' effect that proved so influential.

Small minority

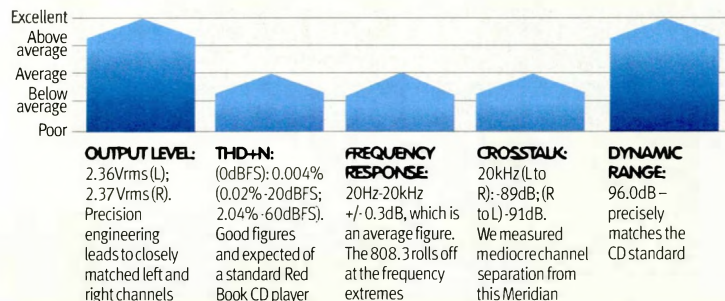
The above results were achieved in a system fronted by PMC fact 8 speakers and powered by a Gamut D200 MkIII power amplifier using the 808.3's onboard preamp. Moving the player into another system with ATC active speakers proved less successful, because the Meridian didn't play to that system's skills of dynamics and timing, but it made the most open sound that this system has yet produced with CD. Which proves that however good a source is, it needs the right ancillaries to be able to strut its stuff.

In some ways, the 808.3 is a player for the intellect more than the emotions, its sheer resolution can distract you from the tune, but it keeps you fascinated and allows you to enjoy the older and less sonically appealing albums in your collection.

If you want to hear precisely what's going on in a composition and enjoy an uncannily open soundstage then the Meridian 808.3 is in a very small minority of top-notch players. ●

TECH LABS

RESULTS AT A GLANCE



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Extraordinarily revealing and open player

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Not the most emotionally transporting machine with a rather unwieldy remote

BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** It may not be very pretty but in the right system this is an astonishingly revealing player

FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL



How many CDs do you own but never play?



Comes with credit card size remote control

Store, browse and listen to your complete CD collection on the revolutionary Brennan

What's the point in owning hundreds of CDs worth thousands of pounds if you never listen to them? The problem with CDs is that it's quicker to make a cup of coffee than dip into a CD. Try timing how long it takes to pick a CD, load it in the CD player, play a snippet from a track or two, eject it and put it back where it came from. Then there is the problem of finding music. The print on a CD spine is tiny. What if the track is on a compilation CD? What if the CD is in the car? Then there is the clutter. You need to keep your CDs near the player or you won't play them. So you are forced to share your living space with literally hundreds of cheap plastic boxes.

CDs are a great way to listen to music but they are also inconvenient, inaccessible and a bit of a chore.

The Brennan JB7 is a CD player with a hard disk that stores up to 5,000 CDs - and that's not all

It saves space and clutter and delivers near immediate access to an entire music collection. JB7 owners rediscover then fall in love with their music again simply because the Brennan makes it so accessible.

The Brennan also records from vinyl and cassette so you can enjoy your entire music collection but keep the originals in another room or retire them to the attic.

Small enough to pick up with one hand yet big enough for a lifetime of music, the Brennan JB7 is one man's brilliant idea for everyone's forgotten music. Starting at just £359* it's only available direct from Brennan at www.brennan.co.uk.

Key features

- ▶ Browse albums by spinning the volume knob - push to play
- ▶ Display track names as they play
- ▶ Delete tracks you don't like
- ▶ Seven rainbow colour coded playlists
- ▶ Segue function blends one track into the next
- ▶ One touch record from vinyl, cassette or radio
- ▶ One button plays the entire music collection at random
- ▶ Plays MP3 downloads - future proof
- ▶ Clock with alarm
- ▶ 60 Watt, 4.8 x 16 x 22 cm steel and aluminium construction
- ▶ Backup music to external USB hard disk for safe keeping
- ▶ You can use it with your existing hi-fi or on its own



"I've suddenly re-discovered my love of music - it's amazing"

"I feel like a teenager all over again - thank you Brennan"

The Brennan JB7 is available in Cobalt Blue or Titanium Metallic



Money back guarantee

If you're not suitably impressed with your Brennan JB7 we'll collect it free of charge and refund you in full.

The face behind Brennan

Martin is a physicist, computer engineer and silicon chip designer. He co-designed the world's first 64-bit games computer.

"I always liked the promise of CDs. It wasn't so much the quality but the quick access to a given

track. After vinyl and cassette that was a real plus. My first CD player was a five CD multi-changer. I liked the idea of quick access to more than one CD and music that didn't repeat after 40 minutes. A few years ago I had a go at loading

my music onto a computer - but I never listened to it - I needed something simpler, more immediate. In the end the computer got a virus and the music files were lost - I still had the originals thankfully. The JB7 is really my personal ideal music player"



Martin Brennan

To get the whole story on the Brennan JB7 and order visit www.brennan.co.uk

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Flux-50filter

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Silver Arrows -12 (DIN, RCA)



Ag-12 Phono Cable

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— Michael Fremer, Stereophile July 2009 Vol.32 No.7

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CF-201 (R)



CF-202 (R)

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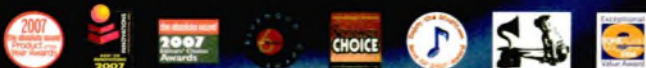


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Perfect PC partner

Pro-Ject's £140 DAC Box is a no-brainer for anyone playing music from a computer, says HFC's technical consultant **Richard Black**

Along the way, Pro-Ject Audio has managed to get some quite impressive functions into small spaces in its Box Audio series of components. A DAC – even a three-input one – is not quite such a shoehorn feat and, indeed, this is by no means the smallest on the market. It's stoutly made, with a steel sleeve over a steel tray which houses the electronics assemblies. The component count is low, with a DAC chip, an S/PDIF receiver and a USB receiver, plus a minimum of housekeeping parts and a handful of power supply components. Power is from the usual switch-mode wall-wart, though we note this supplies nine volts, suggesting that the dedicated tweaker could easily substitute a nine-volt battery, which might be an interesting experiment.

Limited noise

The DAC chip is one we've seen before in Pro-Ject units. It's a handy choice because it can feed the output sockets directly, but it does limit output voltage and the DAC Box only produces one-volt full-scale output. That's only a problem in that you'll need your amp's volume control set a little higher than usual, conceivably

leading to alarmingly loud noises when you switch to another source without adjusting volume. Not really a big deal. Possibly more worrying is the issue of limited noise performance from low-output devices. That doesn't seem to be a major issue here, though noise performance isn't quite state-of-the-art: however, there is a little modulation noise in evidence.

Operation is perfectly straightforward, with the one button on the front cycling round the three inputs. USB operation is absolutely fine. As with most current DACs, it's limited to 48kHz maximum sampling rate. Pro-Ject makes a point of this DAC being able to extract bit-perfect audio from your computer if you install ASIO drivers, available from the Pro-Ject website. That's true, though it happens to be true for all USB DACs. But credit to the company for pointing it out. It's almost certainly the biggest performance upgrade you can make to a computer audio system for no money!

Energetic nature

We hooked this DAC up first of all to a laptop computer and played a few

DETAILS

PRODUCT: Pro-Ject DAC Box
ORIGIN: Austria/ Czech Republic
TYPE: USB DAC
WEIGHT: 680g
DIMENSIONS: (WxHxD) 103x36x103mm
FEATURES:
• Features: USB, electrical and optical inputs
• 96kHz sampling rate (electrical and optical)
• 1V output level
• Texas Instruments DAC chip
DISTRIBUTOR: Henley Designs
TELEPHONE: 01235 511166
WEBSITE: project-audio.com

files (all uncompressed WAV, naturally) through it. Not entirely surprisingly, given the technical similarity, we found its sound quite like that of the CD Box which we reviewed in HFC 338. That's not a bad thing at all, as the most obvious characteristic of both units is a lively, energetic nature which gets cheerfully involved with any kind of music.

There's also plenty of detail around. We'd be lying if we said the DAC is ultra-precise (and it would be unfair to demand it at this price), but it does recover a lot of information from any recording. It's just that it doesn't always present that information in an orderly fashion compared with more upmarket DACs. Still, that seems like an acceptable compromise and we found ourselves easily falling for the unit's general enthusiasm.

Nice depth

Tonally, the upper reaches of the bass register seem a shade plummy, while the deepest bass lacks a little insight. There's some decent kick and also tuning to it, though, so again the drawback is hardly noticeable. Midrange very slightly favours male over female voices, while treble is extended, if occasionally a touch dry. And imaging, as you've probably already guessed, is decent but not super-precise – it has a nice depth to it, though.

Fun-lovin'

We probably wouldn't get too excited about using this DAC as an upgrade for any CD player of recent vintage. Hooked up to a computer-based source, though, it makes a good deal of sense in the best traditions of fun-lovin' budget audio and in that case the S/PDIF inputs could be handy now and then. All-in-all, another useful Box! ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Energetic sound with sufficient insight for toe-tapping enjoyment
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Not the most detailed and bass can be a little vague
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** Plenty of audio fun for a very attractive price – a great computer audio upgrade
FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL





Best of both worlds

A hybrid amp combining solid-state practicality and power from a single-ended thermionic valve preamp stage has **Alvin Gold** all aglow

The Unico Nuovo ('New' in Italian) is a second-generation integrated amplifier. For those familiar with the breed, the Nuovo is based on the original Unico 80 hybrid that was introduced as far back as 2001. Despite its relative antiquity, the original amplifier had a timeless aesthetic quality that has hardly needed updating for the second decade of the millennium. It was a modern amplifier then, albeit one with classic qualities, and it remains so today.

Intriguing departure

The fundamentals of the Italian-made Nuovo haven't changed that much. It is still a hybrid design, with the preamp powered by thermionic valves, with a beefed-up MOSFET

power stage in charge of the output. But there are significant changes. The Nuovo continues to use a single triode stage for each channel, but the active devices have changed from an single triode ECC82/12AU7 to ECC83/AX7 twin-triode tubes. The higher gain tube, when carefully matched to the MOSFET power amp gain stage is claimed to improve performance and accentuate the valve-like qualities of the overall design. A new biasing circuit, derived from phono step-up design practice, uses something called ionic bias which is said to uncover 'finer tonic nuances'. The bias point is self-adjusting, which eliminates an important point where performance drift would otherwise occur.

A further change is that the power amplifier MOSFET complement has

► DETAILS

PRODUCT: Research Unico Nuovo

ORIGIN: Italy

TYPE: Integrated amplifier hybrid valve

WEIGHT: 14.1kg

DIMENSIONS: (WxHxD) 434x89x432mm

FEATURES:

- Subwoofer output
- Bi-wire speaker terminals
- RF full system remote control
- Phono upgrade available
- Available in silver or black

DISTRIBUTOR: UKD

TELEPHONE: 01753 652669

WEBSITE: unisonresearch.com

been doubled (though headline power output is unchanged at 80 watts per channel), which combined with a change to the novel constant power supply design, offers an easier, more relaxed quality at elevated power levels and more dynamic headroom – claims which seem easily justifiable on test.

The amplifier has five line inputs, including one tape circuit, though one of the line inputs can be converted for use as an MM/MC phono input (it's already identified as such, though it operates as a standard line output unless this extra cost option is implemented). Two pairs of loudspeaker terminals are also provided for bi-wiring.

One intriguing departure from normality is, that in addition to the usual speaker output, there is a line output that tracks the volume control (unlike a standard tape output for example), which can be used to drive a subwoofer. This may not be standard practice in the high-fidelity realm, but it opens up the possibility of using relatively small, very high-quality, narrow-bandwidth speakers, with one or even two subwoofers to broaden the reproduced bandwidth.

Valve tuner

From the outside, there is more than a hint of Copland-style aesthetics here. There are the same elegant,



simple lines, the same honed-down quality – there is nothing here that isn't required – and the same absolute focus on the fundamentals, with one minor exception. There are only two controls, volume and an input selector, each associated with a discreet LED which will warn you when the unit is powering-up, if the protection has been triggered, or if it is running. The back panel has similar restraint, as already described.

The fascia is a pleasing aluminium extrusion, with a non-reflective sandcast finish matching the controls and the mains power switch is

“Its warmth appears to flow organically from inside the music, rather than externally.”

situated on the right hand side – accessible, but not immediately obvious. The aluminium casework is solidly built and includes well-considered mechanical earthing, which eliminates microphony.

The only feature we weren't completely happy with is the supplied RC2 remote control. It's

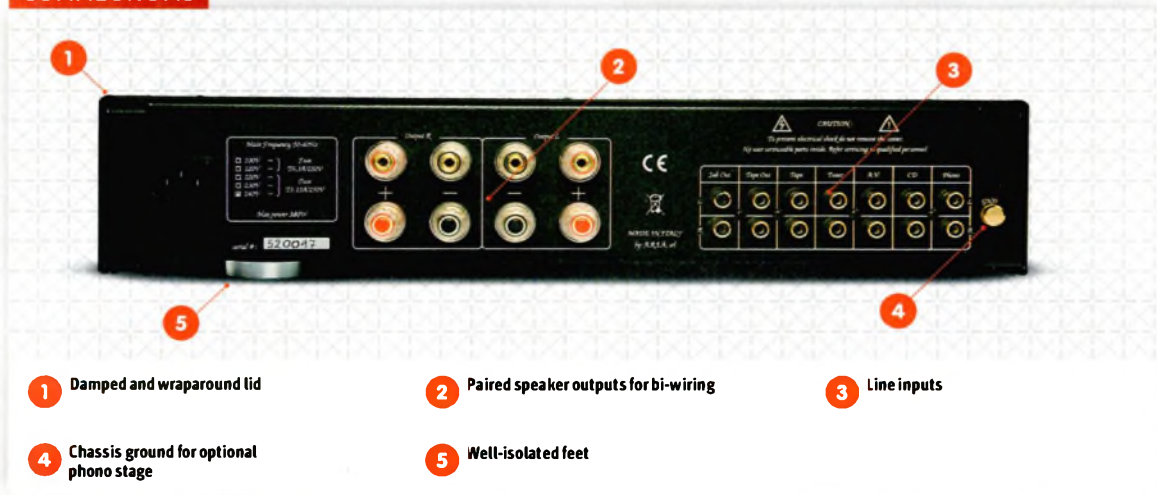
perfectly functional, however, and has the benefit of being a full-system remote, with enough buttons to operate one of the matching Unison Research CD players.

Impressively the carcass is hewn from a lump of wood, though the main control matrix is secured to the unit with two ugly crosshead screws. More to the point, the buttons are small and stiff and on the verge of being unyielding. In the grander scheme of things, this is no big deal, and it's certainly no deal-breaker, but it could have been done better.



THE INPUT valve stage has much of the simplicity of the original Unico 80, but the new ECC83 parallel double triode is less compromised and offers greater refinement. The following 'level shifter and signal follower' allows direct coupling between the output and the second (solid-state) stage which operates around 0 volts. This topology places greater demands on circuit-operating points, for which the new biasing is continuously and automatically adjusted, with the result that the circuit is claimed to be less sensitive to voltage variation and power supply ripple. The output is built around a symmetrical bipolar current mirror which acts as a driver for the output MOSFETs, which has a higher capacity than the original.

CONNECTIONS



1 Damped and wraparound lid

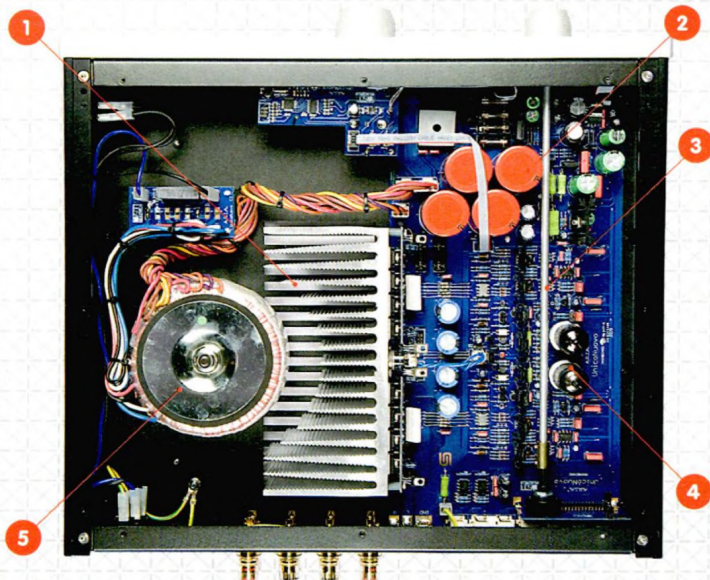
2 Paired speaker outputs for bi-wiring

3 Line inputs

4 Chassis ground for optional phono stage

5 Well-isolated feet

HIDDEN TECH



- 1** Large internal heatsink
- 2** Output capacitors
- 3** Very long input selector switch
- 4** ECC83 valves
- 5** Regulated toroidal transformer

Under the hood, the Nuovo reveals itself as being unusually well made. The heatsink, for example, is shaped to nestle snugly around the large toroidal transformer, while the volume has a long control rod, so that altering the volume using the front panel adjusts the volume at the input, avoiding transporting the audio signal from the back of the amplifier to the front, and back again.

Natural flow

Most of the test work for this review used the excellent Triangle Quartet floorstanding loudspeaker and a Denon DCD-SA1 SACD player, which turned out to be completely compatible with the

character of the amplifier.

The best way to sum up the Unico Nuovo is that it does what it says on the tin. It has the qualities you'd expect of a valve amp, a hint of warmth and grace and a smoothness that is quite different from the sterility of a poor solid-state amplifier.

What's really striking, however, is that it achieves this without going over the top. The warmth appears to flow organically from inside the music, rather than being laid on externally as though with a trowel. Imagery is expansive, but properly focussed and realistic in scale. It is the slight loss of focus and a residual inconsistency between the sound of valves and solid-state that renders most hybrid designs we've experienced



NICK GREEN, who represents the UK importer for Unison Research, suggested the matching Unison Research Unico CDE, which costs around £2,000 to £2,400, depending on options (the highest price is for the dual-mono DAC version), or an older design; the more affordable CD Primo (£1,375), which lacks balanced operation.

For speakers, he considers the luxury two-way compact Mezza (£830) from the Opera Linea Classica series. If you're looking for a larger alternative, the Opera Seconda (£1,835) from the same series should work well. The five-tweeter Opera Callas (£2,880) will also fit the bill and offers an appropriately spacious sound.

Opera speakers come from the same factory as Unison Research and are used for voicing Unison Research amplifiers – and vice versa.

as ultimately unsatisfactory and this even applies to most valve/MOSFET hybrids – though MOSFETs are widely regarded as being more valve-like than other solid-state devices.

At the same time, the Unico Nuovo is fast, assured and dynamic. It is clearly not the most powerful amplifier in its class, but it will hold its own with most 100-watt amplifiers and with mid-efficiency speakers – the Triangle is slightly more sensitive than most, but this was confirmed with other speakers. With the Mordaunt-Short Performance 6LE, for example, there's always enough power in hand and it is always delivered in a consistent way with no hint of strain.

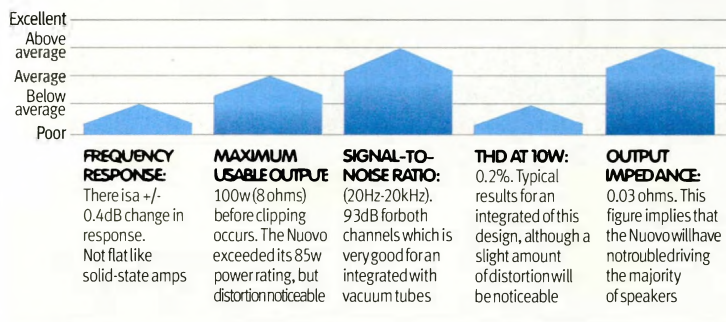
The Nuovo has a natural flow and it sounds fast and assured on test, ebbing and swelling with the music. Stereo imagery has real depth and in the lateral plane, the sound seems to stretch without break between opposite walls. Coincidentally the Triangle Quartet has an unusual ability to suggest height, which is probably attributable to the unusual dispersion of the tweeter housing, but whatever the cause, the result is a tactile and three-dimensional image.

Thoroughbred

If what you want from an amplifier is solid-state-like power delivery, leavened by the grace and polish of a good valve-based design, then Unison Research have got it on the button. The Nuovo offers an authentic taste of the high end at an attractive price, which is not completely out of step with the solid-state competition. Its sound is individual and more valve-like than transistor, but it has undeniable polish and verve. Above all, it is a thoroughbred, that makes unusually effective use of the two main technologies to make it sing. ●

TECH LABS

RESULTS AT A GLANCE



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Fluid, organic sound quality, exceptional poise and imagery
- VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Remote control could be better
- BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★ **WESAY:** One of the few examples of a truly successful marriage between tubes and solid-state
- FEATURES** ★★★★★

OVERALL



PLATINUM

S E R I E S



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Platinum PL200

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Hi-Fi Choice - March 2010



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Digital 1

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Naim on stream

Naim has launched a new, streaming all-in-one system with a difference – there's no CD drive! But as **Ed Selley** discovers, it's music non-stop

Considering that Naim waited the best part of a decade before producing its first CD player, the speed that the company has adopted hard drive and audio streaming products is impressive. In the last few years, we have been treated to the HDX hard drive server, the 'NaimNet' multiroom system and the Uniti all-in-one system with streaming capability.

The Uniti has now morphed into a complete range of products with the Uniti Serv, CD-ripping music server and the product tested here, the all-in-one streamer/player, the UnitiQute. Finally, Naim has just announced the NDX streamer (see *Audiophile* p8).

Full functionality

The UnitiQute is a half-width version of the full-size Uniti. As

DETAILS

PRODUCT: Naim

ORIGIN: UK

TYPE: All-in-one streamer/player

WEIGHT: 5.6kg

DIMENSIONS: (WxHxD)
370x240x500mm

FEATURES:

- Able to stream music over network using UPnP protocol
- Digital, line and USB inputs, DAB/FM and internet radio
- 45w internal amplifier

DISTRIBUTOR: Naim

TELEPHONE: 01722 426600

WEBSITE: naim-audio.com

well as being able to stream files up to 24-bit/96kHz in size via Ethernet or wireless network, the UnitiQute also has a DAB/FM internal tuner, built-in 45-watt amp, digital inputs, internet radio access and a USB input with the ability to access both stored files on a USB stick or an iPod or iPhone directly.

The one feature that has been removed in the move from full-width Uniti to UnitiQute is the CD drive. The UnitiQute is entirely dependent on music being elsewhere – be it on a network, via a digital input or over the airwaves, or the internet. The Naim can then output any of these sources via the internal 45-watt amplifier, a pre out or via a digital output. This is also the first Naim product we recall seeing that has no DIN connections on the rear panel.

Lack of DIN plugs aside, there is little danger that the UnitiQute will be confused with any other companies' products. The casework of the unit is every bit as solid as the rest of the Naim range and is

non-magnetic and non-resonant. The display is a reassuring green and the illuminated logo is retained as well.

Other Naim trademarks, such as the switchable chassis ground and lack of standby switch are present and correct. Indeed, besides a hard power switch on the rear panel, the UnitiQute has no buttons of any kind. All control is via the supplied remote or via the iPhone app (see boxout), so be sure to put the remote somewhere safe.

The overall impression of the UnitiQute is, that despite being rather different in functionality to more classic Naim offerings, it is still very much a Naim product. This extends to the run-in period, which whilst brief by Naim standards, is rather longer than might normally be expected of an all-in-one system.

Net-works

As the Naim is very dependent on networks and the web to show what it can do, it is good news to report that set up proved straightforward and is reasonably well explained in the manual. For review, the UnitiQute was asked to find material stored on a network attached storage (NAS) drive that was connected via Ethernet to a router. Later on, a laptop was set up as a UPnP server, much like the NAS and the UnitiQute was instructed to find content on it. In both cases, it was able to



THE UNITIQUITE makes use of iPod's in two ways. The USB port on the front can connect directly to an iPod via the standard iPod charging or syncing cable. This has been previously seen on the full-size Uniti and the Naim DAC and it remains very useful on the UnitiQute. The time taken to scan even high-capacity iPods is brief and it's then possible to look through and play albums, tracks or playlists via the display of the UnitiQute.

If you are an iPod Touch or iPhone owner, you can also use your device to control the UnitiQute via the n-Stream app available to buy on the iTunes App store. This allows for full control of the UnitiQute and will show album art of the material playing once you have made your selection. It is extremely attractive and worked well on test.

locate music content quickly and effectively.

Naim recommends using the Ethernet connection on the rear panel for improved performance and stability and, if you have the wherewithal to do so, such a network should prove very resilient, in practice. We also used the wireless connection extensively and provided that the router being used is relatively robust and the network itself is not being asked to do several very complicated tasks at once, the results are broadly indistinguishable from the Ethernet socket.

The functionality, build and ease of set up make the UnitiQute a strong proposition at the asking price, although as a relatively new type of product, it will prove a little

“The UnitiQute is well-specified and, most importantly, capable of a strong sonic performance.”

confusing to some (see *Talking Point*). The digital inputs, internal tuner and iPod support strengthen the appeal and make the unit capable of performing as the hub of a relatively complex system.

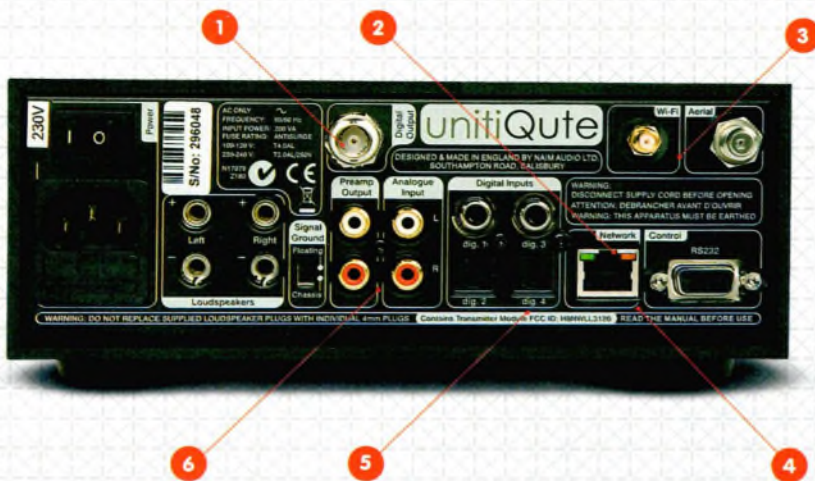
Considerable effort seems to have gone into making the UnitiQute a straightforward device to operate. The menus for set up and track selection are logical and easy to follow and the remote is easy to understand and intuitive. The green display can become slightly hard to read at a distance when the smallest size text is being displayed, while the default time the display stays visible for is a little short, although easily adjusted.

Rock box

After a period running in, we installed the UnitiQute on a wired network and connected it to a pair of Mordaunt Short Mezzo 1's. The initial and indeed lasting impression is the UnitiQute is still every inch a Naim product. It is possessed of a very assured presentational style with superb timing and the characteristic Naim bass 'grip' that has marked most of their products out for years.

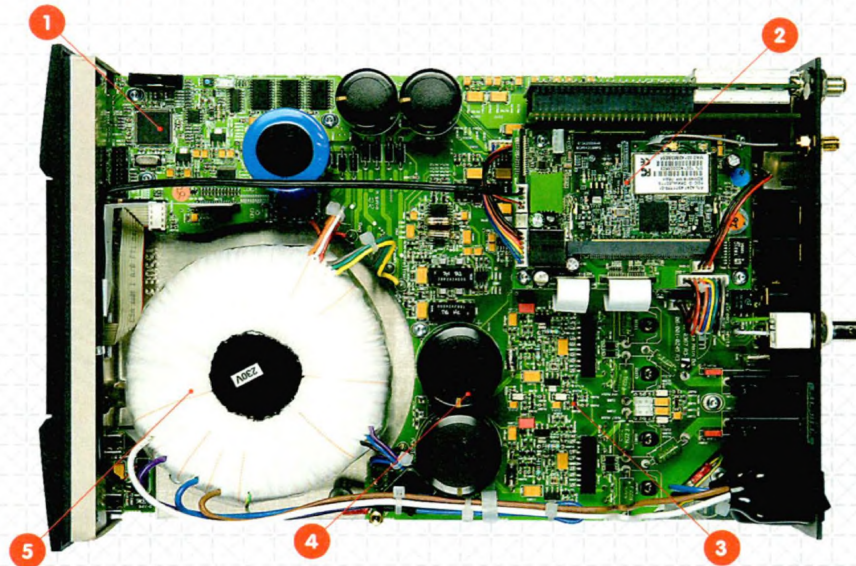
The overall presentation is fractionally forward of neutral, but this makes itself felt in a sense of excitement rather than any real harshness or stridency. The internal amplification has enough power to

CONNECTIONS



- 1 Digital output
- 2 Network connection
- 3 Wireless aerial connection
- 4 Ethernet networking port
- 5 Digital inputs
- 6 Analogue inputs and outputs

HIDDEN TECH



- 1 Asynchronous USB software
- 2 Networking and streaming hardware
- 3 Internal amplifier
- 4 Output capacitors
- 5 Power supply with multiple output taps

drive most pairs of speakers that one would expect to see used with this sort of system. Pushed very hard, the sound will start to harden up, but not until you have reached levels that are on the high side for domestic purposes.

Given a lossless FLAC or WAV file or even better, a (regrettably rare) 24-bit/96kHz high-resolution file, the UnitiQute has excellent tonality and timbre. Voices are tangibly real and have a welcome sense of air and space around them. Instruments are well-placed in relation to one another and whilst the presentation is still fairly 'left/right' in the Naim tradition, there is a believable sense of three dimensionality to proceedings.

Switch to compressed files and the UnitiQute retains much of this positive behaviour, although by the time bitrates drop much below 192kbps, the presentation will have become rather flatter and thinner than with lossless files, but this is not the fault of the UnitiQute and generally thoughtfully compressed files remain extremely listenable. The same behaviour is applicable to the digital inputs which did a fine job with the varying quality and material available from our Sky HD box, which is typical of the equipment likely to be connected to a device like this.

The internal tuner proved virtually noise-free and easy to tune. It is,



NAIM DESCRIBE the UnitiQute as a 'digital streaming all-in-one'. But it can also be viewed as a streaming 'client' in that it cannot hold music itself and requires another storage point (or the internet) to supply its demands.

The nearest competitive product is the Arcam Solo Neo (HFC 336), which is almost exactly the same price as the UnitiQute and has similar features. The Solo Neo retains a CD mechanism, however, which does allow a would be owner to spin a CD straight off. The UnitiQute will always require a CD to be ripped to network storage or USB stick.

To the increasing number of network-savvy listeners out there, this is not an issue, but to a large number of would be purchasers, the additional processes involved will not appeal.

however, overshadowed by the excellent internet radio implementation, which is one of the best we have seen. The UnitiQute has an extensive database of stations which can be searched by genre and country of origin.

Connection proves fast and reliable, but more importantly, stations with a bitrate of 192kbps or above – particularly AAC codec – based ones – are comfortably superior to DAB. Further stations can be requested via the website and the overall experience transforms internet radio from something of a novelty to a genuinely worthwhile listening experience for all.

The big issue

The UnitiQute is very well thought out, well specified and, most importantly, capable of a strong sonic performance. To anyone with an existing network and their music already stored on a NAS drive or similar, there is very little that can match its performance and features, let alone the form factor at a similar price.

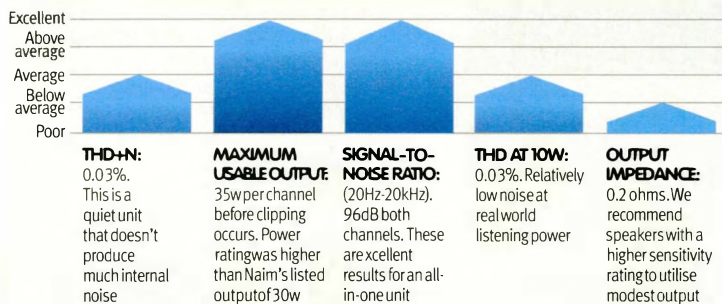
The biggest issue that the UnitiQute currently has is not performance-related, but more down to the fact that currently the only real way of buying music that does the UnitiQute justice is via CD. This means that most would-be owners will have to purchase a format that the UnitiQute cannot play directly.

This is not to say that there is no high-quality music out there to download (Naim itself has a better selection than most), but the UnitiQute is essentially waiting for the music retail market to catch it up.

For some, this will mean the UnitiQute loses out to products still capable of playing CDs. Others, however, will be ready to make the jump. ●

TECH LABS

RESULTS AT A GLANCE



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- SOUND QUALITY** ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Excellent features and easy to set up with strong performance
- VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Limitations in content delivery will reduce appeal to the networksavvy
- BUILD QUALITY** ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** Well thought out and clever product that does most things very well indeed

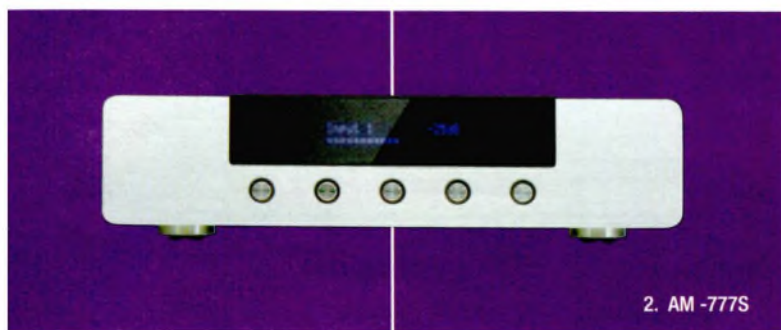
OVERALL





AMR 777 SERIES

1. AMR Compact Disk Processor CD-777 2. AMR Pre-Main Amplifier AM-777 3. AMR Phono Stage PH-77



2. AM -777S



3. PH-77T



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1. CD-777B



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Concert for one

Jimmy Hughes looks at the latest solution for audiophile-quality sound from headphones – Musical Fidelity's new M1 HPA amplifier

There was a time – admittedly forty or so years back – when every self-respecting amplifier came with a socket for headphones. The headphone socket was like tone controls, or a balance control – it was part of the furniture.

But slowly, as amplifiers became simpler and more Spartan, such fripperies were dispensed with. Now, an amplifier with a headphone socket is the exception rather than the rule and those wanting headphone facilities need to consider a high-end add-on box.

Musical Fidelity's Antony Michaelson is a huge fan of headphones and regularly uses them at home for critical/recreational listening. Hence, the company's legacy of high-quality headphone amplifiers in its product line up.

Miniature power

The M1 HPA is totally straightforward. It has sockets for two sets of headphones, plus inputs for line/USB and a volume control. There's also an output via RCA phono sockets, enabling the device to be used as a preamp – but more on this later.

In effect, the HPA is a miniature Pure Class A power amp. It is designed to handle complex loads and has a low output impedance. Some of the best headphones present quite a challenge to drive, but the M1 HPA should handle even the most difficult.

High calibre

The device is beautifully finished and very solidly made, looking and feeling far more expensive than it is. The all-metal casework has a classy, understated appearance and the controls operate smoothly and crisply.

Headphone listening is a very personal thing – not everyone enjoys the experience. However, it's still fair to say that – with a dedicated amplifier of HPA-calibre and a good set of headphones – superb results can be achieved at a very reasonable price.

Trick up its sleeve

Compared to the quality of sound you might get from a typical amplifier (with its headphone socket padded down from the speaker output), the HPA sounds cleaner and more purposeful, with greater immediacy and a wider dynamic range.

▶ DETAILS

PRODUCT: Musical Fidelity M1 HPA
ORIGIN: UK/Taiwan
TYPE: Headphone amplifier/line-level preamp
WEIGHT: 3.4kg
DIMENSIONS: (WxHxD) 220x300x100mm
FEATURES:
 • Provision for two sets of headphones; USB connection
 • Usable as a line-level preamp
 • Very low noise/low distortion
 • Internal power supply
DISTRIBUTOR: Musical Fidelity
TELEPHONE: 020 8900 2866
WEBSITE: musicalfidelity.com

Bass is firm, clean, and very deep and powerful. Tonally, the results are crisp and very detailed. Even with inefficient headphones, the HPA has power to spare and can produce fairly high sound-pressure levels.

Being Pure Class A with low output impedance (less than one ohm), it's able to drive even difficult 'phones (like the AKG 1000) with ease. And, as mentioned, it has ample gain – with some 'phones, enough to cause hearing damage – so take care!

As if being a brilliant headphone amp wasn't enough, the HPA has another trick up its sleeve; it can double as a high-quality line-level preamp. There's an extra set of phono socket outputs on the back for users wanting to go down this route.

Agreed, as a preamp the HPA has some restrictions – you've just the one pair of line inputs, for example, but, for those on a tight budget wanting a world-class line preamp, the HPA's functional limitations are worth putting up with.

As a preamp, the device sounds very clean and focussed, with good detail and wide dynamic range. Tonally, the presentation is a touch dry and lean, rather than rich, warm, or euphonic, but clarity is excellent.

Significant

For anyone serious about headphones, Musical Fidelity's M1 HPA is well worth a listen. By audiophile standards, it's an incredibly well-priced, high-quality piece of kit that offers outstandingly good results in a small neat package.

Choose your headphones wisely, and you'll have a package that rivals the sonic performance of large ultra-expensive loudspeakers and amplifiers.

The HPA also doubles as a superb line-level preamp. Indeed, you might have to pay five times the HPA's asking price to significantly better its performance here. If that isn't value, we don't know what is! ●



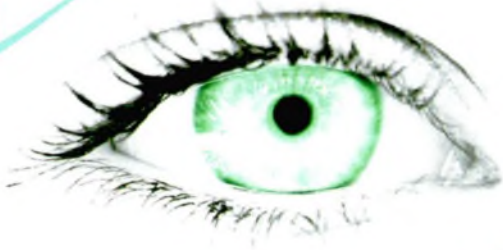
Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Very good sound – also usable as a preamp
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** No input selector limits use as a preamp
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** Musical Fidelity's HPA is a high-quality headphone amplifier that really rocks. It's a superb preamp, too
FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL





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www.scvlondon.co.uk

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Analogue appeal

For a very small outlay, you can have all the benefits of high-quality FM/AM radio with NAD's new C426. **Richard Black** tunes in

We felt positively sentimental unwrapping this little goody – an analogue-only tuner! It's been a while since we saw a new one of those round these parts. The reason for that, of course, is that most tuners these days include DAB as well. Come to that, with DAB threatening to oust FM from the airwaves, is there any point to an analogue-only one?

Commercially, NAD no doubt justifies its investment in this new model via sales in countries where DAB has yet to make a mark (there are still plenty), but even in a UK context it still has plenty going for it.

DAB vs FM

First, despite the proliferation of digital-only stations, most of the stuff that anyone actually wants to listen to seems to be on analogue radio and most of the remainder is available online, often via play-on-demand (podcasts).

The argument over DAB versus FM sound quality is an old and static one, but suffice to say that many audiophiles still find FM the preferable option. In fact, FM's got a good few years left in it even by the most pessimistic estimates. So if your old tuner has packed up, or you're looking to add low-cost FM to your system, then £220 seems perfectly sensible.

Blend function

As for the business of FM-only versus FM plus DAB, we're not alone in believing that if you really want the best performance from a bit of kit, you don't really want too much functionality shoehorned into it. There will be compromises and cost-savings, not to mention the vexed issue of electrical interference, so keeping it simple is seldom bad news. And simple is how the C426 goes. It has RDS, a remote control, RS-232 (the standard in electrical characteristics and timing of signals) and presets, but in basic terms it just receives AM and FM radio.

A tiny front-end module feeds circuits based on recent dedicated integrated circuits on NAD's own board, all fed from a traditional all-analogue power supply. The display does the basics very well and includes the usual rather optimistic signal-strength meter. There's also a 'Blend' function which can be useful where stereo reception is marginal for noise performance.

Good signals

Our first impression of this tuner is distinctly positive. Intending to do no more than ensure it was basically functional, we hooked it up with literally a random piece of wire as the aerial and were astonished to hear pretty much acceptable sound – usually a tuner would be hideously noisy under such conditions. Further



► DETAILS

PRODUCT:
NAD C426
ORIGIN: Canada/
China
TYPE:
FM/AM tuner
WEIGHT: 4.2kg
DIMENSIONS:
(WxHxD)
435x87x315mm
FEATURES:
• Radio Data System
(RDS)
• 40 presets each on
FM and AM
• Signal strength
meter
• Rotary tuning knob
DISTRIBUTOR:
Armour Home
Electronics
TELEPHONE:
01279 501111
WEBSITE:
nadelectronics.com

testing confirms that this is a very sensitive design, ideally suited to troublesome locations.

That's obviously a plus, but there's no direct link between RF-sensitivity and audio performance under conditions of a good signal. Happily, it seems that the latter is just as good as the former in this case. Not only is the tonal balance unusually well judged, there is distinctly more detail than one often hears from FM radio.

The major reason for that is that NAD has managed to reduce the low-level 'grain' that affects reception in all too many tuners, even when they are fed from a good antenna. As a result, all those little details that live down near the noise floor become that much more obvious and music suddenly snaps and sparkles into life in a most gratifying way.

Pace and timing

Deep bass is another common weakness of FM, yet the C426 does very well, with clearly defined low notes from all manner of instruments. Pace and timing are good, too, certainly among the best we've heard from a budget tuner. The very highest treble lacks some of the insight that the finest tuners can achieve, but at a fifth or less of what they cost we aren't really criticising, especially as images have well-defined and stable width and depth.

This isn't just a very good budget tuner: it's a very good tuner, period. ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★ **LIKE:** Good RF-side performance coupled with fine audio

VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Slight treble dryness is about the only drawback

BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★ **WESAY:** If you aren't wedded to DAB, then this is a very attractive purchase

FEATURES
★★★★★

OVERALL





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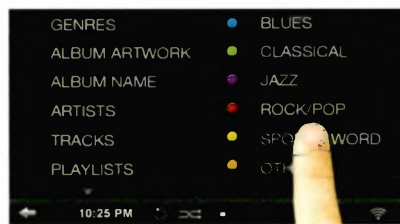


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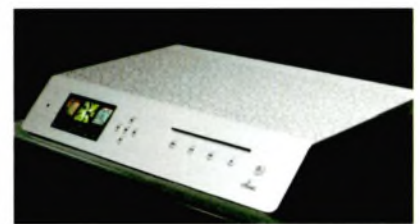


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56 **Dexy's
Midnight
Runners**
Searching For
The Young
Soul Rebels



57 **King Crimson**
In the Wake of
Poseidon

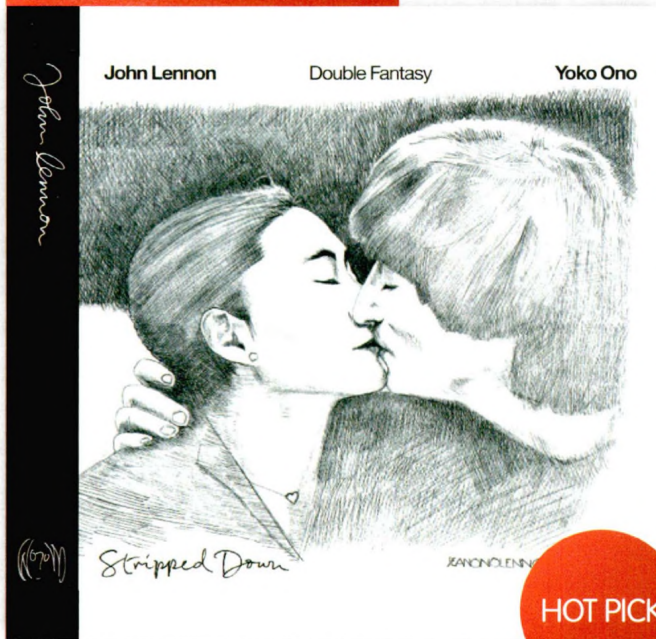


57 **AM**
Future Sons
& Daughters

Music reviews

Hi-Fi Choice's pick of the latest high-quality music releases

ALBUM OF THE MONTH



“This is one of the most important excursions into rock music’s core cannon.”

All of these reissues sound better for being remastered – allegedly by Yoko, but don’t let that put you off. The real work was done by the engineers, Allan Rouse at Abbey Road and George Marino at Avatar in New York. The stark, brutal sound of *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* is given an even more compelling edge, forcing attention on to Lennon’s wounded vocals. *Sometime In New York City* sounds much enhanced, with Phil Spector’s wall-of-sound production packing a more potent punch than the original vinyl.

Rock ‘n’ Roll is another revelation. Dismissed on its release as a

contract-fulfilling project lacking wit or charm, it now sounds like Lennon paying a more heartfelt tribute to his roots than we ever gave him credit for at the time.

But it’s 1980’s *Double Fantasy*, which provides the most surprising new insights – largely because it is presented in two versions: a remastered take on the original release and then a dramatic reimagining of the album, which finds Yoko and her engineers paring back the instrumentation to focus on Lennon’s vocals. Instead of sounding like a bunch of demos, the power of the songs shines through like an oil painting from which layers of varnish have been stripped away to reveal the brush strokes of an old master in freshly vivid colours. **NW**

Standout tracks: Mother; Gimme Some Truth; Mind Games; Just Like Starting Over; Number Nine Dream

John Lennon

The John Lennon Signature Box

www.emimusic.com

★★★★★

Apple

11-CD set

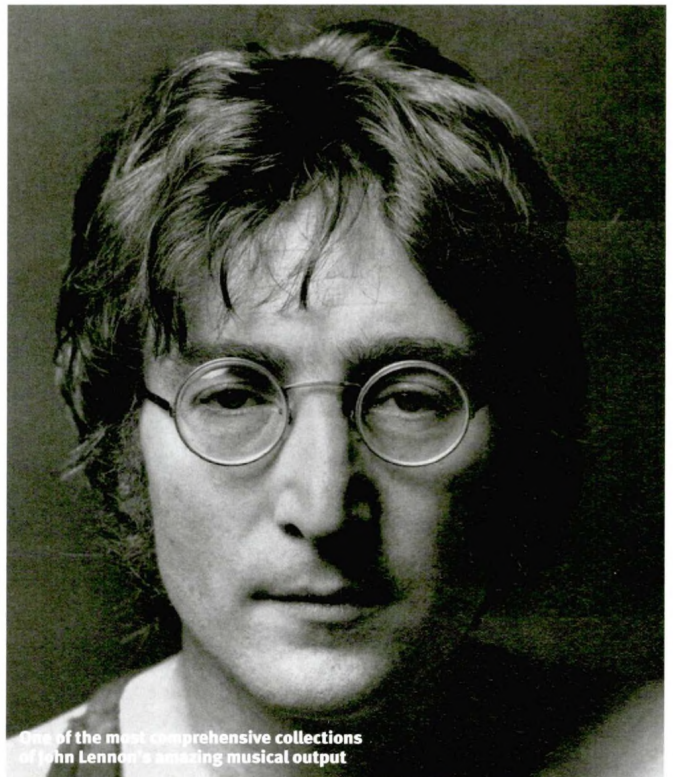
LENNON’S POST-BEATLES career was spotty and sporadic, as he was variously interrupted and distracted by his obsession with Yoko, heroin addiction, heavy-handed radical politicking, lost weekends, fighting deportation from America and the strange period of withdrawal to become a bread-baking house husband.

But as this collection of eight remastered albums (plus bonus discs of rare and previously unreleased recordings), reminds us, it was also littered with some outstanding recordings.

All of his solo albums from *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* (1970) to the posthumous *Milk And Honey* (1984) via *Imagine*, *Sometime In New York City*, *Mind Games*, *Walls And Bridges*, *Rock ‘n’ Roll* and *Double Fantasy*, are now reissued individually as part

of a comprehensive remastering programme. But their collection in a box set also presents the opportunity to reassess Lennon’s solo output as a unified body of work and in doing so, presents some unexpected insights.

Equally revealing, is a four-disc set titled *Gimme Some Truth*, which presents 72 of Lennon’s solo recordings, showcasing respectively his rock ‘n’ roll roots and influences; the socio-political songs; the love songs; and a fourth disc of his more personal songs reflecting his outlook on life. How you chose to consume this material from the many options available, will, of course, be a matter of personal choice. But whichever way you slice it, this is one of the most important and welcome remastering excursions into rock music’s core canon in many years.



One of the most comprehensive collections of John Lennon's amazing musical output



Dexy's Midnight Runners

Searching For The Young Soul Rebels

legacyrecordings.com

★★★★★

EMI

CD

IT'S BEEN 30 YEARS since eight surly men in woolly hats hit the UK top spot with *Geno* and delivered a searingly ambitious album packed with punk attitude and soul stylings, with powerful horn blasts, driving rhythms, instantly classic tunes, and Kevin Rowland – a front man whose obvious passion, self-belief and strangled, highly stylised vocal delivery would brook no argument. It's rare to hear an album forged from such commitment and single-minded ambition and it's still stunning today.

There's a retro feel to the sound as Rowland and producer Pete Wingfield strived for a vibe that reflected the northern soul roots of the music. As such, it's a little thin in the bass, but the snare cracks as sharp as a whip and it maintains a crackling sense of tension throughout.

The bonus CD includes demos and radio sessions, plus essential B-sides including *The Horse* and *Plan B*. **DO**

Standout tracks: Burn It Down; Geno; Tell Me When My Light Turns Green; Keep It



Syd Barrett

An Introduction To...

brain-damage.co.uk

★★★★★

EMI/Harvest

4-CD box set

EIGHTEEN TRACKS pulled from the archives by Barrett's long-time curator, David Gilmour includes early Floyd singles and album cuts charting Syd's arc from perfectly frozen English psychedelic goblin with the charming dulcet tones of Pink Floyd's *Piper At The Gates Of Dawn*, to the sheer anguish of a disintegrating talent on *Octopus* or *If It's In You* from 1970.

Yet uplift comes from the effervescence of his second solo album, *Barrett*, especially the gorgeous *Gigolo Aunt* and the inclusion of the witty pastiche *Bob Dylan Blues* from 1970.

In fact, this is the best-sounding Barrett album ever and for hardcore devotees there's a 20-minute unreleased download jam, *Rhamadan*. **MP**

Standout tracks: See Emily Play; Matilda Mother; Chapter 24; Terapin; Baby Lemonade



Carmina Celtica

Canty with William Taylor (harp)

linnrecords.com

★★★★★

Linn

CD

CANTY IS THE NAME of Scotland's only professional medieval music group and this recording consists of a small corpus of female singers drawn from Capella Nova, an early music ensemble.

This varied collection combines nine contemporary works by various composers, including John Tavener and James MacMillan with a selection of medieval choral pieces.

Recorded at Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh, the recordings are uniformly rich and atmospheric, though necessarily austere. And although much of the music is contemporary, the musical language is primarily of medieval flavoured plainsong and chant, with a strong early religious feel. **AG**

Standout track: Flower Garland



The Groundhogs

Thank Christ For The Groundhogs: The Liberty Years 1968-72

emimusic.com

★★★★★

EMI

3-CD set

THE GROUNDHOG'S first five albums saw them move from a straight-ahead blues power trio to top-ten psychedelic warriors, not too far behind the likes of Cream and Hendrix's Experience. In Tony McPhee, they had a fine songwriter, too, who penned very English songs about war, class and suburban life.

Unlike their earlier album *Scratching The Surface* (1968), *Split* (1971) and *Who Will Save The World* (1972) demonstrate how the band had finally become masters of the studio and knew how to capture their improvisational, exploratory spirit. Prog-rock from this era can often sound decidedly murky. But here the effect is precise and coherent. **NW**

Standout tracks: Split Part 2; Strange Town; Cherry Red

AUDIOPHILE VINYL

Muddy Waters At Newport speakerscorner.de



★★★★★ Speakers Corner

180g vinyl

THIS LIVE RECORDING from 1960 was Muddy Waters' second album and the one that broke him to a white audience in the US, where it remained in print for over 20

years. It finds the bluesman and his band playing the last afternoon of the Newport Jazz Festival on the occasion that the event had to be wound up early due to rioting the day before.

It introduced Chicago blues to a whole new audience, one that by the end of the set sounded like it was getting pretty excited by the driving grooves of the *Got My Mojo Working* encore.

While you can tell that this was a rock-solid band and Waters a powerful singer, the recording doesn't manage to make this as clear as it

might. Although it lacks energy, it is revealing enough to give you a good idea of why the music was so thrilling at the time.

Waters' debut, the mono *Best Off* from 1957, lacks the separation and scale of Newport, but has rather greater energy. Only the voice gets real stereo treatment here and not all the time at that, but it's easy to hear the fine contributions from Otis Spann (piano) and Francis Clay (drums) in particular. **JK**

Standout tracks: Tiger In Your Tank; Blues For Newport





King Crimson

In The Wake Of Poseidon

king-crimson.com

★★★★★

Panegyric

CD/DVD-A

BY DECEMBER 1969 the first incarnation of King Crimson had split during a US tour leaving Robert Fripp to soldier on alone. Yet by May 1970 *In The Wake Of Poseidon* was released, which at first sounds similar to their debut album, but as one delves deeper there's more jazzy piano, a more percussive drumming style and less use of Mellotron.

As ever with Crimson, there's a wealth of subtlety in the sound and with *Cadence and Cascade* and *Peace-A Theme*, Fripp blueprinted the most subtly romantic acoustic guitar of his career.

As usual, atop the splendid remastered sound, is a DVD-A of MLP Lossless and DTS 5.1 Surround sound, LPCM and the original 1970 stereo mix. **MP** **Standout tracks:** Pictures Of A City; Cadence and Cascade, Cat Food



Thin Lizzy

Vagabonds Of The Western World

www.decca.com

★★★★★

Decca

2-CD deluxe edition

RELEASED IN 1973, Thin Lizzy's third album predated their mainstream chart success, but found Phil Lynott patenting his trademark swagger on tracks such as *The Rocker*. The original eight songs are augmented by 21 bonus tracks, including live recordings and radio sessions.

Recorded prior to the arrival of the slamming twin guitar attack of Scott Gorham and Brian Robertson, *Vagabonds...* nevertheless overcame the limitations of the basic trio line-up to point the way to the power-chord glory of future hits such as *Jailbreak*.

Eric Bell's guitar offers a crisp counterpoint to Lynott's thunderous bass playing, while conversely softer tracks sound surprisingly delicate. **NW** **Standout tracks:** The Rocker; Vagabonds Of The Western World

ARVO PÄRT

SYMPHONY NO 4

Arvo Pärt

Symphony No 4

Esa-Pekka Salonen (cond), LA Phil

ecmrecords.com

★★★★★

ECM New Series

CD

NOT STRICTLY A SYMPHONY, this string-led work is divided into three movements which don't vary much from each other. It does have a very church-like atmosphere and like many Pärt works, it makes characteristic use of orchestral bells.

The recording was made in the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles (it was also performed at this year Proms) and is likely to elicit varying reactions. It's largely static quality may not be immediately appealing, but any new work by Pärt is an occasion and the almost medieval raptness and the concentrated quality of the music has a certain allure. The playing is extremely fine, and the music is frequently very beautiful. **AG**

Standout track: Con sublimità

HIGH-RESOLUTION DOWNLOADS

Howie B

Good Morning Scalene

bowers-wilkins.com

★★★★★

B&W Society of Sound

24-bit/48kHz stereo



THE PRODUCER DESCRIBED as "an ace hired-gun often called upon to give pop stars credit in the dance

world", Howie B brings an intriguing and eclectic sensibility to electronic music. These tracks lean more towards ambient-jazz and filmic structures than any dance groove and mix synthetic and 'real' instruments to provide some textural variety in the predominantly keyboard-led line-up.

This 24-bit/48kHz recording truly brings out the wealth of subtlety and detail that is hidden away in these tracks and exposes the variety of instrumental texture, both natural and synthesised. It is also well suited to giving your low frequency drivers something of a workout. **MS**

Standout tracks: Tarantino; What's My Name (Dub)

AM

Future Sons & Daughters

naimlabel.com

★★★★★

Naim Label

24-bit/48kHz stereo



SOUNDING NOT unlike Beck, but with more of a pop consciousness, this album has a charming retro

feel about many of the compositions. Genre hopping from The Beatles to Bossa Nova by way of soft funk, it references a host of musical icons from the sixties and seventies, but cleverly avoids sounding derivative or clichéd.

As we have noted with some other albums, this is not the sort of tinkly, audiophile music that people imagine would obviously lend itself to hi-res music. The 24-bit recording simply creates a credible sense of realism, enhancing the soundstage and breathing life and vitality into the music. **MS**

Standout tracks: It's Been So Long; Self Preservation

BLU-RAY AUDIO

Various Artists A Concert By The Lake eagle-rock.com



★★★★★

Eagle Vision

Blu-ray DTS HD Master, Dolby Digital 5.1, LPCM stereo

A few years back Procol Harum's Gary Brooker gathered a bunch of his musician mates at Wintershall Estate in Surrey

to play a selection of tunes new and old in front of a well-dressed audience in aid of charity. A bit like a charity ball, but with Eric Clapton, Katie Melua, Paul Carrack, Mike Rutherford and more on the bandstand.

Together they work their way through 23 numbers old and new, with Clapton singing *Willie And The Hand Jive*, alongside several of his own crowd-pleasers, Melua giving us three of her hits and a Beatles number from Ringo Starr.

We selected this disc for review because it's the best

sounding Blu-ray we've heard to date. It's very open, live-sounding and projects into the room with considerable ease. Voices are particularly well captured, with Paul Carrack, Gary Brooker and Ms Melua making the best noises in this department.

The DTS HD Master track takes the army of guitars, two drummers and keyboard players in its stride and giving a result that in the right system must come close to witnessing the original event. **AG** **Standout tracks:** This World is Rich; I Can't Dance

naim
**NAIM UNITI
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*WILST STOCK

- ANTHONY GALLO
ACOUSTICS
- ARCAM
- ATLAS Cables
- audiolab
- AUDIOVECTOR
- Bandaudio
- B&W
- Blackwood
- CHORD
Cables
- CHORD
Cable Electronics Limited
- CRESTON
- CRESTRON
- CYRUS
- EMM
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- exposure
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- Kohonen
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- kudos
- LINN
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- NAD
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Minitest

Selecting the right bi-wire cables for your speakers needn't be rocket science says **Richard Black**

Black Rhodium Jive Bi-Wire

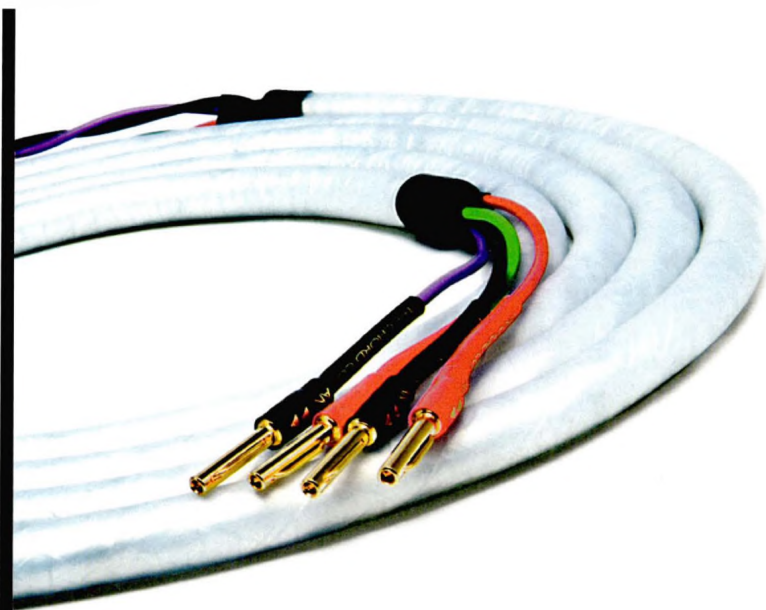
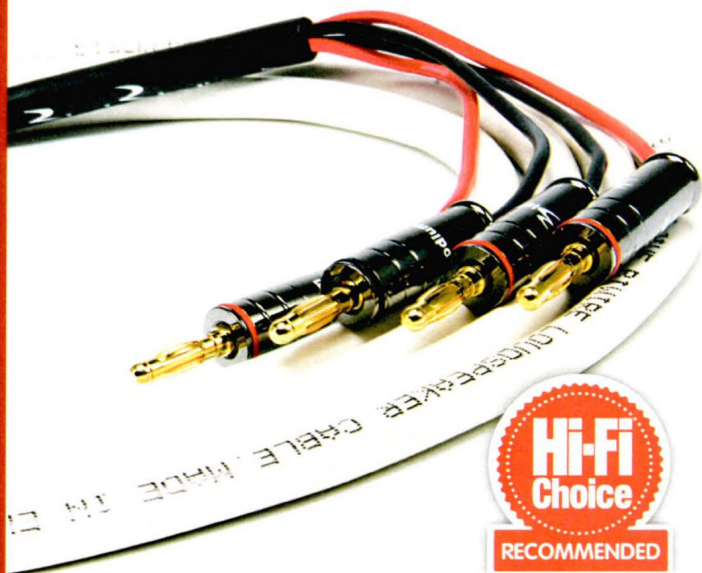
PRICE: £14 PER METRE CONTACT: 01332 342233
WEBSITE: BLACKRHODIUM.CO.UK

BLACK RHODIUM'S current dance-themed range includes three bi-wire cables, of which this is the cheapest. It includes several BR hallmark features, most obviously the use of silicone rubber insulation. As with almost all aspects of cable design, the jury is still out on the precise benefits of silicone, but there's no doubting its suitability for the job in electrical terms: in mechanical terms it's very friendly because its soft, pliable nature makes for a very tractable cable, aided by the soft overall sheath that has been applied.

The diameter is a modest 8mm and the small bend radius makes this an easy cable to route and conceal. Conductors are of tinned copper, 1.5 mm² each and the cable is marked for directionality, though that is obvious in the standard two-to-four bi-wire setup. Our sample came with BR's own 4mm plugs, which are simple but low resistance types.

The dominant sonic characteristic of this cable is something we've noticed before from many BR products, a slightly 'dark' quality which very subtly focuses attention on the bass, most specifically, the upper bass. All the same, detail is very good across the range. The deepest bass, perhaps, lacks a little extension compared with the finest cables available, while the treble is a touch on the dry side, but tonality in the midrange is highly neutral and we were particularly impressed with imaging, which is clear, precise and stable across the board. There's also a good sense of control which makes this a very easy cable to like.

VERDICT AN ATTRACTIVE range of sonic virtues, the drawbacks being very minor for the price. Highly practical, too
★★★★



The Chord Company Carnival Silver Screen Bi-Wire

PRICE: £12 PER METRE CONTACT: 01980 625700
WEBSITE: CHORD.CO.UK

AS THE NAME IMPLIES, this is a screened cable, something unusual among loudspeaker wires. The usual thinking is that at the high voltage and current levels associated with loudspeaker connections, a few microvolts of hum or other interference is just not an issue, but radio-frequency (RF) interference can still be conducted back into the amplifier on unscreened cable and, once there, can get into places where it may produce audible effects.

The screen on the Carnival is not electrically connected to the conductors, which makes its effects particularly hard to envisage, but we certainly can't think of any reason why it might do any harm. The conductors are 2.5mm² copper, insulated with polythene and jacketed overall with PVC before the screen is applied, making an overall construction that's rather bulky (13mm diameter) but not too tricky to handle.

Without an unscreened version for comparison it's impossible to ascribe sonic qualities to physical characteristics, but we found this a very detailed cable that's particularly informative in the upper midrange and treble. It has a lovely sparkle to it and is particularly good at reproducing well-recorded, treble-rich instruments like violin and trumpet. The attack on notes is crisp and well-defined, while the decay into ambience is natural, with none of the sudden cutoff that one sometimes hears. The bass isn't quite the equal of the higher frequencies, though. It has quite good extension but we were never entirely convinced that it was as taut and rhythmic as we'd heard from some other cables around this price.

VERDICT FINE TREBLE, with good detail making this a great cable for acoustic music. Bass could benefit from a little more precision
★★★★

Supra Rondo 4x4.0

PRICE: £10 PER METRE CONTACT: 01 223 441 299
WEBSITE: JENVING.SE

THERE'S NO SCREEN on this cable, but manufacturer Jenving claims that interference-rejection is enhanced by the twisted construction, which has a tighter pitch (more complete rotations of its spiral per foot) than most cables. Apparently, special twisting machines are used for this, which also avoid mechanical stress on the wires. Well, yes, sort of: the spiral isn't particularly tight (you can easily make it out through the PVC jacket) and it's far from obvious what a little mechanical stress is going to do a cable to damage it. Anyway, the generous amount of copper is useful for keeping resistance low and the cable is very flexible for its 10mm diameter. Insulation is PVC, which isn't always considered the best for audio use, but generally seems harmless in speaker cables.

It's hard not to enjoy the bass this cable passes to the loudspeakers, which is deep, resonant and also well timed. At the same time, if we're fussy, it's not always incredibly precise and it can be a little harder than usual to pick out fine details in the lowest two or three octaves. Detail gets better as one goes up the range, but the trade-off in the treble is a slight dryness. As a result, this cable seems much better suited to all-electronic recordings than acoustic ones: its rhythmic qualities and snap are exciting but the sound of the venue is not so well conveyed on recordings made with natural microphone techniques. Funnily enough, we found the treble slightly improved by connecting both pairs of wires together at both ends, non-bi-wire style, though the bass lost some tautness.

VERDICT ADMIRABLE FOR ITS rhythmic drive and bass extension, but this cable doesn't offer the best bass detail or the most open treble



van den Hul The Teatrack Hybrid

PRICE: £35 PER METRE CONTACT: 01235 511166
WEBSITE: VANDENHUL.COM

EVEN BY VAN DEN HUL'S standard this is a pretty oddly named cable, but construction is sane enough. Each conductor is a composite of silver-plated copper and 'linear structured carbon', vdH's trademark material which, while possessing considerably higher resistance than metal, avoids the problems (whatever those are) of metal conductors and their crystalline structure. The carbon fibres are arranged around a core of many thin copper strands and this arrangement plus the use of 'Hulliflex' insulation makes for a cable which is, at least, flexible in one direction. Being flat (25mm wide) it's completely intractable in the other direction, but it's not too tricky to handle. Our sample was terminated with vdH's own multi-purpose end sockets – just screw-in 4mm or spade terminals to suit.

Of all the cables in this group, we found this the most satisfactory overall. It's not perfect and we reckon there's a little more extension in the bass it might have retained, plus a shade more treble sparkle, but it does achieve good results across the board: superb in some areas. Rhythm is very good, with a really well-timed kick in the upper bass and tonal neutrality from low midrange upwards is also very fine. Detail, meanwhile, is very good indeed, clear but never forced or thrust upon the listener. We found ourselves re-evaluating a couple of very familiar tracks, after a session with this cable in circuit revealed information we hadn't previously noticed. It also thoroughly confirms the benefits of bi-wiring, sounding noticeably less precise when connected up with wires in parallel, single-wired. ●

VERDICT THE EXPENSE seems well justified by a sound that's impeccably timed, neutral and full of detail, with good extension, too



Bi-wiring isn't necessarily the answer to all audio ills but it can be clearly beneficial, as our tests with these cables (especially the van den Hul) showed. That said, it is usually easy to try connecting

a bi-wire cable in single-wire mode, with two cores in parallel for each of hot and cold and it's evident that your mileage may vary depending on cable, speaker and possibly amp too. As always

with speaker cable, keep lengths to a minimum but the same for each channel, as imbalance can cause subtle tonal shifts which play a surprising degree of havoc with stereo imaging.

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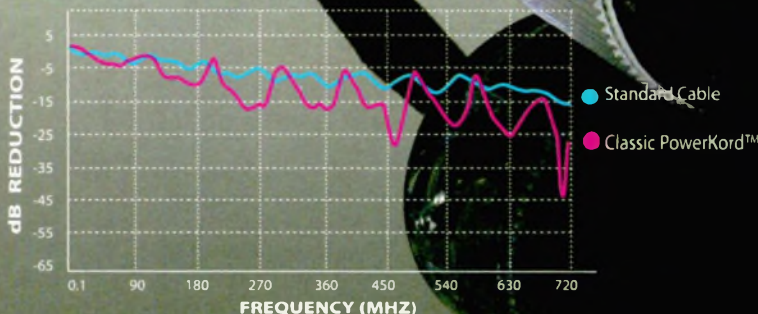
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HiFi Choice magazine

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Mr C Donnelly, London

Also consider...

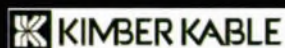
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What HiFi? Sound & Vision Ultimate Guide to High End Entertainment, Sept. 08

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YOUR EXPERTS



PAUL MESSENGER

EXPERTISE: LOUDSPEAKERS

HAVING WORKED on both sides of the audio industry for over 30 years, as loudspeaker designer and reviewer, Paul is ideally placed to offer thorough, in-depth analysis of every speaker reviewed, as well as cutting-edge developments in the field.



JIMMY HUGHES

EXPERTISE: SYSTEM OPTIMISATION

AS EVERY audiophile knows, there's so much more to getting a system to sing than merely throwing components together. Jimmy Hughes has spent 40 years tweaking and optimising systems, as well as voraciously collecting records.



RICHARD BLACK

EXPERTISE: TECHNOLOGY

WRITING EXCLUSIVELY for HFC, Richard brings his experience as a successful musician and recording engineer to bear in our rigorous *Blind-Listening Group Test*. As our technical consultant, Richard is the authority on HFC's test and measurement.



ED SELLEY

EXPERTISE: DIGITAL AUDIO

RESIDENT IN the audio industry for over a decade, Ed has considerable experience of both CD and SACD formats on disc, as well as an increasing personal interest in streamed high-resolution audio and network based systems



ALVIN GOLD

EXPERTISE: HIGH-END REVIEWER

HAVING WRITTEN for a huge range of magazines, both internationally and in Britain, Alvin has a very full 30 years of reviewing under his belt. A guru of all component types, he's now extending his expertise by building PCs for audio too.



JASON KENNEDY

EXPERTISE: TURNTABLES

ANOTHER EDITOR, Jason opted to become a freelance contributor when he relinquished the helm of HFC after 17 years on the magazine. A hi-fi addict since his twenties, Jason fell for the beauty of vinyl and has never looked back.

ASK US A QUESTION TODAY!

Our experts are on hand to answer your questions. Whether you're looking for future-proof upgrades, advice or help with your current set-up, our two-channel Einsteins have all the necessary expertise and several hundred years of combined audio knowledge to slake your thirst and support your passion for perfect sound. Email your questions now: hifichoice@futurenet.com

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Q Can you recommend an alternative to iTunes and Windows Media Player and their proprietary technology? What is the best CD-ripping / music database / artwork management software out there?

A The problem here is that for as long as there are iPods in the system, iTunes remains the only legitimate option for putting music on them. Amongst our preferred ripping options is dBpoweramp (<http://www.dbpoweramp.com/>), which can perform extremely accurate rips with excellent metadata access. It can convert ripped files from and to virtually any available codec, including Apple Lossless, but you would still need iTunes to place this

music onto an 'off the shelf' iPod. It is possible to modify iPods to run software such as Rockbox, but this only applies to the older designs rather than the iPod Touch that you mention.



Urge for Led Zepplin

Q I have a Primare amp I30 and matching CD player CD31 and I'm upgrading my current speakers (Bowers and Wilkins 601) to a larger pair of floorstanders.

I am after a warmer sound with an open midrange and deeper, tighter bass (not much then!) and I'm thinking of a Focal 816W SE or a Spondor A6. My room is lightly furnished and approx. 5.5 m x 4.0m x 3.0m high, while the walls are 1m thick granite (it is a converted barn).

I listen to a lot of Jazz and female vocalists, but every so often I have the urge for Led Zepplin (in the country no-one can hear you scream).

I was very keen on the A6, but your review (HFC 337) wasn't as positive as I'd hoped, so any help with additional speakers I should add to my shortlist would be appreciated. My budget is around £2,500.

Gareth Williams, via email



A We would strongly discourage writing a product off because it only scores four-stars. In this instance, the A6 drops points because although it has many of the attributes that you are looking for in a pair of speakers, we would definitely recommend an audition. We think the Focal is a fine speaker, but it has a brighter presentation than the Spondor and might be a little forward for your tastes. We would substitute the Cabasse Bora (HFC 324), which has some of the sparkle, but with a slightly greater sense of refinement.

Fast sounds

Q I wonder if you could advise me please? My system is as follows: Resolution Audio Opus 21 XS CD player sitting on titanium metal spikes (connected to preamp by Transparent Music Link Plus); Cyrus Pre X preamp with PSX-R; 2x Cyrus Mono X amps (connected to preamp by van den Hul first ultimate cable); QED XT 400 speaker cable; Rega P3 with acrylic platter and Ortofon MC 25 FL cartridge with Pro-Ject Phono Box SE amp, also connected with Music Link Plus cables;

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Dynaudio Contour 3.0 speakers; Technics RB608R tape deck (with dbx noise suppressor); Sound-Stage glass rack with equipment sitting on chipboard which helps the sound, plus Wireworld mains cables.

The system sounds really good, but I've found the record player outperforms the CD player. I have connected the CD player directly to the Mono X amps and used it as a preamp, but this makes the sound flat and dull, so the Cyrus Pre X amp is adding a bit of magic to the mix.

To improve the sound do I need to change the preamp to a Cyrus Pre XVS or go for another marque? Or do I use a Cyrus XP d and connect the Resolution player with XLR cable?

The speakers sound great, but are power-hungry, so can I link two Mono Xs to the speakers (the speakers only have one set of terminals)?

I could potentially put £3,000 together for a worthwhile upgrade.

Tim Harrison, via email

A If your system is performing well with sources other than CD, we would be loath to suggest that you started playing around with amp and speakers.

The Opus 21 remains a favourite of ours, but it can be very relaxed in its presentation and it is not too surprising that the Rega/Ortofon combination might sound livelier. We also don't feel that dispensing with a preamp in a multiple-input system is something you will enjoy in the long run.

Our recommendation in this case would be to consider a new CD player with a bit more vigour than the Opus 21. Two players that we feel offer this step-up in performance are the recently revised Leema Antilla II (HFC 323) and the Moon CD3.3 (HFC 328). Neither are 'bright', but they have a liveliness and sense of timing that the Opus 21 may lack. The Moon also has a digital input should you wish to add another digital source in time.

The Sensitive type

Q My main source is a Rega Saturn CD player, which I have had for the best part of five years. Amplification is a Pathos Inpol 2 hybrid amplifier (50 watts). Speakers are Dynaudio Focus 140s.

I am considering changing my speakers as I believe these to be the weakest link in the system. I would appreciate your advice on what would be suitable alternatives; either standmount or floorstanders in the £5,000 price range.

My music preferences are more or less everything other than hard rock and this includes: country; jazz; popular; classical etc plus the majority of my library comprises female voice and popular. I am not a bass fiend, but like lots of detail-retrieval in my music and depth and spread of sound stage, with good stereo imaging. I like to hear everything that's going on in the music with a neutral to warm presentation rather than bright or clinical.

My listening room dimensions are 6 x 7 metres with a vaulted ceiling.

Ian Cork, Kidlington

A We rather like the Dynaudio range on the whole, but we suspect that more than 50 watts would be required to get the best out of them. One design we have tested that offers an equally beautiful cabinet is the Sonus faber Cremona Auditor (HFC 305), which is comfortably under budget and has the sweetness and tonality (without being afraid of a little rocking) that you are looking for. It is also sensitive enough to work well on the output of the Pathos. Slightly over budget, but equally lovely is the Kudos Cardea C30's, which might be happier in a listening room of the sort of dimensions that you mention and are still sensitive enough to be happy working with the Pathos.

The Sonus faber Cremona – beauty and performance



THE HI-FI CHOICE GUIDE TO: AVOIDING 'SIDEGRADING'



WE SEE OUR FAIR SHARE

of questions from readers with money to spend on chasing audio perfection. Often, they are far from sure about what it is they want from the upgrade or indeed what improvements they can make. Uncertainty in this area is the path to a 'sidegrade.'

'Sidegrading' is when you realise on reflection (and often a lot of money later) that the results of your new arrival are different, but not actually better. If you are seeking worthwhile improvements, there are some simple lessons to apply.

Most important – what is 'wrong' with your system – where could it be improved? If you say 'nothing' or 'I don't know', then put your wallet away! Spending in the hope that it might make something better is a bad idea. Second, once you know what could be improved, spend some time working out how to find this improvement, rather than jumping straight in.

Another consideration is how much to spend to achieve a worthwhile step forward. Equipment does improve as price increases, but look at equipment that costs at least 50 per cent more than your current unit – replacing a £1,000 CD player with a £1,200 one is not really going to be cost-effective.

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40 years' experience



Ed Selley
Former industry insider and
digital technology specialist



Richard Holliss
Hi-Fi Choice's current
Production Editor

Awards Intro

Welcome to the 2010 *Hi-Fi Choice* Awards issue – which is without doubt the most reliable guide to hi-fi buying anywhere. Spread across the next 38 pages you'll find our pick of the very best hi-fi components currently available, painstakingly plucked from each relevant product category by our expert panel.

As you'd expect from *Hi-Fi Choice*, we have rigorously filtered our favourite products from the last 13 issues to come up with a final list of award-winning components to suit a variety of pockets. For each category, you'll see two finalists and an overall winner, giving you a perfect shortlist for auditioning new equipment, when used in conjunction with our famous *Buyers Guide* directory at the back of the issue.

The Judging...

The process we undertake in judging which products make it into our *Awards* issue is exhaustive. All of the equipment is listened to and carefully considered and then we embark on an extensive consultation with a judging panel of exceptional experience: the *Hi-Fi Choice* reviewing team!

We've also checked the availability and pricing of each product, to ensure that you can still get hold of it in the coming months and that you know how much to pay.

The result is an *Awards* edition for those who really care about quality and want a reliable buying reference for 2010/2011. Many of our awards have been given to high-scoring products from our unique *Blind-listening Group Test*, so this really is a best of the best.

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Roksan Kandy K2

The Kandy K2 is the only product from the 2009 Awards to retain its title. It returned to see off all challengers in a recent Blind-listening Group Test and the same qualities that earned it the award last year still apply. It is a truly accomplished music-maker across a wide variety of styles and genres. With excellent timing and tonality the K2 is a great listen.

DETAILS

PRICE: £895
TYPE: CD player
TELEPHONE: 01235 511166
WEBSITE: roksan.co.uk



Marantz SA-KI LITE

DETAILS

PRICE: £899
TYPE: CD/SACD player
TELEPHONE: 02890 279830
WEBSITE: marantz.eu



Moon CD.5

DETAILS

PRICE: £999
TYPE: CD player
TELEPHONE: 0131 555 3922
WEBSITE: simaudio.com



a class above

With the same innovations as KEF's revolutionary Concept Blade technology showcase, the all-new Q Series from KEF performs like speakers from a higher price class in terms of realism, musicality and off-axis dispersion.

Q Series

All new Uni-Q array.

Sweet, spacious and true, wherever you sit

A large vented tweeter in the centre of the bass/midrange driver, with a 'tangerine' waveguide and unique Z-flex surround to combine unrivalled dispersion with generous travel for the aluminium MF/LF cone.

Advanced bass technologies.

Deeper, tighter and more accurate bass

Inside the fashionably rectilinear cabinets, the new bass driver combines a rigid superlight cone with a massive vented magnet assembly and an oversized voice coil for exceptional sensitivity and distortion-free power handling.

Total system design.

A holistic approach, with no compromises.

These advanced new drivers only need first order crossovers, maximising fluency and transparency, and KEF's legendary attention to detail extends from innovations for easier bi-wiring to environment-friendly finishes.

Resolution Audio Cantata

We loved the Opus 21 CD player by Resolution Audio and always felt that it was going to take something special to better it. The Cantata is that something. Combining the roles of standalone CD player with that of a media streamer and DAC, the Cantata handles all roles with style, possessing a sound quality that is the equal of more expensive players.

DETAILS

PRICE: £5,995
TYPE: CD/streamer
TELEPHONE: 01268 858222
WEBSITE: resolutionaudio.com



Denon DCD-2010AE

DETAILS

PRICE: £1,700
TYPE: CD/SACD
TELEPHONE: 02890 279830
WEBSITE: denon.co.uk



Rega Isis

DETAILS

PRICE: £5,998
TYPE: CD player
TELEPHONE: 01702 233071
WEBSITE: rega.co.uk



"If you want to make someone feel emotion, you have to make them let go. Listening to something is an act of surrender."

Brian Eno



Hear it

as they intended



Chord Indigo Plus Digital

Whilst most hi-fi and home cinema enthusiasts are happy to accept the influence that interconnects and speaker cable can have on the performance of a system, many people struggle to accept that a digital cable can be equally influential.

The common reaction is that since the cable is only carrying a digital signal, the design and quality of materials used in the cable will have far less influence. Listening tests however, show this is not necessarily the case. Repeated listening tests using high quality digital to analogue converters and home cinema receivers have shown that digital cables can and do have an effect on the sound quality of the system in which they are used. Digital cables are capable of affecting levels of detail, dynamics, sound staging and the rhythmic and tonal characteristics of a system.

The improvements that the Indigo Plus Digital can bring to a system should not be dismissed lightly.



www.chord.co.uk

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COMPANY

Get advice on all aspects of hi-fi and home cinema from the Cable Doctor and sign-up for our newsletter, keeping you in touch with the latest product development news, exclusive competitions and technical tips

Pro-Ject 6 Perspex

Winning the *Blind-listening Group Test (HFC 338)*, against competition that included a more recent version of last year's award-winner, the 6 Perspex truly deserves this year's top-spot. We loved its open and even-handed sound, the handsome design and its excellent build quality.

▶ **DETAILS**

PRICE: £1,280 (incl arm)
TYPE: Turntable
TELEPHONE: 01235 511166
WEBSITE: project-audio.com



Clearaudio Concept

▶ **DETAILS**

PRICE: £1,100 (incl arm/cartridge)
TYPE: Turntable
TELEPHONE: 01252 702705
WEBSITE: clearaudio.de



Pro-Ject RPM-1 Genie 3

▶ **DETAILS**

PRICE: £190 (incl arm/cartridge)
TYPE: Turntable
TELEPHONE: 01235 511166
WEBSITE: project-audio.com





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The New Integrated Amplifier ECI-5 MK II

Our aim when designing the ECI-5 MK II was to make the sound more modern, enhancing the details and dynamics.

Feedback from our listening team tell us that we have succeeded – “this amplifier sounds much larger than the size and the price tag”

Made in Norway

www.electrocompaniet.no

Dr Feickert Analogue Woodpecker

Vinyl has been with us for decades and yet the Woodpecker manages to pack some surprising innovations into its handsome design. A composite of metals, laminates and acetal plastic, the deck offers an insightful and revealing sound that makes it a worthy award-winner.

▶ DETAILS

PRICE: £2,995
(excluding arm and cartridge)
TYPE: Turntable
TELEPHONE:
01923 352479
WEBSITE:
angelsoundaudio.co.uk



Clearaudio Emotion SE

▶ DETAILS

PRICE: £1,995
(including arm and cartridge)
TYPE: Turntable
TELEPHONE:
01252 702705
WEBSITE:
clearaudio.de



Hanss Acoustics T-30

▶ DETAILS

PRICE: £3,600
(excluding arm and cartridge)
TYPE: Turntable
TELEPHONE:
07842 126218
WEBSITE:
hanssacoustics.com



ARCAM

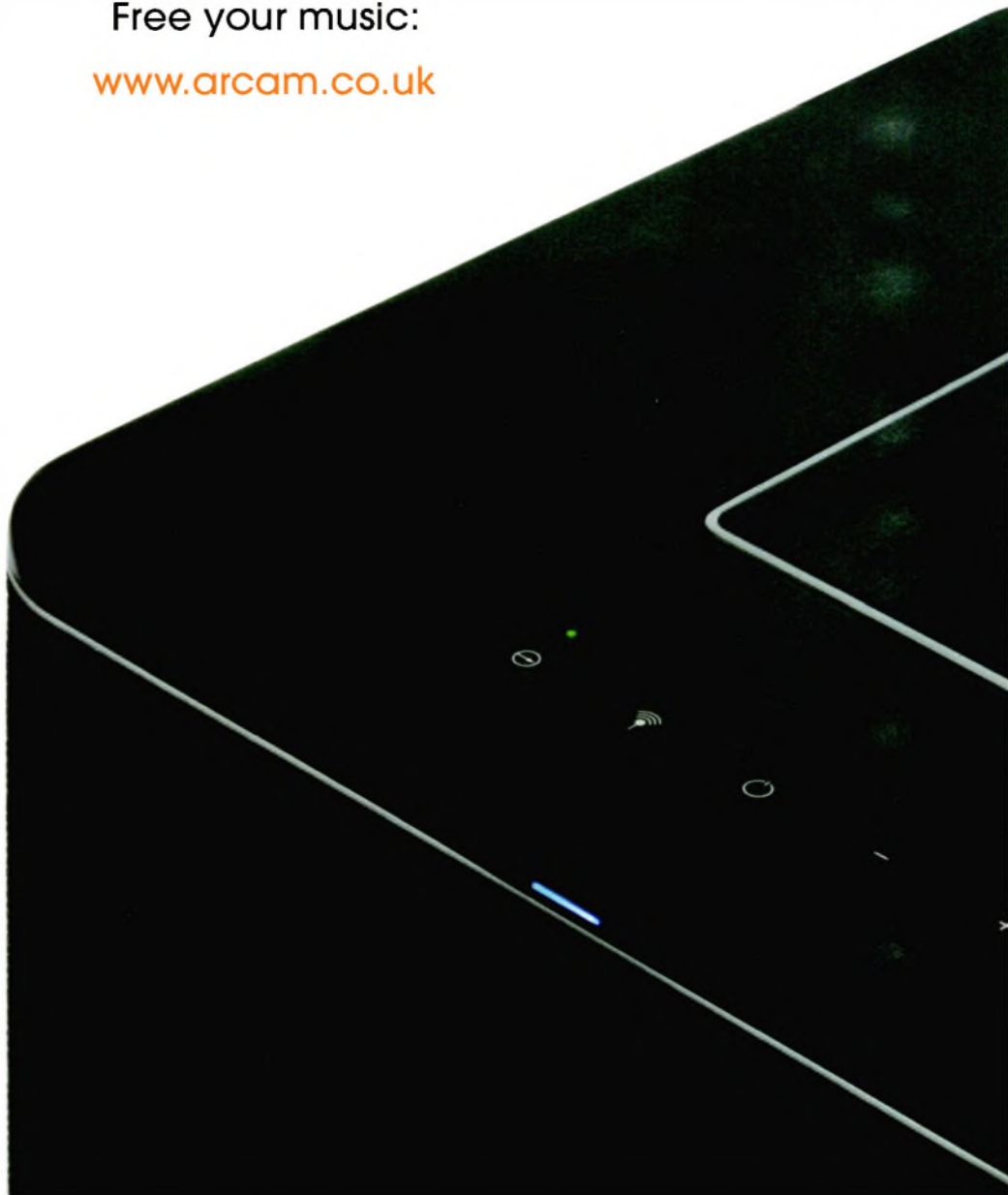
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a portable iPod speaker system.

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www.arcam.co.uk



Naim Audio DAC

Having shown no previous interest in external DACs, for Naim to win this category at the first attempt is a remarkable achievement. But then this DAC combines the traditional Naim attention to detail with clever technology. The end result being a fantastic performer and a flexible addition to any system.

DETAILS

PRICE: £1,950

TYPE: DAC

TELEPHONE: 01722 426600

WEBSITE: naim-audio.com



iBasso D4 Mamba



DETAILS

PRICE: £225

TYPE: DAC/
headphone
amplifier

TELEPHONE: 0800 756 9564

WEBSITE: ibasso.com

Nuforce Icon HDP



DETAILS

PRICE: £345

TYPE: DAC/
headphone
amp/preamp

TELEPHONE: 08450 525259

WEBSITE: nuforce.com

Definition

Stereo Sound
Grand Prix
Award 2009

Definition DC10T

EDITOR'S CHOICE
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine

Definition DC10T

Image Hi-Fi
Award 2010
Best Loudspeaker

Definition DC8

MEDIA
TOTAAL
AWARD
2009
BESTE VAN

Definition DC8T



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

TANNOY

Pure Sensia

More than just a simple radio, the Sensia won over the judges, thanks in part to its excellent Pure DAB reception. It can also stream music over a wireless network and even surf the internet. That it does all of these things with aplomb easily makes it this year's award-winner.

DETAILS

PRICE: £250
TYPE: DAB/FM/web radio/media player
TELEPHONE: 0845 148 9001
WEBSITE: pure.com



Tivoli Networks+

DETAILS

PRICE: £495
TYPE: DAB/FM/web radio
TELEPHONE: 01279 501111
WEBSITE: tivoliaudio.com



Vita Audio R1 MkII

DETAILS

PRICE: £160
TYPE: DAB+/FM radio
TELEPHONE: 01702 601410
WEBSITE: vitaaudio.com



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www.niaudioshow.com

info@niaudioshow.com

+44 (0) 845 64 36 299

Denon PMA-1510AE

The '1510AE won us over with a clean and immediate sonic performance, coupled with a power output that is up to the task of driving virtually any speaker it is likely to encounter. For the price, it also enjoys excellent fit and finish and an extensive feature set, including bypassable tone controls and a good-quality MM/MC phono stage. A worthy winner.

DETAILS

PRICE: £900
TYPE: Integrated
TELEPHONE: 02890 279830
WEBSITE: denon.co.uk



Marantz Pearl Lite PM-KI

DETAILS

PRICE: £899
TYPE: Integrated
TELEPHONE: 02890 279830
WEBSITE: marantz.com



Puresound A10

DETAILS

PRICE: £600
TYPE: Integrated (valve)
TELEPHONE: 01822 612449
WEBSITE: puresound.info



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Warehouse

t. 01483 537 577
m. 07810 546 103
e. john@theaudiowarehouse.co.uk
w. www.theaudiowarehouse.co.uk

Rotel RC1580/RB1582

This combination impressed us from the outset. The Rotels are handsome brutes with an impressive spec and massive power reserves. They went on to beat all comers in their group test, combining a powerful and convincing performance with an ability to reproduce the most delicate of pieces without losing a single detail. A very accomplished duo.

DETAILS

PRICE:
£2,200
TYPE: Pre/power
TELEPHONE:
01903 221500
WEBSITE:
roteL.com



Arcam A38

DETAILS

PRICE: £1,480
TYPE: Integrated
TELEPHONE:
01223 203200
WEBSITE:
arcam.co.uk



Luxman L550A-II

DETAILS

PRICE: £3,450
TYPE: Integrated
TELEPHONE:
01900 813064
WEBSITE:
luxman.co.jp





evolution of the species

Introducing the Unico Nuovo

With more than a dozen detail improvements - including a sweeter sounding triode valve, twice the number of output devices and a novel constant power supply - the **Unico Nuovo** is a giant step forward for the evolution of the species.

For the listener, the result is an even more natural sound with greater dynamic headroom, and all the musical enjoyment synonymous with the **Unison Research** name.

Available now in black or silver finishes, price **£1650**.



FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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We are exhibiting at the National Audio Show 2010, Whittlebury Hall, Northants on 25th and 26th September, and will be using these and other high end products throughout the two days.

Visit us in the Priory Suite on the first floor for your chance to hear music that stirs the soul.



dCS
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Castle Knight 2

The Knight 2 marks a welcome return by one of the premier British speaker brands. New owners IAG have successfully kept the values that made Castle speakers special and updated the models for the 21st Century. We love the detail and explicit vocals coupled with fast and detailed bass. This top-flight performance is presented in a gorgeous, real-wood veneer cabinet finished to an extremely high standard, resulting in a worthy award-winner.

► **DETAILS**

PRICE: £400
TYPE: Standmount
TELEPHONE:
 01480 447700
WEBSITE:
 castle.uk.com



Acoustic Energy Radiance 2

► **DETAILS**

PRICE: £1,000
TYPE:
 Floorstander
TELEPHONE:
 01285 654432
WEBSITE:
 acoustic-energy.co.uk



Focal Chorus 826W LE

► **DETAILS**

PRICE: £1,879
TYPE:
 Floorstander
TELEPHONE:
 08456 602680
WEBSITE:
 focal-fr.com



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PMC fact.8

The fact.8 is a speaker that does nearly everything right. It is capable of great performance, with superb bass extension, good tonality and sensitivity and some intelligent, well thought out tuning controls. This is then presented in one of the most handsome cabinets we have seen in a while. Virtues that take it to the top of the class.

DETAILS

PRICE: £4,600
TYPE: Floorstander
TELEPHONE:
 01582 405694
WEBSITE:
 pmc-speakers.com



Audiovector S3 Super

DETAILS

PRICE: £2,680
TYPE:
 Floorstander
TELEPHONE:
 01302 711528
WEBSITE:
 audiovector.com



Teufel Ultima 800

DETAILS

PRICE: £2,498
TYPE:
 Floorstander
TELEPHONE:
 00800 200 300 40
WEBSITE:
 teufelaudio.com



audio-T

While many of our competitors have chosen to focus on home cinema and TV, at Audio T we've never lost sight of our roots... set down in 2 channel over 44 years ago. We sell home cinema, of course, but we also have a range of 2 channel brands that is second to none, with streaming products from Naim, Arcam, Olive and Sonos.

All our stores have knowledgeable staff and a comfortable demonstration room. We can deliver and install systems for you and we are always happy to live up to our Price Promise.

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01276 685597

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029 20228565

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020 8367 3132

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01524 39657

Manchester
0161 839 8869

Portsmouth
023 9266 3604

Preston
01772 883958

Swansea
01792 474608

Swindon
01793 538222

Warrington
01925 632179

Worcester
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*Subject to status. Ask instore for details. Not all brands are available in every shop so please check our website before travelling.

www.audio-t.co.uk



Beyerdynamic

T1

The T1 impressed us from the outset. Even before it was plugged in, the beautiful build quality and attractive design did wonders for its desirability. This was backed up by a strong and engaging performance that showed remarkable detail-retrieval, resulting in a very transparent and natural-sounding headphone.

▣ DETAILS

PRICE: £880

TYPE: Semi-open back

TELEPHONE:

01444 258258

WEBSITE:

beyerdynamic.de



Grado

PS1000



▣ DETAILS

PRICE: £1,795

TYPE: Open back

TELEPHONE:

01279 501111

WEBSITE:

gradolabs.com

Bowers & Wilkins

P5



▣ DETAILS

PRICE: £250

TYPE: Closed back

TELEPHONE:

01903 221500

WEBSITE:

bowers-wilkins.com

Aura Note Premier

The Aura is a demonstration of what makes an award-winning one-box system. It combines excellent sonics with an attractive and well-thought out design and an extensive feature set that should allow it to fit into even demanding roles without issue. If you need top performance in one box, look no further than this.

DETAILS

PRICE: £1,500
TYPE: One-box system
TELEPHONE: 01403 782221
WEBSITE: auradesign.co.jp



Arcam Solo Mini

DETAILS

PRICE: £750
TYPE: One-box system
TELEPHONE: 01223 203200
WEBSITE: arcam.co.uk



Arcam Solo Neo

DETAILS

PRICE: £1,350
TYPE: Streaming one-box system
TELEPHONE: 01223 203200
WEBSITE: arcam.co.uk



QED Signature Audio S

The QED achieves the single most important aim of any hi-fi cable, in that it imparts no character of its own to the performance. The sophisticated 'quasi-balanced' design and excellent quality materials throughout, combine to give the QED a near total transparency that is the mark of an award-winner.

▣ **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£190 (1m pair)
TYPE: Interconnect
TELEPHONE:
01279 501111
WEBSITE:
qed.co.uk



Ixos XHA716

▣ **DETAILS**

PRICE: £100
(1m pair)
TYPE:
Interconnect
TELEPHONE:
01844 219000
WEBSITE:
ixos.co.uk



Kimber Tonik

▣ **DETAILS**

PRICE: £75
(1m pair)
TYPE:
Interconnect
TELEPHONE:
0845 345 1550
WEBSITE:
kimber.com

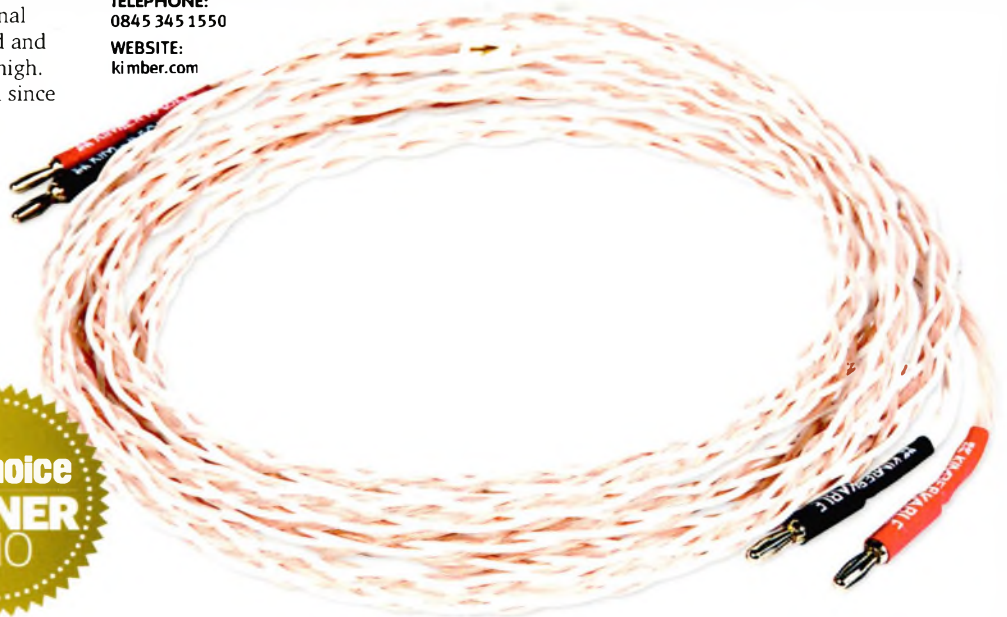


Kimber 4VS

The Kimber really stood out with a wonderfully natural and relaxed performance. It did a fine job of making itself unobtrusive and letting the music take centre stage. The traditional woven construction is retained and the fit and finish is extremely high. The price has even gone down since we reviewed it!

▶ DETAILS

PRICE: £133 (2.5m terminated pair)
TYPE: Vari-strand
TELEPHONE: 0845 345 1550
WEBSITE: kimber.com



The Chord Co. Rumour 2

▶ DETAILS

PRICE: £142 (3m terminated pair)
TYPE: Bi-wire
TELEPHONE: 01980 625700
WEBSITE: chord.co.uk



Merlin C12 Mk 2

▶ DETAILS

PRICE: £190 (3m terminated pair)
TYPE: Single-wire
TELEPHONE: 0870 321 0215
WEBSITE: merlincables.com

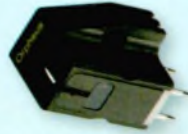


It's a breeze to buy high-end gear at www.coolgales.com.



Clearaudio Innovation Wood
turntable, £6250

With mag bearing, speed control. "A superb way of playing vinyl that never draws attention to itself." (*Hi-Fi World*) **ON DEM**



Transfiguration Orpheus L
cartridge, £3400

New 1 Ohm internal impedance version. "Totally natural rendition of music." (*Hi-Fi News*) **ON DEM**



Graham Phantom II
tonearm, £3550

Interchangeable armtubes. "A masterpiece of craftsmanship and design savvy." (*The Absolute Sound*) **ON DEM**



Scheu Laufwerk 2 turntable, £4350

Massive 80 mm platter, Papst motor. "Reference quality...reference quality looks." (TNTAudio.com) **ON DEM**



Zyx R-100 Fuji
cartridge, £1450

High-purity crystal copper coils. Supremely lucid, precise, transparent.



SME V tonearm, £2180

The all-time classic. "Perhaps the last great flowering of the tonearm designer's art." (*Hi-Fi News*) **ON DEM**



Michell Gyro SE turntable, £1135

The classic John Michell design. "Should appeal to anyone looking for a high-end deck." (*Hi-Fi News*)



Lyra Delos cartridge, £895

Replaces Argo i. A new standard for mid-range low-output moving coils. **ON DEM**



Clearaudio Unify tonearm, £1360

Phenomenal unipivot, available in carbon-fibre and wood versions, 9, 10, 12, and 14 inch lengths.



Pro-Ject Xpression III turntable, £435

Gloss black base, acrylic platter. "Better imaging, better ambience and dynamics." (*Hi-Fi News*)



Sumiko Blue Point Special EVO III
cartridge, £239

A favourite high-output moving coil. "A big helping of moving-coil goodness." (*The Absolute Sound*)



Thomas Schick tonearm, £995

"The question is no longer *Will this stand alongside my other, more expensive tonearms?* but, rather, *Do I really need more than this?*" (*Stereophile*) **ON DEM**

Plus other turntables from

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Michell
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Goldring
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Keith Monks Omni Mk VII record cleaning machine, £3295

Cleans all size records. "If you're looking for the best, well, here it is." (*Stereophile*)



Aesthetix Rhea phono stage, £3900

Ten valve design. "A sense of palpability and immediacy that recalls the magic of live music." (*The Absolute Sound*) **ON DEM**



Eclipse TD-712z Mk II speakers, £5295

Now available in piano black. "More life-like and cohesive than just about anything you can buy." (*What Hi-Fi?*) **ON DEM**



Loricraft PRC3 record cleaning machine, £1395

The standard for serious vinylphiles. "Even brand new, sealed records benefit." (*PositiveFeedback.com*)



Leema Acoustics Agena phono stage, £2995

Reference unit with two inputs, fully adjustable. Integral DAC with USB port. **ON DEM**



Esoteric X-05 SACD/CD player, £4495

Awesome one-box unit. "There aren't enough superlatives to describe this machine." (*The Absolute Sound*) **ON DEM**



VPI 16.5 record cleaning machine, £575

Our most popular budget unit. "An essential component." (*Hi-Fi+*)



Whest PS.30RDT phono stage, £2799

Dual transformer, dual mono. "A brilliant all round design." (*Hi-Fi World*) **ON DEM**



Stax SR-007 II SE Omega System headphones and amp, £3195

Hand-selected valves. "If I have to go through life with only one of the Stax amps, give me the tubed SRM-007t." (*Stereophile*) **ON DEM**



Record Research Lab record cleaning fluids, £19.95

The gold standard for use with record cleaning machines. Always in stock.



Pro-Ject Tube Box II phono stage, £310

Great valve unit. Budget version of acclaimed Pro-Ject Tube Box SE.



Nordost Red Dawn cabling, from £275

Superb price/performance. "Cleanest, quickest and most natural wires I've yet to hear." (*SoundStage.com*)

Plus other analogue care products from

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The Victoria School House ≈ Bath

Quadraspire Sunoko-Vent T

A clever solution to the twin problems of resonance and ventilation, the slotted-shelves of the Sunoko-Vent T provide additional airflow to components that need them. And while reducing resonance from external sources, the main frame design allows equipment placed on it to shine. A good enough reason to be an award-winner.

▣ **DETAILS**

PRICE: £800
(includes four shelves)
TYPE: Equipment rack
TELEPHONE:
01179 863228
WEBSITE:
quadraspire.co.uk



Blox Stax 300

▣ **DETAILS**

PRICE: £180
(includes three shelves)
TYPE: Equipment rack
TELEPHONE:
01799 525350
WEBSITE:
blokuk.com



Target CL470

▣ **DETAILS**

PRICE: £300
TYPE: Equipment rack
TELEPHONE:
020 8900 6801
WEBSITE:
targethifi.co.uk



Moth

Record Cleaning Machine MkII

The Moth offers a cleaning performance comparable with considerably more expensive machines and is simplicity itself to use. We love the logical and well thought out design that makes cleaning quick and painless (if not silent!) and the results are uniformly excellent.

▶ DETAILS

PRICE: £450

TYPE: Wet record cleaner

TELEPHONE:

01234 741152

WEBSITE:

britishaudio.co.uk



Isonoe

Isolation Feet



▶ DETAILS

PRICE: £98
(pack of four)

TYPE: Isolation feet

TELEPHONE:
020 8300 7563

WEBSITE:
isonoe.com

Onkyo

ND-S1 iPod dock



▶ DETAILS

PRICE: £150

TYPE: iPod dock

TELEPHONE:
01628 473350

WEBSITE:
onkyo.co.uk

Pure Sensia

The Sensia takes what we expect a radio to do and turns it on its head. The combination of DAB with internet radio and media streaming – to say nothing of the ability to access certain websites is deeply impressive. It was the first product to bring touch-screen interactivity to this most cherished medium.

DETAILS

PRICE: £250
TYPE: DAB/FM/web radio/media player
TELEPHONE: 0845 148 9001
WEBSITE: pure.com



Logitech Squeezebox Touch

DETAILS

PRICE: £260
TYPE: Streamer
TELEPHONE: 08000 857499
WEBSITE: logitech.com



Resolution Audio Cantata

DETAILS

PRICE: £5,995
TYPE: Streaming CD player
TELEPHONE: 01 268 858222
WEBSITE: resolutionaudio.com



Sevensoaks Sound & Vision and Audio T are in the process of merging their respective businesses and will become one of the largest independent hi-fi and home cinema chains in the UK with over 50 stores nationwide

SEVENoaks
SOUND & VISION

audio T

this month's OFFERS

PRICES CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS. PLEASE SEE WEBSITE, WHICH IS FREQUENTLY UPDATED, FOR THE VERY BEST DEALS AND OUR CURRENT PRICING

★★★★★
SYSTEM OFFER



SAVE £400

CYRUS
CD6SE & 6XP
MONITOR
AUDIO
RX6 SPEAKERS
£2199

PACKAGE OFFER

★★★★★
SYSTEM OFFER

MARANTZ
CD6003 & PM6003
WHARFEDALE
DIAMOND 10.1 SPEAKERS

PACKAGE OFFER **£599**



OR WITH
MONITOR
AUDIO
BRONZE BX2 SPEAKERS

PACKAGE OFFER **£699**

SAVE £1586

★★★★★
SYSTEM OFFER

LEEMA
ANTILA II
TUCANA II
SPENDOR
A6 SPEAKERS
£6999

PACKAGE OFFER



★★★★★
SYSTEM OFFER



FM ONLY - NO DAB TUNER

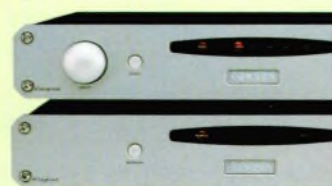
LESS THAN
HALF PRICE!

ARCAM
SOLO FM
MUSIC SYSTEM
£649

★★★★★
PRE/POWER OFFER

LESS THAN
HALF PRICE!

ROKSAN
CASPIAN
M SERIES-1
PRE/POWER
£1399



NEW

PEACHTREE AUDIO

Decco 2 £849
iDecco £999
Nova £1099

Designed as the centre of your digital music system – Peachtree amplifiers are like 4 products in 1. A high quality 24/96 DAC, Valve Pre-Amp, Powerful Amplifier and Class A headphone amplifier, all in one box. The Nova, which is exclusive to Sevensoaks and Audio T, even features an expansion slot which makes it the perfect partner for Sonos.



SEVENOAKS STORES

ABERDEEN 01224 252797	CHELSEA 020 7352 9466	GUILDFORD 01483 536666	LOUGHTON 020 8532 0770	PLYMOUTH 01752 226011	SOUTHAMPTON 023 8033 7770	YEOVIL 01935 700078
BRIGHTON HOVE 01273 733338	CHELTENHAM 01242 241171	HOLBORN 020 7837 7540	MAIDSTONE 01622 686366	POOLE 01202 671677	TUNBRIDGE WELLS 01892 531543	IRELAND DUBLIN 01 275 1100
BRISTOL 0117 974 3727	EPSOM 01372 720720	KINGSTON 020 8547 0717	NORWICH 01603 767605	READING 0118 959 7768	WATFORD 01923 213533	<small>Pricing in Ireland may vary from the UK</small>
BROMLEY 020 8290 1988	EXETER 01392 218895	LEEDS WETHERBY 01937 586886	NOTTINGHAM 0115 911 2121	SEVENOAKS 01732 459555	NEW WEYBRIDGE 01932 840859	OPENING SOON SUBJECT TO LEGAL COMPLETION
CAMBRIDGE 01223 304770	GLASGOW 0141 332 9655	LINCOLN 01522 527397	OXFORD 01865 241773	SHEFFIELD 0114 255 5861	WITHAM ESSEX 01376 501733	• BEDFORD

AUDIO T STORES

BASINGSTOKE 01256 324311	BOLTON 01204 395789	CAMBERLEY 01276 685597	ENFIELD 020 8367 3132	MANCHESTER 0161 839 8869	PRESTON 01772 883958	SWINDON 01793 538222	WORCESTER 01905 619059
BLACKPOOL 01253 300599	BRENTWOOD 01277 264730	CARDIFF 029 2022 8565	LANCASTER 01524 39657	PORTSMOUTH 023 9266 3604	SWANSEA 01792 474608	WARRINGTON 01925 632179	

Please Note: Audio T stores that are not listed above carry an alternative product range, predominantly 2-channel, and have their own dedicated website and advertising. Until the merger is complete, which will take a few months, Sevensoaks Sound & Vision and Audio T will remain separate legal entities. Some brands/products are not available at all stores. Special/added value offers are not in conjunction with any other offer (NICWAOO). Advert valid until 11/11/2010, E&OE

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HI-FI SEPARATES



CYRUS

Cyrus' award-winning CD Xt SE and DAC X have been upgraded with a + suffix. In a recent review, this combination when used with 2 x PSX-R power supplies, received the prestigious Editor's Choice award by Hi-Fi Choice magazine.

The XP amplifiers are based on the circuitry of the top of the range DAC XP+. The entry-level 6XP includes 6 line level inputs along with a zone 2 feature while the 8XP d combines the XP series pre-amplifier with a newly revised power amp, and contains an onboard DAC for digital sources.



- CDX t SE+ CD8 SE
- CD6 SE DAC X+
- DAC XP+ 6XP / 8XP



LEEMA ACOUSTICS

STREAM III

PULSE III

The Stream III CD player features an all-new slot loading transport controlled by Leema's own custom firmware providing secure and reliable disc handling and the best retrieval of digital information this is coupled with the new Leema Quad DAC is a refinement of Leema's own highly successful MD2 Multi-DAC giving a shorter signal path and even better performance. The Stream III features a USB digital output enabling bit-perfect digital archiving.

Many ideas that were pioneered in the award-winning, state-of-the-art, Tucana II, are incorporated in the Pulse III to produce an amplifier with incredible detail and resolution, vanishingly low noise and distortion, and that always communicates with an infectious musicality.

- ANTILA II TUCANA II

ARCAM FMJ

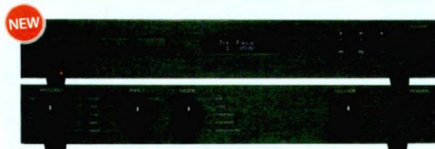
Combining sleek design, flexible connectivity and sound quality far beyond that of budget separates.



- CD17 CD37 A18 A28 A38

AUDIOLAB

Audiolab's new 8200CD is a fully-featured integrated DAC and CD transport of advanced specification, and impeccable performance. Featuring a number of digital inputs, it is the most flexible integrated DAC / CD on the market.



- 8200CD 8200A 8200CDQ 8200P

ROKSAN KANDY K2

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



- K2 CD K2 AMP CASPIAN M2

MARANTZ



- CD5004 PM5004 SA-KI PEARL PM-KI PEARL

ROTEL 06 SE SERIES

The 06 SE series includes four new components and updated versions of the classic CD player and 3 stereo amplifiers.



- RCD-06SE RA-04SE RA-05SE RA-06SE

TURNTABLES



- GENIE 3 DEBUT III XPRESSION III

HI-FI SPEAKERS

MONITOR AUDIO PLATINUM • SILVER RX • NEW BRONZE BX

Platinum - This series has been expertly crafted to draw a rich natural radiance from the most demanding music, reproducing the power and scale of dramatic passages with breathtaking fidelity.

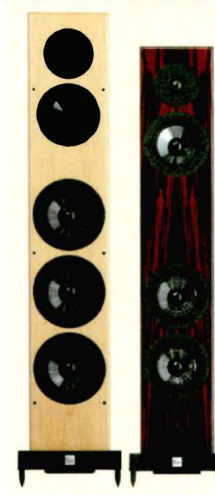
Silver RX - Available in a choice of real wood veneers and high-gloss piano finishes, Silver RX uses techniques and materials from the Platinum and Gold ranges for outstanding performance.



Bronze BX This exciting new range consists of seven models that build on the strengths of the award-winning BR Series.



VIENNA ACOUSTICS CONCERT GRAND KEF NEW Q SERIES



Concert Grand As with all models in the Grand™ range, the composer name is selected based on the scale, complexity and power of performance for which they are best known. Featured here are the Beethoven 'Concert' and 'Baby' Grand.

Q Series Experiencing the new Q Series is like hearing a system costing many time more.

- All new Uni-Q array
- Advanced bass technologies
- Total system design

Pictured Q100 & Q500



B&W CM SERIES • 600 SPENDOR A-LINE

CM Series from Bowers & Wilkins has long been a favourite among its discerning customers. Offering a combination of high performance and exquisite styling at a very affordable price.



600 This, the fourth generation of the 600 Series, features improved drive units, minimalist crossovers and a whole new design.

A-Line - A5 and A6 speakers are compact, high performance, floor standing speakers. They utilize drive units and other design innovations developed for Spendor's flagship ST & SA1 speakers.



PLEASE NOTE: SOME BRANDS/PRODUCTS ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. SPECIAL/ADDED VALUE OFFERS ARE NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER (NICWAOO)

HI-FI SYSTEMS AND MUSIC SERVERS

PEACHTREE AUDIO NOVA

Combining a world class 80wpc integrated amplifier and DAC - Nova is an ideal choice if you're looking to improve computer-based or streaming audio to a "high-end" performance level.



NEW EXCLUSIVE!

ARCAM rCUBE

The new Arcam rCube is a high fidelity audio system that combines flexibility, portability and compatibility with the very latest audio sources in a single, beautiful package.



NEW

rDAC

Offering supreme audio and build quality, the new rDAC is an ideal upgrade for conventional sources and network audio products alike.



NEW

ARCAM SOLO NEO

Arcam's new Solo Neo combines superb music performance and network audio capabilities allowing it to play stored music in a multitude of formats, along with its internal CD player and radio tuner.



Hi-Fi Choice RECOMMENDED

SONOS ZP120 / ZP90 / CB700

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



SS BR100

OLIVE 4HD NEW 3HD

Access all your digitized music from one centralized library. Everything from 24-bit HD files to 16-bit converted CDs will be at your fingertips. Convenient storage, easy touch-screen access and the ability to play it all in any room of your home.

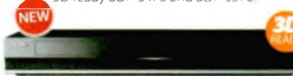


Hi-Fi Choice RECOMMENDED

BLU-RAY PLAYERS

SONY

Sony's new range includes the 2D BDP-S370 and 3D ready BDP-S470 and BDP-S570.



BDP-S370 BDP-S570

PANASONIC

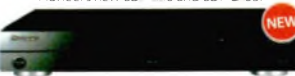
Panasonic complements its range with the new DMP-BDT-100 3D player.



DMP-BD85 DMP-BDT100 DMP-BDT300

PIONEER

Get the most out of your movie experience with Pioneer's new BDP-330 and BDP-LX53.



BDP-330 BDP-LX53

HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS AND RECEIVERS

DENON

Denon's range of A/V receivers bring out the full performance of HD audio and HD video.



AVR-1911 AVR-3311
AVR-2311 AVR-4311

ONKYO

Featuring the latest HDMI 1.4 inputs for simple hook-up of all your high-def sources. These receivers also bring compatibility with the new 3D video format.



TX-SR608 TX-NR808
TX-NR1008

YAMAHA

Experience the full potential of HD audio and video with Yamaha's A/V amplifiers and receivers. Includes the new 3D compatible RX-V567.



RX-V667 RX-V1067
RX-V767 RX-V3067

HOME CINEMA SPEAKER PACKAGES

B&W

MINI THEATRE

These award-winning packages combine style with excellent sound.



MT-25 MT-30

Q ACOUSTICS

2000 CINEMA PACK

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



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KEF

T SERIES

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T105 T205 T305

this month's

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TEAC CRH258i SYSTEM £219 SAVE £71
INCLUDES DS20 IPOD DOCK WORTH £40

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REL R205 SUBWOOFER PIANO BLACK £495
R505 £749 SAVE £274 PIANO BLACK

ARCAM SOLO MINI SYSTEM £649 SAVE £116

SONOS BU250 BUNDLE £SSAV.com SAVE £££

MONITOR AUDIO BRONZE BR1 SPEAKERS £129 SAVE £50

ARCAM BDP100 BLU-RAY PLAYER AVR500 A/V RECEIVER £2999 SAVE £556

DENON & MONITOR AUDIO D-M38 SYSTEM BR1 SPEAKERS £299 SAVE £110

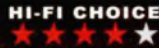
MARANTZ M-CR502 SYSTEM (EX-SPEAKERS) £329 SAVE £70

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so much for so little

Home Demo available on most products.
(*subject to conditions)



Class A-100



CD-100



100.49



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Class A-100 D3



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- Nevada Cables Nordost
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- Transfiguration SME Wadia

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EMAIL ▶ andrew@unit4.co.uk

Luxman L550A-II

The Luxman is classic Japanese high end. It combines a huge feature set with superb build and striking aesthetics. All of which would count for nothing if the audio performance was lacking, but the Luxman lives up to expectations. Clean, even-handed and fitted with a truly great phono stage, this is a superb, great value all-rounder that should appeal to many listeners.

▶ **DETAILS**

PRICE: £3,450
TYPE: Integrated amplifier
TELEPHONE: 01900 813064
WEBSITE: luxman.co.jp
 ▶ **AMP**



Naim Audio DAC

Naim has been producing high-end gear for longer than most and the pedigree shows in the Naim DAC. This is a brilliantly executed piece of equipment that can benefit a variety of digital sources. It rewards with a taught and assured performance with excellent low-end extension.

▶ **DETAILS**

PRICE: £1,950
TYPE: DAC
TELEPHONE: 01722 426600
WEBSITE: naim-audio.com
 ▶ **DAC**



Resolution Audio Cantata

The Cantata is a wonderful high-end product. It combines a bold and innovative design with top-quality materials and is finished to the highest standards. It then rewards with a superb audio performance and a flexibility that, even at this elevated price point, makes it strong value for money.

▶ **DETAILS**

PRICE: £5,995
TYPE: CD/streamer
TELEPHONE: 01268 858222
WEBSITE: resolutionaudio.com
 ▶ **CD PLAYER**



PMC fact.8

The PMC is a worthy category winner and an excellent loudspeaker. What earns it a place in this year's awards is the fact that its excellent performance is wrapped in a handsome, beautifully built and well-proportioned exterior. Truly a product for all seasons.

▶ **DETAILS**
PRICE: £4,600
TYPE: Floorstander
TELEPHONE:
01582 405694
WEBSITE:
pmc-speakers.com



Rotel RC1580/RB1582

The Rotel combination is a perfect example of what is required to be nominated as a product of the year. They naturally offer superb sonic performance – winning their group test at a canter. They also have an excellent specification, superb build and elegant aesthetics coupled with an accessible price. In short, they are brilliantly executed products and excellent value.

▶ **DETAILS**
PRICE: £2,200
TYPE: Pre/power
TELEPHONE:
01903 221500
WEBSITE: rotel.com



Pro-Ject 6 Perspex

Choosing an overall winner was no easier this year than any other, but after some lively discussions, the judges settled on the 6 Perspex. Like many of our award-winners, it has a fantastic sound quality that beat all comers in its group test. Our judging panel felt that its combination of sonic performance, build quality and value for money was exceptional, making this product 2010's smartest buy for the discerning audiophile. Well done Pro-Ject.

DETAILS

PRICE: £1,280
TYPE: Turntable
 (inc arm)
TELEPHONE:
 01235 511166
WEBSITE:
 project-audio.com



One thing we all learned this year is that it's getting harder to judge our award-winners. The days of stark contrast between winner and loser are gone, and fortunately, so are the chances of buying a lemon. Any one of our products featured in our awards would make an excellent purchase, and it would be a mistake to overlook a 'finalist' in pursuit

of a 'winner'. Many of our winners, however, have also excelled in their respective *Blind-listening Group Tests*, a methodology we hold dear here at *Hi-Fi Choice*. And increasingly, future award-winners are likely to be chosen from our comparative tests, so keep an eye on our six-way tests each month.

We will always advise you to try products with your own ears before

committing to buy, but we also recognise from your letters and emails that this is getting harder to achieve as dealers contract and options become more limited. Therefore, finding a good, trustworthy dealer has become more important than ever before.

In fact, we might even give dealer awards next year, so why not tell us about your favourites?

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Cables

- Acoustic ART
- Acoustic Systems
- Analysis Plus
- Argento Audio
- Artisan Silver Cables
- Audience
- Chord Company
- Ecosse
- Furutech
- Nordost Corporation
- MIT Industries
- Quantum QRT
- Revelation Audio Labs
- StereoLab
- Synergistic Research
- Townshend Audio
- van den Hul
- Vovox
- WyreWizard

Power Conditioning

- Audience adeptResponse
- Isotek
- Kemp Elektronik
- Quantum QRT
- QBase

- CableSpike
- Cable Tower
- Telos

Enhancement CDs

Room Treatment

- Acoustic Art
- Room Tuning Resonators

Hi-Fi

- Ayra Speakers
- Bel Canto
- STAX headphones
- Townshend Audio

- XLR cables
- Sub woofer cables
- Chord ipod cables
- iPod cables
- DIN cables
- Mains & Power cables
- Jumpers
- Firewire

- Cables for dCS systems
- Chord cables for Naim

- HDMI
- Digital cables
- Optical cables
- S video
- Component cables



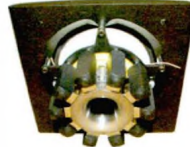
On demonstration

Raidho Acoustics



C2

The Raidho Loudspeakers employ the very finest components, including Ceramic drivers which are hand built in house. The Raidho ribbon tweeter is unique and was the very starting point of the company. The new Raidho speakers utilize the very finest filters and crossover components in a topology unique to Raidho.



C1

How many evolutionary steps does it take to make a revolution? The Raidho magnet system consists of 2 rows on neodymium magnets places in a push pull configuration. Loudspeaker technology has moved very little in the past 50 years, with small improvement in real terms, taking a long time to realize. But now a systematic reappraisal of fundamental principals has changed the rules. Designer Michael Boerresen has created a new standard when it comes to delivering the life and drama captured in a recording.

Evolutionary ? Yes
 Revolutionary ? Absolutely

The C2 is an agile conjuror of a speaker, able to keep all the balls in the air at the same time. It is often an education to live with and I can do nothing but thoroughly recommend it.. Chris Thomas Hi-fi Plus issue 73



Product of the year 2008

Please visit the High End Cable website for call for more information. C1.0 was Hi-fi plus Product of the year 2008. **We offer fabulous trade in deals, up to 40% when we take in your old speakers in part exchange. So your old speakers could be worth more than you think. Call Dave today on 01775**

audience



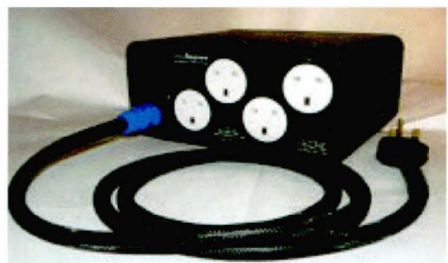
Overall, very impressive. Robert Townsend -- Stereophile Jan 08

Audience have been producing High End Cables for sometime now culminating in the new Au24e. Top systems need the best and with Audience there are none to surpass them at their price points. 1m pair Au24e RCA interconnects cost just £729.00 with the matching 3m pair of speaker cables just £1,559.00. Very affordable excellence.



If your budget can not stretch to the Au24e then the Maestro might fit the bill at £259.00 for the interconnects and £670.00 for a 3m pair of speaker cables.

Please visit the website for the full range of Audience Hi-fi products including their excellent power conditioners and power cords.



Hi-Fi Choice

Buyer's Guide



Welcome to the *Hi-Fi Choice Buyer's Guide* – the ultimate directory 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, with up-to-date pricing and trustworthy verdicts.

Reviews you can trust

Hi-Fi Choice test results are the most reliable in the business. We employ the UK's most respected hi-fi journalists 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, amplifiers, tuners and loudspeakers.

Reviews online

We've also included *TechRadar* listings where our reviews appear online.

To access selected *Hi-Fi Choice* reviews, simply type: techradar.com/ into your browser, followed by the six-digit number printed in the first column of our *Buyer's Guide*.

How to use this guide

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

BADGES EXPLAINED

OUR AWARDS



EDITOR'S CHOICE: Awarded to those products that are judged to deliver reference-standard performance



RECOMMENDED: The products we feel meet a certain high standard of performance



GROUP TEST WINNER: Comparative tests can only have one true winner, and this badge says it all

NEW ENTRIES...

Every month, our buying bible is updated to include our latest reviews. These new entries are highlighted in yellow and reflect the very best reviews from the previous issue.

SOURCE COMPONENTS

112 _ CD players

Whether CD or SACD, we list the very best players for the job



113 _ Turntables

Everything is listed here, from a £190 Pro-ject to a £115k Continuum



113 _ Phono cartridges

The best in both magnetic and moving coil cartridges

115 _ Radio tuners

Surf the airwaves with any one of these carefully selected tuners

115 _ Headphones

Badge-winning headphones for your personal listening pleasure



AMPLIFIERS

117 _ Stereo amplifiers

Our pick of the world's best one-box integrated amplifiers



117 _ Pre/power amps

For those occasions when two boxes seem better than one



CABLES

119 _ Interconnects

Our favourite cables for transferring delicate signals are all here

119 _ Speaker cables

Priced per metre, these are our top recommendations for home use



LOUDSPEAKERS

120 _ Stereo speakers

An invaluable guide to the best loudspeakers for your electronics

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BADGES KEY: RECOMMENDED = ● EDITOR'S CHOICE = ● GROUP TEST WINNER = ● BEST BUY = ●

CD players



Any one of these fine players will make sweet music for years to come

www.trichordresearch.com
SACD compatible
ELEC digital output
OPT dig output
CD-RW compatible
BAL analogue out
CD text
Headphone socket
Variable output
Issue number

Up to £1,000

Badge	Product	Price	Comments								
●	Arcam CD17	700	Civilised sound, with a positively deluxe treble. Bass is clear, if not the weightiest ever								315
●	Audio Analogue Crescendo	599	Simple player that's clear and communicative with the appropriate partnering equipment								329
●	Cyrus CD6 SE	900	A combination of detail and sheer musical energy with a hint of high end to the performance								318
●	Denon DCD-1510AE	900	If the SACD format is what you're into, then this player is capable of some impressive sounds								335
●	Harman/Kardon HD990	550	Highly detailed with excellent extension at both extremes and impressive resolution	/594818							323
●	Marantz SA7003	600	Highly civilised sound may not be to all tastes, but there's plenty of detail to be heard								323
●	Marantz Pearl Lite SA-KI	899	A key CD/SACD player at an attractive price, with support for digital								338
●	Micromega CD-10	799	The cheapest in the range, the CD-10 has been fine-tuned to please the audiophile								328
●	Moon CD.5	999	Admirably energetic music-maker from this very well-built player								335
●	NAD C545BEE	350	Apart from slight lack of bass control, sound is very fine indeed – treble is beautifully detailed								322
●	Naim CD5i	895	Its competent musical performance exceeds the expectations of an entry-level player								307
	Pro-ject CD Box	300	This player belies both its size and its price with sounds worthy of a decent mid-range system								338
●	Roksan Kandy K2	899	State-of-the-art technology and precision engineering produces a fine CD performance								335
●	Rotel RCD-1520	695	Lacks optical digital output, but feature-count is fine and sound quality is expressive and open	/608305							323

Above £1,000

Badge	Product	Price	Comments								
●	Arcam CD37	1,300	Excellent detail and imaging, neutral tonality and above-average bass resolution	/395096							318
●	Audio Research CD5	5,055	Audibly better than most CD players on the market – assertive and very dynamic	/455309							312
●	Consonance Droplet CDP3.1	1,995	A CD player which gets to the nub of what music is about. Engages the listener every time								322
●	Copland CDA 825	3,985	This a highly revealing player that delivers music in a realistically engaging form								332
●	Creek Destiny	1,400	This player presents the music and nothing but the music and is thoroughly recommended								328
●	Cyrus Audio CD 8 SE	1,200	A highly civilised player which can, nevertheless, deal convincingly with raw music	/399370							323
●	Denon DCD-2010AE	1,700	Well equipped, finely detailed and with good support for compressed audio and iPod								328
●	EMM Labs XDS1	18,995	Very high-performance two channel only player with the option of a standalone D/A converter								327
●	Leema Antila II	2,735	Great build and multiple DACs give this a fast, revealing and totally engaging sound	/612396							323
●	Marantz UD 8004	2,450	Sophisticated and highly capable universal player that just about does it all								336
●	Micromega CD-20	1,249	No SACD, unfortunately, but without doubt one of the better mainstream players								332
●	Mimetism 20.1	5,107	An impressive player that produces a very convincing and musical sound								330
●	Moon CD3.3	2,200	Excellent detail and a fine choice for those who like their music straight from source	/594609							328
●	Moon 750D	7,950	Very few CD players can extract as much information off the disc as the 750D								331
●	Naim CD5 XS	1,790	Its composure and openness results in a musical performance that is extremely seductive								334
●	Rega Isis	5,998	A magnificently musical CD player at a realistic price. USB input is a useful addition								329
●	Resolution Audio Cantata	5,995	CD player/streamer that's revealing enough to set it far apart from the competition								336
●	Roksan Caspian M2	1,600	This impressively engineered CD player is punchy and dynamic, with excellent timing								338
●	Theta Compli Blu	2,998	A very accomplished universal player with support for Blu-ray and HDMI								337
●	Unison Research CDE	2,495	Valve CD player with interchangeable DACs doubles as a standalone DAC that oozes musicality	/483759							318

SPECS KEY **SACD COMPATIBLE** Plays high-resolution SACD discs in 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.



After 5 years in production, the Dino is still one of the most popular phono stages around. Highly versatile with accessible switches on the baseplate to facilitate a wide range cartridges.

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BEST BUY

HI-FI CHOICE magazine



Turntables

The best record players money can buy



Badge	Product	Price	Comments	www.techradar.com	Switchable speed change Suspension subchassis Speeds	Supplied with arm	Supplied with cart	Issue number
●	Clearaudio Concept	1,100	One of the easiest ways of getting into analogue, with excellent results for the price		33/45	●	●	338
●	Continuum Caliburn	125,000	Luxury turntable with state-of-the-art design includes Cobra tonearm and Castellon stand	/587169	33/45/78	●	●	320
●	Dr Feickert Woodpecker	2,995	Offers superb bass, excellent build quality and range of arm choices		33/45	●	●	335
●	The Funk Firm Funk V2	1,390	Not only as beguiling as those that preceded it, this turntable is also more substantial to boot		33/45	●	●	324
●	The Funk Firm Saffire	2,450	Individual design and a sound that's refined and neutral with strong timing and dynamics		33/45	●	opt opt	309
●	Hanss Acoustic T-30	3,600	The only multi-armbase deck in its price range, it boasts image stability and precise bass		33/45	●	opt opt	331
●	Lumley Heliosphere	2,495	A distinctive-looking turntable with a unique sound and a performance that reflects your vinyl	/560765	33/45	●	opt opt	319
●	Michell Tecnodec	608	Needs careful partnering but can deliver a very sophisticated result for the money		33/45	●	opt	309
●	Michell Gyro SE	1,140	A marriage of shot-putter-strength, build quality and robust audio		33/45	●	●	338
●	Pro-Ject RPM-1 Genie 3	190	The Genie is that rare thing of a product with good looks, fine build and excellent sound		33/45	●	●	332
●	Pro-Ject 6 Perspex	1,280	Plenty of detail and good rhythmic qualities (arm included)		33/45/78	●	●	338
●	Pro-Ject X-Pack	1,000	Combines very strong elements (Ortofon Rondo Red) a killer package with top sound and value		33/45	●	●	309
●	Rega P3-24	390	Very competent, uncoloured and musical, improved by £148 outboard electronic power supply		33/45	opt	●	298
●	Roksan Radius 5.2	1,399	Sophisticated design with accomplished sound quality, excellent imagery and good isolation		33/45	●	●	338
●	SRM Arezzo	699	The Arezzo is an excellent source component for those wanting a superb turntable for vinyl replay	/625025	33/45	●	●	325
●	Townshend Rock 7	1,720	Has the ability to pull detail out of a vinyl groove, making it the most resolute turntable at its price		33/45	●	●	324
●	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		33/45	●	●	307

Phono cartridges

MM and MC recommendations



Badge	Product	Price	Comments	Replacable stylus	Issue number
●	Dynavector Karat 17D3	699	One of the most thrilling-sounding cartridges on the market	●	334
●	Goldring Legac	595	An MC cartridge better suited to the smoother-sounding turntable, it unearths a mountain of detail	●	328
●	Grado Prestige Gold 1	150	Unusually assured 'presence' region is the basis of a beautifully musical and involving presentation	●	338
●	Ortofon Rondo Red	385	Delivers detail, power and resolution and makes a good case for its price	●	307
●	Ortofon Cadenza Red	750	There's much to admire in this cartridge's fine detail and unfussy presentation	●	330
●	Ortofon Vivo Red	200	Never less than musically convincing, this all-in-one cartridge is remarkably capable	●	338
●	van den Hul MC One Special	699	A gorgeous cartridge that's worth the price every time you hear a familiar track in a whole new light	●	235
●	van den Hul Condor XCM	2,400	A stunning cartridge with stereo imaging, dynamics and resolution to die for	●	265

Phono stages

Make your turntable sing



Badge	Product	Price	Comments	www.techradar.com	MM phono inputs	MC phono inputs	Adj impedance	Adj gain	Issue number
●	Cambridge Audio 640P	100	An outrageously good bargain that suits budget systems, but can confidently survive upgrades		●	●	●	●	305
●	Lehmann Audio Black Cube	335	This phono amp is a very distinguished performer with an MM source		●	●	●	●	335
●	Linn Uphorik	1,850	Exceptional sound quality, the Uphorik could easily win over the next generation of LP enthusiasts		●	●	●	●	334
●	Pro-Ject Tube Box SE II	435	The big picture is the most evident thing here, but the finer details are there, too		●	●	●	●	335
●	Soundsmith Strain Gauge	6,100	Revolutionary kit assembly that rewrites the rules about vinyl playback	/618387	●	●	●	●	324

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

HFC TOP PICKS



Cambridge Audio 640P £100

If you need a low-cost way to get your turntable talking to your amplifier, this is by far the best option, just pop into your local Richer Sounds



Dynavector Karat 17D3 £699

The 17D3 gets very close to the results achieved with MCs at twice the price and few can touch it in terms of sheer musicality and resolution of detail

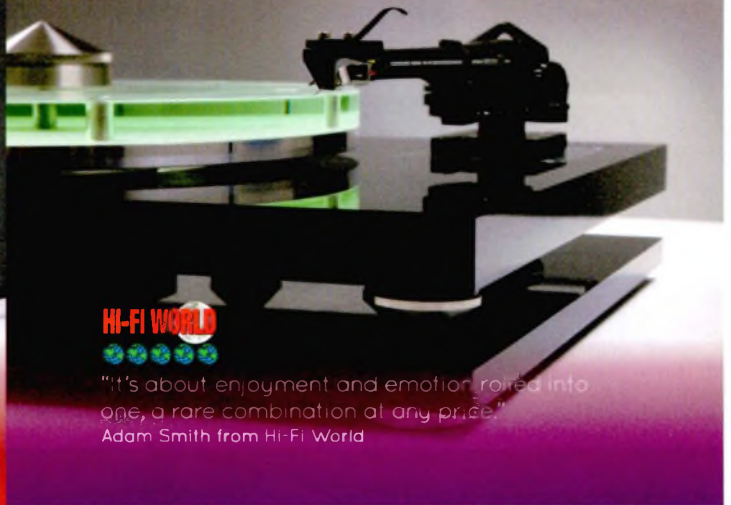


Townshend Rock 7 £1,720

A great turntable for those upgrading from an entry-level deck. Sound engineering at a bargain price sets this deck apart from the competition



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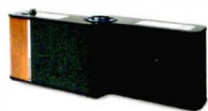
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BADGES KEY: RECOMMENDED = ● EDITOR'S CHOICE = ● GROUP TEST WINNER = ● BEST BUY = ●

Radio tuners

Surf the airwaves with these carefully selected tuners



FM tuners

Badge	Product	Price	Comments	www.techradar.com	Wavebands	Presets	Site-Strength Meter RDS	Rot. tuning knob	Issue number
●	Creek Audio Evolution	350	Sound is detailed, cohesive and extended both tonally and spatially – very classy		FM, M	80	●	●	308
	Rega Radio 3	390	Strong bass, clear treble and a high enjoyment factor makes this an appealing FM performer		FM, M	20		●	283
●	T+AT1210R	1,200	High-end looks are matched by the sound, which is detailed and sophisticated		FM	100	●	●	283

DAB/FM tuners

●	Arcam FMJ T32	600	A highly cost-effective way of optimising the airwaves. iPod functionality is a bonus	/559242	DAB, FM	100	●	●	●	319
●	Onkyo T-4555DAB	400	Admirably free of grain or obvious tonal blemishes, this tuner achieves a high standard		DAB	40	●	●	●	298

DAB/FM portables

●	Monitor Audio Airstream 10	225	The range of features on this DAB/FM/Internet radio is certainly impressive	/636713	DAB, FM, Web	4	●		●	337
●	Pure Move	80	A feature-packed, beautifully built DAB/FM radio that is a pleasure to use	/608367	DAB, FM	20	●			323
●	Pure Sensia	250	One of the smartest table radios around, offering wireless computer-sourced music		DAB, FM, Web	40	●	●		331
●	Tivoli Networks+	495	FM reception is excellent and a cut above everything else this radio has to offer		DAB, FM, Web	5	●	●		337
●	Vita Audio R1 MkII	160	Limited to DAB/FM and line inputs, but the sound quality is very good		DAB, FM, Web	10	●	●		337
●	Vita Audio R2i	300	Very smartly built with a sound that's full-bodied, neutral and detailed	/611865	DAB, FM	30	●		●	323

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.

Headphones

Audiophile solutions for home and travel use



Badge	Product	Price	Comments	www.techradar.com	Electrostatic	Open/Closed back	Circumaural	Supra-aural	3.5mm Jack adaptor	Weight (grams)	Issue number
●	Audio Technica ATH-AD500	100	Bulky, but comfortable, this headphone offers a generous spread of virtues							260	333
●	Audio Technica ATH-W1000X	649	Fine advert for the virtues of closed-back headphones, with great bass and background noise reduction			●				350	334
●	Beyerdynamic DT770	179	One of the most tonally satisfying closed-back headphones around with excellent detail			●	●			270	333
●	Beyerdynamic T1	880	A characterful, enjoyable music-maker with a detailed, weighty sound			●					331
●	Bowers and Wilkins P5	250	A superb headphone with B&W's sound and build quality sealing the deal			●	●			195	333
●	Grado SR60i	100	A strong contender with out-of-class sound in most areas: a brilliant budget all-rounder	/603478	●					210	322
●	Grado SR80i	120	A beautifully neutral and open-sounding headphone that's lively and energetic too			●					322
●	Grado GS1000i	1,100	A superb transducer, capable of astonishingly high performance standards	/624782							325
●	Grado PS1000	1,795	Offer excellent detail and effortless dynamics, but they can be heavy to wear after a while			●	●			500	329
●	Sennheiser HD380	140	This model offers good sound and is a worthy alternative to in-ear monitors			●	●				327
●	Sennheiser HD650	330	Clear and detailed, with very natural tonality through bass and midrange with just a little coloration			●				275	312
●	Sennheiser HD800	1,000	These headphones will convert loudspeaker listeners to the delights of personal stereo performance	/619269	●	●	●			350	324

SPECS KEY **ELECTROSTATIC** Uses electrostatic film instead of more common cone or dome dynamics. **SUPRA-AURAL** Earpads sit on ear rather than around it. **CIRCUMAURAL** Earpads rest on the head around the ears. **OPEN BACK** Vented capsules let sound in and out. **CLOSED BACK** (●) Sealed capsules. **WEIGHT** In grams. **3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR** Allows connection to personal stereos, computers etc.

HFC TOP PICKS



PURE Sensia £250

PURE's ground-breaking touch-screen DAB radio has changed the way we interact with radio forever and sets the standard for innovation



ACS T2 £500

For regular travellers, the ACS T2 with its custom-moulded earpieces is an obvious choice, thanks to all-day comfort and a perfect fit for any ear



Sennheiser HD650 £330

An easy recommendation – Sennheiser's HD650 should really cost more than this – it's simply fabulous and a genuine bargain



10.11.10

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Amplifiers

Our pick of the best one-box amps out there



www.techradar.com
Line inputs
Phono input
Remote control
Headphone socket
Power output (watts)
Issue number

Up to £1,000

Badge	Product	Price	Comments	Line inputs	Phono input	Remote control	Headphone socket	Power output (watts)	Issue number
●	Audio Analogue Crescendo	599	In a room of appropriate dimensions, this amplifier has real musical presence	5				50	329
●	Cambridge Audio 840A v2	800	A chunky powerhouse with features aplenty, this amp offers detail and delicacy (silver finish)	8	●	●		120	327
●	Denon DCD-1510AE	900	Offers a taste of high-end excellence at an affordable price	5	MM/MC			70	335
●	Marantz Pearl Lite PM-KI	899	Great all-rounder and attractively priced, the PM-KI transcends its £899 price	5	MM	●		70	338
●	Moon 1.5	999	A likeable amp in many ways, with admirable bass, treble and imaging	5	●			60	321
●	NAD C3226BEE	320	Unusually confident into awkward loads and very assured especially in bass. Treble a touch recessed	/603281	7			50	322
●	Puresound A10	685	A superbly involving valve amp at a very competitive price and with genuinely excellent results	2				10	331

Above £1,000

●	Arcam A38	1,480	A winning combination of sonic virtues including highly developed detail and musicality	7	opt			100	332
●	Astin Trew AT2000PLUS	1,740	If you prefer timbral and timing qualities of music to its bone-crunching potential, this is a contender	4				65	332
●	Audio Analogue Pucini Settanta	1,450	Detailed and lively, particularly in the upper octaves, but lacks a little bass extension	5	MC			160	320
●	Creek 5350 Evolution	1,075	One of the most attractive amps in its price range, with a sound that's immediately satisfying	5	MM/MC			120	334
●	Denon PMA-2010AE	1,700	High-class, well-equipped integrated, with a performance that is muscular, refined and detailed	6	MM/MC			80	328
●	Electrocompaniet PI-2	1,600	A superb all-rounder, with insight on one hand and effortless musical flow on the other	6				100	327
●	Electrocompaniet ECI-3	1,650	This is an impressively resolute and powerful integrated amplifier for the money	/618304	5			70	324
●	Gryphon Atilla	6,995	Exceptional subtlety and definition, has enough power to cope with just about anything musical	5				100	328
●	Harman/Kardon HK 990	1,000	Very clever, with built-in DSP room correction – but most importantly a powerful and revealing ampl	/594820	7	MC		160	321
●	Leema Pulse	1,270	Admirable bass which combines extension, tautness and clarity. Higher frequencies are highly detailed	5	MM/MC			70	327
●	Leema Tucana II	3,425	Highly featured, well-built and not short of power, this is a highly resolute and organic amp	/612396	7			148	323
●	Luxman L550A-II	3,000	An accomplished all-rounder that's able to handle virtually any system	4	MC			20	335
●	Micromega IA-100	1,125	Fast and fluid performer that brings a touch of panache to its role	5	MM			100	332
●	Mimetism 15.2	5,415	A powerful amplifier with great dynamics and high resolution that's rare even at this price	6				180	330
●	MSB Platinum M200	13,656	This amplifier's devastatingly good all-round sound quality sets a benchmark that few will approach	/603452					322
●	Musical Fidelity M31	1,000	Extremely engaging performer, this power amp boasts excellent sonics and solid build	6				70	337
●	Myryad MX12080	1,200	Sound is more assured at the top of the frequency range, though bass is melodious and detailed	8				80	327
●	NAD 375BEE	1,000	A good, solid amplifier that is fundamentally musical and gives a great bang for your buck	/625323	7			150	325
●	Roksan Caspian M2	1,600	This muscular-sounding amplifier is load tolerant and more powerful in practice	6				85	338

Pre/power amplifiers

Separate boxes can bring clear advantages



www.techradar.com
Preamplifier
Line inputs
Phono input
Remote control
Power output (watts)
Issue number

Up to £2,000

●	Cambridge Audio Azur 840E/840W	2,000	Enterprising technology delivers a pre/power combo that always sounds detailed and controlled					8 opt	200	309
●	NAD C165BEE/C275BEE	1,550	An alternative to the usual integrated route and one that offers flexibility and fine sound					6 MM/MC	130	336

Above £2,000

●	Audio Research DS450	7,000	Power amp features a very neutral transparent sound with lots of power and low-running temperature					2	450	337
●	Bryston BP16/ 2B SST2	5,700	Preamp and power amp combo offers superb sound quality	/608649				6 opt	100	323
●	Bryston BP26	3,670	Cracking preamp brings detailed results					8 opt		308
●	Chord Prima/Mezzo 140	7,135	Small, muscular, beautifully made and styled, and sounds like a dream					5	120	269
●	Classé CP-700/CA-M400	9,200	Pre plus mono power combo with superb build, huge power and enormous flexibility					6 opt	400	293
●	Cyrus Pre XP D/8 power	2,225	Detailed and subtle, with little character added to sound					5	60	336
●	Digital Do Main Ba-1	6,495	By recreating the V-FET, DDM has built one of the most thrilling amplifiers on the market					4	300	327
●	Mark Levinson No. 326S	8,000	Excellent USB implementation, natural sound and solid build. Excellent performance levels					7		338
●	Naim NAC 152XS/NAP 155XS	1,920	Preamp and power amp duo offers excellent performance and classic Naim virtues					6	60	324
●	Roksan Caspian M1	2,800	A powerful and enjoyable-sounding amplifier combo that brings out the strengths of its CD player					5	85	307
●	Rotel RC158/RB1582	2,100	It looks high-end and it really sounds the part, too					5 MM/MC	200	336
●	Trilogy 909/990	10,390	Extremely musical valve-based pairing with hybrid power and beautiful finish	/625226				6	100	325

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.



25 YEARS!

It's our birthday in October, and to celebrate 25 Years of The Sound Gallery we are holding lots of special events leading up to our big birthday party. We are starting with a FREE turntable service for all owners of the legendary Linn Sondek LP12 record player! The party starts now and ends October 30th.



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BADGES KEY: RECOMMENDED = ● | EDITOR'S CHOICE = ● | GROUP TEST WINNER = ● | BEST BUY = ●

Cables



Cables really can make a difference, especially our top recommendations

Analogue interconnects

Rank	Model	Price	Comments	www.techradar.com	Stranded	Solid core	Copper	Digital cable type	Issue number
●	Audioquest Sidewinder	45	A detailed cable, with fine tonality and excellent rhythm		●		●		297
●	Black Rhodium Prelude	90	Practical and sensibly priced all-rounder that seems happily compatible with a wide range of kit		●		●		293
●	Black Rhodium Coda	150	Superb bass with neutral and detailed midrange, treble sweet with occasional slight constriction		●		●		298
●	Black Rhodium Polar Illusion	250	A good all-rounder, with clear and purposeful bass and particularly fine treble		●		●		321
●	Cambridge Azur Reference	50	Performance wouldn't shame a cable at twice the price: especially adept in the treble		●		●		296
●	Chord Co. Indigo Plus	995	Costly, and high-class cable needs running in, but this is a finely detailed design overall	/608313	●				323
●	Clearer Audio Silver-line	283	Complex, well-screened cable which offers good sound all round with exceptional bass		●		●		279
●	CrystalCable Piccolo	348	Thin, tougher than it looks, has some qualities of a solid-core type – resolution, focus and articulation			●		●	294
●	Kimber Timbre	145	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.		●		●		281
●	Monster M1000i	230	Very capable, with only a hint of bass dryness to set against excellent results elsewhere		●		●		284
●	Nordost Wyewizard Dream	110	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 with good mid and treble		●		●		281
●	QED Signature Audio S	190	Mellifluous and rounded, this cable is a great choice for lovers of the human voice				●	●	332
●	Supra EFF-IX	77	Lively sounding which maintains a high level of detail and neutrality, musically, a great all-rounder		●		●		306
●	Townshend Isolda DCT100	99	Particularly enjoyable cohesion and naturalness that makes for great listener involvement				●	●	312
●	van den Hul The Wave	125	Neutral, with a hint of upper-bass richness: images seem to reside slightly further away than most		●		●		312

Digital interconnects

●	Atlas Mavros	285	By any reckoning this is a very revealing wire				●	●	E 336
●	Kimber DV-30	59	A superb performer that lacks very little, even when compared to Kimber's high-end models		●			●	E 317
●	van den Hul The Wave	65	The results this cable achieves are excellent and it scores highly for value				●	●	E 336

Speaker cables (price per metre)

●	Atlas Hyper 1.5	12.5	Don't look to this cable to beef up the bass, but at higher frequencies is revelatory at the price		●		●		299
●	Atlas Ascent 2.0	60	A highly analytical cable and very fine detail across the board		●		●		294
●	Chord Co. Silver Screen	6	Screened speaker cable with excellent treble, but just a little light in the bass at times		●		●		310
●	CrystalCable Piccolo	1,395	A chip off the old block, has a similarly fast, fluid and subtle sound (price -3 metre pair)			●		●	302
●	Kimber 4VS	155	In the right system, this cable is a good choice (price reflects 2.5 metre terminated pair)		●		●		329
●	Monster MCX-1s	5	Notable for its bass, perhaps a touch overdone at times but could be a good foil to small speakers		●		●		280
●	Nordost Heimdall	185	Alternative to Valhalla, silver-plated, micro-monofilament construction, suitable for exacting systems		●		●		278
●	QED X-Tube XT300	12.5	A natural and 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
●	Townshend Isolda DCT	50	Cryogenically treated 'impedance-matched' cable with stabilising components added				●	●	241
●	van den Hul The Wind	50	Separate conductors provide room for experimentation, conductor quantity keeps resistance low				●	●	318
●	Wireworld Solstice 52	25	Rather bulky and awkward, but performance amply justifies it with superb bass solidity		●		●		310
●	Wireworld Oasis 6	40	Excellent bass with tunefulness and extension all first-rate. Awkward to handle, though	/617560	●				324

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.

HFC TOP PICKS



QED Revelation £15 (per metre)
Giving a consistent result with a wide range of amplifiers and speakers, the Revelation speaker cable boasts a good performance in all areas.



Kimber DV-30 £59 (0.5 metre)
A superb performer that lacks very little, even compared to Kimber's high-end models. Tonality, detail and imaging are really very fine.



Black Rhodium Polar Illusion £250
This super-cooled, unshielded interconnect with solid, silver-plated copper insulation, delivers a treble performance that's admirably clear and crisp.

BADGES KEY: RECOMMENDED = ● EDITOR'S CHOICE = ● GROUP TEST WINNER = ● BEST BUY = ●

Stereo speakers

The most influential link in the chain



Up to £1,000

Badge	Product	Price	Comments	Size - width, height, depth (cm)	Floorstander	Bass from (Hz)	Ease of drive	Close to wall	Issue number
●	Acoustic Energy Aegis Neo 3	363	Pretty, neutral floorstander sounds open with wide dynamic range and good bass weight	20,90,5,24	●	A	24	●	294
●	Acoustic Energy Radiance 1	600	Limited bass, power handling and dynamics, but exceptional mid-to-treble voicing	18,5,32,25	●	A	33	●	325
●	Amphion Ion L	900	Sharp styling, fine mid/treble coherence a sweet treble, but less happy bass alignment	16,2,32,6,26,5	●	A	40	●	310
●	ATC SCM11	867	A very fine little speaker t-at its best with natural recordings where it adds little	21,38,25	●	A-	55	●	293
●	AudioPro Avanti A.10	350	A tough and effective little speaker - overall balance is quite smooth and even	19,29,26	●	A+	38	●	319
●	Bowers and Wilkins CM1	488	Luxury miniature has laid-back sound, low coloration and 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, has a smooth, even and nicely open balance	/483503	●		22	●	315
●	Castle Knight 2	400	A true resurgence for the Castle brand, the Knight 2 has a beguiling sound quality	20,38,33,5	●	A+	42	●	338
●	DALI Ikon 6	999	Needs care with setup, impressively transparent and obsessively detailed sound	19,100,33	●	A	37	●	271
●	Dynaudio DM 2/10	880	Has fine dynamics, grip, bass and headroom and is well mannered	27,5,45,35	●	A	22	●	299
●	Focal Chorus 706V	389	Advanced drivers deliver an even, healthy dynamic expression and tension	22,39,25	●	A	27	●	319
●	Focal Chorus 726V	950	Compact and realistically priced, the Chorus 726V is a good all-round performer	22,99,37,5	●	A	25	●	325
●	JBL Studio L880	700	Good value floorstander with neutrality, massive headroom and plenty of punch	22,99,37	●	A	25	●	275
●	KEF iQ50	599	Looks cute and very discreet, with spacious imaging, good balance and a sweet treble	/483527	●	A	23	●	315
●	Monitor Audio BR2	230	Good-looking standmount has a muscular sound with superior coherence	18,5,35,25	●	A-	30	●	294
●	Monitor Audio BR5	450	Not the best dressed in its class, but detailed, bold-sounding and good value	17,85,25	●	A-	36	●	293
●	Monitor Audio Silver RS8	850	Bold, dynamic sound, it's an easy load that works well in larger rooms	90,18,27	●	A	33	●	276
●	Monitor Audio GS10	900	More neutral tonally than some recent MAs, the GS10 is easy to drive	20,36,27	●	A-	40	●	284
●	PMC DB1i	985	Could be more neutral, but a very effective musical communicator	15,5,29,23,4	●	A+	30	●	334
●	ProAc Tablette Ref Eight	704	Stunning standmount with electrostatic-like imagery. Its brother is even better!	15,27,23	●	A+	40	●	267
●	Q Acoustics 1010	110	Neatly styled miniature has limited bass and power handling, fine midband voicing	15,21,5,19,5	●	A	48	●	286
●	Q Acoustics 1020i	140	Outstanding value, t smooth well-balanced and lively sound makes a fine communicator	/516273	●	A+	60	●	318
●	Rega RS1	390	Clever close-to-wall speaker has a fine coherence and good communication skills	15,32,23,6	●	A	23	●	319
●	Russ Andrews SP-1	352	This tweaked Focal 705V RA has a sound that's immediate, engaging and, and great fun	19,2,31,5,24,8	●	A+	65	●	309
●	Spendor S3/5R	750	Lacks dynamic muscle and loudness potential, smooth neutrality and g bass extension	16,5,30,5,190	●		25	●	310
●	Tannoy Revolution DC4T	599	Ultra-compact, lacks bass weight and dynamic tension, but sounds open and coherent	488857	●		40	●	316
●	Tannoy Revolution DC6	900	Pretty compact standmount, delivering a lively bass and smooth, coherent midband	23,36,5,23	●	A	40	●	307
●	Wharfedale Diamond 9.1	150	Superior shape and finish. Sound is laid back, but free from boxiness	19,5,30,28	●	A-	45	●	307
●	Wharfedale Diamond 10.5	480	Despite the price, the 10.5 ticks many of the boxes, with superior voice band coherence	/636778	●	A-	50	●	326

Above £1,000

●	Adam Audio Tensor Delta	8,400	This active loudspeaker brings a powerful range of capabilities to its performance	33,56,34	●	A	50	●	329
●	AE Energy Radiance 2	1,000	This speaker boasts fine neutrality, sweet top, fine imaging and wide dynamic range	18,5,92,25	●	A	30	●	334
●	AE Energy Radiance 3	1,500	This speaker's effective enclosure ensures a wide dynamic range and a very clean sound	/587236	●	A	27	●	320
●	AE AE1 MkIII	2,000	This speaker has a lovely midband smoothness and superior image focus	18,5,31,25	●	A	24	●	337
●	Amphion Argon 3L	2,300	Solid build ensures an impressively clean sound with loads of bass and fine neutrality	19,92,5,30,5	●	A	44	●	322
●	Aspara HL6	4,300	Acoustic material sounds great and there are many strengths in design and performance	18,5,93,34,5	●	A		●	332
●	ATC SCM16A	2,376	Makes a great case for the active speaker. Includes built-in amps and is good value	27,45,33	●	ACT	42	●	300
●	Audioplan Kontrapunkt IVB	2,898	Boasts exceptional stereo imaging and mid-through-treble coherence	16,35,26	●	A	45	●	329
●	Audiovector S3 Super	2,600	Useful ability to upgrade, offers good musical communication and stereo imaging	19,103,31	●	A	50	●	328
●	Aurousal VS	1,650	Fine coherence and imaging of a single driver system, extra help at the frequency extremes	/479149	●		20	●	314
●	AVI ADM9	1,125	Active mini-monitors that are exceptionally accurate and dynamic sounding	20,30,26	●	ACT	60	●	301
●	Bowers and Wilkins CM9	1,760	Tall, elegant, expressive midband and expansive, but well-controlled bass	/597244	●	A	60	●	321
●	Bowers and Wilkins 802	11,500	This high-end speaker has an airy, spacious midband, with clean bass reproduction	36,8,138,56,3	●	A	27	●	337
●	Cabasse Bora	2,200	A real enthusiast's choice with high sensitivity, strong bass and powerful dynamics	/618354	●	A	52	●	324
●	Focal Chorus 816 V	1,099	Fine, warm balance, superior dynamics and a sweet top end, but could be smoother	28,100,37,5	●	A+	20	●	288
●	Focal Chorus 826 V	1,349	Times nicely, goes loud with ease and will produce precise imaging if appropriately set up	28,104,37,5	●	A	45	●	287
●	Focal Chorus 816WSE	1,499	The W cone makes some qualities associated with Focal's high-end models more competitive	99,8,28,2,37,5	●	A+	39	●	308
●	Focal Chorus 826W LE	1,879	Focal has turbo charged the 826 resulting in lots of energy, excitement and fine detail	28,2,103,8,37,5	●	A		●	330
●	Focal Electra 1027 Be	4,399	Outstanding mid and top with fine delicacy, low coloration, but lacks some bass grip and drive	26,5,111,35	●	A-	25	●	276
●	Free FS1	3,500	An elegant design with the minimum of wiring. Wireless with Sonos or Airport Express	16,87,27	●	ACT	35	●	301
●	Gamut PhiS	3,040	Lovely discreet floorstander has excellent sound and several very clever engineering touches	17,100,24	●		20	●	305
●	Green Mountain Audio Rio	2,000	Fabulously tight timing and coherence makes for a very expressive and musical performer	20,8,40,6,34,9	●	A	80	●	332

Stereo speakers (continued)

Shapes and sizes for every budget

Badge	Product	Price	Comments	www.techradar.com	Size - width, height, depth (cm)	Floorstander	Ease of drive	Bass from (Hz)	Free space	Close to wall	Issue number
●	Guru QM10	1,595	A very clever close-to-wall standmount with fine imaging, that sounds a lot bigger than it looks	/465869	30,25,22,32	●	A	26	●	●	317
●	Jamo R 907	6,600	Arguably the more 'chummy' of Jamo's dipole flagships, powerful bass and open midrange	/498515	44,118,97	●	A	30	●	●	317
●	JBL Everest DD66000	44,000	Awesome performance in the true meaning of the word & exceptional musical communication		111,96,5,47	●	A	50	●	●	331
●	Kudos X2	1,350	Attractive presentation alongside a lively sound makes for an involving experience		16,6,78,20,6	●		27	●	●	337
●	Kudos Cardea C2	1,950	This floorstander is a fine all-round performer with fine voicing and neutrality		20,92,5,27	●		23	●	●	322
●	Magico V2	18,000	High pricing derives this speaker's superb painstaking engineering & impressive performance	/624700	25,5,115,30	●	A	32	●	●	325
●	Magneplan Magneplanar 1.6	2,500	Great with acoustic and classical material, this dipole panel speaker has superb sound quality		48,16,5,5	●	A	43	●	●	329
●	Mission 796	1,300	Clean, open and detailed, smooth, relaxed loudspeaker does exactly what it says on the box	/594834	20,6,99,8,31,8	●	A	25	●	●	321
●	Monopulse 42A	1,995	Oddball styling, fine bass-to-mid balance and dynamics and superb voice coherence		26,110,25	●	A	25	●	●	302
●	Monitor Audio PL200	4,750	A costly, but beautifully presented loudspeaker with outstanding voicing and character		25,5,100,28,5	●	A-		●	●	330
●	Mordaunt-Short Perf 6 LE	4,799	Striking moulded enclosure minimises coloration, overall balance is smooth, neutral and open		24,115,43	●	A	22	●	●	308
●	Neat Momentum 3i	1,790	Sounds bigger than it looks, with good coherence and an impressively wide dynamic range		22,38,27	●	A-	23	●	●	302
●	Opera Callas	3,195	Technically innovative multi-tweeter system, this is a grown up and articulate performer	/429144	23,375,34			32	●	●	311
●	Opera Seconda	1,995	Fine styling and finish, plus very superior voicing, if a shade lacking in warmth		24,102,5,31,5	●	A	20	●	●	314
●	Pioneer S-2EX-W	5,200	This speaker offers superb midband neutrality and exceptional clarity	/587272	291,56,5,42,5	●	A	37	●	●	320
●	PMC GB1i	1,525	Fine voice reproduction, overall agility and well-judged balance		15,5,87,23,4	●	A	40	●	●	337
●	PMC FB1i	2,100	A floorstander that boasts impressive bass extension and a smooth sweet top end	/429594	20,100,30	●	A	20	●	●	329
●	PMC fact .8	4,600	Beautiful styling, alongside a superb all-round sound with a notably wide dynamic range		15,5,105,38	●	A	55	●	●	327
●	PMC IB2i	8,900	Delivers a top-class sound quality, fine imaging and exceptional dynamic grip	/617595	33,74,46,5	●	A	25	●	●	324
●	PSB Synchrony One	3,500	Slim and discreet floorstander that delivers superb sound quality and flexible bass	/516267	22,109,32,5	●	A	45	●	●	318
●	Revel F32	3,200	Meticulously balanced, tonally neutral design makes for a taut, well disciplined sound		22,105,39	●	A	20	●	●	256
●	Revolver Screen 3	2,799	Visually dramatic and very successful in delivering genuine high-quality hi-fi sound		50,140,11		A	35	●	●	329
●	Roksan Caspian FR-5	2,475	Sharp-looking speaker sounds exceptionally open and lively without aggression		20,100,25	●	A	22	●	●	290
●	Sonus faber Luito Monitor	1,690	Subtly designed, elegant-sounding package, especially with good recordings	/603221	18,5,35,33,5		A-	55	●	●	322
●	Sonus faber Minima Vintage	2,490	Easy, graceful-sounding compact, a natural for acoustic material at moderate volume levels	/455417	20,33,27,5		A-	55	●	●	312
●	Sonus faber Cremona Audit.	3,350	Open, exciting and with surprisingly good bass, this is 'The Little Speaker That Could'		20,35,37		A	50	●	●	305
●	Spendor SA1	1,295	Very high-quality sub-miniature with notably superior sound		16,5,30,5,19		A	30	●	●	334
●	Spendor SP3/1R2	1,600	Conservative styling, superb neutrality and coherence with unusually low coloration		22,40,28		A	37	●	●	317
●	Tannoy Definition DC10T	5,000	Classy speaker has massive base, high sensitivity and precise image focus	/608326	34,112,5,32	●	A+	35	●	●	323
●	Triangle Genese Lyrr	3,300	A well-balanced speaker with generous sensitivity, fine imaging and good expressiveness		23,30,3,113,3	●	A	30	●	●	338
●	Triangle Magellan Concerto	16,250	New 'sw2' version is less immediate than its predecessor, but it remains highly entertaining		60,160,45	●	A	32	●	●	290
●	Teufel Ultima 800	2,498	Exceptional value for money due to direct sales and easy system-matching		22,98,37	●	A	42	●	●	335
●	Vivid Audio K1	14,495	With a subtle, fast and wide bandwidth, this speaker is one of the finest on the planet	/625361	28,130,45		A	35	●	●	325
●	Wilson Benesch Curve	5,383	Much (but not all) of the ACT's performance in a much more compact and affordable package		23,91,37	●	A	28	●	●	254
●	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
●	Yamaha Soavo 2	1,200	Cunningly crafted with a beautiful balance that always sounds lively, open and involving		22,38,35		A	28	●	●	296
●	Zu Essence	3,750	Realism and communication skills are more than compensation for balance shortcomings		30,5,125,30,5	●	A	25	●	●	327

SPECS KEY **SIZE W,H,D (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).

HFC TOP PICKS

**Amphion Ion L £900**

A great-looking loudspeaker that also boasts a superb mid/treble coherence and a super-sweet treble, some positioning care needed

**Opera Seconda £1,995**

Classy, sealed-box, two-and-a-half-way Italian floorstander with a very fine fit and finish and a superior voice band for acoustic work

**Audioplan Kontrapunkt IVB £2,898**

It's small, it's expensive, but this German floorstander contains the finest ingredients and delivers a smooth sound with some of the best imaging around

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Equipment supports

Hi-fi equipment supports come in all shapes and sizes



Badge	Product	Price	Comments	Top plate size (cm) Height (cm)	Number of shelves Welded	Shelf type	Issue number
	Atacama Equinox	409	Stable, modular design with style and excellent bass transients	81	50,50	● 4	Glass 217
●	Audiophile Base Std Supp't	1,200	Expensive and quite bulky, but sound is unusually detailed and resonance-free	57	46,35	● 3	MDF 302
●	Blok Stax 300	180	A simple and effective design that gives some useful isolation across most of the audio band		40,46	● 3	MDF 334
●	Custom Design Inert Matt	70	Isolation platform can improve the sound of hi-fi components, but is a bit small for most kit		40x25		Metal 311
	Custom Design XL4	380	Simple construction pays off in smart looks. Sound contribution is minimal		60,42	● 4	Glass 293
	Custom Design Milan	509	Good-looking stand with nothing more to complain of than slight muddying of detail	57	48,39	● 4	Glass 302
●	Hi-Fi Racks Podium	500	A keenly priced piece of high-class furniture that also happens to sound great		59,5		Wood 320
●	Isonoe Isolation feet	98	A set of four isolation feet that are ideally suited to microphonic kit like turntables				Alloy 327
	Partington Minim	470	Adds its own character to rock, but to the detriment of acoustic sounds	78	45,37	● 5	Glass 302
●	Quadraspire QX25 Support	25	Beautifully simple design, cheap and easy to use. Excellent with CD players				Acrylic 327
●	Quadraspire Sunoko-Vent T	800	The sound is detailed and largely uncoloured, while the design is rigid and beautifully veneered		59,47	● 4	MDF 334
	Russ Andrews Torlyte Rack	988	Attractive modular system made of very light Torlyte: a touch of added warmth is its only vice	68	54,49	● 4	Torlyte 240
●	Townshend VSSS	1,380	This attractive Seismic Sink retains the same excellent vibration-killing sound quality	76	35,50	● 4	Glass 273

Speaker stands

Not all stands are made equal - try one of our top buys



Badge	Product	Price	Comments	Top plate size (cm) Height (cm)	Number of shelves Filled/Welded	Issue number	
	Anvil Sound Display Stand	229	A variety of smart looks available – sound is clear and precise	50	20,17	● 1	293
●	Custom Design RS300	110	An attractive stand whose lack of coloration suits it to high-resolution systems	56	16,5,18	● 1	281
●	Custom Design SQ404	220	Robust four-pillar design gives very low coloration and maximises performance	61	18,16,3	● 4	283
●	Partington Ansa 60	119	Elegant flat-packer 'disappears' sonically; restrained but neutral and coherent	62	18,15	● 4	232
●	Partington Dreadnought BS	299	Sound is better defined in almost all areas than cheaper, slimmer stands can offer	62	17,23	● 5	309
●	Partington Heavi II	499	Robust to the nth degree, this stand helps produce very precise bass and upper frequencies	53	31,22	● 6	287

SPECS KEY HEIGHT (CM) Height of equipment support and speaker stand (not including spikes) in centimetres. **TOP PLATE SIZE (CM)** Width by depth of the supporting platform(s). 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 SHELVES** To put your kit on (different configurations are often available). **NUMBER OF LEGS** That support the stand. **SHELF TYPE** Material that shelves are made of.

HFC TOP PICKS



Quadraspire QX25 Support £25
Fashioned from two identical pieces of acrylic sheet that slide together, these feet create a very impressive degree of isolation



Partington Dreadnought BS £300
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REGA P3 turntable and RB300 arm, Elys cartridge. Boxed, excellent condition. Recent motor upgrade. Arm new and cartridge light use, £375. **07843 762212 or atj.harding@googlemail.com (Hants).**

PRO-JECT record deck and Pro-ject phono amp, Musical Fidelity XA-1 preamp, Arcam Alpha 9 CD player, Arcam P60 power amp, Rogers Studio 5 speakers. Includes all power cords (Russ Andrews) and cables/speaker stands and equipment stand. (£3,700) £1,400ono. Must be heard. Contact Steven on **00353 87 637 6623 (Co Wicklow Ireland).**

MUSICAL FIDELITY Tri-Vista 21 DAC, less than 200 hours use. Excellent condition, boxed with manual. £540 phone **07905 312191. (Cheshire).**

ROGUEAUDIO 88 valve power amp, fully overhauled and modified by Definitive Audio two years ago, absolute stunner! £1,000 ovno. **Phone 07905 312191. (Cheshire).**

VARIOUS COMPONENTS: Arcam alpha 9 power amplifier 9P, £250. Maplin amplifier boards, 50w/8R, 70w/4R, four available, £25 each. AvonMusic prototype power supply for Class A power amplifiers, £225. AvonMusic prototype power supply for Garrard 4/301 Thorens TD124, £225. Garrard 401 chassis and plinth, £700. Technics SL1210 Mk2 £250. **020 749 98729 (London).**

PRIMARE SPA21 amplifier, recommended almost as good in stereo as the I30, mint, remote and manual, two years old £1,100 plus shipping. Call Michael **00353 86 8127103 or michael.ograde@gmx.co.uk (Ireland).**

NAKAMICHI CR3E £150. Nakamichi CR4E £195. Dunlop Systemdeck 2 £185. Audiolab 8000A £90. All good condition. No offers please. **07513039966. (Dorset).**

MONITOR AUDIO Silver RS6 (oak) for sale £300. Just run-in. **01501 820875 (Scotland).**

TANNOY DC6t speakers (oak) excellent £500. **01501 820875 (Scotland).**

MJACOUSTICS Pro 50 Mk11 Subwoofer £175ono (Excellent condition). Call Mike **01562 638119 or email mike222@blueyonder.co.uk (Worcestershire).**

TEAC VRDS-T1 transport (includes Trichord upgrade £400) receipt kept, manual, remote, boxed £275. Call Ken **01384 293955. (West Midlands).**

WANTED Reel to reel tape recorder, Sony TC377 or similar. Must be in good working order. Please call Lawrence on **01633 421906 (Newport).**

RUSS ANDREWS Powermax Plus mains cable. Big improvement for little money. Hi-Fi Choice Best Buy. Clean, precise sound. (£45) now £20. Call Chris **07981025698 (Bristol).**

ARCAM A38 integrated amp £895. CD37 player £795. Denon TU1800 FM/DAB tuner £150. All in good condition,



Arcam FMJ A38 integrated amplifier

with boxes. **023 8073 8935 or email: golf3385@hotmail.co.uk (Southampton).**

MUSICAL FIDELITY E100 integrated amp, piano black, excellent condition, digital and phono outputs £250. Aurum Cantus Leisure 5 speakers piano rosewood £495. Unison Research S6 valve integrated amp. £750 Call Tony **02380 224003 (Southampton).**

MUSICAL FIDELITY P180 (Mosfet) power amp, with choke-regulated power supply. Condition is excellent and was one of Hi-Fi World's favorites: "powerful and refined". £525. **07972 341692 / 01424 446282. (East Sussex).**

CABASSE mt30 Antigua standmount speakers in wenge (black). Brand new won in competition (£460) £325. Kimber monocoex speaker cable, 13-feet, WBT slant bananas (approx £1,600) £675. **01933 405875 (Northants).**

CYRUS CDXT SE transport player (black), one-year old, boxed as new. Can demo. **02476667877/07887 540082 (Coventry).**

PRIMARE CD110 one-box CD player, 70w amp and DAB. Boxed with manual and remote. Russ Andrews Torlyte platform (£1,320) £650 **017919 025005 (Sussex).**

TACT/LYNGDORF SDA1 2175 integrated amp, superb quality and performance, 200 watts, (silver), boxed (£1,895) £795. **07776 143890 (Southampton).**

DALI Ikon6 loudspeakers. Unmarked with instructions. £250. **01255 675115 (Frinton-on-Sea, Essex).**

GRADO PS1000 headphones, brand new, boxed with warranty, won in competition, £1,200ono. **0115 9397413 (Derbyshire).**

ARCAM Alpha 10 DAVE, award-winning stereo amplifier, with factory-fitted Dolby Digital/DTS module, in excellent condition, with remote and original packaging, £450ono. **Alpha10@reticulum.demon.co.uk (Cams / Beds border).**

AUDIOQUEST Columbia XLR 1m interconnects, boxed, 48v DBS stunning high-end cables, immaculate and in original case (£400) £175. **07876 226999 (Surrey).**

MARANTZ CD 5003 CD player, black, pitch control and CD text, as new (£200) £100 no offers. **01268 415 017 (Basilidon).**

YAMAHA B2 and C2 pre and power amp, 160 watts per channel, £50 or offers. **steve.paton100@googlemail.com (Cumbria).**

WANTED: Top-quality hi-fi separates and complete systems, Naim, Linn, Cyrus, Meridian, Arcam etc, fast, friendly response and willing to travel/pay cash. **07815 892458 (Colchester).**

MONITOR AUDIO RS6, natural oak, just run-in £300. Tannoy DC6T, oak,

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!

immaculate £500. **01501 820875 (Lanarkshire).**

CHORD signature speaker cable, 2m pair, £275. Chord 1m Indigo Plus RCA pair, £475. Chord signature Links, two pair, £25. **07970012450 (Hampshire).**

AUDIO RESEARCH LS2b preamp, original box, (£3,000) £780. Theta Pearl transport and Probasic 3a DAC (£4,750) £1,250. Wanted: Transparent ultra/reference s/e interconnect, finite Element rack. **07973 220663 (Leicestershire).**

RUARK TALISMAN Mk1 speakers with soft-dome tweeters, cherry finish, very good condition, £240. **01425 613983 (Hampshire).**

PS AUDIO phones, one year old, immaculate condition, manual, remote, boxes, purchased from new, can be demonstrated, very light usage, £495. **01737 779938 or 01306 884107 (Surrey).**

MUSICAL FIDELITY A1 CD Pro Player, two years old, mint, boxed. Philips Pro 2 mechanism 24-bit/192K DAC. Top-loader, £650. Original Pi Foundation stands circa 1990, 18-inch-high, top plate 7.5in square, sand- and shot-filled, brass-opped floor spikes, good condition, buyer collects, £150. **07789 712775 (Hampshire).**

REGA 3 full Isokinetic mods turntable, no arm, buyer collects, £250. **01606 784767 (Cheshire).**

MJ ACOUSTICS Ref1 subwoofer, 10-inch downward-firing driver, D.A.M.P amplifier technology, high/low inputs, variable crossover with digital readout, expensive option finish in red cherry, good condition, (£800) £400. Two Musical Fidelity X10Ds and one X-PSU, cylindrical models, both X10Ds are boxed as new, one has NOS Mullards fitted, X-PSU is as new, no box, all leads, £100 each. **07876 705266 (West Yorks).**

NAIM ARIVA loudspeakers quality floorstanders, excellent condition, Cherry finish, 100w, original grills, plinths and cartons, but collection best option, (£1,400) £849. **07595 218 695 or email: steve.crowe@yachtingpages.com (Bristol area).**

NEAT MOTIVE 2 loudspeakers, maple finish, unwanted prize, boxed, unopened, £900. **01684 294649 or 07971662734 or email: ultraarry@hotmail.com (Tewkesbury, Glos.).**

ART AUDIO Maestro Valve monoblocs 50 watts and valve VP1 preamp, good condition, serviced recently and new valves, (£9,500), £2,500. Can demo. **01476 579201 (Grantham).**

SPECTRAL AUDIO dma 150mk2 power amp, excellent con, superb sound, manual box, £3650ono. **0115 9126424 (Notts).**

YAMAHA NS-F700 loudspeakers, piano black, three-way floorstanders, new boxed 25kg, 354x1012x374mm (WxHxD), unwanted prize, £750. **01245 264248 petenicky@tiscali.co.uk (Essex).**

A&R A60 amplifier, low one-channel (pre) £30. Mission, 7LE speakers £35. Yamaha NSC 120 centre speaker (boxed) £40. Technics ST70300 analogue tuner £40. **01708457691 (Essex).**

UNISON RESEARCH S6 valve amp (not working) open to offers. Buyer collects. **01482 853091 (Hull).**

RUSS ANDREWS Kimber Crystal CU interconnect one metre (£150) £70. **07891 533084 (Swansea).**

PRO-JECT record deck and phono amp, Musical Fidelity XA-1 preamp, Arcam Alpha 9 CD player, Arcam P60 power amp, Rogers Studio 5 speakers. Includes all cables, Russ Andrews mains leads and stands (£3,700) £1,600ono. **+00353 87 637 6623 (Co Wicklow).**

MICHELL TECNO black tonearm, as new, 15 hours' use, upgraded, (£445) £375, no offers. **07736 773830 (Yorkshire).**

ISOTEK ELITE 1.5 metre mains cables x 4, cost £300. Open to any sensible offer. **07891 533084 (Swansea).**

ARCAM FMJ A18 six-months old, £350 ONO, Pro-Ject 1.9 Classic (cherry) turntable, MC35FL cartridge, £300 ONO, Trichord Dino, Dino and phono, PSY, £300 ONO. **07896 410722 or 115 9176776 (Nottingham).**

MUSICAL FIDELITY KW550 amp, perfect, boxed, buyer collects, £2,500 ono. Arcam CD player 192, perfect, boxed, £350 ONO. Quad CDP99 (MK I) £400 ono. **01273 305176 (Brighton).**

ARCAM FMJ DV29 high-end DVD audio/video player, silver, good condition, in original box with manual, £350 collected. Price includes 10 DVDs. **01452 614515 (Gloucestershire).**

WANTED: Cambridge CD3 service manual. **brian.hill25@btopenworld.com 01228 792344 (Cumbria).**

CHORD ODYSSEY 2 cables 4-metre pair, terminated (£214) £120. Black Rhodium illusion DCT interconnect 1metre (£250) £150. Audio Note Lexus interconnect 1 metre (£275) £150. **01243 528010 (West Sussex).**

MUSICAL FIDELITY Elektra EI00 Amp, 70 watts per channel, digital and phono inputs, £600 CD player, E500 tuner, all in piano black finish, Celestion CS6 speakers, all in excellent condition with manuals and remotes, £650. Marantz 6003 CD player, only two months old, as new, £200. **02380 224003 (Southampton).**

ROTEL RA-06 AMP /RCD-06 CD/Epos M5 speakers (£1200) £550. All boxed in pristine condition. Includes Chord Crimson interconnect

and Chord Silverscreen speaker cable, Marantz CD6002 CD player, award winner in silver, boxed in pristine condition (£280) £120, Kimber Classic Powercords 1m, boxed as new. Under half price! £40 each, two available. Both for £70. **leet2009@hotmail.co.uk or 01384 412234 (West Midlands).**

MARANTZ SA-11 S2 SACD player, excellent condition, £1,900 ono. Shunyata Hydra 2 £275, Shunyata power cables £100 each. **07810 434589 (Surrey).**

THORENS TD160 BC with SME 3009 fixed head Grado cartridge, Pro-Ject phono amp, Standesign two tier (glass/ metal) stand. A1 condition. £400 ono. **mike222@blueyonder.co.uk or 01562 638119 (Worcestershire).**

TRANSPARENT MUSIC wave plus bi-wire 15-foot pair £200 ono, Mandrake silver wire interconnect phono, 1-metre pair £100, Roksan Kandy AM/FM tuner KT-1 mint, unboxed £100 ono. **020 8368 4228 or petersmyth2@googlemail.com (Barnet).**

MISSION M33 in beech finish with NAD C352, 80 watts per channel integrated amplifier. Unmarked in boxes with remote and manuals. £185. **01908 376966 (Milton Keynes).**

PIONEER FD-1009301 disc CD multiplayer. In excellent condition, with remote control and handbook. £50 ono. **01622 208476 (Maidstone).**

KIMBER D-60 digital cable 1-metre only, five hours' use £295. Kimber KCAG -14db CD interconnect 0.5metres £295. (£560 the pair) **01902 884694 (Dudley).**

SONY CD Player SCY 555 ES (£1,000) £375. Sony DAB/FM/AM tuner D777 ES (£500) £175, matching Champagne Gold finish. Can dem. **02476 711668 (Coventry).**

WANTED: Top quality Hi-fi separates and complete systems, Naim, Linn, Cyrus, Meridian, Arcam etc, fast, friendly response and willing to travel/pay cash. **781 5892458 (Colchester).**

NAIM CD5i-2 CD player £500, Naim Nait 5i-2 amp £400, Monitor Audio RS6 (cherry) speakers £300 all as new and boxed. Naim/Kudos upgrade forces sale. **07791 339784 or gary.pratchett@ntlworld.com or (Nottingham).**

ROBERTS MP23 CD/radio sound system unit, under warranty, boxed, only four months old. (£250) £145. **01304 360230 (Kent).**

DUNLOP SYSTEMDEK transcription turntable (the original one) finished in charcoal nextel, hinged lid, new RB350 arm and Goldring 1042 cartridge. Excellent condition. **07771 508444 (day) or 01205 722000 (Lincs).**

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Winners united

Everyone knows building a system from award-winners shouldn't be done. But we challenged *Jimmy Hughes* to probe 2010's possibilities

When magazines present awards to the 'best' hi-fi components at different price points, there's always a danger that – were you to assemble a system from the winners of each category – the end result might well be ill-matched and not very good. Hi-fi, like football, is a team sport, and success depends on each section playing its part.

While individual ability is very important, bringing together the right combination of 'players' and getting them to perform as a collective unit, produces results greater than the sum of the parts. What you don't want is an assortment of individually brilliant all-stars that fails to gel as a team.

There's more. The unique acoustic qualities of each listening room, adds a further complication. It's not enough to choose individual components that are sympathetic and compatible; they also have to suit the room in which the system is used. This introduces a huge unpredictable element into the mix.

Individual locations may superficially look quite similar in terms of size, shape and furnishings – yet the end result can be a totally different sound. It's a bit like football teams playing home and away; a hi-fi system may perform superbly in one location, only to fall-apart when taken somewhere else.

All hi-fi systems require time to settle-down and bed-in – you can't expect great results from the word go. There needs to be a period of acclimatisation. Sometimes things don't sound quite right when you first set the equipment up, but after a few hours (or days) the sound improves significantly.

Whether the sound really does change, or whether it's the listener's perception of it that alters, is difficult to say. But one thing's for sure; snap judgements in the first few minutes are dangerous. You need to give a hi-fi system at least a week to settle down – perhaps even a month or more if everything is brand-new.

Looking at this year's award winners, we reckon it should be possible to mix 'n' match with reasonable freedom within (and even beyond) each category. While some listeners might prefer the sound produced by a runner-up over that of the winner, such things come with the territory – hi-fi is very subjective; there are no absolutes.

However, one definite compatibility pitfall is matching amplifier output power to speaker sensitivity. Those with an eye on the excellent Luxman L550A-II, for example, need to bear in

mind its limited 20-watt output. The fact that it's a Pure Class A design means it delivers a bigger sound than its specifications indicate.

But, it's still only 20 watts. In comparison, the Rotel RC 1580/RB 1582 delivers a meaty 200 watts. Those thinking of partnering the Luxman with any of the three winning speakers in the above £2,000 category might face a potential problem because the Audiovector and PMCs offer 89dB sensitivity, while the Teufels achieve just 86dB.

It's all about your room, of course

Now, this isn't to say the Luxman couldn't be used with any of these speakers – it could. But, much would depend on room size and the sort of volume levels you like to listen at. Basically, you'd have to decide whether the extra 'scale' created by the Luxman's Pure Class A output subjectively offsets its limited 20 watts output.

Ultimately, there's no substitute for listening. Only by making careful comparisons can you be certain you've made the best choice – the selection that best suits your room and the sort of music you like to listen to. And even assuming you have made the right choice, things like cables can greatly influence the end result.

Placing the speakers in the most favourable part of the room, getting them the optimum distance apart and listening to them from the right place (and the correct height) makes a huge difference. Remember – when fine-tuning a hi-fi installation, there are a 1001 tiny 'victories' to be won – small battles that eventually win the war. ●

Half of Luxman's L550A-II factory output comes to the UK, we hear. We suspect that might go up, again!

It's a bit like football teams playing home and away; a hi-fi system may perform superbly in one location, only to fall apart somewhere else



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"There's no doubt about it, the Luxman is a genuine superstar."

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