

Big fun

Onkyo's punchy sounding A-9050 integrated amplifier



One for all

Loewe's super new SoundVision streaming system



Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

Issue No. **366**

AWARDS 2012

£3.99

AWARDS

2012

SPECIAL ISSUE

17 page guide to the year's best hi-fi



- STREAMERS ● CD PLAYERS ● DACS ● TURNTABLES ● AMPLIFIERS
- LOUDSPEAKERS ● SYSTEMS ● HEADPHONES & MUCH MORE!

Physical attraction

Naim's new CD5si Compact Disc player



HELP!

Five pages of your upgrading questions answered

Music and lights

Icon Audio MB 845 MKIIIm valve power amps



Good wood

Wharfedale goes retro: Denton Anniversary loudspeaker



A timeless musical experience



REFERENCE 5
Vacuum Tube Line-stage Preamplifier

■ ■ It is the best
valve preamplifier
I've ever used. ■ ■

Ken Kessler | Hi-Fi News | Jan 2010



REFERENCE CD8
Compact Disc Player

■ ■ Quite possibly
the best all-round
single box CD
player I've heard. ■ ■

Roy Gregory | Hi-Fi+ | Issue 64



REFERENCE PHONO 2
Vacuum Tube Phono Preamplifier

■ ■ The most
persuasively
lifelike **phonostage**
I've heard. ■ ■

Jonathan Valin | The Absolute Sound | Jan 2010

Over 40 years Audio Research has established a new syntax of emotional, evocative sound. Motivated by the uncompromising pursuit of the ultimate musical experience, Audio Research has created a succession of products that have each gained iconic status. Built by hand with the end user always in mind, Audio Research components combine innovation with longevity – all units being repairable to original performance standards, no matter how old.

The Audio Research collection encompasses both valve and solid-state technology, delivering some of the most critically acclaimed CD players and amplifiers yet devised. The three components featured above – the latest additions to the world-famous Reference line – have already received the rapturous reception one expects of this prestigious marque.

Like all true musical legends, Audio Research creates timeless classics; whichever component you choose, you'll find it's the ultimate sound investment. For details of the full range and your nearest dealer, contact Absolute Sounds.

audio research
HIGH DEFINITION

absolute sounds ltd
58 Durham Road, London SW20 0TW
T: +44 (0)20 89 71 39 09 F: +44 (0)20 88 79 79 62
www.absolutesounds.com info@absolutesounds.com



Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

Welcome

www.hifichoice.co.uk Issue No. **366** Awards 2012



16

Awards 2012 All the best kit of the past year



52

Naim CD5si Super new silver disc spinner

Music reviews



95

REM Document 25th Anniversary



Well, it's that time of year again! Clocks go back, coats go on, car headlamps beam and the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness makes way for the chill reality of winter. But despair not, for there's a whole new world of hi-fi to enjoy, and of course what better companion for it than

the annual *Hi-Fi Choice* Awards issue?

This special magazine focuses on the latest and greatest products we've reviewed over the past year. It's important on two levels. Obviously, if you're in the market for upgrading your system, it's a handy shortlist of the best new kit. Each category has its triumphant winner, a product of sparkling ability that's sure to bring a smile to any prospective purchaser. But we've also shortlisted two finalists too – these aren't included just to make up the numbers, they're essential auditions if you're doing your homework on what to buy next.

The Awards issue is also an interesting read because it shows which way the hi-fi wind is blowing, so to speak. This is the first ever *Hi-Fi Choice* Awards special to kick off with streamers. Traditionally, 'twas turntables and then latterly CD players that started the Awards section, but network music players have now finally come of age. We've also got special gongs for one-box systems and headphones, reflecting the recent growth in demand – and design excellence – of these two product categories. Plus of course, there's so much more...

So, pour a glass of something fortifying, throw a log on the fire, cue up one of your favourite tunes and relax back with this year's absolutely fabulous Awards extravaganza. Oh, and we'd just like to say that we couldn't have done it without you!

David Price Editor
 david.price@hifichoice.co.uk

BADGES EXPLAINED

OUR AWARDS



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



RECOMMENDED:
 Products that we feel meet a high standard of performance



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

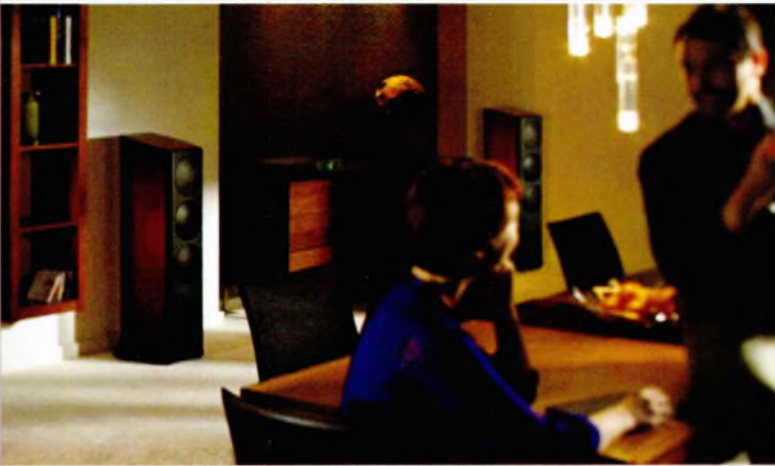


HADLOW HOUSE, 9 HIGH STREET, GREEN STREET GREEN, ORPINGTON, KENT BR6 6BG



world class sound...

NAIM launch the UnitiLite - a slimline all-in-one audio player



NAIM UnitiLite Slimline all-in-one audio player (NEW)

Elegant and slimline, the UnitiLite delivers extraordinary value. It comprises of: integrated CD player, eight-input preamplifier, 50 Watt power amplifier and optional FM and DAB radio tuner. It also offers access to the full range of new media music sources through network and USB inputs. The network input enables playback of audio files stored on UPnP™ servers such as the UnitiServe or home computers, and access to thousands of internet radio stations worldwide.



t. 01202 911 886

bourne-mouth showroom

e-mail: bourne-mouth@jordanacoustics.co.uk
address: Unit 2 - The Old Cart Building,
Parley Court Barns, Parley Green Lane, Hurn,
Bournemouth, BH23 6BB
Open: 9:30-5:30 Tuesday - Friday
9.30-3.00 Saturday

t. 01592 744 779

glenrothes showroom

e-mail: glenrothes@jordanacoustics.co.uk
address: 20-22 Cadham Centre, Glenrothes
Fife, KY7 6RU
Open: 9:30-5:30 Monday - Friday
Closed Saturday

- Large product range
- Free parking
- 0% flexible finance*
- Part exchange*
- Large selection of used items
- Home demonstrations*

visit our website: www.jordanacoustics.co.uk





marantz

McIntosh
LEGENDARY PERFORMANCE™

art loudspeakers



1



2



3



4

This is just a small collection of the world class products we represent

1

NEW TENSOR Mk 2 Series
from Adam Audio

2

NEW Premium 11 Series
from Marantz

3

NEW MC275 MK VI Amplifier
from McIntosh

4

NEW Alnico Series
from ART Loudspeakers



Jordan Acoustics are specialists in *World Class Audio Systems*

Building a true high-end system is not about collecting brands based on reviews. It is about finding a true synergy between components that sound magical together. That palpable reproduction, full of dynamics and realism just how the original artist intended. Fingers on frets, breathing of vocalists, the tautness of a drum skin... the devil is in the detail. **That's why we love great hi-fi and that's exactly why you should give us a call.**

1000 Like

Win a set of wonderful award-winning Focal Spirit One Headphones.

All you have to do is 'Like Us' on facebook. Once we have reached 1000 'Likes', we will choose at random one lucky winner who will receive the set of Focal Spirit One Headphones with our compliments. **What are you waiting for?**

Hi-Fi Choice Contents

hifichoice.co.uk Issue No. **366** Awards 2012

NEWS & OPINION

8 Audiofile

The latest developments in the world of hi-fi

71 Letters

Have your say on audiophile matters

79 Opinion

The *Hi-Fi Choice* team say it as they see it!

95 Music reviews

Essential new releases reviewed

130 Backchat

Assorted hi-fi hearsay

READER SERVICES

124 Next issue

What we hope to bring you next month...

126 Reader classifieds

Buy and sell your kit for FREE here

FEATURES

16 Awards 2012

We announce the best gear of the past year

90 Year in Music Awards

What you won't see at the *Brits*...

98 Dealer Visit

PJ hi-fi dems three serious sound systems

COVER STORY

Hi-Fi Choice
WINNER
2012

16 Awards 2012



LOOK!

111 Choice Extras

7 pages of the latest and greatest gadgets, gizmos, cables, supports and accessories



08



Audiofile: Monitor Audio WS100 speakers

90



Year in music: Awards special



66

Choice Exotica: Icon Audio MB 845 MkII

"Huge, heavy and power hungry, they offer the joys of tubes without the pitfalls"

Tim Jarman: Icon Audio MB 845 MkII **p66**

TESTED THIS MONTH



56

Onkyo A-9050 integrated amplifier



52 Naim
CD5si CD player



60

Wharfedale Denton Anniversary speaker

REVIEWS

Kit testing

52 Naim

CD5si CD player

56 Onkyo

A-9050 integrated amplifier

60 Wharfedale

Denton Anniversary loudspeaker

64 Loewe

SoundVision streaming system

66 Icon Audio

MB 845 MkII monoblock power amplifiers

MINI TEST

CD cleaners

102 Marigo Labs

3D Stabiliser CD Tuning Mat and
Evolution Signature CD Mat

102 Audience

Audience Auric Illuminator

103 Furutech

PC-2 CD and DVD cleaner

103 Russ Andrews

Relees Spray CD and DVD treatment



64

Loewe SoundVision streaming system

Never miss an issue – turn to p50 for our latest subs offer

Audiofile

The latest industry news

Wireless world

Could Monitor Audio's new WS100 loudspeaker package speed the demise of cables, asks **David Price**?

PRICE: £250

AVAILABLE: NOW

CONTACT: 01568 740580

WEB: MONITORAUDIO.CO.UK

Some day, will all hi-fi systems be like this? It wasn't so long ago, when the first wireless loudspeaker systems came out, that they were mind-blowingly expensive, prone to dropouts and of highly questionable sonic ability. I certainly remember auditioning several designs and thinking, "nice idea, but it just isn't there yet..." Now though, we're finally getting to the stage where wireless loudspeakers are becoming credible, affordable alternatives to wired designs, especially in the mass market.

It's a significant step to have companies like Monitor Audio in on the action. There are various nice 'lifestyle' designs – from the likes of Loewe, for example – but Monitor Audio is a dedicated speaker specialist. Its new AirStream WS100 wireless multimedia system is said to be very simple to use: just position the speakers where you want them, plug in the USB transmitter and then listen to your music in CD-quality. The USB dongle transmitter gives wireless connection to any laptop or PC, the device configuring automatically and by itself.

The 1.8kg speakers use the robust (2.4GHz) SKAA wireless transmission system, and sport built-in 20W Class D amplification, plus custom-designed 75mm C-CAM metal-coned mid/bass drivers and 19mm gold dome tweeters. Internal digital signal

processing tunes the signal to suit the enclosures. The loudspeakers themselves are infinite baffle designs with rigid diecast (125x120x120mm) metal shells and a scratch-resistant glass top panel. A unique magnetic pivot system allows the speakers to be tilted backwards, the company says.

The prospect of multi-room is a reality, with up to four WS100 systems able to receive the same source at up to ten metres, and the addition of further dongles enables pristine CD-quality audio to be sent from up to four audio sources to the same WS100 loudspeakers. There's a remote control supplied, and this

can also control music from a media player or through the auxiliary input. The volume can also be adjusted via a button on the right-hand WS100 speaker. While no substitute for high end hi-fi of course, it looks like the WS100 is a highly flexible solution for those who wish to live without wires.



MONITOR AUDIO

MONITOR AUDIO

A highly flexible solution for those
who wish to live without wires



Like a hurricane...

**YOU'VE GOT TO ADMIRE NEIL YOUNG
– IT'S NOT EVERY AGEING ROCK STAR**

who fights the good fight for high quality sound like him. And indeed, over the years, he's paid this noble cause more than just lip-service, he's actually put his money – and his reputation – where his mouth is. Young's new Pono player and matching download service, coming soon to an Internet near you, is one of very few attempts to make music sound better.

Of course, Linn, Naim and B&W have been pushing hi-res downloads for a while now – and all power to their corporate elbows for so doing – but Young's Pono project has a unique chance of tapping into a certain sort of music lover, simply because of *who* the great man is. Young showed a prototype of his Pono portable player on the *David Letterman Show* last month, and judging from this it wins no prizes for style or compactness. However, it is capable of playing 24-bit/192kHz resolution files and apparently has a high memory capacity – needed for all those hi-res files, of course.

Importantly, it's designed to work with a soon-to-be-launched bespoke music download service, one that will sell music that has been remastered with hi-res in mind. There's said to be no use of compression – Neil Young describes it as being the same as the master tape.

So far, the technical specifics remain sketchy, but on the face of it, Pono seems a serious and earnest attempt at giving a certain sort of music buyer (discerning types like us who read hi-fi magazines!) the chance to hear music closer to how it sounds in the studio. We wish him well – long may it run...

Courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics



**Not content to be
a rock legend, Neil
Young is trying to
bring serious sound
quality to the masses**

Air electric

Integrated audio system from legendary brand

The iconic McIntosh brand, recently acquired by Fine Sounds (owner of Wadia Digital, Audio Research and Sonus Faber), has launched an interesting new one-box system called the McAire. It features Apple's AirPlay, and allows users to stream music from their iTunes music libraries on Mac or PC, as well as music stored on their iPhone, iPad or iPod touch, though their Wi-Fi network.

McAire is a free-standing wireless sound system, featuring some technology from the prestigious McIntosh Reference System. With classic façade featuring the iconic blue output meters and hand-crafted black glass front panels, the single box design eliminates the need for in-wall wiring.

PRICE: \$3,000 **AVAILABLE:** NOW **WEB:** MCINTOSHLABS.COM



Net set

Denon's new lifestyle network CD music system

Denon recently announced a new lifestyle network CD music system, that is said to offer almost unlimited access to modern music sources. Built on the success of last year's CEOL model N-7, the new CEOL N-8 is, says the company, a stylishly designed all-in-one solution and comes with embedded Spotify, and an integral Wi-Fi antenna,

It supports FLAC HD up to 24 bit/192kHz and is controllable via the new Denon Remote App for iOS and Android devices. Apple devices can be connected either by the integrated iPod dock (30-pin connector), the front USB or by AirPlay. Music on a PC,

network attached storage (NAS) and online music can be streamed, as the new CEOL is DLNA 1.5 certified and can talk to devices on the network. Online music services Spotify and last.fm are supported, too.

The system can be expanded via the digital or analogue inputs by connecting to a TV or set-top box. It also features a built-in FM stereo tuner with RDS, and a decent quality CD drive.

The CEOL comes with a network receiver (RCD-N8) and matching speaker system (SC-N8), and is available in either black or white. The system costs £499.99 with speakers and £399.99 without.



PRICES: £399.99-£499.99 **AVAILABLE:** NOW **CONTACT:** 02890 279830 **WEB:** DENON.CO.UK

Hi-ho silver

PARASOUND'S SILVER Z CUSTOM MINI SEPARATES can be used as a premium desktop system or to mix and match with multi-room kit. These highly compact designs measure a little over 20cm wide and under 5cm high, and the line up consists of the Zamp v.3 power amp (£399), the Zprez preamp and Zcd CD player (£449 each). The Zdac DAC will follow in December (price tba).

The Zamp V.3 is a two-channel amp rated at 45W at 8 ohms and can be used with an AVR to power a second zone, to power a multi-room audio system, to partner the Zpreamp and Zcd for a desktop system or to connect to a Sonos for an audio upgrade.

The Zprez is a stereo preamp that features four line level inputs, four composite video inputs, and can be used with the Zamp V.3 as a hi-fi desktop system, an audio line driver/volume control or to control a multi-room system using multiple Zpre 2s.

The Zcd completes the current trio and has a built-in volume control, playback of MP3s from a CD-R or USB flash drive, a composite video output to view MP3 file names, as well as optical and coaxial digital outputs.

parasound.com



“The Truth, nothing more,
nothing less...”



“Ridiculously good in every
aspect of vinyl playback”
Diva IISP Michael Fremer, *Stereophile*, January 2011

 **AVID HI-FI**

Every AVID product is born of a thoroughbred passion for performance.

Like a window on the recording, ruthlessly honest yet totally engaging, each listening reveals a genuine insight in the artist and session.

All British-made, our full range of turntables, amplifiers and accessories can transform the way you think about music.

Before you decide - arrange an audition to experience the AVID difference.



Analogue Seduction, 6 Manor View, Whittlesey, Peterborough Tel: 01733 350 878

O'Brien Hi-fi, 60 Durham Road, West Wimbledon, London Tel: 020 8946 1528

Progressive Audio, 2 Maryland Court, Rainham, Kent, Tel: 01634 389004

www.avidhifi.co.uk

AVID HI-FI LIMITED, Bicton Industrial Park, Kimbolton, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE28 0LW
Tel: +44(0)1480 869 900 Fax: +44(0)1480 869 909



Thirty something

Primare's new DAC is designed to sing with hi-res music files

The new Primare DAC 30 is, according to the company, a fully balanced high performance 24-bit/192kHz stereo DAC designed to render the best possible audio quality from computer-based, high-resolution music files stored on hard drive or NAS.

Equipped with a wide array of inputs, including asynchronous USB-B, stereo balanced AES EBU and three pairs of S/PDIF coaxial

and TOSLINK connectors, the DAC30 will act as an audiophile bridge between any music system and a PC or Mac. It uses the processing engine of the Primare

BD32 universal player to convert low-distortion analogue signals to any preamplifier stage via a pair of balanced XLR or single-ended RCA outputs.



PRICE: £2,000 **AVAILABLE:** NOW **CONTACT:** 01423 358846 **WEB:** PRIMARE.NET

Norwegian good

Now Electrocompaniet has a single box system too!

Electrocompaniet announces what it calls a revolutionary new product to its range, the ECI 6DS. An all-in-one music-system, it is said to stream music from your network, either wired or wireless (Wi-Fi). Blu-ray players, CD players and satellite television tuners can also be connected, and everything can be controlled remotely.

The ECI 6DS has an onboard DAC with USB, coax and TOSLINK inputs, and houses a powerful 2x125W integrated amplifier. Analogue sources can also be connected via balanced and phono inputs.



PRICE: £4,315 **AVAILABLE:** NOW **CONTACT:** 020 8893 5835 **WEB:** ELECTROCOMPANIET.NO

DNA strand

Monster goes global with its new DNA headphone range

Monster has announced a global alliance for the launch of a new headphone range called Monster DNA. These headphones bring music listeners a sound that is as powerful and striking as the bold design of the headphone itself, says the company. More than a headphone, Monster DNA will look to serve today's music listener and music artists with a focus on music

sharing and social awareness reaching the music entertainment community globally through an integrated campaign across Viacom music and entertainment.

The Monster DNA headphone range includes seven different versions, featuring On-Ear models in Black, White, Cobalt Blue and Perfect Teal (£169.95 each), and Black and White In-Ear versions at £79.95.



PRICE: £79.95-£169.95 **AVAILABLE:** NOW **WEB:** MONSTERPRODUCTS.COM

SERIOUS PERFORMANCE DESIGNED WITH ELEGANCE



"Clarity is excellent, with a wealth of inner detail being presented to the ear"
HiFi Choice, review of M25, Oct. 2012 edition



Stocked exclusively at:

Superfi | www.superfi.co.uk

Birmingham - Tel: 0121 631 2675

London - Tel: 020 7388 1300

Manchester - Tel: 0161 835 1156

Music Matters | www.musicmatters.co.uk

Birmingham - Tel: 0121 429 2811

Darlington - Tel: 01325 481418

Hatch End - Tel: 020 8420 1925

Leamington Spa - Tel: 01926 888644

Stourbridge - Tel: 01384 444184

Stafford - Tel: 01785 258 216

Solihull - Tel: 0121 742 0254

Stratford Upon Avon - Tel: 01789 414533

Sutton Coldfield - Tel: 0121 354 2311

MX factor

Chord Electronics latest Chordette range additions...

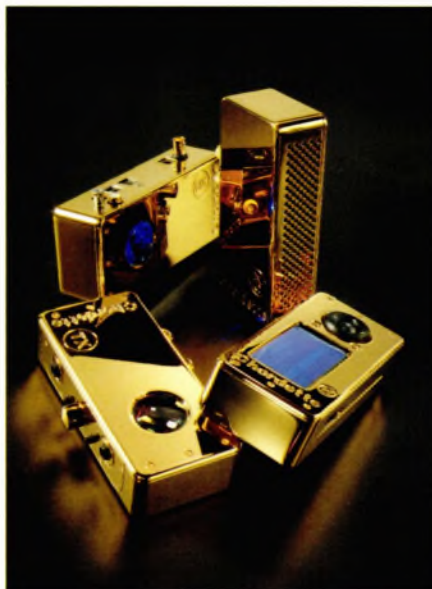
Chord Electronics has launched a new MX Series: four restyled additions to its boutique Chordette range including the IX streamer, SX amplifier, QX 192kHz DSD DAC (£2,490 each) and the TX headphone amp (£2,400). Each can be used in its own right, or integrated as a system using Chord Electronics' recently launched Coupé Carry rack system.

The SX is a vertical MOSFET Class AB amplifier which can be used in stereo or mono mode. Based on the Chordette Scamp amplifier, with RCA inputs added in place of the 48kHz USB input, it will allow other MX-type units to play directly into the apt-X Bluetooth 35W amp.

The advanced QX DAC is based on Chord Electronics' QuteHD and is capable of playing DSD and 192kHz files over USB. The FPGA (field programmable gate array) device can also accept the digital BNC output from the IX.

Based on the new Index network music player, the IX streamer and Internet radio device can access music stored on a network computer, NAS or USB key, with control using a smartphone or tablet app, with full cover art display, the company says.

The TX is a headphone amplifier with both balanced and RCA inputs, plus a high-quality USB input for music replay from computers, etc., through the unit's DAC. With two outputs, two people can listen simultaneously.



Finish options on the series really are unexpectedly elaborate, even for Chord. They include black, fine-beaded aluminium (silver) and a highly polished gold-plated finish for the more ostentatious audiophile with money to spare!

PRICE: £2,400-£2,490 **AVAILABLE:** NOW **CONTACT:** 01622 721444 **WEB:** CHORDELECTRONICS.CO.UK

NEWS IN BRIEF

• PANASONIC HAS LAUNCHED ITS NEW HXD SERIES HEADPHONES.

Available in a wide selection of colours, two models will be available in the series; the HXD3 (£59.99) and HXD5 (£69.99).

The HXD3 is a Bi-texture Combination, with coloured metal housing on a matt surface frame. The soft silicone head pad not only enhances the design appeal of the model, but also stays comfortably on your ear without slipping, says Panasonic, and is the ideal material for noise isolation. Universally attractive with minimalist design, the HXD3 should appeal to a range of music lovers.

The HXD5 also sports minimalist industrial design, with a ring-shaped accent colour on the housing that makes this model look like a real museum piece. Available in two colours – white and titanium black – it boasts large 40mm drivers with faux leather earpads. It's said to give quality sound despite its small size.

"With the HXD Series, we wanted to introduce not only a clear sound, but a fresh and sharp design allowing music lovers to have the best of both worlds", says Helen Booth of Panasonic UK. "The HXD Series headphones lend themselves to a variety of styles, while still providing the great technology we pride ourselves upon."

panasonic.net



• RADIOPLAYER APP AVAILABLE.

A ground-breaking partnership between the BBC and commercial radio has just launched a brand new mobile app. Available from the Apple App store, and shortly on Android phones via Google Play Store, Radioplayer is the first industry-backed app putting UK radio in one place, on a mobile device.

It boasts a range of features including a station scroller and a search engine to access live and catch-up radio. The app is designed to complement existing station branded apps and aims to help grow overall digital radio listening. It represents, says Radioplayer, a step towards future radio interfaces – simple and engaging. **itunes.apple.com**

Planet sweet

ELIPSON'S first active loudspeaker features high quality Bang & Olufsen ICEPower amplification and WELL Kleer audio wireless technologies.

With the Planet LW, the ability to enjoy streaming music has never been easier, says the company. Just plug both speakers into the mains and use the included USB or iPhone/iPad dongle to transmit music to the LW speakers. You will be able to control the volume and tracks by using your computer, your iPhone or the remote control.

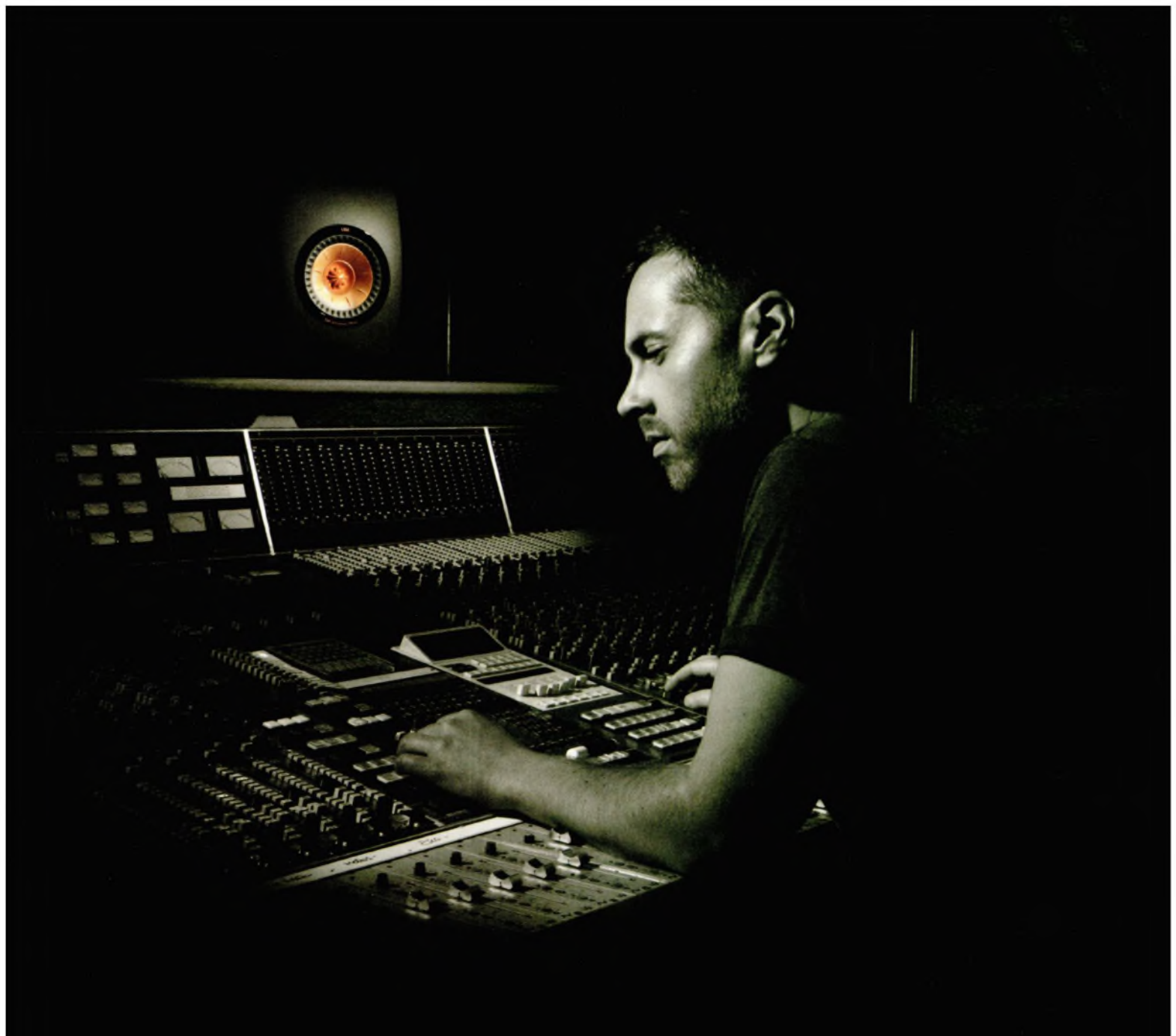
Derived from its passive sister speaker, the Planet Ls, these new Elipson Planet LW speakers use active crossover topology to push, says Elipson, the Planet L speaker to new levels of audio quality. Each tweeter and woofer has its own B&O ICEPower amp for maximum control, and clearer high frequencies within an energy-efficient package.

The WELL wireless link creates a lossless wireless stream transmitting 16-bit/44kHz CD quality audio, the company says, without degrading your music and retaining HD music quality without compression.

The new Elipson Planet LW loudspeakers are offered in high-gloss black, white and red cabinet

finishes and are available at a cost of £1,200. Accessory options include a floor stand, wall mount and ceiling mount. **elipson.com**





ULTIMATE STUDIO EXPERIENCE

'This is a cracking little speaker, sweetly voiced yet highly revealing of source quality, it surprises and delights in equal measure. And it sounds big, defying its compact dimensions. It deserves to be a runaway success for KEF.'

Hi-Fi News Yearbook 2012



SCAN TO LEARN
ABOUT LS50

 @KEF Audio

 KEF Audio UK

LS50

50th Anniversary Model

Enjoy your music precisely the way it was first recorded. Unheard of in such a compact design, LS50 delivers a deeply rich, multi-dimensional 'soundstage experience' that is out of all proportion to its size. Designed using KEF's cutting-edge acoustic modeling, LS50 is the ultimate mini monitor for the home.

www.kef.com

AWARDS 2012

Hi-Fi Choice
WINNER
2012

**Ladies and gentlemen,
please be upstanding for
Hi-Fi Choice magazine's
annual Awards special...**

Welcome

Yes, it's that time of year again folks, the magical moment when the best products we've tested over the past twelve months assemble on stage to receive their coveted *Hi-Fi Choice Award*. In this special section, you'll find our pick of the latest and greatest kit – products which rise head and shoulders above their peers to give a winning mix of sound quality and value for money.

THE JUDGING

The worthy winners were arrived at after an exhaustive selection process in which each *Hi-Fi Choice* reviewer was asked to nominate his favourite in each category. Further consulting ensued, and finally the editor decided which product on the shortlist got the gong. Many winners also came top in our unique *Blind Listening Group Tests*, further underlining their popularity.

Each category lists the section winner and the two leading finalists, all products that should be at the very top of your audition list. Finally, we list our *Product of the Year* – the highest accolade that this magazine can bestow. So dear reader – it's time to don your finest threads, uncork the champagne and enjoy the show...

STREAMER	19
CD PLAYER	21
DIGITAL CONVERTOR	23
TURNTABLE	25
AMPLIFIER	27
STANDMOUNT LOUDSPEAKER	29
FLOORSTANDING LOUDSPEAKER	31
HEADPHONES	33
PHONO STAGE	35
CABLE	37
CHOICE EXTRA	39
CHOICE EXOTICA	41
INNOVATION	43
SYSTEM	45
PRODUCT OF THE YEAR	47



▶ **DAVID PRICE**
Hi-Fi Choice editor and
judging coordinator



▶ **RICHARD BLACK**
Professional musician and
Hi-Fi Choice reviewer



▶ **MALCOLM STEWARD**
Audiophile and
Hi-Fi Choice writer



▶ **JAMES MICHAEL HUGHES**
Audiophile and
Hi-Fi Choice reviewer



▶ **EDWARD SELLEY**
Industry expert and
Hi-Fi Choice writer



▶ **JASON KENNEDY**
Hi-Fi Choice reviewer and
former editor



▶ **PATRICK CLEASBY**
Technology consultant and
Hi-Fi Choice writer



▶ **TIMOTHY JARMAN**
Electronics engineer and
Hi-Fi Choice reviewer



▶ **CHANNA VITHANA**
Design expert and
Hi-Fi Choice writer

Escape to Reality

Designed for people with the passion for an impeccable audio experience

DALI EPICON 6

Allow sensational musical moments to live on in the comfort of your own home with the revolutionary EPICON 6. Designed to make a lasting impression at every level, the exterior of the loudspeaker is as captivating to the eye as the sound is to the ear.

"The EPICON 6 is a very impressive and musically revealing loudspeaker that is finished to a standard that even in the high end is above and beyond the call. The motor system technology that DALI has developed gives this speaker clear ability and puts the company in contention with the biggest names in the business".

HiFi Choice Nov. 2012



IN ADMIRATION OF MUSIC

www.dali-speakers.com

Chord Electronics

Chordette Index

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£900
CONTACT:
01622 721444
WEB ADDRESS:
chordelectronics.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
365

Powerful streaming platform set inside a small but perfectly formed bespoke milled aluminium chassis, this boasts aesthetic and ergonomic surprise and delight, but its super sound will endear long after the

visual novelty has worn off. In a fast-expanding, competitive market, the Index wins because it dares to be different in its packaging, while delivering the sonic goods.



Pioneer

N-50-K

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£500
CONTACT:
01753 789789
WEB ADDRESS:
pioneer.eu/uk/
REVIEW ISSUE:
359

Superbly engineered, capable budget streamer; few will need more.



Cambridge Audio

Stream Magic 6

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£700
CONTACT:
0870 900 100
WEB ADDRESS:
cambridgeaudio.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
363

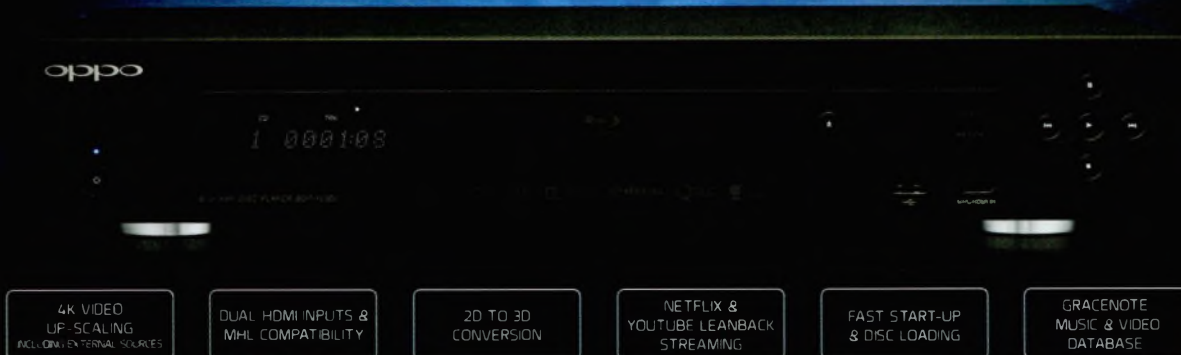
Great all-round package with loads of facilities and fine sound.



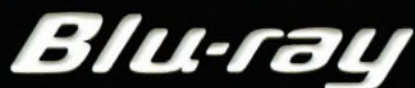
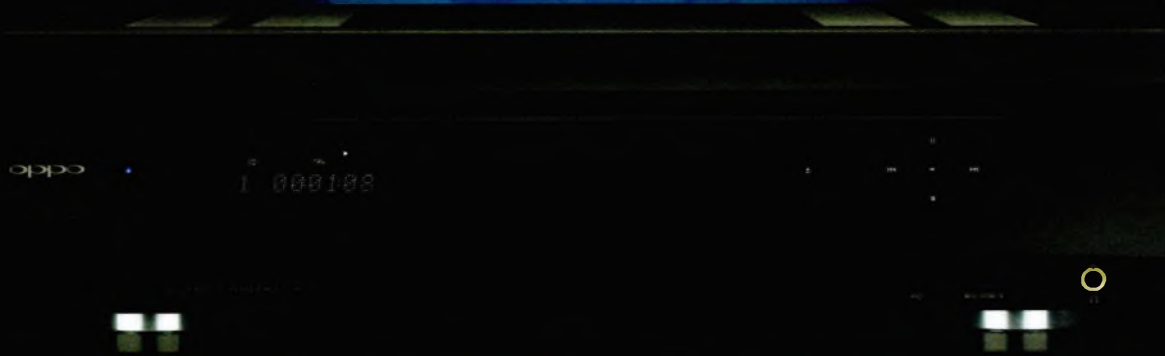
OPPO®

THE NEXT STEP
IN UNIVERSAL DISC PLAYER DESIGN AND ENGINEERING

BDP-103EU



BDP-105EU



For movie enthusiasts, audiophiles and those who take their entertainment very seriously.

www.oppo-bluray.co.uk

Cambridge Audio

Azur 851C

► DETAILS

PRICE:

£1,195

CONTACT:

0870 900 1000

WEB ADDRESS:

cambridgeaudio.com

REVIEW ISSUE:

359

The latest crop of Compact Disc spinners have turned into multi-source DACs with CD-drives built in. The 851C was one of the first to blaze this trail, and did so assuredly. Impeccably engineered and with sonics the

match of most machines at twice the price, what's not to like? Smooth and svelte sounding yet commanding and incisive, only its rivals will regret the advent of this sparkingly talented new CD player.

**Hi-Fi Choice
WINNER
2012**



Cyrus

CD8 SE2

► DETAILS

PRICE:

£1,200

CONTACT:

01480 410900

WEB ADDRESS:

cyrusaudio.co.uk

REVIEW ISSUE:

358

Beautifully packaged, elegantly engineered CD player with fine sound.

**Hi-Fi Choice
FINALIST
2012**



Micromega

CD-20

► DETAILS

PRICE:

£1,222

CONTACT:

020 8971 3909

WEB ADDRESS:

micromega-hifi.com

REVIEW ISSUE:

358

Highly emotive in its sonic character, this charms like few others at the price.

**Hi-Fi Choice
FINALIST
2012**





Elite Machine

Hand-built and fine-tuned, GX establishes a new standard of excellence for its class.

"Monitor Audio's GX50 speaker is a potent performer, majoring on insight, clarity and soundstaging. It opens up recordings in a way that few price rivals can."

- GX50 - Hi-Fi Choice September 2012



Audiolab

M-DAC

► DETAILS

PRICE:

£599

CONTACT:

01480 447700

WEB ADDRESS:

audiolab.co.uk

REVIEW ISSUE:

359

Sometimes a product comes along that comprehensively outshines not just its immediate competition, but many products costing much more. Audiolab's M-DAC is one such design, offering a level of musical insight that's amazing at the price. Factor in its versatile features, easy firmware upgradability and superb build, and it's a seriously persuasive purchasing proposition!

Hi-Fi Choice
WINNER
2012



Rega

DAC

► DETAILS

PRICE:

£500

CONTACT:

01702 333071

WEB ADDRESS:

rega.co.uk

REVIEW ISSUE:

357

Gloriously musical sound, one that's refined way beyond its price.

Hi-Fi Choice
FINALIST
2012



Perreaux Audiant

DP32 (DAC/preamp)

► DETAILS

PRICE:

£2,190

CONTACT:

01333 425 999

WEB ADDRESS:

audioemotion.co.uk

REVIEW ISSUE:

365

Superb premium priced preamplifier with a first-class digital convertor built-in.

Hi-Fi Choice
FINALIST
2012





PACIFIC 3 SA



i02



ARCHIPEL 17 ICD



SANTORIN 25
SUBWOOFER

Expression. Emotion. Expérience.

From the first Cabasse crafted violins made in the Vosges Mountains in 1740 to the latest Pacific 3 SA loudspeakers, the name Cabasse has always been synonymous with essence and thrill of pure sound.

With a range that spans both traditional and design-led loudspeakers, all of which conform to the founder George Cabasse's obsession with reproducing the emotion of live concerts, without alteration, colouration or distortion, Cabasse has a loudspeaker that suits your needs – be it the compact i02 spheres, or the new Pacific 3 SA semi-active speaker, the Archipel custom installation series or the range topping L'Océan and La Sphere with their four-way co-axial point source drive units.

A member of the Canon Group, Cabasse is based in Brest, Brittany where its proximity to the ocean inspires its team; whether they be music lovers, musicians, cinema buffs, sailors or landlovers who love the open spaces, to share their genuine passion for the emotions of live sound.

Experience it for yourself at your local Cabasse stockist:

Bartletts Hi-Fi, London www.bartlettshifi.com

Coherent Systems, Chalfont St. Peter www.coherent-systems.co.uk

Fanthorpes, Hull www.fanthorpes.co.uk

Glasgow Audio, Glasgow www.glasgowaudio.com

Holburn Hi-Fi, Aberdeen www.holburnhifi.co.uk

Rock Solid Sounds, Billingshurst www.rocksolidsounds.co.uk

Senso, Truro www.senso-systems.co.uk

Soundcraft, Ashford www.soundcrafthifi.com

Cabasse
www.cabasse.com

Rega RP6

► **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£798
CONTACT:
01702 333071
WEB ADDRESS:
rega.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
358

When you've got a winning formula, it's always risky to tamper with it, but the new RP6 shows that Rega's trusty belt drive platform can be made even better still. A number of judicious tweaks, intelligently applied, have resulted in one of the very best sounding turntables for the money – while retaining its simple, elegant lines and consummate ease of use.



Pro-Ject Debut Carbon

► **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£300
CONTACT:
01235 511166
WEB ADDRESS:
henleydesigns.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
361

A fine entry-level turntable gets better still, making it a top budget buy.



Inspire Hi-Fi Monarch Junior

► **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£2,999
CONTACT:
01246 472222
WEB ADDRESS:
inspirehifi.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
362

Brilliant high end vinyl spinner with clever design and battleship build.



P R I M A R E

AWARD-WINNING DESIGN
NOW WITH HIGH-RES STREAMING

The MM30 multimedia upgrade adapts the award-winning I32 integrated amplifier and PRE32 stereo preamplifier for audiophile streaming, internet radio and gapless audio playback. It's a genuine 24/192 DAC board including coax, TOSLINK, USB-A, asynchronous USB-B inputs, and a high resolution coax output.



iPad® App

UK Distribution
karma
audio - visual
karma-av.co.uk

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR PRODUCTS

PRIMARE.NET

Cyrus

6a

► **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£699
CONTACT:
01480 435577
WEB ADDRESS:
cyrusaudio.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
364

Not the most powerful mid-price integrated amplifier around, this wee Cyrus is nevertheless one of the most enjoyable to listen to, making music like no other similarly priced designs. Factor in its fine build and finish, iconic styling and easy upgradability, and it truly deserves our best amplifier award of 2012!



Cambridge Audio

Azur 851A

► **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£1,195
CONTACT:
0870 900 1000
WEB ADDRESS:
cambridgeaudio.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
359

Excellent do-it-all design boasting a highly precise and powerful sound.



Roksan Caspian

M2

► **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£1,649
CONTACT:
020 89006801
WEB ADDRESS:
roksan.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
356

Brilliant sounding premium-priced amp with oodles of pep and punch.



drDock

Amazing sound from your iPad, iPhone and iPod.



Meet a dock with a difference. The Arcam drDock is a digital dock that upgrades the audio performance of your iPad, iPhone or iPod, while seamlessly connecting docked Apple devices to your hi-fi, home cinema and TV.

The drDock bypasses Apple's standard digital-to-analogue converter (DAC) in favour of its own, high-quality design – the same superior DAC driving our award-winning rPAC. Hook the drDock up to any hi-fi or home cinema system to instantly hear more from your Apple. Browse and control music via the drDock's remote handset, or use your existing remote if you have compatible Arcam components.

Enjoy your music and movie library, or run streaming apps such as Spotify for audio-boostered access to a world of songs. Anything your Apple device can play will sound better.

Want to view your videos? An HDMI cable connects the drDock to your TV; ideal for watching movies on your travels – aided by the international plug pack provided. The drDock also charges and syncs Apple devices.

Add solid build quality, including a non-slip rubber base, and you have another fine addition to our new rSeries, uniting high-tech products with hi-fi values.

Essentials

- ✓ Supports all iPads; iPhone 4, 4S; iPod Touch 4th Gen
- ✓ Syncs to PC and Mac.
- ✓ Stereo RCA, USB and Arcam control cables included
- ✓ Outputs: Stereo RCA; HDMI; SPDIF (for external DAC)
- ✓ Universal power voltage; international plug set included
- ✓ Remote control included, or use handset from Arcam Solo Mini, Solo Neo, T32, AVR360, AVR400, AVR600, AV888



"A master class in bolstering audio performance"

Trusted Reviews

ARCAM

www.arcam.co.uk/drDock

Made for

iPod iPhone iPad

Boston Acoustics

M25

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£579.90
CONTACT:
02890 279830
WEB ADDRESS:
bostona.eu/en/
REVIEW ISSUE:
363

Consummately smooth, open and polished sounding speaker.

Hi-Fi Choice
FINALIST
2012



PMC

twenty.22

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£1,795
CONTACT:
0870 4441044
WEB ADDRESS:
pmc-speakers.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
359

Just a little unusual in engineering terms, but the sound that this premium priced standmounter serves up is quite extraordinary. As befits a product of the Professional Monitor Company, it gives a powerful, grippy, punchy performance that's confident and assured at all listening levels, but there's real finesse there too. Little compares to this fine small speaker.

Hi-Fi Choice
WINNER
2012



Audiosmile

Kensai

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£1,503
CONTACT:
07952 478193
WEB ADDRESS:
audiosmile.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
355

Brilliant miniature monitor with wonderfully open sound.

Hi-Fi Choice
FINALIST
2012



SET YOUR MUSIC FREE


MARTIN LOGAN

*'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)

Nothing brings music to life like
MartinLogan speakers. Unique
technologies, seamlessly fused to
create a sound so spacious, so open, it
makes ordinary speakers seem hopelessly
constrained.

26 years of electrostatic evolution has led to
MartinLogan's latest creation: the mighty
Summit X. Key to the new speaker's extraordinary
performance are its advanced XStat™
electrostatic panel and perfectly integrated
Controlled Dispersion Powered Force™ woofer
section, effortlessly extending bass response to
subterranean depths.

Yet the Summit X never sounds heavy. On the
contrary, its performance is extraordinarily fast and
open, painting an image that dances boldly before
the listener, fully scaled and unconstrained,
a sound that's natural, effortless and startlingly real.

The pinnacle of MartinLogan's hybrid electrostatic
technology, the Summit X joins an extensive range
of speakers encompassing freestanding, on-wall
and in-wall models, from affordable hybrid designs
and standalone subwoofers to the awesome CLX
– the best full-range electrostatic speaker money
can buy.

Set your music free with MartinLogan speakers,
brought to you by Absolute Sounds – premier
importer of the world's finest hi-fi.



absolute sounds ltd
58 Durham Road, London SW20 0TW
T: +44 (0)20 89 71 39 09 F: +44 (0)20 88 79 79 62
www.absolutesounds.com info@absolutesounds.com



KEF R700

► **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£2,000
CONTACT:
01622 672261
WEB ADDRESS:
kef.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
360

Hugely enjoyable big banger with an expansive and musical nature.



Q Acoustics 2050i

► **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£550
CONTACT:
01279 501111
WEB ADDRESS:
qacoustics.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
364

In the great scheme of floorstanding loudspeakers, never has one offered so much for so little. This big, heavy box is superbly built and finished (especially in the optional piano gloss), and provides a performance to match. Powerful, spacious and detailed like nothing at the price, it gives a gripping, visceral sound, yet is smooth and refined too.

Wilson Benesch Square 3

► **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£4,450
CONTACT:
0114 285 2656
WEB ADDRESS:
wilson-benesch.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
363

Meticulously built with an enthralling, open and spacious sound.



THE FUTURE OF HI-FI

State-of-the-art solutions for the digital generation



The Future of Hi-Fi is coming...

Our new range of all-in-one systems and digital separates combine the convenience and power of the digital revolution with the foot-tapping, spine-tingling musical performance on which Naim has built its reputation. From the pinnacle of digital performance offered by the NDS network player, to the compact convenience of the UnitiQute all-in-one player, there's a solution for you.

You can experience these revolutionary new products at a 'The Future of Hi-Fi' live event near you this Autumn.

To find out more and for a full list of dates and participating retailers visit www.naimaudio.com/future-of-hi-fi


world class sound...

Audio-Technica

ATH-A900X

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£290
CONTACT:
01235 511166
WEB ADDRESS:
eu.audio-technica.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
359

Because competition in the headphone market is so tough, it takes a special pair of cans to win this award – and Audio-Technica's A900X is precisely this. It sounds clean, open and smooth with oodles of detail and insight – and you'll want to listen all day and all of the night thanks to the high level of comfort, courtesy of a clever headband design. Build is excellent, too. A worthy winner.

Hi-Fi Choice
WINNER
2012



Focal

Spirit One

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£199
CONTACT:
0845 6602680
WEB ADDRESS:
focal.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
357

A great high end headphone from the famous speaker brand.

Hi-Fi Choice
FINALIST
2012



Philips

Fidelio X1

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£270
CONTACT:
0844 338 0489
WEB ADDRESS:
philips.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
365

Carefully crafted new design with a silky smooth, svelte sound.

Hi-Fi Choice
FINALIST
2012





CYRUS

ENGINEERED TO ENTERTAIN

It's been another
award-winning year!

Visit your local Cyrus retailer to hear for
yourself what all the fuss is about

**WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012**

STEREO AMPLIFIERS
BEST STEREO AMP £600-£1000
CYRUS 6a

**WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012**

CD PLAYERS
BEST CD PLAYER £1000-£1500
CYRUS CD8 SE2

**WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012**

SYSTEMS
BEST STREAMING SYSTEM UP TO £2000
CYRUS STREAMLINE 2

**WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012**

MUSIC STREAMERS
BEST STREAMER £2000+
CYRUS STREAM XP2-QX



CYRUS 8 DAC



To discover just how good your music can sound, visit:

www.cyrusaudio.com

AVID

Pellar

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£600
CONTACT:
01480 869 900
WEB ADDRESS:
avidhifi.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
363

It's never easy when a company famous for top-notch turntables branches out to electronics, but AVID has done so highly successfully. The Pellar is the company's entry-level phono stage, but is solidly built,

slickly finished and very well engineered. The result is a clean and open sound that impresses with detail, but remains super musical whatever you listen to.



Creek

OBH-15MK2

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£300
CONTACT:
01442 26 0146
WEB ADDRESS:
creekaudio.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
365

With super sound at a modest price, this offers fabulous value for money.



Rega

Fono Mini A2D

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£85
CONTACT:
01702 333071
WEB ADDRESS:
rega.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
360

Nicely made, highly musical entry-level phono stage with USB input.





AUDIOVECTOR



JUST LISTEN

Design
Innovation
Customisation

THE Si 3 RANGE BEAUTY BORN OF PERFORMANCE



WWW.AUDIOVECTOR.COM

Audiovector speakers are available through a knowledgeable dealer network with superlative demonstration facilities:

- Acoustica** (Chester, Cheshire) 01244 344227
- Analogue Seduction** (Peterborough) 01733 350878
- Audible Fidelity** (Daventry) 01327 301006
- Audio Destination** (Tiverton, Devon) 01884 243584
- Audio Emotion** (Banbeath, Fife) 01333 425999

- PJ Hi-Fi** (Guildford, Surrey) 01483 504801
- Ripcaster** (Checkendon, Oxfordshire) 01183 218292
- Sevenoaks Sound & Vision** (Holborn, London) 0207 8377540
- Tavistock Audio** (Tavistock, Devon) 01822 618940

Audiovector is distributed in the UK by Henley Designs Ltd.

henleydesigns.co.uk · 01235 511 166 · sales@henleydesigns.co.uk

Black Rhodium Symphony Stereo

► **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£195
CONTACT:
01332 342233
WEB ADDRESS:
blackrhodium.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
362

Excellent mid-price interconnect with a creamy, musical sound.



Mark Grant G2000HD

► **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£195
CONTACT:
01482 887717
WEB ADDRESS:
markgrantcables.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
362

It's not often that a small brand wins a *Hi-Fi Choice Blind Listening Group Test*, but that's precisely what happened here. A gimmick-free design, the G2000HD is well constructed using high quality materials, and the result is an extremely smooth and sophisticated sound, one that's transparent enough to let the quality of top-notch sources shine through. A worthy recipient of this year's best cable award.



Atlas Equator Integra

► **DETAILS**

PRICE:
£75
CONTACT:
01563 572666
WEB ADDRESS:
atlasables.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
363

Powerful, punchy and expressive – this is an essential audition.



white. it's the new black and now it's an award winner



WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012

STEREO AMPLIFIERS
BEST STEREO AMP £1000-£1500
HEED AUDIO OBELISK si

"The Heed is a peach of a product and a deserved Award-winner"

Obelisk si
What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision
Awards 2012

heed

obelisk x2

"This is one of the most musically accomplished amps we've heard anywhere near this price"

Obelisk si
What Hi-Fi? Sound & Vision
August 2012



**Experience the range on demonstration now
at these selected retailers (in white... or black)**

Analogue Seduction	Peterborough	analogueseduction.net
Audio Destination	Tiverton	audiodestination.co.uk
Basically Sound	Norwich	basicallysound.co.uk
Chris Brooks Audio	Warrington	chrisbrooksaudio.com
English Audio	Hereford	englishaudio.co.uk
Guildford Audio	Guildford	guildfordaudio.co.uk
Phase 3	Worthing	phase3.co.uk
The Home Cinema Centre	Edinburgh	thehomecinemacentre.co.uk
Unilet Sound and Vision	London	unilet.net



www.heedaudio.co.uk



heed
forget hi-fi - remember music

Arcam

drDock

► DETAILS

PRICE:

£199

CONTACT:

01223 203200

WEB ADDRESS:

arcam.co.uk

REVIEW ISSUE:

364

Arcam has always made high quality hi-fi separates, but recently it has applied its redoubtable design and engineering ability to a range of small, portable iDevice accessories. The DrDock is a beautifully packaged iPod/iPhone/iPad dock, giving a direct digital audio output which lets you bypass the internal DACs. This turns your iDevice into a high quality music source.

Hi-Fi Choice
WINNER
2012



Fidelity Art

PAB Platform

► DETAILS

PRICE:

£499

CONTACT:

07840 183485

WEB ADDRESS:

fidelityart.co.uk

REVIEW ISSUE:

363

Intelligently designed and built isolation platform giving great sound.



Design Build Listen

Wand tonearm

► DETAILS

PRICE:

£355

CONTACT:

+64 3 477 3817

WEB ADDRESS:

designbuildlisten.com

REVIEW ISSUE:

363

Beautiful budget tonearm that performs way better than its price suggests.





Shanling CD-T2000

...brings SACD sound quality from regular CD!



SOUND QUALITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



BUILD QUALITY



FEATURES



OVERALL



“ Like most Shanling products, the CD-T2000 offers ‘battleship’ build quality and a very high standard of finish. ”

“ If this product were manufactured in the USA, it would probably cost three or four times what Shanling is asking here and at just under £2,000, makes it a veritable bargain. ”

“ Via the CD-T2000, cymbals reproduce with a lovely breathy openness that sounds like good analogue. ”

“ It delivers a smooth, natural, well-balanced sound that lets you hear the music as it was originally recorded. ”

“ ...the thought of going back to something ‘inferior’ once the review period was over was just too depressing to contemplate. ”

Jimmy Hughes - Hi Fi Choice, October 2011

Real hi-fi

Official Importers & Distributors for:

3Dsonics • Bias King • Duevel • Heart • Hørning • Shanling • Supravox

Tel: 01257 473 175 • info@realhi-fi.com • www.realhi-fi.com

To find your nearest 'Real hi-fi' Dealer visit www.realhi-fi.com or call us today.

Dali Epicon 6

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£7,800
CONTACT:
0845 644 3537
WEB ADDRESS:
dali-uk.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
365

Clever design lifts this premium floorstander to sonic heights!



MartinLogan Ethos

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£6,498
CONTACT:
020 8971 3909
WEB ADDRESS:
martinlogan.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
359

Whereas so many high end speakers are simply variations on the same 'moving coil drive units in a box' theme, MartinLogan dares to be different with its artful combination of conventional sub-bass drivers and large, full range electrostatic panels. The result is musical bliss, with vast soundstaging and subtlety so rarely heard, even from expensive designs such as this. A worthy winner!



Claro Clarity Dual

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£3,720
CONTACT:
01423 867413
WEB ADDRESS:
claro-audio.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
356

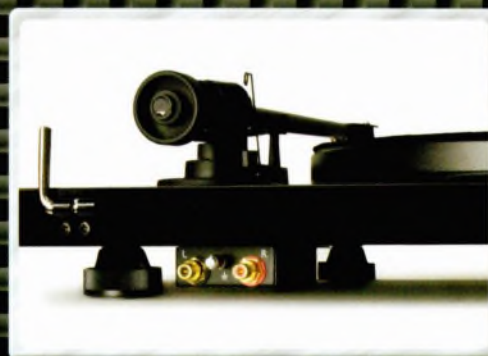
Superlatively built high end turntable with a delightful sound to match the best.



The Carbon Age



Introducing the multi-award winning Debut Carbon from Pro-Ject Audio Systems. The Debut record player is an icon of the entry-level audiophile market, and this latest incarnation elevates the model to a new level of audio quality.



Debut Carbon

Brand new one-piece 8.6" Carbon Fibre tonearm - New motor isolation set-up -
Upgraded 12" platter with higher mass - New mains supply method - Cable junction box -
Ortofon 2m Red Pre-Fitted - Available in 7 high-gloss colours

Pro-Ject Audio Systems is distributed in the UK by
Henley Designs Ltd.
Telephone : 01235 511 166
Email : info@henleydesigns.co.uk
Web : www.henleydesigns.co.uk



Tiger Paw Khan

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£795
CONTACT:
07764 533992
WEB ADDRESS:
tiger-paw.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
361

There have been countless modifications to the Linn LP12 turntable over the years, but few are as radical or as beautifully made as this top plate and crossbrace package.

Expertly fitted, it takes the Sondek's sound to an altogether different place, with substantially increased detail resolution – without making the deck sound overly analytical. Vinyl heaven!



Analogue Innovation Sole Mk.VI

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£625
CONTACT:
01554 890414
WEB ADDRESS:
analogueinnovation.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
362

Great Linn subchassis upgrade, bringing real sonic rewards to the LP12 turntable.



QNAP TS-469 Pro

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£657
CONTACT:
0203 608 1969
WEB ADDRESS:
qnap.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
365

Secure, glitch-free RAID storage – for serious computer audio.



FURUTECH
PURE TRANSMISSION



sound foundations
www.soundfoundations.co.uk

+44(0)1276 501-392
info@soundfoundations.co.uk

WWW.FURUTECH.COM

The ADL GT40 ...



WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2011

PRODUCT OF THE YEAR
CABLES & ACCESSORIES
FURUTECH ADL GT40

toneAudio
Magazine
2010
Product of the Year
Award

PC ADVISOR
RECOMMENDED

AEx
オーディオエッセンスアワード
Audio Excellence Award 2011

Hi-Fi
Choice
RECOMMENDED

a master of all trades.

phono stage • USB DAC • USB ADC • headphone amplifier

ADL
ALPHA DESIGN LABS

by **FURUTECH** Tokyo • Japan
service@adl-av.com

sound foundations
www.soundfoundations.co.uk

+44(0)1276-501-392
info@soundfoundations.co.uk

Linn

Kiko

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£2,500
CONTACT:
0141 307 7777
WEB ADDRESS:
linn.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
364

There are countless stylish one-box hi-fi systems, but the Kiko is so much more than this. It's the answer to a question that few specialist manufacturers ever bother to ask – how to let people enjoy

their favourite music as seamlessly and effortlessly as possible? Expertly engineered and superbly made, the packaging reaches new heights. Oh, and it sounds great, too!

Hi-Fi Choice
WINNER
2012



Block

CVR-100

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£700
WEB ADDRESS:
airaudio.co.uk
REVIEW ISSUE:
360

Neat, well built, affordable one-box CD player/streamer/tuner amplifier.

Hi-Fi Choice
FINALIST
2012



Naim

SuperUniti

► DETAILS

PRICE:
£3,250
CONTACT:
01722 426 600
WEB ADDRESS:
naimaudio.com
REVIEW ISSUE:
357

Gorgeous all-in-one high end streaming system with super sonics.

Hi-Fi Choice
FINALIST
2012



MUSICAL FIDELITY

M1 CLiC | UNIVERSAL MUSIC CONTROLLER

The M1 CLiC is a universal music controller for digital and analogue sources.



Simple control of the music you love

Network streamed music, wired or wireless connectivity, 2x USB, iPod interface, Internet radio, 3x digital & 3x analogue inputs, variable and fixed outputs.

Audiolab

M-DAC



The ascent of high-resolution digital, allied to computer audio's coming of age, has created the need for a new breed of digital-to-analogue convertor. USB-equipped, and with a range of inputs, numerous such devices have appeared over the past year – but none can compare with the Audiolab M-DAC, which does nothing less than define the genre.

Whereas too many of its price rivals take a standard digital convertor chip, stick it in a small box and claim great things, the amount of work and cost of components gone into the M-DAC sets it apart.

Using top-quality ESS Sabre DAC chips allied to bespoke filtering courtesy of digital whizz John Westlake, the M-DAC is an essay in how to do something the hard way. Analogue circuitry is bespoke – digital firmware too – and upgradable. Its sleek anodised aluminium case, with its neat yet highly informative display, is but icing on the cake...

The sound is seriously special. In some ways, it approaches the best DACs around – it has forensic detail retrieval, wonderfully three-dimensional soundstaging, and is highly rhythmically engaging. Its clean, dry

tonality suits classical and electronic music better than jazz or rock, but whatever material you play, it sounds sublime.

Every few years or so, a product comes along that disrupts the natural order of things, turning the market upside down, so things are never quite the same again. The new Audiolab M-DAC is precisely this, and as such is the worthy winner of *Hi-Fi Choice's Product of the Year* accolade. This superb new digital convertor deserves to succeed, and so it surely will...

David Price, editor

More than

alright,

jack.

iPod, iPad, iPhone, iMac are trademarks of Apple Inc., registered in the US and other countries.





It's a little-known fact that the headphone jack output of your iDevice can give better audio quality than the docking connector. The headphone jack is designed and built for audio output, while the connector is more a jack of all trades - compromised by handling the power supply and charging alongside the music's delicate analogue and digital signals.

Armed with this knowledge, you are ready to maximise your equipment's potential, with the convenience of just one cable. Now, from the strong bloodline of all the Pulse cables, Vertere brings you D-Fi.

Specifically and correctly engineered, D-Fi gives you breathtaking performance from headphones, mobile devices, home computers and AV systems.

..... Put simply, D-Fi brings the music.

PULSE

D-Fi

Total Connectivity

UK ONLY SUBSCRIPTIONS:

I would like to subscribe to *Hi-Fi Choice* for 1 year (13 issues) with a one-off payment of £31.20 **SAVE 40%**

OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTIONS:

I would like to subscribe to *Hi-Fi Choice* for 1 year (13 issues) with a one-off payment: Europe (incl Eire) **£56.00** ROW Airmail **£60.00**

DIRECT DEBIT SUBSCRIPTIONS (UK ONLY):

I would like to subscribe to *Hi-Fi Choice*, paying £7.50 every 3 months by Direct Debit **SAVE 42%**

Please complete form below and ensure you have completed 'YOUR DETAILS'

For all Canadian, North and South American subscriptions please call 001 877 363 1310 or go to www.expressmag.com

YOUR DETAILS

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms..... Initial..... Surname.....
Address.....
Postcode..... Country.....
Tel..... Mobile.....
Email..... D.O.B.....

I WOULD LIKE TO SEND A GIFT TO:

Please also fill out 'Your Details' above. To give more than one subscription, please supply address details on a separate sheet.

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms..... Initial..... Surname.....
Address.....
Postcode..... Country.....
Tel..... Mobile.....
D.O.B..... Email.....

PAYMENT DETAILS

Postal Order/Cheque Visa/Mastercard Maestro

Please make cheques payable to MyHobbyStore Ltd and write code X188 on the back

Cardholder's name.....
Card no:..... (Maestro)

Valid from..... Expiry date..... Maestro issue no.....

Signature..... Date.....

DIRECT DEBIT (UK ONLY)

Please ensure you have filled in 'YOUR DETAILS' above

Instructions to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit.
Originator's reference 422562



Name of bank.....

Address of bank.....

Postcode.....

Account holder.....

Signature..... Date.....

Sort code..... Account number.....

Instructions to your bank or building society: Please pay MyHobbyStore Ltd. Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with MyHobbyStore Ltd and if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society

Reference Number (Official use only)

Please note that banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions from some types of account.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: Offer ends 5th December 2012. Subscriptions will begin with the first available issue. Please continue to buy your magazine until you receive your acknowledgement letter. Refund requests must be in writing to the Publisher and will not be given on accounts with less than £20 credit. A £5 admin charge will apply and will be deducted from any refund. Refunds will only be given at the Publisher's sole discretion. *UK offer only. We will use the contact details supplied to communicate with you regarding your Hi-Fi Choice subscription. Your details will be processed by MyHobbyStore Ltd & Hi-Fi Choice in full accordance with all relevant UK and EU data protection legislation. MyHobbyStore Ltd & Hi-Fi Choice may contact you with information about our other products and services. If you DO NOT wish to be contacted by MyHobbyStore Ltd & Hi-Fi Choice please tick here: Email Post Phone If you DO NOT wish to be contacted by carefully chosen 3rd parties, please tick here: Email Post Phone

CODE X188

GREAT REASONS TO SUBSCRIBE

- ★ SAVE UP TO 42% OFF THE SHOP PRICE
- ★ 13 ISSUES DELIVERED DIRECT TO THE DOOR
- ★ FREE ACCESS TO THE LATEST DIGITAL ISSUE AND ONLINE ARCHIVE
- ★ FREE iPad, iPhone AND ANDROID ACCESS
- ★ PLUS FREE GIFT CARD



DIGITAL ONLY SUBSCRIPTIONS AVAILABLE - PLEASE CALL

08456 777 807



The perfect Christmas gift

The ideal stocking filler



SPECIAL OFFER

Save up to
42% off the
shop price!

Each issue of *Hi Fi Choice* contains a wide range of features and equipment reviews, including our unique blind listening group test. New! to the magazine is Choice Extras, a special section focusing on affordable accessories to help you get the best possible sound from your system. Alongside this, we're featuring our new Choice Apps section, for users of smartphones and tablets who want more music-related functionality. **Don't miss out:** subscribe for yourself or a friend today!



Subscribe securely online by visiting:

www.subscription.co.uk/hificl/X188

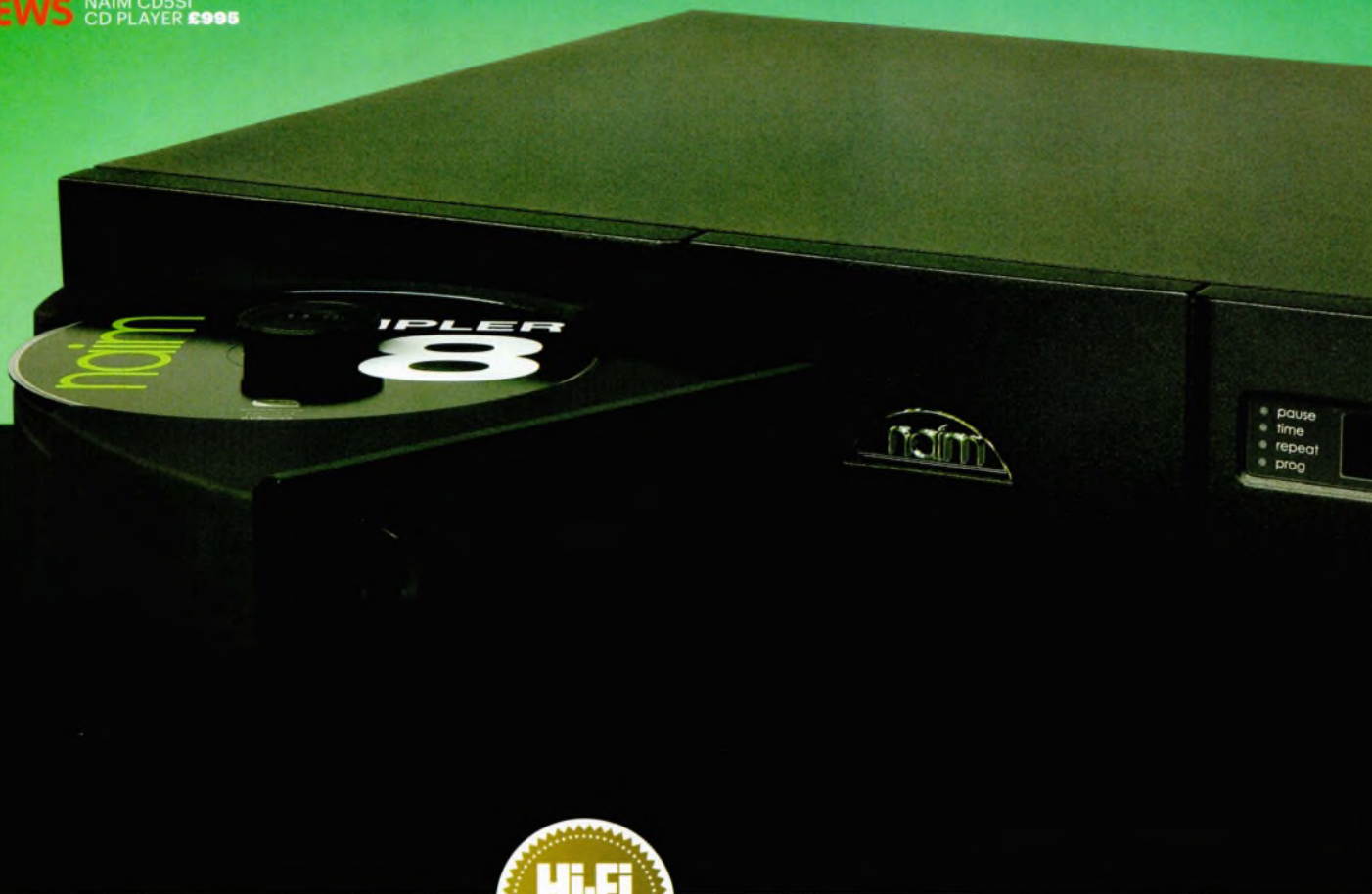
Call our order line and quote X188

08456 777 807

Order lines open weekdays 8am – 9.30pm and Saturday 8am – 4pm

BT landline calls to 0845 numbers will cost no more than 5p per minute. Calls from mobiles usually cost more.

PLEASE RETURN THE FORM OPPOSITE TO: HI-FI CHOICE SUBSCRIPTIONS,
TOWER HOUSE, SOVEREIGN PARK, MARKET HARBOROUGH, LEICS LE16 9EF.



Physical attraction

Naim's brand new CD5si CD player is manna from heaven for those to whom silver disc still appeals, says **Patrick Cleasby**...

A glance through recent editions of this august journal will reveal that it's increasingly unusual for us to be reviewing CD players at all, let alone ones totally bereft of modern trickery like digital outputs or USB inputs. But Naim continues to believe that there's life in the old format yet, and keep the flag flying for traditional CD players with its tweaked-up version of the well-regarded CD5i. Could it convince this inveterate streamer to prioritise good old silver disc spinner?

As one would expect, the new CD5si continues to offer Naim's highly desirable monolithic black powder coated finish and superb build quality, with that innovative swing drawer tray. All the changes are component quality upgrades under the hood, and consist of improved linearity in the power

supply, a new transport mechanism, a higher precision clock and a new analogue output filter. All are developed by Naim in-house. Most interestingly on the non-Naim front, the DAC chip used is the Burr-Brown PCM 1793 – a convertor I've found to give great results in whatever I find it in, from the HRT Music Streamer II+ to the Sansui WLD201 streamer reviewed recently in these pages. Of course, implementations can vary...

In operation, either from the front panel or from the black remote, which shares a housing with the Arcam remotes of the noughties, everything was functional and responsive. The minimalism of the four buttons on the box approach is refreshing when one grew up with the almost never-used index keys and trick play options of the original players. A small magnetic puck is included to secure the CD in the

DETAILS

PRODUCT:
Naim CD5si
ORIGIN:
UK
TYPE:
CD player
WEIGHT:
8.1kg
DIMENSIONS:
(WxHxD)
432x70x301mm
FEATURES:
• Burr-Brown PCM1793 DAC chip
• swing-out CD drawer
• revised analogue filter design
• diecast, non-magnetic casework
• outputs: RCA phono line out, DIN lineout
DISTRIBUTOR:
Naim Audio
TELEPHONE:
01722 426600
WEBSITE:
naimaudio.com

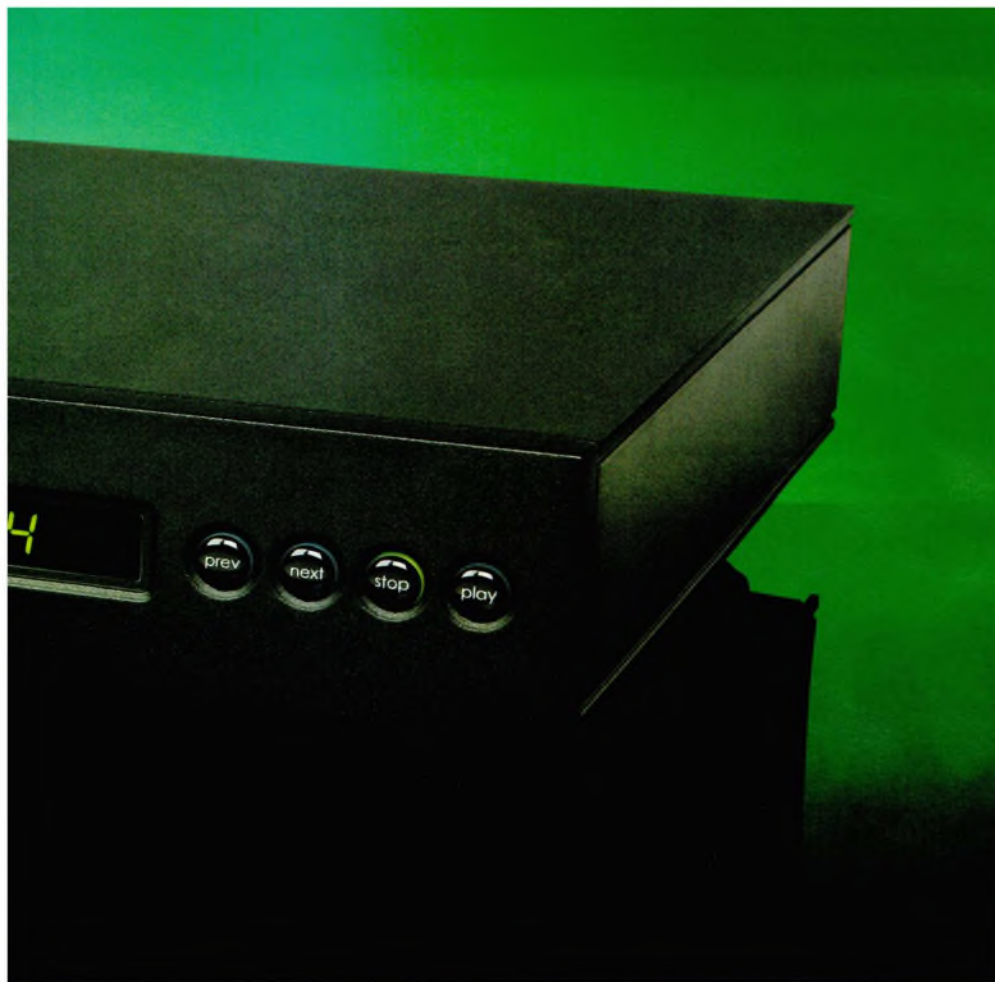
swing tray and is essential if some of your badly UK-made nineties PDO Blackburn discs aren't going to make loud ugly noises when spinning...

Despite my personal streaming proclivities, I don't fail to see Naim's logic that not all territories are as early-adopting and streaming obsessed as we in the UK are. Even here we get regularly contacted by readers who are basically two boxes-plus-speakers users. This is after all how most of us started with CD in the eighties. I suppose times haven't changed that much – at least this way the IT complexities of networked music set-up can be conveniently avoided.

For the purposes of auditioning I paired the CD5si with its intended partner, the Naim Nait 5i. They do indeed make a fine looking and sounding couple. I used the Naim locking DIN lead supplied with the CD player for hook up. There are also analogue phono outs, and that's your lot. Although Naim supply stout IEC cables with its choice of non-moulded plugs, I elected to use a pair of Power Chords from Chord Company. Such non-digital simplicity of set-up takes one back to the dawn of the CD era – so an eighties-centric auditioning list was an inevitability!

Sound quality

From the off, the new CD5si was to demonstrate its facility with well-mastered naturalistic productions. The first CD I spun



part threaded through a layered instrumental. Danny Thompson's double bass part is the key to the song, at least until the Kenny Wheeler's Flugelhorn solo takes over. Bizarrely this is my only note of reproach against the Naim – the bass plucking underneath the solo got ever so slightly lost, but the overall effect was so sumptuous and enjoyable the Naim was forgiven this one slip.

Classical music performance was assessed using Valery Gergiev's *Shostakovich Symphony No. 5* from the Decca SACD of ten years ago. The opening moderato was presented with all the detail and dynamics that the modern recording would allow, with delicate strings, and a full, absorbing bass tonality. In general hybrid SACD-as-CD performance was fine, although Propaganda's *A Secret Wish* felt uninspiring in its remastering. Ironically out-of-spec Dual Discs (remember them?) refused to play as CDs at all.

The opening moderato was presented with all the detail and dynamics the recording would allow...

The most satisfying results were always with oldest-mastered material – original master fiends of my acquaintance swear by Naim – but even with more modern fare such as Radiohead's *2+2=5*, the aural congestion when everything kicks off was rendered with control by the Naim, where it can just fall apart on other players – and the micro-rhythmical timing had maximum precision. Detail is the name of the game with this player – the attack of Gavin Harrison's tom tom hits clearly discernible in the mix during Adrian Belew's shredding solo on Porcupine Tree's *Deadwing*. The CD5Si was also impressive in managing the massive unison bass stabs that drive along underneath that solo and can easily overpower other systems. This ability

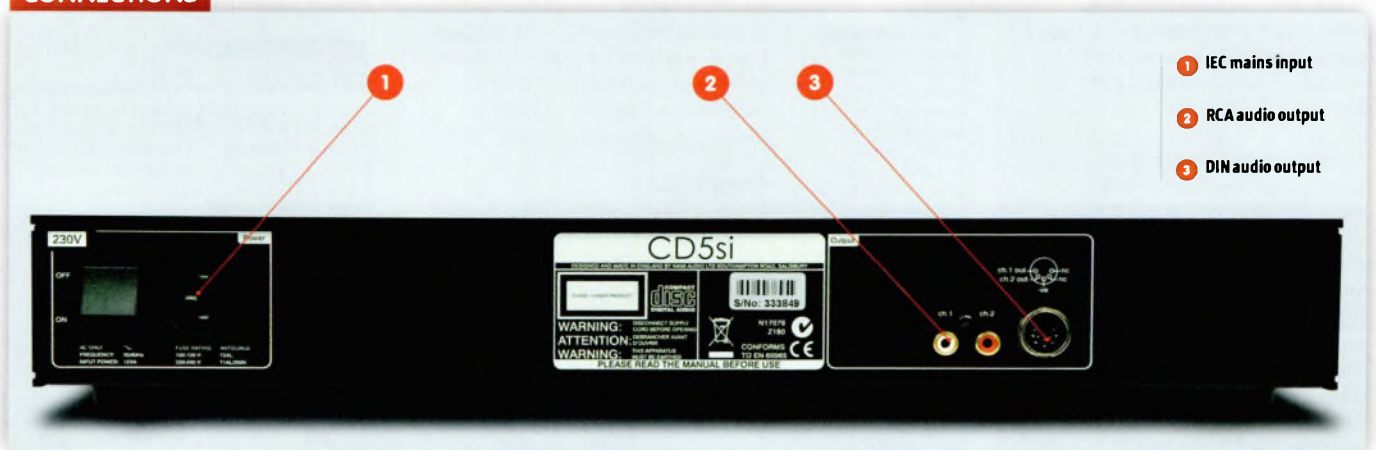
was the original master of Julian Cope's *Jehovahkill* – a work of organic genius and punishing sonics. Even before running in the sound of this album was a revelation on the Naim – Julian's supple baritone can sound un-lifelike in inadequate systems, and there are noisy metals and rampant electric bass tones to be tamed here.

After a few days of solid running in, the results were even more impressive – the improv garage-rock likes of *Soul Desert* with its splashy cymbals can be hard to make lifelike, but the CD5Si does so admirably. The best example is the overall presentation of *The Mystery Trend*, charming on the Naim, beastly on lesser players. His fine vocal tone continued, with his phased Ovation strums managing to sound substantially real and not the plasticky scratching which can result.

Digging further back, it was irresistible to see how the player would cope with the pomp of Madonna's *Like A Prayer*. Would Guy Pratt's majestic bass swoops overpower everything else that was going on? Not with the Naim, a fantastically tonally coherent performance ensued – enabling enjoyment of the bass part as it danced around, but not losing the detail of the chattering metals to the right, subtle congas to the left, and all the while keeping the choir feeling like an integral part of the track. Even Madonna's voice sounded rich and full, the imaging was great and the song had a real swing to it which can often go absent.

Never one to resist one of the classic tests I essayed David Sylvian's *The Ink In The Well* from *Brilliant Trees* – as real instrument-based as the Madonna track is synthetic, the focus here is once again on a masterful bass

CONNECTIONS



Q&A

Steve Sells

Electronic Design Manager, Naim



PC: It is becoming increasingly rare for us to see simple CD players such as this. How long do the powers that be at Naim think you will be continuing to market them?

SS: A good while yet. We see the market for Compact Disc players in the UK reducing, but not in some huge markets like China. In fact, in some particular territories our player sales are growing.

What does the research tell you about future demand for CD players?

Internationally, high-end CD players are still selling well for us. We don't see that changing in the near future.

The Burr-Brown 1793 DAC chip always seems to deliver good results in whatever I've heard it in. Why is it so good?

It's a premium DAC, so you'll find it generally in good digital sources. We choose it because it has a very fine built-in 8x oversampling digital filter that suppresses out-of-band noise to a high standard. The conversion section is also good, it has a novel five-level Delta-Sigma DAC.

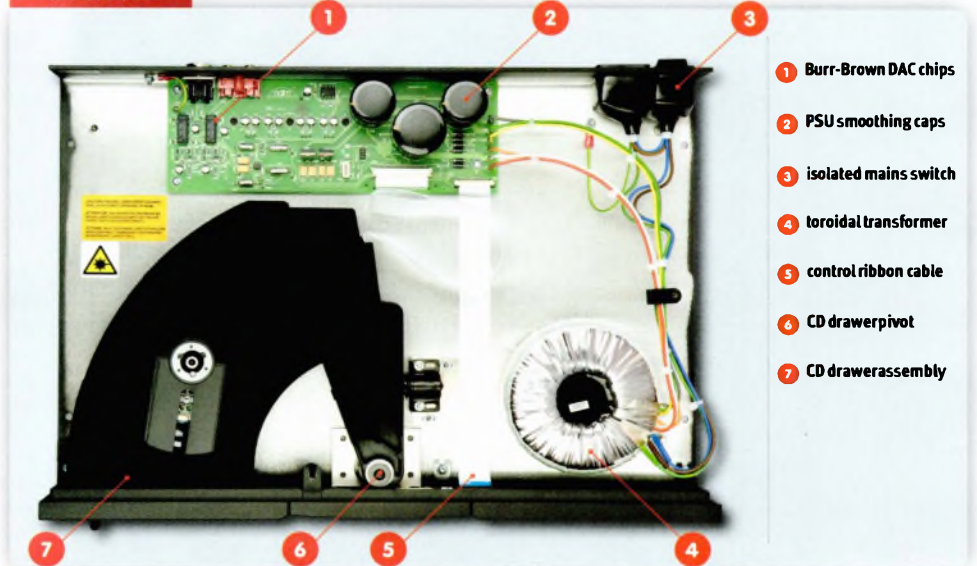
Is consideration given and are special measures necessary to make today's atrociously compressed 'remastered' CDs sound halfway decent?

No, we do not do any special DSP processing. But during the listening tests and tuning sessions, we do use a wide variety of music. We cannot make poor recordings and mastering sound better, but we can do a lot to not make them sound worse than they are.

Do you think there will ever be a swing back to analogue-only connection for components? If so, what accounts for this?

No, in my humble opinion, I think it's still reducing. What we think is good is the compatibility such connections offer and the simplicity of good old CD. You get a great sound, it'll plug into your existing system, it's all proven technology and it's easy to use. What could be better?

IN SIGHT



- 1 Burr-Brown DAC chips
- 2 PSU smoothing caps
- 3 isolated mains switch
- 4 toroidal transformer
- 5 control ribbon cable
- 6 CD drawer pivot
- 7 CD drawer assembly

HOW IT COMPARES

SPEAKING AS ADIEHARD STREAMING FAN, the main basis of my own comparison was against my habitual front-end, the venerable Slim Devices Transporter. While the originally similarly-priced old streamer acquitted itself well, it could not match the sonic class of the CD5si. It was a close run thing, but the disc spinner just gave a more detailed, musical, and tonally-balanced performance. It was only really bested on the bass in the closing passage of David Sylvian's *The Ink In The Well*, which became hard to discern with the new Naim.

Compared to the very capable and similarly priced Cyrus CD Bse CD spinner, the Naim was just a little tonally deeper and darker, and a little better at large scale dynamics. However, the Cyrus was fractionally more detailed, right at the back of the mix. Both machines are excellent and the obvious starter silver disc spinners, if you're minded to take the format seriously – as very many still do.

to marshal a massive bass sound while retaining full extension was also demonstrated on David Byrne and Brian Eno's *Everything That Happens Will Happen Today* – a modern mastering made listenable.

It's usually not too hard to pop on a recent mastering to demonstrate that the results are an abrasive and fatiguing listen, but there wasn't much that was able to upset the Naim. The closest thing was Del Amitri's *Twisted* with its big nineties sound. But their Beatle-esque way with the stereo mix was a great way to demonstrate the strengths of the CD5si are not only in the tonality but also in its soundstaging – *Roll To Me* will not sound well-integrated as a piece of music if the panning effects are not convincing. With the Naim the contrivance works, and moving to *Driving With The Brakes On* we once again got great vocal imaging.

The CD5si feels very non-additive in terms of any colouration of the sound, whether it be from distortion or intentional voicing – it's a highly transparent source component that will make the best of your CD material, and provide a highly involving, enjoyable listen.

Conclusion

It is impressive that in these twilight final years of Compact Disc, Naim Audio still has enough faith in the format and its users to continue developing its excellent CD-based products alongside the next generation alternatives.

The CD5si is so musical it makes just about any CD you throw at it an enjoyable listening experience,

exactly what Naim intended when they stripped out all the superfluous digital circuitry to make an optimum analogue-only playback experience.

As a would-be candidate for conversion back to disc playing, I feel torn. The audible benefits are plain to hear, but the convenience factor of running everything from a big digital library is hard to forget, particularly if your accommodations don't allow space to have discs lining every wall. I also regret the absence of HDCD-decoding, as I have many discs which benefit from it.

For this writer, this demonstration of how sweet digital can sound from a £1,000 source unit is more likely to make me seek to tweak my network setup to match. But if you're in at this price point and committed to silver disc-playing then you simply can't go wrong with this excellent player. If you're up for spending this much on CD playback at this point, I wouldn't dare try to bring you over to the dark side of streaming. ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★ | LIKE: Intrinsically musical nature; smooth sound; excellent build |
| VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★ | DISLIKE: limited facilities and connectivity! |
| BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★ | WE SAY: Highly musical, characterful silver disc spinner that's affordable too; an essential audition |
| FEATURES
★★★☆☆ | |

OVERALL



Coherent Systems

For a sound to
compliment your lifestyle



Tel: 01753 891676

Email: info@coherent-systems.co.uk

www.coherent-systems.co.uk

SOUNDS *for* SALE

NEW AND USED

QUALITY BRANDS

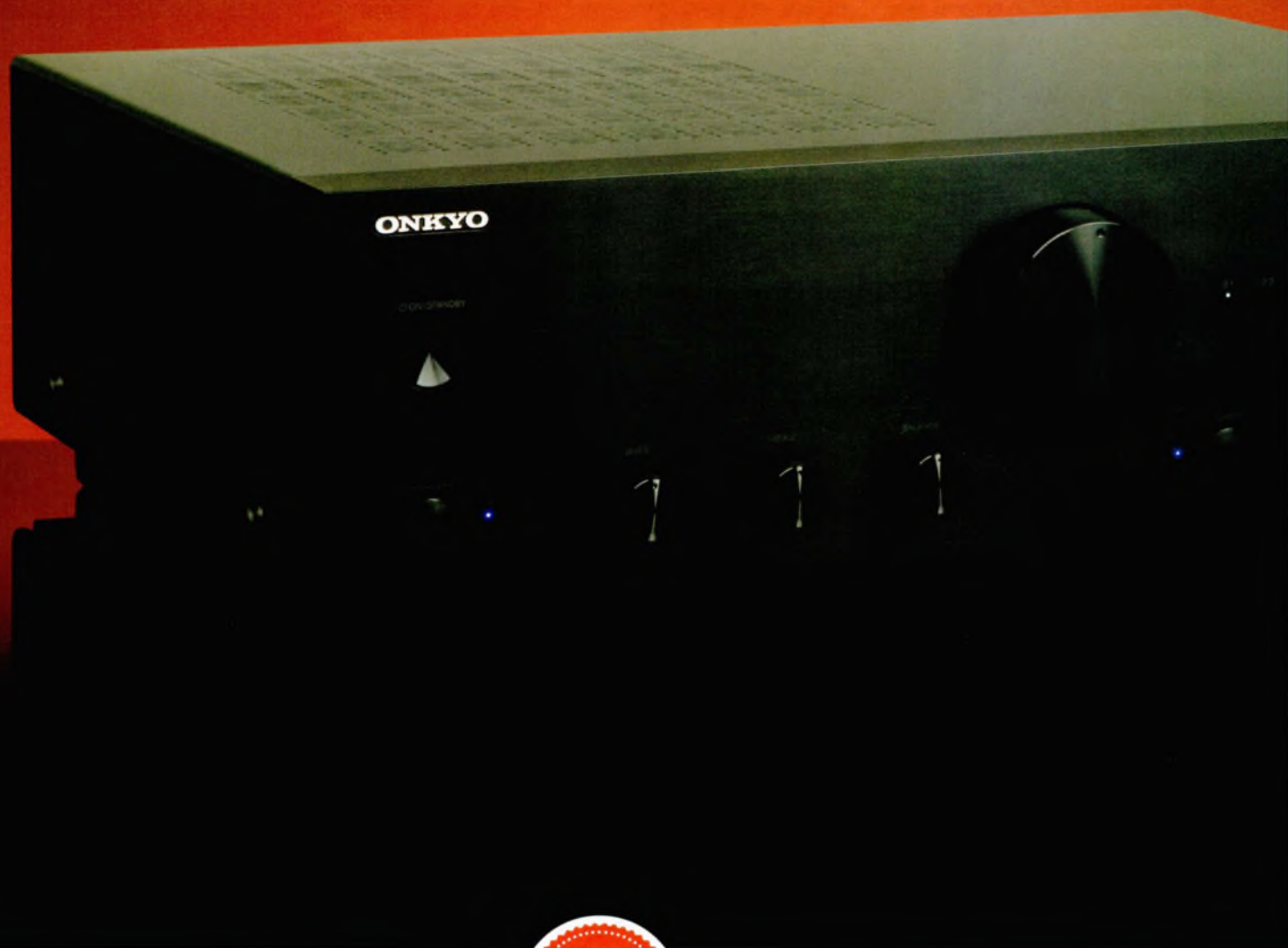
GREAT SERVICE



A GREAT PLACE TO SHOP FOR NEW AND USED AUDIO

T: 020 3651 1194

WWW.SOUNDSFORSALE.UK.COM



All things considered

Onkyo's new A-9050 integrated amplifier is exceptionally well specified for its price, finds **Ed Selley...**

Anyone who's leafed through a hi-fi magazine in the past five years will think Onkyo and impressive affordable AV receivers are practically one and the same. But 'twas not ever thus the way – back in the nineteen eighties, this Japanese brand built up a fine reputation for itself, both in the UK and Stateside, making two-channel stereophonic products. It's only relatively recently that the company

has been going great guns on the multichannel market, with not inconsiderable success...

Despite devoting the bulk of its research and development to home cinema products over the last few years, the company has continued to produce some very interesting stereo products. The mighty C-3000R preamplifier and M-5000R power amplifier were two of the most impressive performers I reviewed last year, for example (*HFC 345*).

▶ DETAILS

PRODUCT: Onkyo A-9050
ORIGIN: Japan/China
TYPE: integrated amp
WEIGHT: 8.2 kg
DIMENSIONS: (WxHxD) 435x139x330, 3mm
FEATURES:
 • Wide Range Amplifier Technology to reduce output distortion
 • DIDRC jitter reduction technology
 • 24/96 capable digital input board
 • power output 2x75W (8Ω, 1kHz, 0.08%THD)
 • 4 line inputs, 1 MM phono
 • 2 coaxial digital inputs, 1 optical TOSLINK
 • outputs: line, preout, subwoofer out
 • 6.3mm headphone output
DISTRIBUTOR: Onkyo UK
TELEPHONE: 01628 473350
WEBSITE: onkyo.co.uk

At less than a tenth of the price of the flagship pairing, the A-9050 is an understandably less complex offering than its big brothers, but many of the technologies that appeared in the bigger duo have made it into the smaller amplifier.

The first of these is the proprietary WRAT (Wide Range Amplifier Technology) system in the amplification stage. This uses a closed ground-loop circuit, in which each circuit has a separate link to the power supply with a view to reducing distortion and allowing the amplifier to have greater control over the reflex energy of the speakers it is connected to.

One unusual feature the A-9050 has inherited from its bigger brethren comes from the P-3000R preamp. This is in the form of a trio of digital inputs with the company's proprietary DIDRC (Dynamic Intermodulation Distortion Reduction Circuitry) technology to reduce jitter in digital signals. Decoding is courtesy of a 24-bit/96kHz-capable Wolfson WM8718



a moving magnet phono stage. You are going to need a very extensive system indeed to defeat the A-9050, and if you decide to go with more Onkyo components, you can select various configuration options to make driving them from a single remote handset a simple business.

There are some nice design touches – I especially like that the input lights are white for digital and blue for analogue inputs, but equally there are some less useful ones too. Most notably that the printed legends on the black review sample are extremely hard to read in anything less than direct sunlight. The supplied remote by contrast is a model of simplicity, despite also having the ability to control various other Onkyo units and is very pleasant to use.

Fit and finish is solid and the Onkyo is a good looking product. The aesthetics are an interesting comparison to the Denon PM-720AE. Both amps have a similar feature set and have an almost identical collection of controls. Where the Denon feels ever so slightly retro in appearance and use, the Onkyo with its squared edges and smaller controls, feels bang up-to-date and more contemporary.

Sound quality

I partnered the A-9050 with a Cambridge Audio DacMagic Plus (which has a digital output to allow for a comparative loop through to the digital inputs on the Onkyo) with a laptop as a source. Speakers used were the rather fine My Audio Design 1920is, which the amplifier proved completely at ease with. In power terms, Onkyo claims an output of 75 watts into eight ohms, and listening tests confirmed this to be realistic.

This integrated has the same sense of calm and confidence that Onkyo's pricier pre-power combo possesses. That WRAT technology does seem to bestow an impressive propulsive force on the amplifiers it is fitted to, and the A-9050 is no exception in this regard. Bass is good – the MAD 1920s are not large speakers

but the little integrated still exerted a considerable grip on them and achieved commendable low-end impact. This shove is achieved without bloat or overhang and this helps the A-9050 to feel fast and controlled, even when you are asking it to keep up with positively frenetic music.

The upper registers are also clear, open and well defined. The Onkyo manages to walk the neat line between detail extraction and stridency, and even when pushed hard, it stays pleasingly civilised considering its price and will go loud enough for most sane domestic requirements. The soundstage is impressive too. Even very large pieces open out into a rich and detailed presentation that is impressive without being forced and the Onkyo has sufficient horsepower to do justice to large scale material.

The midband is equally detailed and spacious, but can come across as slightly matter-of-fact. The Onkyo doesn't sound unnatural but it lacks the absolute sense of life and energy that some of the competition have with the same material. Really high

The Onkyo stays civilised considering its price and is loud enough for most domestic requirements

quality recordings sound extremely good but less lavishly recorded albums don't have the same hook. This is uncannily similar to the P3000R and M5000R which also benefit from high quality material to show what they can really do...

Compared to the animated sounding Denon PMA-720AE, the Onkyo seems cooler and less beguiling. It might very well be more accurate than the Denon, but when I selected Fink's *Perfect Darkness*, the Onkyo captured the essence of the recording without achieving the same emotional hook the PMA-720AE manages. As well as midrange warmth, this is partly down to the deeply subjective area of timing.

DAC. Strangely though, I do feel that having so *nearly* delivered the most useful feature I've seen on a budget amplifier in a while, Onkyo has then proceeded to drop the ball slightly by omitting a USB input!

Beyond the digital inputs, the A-9050 has a usefully comprehensive feature set. Four line inputs, a line output, pre-out (and separate subwoofer output) are joined by

CONNECTIONS



- 1 optical digital input
- 2 IEC power input
- 3 speaker impedance selector
- 4 loudspeaker binding posts
- 5 pre-amplifier output
- 6 RCA line inputs
- 7 phono input

Q&A

Kulwinder Singh Rai
Onkyo Development Consultant



ES: Is the A-9050 designed to work with a standalone digital source, or does Onkyo feel that it is designed to work as a 'sourceless amplifier'?

KSR: Both. As a Japanese manufacturer we know it's difficult to get a foothold in the UK two-channel market, so we decided to equip the A-9050 with a digital input at an atypically low price. And because of its onboard DAC it can be the centrepiece of a truly modern hi-fi system, able to digitally interface with new music sources such as iPhones (via the DS-A5 AirPlay dock), PCs such as the iMac and MacBook and even flatscreen TVs. From that point of view it is what you might call a sourceless amplifier, but we're also catering for traditional customers by making available the matching C-7030 CD player and T-4030 DAB+ tuner.

Has the P3000/M5000 preamp/power amp been influential on the design, and other Onkyo kit?

Yes. We've trickled down many of the same technologies originally developed for P3000/M5000, most notably DIDRC. The A-9050 has been designed by the same engineering team, to share many of defining sonic characteristics of this combo.

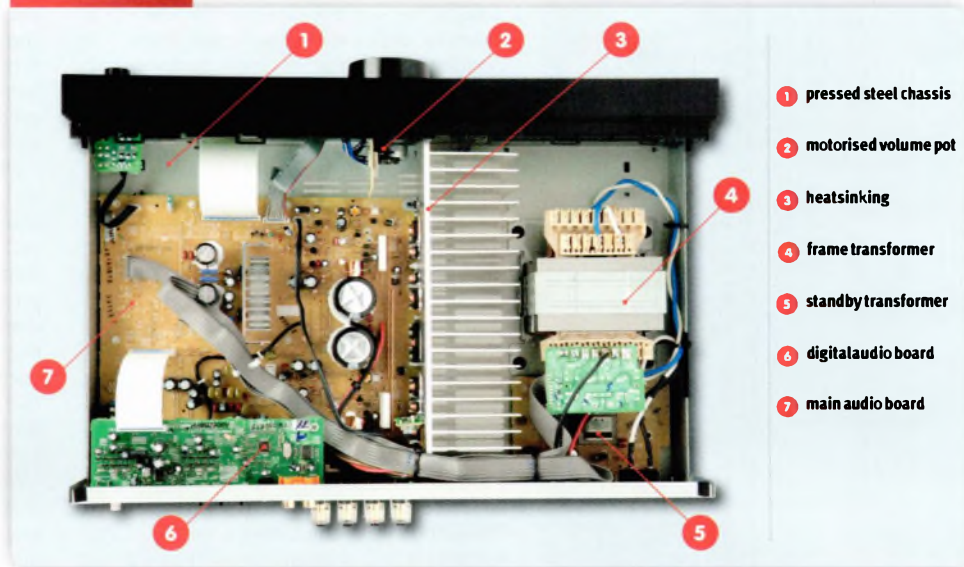
How does Onkyo assess the health of the stereo market in the UK and Europe at the moment?

It's a fact that the stereo hi-fi separates market in the United Kingdom is in a state of decline. The European market is also declining but at a slower rate. However, we think there are still great opportunities for products such as the A-9050 which cater for both analogue and digital sources.

Did the development of the A-9050 throw up any perfect partners in terms of system matching, or was the amplifier designed without any particular regard to the components it was partnered with?

In short, the C-7030 CD player and T-4030 DAB+ tuner are the natural partners for this new integrated amplifier. We recommend all prospective buyers to audition these if they need source components.

IN SIGHT



- 1 pressed steel chassis
- 2 motorised volume pot
- 3 heatsinking
- 4 frame transformer
- 5 standby transformer
- 6 digital audio board
- 7 main audio board

HOW IT COMPARES

THE FACT THAT the Onkyo A-9050 and Denon PMA-720AE went through my listening room essentially back to back means it is hard not to draw comparisons between the two.

Objectively, the Denon is £50 cheaper and offers an almost identical power output to the Onkyo. The Onkyo responds with the truly useful digital input board. Subjectively, the Denon is the easier of the two to integrate with speakers and has a genuinely excellent phono stage. The Onkyo needs more thought about speaker choice, but the digital input board means that even at a slightly higher price than the Denon, it is arguably better value for money.

If you already have a digital source you are happy with, the Denon is a superb amplifier and probably my personal favourite. If you are looking for an amp that is going to get the best from a digital system, the Onkyo is likely the smarter choice though – especially if you choose loudspeakers at the same time.

The Onkyo never feels slow or unwieldy, but doesn't have the same infectious get up and go that the Denon does. This is an area that doesn't matter to many listeners, but it would always be worth a demonstration to make sure.

Careful system matching helped greatly, though. Swapping out the MADs for a pair of Audio Note AN-Ks which have a substantially richer midrange, and the strength of the Onkyo at the frequency extremes is retained, but some of the warmth that was previously lacking is returned to the performance. While the Audio Note might not be an automatic choice if you are choosing amp and speakers at the same time, it is possible to find a pairing that plays to the abilities of the A-9050 and obviates the weaknesses.

The digital inputs are excellent. The A-9050 is impressively close in performance to the DacMagic Plus, which as a standalone DAC is only £50 cheaper than the Onkyo. Its tonality is seriously close to the analogue inputs and there really is commendably little digital fingerprint to them as well. Anyone shopping for an amplifier at £400 who already has some digital sources at a similar price point would be perfectly sane in at least trying the digital inputs to see if there was an improvement. Onkyo's philosophy of the "sourceless system" makes more sense after time spent with the A-9050. In comparison to the digital board (and the Denon), the phono stage is less capable but still more than up to the job of seeing off the £100 offerings more usually paired with amps at this price point.

Conclusion

At its modest retail price of £400, Onkyo's new A-9050 integrated amplifier gets an awful lot right. Here's a handsome, well-built and sonically capable amplifier that will do justice to both your analogue and digital sources. It is especially welcome to see Onkyo creating a particular design philosophy with its stereo product that is subtly different from the competition. The slightly matter-of-fact presentation may not appeal to all, and requires more thoughtful system matching. And I still wish Onkyo had fitted a USB input too, but there really is much else to like.

The sub-£500 stereo integrated amplifier market has gained some extremely talented offerings of late, and the Onkyo A-9050 might not be the uncontested champion. But it's far too good to ignore, so I'd recommend anyone who's interested in an entry-level integrated to go for a serious audition. ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY



VALUE FOR MONEY



BUILD QUALITY



FEATURES



LIKE: Excellent feature set, powerful and lively sound; fine DAC; nice build quality

DISLIKE: Matter-of-fact midband; no USB input

WE SAY: Well specified, sonically capable amplifier that's well worth hearing

OVERALL



M2 SERIES



Technology, Design & Emotion

The multi-award winning Caspian M2 Series of high-fidelity electronics from Roksan Audio are an engineering marvel. The Integrated Amplifier has been meticulously designed to ensure it uncovers even the most delicate detail and presents it majestically. The CD Player's decoupled laser mechanism, super precision master clock and multiple independent circuits create a seamless, harmonic musical experience that is second to none. The more recent addition of a two-channel stereo power amplifier completes the much-desired system by adding further control and musicality.

ROKSAN

Roksan Audio is exclusively distributed in the UK by Henley Designs Ltd.
Telephone: 01235 511 166 | Email: info@henleydesigns.co.uk | Web: www.henleydesigns.co.uk



Happy birthday



Celebrating Wharfedale's eightieth anniversary, its classic Denton loudspeaker has been reimagined. **Jason Kennedy** listens in...

Wharfedale Wireless Works was founded by Gilbert Briggs in 1933. He ran the Yorkshire company until 1958, when it was sold to the Rank Organisation, and also wrote a number of books on the subject of hi-fi and people in the audio industry. He often took part in high profile demonstrations of live versus recorded music, in venues as distinguished as the Royal Festival Hall and the Carnegie Hall.

The first Wharfedale Denton was produced under Rank's auspices in 1967, and various incarnations were in production until the late nineteen seventies. Wharfedale is now owned by IAG, a Chinese company which employs Heybrook founder Peter Comeau as head of engineering. The Eightieth Anniversary Denton is an extremely attractive standmount loudspeaker in the retro mould, veneered in mahogany on all surfaces including the 'picture frame' surround on the front baffle, and finished with a silver-grey (Wharfedale calls it 'tungsten') inset grille that would not have looked out of place on the original.

I particularly like the original style metal badge in anodised gold. Build quality is *extremely* high for the asking price, a sector which is dominated by vinyl wrap and paint finishes – one has to wonder how Wharfedale has managed to deliver so much with this budget?

It's a limited edition model to suit its anniversary status, and Peter Comeau has made efforts to give it a sound that is a bit closer to that of its forebears. He commented that, "in voicing the new Denton I had in mind the original, which sounded musical but with a pleasing touch of warmth. The ferrite magnet tweeter gives a cleaner, smoother treble than Neodymium designs".

The original Denton would have had a ferrite magnet system, but such things are less common on modern

high performance loudspeakers where Neodymium has pretty well become the norm. One possibility is that this is one way that Wharfedale has managed to keep costs down, the price of rare earth magnets such as Neodymium have sky-rocketed in recent years. The tweeter is also in keeping with traditional design, being a one inch soft dome, crossing over to the 125mm bass/mid driver at 2.3kHz, but this driver – despite its classic looks – is somewhat more up to date.

The mid/bass driver cone is woven Kevlar, and the chassis that supports it is injection-moulded alloy, which means that it has maximum rearward ventilation of the driver. The cabinet is made with balanced veneers, that is the veneer forms a sandwich around a fibreboard core (of unspecified density) in order to increase stiffness in comparison to the usual single-sided approach.

▶ DETAILS

PRODUCT:
Wharfedale Denton Anniversary

Origin:
UK/China

Type:
standmount loudspeaker

Weight:
7.9kg

Dimensions:
(WxHxD)
320x200x275mm

FEATURES:
• HF drive unit:
25mm textile dome

• bass/mid drive unit: 125mm woven Kevlar cone

• sensitivity: 86dB

• nominal impedance: 6 ohms

• Finish: mahogany veneer with tungsten grille

DISTRIBUTOR:
IAG UK

TELEPHONE:
01480 447715

WEBSITE:
wharfedale.co.uk

It's a vented box with two small rearward firing ports which are designed to extend output to 45Hz in order to give it some gravitas, this also means that the speaker needs a bit of space behind it in order to stop the bass being overly amplified.

The aforementioned frame surround on the front baffle not only gives the Denton a bit of style, but also stiffens the baffle itself, albeit at the cost of providing a barrier to sound traveling across the front of the speaker. The grille is held in place with lugs rather than being an interference fit, as was often the case in original seventies designs like the LS3/5A. Bi-wirable cable terminals are arranged vertically – not something I've encountered in the past, but it looks good and is apparently a reference to the original Denton. It's easy enough to remove the gold plated links and bi-wire the speaker, but even if you intend to run one set of cables I recommend replacing the linking bars with short sections of your

It works in a larger than average room, which is not always the case with compact standmounts...

speaker cable or even some solid core mains wire, it always sounds better.

Sound quality

The Denton is a fairly compact standmount and, therefore, needs a decent height stand. I used a 60cm Custom Design FS104, which has a damped central column and four slim uprights, one in each corner. Its stiff, low resonance character seemed to suit the Denton's slightly laid back balance and helped it to deliver good timing. I started out by placing the speakers about 30cm from the rear wall, but found that the bass was a bit congested there, so brought them into the room another 20cm which helped in this regard without leaving the bottom end weakened. I also found that pointing each speaker directly at the listening position gave the greatest detail and precision of both timing and imaging, the smooth nature of the treble meaning that this arrangement was not at all bright or uncomfortable even with less than pristine recordings.

Two systems were used to assess the Denton, my reference Townshend Allegri pre with Valvet A3.5 mono-block amps and a Resolution Audio Cantata CD player/USB DAC and a Naim SuperUniti with UnitiServe



Q&A

Peter Comeau

Director of Acoustic Design, IAG



JK: I get the impression the original Dentons were bigger than this, so why go for a bookshelf for the anniversary version?

PC: Today our ideas of what makes a small speaker have changed. The 80th Anniversary Denton still fits the bill for a small speaker that can be shelf or standmounted. For the Anniversary we wanted to highlight the model which did more than any other speaker to make Wharfedale a recognised brand name globally.

You've used Ferrite for its smooth sound, is it the new Alnico?

Not at all! Ferrite magnets are commonly used on bass units but the trend over the past decade has been to use Neodymium for treble units. The original Denton used Ferrite magnets throughout and, when I was checking the subjective performance, the softer sound of a Ferrite magnet, compared to Neodymium, gave me a result closer to the original's smooth treble output.

What order is the crossover?

It is 3rd order acoustic. Thankfully, with the aid of our virtual speaker software we can optimise both the phase and frequency integration of the design in a way that wasn't possible for the first Denton.

Does the inset baffle not cause problems with diffraction?

Not as much as you might think. The chamfer on the edge of the cabinet that blends with the baffle smoothes the response.

Was it voiced with or without grille?

Both. I wanted the performance to reflect the richness and warmth of the original Denton with the grille fitted. In those days no-one removed grilles. Underneath the original Denton was an unfinished baffle, usually with the cabinet veneer matching number scrawled on it in pen. However, I was also aware that modern audiophiles might prefer to use this speaker with the grilles off, so the sound is brighter in balance with the grilles removed.



I'VE NOT COME ACROSS many affordable speakers that are as mellow as the Denton, most are a lot more upfront and dynamic with a more open midband.

This is the case with the two strongest players at this price in our last group test, the Dynaudio DM 2/6 (£495) is a more sophisticated beast with a real wood finish and a very musically engaging sound, in other words a hard act to beat if not quite as beautiful as the Denton.

Our test winner from the last group was Monitor Audio's Silver RX1. At £425 it combines power and polish with an engaging, resolute sound from another real wood veneered box. These two represent the best that can be found at the Denton's price point and if you are after maximum clarity for your buck they are stronger options. If however, you are more of a romantic and enjoy music that was made in the nineteen sixties and seventies, when such transparent speakers were scarce, this new Denton might be rather appealing.

IN SIGHT



- 1 superb real wood veneer cabinetry
- 2 Kevlar mid/bass driver, not a retro touch...
- 3 Bi-wiring also not offered back in 1967!
- 4 soft dome tweeter with Ferrite magnet for smooth sound

streaming combination. Both systems brought out qualities in the Denton particularly the smooth, relaxed nature of the treble, the use of ferrite here clearly makes it mark in a – dare I say it? – old fashioned balance that is less critical of source material and, therefore, easy to enjoy. It's not as detailed or precise as a lot of speakers at this price point, but that is not its purpose, and it makes a pleasant change to come across a mellow speaker that doesn't come from a boutique brand with the associated costs.

This is *not* the most open sounding speaker I've encountered in this market sector, which is presumably a by-product of the treble driver design. Those who seek full-scale imaging with pinpoint placement of instruments and voices may be less charmed by its relaxed demeanour. That said, there is plenty of detail especially through the midband where the Kevlar driver seems rather good at bringing out the smaller sounds that give a piece of music its texture and atmosphere. It's a fairly power-hungry speaker, that quoted 86dB at 6 ohms sensitivity figure tells most of the story, and you will need at least sixty decent watts to get level out of it. It also works in a larger than average room, which is not always the case with compact standmounts.

It's not what one would recommend to a headbanger, but neither is it a lightweight, it just needs an amp with some grip. The raised frame around the periphery of the front baffle, which gives it such a classic old school appearance, probably has something to do with the limited scale of the soundstage. However, where there is a solo voice or instrument it stands solidly in the centre of the stage with no

connection to the loudspeakers themselves. This was apparent with Joni Mitchell's live version of *Edith and the Kingpin*, where the band doesn't join in until the second verse, it's at this point that the speaker positions become apparent and the superiority of the central image is made clear.

Neither of the systems I used could get around a slight sense of dynamic restraint with great recordings, one such being Muddy Waters' *Folk Singer*, where the massive range of his voice didn't come through as fully as it can with the best at this price. On the other hand, the Denton is well balanced in tonal terms, it extends well into the bass, and you don't get the sense of midrange domination that some alternatives offer. Bass itself is not the last word in clarity but it can play a tune, even with fairly complex material, and this is the key to its overall musicality.

Conclusion

A smooth, relaxed tonal balance makes it all too easy to while the day away enjoying music with the Wharfedale Denton Anniversary. Distinctively styled, it will surely win friends. ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- PERFORMANCE**
★★★★★ **LIKE:** Beautifully styled and finished; easy balance; rhythmic ability
- VALUE FOR MONEY**
★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** Lacks ultimate dynamics and grip; needs strong amplifier to drive it
- BUILD QUALITY**
★★★★★ **WE SAY:** Elegantly styled, superbly built, retro-look loudspeaker with a nicely musical sound
- EASE OF DRIVE**
★★★★★

OVERALL



Box-Design by Pro-Ject

Where performance meets convenience

Whether you want to add an iPod or computer music library to your existing Hi-Fi setup, or you're starting a main or secondary system from scratch, Box Design by Pro-Ject Audio Systems is a fantastic way for all music lovers to bring more high-quality audio into their lives. Every Box Design product combines premium build-quality and exceptional sound with a small size and an attractive price.

Stream



Stream Box DS

The Stream Box DS is one of the most affordable Streaming Clients available with high-end specifications.

- Stream 24-bit/192kHz HD Music
- Wi-Fi or Ethernet Connectivity
- Play from USB Hard-Drives
- Gold-Plated RCA Analogue Out
- S/PDIF Digital Out
- UPnP and DLNA Compliant
- Built-In Internet Radio Platform
- Play Digitally from Apple Devices
- Solid, Vibration-Free Construction
- Apple Authenticated

Play



Dock Box S Digital

- Take Pure Digital Feed from any Docked Device.
- Built-In 24-bit/192kHz DAC
- Gold-Plated RCA Analogue-Out
- S/PDIF Digital Output
- Apple Authenticated



Tuner Box S

- Low-Noise FM Tuner
- Manual or Automatic Tuning
- High-Contrast Display



DAC Box S USB

- High-Quality D/A Converter
- S/PDIF, Toslink & USB Inputs
- 24-bit/96kHz TI Chip

Listen



Speaker Box 5

- Two-Way Bookshelf Speaker
- Bass-Reflex System
- Three High-Gloss Finishes
- Magnetically Shielded
- Easy Placement Within a Room



Stereo Box S

- Integrated Amplifier
- 30 Watts Per-Channel
- Great for Desktop Systems



Head Box S

- One Headphone Socket
- Rotary Volume Control
- Low-Noise Semi-Conductors

Expand

NOW AVAILABLE

Box Design have just announced a new series of high-end power cables and distribution blocks at surprisingly affordable prices.

The Connect-It Power series is available now through most Pro-Ject dealers.



Box Design by Pro-Ject Audio Systems is distributed in the UK by Henley Designs Ltd.
www.henleydesigns.co.uk | Tel: 01235 511 166 | sales@henleydesigns.co.uk

Be bop deluxe



In a sea of mediocrity, **Patrick Cleasby** finds an oasis of excellence in Loewe's new SoundVision streaming mini system...

Denizens of AV shows may be more familiar with German firm Loewe as the *de facto* demo TV on an AV manufacturer's stand that signifies 'high end'. As televisions become networked media renderers, it's only natural that Loewe should reverse its learning in that area into a high-end music system. The new SoundVision (only £1,250 in your local John Lewis folks!) is just this.

It arrives in a huge box, but is actually more of the scale of the larger B&W Zeppelin, although with the addition of a fixed seven-inch touch control panel on top. From the front aspect the panel appears to pass straight through the body to the same-width base, so the overall design effect is of a rectangular sound bar with an iPad stuck through it like the legendary sword in the stone. The body is tilted upwards at a fixed angle by the robust metal base which protects the pair of downward-facing bass units, and the angle allows them to reflect forward off the shelf or table surface.

A solid Loewe TV remote is also supplied and can control most things, but you will find yourself naturally using the touchscreen. However, as the sensitivity and response is slightly different to those of Apple devices, it may take a little getting

used to. Naturally the control system takes over the iPod or iPhone's database, and most recent models are supported.

I installed the SoundVision in place of an Epox Aktimate kitchen system which costs half as much, and has much of the same functionality, but the dazzling good looks of the high-gloss white finish and mirrored ends, the rock-solid construction and the flawless teutonic engineering deliver a wow factor that might make the spend up worthwhile just to impress the neighbours. Optionally, a Loewe sub can be attached via its 2.5mm jack connection, but there is plenty of beef without it.

The SoundVision's multifarious abilities eclipse the competition. These include Internet and FM Radio, A2DP Bluetooth link, DLNA playback, (non-Mac) USB playback, an inbuilt facility for the Aupeo streaming service and an iPod dock hidden unobtrusively behind the control panel. At the top of the front speaker grille, which conceals four drivers, is a slot-load CD player with Gracenote CDDB lookup for track details and art on the control panel.

DETAILS

PRODUCT: Loewe SoundVision
ORIGIN: EU/China
TYPE: streaming system
SIZE: (WxHxD) 548x198x224mm
WEIGHT: 6.4kg
FEATURES:
• network streamer
• iPod dock
• 7.5 inch touchscreen
• subwoofer output
DISTRIBUTOR: Loewe
WEBSITE: loewe.tv

In use

The menu and control system is brilliantly designed once you're used to it – all BBC on-demand radio offerings are available, and everything can be favourited. There's a switch in the system settings for DLNA control; defaulted to off but once on, it's the most robust I have come across – both the iOS and Mac OSX PlugPlayer implementation can control the SoundVision DLNA playback flawlessly, unusually.

The sound settings ship with a 'Pop' EQ setting and a loudness control set to on. This delivers a rather pimped-up sound, but it is a very appealing one, whether it be for music or for speech radio (tone controls are also included). Across a range of music and styles, this sleek box sounded far better than it had a right to – given its compact size.

Network music is reliable from any of the possible servers (Twonky, Synology, LMS in DLNA mode). High-resolution FLAC up to 24-bit/96kHz played easily and sounded great, but 24/192 tracks could only manage a digitally stuttering playback. The only bugbear is that on the current 3.3 firmware (Internet upgradeable, natch), BBC Radioplayer always does a little buffering pause fifteen seconds after playback commences. This is so reliable and consistent it can't be a bandwidth thing, so must be either a design issue or Loewe/BBC incompatibility. A small thing and eminently resolvable, so not frustrating enough for me to mark down this superbly-conceived device.

Does the Loewe SoundVision justify its premium price? Well *maybe* not quite, but if you're in the Loewe customer demographic, this probably won't dissuade you, and you'll end up with one of the most gorgeous machines to ever grace a kitchen cabinet or bedside table. ●



Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

SOUND QUALITY ★★★★★ **LIKE:** Beautifully styled; exquisitely well made and finished; excellent sound for size; connectivity; useful features

VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★ **DISLIKE:** BBC Radioplayer firmware glitch

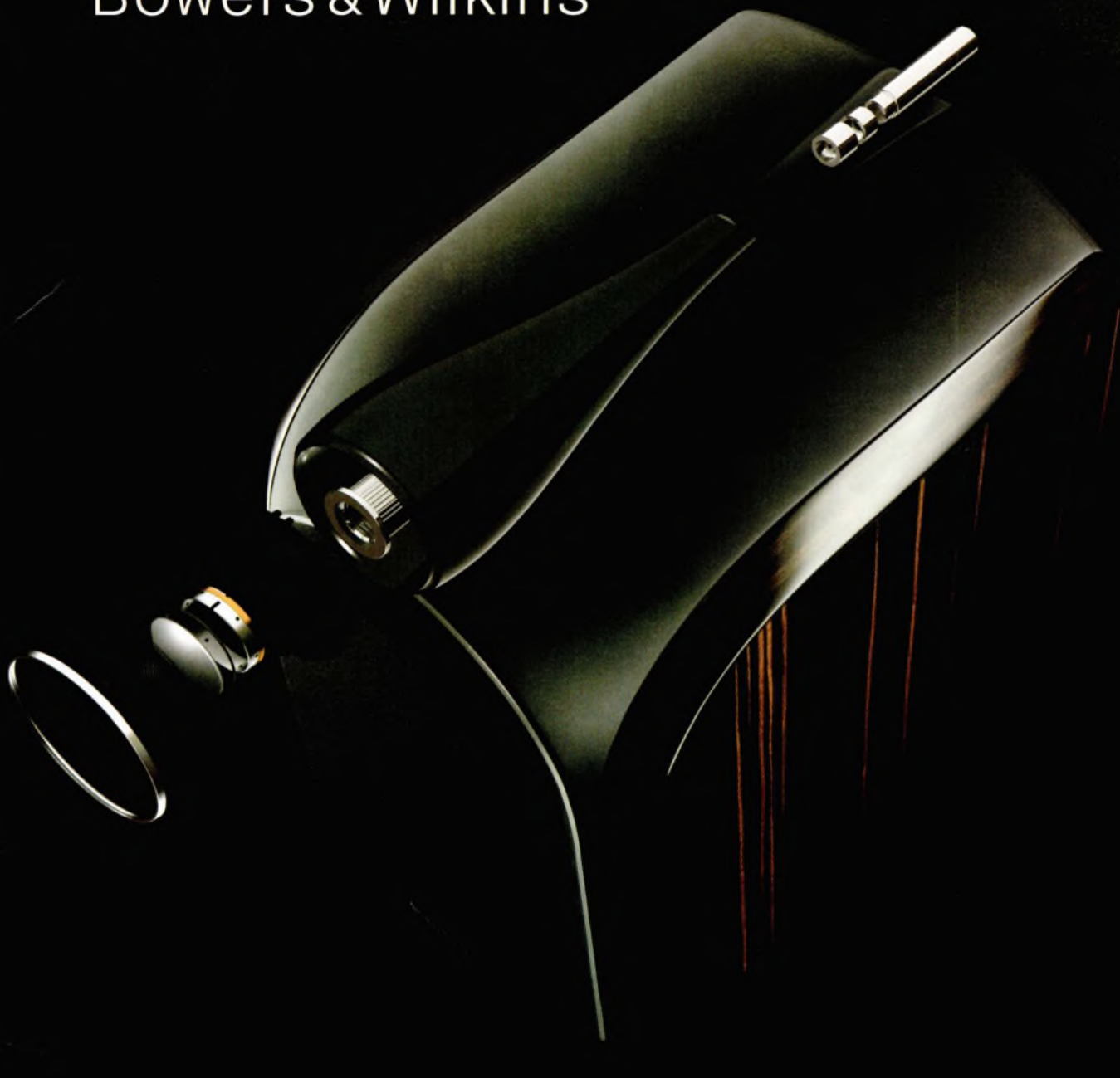
BUILD QUALITY ★★★★★ **WE SAY:** Highly desirable high end one-box streaming system

FEATURES ★★★★★

OVERALL



Bowers & Wilkins



Engineered for the finest moments

PM1 There are times when only music matters. When you want to forget the world and simply lose yourself in sound. The PM1 was designed for these moments. Its carbon-braced tweeter, Kevlar bass/midrange driver and Matrix™ braced cabinet combine to make everything else seem insignificant. It might just be the most refined small speaker we've ever built. **Listen and you'll see.**

www.bowers-wilkins.co.uk/pm1



Music and lights

In the great scheme of thermionic things,
life doesn't get much better than Icon Audio's new
MB 845 MKIIM DS Signature power amps, says **Tim Jarman...**

The problem with many valve amplifiers is that, although they can sound quite sweet at moderate listening levels, they lack the range and extension to put on a really large scale performance. Three-figure wattages are the exception rather than the rule, and if you want triodes – inefficient but loved by their supporters for their speed and resolution – the number of practical choices gets very small indeed. There are, however, *some* monster valves lurking in dusty old data books. Icon Audio, purveyor of affordable, realistically priced tube amplifiers, knows this all too well. Its original MB845 showed just what a success plucking obscure valves out could be, and the new 110 watt MB 845 MkIIIm builds on it...

The key to its power is, of course, the jumbo-sized 845 tubes that are used in the output stages. These are amongst the largest valves to be found in domestic audio products and were originally designed by RCA in the early nineteen thirties for use in cinema amplifiers and AM transmitter modulators. They are directly heated triodes with a thoriated tungsten filament and a carbon anode, these things being necessary to handle the high power levels at which the valves operate – each filament alone dissipates over 30 watts and the anodes need a whopping 1,250 volts to achieve the maximum rated output of 115 watts, that's around *four* times as much as one finds in amplifiers that use smaller valves such as the EL34!

845s are also not particularly sensitive and so need a substantial driver stage – in the MB 845 MkIIIm each one gets its own 6SN7 double triode and these, combined with an unusual choke-based loading circuit, provide the mighty signal that is needed to make the 845s sing.

The amplifier is a push-pull design, and so needs a phase-splitting stage too; this function is performed by a 6SL7 double triode which also acts as the input buffer. It is triodes all the way then, promising low noise and good linearity from a design which has no other active devices in the signal path.

One of the reasons that 845-based amplifiers are unusual is that as well as the very high voltages, the valves also operate at an extremely high bulb temperature, making them quite a hazard if they are not treated with respect. Icon Audio sensibly supply a Plexiglas cover which fits over the area of the chassis where the valves

are located and it is essential that it used for the safety of all concerned. This is a serious piece of equipment, not a toy.

The original MB 845 was a well-known amplifier in audio circles and in creating the MkII version changes were made primarily to the power supply and output transformer, although some tweaks have been made in the input stage too. The latest 'm' model includes a meter as well, which can show both output power (not that useful) and the bias point for each of the 845s (very useful indeed). PTFE valve holders are now also used for the three smaller valves at the front and a revised mains switching arrangement keeps hum out of the input stage. Confused? There's more.

The MB 845 MkIIIm is available in two versions, the standard model which cost around £6,000 per pair, and the special David Shaw Signature edition which comes with different 6SL7/6SN7 valves and Jensen paper in-oil coupling capacitors in the signal path. At around £7,150 it is quite a bit more expensive for six valves and eight capacitors, so my advice would be to try and audition both and see which you prefer. It is the Signature version which is being tested here.

Build and finish of these amplifiers is neat and tidy without being pretentious. The gloss paint may at first seem a bit industrial in appearance, but the anodised aluminium front panels with their nicely styled meters are first rate and there are no *gauche* blue LEDs to distract you as you listen.

The valves come packed separately, but slide beautifully into the high quality and well labelled holders. With the valves fitted and my

Monitor Audio PL100 loudspeakers plugged in via Chord company Odyssey 2 cables, I was able to apply the power and set up the bias – one must never switch on any valve amplifier without a load connected. The clearly marked meters and smooth acting controls made this very easy, in a few minutes all four valves were at their optimum working points. There is also a control to minimise the hum from the AC-fed 845 filaments which you tune for the lowest background noise from the loudspeakers, this is trickier to set up as it is located right between the searingly hot valves.

As with many valve amplifiers there is choice of two loudspeaker outputs, one for four ohm and one for eight. The negative feedback sensing point

Huge, heavy and (power) hungry, they offer the joys of tubes without the pitfalls...

in this design comes from the eight ohm output, so all things being equal this is where the output should be at its most accurate. On the subject of negative feedback, it is interesting that the high/low input level switch is not simply an attenuator; instead it alters the amount of feedback that is applied and, therefore, directly changes the amplifier's gain, which is quite unusual. Sensitivities of 470mV and 1V (for full output) are offered which should cover most needs; in my reference system I used a Cyrus preamplifier and the matching – and very fine – Cyrus CD8 SE2 CD player, but a passive preamp could have also been used with sources that produce plenty of level.

DETAILS

- PRODUCT:**
Icon Audio MB 845 MkIIIm DS Signature
- TYPE:** monoblock power amplifier
- ORIGIN:** UK/China
- WEIGHT:** 37kg each
- DIMENSIONS:**
(HxWxD)
455x70x350mm
- FEATURES:**
- 2x 845 power tubes
 - 2x 6SN7 driver tubes
 - 6SL7 phase splitter tube
 - zero overall feedback (claimed)
 - power and bias meter
 - output: 110W RMS into 8 Ohms (claimed)
 - push-pull circuit
 - 4 and 8 ohm taps
- DISTRIBUTOR:**
Icon Audio
- TELEPHONE:**
0116 2440593
- WEBSITE:**
iconaudio.com



Q&A

David Shaw

Designer, Icon Audio



JK: Why did you choose to design an amp around the 845? What special properties do you think this valve has?

DS: I love working with vintage triodes. They're a joy to listen to and bring out the best in recordings, but their low-ish power can be a problem. The 845, however, isn't the transmitter valve that many people think, but a true audio valve with very similar characteristics to the 2A3 and 300B. It can deliver over 100 watts (push-pull) – plenty of power to drive modern low efficiency loudspeakers and deliver all that triode magic. You can sit for hours rediscovering your music collection without any listening fatigue. Seamless and fluid, intoxicated by every note, every track sounding better than you remembered!

Were there any special considerations, in electronic design terms, that needed to be made to accommodate the 845?

Yes, the 845s are very demanding! My design goals for the MB845 were to deliver high power, good bandwidth especially at low frequencies, and to make it a three-stage amplifier, as four-stage amplifiers tend to sound 'flabby'. The first two were relatively easy using our own in-house transformers, but the third point proved more difficult. To provide the required driving voltage, most designs use three drive stages including two 300B power valves. But I think the sound is inferior and three drive stages also make the amplifier bigger, complex and expensive. My solution, oddly enough, was inspired by the Quad II amplifier, which enabled me to keep my design simple while achieving the sound quality and specifications I wanted.

What improvements have you made to the latest MkIIIm version, and why?

We've included meters for easy bias checking, changed the circuit and wiring to improve the noise floor, enhanced the output transformer, and included new, excellent solid PTFE valve bases with gold plated contacts.

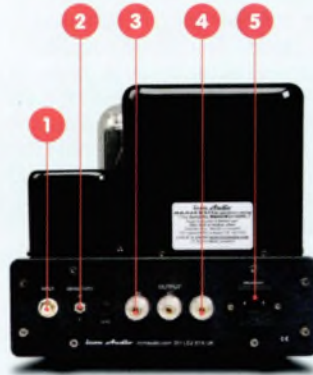
IN SIGHT



- 1 mains power transformer
- 2 smoothing choke
- 3 845 triode output valves
- 4 6SN7 dual triode driver valves
- 5 6SL7 dual triode phas splitter valve
- 6 audio output transformer

CONNECTIONS

- 1 RCA phono input
- 2 Sensitivity switch (470mV / 1V)
- 3 8 ohm speaker output tap
- 4 common speaker terminal
- 5 IEC mains socket



HOW IT COMPARES
ONE OF THE CLOSEST PRICE COMPETITORS OF THE MB 845 IS Musical Fidelity's AMS50 full Class A stereo power amplifier. This is an excellent solid-state design offering a solid 50W per channel from a massive metal chassis. Sonically, it's a fascinating contrast – whereas the Icon Audio has a little looseness in the bass, but is very fluid, the MF is tauter and a little less musical. Its midband is more searching than the Icon, but less mellifluous. Try to audition their respective abilities.

Sound Quality

It is unusual to hear any noises when powering up a valve amplifier, but because the MB 845 MkIIIm's directly heated triodes and silicon rectifiers come to life almost instantly you are greeted with a heavy, decaying thrum through each loudspeaker as the little chrome switches are flicked to 'on'.

I started my listening session with The Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* album, which contains orchestral pieces from the film, composed and arranged by George Martin. I was struck by the silken tonality and immense sound stage that these amplifiers serve up. Everything came together in wonderfully holistic way to give a truly compelling musical experience. The swirling string section, rich woodwind and delicate percussion were so solid, believable and right as the music flowed through. Most tube amps seem to fall apart as the volume is extended, but these just go louder and louder.

I experimented with both output taps, and in my case found the eight ohm one to be more satisfactory, the sound from the four ohm one being noticeably softer and less well focused with my speakers. Tori Amos' *Under The Pink* showed these units are capable of portraying great scale, effortlessly ascending from near silence to the thundering instrumental and piano crescendos. I was enamoured by the lightning speed, incision and grip of these monoblock amplifiers. Of course, they can't match a top solid-stater such as Musical Fidelity's AMS50 in terms of bass control, but in every other aspect they charm like almost no other amplifier I've ever heard.

Some bass overhang was evident, with the lowest registers becoming ponderous at certain tonal points. This is a common trait of valve amplifiers, and to be fair the Icons are better controlled in this area than most. Less typical was a very subtle hardening of cymbals if the amplifier was being worked hard. Despite this, vocal intelligibility proved excellent, a good example of what can be achieved with triodes done properly.

Conclusion

Huge, heavy and hungry for mains power, if your listening room and pocket book can accommodate the new Icon Audio MB 845 MKIIIm, then a treat awaits! They offer all the joys of valves without the pitfalls. You'll still need reasonably efficient loudspeakers and a top-notch source, but this done the sound is vast, profound, lyrical and beguiling.

Both versions are way outside the normal Icon Audio price band, but it's still hard to argue that they don't offer an awful lot for the money. For anyone wanting an 'ultimate' valve amplifier, this is one of the very best, yet one of the least expensive. ●

Hi-Fi Choice

OUR VERDICT

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| SOUND QUALITY
★★★★★ | LIKE: Gorgeous, liquid valve sound; oodles of power decent build; frontal bias/power meter |
| VALUE FOR MONEY
★★★★★ | DISLIKE: You need your own power station to feed it; renewables won't do! |
| BUILD QUALITY
★★★★★ | WE SAY: One of the finest tube amplifiers on sale, a bargain at its price |
| FEATURES
★★★★★ | |

OVERALL



twenty™ series



Hear why the **twenty™** series is award winning

Book a demonstration – see www.pmc-speakers.com

twenty:24
in Amarone

**WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012**

STEREO SPEAKERS
BEST FLOORSTANDER £1500+
PMC TWENTY-23



twenty:23 - Jan '12



twenty:21 - April '12



twenty:21 - July '12

**WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION
AWARDS 2012**

STEREO SPEAKERS
BEST STANDMOUNTER £1500+
PMC TWENTY-22



twenty:22 - June '12



twenty:24 - June '12



twenty:24



twenty:24 - April/May/June '12



PMC®
www.pmc-speakers.com

T +44 (0) 870 4441044
sales@promonitor.co.uk



Major new products at September hifi show

Visitors
again say
"best sound"
Whittlebury Hall
Sept show

At the Whittlebury Hall show in September we launched four major new products:

- Spiral Groove turntables and the Centroid arm
- Kawero! Chiara standmount loudspeakers
- VTL S-200 stereo valve power amplifier
- LeadingEdge power supply with Vertex technology

Spiral Groove

Spiral Groove SG1.1 and SG2 turntables and the Centroid arm are masterpieces of under-stated, seemingly simple design, bred from a deep understanding of the complex forces at work. Everywhere you look you see original thinking, developed over years from earlier SOTA and RPM designs and from user feedback.

Reviewing the £13,200 SG2 design Stereophile said, "...the SG2 is as good as any turntable I've heard, regardless of price." Then, "...like other examples of the very best high-end gear, it transcends expectations – it's something special."



SG1.1 with Centroid arm on quick-release bayonet mount

Music emerges from an almost "black" background, so effective is the arm and turntable combination's control of noise and wayward energy. Multi-layer damping in plinth and platter and solid construction keeps arm, cartridge, platter and motor in a precise, fixed relationship, creating a huge, open soundstage

and very precise speed stability for natural tonal purity, obvious on sustained piano notes. Music is captivating.

The SG1.1 (£21,500) takes performance even higher with a plinth of seven levels of constrained-layer damping and more massive construction, for even better "presence".

Stereophile's view of the £5,000 Centroid arm: "...this may be the best tonearm I've heard." More on our web site.

Kawero! Chiara loudspeakers

These slim, elegant stand-mount speakers astonish listeners with the power and scale of their performance, seemingly out of all proportion to their size.

The Chiara is a direct development from the floor-standing Kawero! and Vivace speakers, the latter being rated amongst "the best of the best" by hifi+ magazine.

At this year's Munich show the Kaiser room using the Chieras was rated "best sound" – out of 300 other exhibitors.

A defining feature of all speakers in the range is the way the rear-firing drive units have been designed to work with *and couple to the room*. The result is speakers that produce a huge soundstage filled with natural-sounding, lifelike performers in normal living rooms.

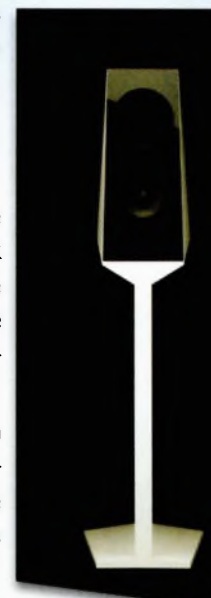
More Vertex – inside

The Chiara's astonishing clarity and scale is a combination of the best ScanSpeak drive units, a Mundorf ribbon tweeter, the ultra-dense Tankwood cabinet and the Vertex energy-absorption applied *inside* – to the cabinet, the crossover and the stand.

Absorbing unwanted wide-band vibration – in a component designed to vibrate! – allows drive units to radiate from a stable baffle and cuts spurious electrical signals being generated in the crossover.

Chiara prices: £13,295 - £15,115

See the show report under News on our web site for links to much more information on all these new products.



Kawero! Chiara in white – wide choice of other finishes available

Customers say we make some of the best sounds at shows and in our studio they have ever heard, so you know we can do the same in your home. Our advice takes account of your best components and guides you where change is needed, in stages you can afford.

You avoid expensive mistakes, enjoy music and save money in the long run.

Just listen and you'll know

CD: Accoustic Arts, Bel Canto, dCS, Gamut, Resolution Audio, Vertex AQ dac-1. Vinyl: Aesthetix, Clearaudio, Graham, Spiral Groove, Transfiguration. Tuners: Magnum Dynalab Amplifiers: Accoustic Arts, Aesthetix, Bel Canto, CAT, Gamut, Sonneteer, Storm Audio, VTL. Loudspeakers: Audio Physic, Gamut, Kawero - Vivace & Chiara, NEAT, Totem. Cables: Chord Co., DN1, Nordost, Siltech, Tellurium, Vertex AQ. Mains: LeadingEdge, Vertex AQ. Supports: Arcici, Black Ravioli, Hi-Fi Racks, Leading Edge, Stands Unique, Vertex AQ

www.rightnote.co.uk

01225 874728 or lo-call: 0845 230 7570

Sponsored by:


 Russ Anderson
Solutions for better music & movies

Hi-fi choices

Email us at letters@hifichoice.co.uk or write to:
**Hi-Fi Choice Letters, My Hobby Store Ltd, Hadlow House,
9 High Street, Green Street Green, Orpington, Kent, BR6 6BG**

THIS MONTH:



MALCOLM STEWARD
EXPERTISE: REVIEWER

MS HAS SEVERAL decades of experience writing about hi-fi for a wealth of mags. Although a long standing vinyl junkie, nowadays he's getting ever more into digital streaming.



ED SELLEY
EXPERTISE: REVIEWER

FOR THE BEST PART of ten years, Ed was developing and supporting products from some of the biggest names in audio. Enjoys blogging about his favourite tunes too.



PATRICK CLEASBY
EXPERTISE: TECH GEEK

PATRICK WORKS in a high-level technical support role in the broadcast industry, when not fiddling with his networked music collection and a rapidly expanding shelf of vinyl LPs.



DAVID PRICE
EXPERTISE: EDITOR

DP HAS SPENT much longer than he'd care to admit buying and upgrading his own hi-fi system, not to mention reviewing thousands of separates over the years.

Sonos – the comeback

Congratulations on your long overdue review of Sonos. I started using Sonos a couple of years ago on the recommendation of my dealer and have a Play 3 and two Connects, one of which is connected to my Naim system. The Play 3 replaced a bedside clock radio when I finally lost patience with listening to the radio through an intermittent fuzz of static. £260 is a lot to replace a clock radio but it is vastly superior and I'm very satisfied with it in this application.

I'd like to pick up on a couple of things in Malcolm's review. Firstly drop-outs, Malcolm makes no secret of his preference for wired connections, but what does "during my time with the system I noticed very few drop-outs" mean? This implies that he did suffer drop-outs, but strikes me as

rather equivocal way of saying so if that was his experience. He implies Sonosnet is inferior to a wired connection without actually saying so, and I'd certainly like to see him clarify his remarks. In two years with the system I haven't noticed any drop-outs and I conclude it is because there haven't been any! The control via iPod over my home Wi-Fi is, on the other hand, very prone to drop-outs and the main thing that mars my enjoyment of the system. The units have once lost all their network addressing and the Sonos technical support line was excellent and got me up and running again very quickly.

Secondly, file compatibility. Malcolm makes much of the lack of hi-res file compatibility and suggests most users will be playing lossy MP3s. While these products are undoubtedly mass

market, this is patronising and I'm sure he's aware there are a good number of audiophiles out there using Sonos to experiment with streaming using 16-bit/44.1kHz files ripped from their CD collections. As an Apple hater I wouldn't expect him to agree, but of far more importance to me

There are a good number of audiophiles out there using Sonos to experiment with

than the lack of hi-res is native support for ALAC, so I can have good quality music around my home through Sonos and on the move from my iPod without faffing around ripping or converting files into multiple formats. It amazes me that so many manufacturers fail to understand this (Naim being a notable exception), although I do more than half my music listening outside the house on my iPod, there are a lot of streamers boasting iPod integration that I will never consider purchasing. At home I want to play ALAC files on my network, not plug in my iPod to listen again to what I've been listening to on my commute to and from work.

Finally, there were a couple of things I'd like to have heard a bit more about. Malcolm didn't specify whether his connection to his SuperNait was analogue or digital. Given its digital inputs, I'm interested to know whether

he compared the connections and his observations. His comments in comparison to the Squeezebox Touch were exceedingly brief and not very illuminating, but for most buyers of a Connect this is surely the most likely alternative. That he has just written extensively on tweaking the Squeezebox Touch for better sound quality in *Hi-Fi Choice*, suggests a fuller comparison of the two products would be of interest to many of your readers, as it certainly would be to me. Hopefully, we've not seen the last of Sonos in your pages?

Andy Oliver

MS says: *Andy, the sentence "during my time with the system I noticed very few drop-outs" means that during the weeks I spent with the system, I experienced only a small quantity of infrequent drop-outs. These occasional glitches were rare, brief and infrequent, so the point did not warrant being laboured.*

SonosNet certainly appeared subjectively to outperform regular Wi-Fi, for which I appear to have made it clear I have no time, and greatly prefer a wired connection – for music as opposed to control data. I naturally used the analogue connection to the SuperNait, which gave me the opportunity to hear how well the Sonos equipment's digital conversion performed, which was more important for most readers, I suspect, than how well the DAC in the Naim amp fared! Logitech chose to discontinue the Squeezebox Touch, so I had to acknowledge, begrudgingly, that comparison to that would hardly be appropriate.

I did not intend to appear patronising about people listening to MP3s in their homes but, honestly, why would anyone who cares about quality sound want to bother? (That was, of course, a rhetorical question.) As for ALAC files I would simply ask why Apple does not join the rest of the planet and make provisions for native FLAC



Sonos – serious kit or just another MP3 player? Malcolm decides!



Musical Fidelity AMS351 – is this £7,500 amp over the top for Hi-Fi Choice speaker tests?

Floored genius?

Dear David – I read with interest your group test for budget floorstanders. The price range we are talking about here is exactly where I am looking so the results were of great interest to me. However, it did occur to me that your reference system was a tad overkill for this level of speaker surely? With no disrespect intended to any of the speakers concerned, but if I had around £7,500 of amp/CD player and cables I don't think I would be looking at a sub-£500 speaker, no matter how good they may be. Do you not think it would have been more beneficial to potential buyers to have a budget reference system driving the speakers, rather than such a disproportionately expensive system? Nice choice of test discs by the way!

Dave Boden

DP says: *Thanks Dave. Just between you and I (whisper it), when I do loudspeaker tests, I always surreptitiously fire up a couple of other amplifiers too. It's really a belt and braces exercise, as occasionally you can get electrical matching and/or synergy issues with different amplifier and speaker combinations. In this case, I still had the last integrated amplifier and group test winner, the Cyrus 6i, to hand – so it was this £600 device that did the honours. Whilst this worked well with all the testees,*

there was a clear improvement in sonics with the £7,500 Musical Fidelity. Importantly, it was better able to signpost the sonic differences between the speakers, as less of its character was being imposed on their drive units. It's useful to note at this junction, that whilst we do often list our 'reference systems' in reviews, these aren't the only things we use – rather, they're the primary systems. A good reviewer needs to experiment with sources, amps, speakers, cables, etc., to get the best out of the kit on test. That's a natural part of the job. This is often not mentioned, otherwise half the review would be taken up with the tales of such experimental derring-do!

Skip'd disc

Fifteen years ago I bought the (then) standard entry-level system, comprising an Arcam Alpha 7 CD, Arcam Alpha 8 amp and KEF Q35 speakers. Since then I have upgraded to Arcam Alpha 8 CD, Arcam Alpha 9 Amp and Alpha 9 Power-amp – bi-amping the KEFs. This was done at minimal cost via eBay and even, would you believe, finding the Alpha 8 CD player in a skip at the local recycling centre (it only needed a new output fuse and was in excellent condition)!

I have started to feel the speakers are in need of an upgrade, however I am not sure whether I am just imagining that they are under specified for

the amps. They are certainly looking somewhat dated. So what speakers would you recommend for this system (I also have a Pro-Ject Genie II Turntable, Cambridge Audio Azur Phono stage, Arcam irDock, Arcam rPac)? I like the look of the KEF R300s or Monitor Audio RX50s but will I get significant, noticeable improvement over the Q35s, other than aesthetics?

ES says: *I had a pair of Q35s and while they are still very likeable, I think that it should be possible to better them at sensible money. A strong potential partner for the Arcams would be the Epos Epic 5. At £750, this is a handsome, beautifully built and sonically excellent speaker that should sit happily in most rooms. If you are looking for something with a bit more welly, don't rule out the Triangle Colour Floorstander either.*



What speaker should replace ageing KEF Q35s in an all-Arcam system? Epos Epic 5, says Ed Selley...

support in its products? And this is not a case of me being anti-Apple because I have no time for WMA files either. Music should not be stored in proprietary formats. Apple seems guilty of the juvenile 'Not Invented Here' syndrome in this instance.

What is more, what made you imagine that I am "an Apple hater"? I certainly do not like

Apple's products – I have had to replace too many Apple computers compared to IBM clone PCs over the past two decades and my iPhone is utterly useless at making and receiving intelligible phone calls – but the term 'hater' is far too florid. I merely dislike Apple and what I see as its over-priced, under-performing products

along with the company's insufferable arrogance.

PC says: *If we've not seen the last of Sonos, we've definitely seen the last of the much-discussed Squeezebox Touch as a going concern. Logitech abolished the SB brand and the Touch back in the summer. Only the Squeezebox Radio survives*

under the new (for Logitech) Ultimate Ears branding and while lovely, that ain't hi-fi.

Eager late adopters should pick up their Touches or original Radios now! I will opine on the situation elsewhere, but it does skew the nursery slopes of hi-fi network music very much in favour of Sonos and that can't be good for the hi-res future unless they buck their ideas up. I couldn't agree more on the point of wanting real full-fat streaming at home, not various flavours of iPod mounting, Airplay flinging and (the Lord help us) Bluetooth faffery.

I would, however, recommend that a move to accurately ripped FLAC and/or a bulk transcode/rip-check of your ALAC will ultimately benefit you in freeing you from the constraints of Apple and Apple-compatible devices.

Golden age

You will understand my age when I tell you I am still very happily using a Quad 44 amp, Rega turntable and a pair of KEF 105s for my delight in classical music. However, I have a problem. Not I might say with this equipment, but with my Sony 40EX703 TV. I find the sound from it grim and you never could, even at Sony, get a gallon into a pint pot as regards speakers. Have you done any reviews of add-on speaker bars?

Mind you I will admit that the Sony sound is improved if you stand behind the set and crane your head over the top to see the picture, but this is not always convenient when three or four need to see a programme! My great friends Donald Aldous of the BBC and Gordon King have long since departed the hi-fi scene and taken to the hi-fly one in heaven!

Loris Goring

PC says: *This one is a perennial problem and depending on room layout I would always advocate siting a good old-fashioned stereo setup like yours around the TV if possible. Sacrilege! Of course that one depends on having a TV or set-top box analogue out, but in your instance you could play with the digital output capability of that TV.*

There are many soundbars available, from Yamaha, who started the trend, through the lower-end likes of Orbitsound

right 'up' to Bose. What you watch will be a key driver in what sound you want to hear. I recommend sampling a few of the options – there should be no shortage in your nearest AV emporium.

ES says: Hi-Fi Choice hasn't reviewed speaker bars, but my dalliances with home cinema reviewing suggests that as a one-stop shop for improving the sound of teeny tiny flatscreen speakers, you will struggle to beat the Yamaha Sound Projector range. Depending, of course, on the location of the screen relative to your system, it might also be possible to attach directly to that for a bit of extra muscle.

Flat earth society?

I enjoyed the recent article about Linn Kiko, and I have read a couple of Naim reviews as well during the past years. But none where the two brands are mixed, as they used to be in the heady nineteen eighties. So my humble request to you, is to review a system comprising of Linn-Naim-Linn (source, amp, speakers) such as Akurat DS-NAC 282-NAP 250-Akurat 242 (passive...) with Naim speaker cables. It would be a thrill to read...

Mats Stille, Stockholm

DP says: Hi Mats – one of the reasons many magazines used to review Linn/Naim systems in the nineteen seventies and eighties was that they were 'approved suppliers' for one another. Basically, Linn didn't make amplification and Naim didn't do sources or speakers. As it happened, the two Managing Directors of the companies were also said to get on very well personally, and certainly this

chemistry showed when their respective equipment was put together in a listening room.

Some of the most synergistic systems I've ever heard were Linn/Naim ones, allowing the already expensive combination of kit to punch even higher. So, I take your point – and I shall put it to both companies. Let's see where it goes...

ES says: I have actually floated a '21st Century Flat Earth' special to various key personnel which would combine the two companies' products in the way they used to be. The response was tentatively positive so, we'll see if we can bring something to fruition...

Going for the one...

I am currently in the market for a top quality DAC. My system consists of a Musical Fidelity A1008 integrated amplifier (with onboard DAC) and an Olive 4HD (with onboard DAC), and Epos ES22 loudspeakers. All cabling is by MIT. I've tried both the Olive DAC and the Musical Fidelity DAC and find that the digital coax out from the Olive through the Musical Fidelity works best – with a pacier, larger soundstage, although it does lose a little richness in the presentation. Hence the request for a better separate DAC...

My budget could go to £2,000 and I've currently read reviews on the likes of the Rega DAC, the new Audiolab M-DAC and the Metrum Acoustics Octave. Can you please offer any advice around the reviews and which would be the preferred DAC, additionally any further suggestions? I do intend to audition, but I'm finding difficulty in sourcing a dealer where I can audition the Octave.

Michael Ramshaw

Superdeck shootout

Dear David – I would be very grateful for your opinion with regard to the major sonic differences between the latest Michell Orbe and Linn Sondek turntables, as it is very difficult to obtain a side by side comparison. The main issues are: [1] Is it likely that the Linn will produce a much tighter, more precisely focused images than the Orbe? [2] Are there any other areas in which the Linn is likely to outperform the Michell? I am assuming that the phono stage and cartridge are around £1,000 respectively.

Ralph Woollams

DP says: Hi Ralph – in a nutshell, Linn is funkier and more intricate rhythmically, enticing you into the music – but is more limited in

terms of depth perspective, soundstaging, tonal purity and bass grip. The Michell will give a bigger, more 3D, mastertape-like sound – more detail, greater overall dynamics, bigger and tauter bass, but less 'fun'. It's still very musically enjoyable though...

ES says: Far be it for me to argue with the boss, but the Orbe can be made to sound funky. Thanks to Michell making armboards for pretty much any nine inch arm, you can think of, you can choose an arm that will accentuate the rhythmic performance of the Orbe and increase the fun factor. The combination of Orbe with a Mørch tonearm from Denmark can teach an LP12 a trick or two about timing and it looks fabulous too!

How does Michell's Orbe turntable compare to a Linn Sondek LP12? Very well, says David Price...



DP says: Needless to say, the Audiolab M-DAC is an essential audition, despite being a good deal less expensive than your budget permits. Go and audition it first, then try the Arcam FMJ-D33 and Naim DAC to see how it compares. You should find it more than holds its own in many respects.

ES says: It would be remiss of me not to mention that I've recently listened to the new Musical Fidelity M6DAC at the magic £2,000 price point. If you like the M1, the M6 is in the same vein, but with a bit of added sophistication and low-end shove.

Package deal

I really don't like digipaks and other flimsy cardboard packaging, which some albums only seem available in. I much prefer jewelcases or at least something reasonably substantial (like small hardback books) – the card style packaging doesn't age or travel well and it's nice to have something you can take in the car. Plastic jewelboxes can be cannibalised and you can recycle plastic as well as card.

Another CD bugbear is bonus tracks tacked on to the end of albums which ruin the flow of albums. I'd prefer them on a



How to make an old telly sound the part? Try a Yamaha soundbar, says Ed Selley!



Man seeks £2,000 DAC. Arcam's FMJ-D33 is recommended. The end?

separate disc or maybe hidden on the pregap, while inlay booklets designed as posters seem designed almost never to fold back into position. Also, sometimes older compilations or foreign versions of albums have better tracklists. The original release of Damien Rice's album was packaged in small CD-sized clothed covered hardback book form. That would fit in to one's record's collection just nicely...

John Thompson

Boom bang a bang – part 2

Dear David – just to remind you, my last letter was published in the *Hi-Fi Choice* September issue requesting some advice regarding speaker and room interaction issues. I unfortunately did not really like the look of some of the speaker suggestions (Waterfall Victoria, Piega), and while I did like the WLM Diva Monitor, I could not find a dealer close by to listen to them.

I did try all the advice given to make my existing speakers work; from tightening the bolt heads, bungs, speaker placement. I also tried sorbothane feet directly under the speakers, then also getting granite plinths and adding large sorbothane feet under the plinths. I also tried some Sound Dead Steel Isofeet. The sorbothane feet made the biggest difference, but only in a small way and I still have the same issue as before.

I have also checked all other components of the system,

including buying a Tellurium Q Black Interconnect and Jumper speaker cables, but can only deduct that the speakers are either faulty, or I just do not like the sound of them.

My system comprises of Krell SA-350A, an Audiolab 8200 CDQ (more about that below), Sugden A21 SE, Tellurium Q Black Interconnect and van den Hul The

The sorbothane feet made the biggest difference, but only in a small way...

First Ultimate interconnect, IsoTek EVO 3 Sirius Mains Block, various power cables (to be replaced with IsoTek Premium), Tellurium Q Black loudspeaker cable, B&W 703 loudspeakers.

I still have issues with 'bass bloom' where the speaker interacts too much with the room and I feel the couch shaking on vibrations at medium-to-high volume levels. Overall it also has way too much bass, even at medium listening levels. The midband also is repressed and sounds closed in. I think the sound has okay treble, even too much at times. It also sounds closed in and I want more open, more detail, possibly slighter warmer (or maybe more midband) sound. I still want a lot of detail, but more clarity, warmth and midband rather than only the high treble



What next for a man who can't get on with his mid-price B&W floorstanders? Audition the Monitor Audio GX300...

Speak easy

After months of research and auditioning I've decided to go for Wharfedale Jade 5 floorstander with Audiolab amplification, comprising two 8200M mono-blocks and a 8200CDQ CD player/preamp. Do you know how will this sound in a forty square metre room? I also don't know what

interconnects and speaker cables to buy. Budget for cables would be around 300 Euro total. I'd like to keep a warmish sound that's easy to listen to over extended periods of time.

Alex

DP says: It should sound very clean and powerful, Alex.

Obviously it depends hugely on your room, and also its furnishings and the sort of music you listen to, but the Audiolab electronics aren't going to make things sound big, fat and fulsome anytime soon. Instead, expect oodles of detail and a crisply etched midband. As such, to smooth

things just a touch, you should audition cables from Tellurium Q, Mark Grant and Black Rhodium – the incision of the likes of Furutech or the stark transparency of van den Hul might not be quite the ticket with a system that's not prone to giving a euphonic rendition of the source.

and bass that I have now, more like analytical monitor speakers I think. I also want more involvement and detail at lower listening levels.

The listening room is around 10x7x3 metres and is a converted wharf, but I had similar sound issues in previous flats. I listen primarily to electronic music like Depeche Mode and Pet Shop boys, but also Jesus and Mary Chain, Stone Roses and similar. Can you please provide me with a suggested list of speakers to audition.

As an example I would think the PMC FB1i could work with a sensitivity of around 89dB/m, as that is similar to some of the previous loudspeaker suggestions. I also believe that the B&Ws have a sensitivity of 93-94dB/m, but can you only turn the volume knob twenty percent up before it is too loud? Any other suggestions? To make it more complex the speakers need to be a maximum of 30cm from the rear wall; budget is flexible but £3,000 is tops.

Also when my last letter was published, I was thinking about selling my Audiolab as the Krell sounded so much better. When swapping cables and checking/cleaning the whole system I, however, found that the Audiolab sounded much better with a normal power cable, as the (rather old) specialist mains cable I had was choking the sound of the Audiolab! I really can't hear what CD player sounds better, probably because of the loudspeaker issues mentioned above.

What I can hear now is that the Krell is more open and sounds brighter and possibly somewhat more detailed, but the Audiolab is very close with similar detail, but with a somewhat darker and more organic sound. I will keep both until I have replaced my current speakers, but would be interested in your view of which one I should keep.

Paul Bjernklo

LETTER OF THE MONTH

DP says: Okay Paul, next it's time to audition some speakers. Start with the PMC FB1i as you suggest, then hear the Monitor Audio GX300. Both cost under £3,000, and have a distinctively different sound – the PMC is more ballsy and musical, the Monitor Audio more clean and open. Between them, you should have most bases covered, so it's a case of seeing how you get on with them, then letting us know. Find a good dealer and ask for a home demo, if at all possible, due to your atypical room acoustics. Then you can try the Krell and Audiolab amplification; frankly I'd be surprised if you preferred the latter with more revealing loudspeakers, but your room acoustics seem to be a law unto themselves!

...but PMC's FB1i also works well, with a tauter, punchier sound albeit less detail and insight



I AM LOOKING FOR A CD PLAYER OR DIGITAL CONVERTOR

to replace my aged Marantz CD17KI Signature. There is nothing wrong with the CD17 per se, however I'm looking for a change in sound, a move towards that warmer vinyl/analogue/tube sound. I want something more akin to late night listening – lights down low with a good glass of red-type sound, one with a wide soundstage, airy treble and good midrange depth...perhaps a tube-based player?

I predominantly listen to Reggae music – Rocksteady, Roots and Dancehall, and Dub. Thus my musical tastes would lead one to think that bass is all-important, however this isn't really the case. Yes, a good taut deep bass is desirable and would be a bonus, but I actually value hearing the vocals and instruments over a constant thud, thud, thud!

My current system comprises a Plinius M8 preamplifier, Innersound ESL300 power amp, two Cambridge Audio 840W power amps set as Bridge Monoblocks, ATC SCM35 speakers with Jas-Audio 100K supertweeters, REL Strata III subwoofer (simply set to subtly reinforce, and slightly enhance any bass). Interconnects are IXOS Ixotica X2s (RCA from player to Pre, XLRs to Power amps) and speaker cables are QED Genesis Silver Spiral (slightly modified)

I recently tried out two DACs – an Audiolab M-DAC and Musical Fidelity M1 – just to hear any upgrade, improvement or variation on sound, and while I could hear nuances (the Audiolab was superior) in the dealer's demo room, the overall sound did not alter in any significant way during my extended home trial. maybe I was expecting too much? *'Dave'*

DP says: Yes, probably. I've awarded you Letter of the Month simply because you raise a very interesting point – one of expectations. Many people come back to hi-fi expecting to upgrade their multi-thousand pound systems for pennies. But then reality intrudes, as soon as you get down to the dealer dem room.

It's worth remembering here that you've got a CD player which in today's money would cost well over £2,500, and you're expecting a modern £500 DAC to comprehensively outclass it. In some ways, I'd wager that it would – certainly in terms of low-level detailing, depth perspective and imaging precision the M-DAC is a world ahead. However, for your own music tastes and proclivities, it's likely to be less suitable.

The Audiolab is a very high resolution performer, but doesn't have a single eufonic transistor on its circuitboard, making it temperamentally ill-suited to your sort of music. if money is no object then ideally you would be looking at the Accustic Arts CD player 1 mk3, which has a wonderfully fluid and bouncy sound, but costing several thousand quid I suspect it's too expensive. So look instead to the AstinTrew AT3500 Plus (£1,495), which gives a good taste of the former's sound. This machine didn't shine brightest in our recent group test, but has countless friends who use vinyl as their primary source – enough said!

WIN A RUSS ANDREWS POWERMAX PLUS MAINS LEAD WORTH £50!

Letter of the Month winners receive a Russ Andrews PowerMax Plus mains lead worth £50. Write to us at letters@hifichoice.co.uk



WILSON
AUDIO

audio research
HIGH DEFINITION

...high-end is what we do and its something
we do rather well...

Steve Martin

t0vo0m000h00g0dfo0d0ud0b

SHOWN LEFT: NEW Wilson Audio Alexia | SHOWN RIGHT: NEW Audio Research Reference 75



Guildford Audio

t. 01483 537 577
m. 07979 515 577
e. sales@guildfordaudio.co.uk
web: www.guildfordaudio.co.uk

SHOWN LEFT: NEW *Sonus faber Venere Range* | SHOWN RIGHT: *Devialet System in white*

ANTHONY GALLO
ACOUSTICS

ARCAM

ATLAS Cables

audiolab

AUDIOVECTOR

Bardaudio

B&W

BOSS

THE CHORD
COMPANY

CHORD

CREAK

CRESTRON

CYRUS

DALI

DENON

epos

EXPOSURE

GENELEC

GOLDRING

GRADO

IMAGE

ISOtek

JVC

KALEIDASCAP

KEF

KUDOS

LINN

LUMAGEN

MARANTZ

MICHELL ENGINEERING

MISSION

MUSICAL FIDELITY

NAD

naim

neat

ONKYO

Panasonic

PMC

ProAc

Project

QUAD

ROTEL

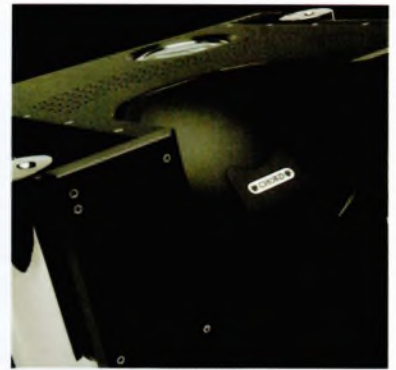
SENDER

spendor

Taiichiro RESEARCH

Velodyne

Wilson benesch



Visit our dedicated demonstration rooms at:
3 Bridge Street
Guildford
Surrey
GU1 4RY

Opening Hours:
9am-6pm Mon to Sat (later by appointment)

Tel:
01483 504801 or 01483 304756

Email:
info@pjhifi.co.uk

Web:
www.pjhifi.co.uk

▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ ▶ The only real hi-fi shop in Guildford

Grand designs

Apple's Steve Jobs was a super-talented product planner, but others have created better before, says **David Price**...

October 5th, 2011 is a day that will go down in many people's hearts as being as black as September 11th a decade before. Although in scale, the sad death of Apple co-founder Steve Jobs one year ago surely can't be compared to the horrific events at the World Trade Center in New York, it's nevertheless fair to say that Apple fans the world over – of which there are hundreds of millions – still recoil at the thought of their idol passing.

When Jobs died, there was a huge public outpouring of grief, with *Appleistas* laying flowers outside the company's store on New York's Fifth Avenue, and candles being lit in others. Around the world, chat rooms, web forums and Twitter strands swelled with sadness, and newspaper columnists dipped into their purplest of prose to eulogise over a man that – so many feel – has made an indelible impact on the modern world.

A great many Apple fans (who often stretch the word 'fan' to the outer limits) believe Jobs was more than just a company CEO, but a visionary, an artist and the creator of some of the most beautiful objects that humankind has yet produced. Comparisons have been drawn with Leonardo Davinci no less, and I for one am still surprised that his name and that of Brunel haven't been uttered in the same breath – in this country, at least!

My own feelings about Jobs are a little more measured. Let me say firstly that I *am* an Apple computer fan. I migrated from PCs to Macs nine years ago, and have never looked back. When I do take a sneaky peak at the dark side – so to speak – I am still depressed by the overall look and feel of Windows operating systems, and soon a cloud of despondency descends. Like many people, I feel like my Mac has been designed for 'how my brain works', rather than for the convenience of the computer, which was always the way with Windows, wasn't it? So, I'm hardly a natural critic of Apple, adoring as I do OS X, and respecting the high quality hardware designed to partner it.

But there my fandom stops. Steve Jobs was *not* the first human being to bring us beautifully designed consumer electronic technology. One fleeting glance at Bang and Olufsen's product portfolio of forty years ago, or indeed Braun's a decade before that, shows aesthetically arresting, brilliantly packaged music playing products. Designers such as Jacob Jensen (B&O) and Dieter Rams (Braun) were surely heroes to Steve Jobs, as they did

with record players, receivers and music centres what Sir Jonathan Ive did to portable hard-disk-based music players in 2001. Moreover, they did it with a pencil and a slide rule, rather than today's labour-saving Computer Aided Design and rendering...

Furthermore, the militant tendency of Apple fandom, in their canonising of Steve Jobs, seem to have forgotten about one Akio Morita. If you were to warp back thirty years to a Britain festooned with BBC Micros, Austin miniMetros, seven inch Duran Duran vinyl singles and Rubik Cubes, you'd also see in the shelves of your local Boots, Currys, Dixons and WH Smiths, something called a Walkman. Sony boss Morita had been pushing the idea of miniaturisation for the best part of twenty years by this time. (Indeed his autobiography, *Made in Japan*, amusingly recalls tales of him trying to persuade American buyers of the mid-nineteen sixties that they needed a small portable radio and compact home video recorders, only to be greeted with blank stares and ridicule.) With the cassette Walkman, Morita's efforts finally paid off. Of course, without it, the iPod wouldn't have been possible – Sony created not just the product but the very market for it, and lovingly built it rather than using an outsourced, overseas OEM manufacturer...

In the great scheme of things then, I do *not* think that Jobs was the greatest visionary that the consumer electronics world has ever seen. But that's not in any way to denigrate his obvious talents, superlative taste and brilliant strategic brain. He wasn't an artist, he was a product planner and packager *par excellence*, having a talent for joined-up-thinking that few have ever matched. He had what so many corporate types lack – what President George Bush (the first) called "the vision thing". This ability to read the lie of the land in commercial consumer electronics terms, is what set him apart from so many of his peers.

All this meant that Jobs was able to preside over a period of extraordinary growth, one that turned Apple into the largest company the world has ever seen, with more money than the US government and a market capitalisation of some £390 billion. Now though, I fear Apple will become more conservative, with power shifting away from creatives to traditional management types. As the smack of firm accounting intervenes, it's possible that its reputation will suffer – just as has happened with several premium priced, heavily marketed car brands. I do hope not.

In the great scheme of things, I do not think that Jobs was the greatest visionary that the consumer electronics world has ever seen...

DAVID PRICE
Hi-Fi Choice editor



Tellurium Qtm

Audio designed to combat phase distortion

Find out why more and more people are talking about Tellurium Qtm products.

Don't just believe all the incredible reviews, test our products for yourself against anything else in the same price range.

Find out how your music can **really** sound and talk to your nearest Tellurium Qtm dealer now.



Cables, amplifiers and the unexpected!

www.TelluriumQ.com

01458 251997



hi-fi+

Products of the Year 2010



Jan 2011

Hi Fi World

Cable of the Year 2010

neat little packages



Audio
Cinema
Multi-Room
Network
Installation

Bryston
Chord Co.
Dynavector
Heed
HiFi Racks
Isoblue
Lehmann
Linn
Naim
Neat
Okki Nokki
PMC
Rega
REL
Sennheiser
Wilson Benesch
Wireworld

Calveley Court, Reymerton, Norfolk. NR9 4QD

01362 820800

enquiries@basicallysound.co.uk
www.basicallysound.co.uk



BASICALLY
SOUND



THE WAND
UNIPIVOT TONEARM

Musical Magic!



"The Wand certainly pulled something wonderful out of the hi-fi hat ... It sounds completely out of its price class, letting you get lost in music. I loved the way it let the rhythms flow." **HiFi Choice #363**



"...the low end is a real strength of The Wand as it captures bass lines expertly and never seems to run out of puff or feel that it was lacking authority. I would say that it is almost impossible not to fall for The Wand's charms." **HiFi World January 2012**

www.thewandtonearm.com



info@designbuildlisten.com
Retail and OEM enquires now welcome.



Miked up!

In the second of two articles, **Richard Black** takes a closer look at the mysterious world of microphones...

I closed the first part of this survey of music recording microphones by noting that the two main microphone types, ribbon and condenser, have fundamentally different characteristics with respect to directional response, and also very different resonant signatures. Condenser microphones can be made directional by the careful inclusion of small holes in their backplate, and in practice a great many of them are made in 'cardioid' form.

A cardioid is a kind of curve defined by a mathematical equation, and it equates to a directional response with a maximum facing forward, rather less at the sides, and nothing at all to the exact rear, though the response soon increases as one goes just a couple of degrees either side of dead centre at the back.

It turns out that a cardioid response is just directional enough to be useful in recording two-channel stereo using two microphones in 'X-Y' configuration – as near together as physically possible, one facing about 45 degrees left of front dead centre, the other about 45 degrees right. In fact this is pretty much the standard 'Blumlein stereo' system that purists are so keen on. It's been used in a very great number of highly respected recordings, and I can personally vouch for the fact that it works very well, both spatially and tonally, assuming the recording is being made in a space with decent acoustics and the microphones are positioned with care.

Another useful property of the cardioid response is that if you have two cardioid microphones placed back-to-back you can combine their outputs in varying proportions, in and out of phase, to generate any response between omnidirectional and figure-8 (equal front and rear but nothing to the sides). There are plenty of variable pattern microphones on

the market that include two capsules just like this.

Ribbon microphones intrinsically have figure-8 response, but it's a simple enough matter to make this somewhat directional by incorporating a baffle at the rear, blocking out rear sound and

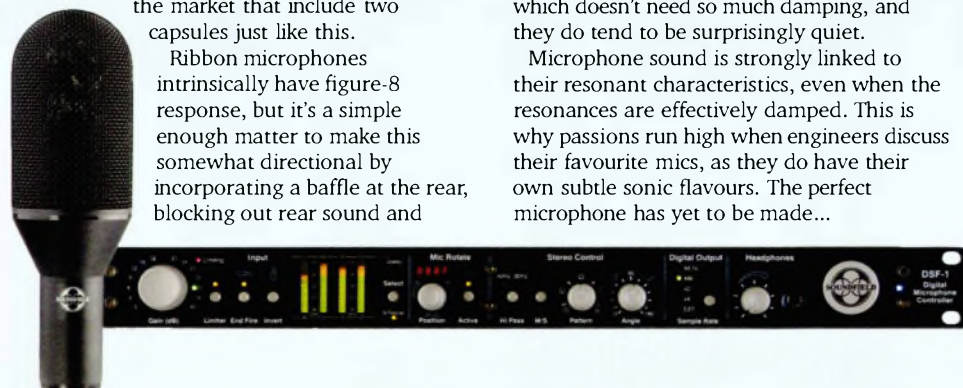
giving something close to cardioid, though typically a little more directional towards the front. This isn't so often done in practice. Most often, ribbon microphones are used in native form and, again, in X-Y arrangement. My favourite Royer SF-12 stereo ribbon is simply two ribbon capsules in a single housing, arranged to face 90 degrees apart. This is also a version of Blumlein stereo.

In fact, the difference between 'Blumlein' stereo with two cardioids and with two ribbons is mainly that the latter has more pickup from the rear, and therefore more ambient sound pickup. If you want to reduce that, you can move the microphones closer to the performers, or add in the output from an omnidirectional microphone. Rearwards, this will be out of phase with the signal from the ribbons, so will in fact tend to cancel. I've done this and it works well, but from a directional point of view it's hardly worth the trouble when moving the microphones is so much easier. It also gives a very slightly better signal-to-noise ratio (because condenser microphones are in practice typically rather quieter than ribbons, as it happens), but again moving the microphones closer to the sound source also improves SNR.

You might think the noise of microphones is a function of the electronics used to amplify their small signal, but this is not necessarily true. Indeed, the amplifier I use with my Royer is considerably quieter than the microphone itself, which generates 'Johnson noise' – the noise produced by any resistor due to random thermal effects. Condenser microphones are also limited by physical considerations, including the mechanical damping applied to their principal resonance, which is typically within the upper treble and so can't be left unattenuated. A very few condensers have been made with an ultrasonic resonance which doesn't need so much damping, and they do tend to be surprisingly quiet.

Microphone sound is strongly linked to their resonant characteristics, even when the resonances are effectively damped. This is why passions run high when engineers discuss their favourite mics, as they do have their own subtle sonic flavours. The perfect microphone has yet to be made...

Passions run high when engineers discuss their favourite mics – the perfect one has yet to be made...



RICHARD BLACK
musician and reviewer



Small size BIG sound



how we do it . . .

Our new A3 loudspeaker really is small, only 75cm tall. It fits neatly into the smallest spaces.

A low Q enclosure ensures deep articulate bass in any listening room. Which means the A3 delivers a BIG clear sound even in small rooms.

It's easy to drive. So you don't have to own a big expensive amplifier.

'Making a good loudspeaker that falls within the price and size of the A3 is something wonderful.'

Hi-Fi + Issue 86, Feb 12

'There's little doubt Spendor has a winner on its hands with the smallest of its floorstanding range.'

Hi-Fi World, Oct 12



A3



A5



A6



A9

SPENDOR

www.spendoraudio.com

Squeezed out

Patrick Cleasby mourns the passing of one of the great network music bargains of recent years...

As auguries of doom go, reading the '10 Best...' page in the *i* newspaper seems like a mild one, but a month ago I saw something in passing which instantly made me realise that a very bad thing had happened.

The feature was on portable radios, and what I saw was a picture of my personal favourite purchase of 2012 with a strangely different appearance. All year my Squeezebox Radio has been my constant companion around the house and here it was emblazoned with a new 'Ue' branding. This wasn't good news...

It didn't take long to determine that I had been shirking my duty to be up-to-date on the streaming marketplace – the forums were already abuzz with concern about what had happened. Swiss mouse-maker Logitech (please boo here...) had dropped all Squeezebox product (the Touch is distressingly now end-of-life) and relaunched the two year-old Squeezebox Radio as the Logitech Ue Smart Radio using the headphone brand 'Ultimate Ears' they had recently acquired. They had also dumbed the radio's own firmware and switched its server software from the familiar Logitech Media Server (which had been built on Squeeze , originators' Slim Devices foundations) to 'Ue Music Library'...

Ue Music Library version 10 looks like exactly what it is, judging by its System Preference Panel and its hidden web interface (127.0.0.1:3546). It's a dumbed-down version of LMS, with all the interesting third party plug-in ability removed. It is reputed to have an LMS mode but few have dug deep into the configuration possibilities at this point, now there is no hi-res capable transport to go with it!

In truth, although very disappointed with the news, I was not particularly surprised. Both my Squeezebox Radio and the Touch I use in testing were acquired for January sale knockdown prices and I shook my head on seeing that they were buried unloved and misunderstood in the 'Networking' section of Currys Digital, whereas the inferior Sonos product was on open display in the posh AV area.

But for those of us whose Squeezebox 3s and Transporters still bear the Slim Devices logo rather than that of Logitech, and who remember Slimserver rather than Squeezebox Server – let alone LMS – the concern had been around for much longer. In some ways it is a miracle the Squeezebox (if not the Transporter) survived as long as it did – I remember going to a Logitech event in 2006 and talking to execs who didn't understand or seem to be interested in the fact

that there was an audience who supported a (Logitech's own!) playback solution that maintained full audio quality, rather than the compressed A2DP Bluetooth solutions they were then touting, and which are now starting to saturate the non-hi-fi consumer market. Their proclamations on the current situation come across as similarly naive and dismissive of audiophile concerns, and as yet there has been no public reaction capable of appeasing the aggrieved punters and third party accessory providers who justifiably feel that they have been left high and dry.

There are two possible reactions from the Squeeze enthusiast at this point. Those whose houses are threaded through with SB3s, Duets, Booms, Transporters Touches and Radios, will undoubtedly stock up on 'in case of failure' backup instances of the latter two while still available (prices have not shifted hugely yet and many probably still languish in the Dixon Stores Group shelves of the nation). To those who may have taken our advice to dabble in network music with the Touch, we can only apologise, and selling the kit while the hardcore stock up is an option. Personally I am in the first camp – the joy of the open Slim Devices approach is that talented coders who are Squeeze enthusiasts will ensure that when mysqueezebox.com goes down, workarounds will exist to keep the kit going. Just don't 'upgrade' your Squeezebox Radios to the Ue firmware - it's going to be a one way trip!

So in memoriam, we should remember the true and original Slim Devices Inc. as an innovative company that did much to get the ball of networked audio rolling, pray that their Squeeze hardware lasts for a really long time, and regret that their distinctive, open and flexible software platform will fall from currency. Our Swiss nemesis may yet redress the balance and introduce something operating on their new platform which will meet our expectation of high resolution music serving once again. However I have a serious doubt that they will endure in the serious music hardware market, if they endure at all. The Touch and the Radio feel like the last hurrah for Squeeze. Of course, my yearning for a Logitech Transporter 2 always felt like a forlorn hope, and has now been well and truly confirmed as being so.

We should remember the true and original Slim Devices Inc. as an innovative company that did much to get the networked audio ball rolling



PATRICK CLEASBY
Technology specialist

T+A

Music Receiver

Your music collection at your finger tips



Featuring the very latest wireless streaming technology, the Music Receiver from T+A is a real one box music solution.

Equipped with T+A's wireless streaming client for internet radio and access to any music stored on a home network, the Music Receiver also features a CD player, iPod connectivity, FM tuner, a 32-bit 352.8 kHz dual mono DAC and multiple digital and analogue in- and outputs.

Combined with its 160 Watts per channel internal amplifier and RS 232 control, the Music Receiver plays music without compromise no matter how it is stored.



Hand built in Germany, the Music Receiver from T+A is available in the UK now.

For more information or to arrange a demonstration, please contact:

AVOKE

Avoke Limited
Tel - +44 (0)7876 246956
Email - info@avoke.co.uk
Web - www.avoke.co.uk

Bass-onomics

Jason Kennedy bemoans the lack of low frequencies in high end systems from Northampton to Milan...

I recently mentioned to a fellow audiophile sufferer that in an awful lot of demonstrations at hi-fi shows that I had visited of late, real low frequencies were in relatively short supply. He told me that his first introduction to this addictive hobby involved a system where the bass had been turned down to give a more hi-fi sound. This was some time ago, before tone controls had been outlawed of course – you understand – but it would seem that it's a view that persists today...

The other side of the coin is that the Beats by Dre headphones that seem very popular with Olympic swimmers among others, have a lot of bass. Indeed it is too much, in the opinion of some of those in the know about sound quality, but this really doesn't seem to undermine their popularity one iota.

Speaking personally, I do like some low-end seismic activity with my music. It's got to be tuneful and harmonically clear, but it is a fundamental part of the spectrum, the part that gives a soundstage foundation and a band or orchestra its power. It really has got to be there – in spirit if not in body...

I don't think I'm alone in this preference, but at the two shows alluded to – Top Audio in Milan and the National Audio Show in Whittlebury – serious bass was in short supply. This despite the presence of large, expensive speakers attached to similarly exotic amplifiers, some with at least hundreds if not thousands of watts on tap. Maybe it's the rooms at these events, perhaps they suck the bottom end out of the systems, but some of the rooms at Whittlebury are cavernous and even they seemed to be short on low-end grip.

One surefire, but surprisingly unfashionable, way of getting bass out of a system is to have an active bass driver in the main speaker or in the subwoofer. The latter can be extremely good at producing a sense of gravitas and scale. As I discovered with ATC and REL designs in the past, it's also the approach which lies at the heart of Bose's extremely popular sat/sub systems. It makes me wonder if the industry is missing out on bringing new customers into the fold by focusing on fast, clear mid and treble, which reveals plenty of detail but often takes precedence over the physical end of the spectrum. As the Dre headphones reveal, people really do like bass, and of course don't get proper bass out of headphones!

The active bass approach has never been popular with the hi-fi trade because it limits the amount of boxes a retailer can sell and

also restricts the potential for getting the customer back for an upgrade. Yet active systems have an awful lot going for them, by removing the crossover from the speaker and putting it between preamplifier and power amplifiers, you're making a direct link to the drive units which significantly enhances their ability to really control what they do. Another advantage is of course that you are also taking the crossover out of a highly resonant environment where air pressure is always changing, surely a good thing?

The main drawback with the active loudspeaker design approach is that the crossover becomes electronic which can result in less transparency, but if speaker designers put as much effort into improving this side of the equation as they do into the rest of the system then it's likely that this could be overcome.

Active systems are, of course, the *de facto* choice in studio environments, where their ability to play long and hard with minimal distortion is valued by those that have to listen long and hard. And decent studios always have at least one system that can produce real bass. I recall hearing a full-scale active PMC system at Metropolis studios once, the music I heard that day has never sounded as good since, no matter how revealing a system I've managed to amass at home...

In other words, bass is good. It is – lest we forget – what gets your feet moving and the sound bouncing with most types of music. Audiophile snobs forget this at their peril, it's not always a case of 'less is more'. Just because a system makes a passable attempt at serious subsonics, doesn't mean it is not worthy!

Bass is good, it's what gets your feet moving and the sound bouncing, it's not always a case of 'less is more'...



JASON KENNEDY
Hi-Fi Choice writer

YOUR MUSIC NEEDS
YOU!



QUALITY AUDIO AND AV SINCE 1985



Kiko is here!

Kiko is a network music player that allows you to play all your digital content. Control it all using your smartphone, tablet or laptop. It combines the convenience you love with brilliant sound quality. It provides a hub for all your music & TV!



RP6 record player by REGA.

ARCAM cinema systems



SUPERUNITI music streamer by Naim.



PM1 speakers from B&W

Re: emphasis

Buried in CD's specification is provision for pre- and de-emphasis – **Tim Jarman** goes in search of a bit of digital history...

When you read old reviews of early CD players you often find that the sound is criticised for being too hard, harsh or brash. Fair enough, as some of them weren't exactly easy on the ear, but lurking in the CD's 'Red Book' was a possible answer to the problem – pre- and de-emphasis. The presence of this refinement highlights that CD was created from a mixture of both the analogue and digital worlds; while the hype was all about 1s and 0s in truth many of the early players contained almost as much analogue circuitry as they did digital.

Emphasis is a common technique in analogue recording and signal transmission, in simple terms it involves boosting the band of frequencies in the programme signal which are most affected by noise prior to recording/transmission and then reducing them back to their proper level as late as possible at the playback/receiving end, so that the system noise diminishes in prominence by the same amount.

FM radio is a good example of the use of emphasis, tape is another. With Compact Disc, the emphasis takes the form of a mild treble boost during encoding, which is then cancelled out by an extra filter in the player that is switched in automatically in response to control codes on the disc, so if everything is working properly it's not obvious that it has been used. Various theories exist as to why this feature was included in the specification, but my guess is that it was a pet idea of someone sitting at the table when the standards were written who managed to convince the others that it was important. Since then every player has had to have the necessary bits to meet the Red Book spec. Very few CDs were produced with emphasis though, so in most machines this extra refinement never gets used.

How few discs? To find out I made a simple modification to a Sony CDP-101 so that the remote control 'received' indicator also comes on when a disc with emphasis is played. The choice of an early machine is a pragmatic one, in these designs the extra filter (which is in the analogue domain, just after the DAC) is an easily identifiable block of circuitry so it's straightforward to determine whether it is 'in' or 'out'. In later machines the de-emphasis filter became just another set of coefficients in the digital filter with no obvious external indication of its functioning. Having gone through my large collection of discs, I found only one which put the little green light on, so it really wasn't a popular option!

This disc, *Mari Fujiwara plays Violoncello Concertos* (Denon DC-8121), really did sound glorious and silky smooth (even on the CDP-101, which is famously a bit clinical), but that could be down to any number of things – from Fujiwara's skill to the care taken in the recording and mastering process. But if the numbers going through the DAC have been made bigger to get the same analogue output voltage it follows that the treble amplitude resolution has also increased (this is only the case with players with a post-DAC analogue filter, with the later all-digital ones there will be no difference), although at the same time the treble headroom will be reduced. The noise level will also fall, but since neither this nor amplitude resolution are really limiting factors in the performance of the CD system (it is the low sampling rate which is the major problem and this is not altered by the use of emphasis) any performance gains are likely to be slight.

It seems that the recording industry also came to this conclusion, valuing CD's ability to produce startling and sparkling dynamics over a theoretical improvement in treble resolution. In a way that's a shame, but the lasting testament to the emphasis system's perfection is that most listeners never knew that it was there.

Looking at what's going on though you realise that because the treble is boosted it represents a bigger number going into the DAC, which in digital audio improves the resolution since after the filtering it takes more 'bits' to generate the same level than a conventional recording would need. This is only the case with an early player of course, in the later ones it all happens before the DAC so there's no real difference. The other advantage is that background noise is also reduced, but this, like amplitude resolution, was never really a CD problem anyway. CD's real limitation, temporal resolution, isn't addressed by emphasis and can't be by any similar arrangement.



CD was created from a mixture of both the analogue and digital worlds; many of the early players contained almost as much analogue circuitry as they did digital...

TIM JARMAN
Electronics engineer



Drop into one of our **Top 20**

The Music Chain

Much is written about music and the musicians who entertain us, and we rightly exalt great musicians. But there is an interlinked chain of participants, two of which are I believe are crucial to our music scene in today's world. For centuries the music chain was a very short one – composers or songwriters, musicians and listeners, and the judgement on quality was immediate. Recording technologies have changed all this exponentially.

Today, we listen to most of our music from a recording and this gives recording engineers the opportunity to avoid poor acoustics, duff notes and off days. This, of course, means the chain has grown to include the recording engineers, the music distribution system (retailers or downloads), hi-fi manufacturers, hi-fi sellers and the hi-fi purchasers, the latter being the listeners.

I should start by saying that hi-fi has become an adulterated term that no longer has its original meaning because it's applied to much equipment that certainly should not be termed high-fidelity.



It's said that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

However, I believe there are two particularly strong

links that, if removed from the chain, would seriously damage the quality of recorded music. These are the audiophile, or hi-fi connoisseur, and the specialist hi-fi

retailer, the latter in nearly all cases also being the former because it's their interest that has driven them into their particular business. These are the people who most appreciate how exciting and involving music can be and how it can deliver an emotional experience.

Hi-Fi Connoisseurs

So why is the hi-fi connoisseur so important to the music industry? By their nature, audiophiles are generally avid music lovers who enhance their enjoyment through listening to music at its very best quality level, which means playing great recordings through hi-end hi-fi to achieve the most outstanding results.

Without the audiophile, the main driver for quality would probably be removed from the chain. Let's be honest, over recent years the majority of music listeners now settle for MP3 convenience and, therefore, mediocre sound quality, that is 'pre-ruined' music. If the pendulum ever swings so far that all but a few listen to highly compressed formats such as MP3, music producers will not waste their resources on producing high quality recordings because it would be commercially unnecessary, even if their recording engineers wanted to achieve the best they could. After all, an MP3 or AAC file, the iTunes default format, downloaded at 128 kbps (the most popular download speed), is about one-eleventh the size of a full resolution CD track, 1411 kbps, so the quality is inevitably far inferior. Information is irretrievably lost and the full dynamic

range is lacking. Using an iPod while jogging does not really raise a quality issue but playing low-resolution tracks through an iPod docking station that feeds into a decent hi-fi system, is a disaster area. It's rubbish quality made louder. Fortunately, there is still significant demand from audiophiles committed to sound quality to sustain the production of high quality recordings, but it would be a tragedy if there weren't. For example, most classical recordings downloaded as an MP3 or AAC file are a complete waste of time because there is so much information missing that they are reduced to just the essence of a tune.

Specialist Hi-Fi Retailers

Just as essential a link in the chain as the hi-fi connoisseur is the specialist hi-fi retailer and the two are rightly dependent on each other. Without the specialist retailer the hi-end hi-fi manufacturer would have to rely on the internet and hi-fi magazine reviewers to try and assess the relative merits and performance of their products against that of their competitors – a notoriously unreliable decision making process. Specialist hi-fi retailers are constantly being offered new products for assessment and potential stocking and, as it is also their hobby as well as their livelihood, they are greatly interested in achieving the best performance and seeking out the most outstanding products and combinations. More than that though is their relationship with audiophiles for, if they are to stay in business, they must satisfy the most discerning customers in the industry. The reality is that audiophiles and specialist hi-fi retailers are essential to each other.

UK Hi-Fi Dealers near you



Future of Recorded Music

What are the future prospects of maintaining high quality music recordings? We must hope that audiophiles, or hi-fi connoisseurs, or perhaps most accurately described, music lovers, will continue to drive the demand for quality. But another important reason for hope within the mass-market is that there is no longer any over-riding reason for MP3 and AAC to have such a following. These formats were designed to overcome very slow download speeds and expensive memory capacity. These are not significant factors for most people now. Full resolution audio streaming, as well as CD quality downloads, are already available and will become the norm as the wider public becomes aware of the tremendous quality benefit. This has happened with HD TV so we know this awareness can grow rapidly. In the meantime, we must highly value hi-fi connoisseurs and specialist hi-fi retailers, of which the ones listed on this page represent the UK's finest. Specialist dealers know how to choose the products that combine as a superb system and how to get the best out of it by expert installation in the home. If there's a price premium over an internet purchase, it's probably a small one, but it's unquestionably worth the difference.



STAR QUALITIES

VALUE FOR MONEY.....	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SERVICE.....	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
FACILITIES.....	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
VERDICT.....	★ ★ ★ ★ ★



OUR TOP 20 UK HI-FI DEALERS

SOUTH

Ashford, Kent
SOUNDCRAFT HI-FI
40 High Street.
t: 01233 624441
www.soundcraft-hifi.com

Chelmsford
RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION
216 Moulsham Street.
t: 01245 265245
www.rayleighhifi.com

E. Grinstead
AUDIO DESIGNS
26 High Street.
t: 01342 328065
www.audiodesigns.co.uk

Kingston-upon-Thames
INFIDELITY
9 High Street,
Hampton Wick.
t: 020 8943 3530
www.infidelity.co.uk

Maidenhead
AUDIO VENUE
36 Queen Street.
t: 01628 633995
www.audiovenue.com

Norwich
MARTINS HI-FI
85-91 Ber Street.
t: 01603 627134
www.martinshifi.co.uk

Rayleigh
RAYLEIGH HI-FI
44a High Street.
t: 01268 779762
www.rayleighhifi.com

Southend-on-Sea
RAYLEIGH HI-FI SOUND & VISION
132/4 London Road.
t: 01702 435255
www.rayleighhifi.com

LONDON

Ealing
AUDIO VENUE
27 Bond Street.
t: 020 8567 8703
www.audiovenue.com

N1
GRAHAMS HI-FI
190a New North Road.
t: 020 7226 5500
www.grahams.co.uk

SW11
ORANGES & LEMONS
61/63 Webbs Road.
t: 020 7924 2043
www.oandlhifi.co.uk

SW20

O'BRIEN HI-FI
60 Durham Road.
t: 020 8946 1528
www.obrienhifi.com

SOUTH WEST

Bath
AUDIENCE
14 Broad Street.
t: 01225 333310
www.audience.org.uk

Exeter
GULLIFORD HI-FI
97 Sidwell Street.
t: 01392 4911 94
www.gullifordhifi.co.uk

MIDLANDS

Banbury
OVERTURE
3 Church Lane.
t: 01295 272158
www.overture.co.uk

Birmingham
MUSIC MATTERS
363 Hagley Road, Edgbaston.
t: 0121 429 2811
www.musicmatters.co.uk

Coventry
FRANK HARVEY
163 Spon Street.
t: 024 7652 5200
www.frankharvey.co.uk

Leicester
CYMBIOSIS
6 Hotel Street.
t: 0116 262 3754
www.cymbiosis.com

Nottingham
CASTLE SOUND & VISION
48/50 Maid Marian Way.
t: 0115 9584404
www.castlesoundvision.com

NORTH

Cheadle
THE AUDIO WORKS
14 Stockport Road.
t: 0161 428 7887
www.theaudioworks.co.uk

Chester
ACOUSTICA
17 Hoole Road.
t: 01244 344227
www.acoustica.co.uk

Hull
THE AUDIO ROOM
Savile Street, Hull
t: 01482 891375
www.theaudiroom.co.uk

York
SOUND ORGANISATION
2 Gillygate.
t: 01904 627108
www.soundorg.co.uk

These specialist dealers have been selected because they are known to do an excellent job in guiding customers towards hi-fi that will give years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.

Going for gold

Awards fever is contagious, and *Year in Music* has caught it! In this special feature, *Hi-Fi Choice* dishes out gold, silver and bronze medals to the most – and least – deserving albums across the decades. Mr **Simon Berkovitch** is your host...



BIGGEST SELLING ALBUM OF ALL TIME

YEAR IN MUSIC: 1982
GOLD: Michael Jackson, *Thriller*



With certified music recording sales of a whopping 42 million copies – and claimed sales somewhere in the region of an astonishing 65-110 million – it's Michael Jackson's 1982 album *Thriller* that trounces the competition in this category. Those deathless hits *Billie Jean*, *Beat It* and the eponymous title track are all culled from this mega-selling album, in no small part hustled onto turntables worldwide by some unforgettable music videos. The first superstar of the MTV video age had arrived.

AC/DC's 1980 hard rock monolith *Back in Black* may be a surprising runner up. But what, no Beatles, Stones or Fleetwood Mac in the top three? Well, 25 million certified sales justify AC/DC's silver medal; more than enough small change to keep guitarist Angus Young in an unlimited supply of short trousers!

Progressive rock poster boys Pink Floyd earn themselves the bronze medal for just under 23 million sales of 1973's *Dark Side of the Moon*. "Money... it's a gas"...



SILVER: AC/DC, *Back in Black* (1980)



BRONZE: Pink Floyd, *Dark Side of the Moon* (1973)

GREATEST 'ONE ALBUM WONDER'

YEAR IN MUSIC: 1969
GOLD: Alexander 'Skip' Spence, *Oar*

A key member of 'should-have-been-contenders' 1960s psych-pop (but not pop-sike) songwriting powerhouse Moby Grape (as well as having served in the ranks of Quicksilver Messenger Service and Jefferson Airplane), Spence left the band under a cloud of erratic behaviour in 1968. Released from hospital in 1969, Spence cut his only solo album, the enigmatic *Oar*, that same year.

Often mentioned in the same breath as former Pink Floyd frontman Syd Barrett's solo works, this is an album ultimately comparable only to itself. *Oar* is a solo record in the truest sense – Spence plays everything. Songs are stripped-down; vocals are equal parts Delta Bluesman-deep and psychedelic whisper-light; the mood is intimate; the sketches of songs draw you back for repeated listens. It's all about the vibe, man...

War in Peace is the album's pivotal song – an eerie full stop to the psychedelic. *Oar* was a commercial failure, yet a cult album in waiting. Spence vanishes from view after its low-key release, his reputation as 'lost genius' stuck in amber. A great late night listen.



SILVER: Jackson C. Frank 'Jackson C. Frank' (1965)



BRONZE: The La's, *The La's* (1990)



MOST ELABORATE ALBUM PACKAGING

YEAR IN MUSIC: 1971
GOLD: Hawkwind, *In Search of Space*

When the silver beer mat became the format of choice back in the 1980s, the days of the elaborate vinyl gatefold sleeve were finally numbered – arguably a good thing in the case of Emerson, Lake and Palmer’s preposterous triple album packaging. But, in some cases, elaborate sleeve designs ensured that albums were more of an *event* than just another container for music, elevating them to the status of covetable art works.

A glorious 1971 example is Hawkwind’s classic *In Search of Space*. Housed in a beautiful cruciform, interlocking foldout sleeve complete with cosmic graphics from underground artist Barney Bubbles (also see 1973’s trip-tastic *Space Ritual*), initial copies of the album came with the elaborate Hawkwind Log, a far-out page 24-page booklet penned by future ‘Spaceship Hawkwind’ frontman – Robert Calvert.

Special mention also goes to Krautrockers Ash Ra Tempel’s Egyptian-themed debut album sleeve on Ohr records – a label that revelled in creating covetable sleeve art – and the limited edition silver, hexagonal sleeve for the otherworldly soundtrack to unsettling sci-fi thriller *The Andromeda Strain* by composer Gil Mellé, both also released in 1971.



SILVER: Ash Ra Tempel, *Ash Ra Tempel* (1971)



BRONZE: The Andromeda Strain, original soundtrack (1971)

MOST DISAPPOINTING FOLLOW-UP ALBUM

YEAR IN MUSIC: 2008
GOLD: Guns ‘N’ Roses, *Chinese Democracy*

Musical empires had risen and fallen in the amount of time that keeper of the G’N’R flame, Axl Rose, took to deliver the follow-up to 1993’s covers album (warning bells were already starting to ring back then) *The Spaghetti Incident?*.

When the curtain was finally pulled back on *Chinese Democracy* in 2008, after already having been leaked onto the Internet, the most expensive album ever produced failed to live up to sales expectations and sorely disappointed anyone hoping for anything resembling 1987’s *Appetite For Destruction*; only the diehard faithful could have been anything other than underwhelmed. Ironically, it’s also banned in China.



With the tongue in cheek, yet sky-high arrogant, title of the follow up to 1989’s eponymous debut album, The Stone Roses were always setting themselves up for a fall with 1994’s *Second Coming*. It’s doubtful that many believers would want the second coming of Christ to be soundtracked by endless, guitar solos from the Jimmy Page school of excess...

When Fleetwood Mac’s expensive double album *Tusk* finally hit the record racks in 1979, Lindsey Buckingham’s eccentric new wave-inspired compositions left fans – and bearded bandmates – expecting *Rumours: Part II* scratching their heads – and not reaching for their wallets in such massive numbers. Considered a failure in sales terms, it still sold shed-loads. An AOR *White Album*.



SILVER: The Stone Roses, *Second Coming* (1994)



BRONZE: Fleetwood Mac, *Tusk* (1979)



GREATEST COMEBACK ALBUM

YEAR IN MUSIC: 1995
GOLD: Scott Walker, *Tilt*

The journey from housewives’ favourite to critically acclaimed, reclusive *avant-garde* genius was never going to be an easy one. Scott Walker may be the voice behind radio-friendly 1960s evergreen *The Sun Ain’t Gonna Shine Any More*, but a darker imagination was at play under that eye-candy mop of Beatleish hair...

With a head full of Camus and an eye for Ingmar Bergman, Walker’s true intent gradually seeped through the MOR cracks over the years. 1969’s solo album *Scott 4* is an inspired marriage of orchestral pop and moody, intelligent lyricism. It flopped. 1978’s Walker Brothers album *Nite Flights* was a ‘Do what you like, lads’ parting shot on a label going bust. Scott’s compositions – especially the harrowing (in the greatest possible way) *The Electrician* – were light years away from sugary Walker Brothers’ 1976 reunion hit *No Regrets*. It also sank like a stone. His *Climate of Hunter* LP was an incongruous, challenging guest at 1984’s tinselly party. It didn’t trouble the charts much either. All these great records paved the way for 1995’s remarkable *Tilt*...

Tilt is light years away from the expected fifty-something’s bland comeback LP. Was this pop? Was this avant-garde composition? It was both – Walker reinvents the humble pop song over the course of the album’s nine adventurous compositions, with dense thickets of imagery sung by that sensational voice clambering through industrial-tinged art-rock soundscapes. This album is an unique listening experience, an incredible artistic statement and a critics’ favourite, but god knows what his original audience would have thought of it. It’s also a comeback worthy of Lazarus...

Not what you’d call an artist with a prolific work rate, Walker delivered his follow-up to *Tilt*, *The Drift*, some eleven years later in 2006. And as unpredictable and uncompromising as ever, this one even featured raw meat being punched as percussion...



SILVER: Kate Bush, *Aerial* (2005)



BRONZE: Portishead, *Third* (2008)

GREATEST RUN OF CLASSIC ALBUMS

YEAR IN MUSIC: 1969-1980
GOLD: David Bowie



"Ah, but what about *Pin Ups* and *Stage?*" Well, discounting those relatively disappointing efforts on the grounds that they are a covers set and a live album, respectively, David Bowie's run of albums from 1969's *Space Oddity* (AKA *Man of Words, Man of Music*) to 1980's *Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps)* is damned-near untouchable...

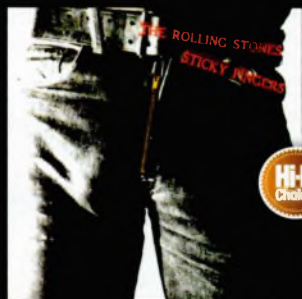
From the free festival folksy inflections of *Space Oddity*, through proto-hard rock (*The Man Who Sold The World*), glam (*Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars* and *Aladdin Sane*), space-age soul (*Young Americans*) and leftfield synthesiser art-rock (*Low* and "*Heroes*"), Bowie scarcely put a foot wrong for over a decade,

constantly reinventing himself artistically and taking his audience with him. There's one hell of a Spotify playlist lurking in the diverse grooves of those classic albums.

Similarly, the first three Roxy albums – *Roxy Music* (1972), *For Your Pleasure* and *Stranded* (both 1973) explode with invention and energy. Finally, in the serious world of rock 'n' roll, few groups could touch the Jagger/Richards songwriting partnership from 'back to basics' LP *Beggars' Banquet* (1968) to the sprawling excess of 1972's *Exile on Main Street*, albums on which the group's (now unlikely) reputation as 'the world's greatest rock 'n' roll band' still largely rests. And why not?



SILVER: Roxy Music (1972-1973)



BRONZE: The Rolling Stones (1968-1972)

GREATEST LIVE ALBUM

YEAR IN MUSIC: 1969
GOLD: MC5, Kick Out The Jams

Expletive deleted. MC5 vocalist Rob Tyner's insurrectionary introduction to the title track of this legendary live set may have been censored by record label Elektra, but little can be done to neuter the jaw-dropping power of the MC5, defiantly nailed on record here.

From the joyous energy of we-have-lift-off opener *Ramblin' Rose* to the otherworldly chaos of Sun Ra collaboration *Starship*, the MC5 delivered a 'how to' in righteous, high-energy rock 'n' roll over the course of two nights at Detroit's Rio Grande Ballroom, Halloween, 1968. The group's studio albums from the time – 1970's *Back in the USA* and the following

year's *High Time* may contain many great songs, but are tame affairs in comparison to this blistering set.

Notorious American rock critic Lester Bangs called *Kick Out the Jams* a "ridiculous, overbearing, pretentious album" on its 1969 release, which just goes to show what the effect of the misuse of coffee can have on the ears.

Special silver and bronze medal mentions also go to essential double albums *Live Dead*, which captures The Grateful Dead in full cosmic flight on the exquisite *Dark Star*, and Hawkwind's classic *Space Ritual*, featuring Lemmy powering the finest line-up of the pukka veteran space-rockers.



SILVER: Grateful Dead, Live/Dead (1969)



BRONZE: Hawkwind, Space Ritual (1973)

Bespoke Award Winning Turntables & Turntable Upgrade Packages



Quest
REGA
UPGRADES

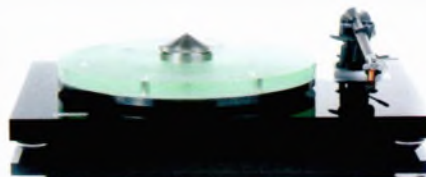
for Rega
Turntables

For: excellent midband focus super base grip
fine speed stability enhanced dynamics fit and finish
Against: nothing

vivid
UPGRADES

for Linn LP12
Turntables

For: • silky, spacious midband • superior grip and focus
• enhanced dynamics • fit and finish
Against: • nothing



Our new Award winning Direct Drive and Idler drive turntables available for demonstration - inc 78rpm versions

MONARCH
DIRECT DRIVE TURNTABLE

MONARCH Junior
DIRECT DRIVE TURNTABLE

eclipse^{SE}_{V2}
TURNTABLE

eclipse^{SE}_{V2} 12
TURNTABLE

Apollo 
TURNTABLE

vivid
UPGRADES

vivid^{x12}
UPGRADES

Quest
REGA
UPGRADES

Quest
CLEAR

THORENS
UPGRADES

Call our specialist Turntable **HOTLINE** to discuss any of our products

T: 01246 47 22 22

www.inspirehifi.co.uk 
M: 07932 367555 E: robert@inspirehifi.co.uk

Part Exchange available on all our Turntables

While you wait rebuilds available. Visit our Demo Suite J29A M1.

WELCOME TO THE NORTH EAST

ANATEK RESEARCH
 APOLLO
 ATACAMA
 AV INTERNATIONAL
 CHORD COMPANY
 CHORD ELECTRONICS
 CLEARAUDIO
 DYNAVECTOR
 EAR YOSHINO
 GOLDRING
 GRAHAM ENGINEERING
 GRAHAM SLEE
 G F HADCOCK
 ISOTEK
 KOETSU
 KUDOS AUDIO
 MARTIN LOGAN
 LYRA
 MAGNEPLANAR
 MELODY
 MICHELL ENGINEERING
 MONITOR AUDIO



NAD
 NAIM AUDIO
 NORDOST
 NOTTINGHAM ANALOGUE
 OPERA
 ORTOFON
 PATHOS ACOUSTICS
 PROJECT
 PS AUDIO
 PURESOUND
 REGA
 REVOLVER
 ROKSAN
 SME
 STAX
 SUGDEN AUDIO
 TEAC ESOTERIC
 TRANSFIGURATION
 TRICHORD RESEARCH
 UNISON RESEARCH
 USHER AUDIO
 VAN DEN HUL

HIFISOUND, Castlegate mill, Quayside, Stockton on Tees. 01642 267012

2NDHANDHIFI.CO.UK

Guaranteed used and ex-demo audio equipment from HiFiSound - the UK's premier source

Call: 0845 6019390 Email: choice@2ndhandhifi.co.uk

NEW STOCK IN THIS MONTH...

Michell Orbe SE cue in.....	1399	Krell KC1 Preamp/ifier, excellent boxed.....	2999	Krell KPS28c, excellent boxed.....	2499	Mission 752 vgc.....	199
Heybrook T12 Linn LVX. Black, reaservable order.....	199	Krell FPB650M Monoblocks.....	5499	Arcam CD192, excellent.....	399	Martin Logan Summit, excellent boxed.....	4499
Dual CS505, excellent starter disk.....	79	NAIM NAP90, excellent.....	199	Classe CDP112, excellent boxed.....	999	Martin Logan Descant vgc boxed.....	1199
Project Phono box.....	49	Linn Klout, excellent very late model.....	1199	NAIM CDS2/XPS, excellent boxed.....	1499	Sjixador S5e, excellent boxed.....	599
Purm 701ES DAB Tuner, good condition.....	99	Arcam P90 Power amplifier.....	399	NAIM CDS1/PSU, excellent boxed.....	999	Monitor Audio Silver 5, excellent boxed.....	1999
NAIM NA103, excellent.....	199	Unison Research P70, excellent boxed.....	1999	Esoteric DV50S, near mint boxed.....	1499	NAIM Intro 2, rosewood, superb condition boxed.....	249

Analogue

Audio Technica AT1110U tonearm, excellent.....	199	Audio Research Ref 110 Monoblocks, vgc boxed.....	17999
Boule MS11MS11 Phono Stage, vgc.....	1499	Audio Research Ref 210 Monoblocks, as new boxed.....	9911
Clearaudio Unify tonearm, brand new.....	999	Audio Research VS110 with KT120s vgc boxed.....	1749
Clearaudio Unimat mint boxed ex demo.....	875	Audio Research VS115, vgc boxed.....	2999
Dais & Syntex PU2 Audio Origami servizet, good inter.....	399	Ayre Acoustics AX7e Integrated amplifier, ex boxed.....	1299
EAR 834P Deluxe ex demo.....	1299	Beard P35mk2 Power Amplifier vgc.....	799
Grace Cannodes various ex display.....	Car	Chord CPM3000 Integrated, excellent boxed reduced.....	2999
Hadcock Z28 tonearm, excellent boxed.....	349	Chord SPM650 Poweramp, excellent boxed.....	1749
Heybrook T12 old Linn Basik LVX and K9.....	299	Counterpoint SA12, excellent.....	499
Linn LP12 with Vahra & itok tonearm.....	799	Cyrus 8vs2 Integrated amplifier, excellent boxed.....	499
Linn itok LVX, near mint boxed, excellent.....	799	Cyrus 8XP Integrated, excellent.....	599
LFDA Mistral Phono stage, excellent boxed.....	249	Esoteric A111 with DAC, excellent boxed.....	1199
Manitara Mantra, Rega for vgc, excellent.....	299	Kayan KAS180 Power, dated.....	1799
Michell Hydraulic Reference, SME 318,.....	599	Krell FPB200 Power, excellent boxed.....	2499
Michell Gyro SE, HR Power supply vgc boxed.....	899	Krell KSA2000 Power, vgc.....	1499
Michell Myro, Rega arm, near mint boxed.....	899	Krell KA4000, excellent boxed, just serviced.....	1499
Musica Fidelity XLP5V3.....	199	Leak LL12, Monos vgc for year.....	749
Project Phono box 2, excellent.....	59	Linn Kofector, preamp/ifier, excellent.....	249
Project Essential and Dekut, ex demo.....	Car	Linn Kaim, excellent boxed.....	399
PS Audio GCPH Phono Stage, ex demo.....	599	Linn LK140, excellent.....	349
Quad 24P phono stage, as new boxed, weeks old.....	849	Linn LK85, excellent.....	229
Rega RP1, ex demo.....	179	Linn Wakonda, excellent remote.....	249
Rega Planar 3 Green boxed.....	249	Linn Majik, excellent remote.....	299
Rega Fono MM boxed as new.....	299	Melody 111 Preamp/ifier, world renowned ex demo.....	2499
Rega Planar 3 vgc boxed.....	249	Meridian 551 Integrated, vgc.....	499
Roksan IMS1 & DSU, superb boxed.....	1791	Micromega IAN1, near mint boxed.....	399
Roksan Radius 5.2, ex demo.....	899	Musica Fidelity M3 Integrated with PSU Boxed.....	1599
SME Series V, vgc boxed.....	1249	Musica Fidelity A3CR Power, excellent boxed.....	299
SME 300R2, excellent from.....	149	NAIM Supercao 2, ex demo, nr mint.....	Car
Thorens TD125, SME 3009, SME Pinth.....	399	NAIM NAC210/NAP210, excellent.....	1699
Thorens TD309, ex display bargain.....	799	NAIM NAC282 with Naosic, excellent boxed.....	1799
Thorens TD124/SME 3009, excellent.....	999	NAIM NAP135S bar, good condition boxed.....	1699
Thorens ID124 mk2, excellent.....	799	NVA PH/IC/PS/A411, Pre/PSU/Power, excellent boxed.....	599
Uwrsend Rock2, Rega tonearm vgc boxed.....	499	Pass Labs X2 Preamp/ifier, excellent.....	899
Uwrsend Rock 2, Mission 774LC, excellent.....	349	Primare I21, integrated, mint boxed.....	599
Wilson Benesch Act 1 Tonearm, nr mint superb.....	799	Puresound 2A3, excellent boxed.....	899

Amplifiers

AMR A77, excellent flightcased, REDUCED.....	2999
Arcam Alpha 9 Integrated Amplifier, vgc.....	199
Arcam Alpha RP, excellent boxed.....	199
Audioab R000A, excellent.....	149
Audio Research Ref 110 Monoblocks, vgc boxed.....	17999
Audio Research Ref 210 Monoblocks, as new boxed.....	9911
Audio Research VS110 with KT120s vgc boxed.....	1749
Audio Research VS115, vgc boxed.....	2999
Ayre Acoustics AX7e Integrated amplifier, ex boxed.....	1299
Beard P35mk2 Power Amplifier vgc.....	799
Chord CPM3000 Integrated, excellent boxed reduced.....	2999
Chord SPM650 Poweramp, excellent boxed.....	1749
Counterpoint SA12, excellent.....	499
Cyrus 8vs2 Integrated amplifier, excellent boxed.....	499
Cyrus 8XP Integrated, excellent.....	599
Esoteric A111 with DAC, excellent boxed.....	1199
Kayan KAS180 Power, dated.....	1799
Krell FPB200 Power, excellent boxed.....	2499
Krell KSA2000 Power, vgc.....	1499
Krell KA4000, excellent boxed, just serviced.....	1499
Leak LL12, Monos vgc for year.....	749
Linn Kofector, preamp/ifier, excellent.....	249
Linn Kaim, excellent boxed.....	399
Linn LK140, excellent.....	349
Linn LK85, excellent.....	229
Linn Wakonda, excellent remote.....	249
Linn Majik, excellent remote.....	299
Melody 111 Preamp/ifier, world renowned ex demo.....	2499
Meridian 551 Integrated, vgc.....	499
Micromega IAN1, near mint boxed.....	399
Musica Fidelity M3 Integrated with PSU Boxed.....	1599
Musica Fidelity A3CR Power, excellent boxed.....	299
NAIM Supercao 2, ex demo, nr mint.....	Car
NAIM NAC210/NAP210, excellent.....	1699
NAIM NAC282 with Naosic, excellent boxed.....	1799
NAIM NAP135S bar, good condition boxed.....	1699
NVA PH/IC/PS/A411, Pre/PSU/Power, excellent boxed.....	599
Pass Labs X2 Preamp/ifier, excellent.....	899
Primare I21, integrated, mint boxed.....	599
Puresound 2A3, excellent boxed.....	899
Quad 33/44/303/405 all vgc.....	Car
Radorfa S1A25mk3 vgc for year.....	1749
Sonus Fabre, Musica Integrated, excellent.....	1199
IACI Audio RCS 2.0 Room Correcting preamp/ifier.....	799
Unison Research Aria S2, valve integrated.....	699
World Audio Design Kit 34, excellent.....	399

Digital

Acouphase DP800/DCB01 Transport/DAC, WOW!.....	11499
AMR CD777, ex demo.....	Call
Arcam CD192, excellent.....	399
Arcam CD72, remote.....	149
Arcam CD73, excellent boxed.....	199
Arcam Alpha 7, great condition.....	79
Arcam Alpha 9, excellent DCS Ringdac player.....	299
Audioab R000A, D11 Transport and R000DAC.....	599
Ayre Acoustics CX7e CD Player, ex boxed.....	1499
Cooland CDA288, excellent.....	549
Cyrus CD85c, excellent boxed.....	699
Cyrus CD65, excellent boxed REDUCED.....	279
EAR Acute, excellent boxed.....	2049
Lector Dtl, excellent boxed, due in.....	699
Linn Mink, excellent reduced.....	199
Leeha Stream 3, nr mint boxed.....	799
Micromega CD30, nr mint boxed, new mode REDUCED.....	999
Musica Fidelity NuVista 3D CD Player, excellent boxed.....	999
Musica Fidelity A3, 2CD, excellent boxed.....	449
Musica Fidelity A3CD, excellent boxed.....	299
Musica Fidelity CD Library CD player with vases, vgc.....	299
NAIM CD3.5, excellent remote.....	349
NAIM CD2, excellent boxed remote.....	1399
NAIM CD2, excellent boxed remote.....	1499
NAIM CDS/2, ex demo.....	Call
Norman Design Model 3, DAC, excellent boxed.....	199
Primare CD21, near mint boxed.....	549
Rega Apollo, excellent boxed.....	299
Rega Planet 2000, excellent boxed.....	279
Ror, RCD965BX, excellent remote.....	99
Shanling MC30, excellent.....	1999
Shanling MC30, excellent.....	499
Unison Research Unico CD, ex demo.....	899
Yamaha CD5050 vintage classic boxed.....	299

Loudspeakers

AVI Neutron 5, ex demo mint.....	349
AVI ADM9.1, ex demo nr mint.....	849
B&W DM70 Continental, fair cosmetics, fully working.....	Offers
B&W DM303, excellent condition.....	99
Castle Harlech, cherry finish vgc, reduced.....	249
Focal B6V, excellent boxed.....	349
IFL CS11, Transmission Line Floorstander, vgc bargain.....	299
KEF X05 Floorstanders, excellent.....	599
Kudos C201, new style, excellent in Walnut.....	1999
Linn Ninka, boxed in Maple.....	599
Linn Keith, in cherry with Kustones & unused Gnl's vgc.....	249
Linn Lukan, Rose finish.....	299
Linn Indec, vgc.....	79
Magneplanar MG2.4 vgc for age.....	499
Magneplanar MG3.6, Ex dem superb, were £2999 now.....	1249
Magneplanar MG1.6, excellent boxed.....	2499
Meridian M1 Active speakers, boxed due in.....	Call
Monitor Audio Radius HD, various ex display.....	299
Monitor Audio BX5.....	299
NEA1 Neutron 5, ex demo boxed.....	549
O Acoustics 211111 Series, various ex demo.....	Car
Quad ESL5's, good working order boxed.....	499
Rogers JR149 and wall brackets, excellent.....	649
Rogers LS3/5a, excellent.....	799
Sendor BC1, superb but full working order.....	299
LDL RL12, excellent.....	99
Thiel CS7.2, vgc, just refurbished.....	2999
Usher S520 and matching Subwoofers.....	1399
Usher 718 Diamonds, excellent boxed, ex demo.....	1999
Wharfedale Diamond Home cinema pack, ex demo.....	Call
Wharfedale 10.1, ex demo, nr mint boxed.....	149
Wilson Benesch Curve, excellent boxed.....	2999
Wilson Watt/Puppy 3/2, vgc, dated due in.....	2249

Radios/Recorders

Audio Note T-Zero Tuner, excellent boxed.....	349
Audioab 80001 vgc.....	199
Meridian 504, excellent.....	299
Meridian 2014, good condition.....	199
Quad FM3, excellent.....	99
Quad FM4, excellent late boxed unit.....	249
Quad FM6b, excellent boxed.....	299

AV/Accessories/Cables

Chord DSP8000r, excellent boxed £7.5k new, BARGAIN.....	2499
Naïm Flatcap original, excellent.....	199
Naïm Hicap - One, excellent.....	349
Naïm Hicap - Chrome, excellent.....	299
Naïm Flatcap 2, 20u, excellent.....	299
Orionyx 1XNR6U9, last one sealed box.....	299
Stax Lambda Pro, and Valve energiser.....	899
Townshero Sphiric rack, 4 tier mint.....	999
Van den Hul First Ultimate 0.8m.....	99

Special System Deals

ARCAM Solo Neo System, excellent boxed.....	799
Audio Analogue Crescendo Amp & CD, ex demo.....	799
Krell Showcase Cinema 711 system (HDMI), mint boxed.....	4499
NAIM NAI1 XS & CDSXS.....	2749
NAIM UniQue & Kudos C2s, ex demo.....	2249
Roksan K2 ArmvCD cam, ex demo.....	1199
Shanling MC30, excellent.....	499
TEAC DIS INNOVATION SERIES - Special offers - ON DEMO.....	Call
TEAC CRH500 A1 in one network system, ex demo.....	Call

Telephone 01642 267012, Tuesday to Saturday 10 'til 5 or email choice@2ndhandhifi.co.uk



TURNTABLEWORLD

Special offers to celebrate our new website

www.turntableworld.co.uk - the audio specialists - 01642 267012



96 Bill Withers
Complete Sussex
And Columbia
Albums



96 Rolling Stones
GRRRI

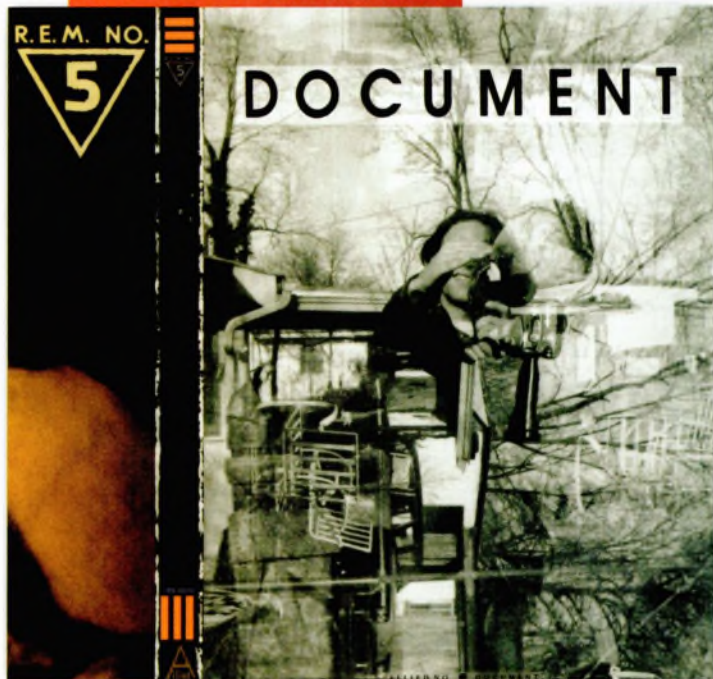


97 Josef Suk
A Summer's Tale;
Prague

Music reviews

The latest music releases...

ALBUM OF THE MONTH



REM
Document (25th Anniversary)

emimusic.com

★★★★

2 CD deluxe set

EMI

SUPERSTARDOM did not come overnight to REM. By the time of 1987's *Document*, the alt-rockers from Athens, Georgia had spent six relatively obscure years on the indie-rock circuit, releasing four albums and slowly building a dedicated hardcore following...

Their fifth album changed all that, catapulting Michael Stipe and band from critically-acclaimed underground favourites to mainstream commercial success, joining U2 and Guns 'N' Roses as one of the biggest bands of the late 1980s. Their elevation was deserved but unexpected. For although *Document* was their most impressive, confident and sharply-focused album to date, there was no great radical departure from what had gone before, merely a gradual evolution.

The commercial transformation in their fortunes, of course, was largely down to the presence on the album of *The One I Love*, REM's first radio-friendly top ten single, and arguably the band's first love song – albeit an off-kilter one, given that lead singer Michael Stipe had at one time sworn they would never write anything so crass. The success of *The One I Love* and its multi-platinum parent album led to a major label deal with Warners, a contract said to be the most expensive in popular music history and blockbuster albums such as *Out Of Time* and *Automatic For The People*.

But in a very real sense, *Document* is the album where REM crossed over from alternative rock phenomenon to cultural institution, arguably the only band in history to make the transition to mainstream

Document is the album where REM crossed over from alternative rock to cultural institution

stadium-filling rock giants without compromising their integrity or pandering to any of the usual banalities of stadium rock.

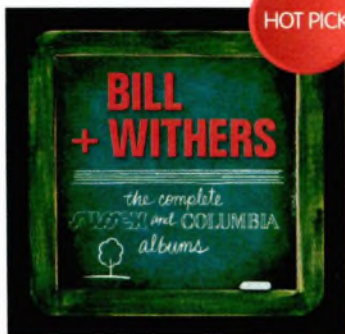
If the combination of post-punk attitude, cryptic lyrics, haunting vocals and jangling folk-pop had much in common with the sound of previous albums such as *Fables Of The Reconstruction* and *Life's Rich Pageant*, new producer Scott Litt ensured they were honed more perfectly than ever before.

Litt – who was to stay and helm REM's albums for the next decade – gave the sound both a harder, rocking edge and a cleaner, chiming tone. Bill Berry's drums were pushed further up in the mix and Peter Buck's guitar riffing given a more muscular pulse, while Stipe

was persuaded to exchange his past mumbling for a more extrovert delivery. Unusual textures were added with dulcimer to *King of Birds* and some jazzy, freeform saxophone blowing on *Fireplace*. The songs were memorable, fierier, angrier and highly politicised, too. The opener *Finest Worksong* (with its repeated lyric, "what we want and what we need has been confused"), *Exhuming McCarthy* (which opens with the sound of a typewriter, casting Stipe as fearless journalist), *Welcome To The Occupation* and *It's the End Of The World As We Know It (and I Feel Fine)* all packed a state-of-the-union message for the Reaganite times, albeit expressed in typically esoteric REM style, but still sounding topical today.

The 2012 digital remastering is excellent and the anniversary reissue is augmented with a terrific concert performance recorded on their 1987 European tour, featuring nine of *Document*'s 11 songs and a further 11 tracks from earlier albums. **NW**





HOT PICK

Bill Withers

Complete Sussex And Columbia Albums

sonymusic.com

★★★★★

Sony Music

CD

HE'S NOT QUITE A HOUSEHOLD NAME,

but BW is the writer and voice behind evergreen hits like *Lovely Day*, *Lean On Me* and *Ain't No Sunshine*, all of which are included in this round-up which roughly spans the 1970s and his creative peak. Factor in *aficionado* favourites like *Grandma's Hands*, *Who Is He (And What Is He To You)? Use Me* and at least a dozen others and you've got a must-have box set.

The one-time airplane toilet fitter always had one of the richest and most evocative voices in soul. He also had the advantage of being backed by one of the funkier groups in history. Able to float a tune to best effect without resorting to histrionics, he also had that uncanny knack of singing a song like he's talking confidently into your ear, managing some beautifully intimate moments even on 1973's standout *Live At Carnegie Hall*. **DO**



Tori Amos

Gold Dust

deutschegrammophon.com

★★★★★ DeutschGrammophon

CD

LONG SINCE EVOLVED from Kate Bush disciple into her own unique style of diva, Tori Amos has been with us for 20 years, consistently delivering quality torch songs and ballads in a variety of musical settings, from solo piano to electronica and many places in-between.

Gold Dust features orchestral reinterpretations of songs past but it certainly isn't a greatest hits. Rather it's more like Joni Mitchell's strings and big band experiment on *Travelogue* from 2002, in which she repaints new versions of her favourites with a fuller palette.

The orchestrations by long-time collaborator John-Philip Shenale are lush, romantic and sweeping, laying on the melodrama in thick swathes of colour. Nothing wrong with that, since it fits in well nigh perfectly with her slightly overwrought *oeuvre*. **DO**



HOT PICK

Rolling Stones

GRRR!

universalmusic.com

★★★★★

Universal

4 CD deluxe set/5 LP vinyl set

THE STONES FACED A PROBLEM in how to mark their 50th anniversary year. They lacked the songs and the energy to record their first new album since 2005's *A Bigger Bang*. But there are so many greatest hits compilations already on the market that another might seem gratuitous and exploitative. Hence we end up with a hybrid affair which traces their career trajectory over 78 tracks.

The thrilling sound of these tracks is so over-familiar that we might be better off discussing the cover art (the famous tongue logo superimposed on a giant gorilla). Some of the less well-regarded hits have stood the test of time to sound better today than they did on release, while the new tracks rock robustly enough, particularly the prophetically-titled *One Last Shot*. **NW**



10cc

Tenology - Album Classics 1973-78

universalmusic.com

★★★★★

Universal

4 CDs plus DVD box set

FEW HAVE COMBINED art-rock tendencies and winning pop melodies with more skill and wit than 10cc. Formed in the early 1970s by four Mancunians with an enviable pedigree as session men and Tin Pan Alley writers, they were at times too clever for their own good. But in an era when 'pop' groups made commercial singles and 'rock' bands made serious albums, there was a rare brilliance in the aplomb with which 10cc straddled both camps.

A total of 75 tracks pays fulsome testimony to 10cc's sheer inventiveness. From the doo-wop parody of *Donna* and the rock 'n' roll pastiche of *The Dean and I*, their mini pop masterpieces hit the mark every time, smartly polished to exquisite studio perfection. **NW**

AUDIOPHILE VINYL

Ann Peebles I Can't Stand the Rain purepleasurerecords.com



★★★★★ Hi Records/PP

180g vinyl

RECORDED BY WILLIE MITCHELL for Hi Records in Memphis, Ann Peebles' biggest hit from 1974 contains all the classic elements of his highly

successful formula: Memphis horns, funky bluesy grooves and a whole heap of soul.

Peebles co-wrote seven of the ten tracks with husband Donald Bryant and this undoubtedly lies behind the depth of feeling that underlies them. The theme is the sadder side of love, bittersweet tunes about loss and misgivings, which all combine to produce a blues album of considerable depth and subtlety. The only piece to break with this musically is *Run, Run, Run* which has some fabulous playing and

shows just how influential this sound was on the rest of the decade and beyond.

The sound is not as dynamic as more upbeat albums from Hi Records, but has plenty of tonal depth and the horn section brings welcome contrast when it's given the nod. Mitchell layers the sound using levels which gives it a degree of perspective. Texture is provided by some very fine keyboard playing – it's not hard to hear why this album has fuelled so many hip hop hits. **JK**





Sex Pistols
Never Mind The Bollocks
Here's The Sex Pistols
universalmusic.com
★★★★★ **Universal**
3 CD/DVD box set

IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN AN ALBUM that 'changed the world', but John Lydon surely has a point when he complains that elevating the Pistols' fleeting two-fingers to the music establishment into a four disc set is "killing the spirit of the thing". Neither does the 35th anniversary of its 1977 release seem particularly significant, although there's no denying the original 12 tracks still have a magnificent ferocity.

Even Lydon has graciously welcomed the sonic upgrading of the original album from recently unearthed master tapes. The demos, out-takes and B-sides are of archival interest, but the sloppy live recordings suggest producer Chris Thomas must have worked overtime to create the crisp bite of the studio album. **NW**



Beethoven
The Five Piano Concertos
Staatskapelle Berlin
deccaclassics.com
★★★★★ **Decca**
3 CDs

DANIEL BARENBOIM has been playing these concertos for well over half a century, and he's recorded them as soloist, conductor, and soloist/conductor. In this new recording, taped live, he plays and conducts, and the results are impressive. Using smallish forces creates the impression of orchestral chamber music, with clean, transparent lines and excellent clarity. The solo playing is imaginative and detailed; by turns sensitive and surprising, with some startling dynamic contrasts.

The recordings sound detailed and clear. The balance between piano and orchestra is good, yet there's no sense of microphone spotlighting. An audience applause is left at the end, but otherwise you wouldn't know the performances were recorded live. **JMH**



Josef Suk
A Summer's Tale; Prague
BBC Symphony Orch.
chandos.net
★★★★★ **Chandos**
CD

SUK OCCUPIES that musical twilight zone between total obscurity and limited popularity. His music is serious, well-crafted, and definitely worth taking time to get to know. *A Summer's Tale* is an ambitious orchestral work cast in four movements and lasting almost forty minutes. It's an atmospheric piece; impressionistic and original, and Suk's glowering tone colours are beautifully caught by the excellent Chandos recording. *Prague* is also cast in four movements, and its dark colouring creates a powerful impression.

The recording produces a superbly natural sound that is highly detailed, smooth, and well-integrated. The sound doesn't scream 'hi-fi' at you, yet the range (tonal, dynamic, frequency) is very wide. **JMH**

HOT PICK

HIGH RESOLUTION DOWNLOADS

Huey And The New Yorkers

Say It To My Face
naimlabel.com

★★★★★ **Naim Edge**
24-bit/44.1kHz



FORMER FUN LOVIN' Criminal Huey Morgan has moved to London now and become that risky beast – a radio personality. The worry was that he might forget the rolling groove and cheeky chappie charm of his *Scooby Snacks* days and become another media luvvie. Thankfully though, he seems not to have drifted too far from his Coney Island roots with this album and the now-44-year-old's brilliantly recorded music retains an at least near-youthful vitality and humour.

Anyone expecting a pristine Antonio Forcione type album from Naim will be sorely disappointed with this recording, but personally I'm thoroughly delighted with this entertainingly mature yet gritty release. **MS**

Craft

Craft
bowers-wilkins.co.uk

★★★★★ **B&W**
24-bit/48kHz



IT SEEMS THAT as B&W's Society of Sound gets older, it is gaining a younger sensibility.

This collection of songs by Craft is firmly hip-hop. Says B&W, "Craft is a considered, ever-maturing and gradually snowballing movement of young musicians hailing from the south of England". The band has succeeded in producing a sound that combines a "classic American soul sound for the guitars and bass" and British urban MC-ing.

Effectively this is a hi-fi recording of a lo-fi garage sound made using the grainy texture of a vintage mixing desk. Singer, Cristabel Nosedá has a superb classic soul voice, by the way. **MS**

BLU-RAY DVD

Peter Gabriel Classic Albums: So eagle-rock.com



★★★★★ **Eagle Vision**

DESPITE FOUR SUCCESSFUL SOLO ALBUMS, Peter Gabriel was still 'a cult artist' before *So* in 1986. It was his first to feature a title, albeit a small one, and the first original album produced by

Daniel Lanois. It also featured *Sledgehammer* and the unforgettable video that made it a global success.

This Classic Albums series documentary features input from all the key people involved in the recording, from PG himself through Lanois, the various engineers and assistants and musicians including Tony Levin, Manu Katche, Laurie Anderson and Jerry Marrotta. The only notable exception is Kate Bush whose beautiful duet on *Don't Give Up* would have been rather different had Dolly

Parton, Gabriel's first choice, taken the role!

It's an intriguing view of the painstaking effort involved in making an album in the eighties before Pro Tools changed the face of editing. They had 96 full multi-track versions of *In Your Eyes* before they sat down and spliced all the best bits together using two-inch tape machines with a standard stereo soundtrack and only minimal musical excerpts, it's debatable whether the Blu-ray warrants the expense, but it looks great on the big screen. **JK**

PJ looker

PJ hi-fi takes some classic brands and combines them to great effect, as **Ed Selley** discovers...

Back in the late nineteen forties, PJ hi-fi was involved in the sale and rental of public address systems. In the ensuing decades, the focus shifted to domestic audio and the location changed to the present address on Bridge Street in Guildford. The business was taken over by Richard Taunton in 1989, and although he has now stepped back from the day-to-day running of the store, he remains heavily involved. As an aside, it was PJ hi-fi under Richard that sold me some of my first proper hi-fi in 1998, in the form of an Arcam Alpha 7 amplifier and CD player!

As befits a long running store, the brands represented are equally well established. The two-channel portfolio is a who's who of the major British brands, and some of *Hi-Fi Choice's* favourite products of recent years are available to dem. Where PJ hi-fi differs slightly is that these brands are combined in ways that are subtly different to what you might find elsewhere. I asked store manager Andy Holt to assemble three systems that demonstrated the PJ ethos and settled back to sample the results.

Unsurprisingly for a store where Linn and Naim feature, PJ hi-fi has enthusiastically adopted streaming and networked audio, and has the wherewithal to demonstrate them to a very high standard. So two of our three systems were streamer-based, the third using Compact Disc.

THE EXPERTS



PJ HI-FI
3 Bridge Street, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4RY
01483 304756, info@pjhifi.co.uk

linn.co.uk/
neat.co.uk/
naimaudio.com/
audiovector.com/
chordelectronics.co.uk/
bowers-wilkins.co.uk/



**RAY
LAMONTAGNE**
GOD WILLIN'
& THE CREEK
DON'T RISE
HI-RES FLAC



MUSE
THE 2ND LAW
HI-RES FLAC



FLEET FOXES
FLEET FOXES
CD

SYSTEM 1 – NEAT MAJIK TRICK

Tucked away in the smallest of the three dem rooms was the PJ hi-fi answer to the challenge of great sound for a sensible outlay. This system is also a reflection of the requirements of many customers. Guildford and the surrounding area is relatively affluent, but space is at a premium, so this system is a reflection of these requirements. While small in size, the results are impressive.

Deceptively capable

Source and amplification for system one takes the form of a Linn Majik DSM. This is Linn's all-in-one take on the DS platform and combines its 24-bit/192kHz-capable UPnP streamer with a 90W amplifier. The result is a compact and handsome single box unit that is deceptively capable of working with any other boxes that you might have lying around. The Majik boasts no less than fifteen inputs across analogue, digital and HDMI. This little box can cope with everything from a Blu-ray player to a turntable without breaking sweat.

Partnering the Linn is another product with abilities beyond its stature. At 76cm tall the NEAT Motive 2 is one of the tiniest floorstanders on the market and can be slotted into almost any space without ever being obtrusive. This is no mere lifestyle trinket though. The trademark titanium tweeter and cabinet, tilted back to assist time alignment, are signs that NEAT takes the performance of the Motive 2 as seriously as they do any other speaker in the range.

Happy partnership

I've heard both of these units before but never working together. This is clearly my loss as this is a very happy partnership indeed. Selecting Ray LaMontagne's *God Willin' & The Creek Don't Rise* from the well-stocked server, the opening chords of *Repo Man* have a fantastic life and energy to them. Tonality is sensational – the guitar is captured with astonishing vibrancy, but the result is all the better because nothing is forced or overblown – it simply manages to sound right.

The bass response of the Motives never fails to raise a smile. It seems improbable that such a small loudspeaker should have the bass

weight that it does, but the lower notes manage to be felt as well as heard. There isn't a trace of bloat or overhang and this gives the system a wonderful sense of timing and precision. It starts and stops with an elegance that is really only noticeable when it is taken away.

Switch to high-resolution material and the results get even better. Brandishing a freshly downloaded 24/96kHz copy of *The 2nd Law* by Muse courtesy of HighResAudio, the performance of the system steps up another notch. The benefits of hi-res shine through from the outset.

The soundstage is a vast, rock-solid presence, while instruments take on an almost analogue quality. The result is spellbinding and an

emphatic demonstration of what streaming can do.

The other ace in the pack is the interface. Linn has honed its operating system and control app since the launch of the original DS and the result is a system that is absolutely intuitive to use. Browsing the extensive selection of music on the server and queuing your next choice up while the current one plays is a world away from squinting at CD spines. This Linn/NEAT partnership is a superlative combination of convenience and musical ability.

- 1 LINN MAJIK DSM STREAMER £2,965
- 2 NEAT MOTIVE 2 SPEAKERS £1,215

TOTAL SYSTEM PRICE: £4,180



SYSTEM 2 – VECTORING IN

Moving to the upstairs demo room, system two is an altogether more serious proposition, but has two things in common with the first system. The first is that this is another network audio-based setup. The second is that this is a combination of brands not commonly seen in the UK and this partnership is a particular PJ hi-fi speciality...

Fully upgradable

The electronics for this system come courtesy of Naim Audio. The pairing of a SuperNait integrated amplifier and NDX network audio streamer is a popular one and it is easy to see why. As a combination they offer 24-bit/192kHz streaming, Internet radio and iPod connectivity, together with multiple digital inputs (still a surprising thing to find on products from a company that for years never even fitted digital outputs!) and a full set of analogue inputs as well. The 80 watt output is notionally lower than the Linn, but the latter is quoted into four ohms and having lived with a SuperNait for over a year, I've found that 80 watts of Naim is generally sufficient to flatten buildings.

Where this system then deviates from the norm is in the choice of speakers. PJ hi-fi

has been a supporter of the Danish speaker brand Audiovector for many years now and a few minutes talking to Andy about this system reveals that he is a huge fan of the marque and his enthusiasm is infectious. The model used here is the Si3 Signature, a two-and-a-half way floorstander. The most unusual design aspect of the Si3 is that the models are fully upgradable. At any stage after purchase, you can turn your Signatures (or indeed the models below) into the higher spec Avantgarde. This makes the whole system extremely flexible in terms of future upgrades.

Presence and impact

Upgrades will be the last thing on your mind when you listen to this trio however. From the outset the increase in scale is what sets this system apart from the smaller setup downstairs. The same sequence of Ray LaMontagne has all of the finesse and detail the first system did, but there is an increase in the presence and impact that further adds to the realism. The Audiovectors are exceptionally revealing and their ability to open out even relatively complex material is deeply impressive.

The improvement in bass weight is not too surprising, given the increase in speaker

size, but what is more of a shock is that if anything, this system is even faster on its feet than the smaller one. This speed doesn't force itself upon music, it simply imparts an effortless sense of grace to anything you play on it. The system synergy here is top notch and it is no surprise to learn that Audiovector distributes Naim in Denmark. If the results are always this good, there must be some very happy Danes about. Naturally, this is another hi-res capable system and the Muse track proved an absolute delight.

The combination of deftness, articulation and immense impact that this system demonstrates is highly addictive and something I could have spent hours with. What is equally impressive is that when you aren't being blown away by it, the small footprint and elegant aesthetics mean it is unlikely to overwhelm any room. You could ask yourself why you would ever want to spend any more than this, but Andy had the answer to that waiting downstairs...

- 1 NAIM NDX (EXC. DAB/FM MODULE) £3,050
- 2 NAIM SUPERNAIT INTEGRATED AMP £2,825
- 3 AUDIOVECTOR Si3 SIG. SPEAKERS £3,900

TOTAL SYSTEM PRICE: £9,775



SYSTEM 3 – CRAZY DIAMOND

The final system of the day is a considerable jump in terms of pricing and size, and introduces two other brands from the portfolio. There's still evidence of the PJ hi-fi 'DNA' even at this relatively elevated price point, though. This is still an extremely room-friendly system when you take into account the performance on offer. And once again, this is a brand pairing, that while not perhaps as unusual as the second system, is still one of the less common ones that I have encountered.

Entirely wholesome

Chord Electronics has been part of the store portfolio for some years and Alex rates the company's amplifiers extremely highly. The SPM1400 Mk2 monoblock is not the largest amplifier in the Chord range, but still delivers an entirely wholesome 480 watts of power. A pair of these combined with the CFA5000 preamp is generally sufficient to handle whatever you might throw at them.

This trio is often partnered with a network streamer like the Linn Klimax, but in this case, Alex has gone 'all in' with Chord and selected a Red Reference Mk3 CD player. Chord's flagship disc spinner combines serious decoding horsepower with striking styling – it's a lovely thing to have, providing you can afford it.

Naturally, if you wanted to run both, the CFA5000 has inputs galore to allow this.

This considerable pile of electronics is called upon to drive Bowers & Wilkins' 800D loudspeaker. Largest member of the 800 series (and at 102kg each, large *full stop*), the 800 is a heady combination of sophisticated technology and good old fashioned cubic capacity. The 800 series is a range of products that are not actually that technically demanding to drive, but rather more difficult to drive well. Can the Chords deliver and do so exclusively on a diet of Red Book CD?

Eloquent demonstration

Selecting the Fleet Foxes initially, the soaring vocals over the pounding drums of *Your Protector* are a fairly eloquent demonstration that CD can still deliver the goods when the hardware is up to the job. This is a combination that makes the whole business of music making look incredibly easy. The most remarkable feature of this system is how it can be run at phenomenal volume levels without any signs of distress or ever imparting any sense that it is at anything other than tickover.

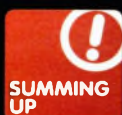
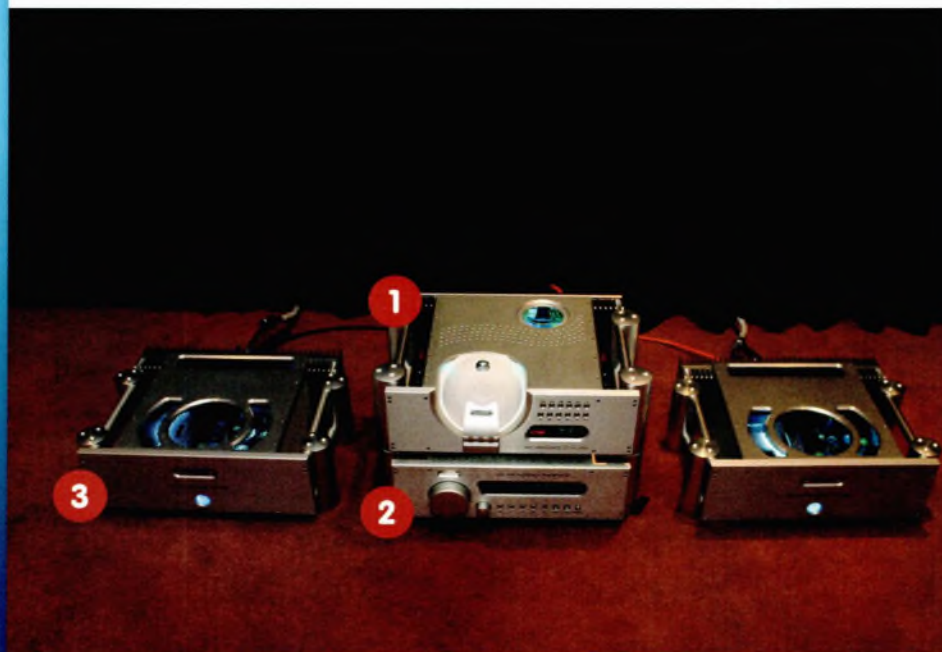
Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the bass. None of the systems on display has been a slouch in this regard, but with the 800D, bass makes the transition from

something heard to something felt. There really is very little substitute for two ten-inch bass drivers and the result is incredibly clean, deep and powerful bass. Tonality is unambiguously real – the diamond tweeter is no gimmick, it is still capable of some of the cleanest and most natural treble I've had the pleasure to set ears upon.

As a combination, there are unique features to this system as well. Sometimes, it is easy to find the 800D ever so slightly sterile, but the Chord front end seems to impart a vitality that keeps this at bay. Equally, the civilising influence of the 800D loudspeakers is beneficial to the Chords, especially as you ramp the volume up. Once again, this isn't a combination done for the sake of being different, but a clever move to get the best from two different brands. The parts of this particular sum are extremely impressive, but the final combination is more spectacular still.

- 1 CHORD ELECTRONICS RED REFERENCE MK3 CD PLAYER £15,600
- 2 CHORD ELECTRONICS CPA5000 PREAMP £11,850
- 3 2X CHORD ELECTRONICS SPM1400 MK2 MONOBLOCKS £9,090 EACH
- 4 B&W 800 DIAMOND LOUDSPEAKERS £18,500

TOTAL SYSTEM PRICE: £64,130



Both Alex and Richard care deeply about getting high performance out of their portfolio and they have clearly spent considerable amounts of time looking at the most effective means of combining their brands to obtain the best results.

All three of these systems manage at once to entertain and enthrall. There are no baffling control interfaces or lengthy start-up procedures, just well assembled components that are well placed to work with any additional equipment you might have.

The common theme of an exceptionally cohesive, room filling sound is a testament to their careful matching. The performances that PJ hi-fi is getting suggest that they should be delivering great sound to Guildford for another sixty years.

Minitest

Compact Discs aren't immune to dirt and dust, so **Neville Roberts** tests some affordable cleaners...

Marigo Labs

3D Stabiliser CD Tuning Mat and Evolution Signature CD Mat

PRICES: £74.94 (3D MAT), £149.95 (CD MAT)
CONTACT: 01733 350878 WEBSITE: ANALOGUESEDUCTION.NET

THE 3D STABILISER MAT and the Evolution Signature CD Mat are manufactured by Marigo Labs and are available from Analogue Seduction. These mats are designed to extract the best performance from your SACD, DVD-A, DVD-V and CD discs by addressing issues that centre around vibration, stray magnetism, static and optical diffraction. Marigo mats are absolutely flat and designed to be placed on top of a CD prior to and left *in situ* during playing.

The 3D Stabiliser Mat employs a carbon fibre and Kevlar composite, with embedded ultra-fine silver wire for stray field suppression. The mat has an anti-static gold coating on the underside and optically absorbent green coating on top. With this mat, I noticed a definite improvement in the realism of the sound, which by contrast made me realise that the instruments had sounded somewhat constrained in the past.

The top-of-the-range Evolution Signature CD Mat makes use of a proprietary composite material that has been created using an embedded carbon nano-tube structure which dramatically reduces the level of disc vibration, it's claimed. As with the 3D Stabiliser mat, the Evolution Signature CD Mat is placed on top of an optical disc, and it does indeed offer improvements in realism and detail which I found particularly noticeable with vocals.

VERDICT THE SONIC IMPROVEMENTS when using both mats are clearly demonstrable, although the Evolution Signature takes these improvements to the next level.

★★★★★



Audience Auric Illuminator

PRICE: £49.95 CONTACT: 01775 761880
WEBSITE: HIGHENDCABLE.CO.UK

THIS OFFERING FROM HIGH END CABLE is a treatment and cleaner for optical discs. It is specifically designed for use with CDs, DVDs, LaserDiscs and SACDs. The Auric Illuminator is essentially a two-stage process for what's described as an 'optical disc playback resolution enhancement'. The first stage is to reduce the amount of ambient light entering the disc and reaching the optical path of the player's laser system. The second stage is to clean and treat both surfaces of the disc to remove static electricity and prevent future static build-up. On the playing surface, this will also enhance the optical transparency by reducing reflection and refraction.

The treatment kit includes the Auric Illuminator Pen, a marker template, a large bottle of a clear treatment gel and a pack of non-abrasive disposable polishing cloths. The CD or DVD is treated by filling in the central clear area with the Illuminator Pen marker using the template supplied, and the outer rim of the disc is also blacked out with the marker. Then, the disc is treated on both sides with one drop of the gel spread on each surface and finally buffed with one of the supplied cloths.

Treated discs seemed less harsh at the top end, generally quieter, smoother and easier to listen to, and supports a blind test carried out by High End Cable where they played two copies of the same CD to customers – one treated and one untreated. Without exception all listeners noticed an improvement with the treated CD.

VERDICT NOTICEABLE audible improvements after treatment make this a worthwhile investment.

★★★★★

Furutech

PC-2 CD and DVD Cleaner

PRICE: £34.95 CONTACT: 07908 056978
WEBSITE: MAINS-CABLES-R-US.CO.UK

FURUTECH PC-2 CLEANER FLUID, here supplied by Mains Cables R Us, contains a combination of enzymes and ions that provides a powerful cleansing action on any CD or DVD and maximising the laser reading capability. The fluid is made from natural products and is free of pollution-causing materials, including interface active agents and chemical skin irritants. The product is, therefore, both environmentally friendly and safe to use. Furutech PC-2 cleaner is supplied along with a micro-fibre cleaning cloth.

Although it has a strong stain removal ability, the fluid is harmless to most surfaces and is odourless, tasteless and colourless. Without any oily additives, it leaves no residual traces and the treated surface will be sparklingly clean, thus reducing the risk of read errors. To treat a CD or DVD, simply spray the fluid onto the playing side of the disc and polish off with the supplied micro-fibre cloth, ensuring that the surface is completely dry with absolutely no residual traces remaining.

In use, I found that I had no difficulty in removing the odd finger-print that had obviously been left by someone else on my CD! Notably, one particular disc that I had trouble playing in my car CD player actually played the entire list of tracks without interruption after treatment – result!

VERDICT DOES WHAT IT SAYS ON THE TIN, and can be used as often as desired.



Russ Andrews

ReleeS Spray CD and DVD treatment

PRICE: £22.50 CONTACT: 01539 797300
WEBSITE: RUSSANDREWS.COM

RELEES SPRAY TREATMENT from Russ Andrews is supplied in a 50ml pump bottle and is sprayed onto the label side of CDs, SACDs and DVDs in order to reduce static. Russ Andrews' tests have shown that, after treatment, you will hear a deeper bass, lower distortion and a more three-dimensional soundstage, the company says.

ReleeS can be used in conjunction with ReVeel mould release agent cleaner (reviewed in HFC 358). After cleaning with ReVeel, the ReleeS product is sprayed onto the label side only and then wiped off with a soft cloth. All new and used CDs and DVDs will benefit from this treatment as it helps to reduce the amount of error correction required which improves sound quality and gives a less 'digital' sound.

In my experience, it certainly lifted performances to another level and made the sound more effortless and easy to listen to. Incidentally, it can also be used to treat cables by simply spraying the solution onto a clean micro-fibre cloth and then wiping this along the length of the cable. This will take away any static from the cable and help to prevent it from building up again, thus reducing any negative effects arising from static interference. Recommended. ●

VERDICT EFFECTIVELY REDUCES negative effects from static interference – worth the investment.



The Furutech PC2 is a no-nonsense cleaner for the playing surface, while the Russ Andrews ReleeS spray is an anti-static treatment for the label side. The Auric Illuminator combines effective

disc cleaning with a marker pen to reduce internal and external optical interference and the Marigo Labs CD mats reduce jitter, static and undesirable optical reflections while playing.

All these products are valuable for getting the best out of your music collection. Some should even be considered just as essential as those used for cleaning your vinyl records.

Our Four Cornerstones are: Quality – Performance – Value – Service You won't be disappointed!

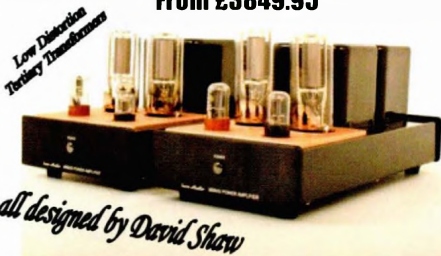
Feel free to ask which amplifier is right for your room and speakers?

We now have a wide range of valves available on our website

Designed in Leicester by David Shaw. Hand finished and tested in Leicester. We design and wind our own transformers using the best 5N copper and LG iron. Using top worldwide parts from Rubicon, ALPS, Jensen, JJ, SCR, Full Music. Our commitment to quality and service means you are assured of advice, upgrades, and service for at least the 20 year expected life of our amplifiers. You're assured of good performance new or second hand!

MB845 i mono blocks

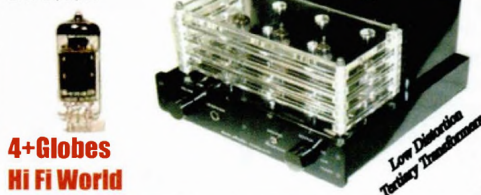
Fabulous huge 845 triode mono block amplifiers. NEW improved version of the original. Now with "Low Distortion Tertiary" transformers 90+90w **5 Globes Hi Fi World**
From £3849.95



ST20PP 15+15W Amp

Guaranteed to amaze and delight you Mullard's amazing EL84 makes this amplifier perform way beyond its modest size. Now with headphone socket. Not sure about valves? Try this with our money back guarantee.

Only £549.95



NEW Stereo 60 MK III 75+75w

Total redesign with new KT120s New Tertiary transformers New power supply, very low distortion. Huge power in 1 box!
"OUTSTANDING!" Hi Fi News group test April 2012



New Full Range

Like no other speaker! Big rich sound with huge deep bass. No midrange "shout" With a purity and sound stage unobtainable with multi unit speakers. The FRm 2 is ideal for amplifiers of 6-50 watts especially SET and small PP amplifiers. Huge deep sound from a normal sized floorstander. Using our own unique driver.
Only £1499.95 pr

The Icon CDX1 CD Player

Several unique features 3 power supplies. Valve rectifier, valve & choke regulated. Hard wired analogue output stage. With a top quality 192kHz 24bit player. Upgradeable.

From £1299.95 (upgradeable)

"Great for any mood or style of music"

Awarded 5 Globes Hi Fi World



NEW LA4 MK III Line Preamp

"...Major on musical flow and attention to detail, Distortion very low 0.0003% Enormous headroom, bandwidth very wide, very low noise..." NK Hi Fi World, awarded 5 Globes



From only £999.95 (upgradeable)

MB150 150w Mono Blocks

150+150w of pure UL valve power (or 100 + 100w of pure triode). Using 4 KT90, KT88 or KT120. Based on our award winning MB90s. Unlike transistors, these giants retain the Icon warmth and texture at volumes, giving massive headroom and very low distortion. Various upgrades available. **Now available with the new KT120!**

Only £2999.00 Pair 4+ Globes Hi Fi World



Our Best Ever Mid Range Amplifier!

Stereo 40 MK III our best ever value amplifier. It has everything! 40+40 watts, Triode mode, Valve rectifier. Remote control. Tape loop. Standby switch. KT66/KT88 EL34/6550 compatible. **Two rave reviews in HFW and HFN.**

From Only £1,499

New 2A3 Model Now In Stock!

"...Bristling with musical energy, smooth & sweet..." P Rigby Hi Fi World Awarded 5 Globes



NEW ST40 III 6AS7 Pure Triode Amp

25+25w pure triode. No feedback. Created as an affordable alternative to the high cost of 300Bs All the attributes of vintage triodes only £70 for a new set of output valves. Warm creamy sound lots of detail. Astonishing sound stage. All the other features of our Stereo 40 III inc remote control

From only £1,399.95 complete



NEW MB805 SE Mono blocks

45+45 Watts of Single Ended Heaven
From £5499.95 (upgradeable)



Stereo 25 MK II

NEW high quality headphone socket for private listening. NEW 6SN7/6SL7 valves for better definition. Upgraded output transformers for better bandwidth. 35+35w. Alps pot, 4/8 Ω outputs, Supplied transparent cover
FREE EL34 UPGRADE WORTH £100 (limited offer)

Still Only £849.95



PS 3 All Valve Phono Stage

"Our Fave Affordable High End Phono Stage"

N.K. Hi Fi World. Awarded 5 "Globes"

"Outstanding Product" Hi Fi News

All triode. Passive RIAA. Custom British MC TX option. Very quiet, high output. With the best possible Power supply. Valve rectified & regulated for definition and smoothness, 14kg.

From only £1759.95 complete (inc MC TX)



Common Features: Icon Designs by David Shaw. Hand built "Point to Point" wiring. Designed and finished in Leicester UK. No printed circuit board. ALPS Volume control. Gold plated terminals. Audiophile components.

Silver PTFE audio cable. Steel & alloy plate construction. Soft start. Comprehensive manual Inc DIY valve change info Plexiglas valve cover included. "Proper" valve amplifiers are heavy because good transformers need lots of iron!

See our other models at www.iconaudio.com Buy through your dealer or direct from us. Export no problem! (EU £30 per box) Want to know more?

.....Or ring us on +44 (0)116 2440593 email sales@iconaudio.com **icon Audio** 351 Aylestone Road Leicester LE2 8TA (U.K.)

*Whilst stocks last, Conditions apply ask for details Prices correct with 20% UK VAT at time of going to press but subject to change 09.2011. E & O E UK Visa, MasterCard AMEX and debit cards accepted

icon Audio



The New Stereo 40 MK III KT88m Our best ever mid range amplifier!



Low Distortion Tertiary
wound transformers

designed by David Shaw

Shown with upgraded TreaSure CV181s and Full Music TJ 6SL7, Jensen copper foil in paper and oil capacitors

Superbly engineered. Very versatile 40w + 40w UL or 20w + 20w Triode

Whilst our flagship models rightly get superb praise from reviewers worldwide for their performance and value, we never lose focus on our more affordable products and regularly update them when the opportunity arises. Such is the case with our Stereo 40. Our original brief over 10 years ago to make the best possible EL34/KT88 valve amplifier for a reasonable price still holds true. Our latest Stereo 40 MK IIIm incorporates several improvements. Now with a meter which allows a very simple way to check that the output valves are operating at their optimum value and best performance. This will also tell you when a valve is due for replacement or when it is failing. Something other designs don't do. The Stereo 40 is almost unique in its ability to use a very wide range of valves including 6L6, 5881, EL34, 6CA7, KT66, KT77, 6550, KT88. Now made very easy to change if you like "tube rolling".

In our quest to make the best amplifier in its class we also include all the features we think a good amplifier should have including Triode or Ultralinear operation, remote control, a record loop, a warm up/standby facility, valve rectifier, Low Distortion Tertiary output transformers and many more features. There are also things we don't include like printed circuit boards and transistors both of which we feel degrade the performance of valve amplifiers. Obviously the overriding priority is the sound quality which must come from good engineering which we believe to be far ahead of the Stereo 40's modest price. We guarantee you will not be disappointed!

Our four cornerstones are **Quality Performance** and **Value**. And in the future, **Service** when you need it. In this age of "built in obsolescence" it may be unfashionable to talk about repairs and spares but our commitment to future service means you should be able to enjoy your amplifier for at least 20 years.

All of our amplifiers are designed and finished in Leicester they are commissioned and serviced by the people that designed them so you can be sure of our quality control and long term performance. Our new series of "Low Distortion Tertiary" output transformers are the best we have ever made, enabling us to reduce global feedback by about 40%. All our amplifiers are hand made using "point to point" soldering without using printed circuit boards. We are convinced this sounds better. It also allows for easy servicing, upgrades and modifications. Remote controlled volume is useful for fine tuning your listening level to match your taste. High quality components are used throughout including an "ALPS" volume control, silver plated PTFE audio cable SCR capacitors audiophile resistors. Power Amplifier operation is possible by selecting a lower "gain" on the rear of the amplifier (this is done without attenuation which would lose quality). Loudspeakers of nominal impedance between 3 ohms and 10 ohms may be used with virtually no reduction in power or quality. A valve rectifier with choke regulated power supply adds a richness to the sound quality that silicon devices alone are unable to do. Tape and other methods of recording and playback are catered for by the "Tape Monitor". Also useful for Home Cinema applications.

In short we have created an amplifier of excellent flexibility and quality which retains the qualities of traditional design and performance.

From £1,549.95 (inc 20% VAT) Upgradeable. See our similar Stereo 40 6AS7 only £1399, Stereo 40 2A3 £1899, and other award winning amplifiers on our website

www.iconaudio.com sales@iconaudio.com

icon Audio

Leicester UK





Ed Selley brings you our pick of this month's top hi-fi websites...

HIGHRESAUDIO

highresaudio.com

The market for high resolution audio continues to grow inch by inch (or perhaps meg by meg) and my latest discovery is German based HighResAudio. The site specialises in 24-bit recordings including a small number in 24-bit/384kHz, which is about the limit of what is technically possible at the moment. The catalogue is impressive and supported by full artwork and artist biography. This is not too different from many other sites, but it has one feature that really sets it apart...

As I write this, the sixth studio album by Muse, *The 2nd Law* has been released and from the very start HighResAudio has it as a 24/96 download. This is the first time I am aware of an album that has a chance of topping the charts being available from the off as a high-resolution download. I've said many times before that it is vital that popular material is available in high resolution for the whole concept to have any success, and it's fantastic to see this being realised. The site charges in Sterling and has a very well organised and easy to follow download manager that makes purchases straightforward even for first timers.



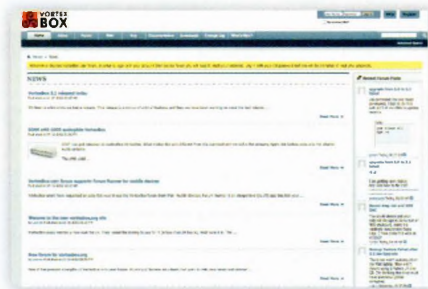
VORTEXBOX

vortexbox.org

Although I am making strenuous efforts to ensure that streamer and computer audio owners have as much choice of downloads as possible, the reality for most is that a large percentage of their purchases will come on CD. Playback on a streamer will involve ripping the disc to storage. Enter VortexBox, a company dedicated to the 'RipNAS' concept – a device that rips your audio, tags it and then acts as a server. The system can rip to a variety of formats and can be used for video as well as audio as well as performing other tasks like 'dual ripping' (where one disc can be converted to FLAC and MP3 at the same time).

Hi-Fi Choice has reviewed a complete VortexBox before, but the most common

use for the VortexBox software is to download it and use it to convert an aged desktop PC over to a VortexBox. This results in a cost-effective and very stable Linux based platform to rip and serve your files. Where this site really comes into its own is the supporting forum and user group. There's a vast repository of knowledge and experience about building and tweaking your VortexBox to do what you want and how you want it.

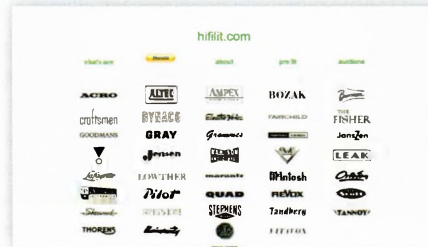


HI-FI LIT

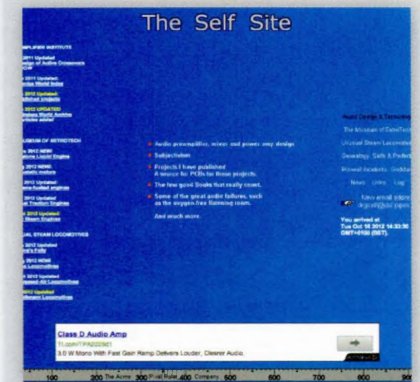
hifilit.com

As a relatively young (by the standards of hi-fi journalists at least) person, I don't find it as easy as some of my colleagues to throw in pinpoint accurate historical references to pieces, on account of me not being there when it happened! Thankfully, the Internet is able to fill in some of the gaps and this website is a fantastic resource...

Hi-fi Lit is a compilation of historic brochures and manuals from some of the biggest vintage brands and famous products. The site is divided up by brand and the scans are excellent quality and entirely legible. Some of the products are fairly US-biased, but there are some excellent bits from the UK including Tannoy and Vitavox. One of the most useful things on the site is in the Quad section, though. This is a complete, full colour, high-resolution scan of the original ESL manual. As well as being a fabulous trip down memory lane, the manual is a fantastic period piece. Given the number of ESLs still in use, this is a genuinely useful resource for any current owner.



THE DOUG SELF SITE



douglas-self.com

Douglas Self has been active in the Audio Industry for over thirty years and has been responsible for some very influential books – most of which are available to buy. Generous soul that he is, Doug has also put a huge amount of material on his site for free. If you are interested in DIY or simply want to learn more about the basics of amplifier design, there is some absolutely brilliant information at hand, from information on balanced connections to thoughts on distortion and amplifier types. Some of the ideas are pretty complicated, but Doug is able to make it all fairly easy to follow. As Doug is one of the archest subjectivists going, everything here is grounded firmly in measurement, but there is some good practice that every DIY'er would do well to read.

In addition to the audio section, the site serves as a repository for Doug's other interests. I worked with Doug at Cambridge Audio for some years and found that he was fascinated by various aspects of engineering and science. The site has sections devoted to this and the author's pleasingly dry sense of humour makes many of them an entertaining read and a pleasant distraction. ●





Introducing UnitiLite in selected Sevenoaks stores nationwide.

UnitiLite is a slimline version of Naim's original award-winning NaimUniti and is the latest addition to the Uniti range.

Comprising a CD player, MP3/iPod and USB memory stick playback, digital to analogue converter, high resolution 32bit/192kHz capable network stream player and integrated 50W amplifier in one sleek enclosure. Like Naim's other streaming devices, the UnitiLite has a network connection and is UPnP enabled to stream audio stored on the home network and access internet radio (an optional FM/DAB module is also available). All you need to add is a pair of speakers to make an accessible, great sounding system.

Visit your local Sevenoaks Naim dealer today for a demonstration.

£1650

ROTEL 12 SERIES

NEW

The new Rotel 12 Series takes the concept of entry-level audiophile quality to new heights. Thanks to a new advanced system approach, streaming options and the addition of a dedicated iOS app for system control, the six new hi-fi components have their feet planted firmly in the future while retaining Rotel's sense of heritage and quality of its past.



RA-10	£349	RA-11	£499	RA-12	£599
RCD-12	£499	RT-11	£279	RT-12	£649

PMC DBI GOLD

NEW

Based on Studio version of the famous DB1 model with a proven 10 year heritage in Professional studio environment. The Gold version uses Studio series HF and LF drive units for added robustness and reference monitor sound. Sound quality is what you'd expect from a PMC speaker using their ATL bass loading technology and will partner well with most popular Hi-Fi components.



£999

STORES NATIONWIDE

- Aberdeen* 01224 252797
- Bishop's Stortford* 01279 506576 ●
- Brighton (Hove)* 01273 733338
- Bristol* 0117 974 3727 ●
- Bromley 020 8290 1988 ●
- Cambridge* 01223 304770
- Chelsea* 020 7352 9466

- Cheltenham* 01242 241171 ●
- Chorleywood (Watford)* 0845 5046364
- Epsom* 01372 720720
- Exeter* 01392 218895
- Glasgow* 0141 332 9655
- Guildford 01483 536666
- Holborn* 020 7837 7540 ●
- Kingston* 020 8547 0717
- Leeds (Wetherby) 01937 586886 ●
- Loughton* 020 8532 0770 ●
- Maidstone 01622 686366 ●

- Norwich* 01603 767605
- Oxford 01865 241773 ● **NEW**
- Reading* 0118 959 7768 ●
- Sevenoaks 01732 459555 ●
- Sheffield* 0114 255 5861
- Southampton* 023 8033 7770 ●
- Tunbridge Wells 01892 531543 ●
- Weybridge 01932 840859 ●
- Witham (Essex) 01376 501733 ●
- Yeovil* 01935 700078

VISIT OUR WEBSITE



For more information on our comprehensive range of products along with the latest news, offers and a convenient option to order many products on-line or reserve before you travel, go to www.ssav.com

● NAIM PRODUCTS ARE CURRENTLY ONLY AVAILABLE AT THESE STORES - WITH MORE STORES BEING ADDED SOON!

PLEASE NOTE: SOME BRANDS/PRODUCTS ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT ALL STORES. SPECIAL/ADDEDVALUE OFFERS ARE NOT IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER (NICWAOO). ADVERT VALID UNTIL 14/12/2012. E&OE. *THESE STORES ARE FRANCHISED AND OPERATE UNDER A LICENCE AGREEMENT TO SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION.

REAL STORES

Sevenoaks Sound & Vision have stores nationwide - each carries the very best in home cinema and hi-fi equipment on display, ready for you to watch, listen to and compare in our dedicated demonstration rooms.



REAL PEOPLE

Our staff are friendly, knowledgeable and passionate about music and film and the equipment needed to get the most out of your collection. They will be delighted to assist you in making the right selection to ensure you enjoy your system for years to come.



REAL PRODUCTS

A wide selection of products from the world's leading manufacturers is in stock and available for you to take home. We also offer a delivery and installation service as well as a convenient on-line click and reserve option for many of our products.



REAL VALUE

Fantastic value for money is our aim. Although we remain independent, you'll be pleasantly surprised just how competitive we can be - with the added benefit of seeing, hearing and touching the product before you buy, and someone to help if things go wrong.

FOR OUR LATEST PRICES AND OFFERS VISIT WWW.SSAV.COM



CYRUS CD8 SE2 • 6A CD PLAYER / AMPLIFIER
With its impressive 40 Watts per channel and six analogue inputs, the 6a amplifier is a great partner for the CD8 SE2 CD player.



AUDIOLAB 8200CD • 8200A CD / AMPLIFIER
The award-winning 8200CD features a wealth of digital inputs that will keep it playing all your music regardless of how it may be stored.



LEEMA ELEMENTS CD PLAYER / AMPLIFIER
The Elements Series is the latest in the line of Leema high-performance audio equipment.



MARANTZ CD6004 • PM6004 CD / AMPLIFIER
This award-winning CD player and amplifier is the result of extensive research and development by Marantz's engineering team, under the direction of Brand Ambassador Ken Ishiwata.



ROKSAN CASPIAN M2 CD / AMPLIFIER
The M2 amp boasts 85wpc and five line inputs while the matching CD features a 24-bit DAC plus dedicated power supplies for the outputs.



SANSUI SAP201V • CDD201V CD / AMPLIFIER
Sansui returns to the UK with a wide range of hi-fi components including this CD player and 40W integrated amplifier. Available in silver and black finishes.



NAIM SUPERUNITI MUSIC STREAMER
Combines all Naim's experience in integrated amplification and audio streaming into a single casing, the SuperUniti is the reference all-in-one player in the Uniti range.



DENON CEOL RCD-N8 CD NETWORK SYSTEM
Features CD playback and Internet radio along with a USB connection and network capability via its ethernet port or wirelessly.



ARCAM SOLO NEO CD NETWORK SYSTEM
Combines superb music performance, network audio capabilities along with an internal CD player and tuner.



PRO-JECT DEBUT CARBON TURNTABLE
With its Carbon armtube and supplied Ortofon 2m Red cartridge, the Debut Carbon sets new standards in its price range.



REGA RP1 TURNTABLE
Excellent build quality, reliability and ease of use combine to make the RP1 a product that will offer a lifetime of musical enjoyment.



PRO-JECT XPRESSION III TURNTABLE
Features an improved, carbon-fibre tonearm, superior isolation feet and comes supplied complete with a factory-fitted and aligned Ortofon 2M Red cartridge.

QACOUSTICS
2050i / 2020i

The 2050i floorstanders combines excellent build quality with extended bass, clarity, refinement and dynamic ability. While the compact 2020i combines open mid-range, astonishing transient response with exceptional high frequency clarity.



MONITOR AUDIO
GOLD GX

Monitor Audio's new Gold GX speakers use technology that has filtered down from their flagship Platinum PL range. The range comprises two standmounts, two floorstanders, two centre speakers, a pair of surround speakers and a single subwoofer.



BOWERS & WILKINS
PM1

This luxury, compact loudspeaker is the latest in a long line of Bowers & Wilkins audiophile mini monitors. It offers an extremely high-quality audio performance and features several technological innovations including a new tweeter and ground-breaking cabinet design.



TANNOY
REVOLUTION DC6T SE

Award-winning compact, floorstanding speakers featuring Tannoy's unique Dual Concentric™ drive unit along with luxurious real wood finish trapezoidal cabinets.

PMC
TWENTY RANGE

The twenty series is the next generation of elegant, hand-crafted British loudspeakers that follow in the lineage of worldwide acclaimed PMC designs. The 4 models use PMC's innovative ATL™ technology, providing a supremely rich and detailed performance ideally suited to all styles and sizes of interior.

DENON DNP-720AE MUSIC STREAMER

Enjoy a wide variety of internet radio and on-line digital content. The DNP-720AE also supports AirPlay® so that you can stream music from any compatible device.



PIONEER N-50 MUSIC STREAMER

Audiophile Network player supporting AirPlay® and DLNA wireless technologies, allowing you to stream music wirelessly from your iTunes libraries or iOS devices.



SANSUI WLD+201L MUSIC STREAMER

Network Audio Player featuring DLNA wireless technology, DAB+/FM tuner and remote control via iPad, iPhone or iPod Touch with Sansui 'Libretto' control app.



MARANTZ NA7004 MUSIC STREAMER

This AirPlay® compatible player lets you connect to all your favourite music, whether it's from your PC, external hard disc or as an FM / DAB radio station broadcast or even on the other side of the world via Internet Radio.



ROTEL RT-12 MUSIC STREAMER

The RT-12 is an FM and DAB+ preset radio tuner and much more besides. By incorporating network capabilities, the RT-12 access thousands of internet radio broadcasts and play audio files stored on UPnP servers such as Windows computers.



CYRUS STREAMLINE 2
MUSIC STREAMING SYSTEM

Based upon the same platform as the Stream XP2 but it comes complete with a high performance built-in stereo power amplifier.



SONOS • THE WIRELESS HI-FI SYSTEM

Play your digital music all over your house without a PC in every room. The award-winning Sonos 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.



AUDIOQUEST
DRAGONFLY USB DAC

Flash drive sized Digital-Audio Converter that connects to a USB jack on a Mac® or Windows® PC, turning any computer into a true high-fidelity music source.

- Plays all music files: MP3 to 24 bit/192kHz
- Drives headphones directly
- Variable or fixed output for connecting to powered speakers, power amp, pre-amp or amplifier.



ARCAM
rSERIES DACs

These affordable and discreet DACs are an easy way to upgrade the sound quality of almost any digital audio source. The new drDock (right) crams audiophile-grade components into a sturdy cast aluminium casing, along with HDMI-out.



drDOCK	DIGITAL DOCK FOR iFAD / iPHONE / IPOD	£199
rPAC	USB DAC / HEADPHONE AMP	£149
rLINK	OPTICAL / COAXIAL DAC	£149
rBLINK	BLUETOOTH DAC	£159



AUDIOLAB M-DAC

Award-winning DAC featuring a USB input with asynchronous data processing along with two coaxial and optical digital inputs. High-res 24-bit/192kHz music files can be played via its coaxial input.

Please Note: 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 14/12/2012. E&OE.

SEVENoaks
SOUND & VISION

AVAILABLE DIRECT

The Brennan JB7 will change the way you listen to your CD collection - ***forever!***

Now available on the high street, exclusively at **RICHER SOUNDS**



NEW FOR 2012
Download or play music from your iPod

Store, browse and play up to **5000 CDs*** - at the touch of a button!



Built-in hard drive - loading each CD takes **JUST 3 - 4 MINUTES!**



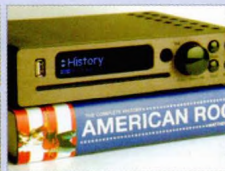
One simple button will play your entire collection at random!



Album and track names are automatically added!



Combines tracks in ways you would never dream of!



No bigger than an average hardback book!



Find the music you want to hear in **SECONDS!**

★ VOTED 'BEST BUY' BY WHAT HI-FI. RECOMMENDED BY GRAMOPHONE MAGAZINE AND SUNDAY TIMES. ★

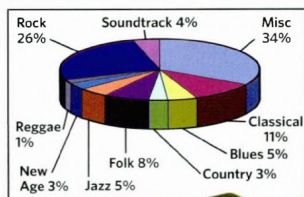
How many CD's do you own and never play? Think of the money they cost, the space they take up.

Well, now thanks to one man's brilliant invention, you'll find yourself listening and falling in love with your music collection all over again.

No more clutter, no more hassle, just every album you've collected over the years, every favourite track - instantly available at the touch of a button. All from something no bigger than a hardback book. The Brennan JB7 will even pick your music for you and play it back in a combination that will surprise, entertain, amuse and even move you in a way you would never have imagined!

"At last I can get rid of the racks of CDs in my living room"

"Quite honestly it's the best thing I've bought in years!"



Massive CD database on the Brennan JB7's hard drive contains the titles of 3.0 million albums including their track names.

- PUT AN END TO YOUR CD CLUTTER
- GAIN VALUABLE SHELF SPACE
- ALL OF YOUR MUSIC AT THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON
- PERFECT FOR ENTERTAINING OR RELAXING TO
- CONTROL FROM YOUR ARMCHAIR
- COMPILE PLAYLISTS QUICKLY AND EASILY
- TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CHEAP CD PRICES

OVER 30,000 ALREADY SOLD!

Martin Brennan



The face behind the Brennan JB7

Martin Brennan has worked with Sir Clive Sinclair and Lord Alan Sugar and has designed over 20 silicon chips in his career. Ever since CDs were invented Martin longed for a CD player that would hold his entire disorganised CD collection.

He wanted something as simple to use as a light switch but at the same time something that would let him find a particular track without leaving his armchair.

In 2006 the record companies said unequivocally that they are happy for you to load your own CDs onto a hard disk but the Advertising Standards Authority have asked us to tell you that it is unlawful to copy material without the permission of the copyright holder. Confused? Find out more and have your say at www.brennan.co.uk.

Additional features: ○ Seven rainbow colour coded playlists ○ Segue function blends one track into the next ○ One touch record from vinyl, cassette or radio ○ Use it with existing hi-fi or on its own ○ Plays MP3 downloads - future proof ○ Credit card size remote control

Buy it, load it, play it and if you still don't love it - WE'LL GIVE YOU YOUR MONEY BACK!

If the Brennan JB7 isn't right for you - gives us a call and we will arrange to come and collect it and give you a full refund - we can even arrange collection from a place of work.

There really is nothing quite like the revolutionary Brennan JB7 for the price. Re-connect with your music **TODAY!**

ALSO AVAILABLE DIRECT. To order visit www.brennan.co.uk

brennan



*See copyright message on the Brennan website

LongDog Audio MCJ2 moving coil phono stage

The near frenzy exhibited these days by those enthusiasts chasing the last gram of performance from vinyl discs, seemingly knows no bounds. Some people seem to be pursuing tweaks and technologies that can, I reckon, only have an effect at the quantum level...

However, as the highly respected electronics and loudspeaker designer Paul McGowan, recently noted. "when you ridicule that which you or others feel and sense but cannot explain, you move farther away from any possibility of understanding." So, I will happily shut up!

The LongDog Audio MCJ2 moving coil phono amplifier aims to exploit the benefits of both solid-state and valve-based designs without suffering their respective perceived flaws. The designer feels that many transistorised phono stages exhibit splashy high frequencies and lack dynamic range, while valve designs tend to have inherent noise problems, or are unstable. Curing this noise can introduce power supply problems or involve using step-up transformers, which can result in smearing and loss of detail. The LongDog MCJ2 aims to provide the best of both worlds by offering the low noise and bass performance of a solid-state unit combined with the dynamics and treble purity of a valve design.

To achieve this, the design employs low-noise Toshiba J-FETs combined with an ECC88 triode in a cascode configuration. This arrangement allows the use of a low-output moving coil cartridge with a valve phono section (with the advantages of high overload margin and treble purity), without the need for any type of step-up transformer, which he strove to avoid. It further employs high grade audio components such as ICW Clarity Cap capacitors and Takman carbon and metal film resistors, and a substantial regulated power supply.

I have to say that I was none too impressed with the way the LongDog was assembled – the casework appeared to have all the sophistication of a kitchen table build and the internal wiring reminded me of some hobbyist amplifier concoction from the nineteen seventies. I was even obliged to dismantle the case to reattach one of the pointed wooden feet that a previous reviewer/blogger had managed to detach, leaving its fixing screw floating about inside the enclosure. The top panel of the case is retained by four small screws that connect with nuts that float inside a channel in the top edge of the extruded side walls. This ensured a whole lot of fiddling about aligning them before clamping the top

panel into place. I hope that future production samples will feature a better arrangement for anyone who needs to venture inside, say, when they are replacing valves.

Sound quality

I tested the LongDog with a Dynavector XX-2 moving coil fitted in my Well Tempered Amadeus turntable/tonerarm combination, connecting it with Atlas Equator interconnects through to my Naim amplifier system and Neat Ultimatum XL10 loudspeakers. The LongDog was reassuringly quiet when idle, with absolutely no hum or noise evident, and the deck and it seemed to work particularly well together on the first album I tried, Joni Mitchell's *Mingus*: they rendered Mitchell's voice on *God Must Be a Boogie Man* sweetly, making her sound natural above the dynamic output of John McLaughlin's guitar, and the equally abrupt, percussive timbre of Stanley Clarke's bass. The same obviously realistic human quality also pervaded the portrayal of the backing vocalists, so it certainly seemed that the 'Dog relished taxing – especially female – vocals, which are so frequently a stumbling point for phono stages.

On Little Feat's wonderful *The Last Record Album*, the 'Dog did a fine job of rendering this dynamic, rhythmically complex music, laying bare and organising the multitude of temporal strands that form its rhythms. It gave a particularly stunning account of the vocals and the stygian bass on *Long Distance Love*. The music displayed real sparkle and verve, a genuine vitality that combined with the naturalness of the vocals to impart a magical energy to the songs on this magnificent album.

The LongDog handled both vocal and timing complexity with rewarding adroitness and ease. With orchestral selections the 'Dog exhibited great tonal and textural honesty. It also portrayed a wide, natural sound stage. The sound had a remarkable integrity along with its vivid, forthright presentation. It also demonstrated the same vocal insight – a rewarding transparency and detail – with the Bach Choir as it did with Little Feat. Overall, the LongDog Audio MCJ2 provided a consistently fine performance. To be fully competitive, though, its build quality would benefit from improvement. **MS**

DETAILS

PRICE: £1,695

CONTACT:
07908 056978

WEBSITE:
LONGDOGAUDIO.COM

OUR VERDICT



Analogue Seduction
where music is our passion



Analogue Seduction are dedicated towards two channel Hi-Fi, specialising in vinyl replay.

As well as our on-line shop we have dedicated demonstration retail facilities based in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire and we can offer our customers home demonstrations.

We stock the finest in amplification, analogue, digital replay and speakers. We also specialise in a cable termination and cable burn in service.

Please visit our website www.analogueseduction.net to browse or purchase products that are not easily available elsewhere.

New vinyl records now stocked

Tel: +44 (0)1733 344768

MCRU
www.mcru.co.uk

f /mcrultd
 @Mainscablesrus

www.mcru.co.uk | Tel: 07908 056978
MUCH MORE THAN JUST CABLES

WIN!!!
HiFiMan
HE-300s



100 200 300 400 500

Like and share MCRU's Facebook Page
 1 Person from the first 500 likes
 will receive a pair of
 HiFiMan HE-300s



HOME CINEMA Choice PRESENTS

HEROES

O F H O M E C I N E M A

ISSUE
ON SALE
Nov 9

IN ASSOCIATION WITH **OPPO** AT THE TOP OF EVERYONE'S SHORTLIST



**THE YEAR'S
 BIGGEST & BEST
 BLU-RAYS &
 DVDS REVEALED!**

**HEROES OF HOME CINEMA IS
 THE INDISPENSABLE YEARBOOK
 FOR ALL FILM FANATICS AND
 AV ENTHUSIASTS**

60 NEW RELEASES
Escape from Space

**WIN A
 LOEWE
 SMART TV
 WORTH OVER
 £2K**



PRE-ORDER YOUR COPY NOW! ONLY £5.99*

Go to: <http://www.myhobbystore.co.uk/heroes>

- From recent 3D blockbusters *Avengers Assembled* and *Prometheus* to restored classics *Jaws* and *Lawrence of Arabia* – more than 150 of the year's hottest Blu-rays and DVDs rated
- Go behind-the-scenes of your favourite films with our in-depth interviews & retrospectives
- From the makers of *Home Cinema Choice* – the UK's only dedicated home cinema magazine

* plus P&P

Analogue Seduction Analogue Studio Vinyl cleaning mat

The Analogue Studio Professional Vinyl Record Cleaning Work Mat from Analogue Seduction is a good solution for cleaning all your records and digital media, including LPs, CD, Blu-ray and DVD discs.

It is best not to clean a record with a cloth while it is on the turntable, as you will be applying a sideways force to the central bearing while wiping the record. Instead, place the record on this Cleaning Work Mat and wipe around the record in the direction of the groove before playing.

The mat is supplied in a surprisingly compact box, which led me to expect the mat to be folded up inside. Not so! When I unpacked the mat, I found that it was in the form of a jigsaw and had to be assembled before use! My heart sank as I have memories of being given jigsaws as a child – I never could really see the point! Why take a perfectly good picture, cut it up into thousands of tiny pieces and then have to put it together again? However, fear not as there are only five pieces to assemble and it is very easy to do, even without having the completed picture printed on the front of the box!

In use

Two spindle sizes are on the mat – one for records and the other for CDs and DVDs. Made from a soft, velvet-like material to protect your discs, this cleaning mat will securely hold the disc in place while you do your vinyl ablutions. It's suitable for wet or dry cleaning, by the way. Oh, and that jigsaw design is really a great idea – full marks to Analogue Seduction! **NR**



DETAILS

PRICE: £12.98

CONTACT:
01733 350878

WEBSITE:
ANALOGUE
SEDUCTION.NET

OUR VERDICT



Russ Andrews X2 Block with Silencer



The Russ Andrews X2 Block with Silencer is a mains extension unit designed for people who have a fairly minimal system – for example, just a CD player and integrated amp – but want an extension box of the quality of Russ Andrews' mains PowerBlocks without requiring eight sockets. It is an extension block with two sockets, complete with built-in mains noise suppression. As well as audiophile applications, it's also good for computers, as it comes with built-in mains filtering and surge protection.

This block is fitted with a 10A IEC input socket to allow you to connect your choice of mains cable, or one can be supplied at extra cost. My review sample was supplied with a Kimber PowerMax Plus cable that sells for £49.95. It is fitted with the Russ Andrews Silencer mains filter and Super-Clamp surge protection systems and there is the option to have its ClarityMains filter and MegaClamp circuitry added at extra cost for additional mains filtration and better spike and surge protection. It is fitted with high performance, high contact pressure mains sockets, fully nickel-plated contacts and each socket is independently wired with Kimber TCX cable as standard. Overall fit and finish of this item was to Russ Andrews' usual high standards.

In use

Of course, the performance of products such as these depends very much on the individual circumstances of the listener – some have very dirty mains, others not. Still, in my system this block worked very effectively, giving a smoother and more relaxed sound compared to a cheapo IKEA mains distribution box. **NR**

DETAILS

PRICE: £165
(WITHOUT
MAINS LEAD)

CONTACT:
01539 797300

WEBSITE:
RUSSANDREWS.
COM

OUR VERDICT



Performance Promotions



Exchange your old Arcam BDP100 &

Save 50%

Trade-up to a New BDP300 for £499

Major benefits include: Faster load time, better 3D- video and audio performance, new five year warranty
Also Consider: Our Arcam AVR400 Promotion. Trade in any AV receiver & Claim £400 Allowance against a new AVR400 Receiver and up to 10 months with nothing to Pay. - Include the above for a real super deal. See our website for details



Linn LK Promotion - Trade in your Old LK

Save 15%

on your new Linn replacement
See website or call for details

Refresh & Renew your Akurate DS to current spec for £1500
Use your old board in a Renew case to get an additional room



Please call or see website for details



naim Hi-line and Power-line Promotion

Trade in your old Naim for a new Naim Uniti or Classic model & claim a FREE Power-line or Hi-line worth up to £615 - get even better performance

The Hi-line or Power-line is a fantastic upgrade in its own right. Have a dem, hear for yourself and choose the one that suits you. Call us now.

www.billyvee.co.uk

See our website for Current Promotions, ex-demonstration and special offers



Speaker Recycling Promo

Trade in your old speakers and claim up to
20% against a New Pair

Choose a brand new pair of speakers to give your system a real boost this Autumn and claim up to 20% allowance trade in against your old pair - runs until Dec 31st
Brands - B&W (CM & 800 series) - Linn - Naim - PMC - ProAc - Spendor
Buy now and pay in 2013 with deferred credit - Please call or see website for details

Billy Vee
SOUND • SYSTEMS

020 8318 5755

020 8852 1321

email enquiry: info@billyvee.co.uk

248 Lee High Road, Lewisham, London SE13 5PL (Mon - Sat 10am - 6.30pm Closed Thursday)

Atlas Mavros 2 cable



This cable comes wired with four conductors, two with 385 strands of crystal-less Ohno Continuous Cast Copper and two solid 1.5 square mm OCC conductors, all with high quality Micro-porous Teflon dielectrics. Despite being terminated with bulky Rhodium-plated expanding plugs, they are simple to install.

Sound quality

The Mavros produces a natural perspective on music, sounding authoritative and open, offering fine insight without appearing clinically detailed. The sound improves further after a run-in of around a week, a process encouraged by the manufacturer which provides a CD for this purpose in the box. Once run-in, it gives a balanced presentation that's exceptionally easy on the ear. On Jaco Pastorius' eponymous album, music sounded fast and responsive, with fine resolution of leading edges and the decay of notes, along with excellent detailing of instruments at the back of the mix, and fine overall dynamic contrast.

The cable also offered an admirable recreation of the ambient detail on Hot Tuna's *Uncle Sam's Blues* which proved the dynamic prowess of the cable. Its finest achievement however, was conveying the poetic, lyrical quality of Jorma Kaukonen's acoustic guitar playing and the solid underpinning provided by Jack Casady's fluid contributions on bass.

Tonally even-handed with robust bass, delicate highs and a communicative midrange, Atlas's admittedly very expensive Mavros 2 cable gives a natural sense of dynamic contrast. **MS**

DETAILS
PRICE: £499.95
CONTACT:
01563 572666
WEBSITE:
ATLASCABLES.COM

OUR VERDICT
★★★★★

Pure Move 2500

DAB radios are getting better. Until recently many used up to five times as much power as AM/FM radios, but the latest ones are a lot less juicy. Poor signal reception remains a real issue, but the newest chipsets have more sensitive front ends. That annoying 'bubbling mud' sound when the signal drops out, has become less of an issue...

Pure's freshly facelifted Move 2500 gets a new paint job and brushed metal backplate. It plays DAB/DAB+/DMB-R (Band III and L-Band) and FM (RDS), meaning it's pretty versatile, and sports a built-in rechargeable battery, with a micro USB charger supplied. At 102x56x15mm, it's small enough to fit into a breast or trouser pocket, but it doesn't amaze with its compactness, as – say – the new iPod Nano does. It weighs 105g, which isn't too intrusive on the move, but then again is hardly sylph-like by modern standards. The orange backlit LC display is very easy to read, although by Retina standards it's positively prehistoric.

On the move, it gives decent sound and doesn't drop out much. In poor reception areas, using the supplied headphones as an aerial, the Move 2500 ekes out a signal way better than its PocketDAB predecessors used to, making it a practical proposition for more people than before. The long battery life of around twelve hours, helps too.

Downsides? Well, don't expect sonic wireworks. Nor does it win any prizes for style, and the metal body scratches and marks too easily – PURE's new gel case (£10) is a worthwhile investment. Overall though, it does its job more effectively than expected. Worth investigating, then. **ES**

DETAILS
PRICE: £79.95
WEBSITE:
PURE.COM

OUR VERDICT
★★★★★





High End Cable

www.highendcable.co.uk

Call Dave Jackson on 01775 761880

Top Brands

Acoustic ART
 Acoustic Systems
 Analysis Plus
 Argento Audio
 Audience
 Chord Company
 Dynamique Audio
 Ecosse
 Furutech
 Leif Series
 Michael Green Audio
 Nordost Corporation
 Leif | Norse2 | Reference
 Olive HD Servers
 Quantum QRT
 Raidho Acoustics
 Revelation Audio Labs
 Purist Audio Design
 StereoLab
 Synergistic Research
 STAX
 Telos
 Townshend Audio
 van den Hul

Power Conditioning

Audience adeptResponse
 Isotek
 Quantum QRT
 QBase

Accessories

Power supply upgrade
 Fuses
 Telos caps
 ECO

Enhancement CDs

Treatment

Room treatment
 Acoustic Art
 Room Tuning Resonators
 DecoTune
 RoomTune RoomPak
 RoomTune Squares
 MiG's
 Sort Kones
 Pulsar points
 Quasar points

Equipment

Raidho Acoustics
 Bel Canto
 STAX headphones
 Olive HD Servers

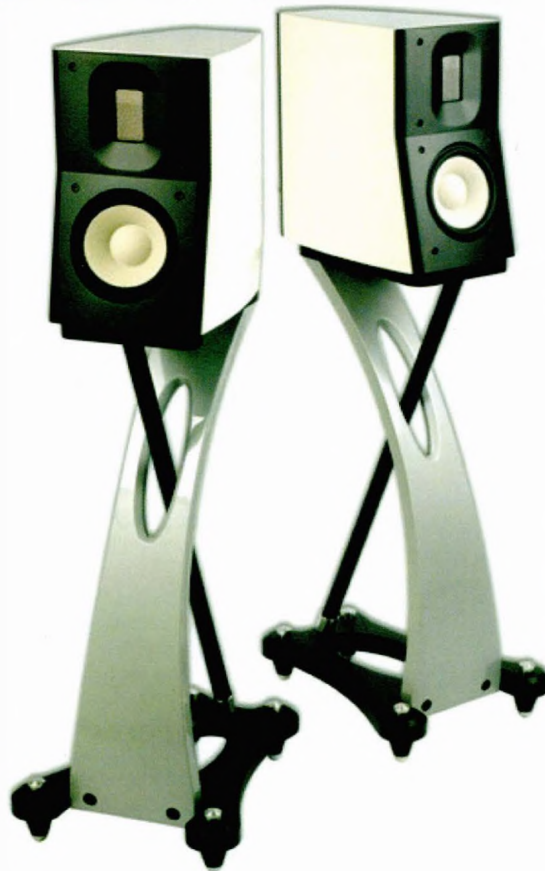
Also

DIN cables
 Jumpers
 Firewire

Cables for dCS

Sub woofer cables
 HDMI
 Digital cables
 Optical cables
 S video
 Component cables
 ipod cables

Second hand and brand new end of line bargains



Raidho C1.1 is a small, neatly perfectly proportioned loudspeaker. In spite of its limited size, the sound it produces is surprising at first, but harmonious at the same time. This model was developed on the basis of recognised theories of dimension, which Raidho put in practice to produce a beautiful cabinet, carried out in every detail, and superbly finished. The C1.1 is put together from hand-made units built from Raidho's Acoustic's patented technologies. Available in Black, White or Walnut burl finishes.

The two-piece baffle is made from 20mm aluminium with each driver assembled directly onto its rear face. The C1.1 is a new breed of small loudspeakers that uncompromisingly let you hear what your system and the musicians can do. Simply listen to a Raidho C1.1 for an impressive experience.

See what the great and good are saying about of the C1.1

"This emotional range is one of the last great frontiers in hi-fi -- and the C1.1s break new ground. At a time when systems in general and loudspeakers in particular seem to play things ever safer, opting for flat frequency response, resolution or some other technical parameter, at the expense of musical expression and involvement, the C1.1s are a welcome breath of fresh air. The challenge they represent for listeners comes in the form of a question, "Do you want to play it safe or are you feeling adventurous; do you want music to confirm what you already know or become a voyage of discovery?" Think carefully, because the wrong answer will generally prove expensive -- even if it might have seemed like the "safe" solution at the time. If it's adventure you want (or need), look no further than the C1.1s. Believe me, they'll take you on quite a trip!" **Audio Beat Jan 09 2012 an article by Roy Gregory**

"But for me the real star of the Show was the revised Raidho C1.1 bookshelf loudspeaker. There are subtle changes between this model and its C1.0 predecessor, but it took about a nanosecond to realise you were in the presence of greatness, even given the lofty company and its over-achieving predecessor. Alan Sircom's CES 2012 Show report issue 86 Hi-fi Plus

"the C1.1's were simply sensational" ... "had these two-way stand-mount speakers fallen within my purview, I would have nominated them for Best Sound of Show" Jonathan Valin from Absolute Sound at CES 2012. Who has since awarded the C1.1 The Absolute Sound's Golden Ear award

Call today to trade up to a Raidho C1.1 — Call 01775 761880



La Boite Concept LD120

Over the years, *Hi-Fi Choice* has reviewed literally hundreds of pairs of loudspeakers. In the same period, a considerable amount of furniture – albeit items normally dedicated to supporting equipment rather than people – has also passed through these same pages. As far as I know however, this august journal has never reviewed a product that combines the attributes of both. Until now, that is!

LaBoite is a French company with a range of products designed to combine furniture with loudspeakers. Yes, it's an unusual concept to get your head round upon first contemplation, but the more you think about it, the more it makes sense. The £870 LD120 you see here is the middle of the three models, and is a relatively narrow (770x570x520mm) writing desk that conceals no less than seven loudspeaker driver units within its body! Two other desks and a truly extraordinary looking integrated console called La Premiere are also available. Ooh la la!

The seven drivers of the LD120 occupy three sides of the main body. The most visible are the four forward firing units, which point at the person sat at the desk. These comprise two ten centimetre paper mid/bass drivers and a pair of soft dome tweeters. These provide the bulk of the sound output from the LD120, but as the drivers essentially point at your groin, a smaller pair of drivers is fitted at the back of the desk at an angle designed to reflect effects against the wall and back to the listener. Finally, a single bass driver mounted on the underside of the unit gives the LD120 some extra low end shove.

La Boite claims a figure of 120 watts of total amplification for the LD120, but this is not evenly distributed across the speakers. Indeed the bulk of the output comes from the four drivers at the front and the sub. LaBoite has incorporated its proprietary 'Wide Sound' technology that is intended to give the LD120 more stereo width, and consistent sound if you're moving around it.

As an object the LD120 is undeniably rather attractive. The review sample came with the sides and legs finished in red lacquer, which avoids the whole thing looking a little dark. The desktop itself is a decent grade of leather with the controls sited towards the back on an acrylic plate. I think it looks pretty smart in a sort of retro-futuristic way that seems to be all the rage at the moment. The French seem to have this sort of aesthetic down to a fine art...

Sound quality

The LD120 is fitted with analogue inputs, but as the intention according to LaBoite is to connect a laptop over USB and work and listen at the same time, this is what I did. The USB input seems to be a conventional USB 1.0 type but this proved sufficient for lossless FLAC via Songbird. The initial effect of listening to the LD120 is undoubtedly a little curious. The position you assume

is extremely near-field but with drivers that are aligned some way from the ear. The effect sounds a little off axis, although less than you might expect presumably thanks to the 'Wide Sound' technology – and if you are working on the laptop at the time (and it is after all a desk), you can find yourself with your ears placed over or even behind the placement of the speakers.

After you adjust to this, and take some care to ensure the LD120 is reasonably close to a wall, the effect is pretty good. As you might expect from a floorstanding desk, the LaBoite has plenty of headroom, and in more than one sense of the word. And that large driver on the underside gives surprising bass extension too. 'Wide Sound' or not, the level of stereo separation is not enormous but the effect is no narrower than a typical example of desktop audio. Tonality is good too; voices sound believable and there is plenty of detail. Pushed hard it can sound a little coarse and distort a little but given how close to the drivers you are, this is a higher level than I can see most people going for.

So what to make of the La Boite LD120? Well of course, realistically, it isn't a competitor to a traditional hi-fi system. But if you were looking at the various desktop audio products and then decided to consider a desk at the same time, it's a potentially entertaining solution. It actually sounds rather appealing, looks good and proved comfortable to work at as well. Not exactly a product for every *Hi-Fi Choice* reader perhaps, but it actually functions better than you'd think. So if you're trying to put a bit more life in your work/life balance, the LD120 could be just the ticket. **ES**

► DETAILS

PRICE: £870

WEBSITE:

LABOITE
CONCEPT.COM

OUR VERDICT



Connect your system with PowerLink Plus™

60 Day Home Trial

NEW!

MUSICALITY
RA
EXCLUSIVE
BUILT IN

High-pressure, large contact surface area sockets to ensure an effective mains connection

Optional PowerMax Plus™ - our entry level mains cable made with KIMBER KABLE

Low-profile tough black anodised aluminium casework 'disappears' visually behind your equipment rack

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION



Sept 08
PowerMax Plus
mains cable

IEC input socket allows the use of your choice of mains cable

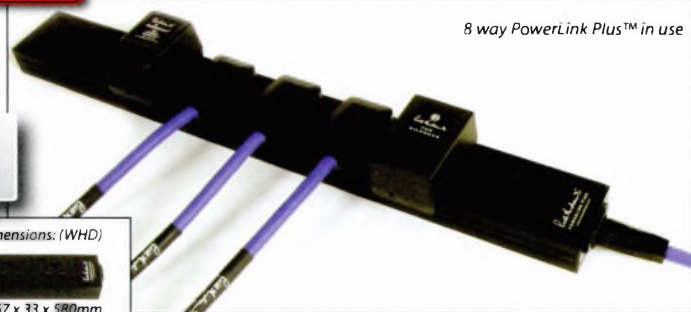
We all need to use a mains extension but our tests have shown that its quality can have a direct bearing on the sound and pictures you enjoy.

Our new mains extension, **PowerLink Plus™**, has your choice of four, six, or eight high-performance sockets. All the investment has gone into the quality of construction which is designed to give an effective mains connection for all systems. If you've yet to upgrade your extension we believe it's one of the easiest and most effective upgrades you can make.

Where should I use it?

Any level of Hi-Fi or Home Cinema system can benefit from an improved connection to the mains. PowerLink Plus™ is ideal for mini systems, budget, mid-range and even high-end Hi-Fi systems and Home Cinema systems.

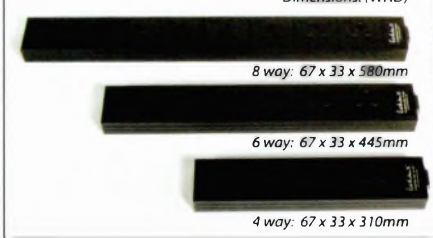
NEW!



8 way PowerLink Plus™ in use

Choice of four, six or eight 13A high-pressure sockets

Dimensions: (WHD)



8 way: 67 x 33 x 580mm

6 way: 67 x 33 x 445mm

4 way: 67 x 33 x 310mm

SAVE 10% on a PowerMax Plus™ mains cable when you buy both together

New catalogue out NOW!

92 pages packed with cables and accessories designed to give you the best from your Hi-Fi & Home Cinema, request your copy now.



POWERLINK PLUS™
mains extension only Code 1167
4 way £75.00
6 way £93.00
8 way £111.00

POWERLINK PLUS™
with 1m PowerMax Plus™ Code 1167
4 way £121.75
6 way £139.75
8 way £157.75

Order now on **01539 797300** or visit www.russandrews.com/powerlink



Russ Andrews Accessories Ltd, 2b Moreland Court,
Westmorland Business Park, Shap Road, Kendal, LA9 6NS, UK.
Tel: +44 (0)1539 797300 Email: info@russandrews.com

Exclusive UK Retailer for



Russ Andrews®

Mail Order Direct • 60 Day Cable Home Trial • Cable Upgrade Scheme • Free Delivery (orders over £100 within UK Mainland)

ISOkinetik ISOlevel 45rpm spirit level

Any item of hi-fi that spins a disc, whether it is a Compact Disc, DVD or Long Playing record, requires it to be perfectly level to perform at its best. The hardest piece of equipment to get right is the turntable – especially those that have the platter supported on a sprung subplatter. Both the tonearm and the platter will be mechanically aligned in the turntable and if the turntable is tilted in any way, then the tonearm will be tilted too. Given that it is gravity that provides the downward force on the stylus, any tilt will generally result in an unequal force being applied to both sides of the groove – highly undesirable! Therefore, the only way to set up a turntable is to use a spirit level that is designed for the purpose and fits over the central spindle. One such device is the ISOlevel 45rpm from ISOkinetik.

This little widget is beautifully engineered with a one-piece construction manufactured in aluminium. The top has a recess that houses the spirit level and the lower section is flared outwards to act as a useful 45rpm adaptor for all those ex-juke-box singles in your record collection! The device has a hole in the base that sits comfortably over the central spindle of your turntable.

In use

When using the device, it's important to ensure that the turntable is stationary with no record fitted, to eliminate any inaccuracies in an LP that may affect the reading. Then you simply view the bubble in the top and ensure it is perfectly central within the black circle engraved on the surface. Job done. The ISOkinetik ISOlevel is nicely finished and makes one of the most important aspects of setting up your turntable a breeze. Recommended then, although there are other such designs offering keener value for money. **NR**



DETAILS

PRICE: £24.99
CONTACT:
020 8241 8890
WEBSITE:
CABEZON.EU

OUR VERDICT



Audience Conductor 'e' RCA interconnect



Audience was formed in 1997 in the United States, and has now established itself in the audiophile world as a manufacturer of high-end products, including Auricap capacitors, power conditioners and the Auric Illuminator optical disc treatment and cleaner. The Audience Conductor 'e' interconnect cables are the 'enhanced' version of the high performance to price ratio, entry level Conductor audio cables.

As with all the cables manufactured by Audience, the Conductor line is designed for low eddy-current resistance, because it is one of the most important qualities in high-resolution audio and video cables.

One of the design philosophies behind its cables is simplicity in the physical design and this is clearly demonstrated by the straightforward construction of the gold-plated RCA phono connectors. The connectors are physically held in place with heatshrink sleeving giving them a very slender and sleek appearance. The Conductor 'e' interconnect cables are also very flexible making them easy to install in tight spaces.

In use

After the required burn-in time, I tested the cables with a variety of different music. I have to say I really liked the sound of these interconnects. They produced a clean and well-defined sound where the music flowed effortlessly. They have the ability to convey instruments in a natural way and full orchestras sounded well-balanced. The Audience's Conductor 'e' interconnects are a delight and I thoroughly recommend that you audition them. **NR**

DETAILS

PRICE: £235
(IM PAIR)
CONTACT:
01775 761880
WEBSITE:
HIGHENDCABLE.
CO.UK

OUR VERDICT



award-winning high performance analogue, digital & video cables

www.atlascables.com

ATLAS[®]

Equator Asymmetrical Integra



Atlas understands the meaning of uncompromising performance. Is the Atlas Equator asymmetrical the best interconnect on the market? It sure is at its price! A consistent winner, the Equator Integra is obviously the entry level audio interconnect for discerning music lovers.

Need some advice on choosing the best cables?
Call us free on
0800 731 1140

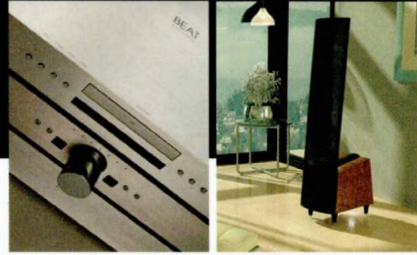
ATLAS Cables

e: J.Carrick@atlascables.com

www.atlascables.com

AUDIO DESTINATION

The Finest Audio Products



Owned by husband and wife team: Mike & Caroline - Audio Destination is not your typical Hi-Fi specialist

Audio Destination brings together a range of only the finest audio products and places them in comfortable and relaxed surroundings.

- Tuesday - Friday 9am - 5pm
- Saturday 9am - 4pm
- Demonstration Rooms
- Long-term customer support and care
- Large selection of famous brands

We look forward to seeing you

Call +44 (0)1884 243 584

www.audiodestination.co.uk
email: info@audiodestination.co.uk
Audio Destination, Suite 7a Market Walk,
Tiverton, Devon EX16 6BL

DRIVERS:

- ▶ ATC
- ▶ AUDAX
- ▶ ETON
- ▶ FOSTEX
- ▶ LPG ▶ MAX FIDELITY
- ▶ MOREL ▶ PEERLESS
- ▶ SCAN-SPEAK ▶ SEAS
- ▶ SILVER FLUTE
- ▶ VIFA ▶ VISATON
- ▶ VOLT



SOLENS CAPACITORS AND INDUCTORS - USED BY THE MOST DISCRIMINATING LOUDSPEAKER MANUFACTURERS.

HARDWARE

HOW TO BOOKS

Contact us for the free Solen CDROM Catalog.

FREE!



SOLENS

4470 Avenue Thibault
St-Hubert, QC, J3Y 7T9 Canada

Tel: 450.656.2759
Fax: 450.443.4949
Email: solen@solen.ca
Web: www.solen.ca

HIFI CHOICE ADVERTISERS INDEX

AUDIO RESEARCH	2
AVID HI-FI	11
BOSTON ACOUSTICS	13
KEF	15
DALI	18
OPPO	20
MONITOR AUDIO	22
CABASSE	24
PRIMARE	26
ARCAM	28
MARTIN LOGAN	30
NAIM AUDIO	32
CYRUS AUDIO	34
AUDIO VECTOR	36
HEED	38
REAL HIFI	40
FURUTECH	44
MUSICAL FIDELITY	46
COHERENT SYSTEMS	55
ROKSAN	59
BOWERS & WILKINS	65
PMC	69
THE RIGHT NOTE	70
PJ HI-FI	78
BASICALLY SOUND & VISION	80
DESIGN BUILD LISTEN	80
TELLERIUM Q	80
SPENDOR	82
T+A	84
THE SOUND GALLERY	86
INSPIRE HIFI	93
HI-FI SOUND	94
BRENNAN	110
ANALOGUE SEDUCTION	112
MAINS CABLES R US	112
BILLY VEE	114
HIGH END CABLE	116
RUSS ANDREWS	118
ATLAS CABLES	120
AUDIO DESTINATION	120
SOLENS ELECTRONIQUE	120
EMPORIUM HI-FI	122
VICKERS HI-FI	122
AUDIO EMOTION	131
ICON AUDIO	104, 105
SEVENOAKS SOUND & VISION	107, 108, 109
JORDAN ACOUSTICS	4, 5
PRO-JECT	42, 63
VERTERE	48, 49
GUILDFORD AUDIO	76, 77
RAYLEIGH HI-FI	88, 89

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CALL

SONIA LAWRENCE

01689 869899

sonia.lawrence@myhobbystore.com

Harman/Kardon BT headphone

With the release of Apt X Bluetooth, the format is now capable of lossless transmission without compression and Bluetooth headphones are now credible pieces of hi-fi. The logically named BT is the latest such offering from Harman Kardon and is both Bluetooth capable with a forty hour battery life in this configuration, but can also run wired when you run out of battery or use a device that isn't Bluetooth capable.

The BT is a handsome bit of kit. The square earpads and steel headband are lovely design touches and it feels very well assembled. None of this is design over function either. The BT is comfortable to wear for extended periods and the square earpads are a decent fit around most human ears and there is a good level of grip on the side of your head. Basic volume and track skip and scan functions are mounted on the left hand earpad. These aren't the largest buttons going but become pretty easy to use after a while.

Sound quality

Sonically, the BT is very capable too. Developed in partnership with fellow Harman brand AKG, the sonic balance is commendably detailed and neutral. The BT has a very open presentation that manages to extract a considerable amount of detail and create an impressive sense of soundstage as well, which is not always a given with headphones. Timing is good and there is a pleasing sense of agility to performance. Bass is not as seismic as some of the competition but is detailed and tight.

Performance over Bluetooth is broadly similar to the wired connection and connection is simple and stable. There is a very slight increase in background noise, but nothing too serious at normal listening levels. If you are looking for a versatile all rounder with a very handsome appearance, you would do well to check them out. **ES**



DETAILS

PRICE: £220
CONTACT:
01707 278100
WEBSITE:
HARMANKARDON.
COM

OUR VERDICT



Ferrari by Logic3 T250 headphone

Of course, it's not everyday that Ferrari lets you use its name on one of your products, so due respect to Logic3 for pulling off what's surely impressive feat. The Italian supercar manufacturer is protective of its brand, and doesn't just associate it with anyone. For example, in the audio arena, the last hi-fi brand linked with the Maranello company was no less than Meridian. The other side of this however is that – precisely because Ferrari doesn't have any audiophile provenance – some may suspect the likes of the T250 to be nothing more than a designer branding exercise.

It's certainly a luxurious product, with a nice aluminium chassis and lambskin faced ear cups and headband. It makes for a very comfy fit, with soft ear pads said to be constructed from breathable materials. The phone folds up neatly for stowage and/or transport, and includes a Ferrari Cavallino carry case. The detachable woven fabric cable has a classy feel and doesn't introduce undue noise. A 3-button remote with microphone is included for Appleistas. A 6.3mm jack socket is standard, with an aeroplane adaptor. Overall finish is to a high standard, if not quite the very best.

Sound quality

Somewhat unusually, the T250 is a closed back design, sporting 40mm drive units. Frequency response is a claimed 20Hz-20kHz, impedance a quoted 32 Ohms, and sensitivity is said to be 110dB at 1kHz/1mW. I found this headphone to be rather dull sounding overall. It's got a nice, tight bass and a pretty smooth and civilised midband, but compared to reference quality designs such as Philips' Fidelio X1, it lacked sparkle and shine.

The music sounded a little drab and didn't have the degree of insight one would have expected at the price. A nicely presented, but rather under-performing design. **ES**



DETAILS

PRICE: £249
CONTACT:
01923 471 010
WEBSITE:
FERRARI-BY-
LOGIC3.COM

OUR VERDICT



Emporiumhifi

www.emporiumhifi.com

AUTHORISED DEALERS

A.M.R - AUDION - AUDIO NOTE - AIR TIGHT - CARDAS - CONRAD JOHNSON - BENZ - KUZMA - SUGDEN - PASS LABS - SME - FUNK FIRM - ORIGIN LIVE - LUXMAN - MICHELL - NIGHTINGALE - VIVA AUDIO - LECTOR - PURESOUND - LYRA - ORTOFON - USHER - STERLING BROADCAST - NVO - PROMITHEUS.
PLUS MANY MORE.

We are actively seeking to purchase all used quality HiFi NOW!
From complete systems to individual items.

WE BUY

AUDIO NOTE - AUDIO RESEARCH - KRELL - CONRAD JOHNSON - SONUS FABER - COPLAND - MARTIN LOGAN - APOGEE - MICHELL - SME - MERIDIAN - LINN - NAIM - AUDIO INNOVATIONS - AUDION - PINK TRIANGLE - PROAC - TUBE TECHNOLOGY - DIAPASON - UNISON RESEARCH - CHARIO - CLASSE - BRYSTON - REGA - LFD
& MANY OTHER BRANDS.

We offer a Part-Exchange facility on all stock items

CONTACT US NOW FOR INSTANT QUOTES

HEAD OFFICE **KENT** **WALES** **MIDLANDS**
01986 895929 - 01304 239419 - 01554 750262 - 01213 466043

Audiolab
Audioquest
Chord Electronics
Cyrus
Dali
Marantz
Michell
Mission
Monitor Audio
NAD
Olive
Opera
Origin-Live
Pathos
Pioneer
Primare
Pro-Ac
Project
Quad
Ruark-Audio
Roksan
Shanling
SME
Sonos
Sugden
Tannoy
Teac
Trichord
Unison Research
Wharfedale
& more...

VICKERS HI-FI

High Fidelity Specialists Since 1967

New... 7,500 sq ft. Store...



8 Concorde Park, Amy Johnson Way, Clifton Moor, York YO30 4WT Tel : 01904 - 691600

" One of the Best Hi-Fi shops in the Country is right here in York "

- ▶ Quality Hi-Fi Separates from £100 to £10,000
- ▶ Over 45 years Experience ▶ Widest Choice in the Area
- ▶ Superb Air Conditioned Demonstration Rooms
- ▶ Free Customer Car Park ▶ Wheelchair Friendly
- ▶ Independent Advice from Experienced & Qualified Staff
- ▶ Open 10:30am - 5:30pm 6 days: Mon. to Sat.
- ▶ Up to 3 years Interest Free Credit* just 20% deposit *Subject to Status



www.Vickers-HiFi.co.uk



...The Award Winning North of England Hi-Fi Specialists

Swinsian for Mac OSX

With the imminent arrival of iTunes 11, and its semi-radical interface redesign, those who cleave to the historical look of the library tool over the last ten years may well soon be looking for the likes of Swinsian – obviously iTunes ‘inspired’, but music-specialised and simple, designed for large libraries, supporting open codecs, but retaining Apple integration.

We have gone through many Mac-based alternatives to iTunes in our reviews, for their sophisticated approaches to negotiating a decent quality computer audio route out of the machine. However these programs sometimes (probably rightfully) neglect the possibilities of running an iPod away from iTunes.

This is never *that* easy a thing to do, due to the widespread use of non-Apple formats such as FLAC and the iPod manufacturer’s tendency to lock everything down. As such, if you’re interested in the iPod/iPhone possibilities of this app, it is worth checking the developer’s FAQ on the website. There you will find plain language explanations of what it can and can’t do for your particular case. There’s also a useful guide to the possibilities of using AppleScript with Swinsian.

Preferences include podcasts and last.fm integration, watch folders and transcoding options for going from FLAC or other codecs to iPod-compatible ones. Swinsian also joins the lifestyle Apple world by giving the option of selecting Airplay as an audio output. And the name? Apparently Swinsian is Old English for ‘to make a pleasing sound, make melody or music!’ Who knew? **PC**

▶ **DETAILS**
PRICE: £12.77
WEBSITE:
SWINSIAN.COM

OUR VERDICT



DOWNLOAD



Picture courtesy of Apple

BBC iPlayer Radio for iOS

Although I am not a significant user of the iPlayer, as a recent convert to Internet radio I found the news that the corporation was splitting out radio provision from the TV service very interesting.

They have been in this game for some time now, so we have come to expect attractive and streamlined interfaces, and that’s precisely what we get here. Frustratingly there’s no iPad resolution version, so we have to be content with a 2x blow up of the iPhone design, but it still works very well and appears colourful and detailed enough on the Retina Screen.

Key innovations include giving easy access to all the regional variations – UK national services are available on the selection wheel that forms the front page, and the local services button requires access to your location from the device to offer you your most appropriate local services. Once on a station you can rotate the device to landscape to see the full schedule, or lift up the programme identifier to access weblinks to various programme-related information.

There is a search tab that delivers a tidy list of shows with their thumbnail stills, and the podcast tab is similar. Finally there is an alarms tab where you can also manage reminders for favourite shows. Adaptive streaming can be over 3G and Wi-Fi and the sound quality is good – regrettably there is still no download option. However show tracklist information can be selectively saved for later perusal and emailing to self. Ingenious! **PC**

▶ **DETAILS**
PRICE: £FREE
WEBSITE:
BBC.CO.UK/
RADIO

OUR VERDICT



DOWNLOAD



Picture courtesy of Apple



Hi-Fi Choice

PASSION FOR SOUND

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor David Price, david.price@hifichoice.co.uk
Production Editor Richard Holliss, richard.holliss@hifichoice.co.uk
Art Editor Paul Godfrey
Group Art Editor John Rook, john.rook@myhobbystore.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Simon Berkovitch, Patrick Cleasby, Tim Jarman, Jason Kennedy, Dave Oliver, James Michael Hughes, Neville Roberts, Ed Selley, Channa Vithana, Nigel Williamson

ADVERTISING

Senior Advertising Executive Jack O'Sullivan
Tel: 0844 848 5245
Email: jack.o.sullivan@myhobbystore.com
Advertising Manager Sonia Lawrence
Tel: 01689 869 899
Email: sonia.lawrence@myhobbystore.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions Manager Paul Moynneux
 UK - New, Renewals & Enquiries
Tel: 08456 777 807 **Email:** hifichoice@subscription.co.uk
 USA & CANADA - New, Renewals & Enquiries
Tel: (001) 877 363 1310 **Email:** expsmag@expressmag.com
 REST OF WORLD - New, Renewals & Enquiries
Tel: +44 (0) 8456 777 807

BACK ISSUES

Tel: 0844 848 8822
From outside the UK: +44 (0) 1689 869896
Email: customer.services@myhobbystore.com

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Group Editor Paul Miller, paul.miller@avtechmedia.co.uk
Group Sales Manager Duncan Armstrong
Head of Design & Production Julie Miller
Ecommerce Manager Amanda Lee
Chief Executive Owen Davies
Chairman Peter Harkness

Published by MyHobbyStore Ltd.
 Hadlow House, 9 High Street, Green Street Green, Orpington, Kent, BR6 6BG

Email: customer.services@myhobbystore.com
Tel: 0844 412 2262
From outside the UK: +44 (0)1689 869896
www.myhobbystore.com

Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd.



Published by MyHobbyStore Ltd. All rights reserved. 2012. ISSN 0959-1115. Periodicals paid at Green House, NJ. The Publisher's written consent must be obtained before any part of this publication may be reproduced in any form whatsoever, including photocopying, and information systems. All responsibility is taken in the preparation of the magazine contents, but the publishers cannot be held legally responsible for errors in the contents of this magazine or for any loss however arising from such errors, including loss resulting from negligence of our staff. Reserver placed upon the contents of this magazine is at reader's own risk.

Hi-Fi Choice ISSN 0959-1115 is published monthly 12 times per year by MyHobbyStore Ltd, c/o AVTech Media Group, One Corp, at 19 Power Court Way Suite 515, Marlborough, NY 12540. Periodicals Postage paid at Marlborough, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Hi-Fi Choice c/o Express Mag, P.O. Box 2769, Marlborough, NY 12540-2769.



When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

If you can't always find a copy of this magazine, help is at hand! Complete this form and hand in at your local store, they'll arrange for a copy of each issue to be reserved for you. Some stores may even be able to arrange for it to be delivered to your home. Just ask! *Subject to availability*



Please reserve/deliver my copy of on a regular basis, starting with issue

Title _____ First name _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone number _____

If you don't want to miss an issue



Next month

ACOUSTIC SOLID 111

CAN THIS MID-PRICE GERMAN VINYL SPINNER upset the Brit turntable pack? We decide...



KEF R300

SUPER SUB-£1,000 STANDMOUNT SPEAKER from one of Britain's biggest brands

RETRO: LECSON AC1/AP1

One of the most beautiful pre-power amplifier packages, this classic combination gets an affectionate look back...



ALSO:

Micromega MyDAC digital convertor, YBA WA202 receiver, phono stage *Blind Listening Group Test* and *Choice Extras* accessories section...

PLUS: your system buying and upgrading queries answered, all the latest hi-fi industry news, views and comment and the month's finest new audiophile music releases...
JANUARY 2013 ON SALE THURSDAY 6 DECEMBER 2012

15 AUDIO

SE

Churchward Court, 15 Western Road,
Lewes BN7 1RL

☎ 08448 221115
☐ www.15audio.co.uk

BASICALLY SOUND

E

Calveley Court, Southburgh Rd, Reymerston
Norfolk NR9 4QD

☎ 01362 820800
☐ www.basicallysound.co.uk

ACOUSTICA

NW

17 Hoole Road, Chester, Cheshire
CH2 3NH

☎ 01244 344227
☐ www.acoustica.co.uk

HIFI LOUNGE

SE

4 The Granary Buildings, Millow Hall Farm
Millow, Near Dunton, Bedfordshire
SG18 8RH

☎ 01767 448 121
☐ www.hifilounge.co.uk

NOTTINGHAM HI-FI CENTRE EM

120-122 Alfreton Road, Nottingham,
Nottinghamshire NG7 3NR

☎ 0115 9786919
☐ www.nottinghamhifi.co.uk

AUDIO COUNSEL

NW

26 High Street, Cheadle, Cheshire
SK8 1AL

☎ 0161 491 6090
☐ www.audio-counsel.co.uk

BADA

GRAHAMS HI-FI

GL

Canonbury Yard, 190a New North Road,
London N1

☎ 020 7226 5500
☐ www.grahams.co.uk

STUDIO AV

WM

44 High Street, Eton, Berkshire,
SL4 6BL

☎ 01753 631000
☐ www.studioav.co.uk

SYNERGY AV HI-FI

NW

12a West St, Congleton, Cheshire
CW12 3JB

☎ 01260 280017
☐ www.synergyav.co.uk

INFIDELITY

GL

9 High Street, Hampton Wick
Surrey, KT1 4DA.

☎ 020 8943 3530
☐ www.infidelity.co.uk

BADA

SOUND CINERGY

WM

37 High Street, Aldridge, Walsall, West
Midlands, WS9 8NL

☎ 01922 457 926
☐ www.soundcinergy.co.uk

DOUG BRADY HIFI

NW

Kingsway North, Warrington,
Cheshire, WA1 3NU

☎ 01925 828009 (Mon-Sat 9am-5.30pm)
☐ www.dougbradyhifi.com

AUDIOBOFFS

GL

338 Shenley Road, Borehamwood,
Herts WD 1TP

☎ 020 8177 4095
☐ www.audioboffs.co.uk

VICKERS HIFI

NE

8 Concorde Park, Amy Johnson Way,
Clifton Moor, York YO30 4WT

☎ 01904 691600
☐ www.vickers-hifi.co.uk

SE - South East,
GL - Greater London,
SW - South West,
E - East,
EM - East Midlands,
WM - West Midlands,
NE - North East,
NW - North West,
W - Wales.

SONATA

GL

West Hampstead, London NW6
Appointment only

☎ 0330 111 5653
☐ www.sonatahifi.com

TAVISTOCK AUDIO

SW

18 Market Street, Devon, PL19 0DE

☎ 01822 618940
☐ www.tavistockaudio.co.uk

THE RIGHT NOTE

SW

56 High Street, Saltford, Bristol
BS31 3EJ

☎ 01225 874728
☐ www.rightnote.co.uk

AUDIO IMAGES

E

128 London Road North, Lowestoft, Suffolk
NR32 1HB

☎ 01502 582853
☐ www.audioimages-hifi.com

HI-FI CHOICE

To advertise in the dealer directory,
Please contact
Sonia Lawrence 01689 869 899
sonia.lawrence@myhobbystore.com



For sale / Wanted

Hi-Fi Choice Reader Classified

Welcome to *Hi-Fi Choice* Reader Classified, a free private ads service for buying and selling second-hand hi-fi components.

These pages are a must-read if you're thinking about buying used kit, or if you have hi-fi you want to sell. It's free to place an advertisement – simply submit your ad of up to 30 words, remembering to include your email, phone number and county.

The simplest way to send your ad is via email to: letters@hi-fichoice.co.uk or mail: **Reader Classified, Hi-Fi Choice, My Hobby Store Ltd, Hadlow House, 9 High Street, Green Street Green, Orpington, Kent BR6 6BG.**

Please note that this service is open to private advertisers only.

FOR SALE

HI-FI CHOICE magazine from Sept 1992 (20 years). Email davidkconstant@gmail.com (London).

ARAGON Stage one, (silver) £500 of upgrades, Aragon 2007 power amp 7ch 200w to 8 ohms, (silver) £500 of upgrades, excellent condition, original boxes. £2,500. **01885410517 (Worcester).**

TRICHORD Dino Mk2 phono amp, Dino+NC power supply, Trichord high-performance power lead, all excellent, unmarked and lightly used, less than 3 years old, £400. **01582867139 or email mikethompson48@hotmail.com (Bedfordshire).**

PRO-JECT RPM 1.3 Genie (red) turntable, excellent condition, box and manual, buyer collects, £160. **01933626185 or email: royrolfe@hotmail.co.uk (Northamptonshire).**

TECHNICS SL1210 Mk2 (no cartridge) £249, Garrard 401 with plinth, no arm £699, Garrard 401/301

power supply £299. Can post if needed. **0207 499 8729 (London).**

VTL 100 mono compact monoblocks, mint for age, sensible offers, ATC CA2 pre ex con £350, NVA mm phonostage ex con £150. **01822 860 432 (Devon).**

NUFORCE DAC 9 D/A convertor, (silver finish), very high resolution, will drive power amp directly and has an excellent built in headphone preamp. (£1,199) £650. **01296 437314 (Bucks).**

B&W CDM1 NT standmount speakers (cherry), excellent condition, boxed, complete (£750) £350. **01702 520063 (Essex).**

ATC SCM7 loudspeakers (black ash), mint condition, boxed with manuals, (£610) £475. **07733 428736 or email: gill@gillbrears.plus.com (Huddersfield).**

RUSS ANDREWS Classic Powerkord with IsoTek 24ct gold Wattgate £75. **01484 427426 (W Yorks).**

PMC GB1i floorstanding loudspeakers, (black) excellent sound, mint and boxed £800. **01474 352164 (Kent).**

FOCAL Spirit One headphones, high quality closed-back design, (HFC 5-star rating) £90, Atlas Equator Mk3 and Linn (black) high quality interconnect cables, both as new £30 each. **07971136711 (W.Yorks).**

WANTED mounting plate for Rega RB300 arm to Thorens 160s turntable. Trade or private. **01772 687748 (Lancashire).**

NAIM CD3.5 CD player, new remote and CD securing puck, original packaging. Comes with interconnects VGC. **0740 2599050 (Northamptonshire).**

KRYSTAL KABLES audiophile silver mains lead, fitted with silver-plated mains plug and IEC (£95) £39, Russ Andrews Yello Powerkord (performance between Powermax and Classic Powerkord),



Pro-Ject vinyl spinner at the bargain price of £160

fantastic upgrade (£50) £25, Sound style XS105 4-tier silver hi-fi rack, made under the Revolver badge, fantastic upgrade, slight cosmetic damage (£150) £35. **07981 025698 or email: chrisandelizabeth2001@yahoo.co.uk.(Bristol).**

TRANSPARENT Reference speaker cable 10 ft (£6,000) £975, Nordost SPM Reference speaker cable 17ft, bi-wire, both ends factory terminated £1,200, Nordost SPM Reference balanced interconnect 1m, boxed as new £450. **Email: booning4@hotmail.com (Co Wicklow).**

QUAD 77 series CD player, tuner and integrated amplifier (carbon), plus remote controller and two Quadlink cables, excellent, boxed (1 original, 2 elite boxes), including manuals £750 ono. **07791619099 or email: mikkafas@hotmail.co.uk (NW London).**

IMF TLS50 transmission line speakers (teak), full working order and in very good condition including grilles £100, Epos ES22 speakers (Dark Cherry), 2 1/2 way small floorstanders, fabulous sounding speakers in very good condition including grilles. Buyer collects £450. **02920702134 or email: gareth.jones72@btinternet.com (Cardiff).**

TOM EVANS AUDIO MicroGroove plus phono preamp, superb sound, very

good condition, set up for low output MC cartridge (100ohm R, 0.2microvolt). (£850) £475 ono. **07725 525001 or email: alan.strudwick@googlemail.com (South Wales).**

NAIM CDX-2, excellent condition and wonderful sound, Includes original packing, SNAIC, lead, puck and manual. £1,200. One owner, purchased new March 2009, collection preferred. **01252 312 663 or email: atj.harding@googlemail.com (Hampshire).**

CYRUS system: Pre VS2 £300, Dac X £675, CD 8X £475, 8 Power £750, PSX-Rs x2 @ £250 each, Cyrus 781 speakers, plus Nextel stands £320, Apollo 4-tier stand £75 ono on all, as a whole or parts; Valve system: Orange valve preamp £175, Audio Innovations power amp £750, Ayon CD 1 £600, LSA 1 Speakers £600, Atacama Equinox XL Pro 3-tier stand £200, Music Tools Entasis h50 speaker stands £450 ono on all, as a whole or parts, Vitus SP102 Phono Stage £12,000 ono, superb performer/unmatched; cables for sale: Audience AU24e 1.5m RCA interconnect £525, Audience AU24 Powercord 3m £795, Nordost Heimdall speaker wire 2m bi-wire pair £550, Nordost Heimdall RCAo.6m X 2 £280 each, IsoTek Power Cord Premium mains cable 1.5m X 5 £50 each, XLO Type

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!

1.1 Signature RCA £300, XLO HTP1 RCA 1m £35, XLO HT Pro Digital interconnect 1m £35, Furukawa FV Video RCA 1m £40, Furukawa FD Audio RCA 1m £35, Cyrus bi-wire speaker cable 2.5m £30, Tiffany CX-7B RCA 1m £30, Signal 7080 RCA interconnect 2x 1m £30, Signal 7081 RCA interconnect 1x 1m RCA set £25, 1x 1m RCA single £15, 1x 2.1m RCA set £35. **01825 841104 or email: mark.hanna@virgin.net (Lewes).**

AUDIOLAB 8000 CD player (silver), boxed, unused, remote control £250. **01483 271238 (Surrey).**

AUREX Micro System 15 (HFC 360) £300 including carriage, Marantz PM7001 amplifier, boxed, unused £185, JVC Q17 Direct drive £350, Sony TCK 611S cassette £45. **01708 457691 (Essex).**

QUAD 12L speakers (Birdseye Maple), excellent condition, complete with 2m Chord Rumour bi-wire speaker cables £195. **07986987380 (Northants).**

QUAD 67 CD player, remote control, instructions, boxed, immaculate condition. Recent service by Quad. Can dem £399. **0116 2812074 or 07890 884997 (London).**

ASH DESIGN Cosmic 4 AV rack (Rosewood), 4 glass shelves, double width unit. Isolation spikes and isolated shelves (£500) £170. **001273 309708 or email: pbnokes@hotmail.co.uk (East Sussex).**

CYRUS Pre Vs2 preamp (silver) £350 ono, Cyrus PSX-R power supply (silver), excellent upgrade for preamp £250 ono, or £500 the pair. **01889 575655 or email: derrick@forsters2.plus.com (Staffordshire).**

NAIM equipment (all Olive) series: 2x 250 monoblocks, £800 each, Naim NAC 52 preamp/supercap/SNAIC £1,800, Naim Hi-Cap £300, NAXO crossover £250. All boxed. **07968 735053 or email: d.mckeith@btinternet.com (Highland).**

USHER Dancer Mini 2 Diamond (walnut), immaculate condition, current model, boxed, manuals, will demo

(£3,700) £2,450, Chord Odyssey 4 bi-wire, 4m pr speaker cables (£435) £150. Buyer collects. **01428 605002 or email: rogersaunders@lineone.net (SW Surrey).**

SPENDOR S5e loudspeakers (cherry), 4 years old, very good condition, with boxes. £420. Buyer collects. **001268 774416 (Essex).**

VERTEX AQ pair of Moncayo speaker cables, 6m banana plugs £700, 2x Roraima mains leads in copper, £150 each, 2x Roraima mains cables, 1m (silver) £200 each. Buyer to collect. **007860 155521 (Middlesex).**

NAIM Nait 01 with Napst, both fitted with Russ Andrews small wooden cones. Both tuner and power supply as new, £800. **0117 9500429 or email: ron.watt@sky.com (Bristol).**

ATC SCM7 speakers, 6 months old, excellent condition, boxed, as new, fine sound (£610) £475. **07733 428736 (West Yorkshire).**

FOCAL Profile 908 standmount speakers (in Classic) with matching, dedicated S908 stands. Scratch on one side of speaker, but brand new grilles. Sonically perfect, Best Buy, HFC December 2005 (£1,600) £555. **01494 521359 or 07772 711432 (Bucks).**

OPERA Super Pavarotti speakers, real wood mahogany, excellent condition £175, QED XT400 X tube speaker cable, 2x 5m (as new) £75, Sumiko Blue Point No2, cartridge, 100 hours £45. **07800606892 or email: schandler@dopaq.co.uk (Worcestershire).**

WORLD AUDIO DESIGN K5881 valve power amplifier, mint condition, can email photos £375. **01424 446282/07972 341692 (East Sussex).**

ROGERS MLS4a speakers, Black Serial no; 5777, Good condition £200, Pink Triangle Export Rega RB300 arm, owned since new (black), nearly new bearing £600. Dynavector 10x5 £150 2yr. **07547897476 or email: paulginestri@hotmail.co.uk (East Sussex).**

MICHELL GyroDec SE, OEM RB300 tonearm, excellent condition, beautiful sound. £800 ono. Protective cover and instructions included. Buyer collects. **07831 410479 or email: glenn.moore@mac.com (Kent).**

MONITOR AUDIO Gold GX 300 speakers (piano black lacquer), boxes, in pristine condition. Purchased just after their launch last year (£3,000) £1,999. Buyer collects. **01249 892896 (Chippenham).**

OLIVE 03 music server, 18 months old, original packaging, excellent £400. Located North Yorks. **01642 680122 or email: steverobin@mac.com (North Yorks).**

YAMAHA NS1000 Monitor Speakers. Only few hours use, pair in perfect condition, clamps replaced with new Gold Posts. Rare Edition £1,200. Nordost Flatline Blue Heaven speaker cables, banana plugs one end, other unterminated. Stereo pairs 1x 4.5m (£1,030) and 1x 2.5m (£630). Unused/new. Bargain at £550, ono the lot. **01945 463077 or email: deregle1@aol.com (London).**

SUGDEN Mysterio integrated amp, lightly used, boxed. Can be posted, £650. **01782 785734 (Staffordshire).**

VAN DEN HUL The Waterfall RCA interconnect 0.8m £60, Chord Company Carnival Silver Screen speaker cable, 2x 4m lengths, terminated

£30, Chord Company Chorus 2 RCA 1m £50, Chameleon Silver plus 1m and 0.5m, all boxed £40 each: **0121 602 8349 (W Midlands).**

REGA Couple and Linn Black high-quality interconnect cables, both as new £30: **0121 602 8349 (W Midlands).**

ARCAM rDAC kw and wireless dongle, hardly used. Superb sound, either via USB, S/PDIF, optical or wirelessly, £380. Also battery PSU and charger £30: **07793749178 or email: david@veniceinfosite.com (London).**

KIMBER Select KS1030 1m pair £600, Kimber Monocle-xl 8ft pair speaker cable £500, original packaging: **01772 314151 or email: jamesmckendrick@btinternet.com (Preston).**

ACOUSTIC REALITY AR1001 Mono Blocks, Class D power amps, 1,000w. Silver, excellent condition £825 (pair), Cyrus Pre Vs2 preamp (brushed black), excellent condition, boxed and original accessories £350: **01223 890607 or email: m.overall@btinternet.com (Cambridge).**

TECHNICS SL7 parallel tracker classic turntable with sounds to shame many a modern deck. Pristine condition, hardly

used and full working order £225: **07793749178 or email: david@veniceinfosite.com (London).**

MUSICAL FIDELITY AMS35i, pure Class A integrated amplifier (black), boxed and mint, only 18 months old with 5 year guarantee, reluctant sale (£6,000) £4,500: **01303 863424 (Kent).**

CYRUS 1m and 50cm interconnects, RCA, used but like new and boxed. £70 and £55 resp. delivered: **0115 9288006 or email: Rolfjordan@gmail.com (Notts).**

ORIGIN LIVE Conqueror Mk3c tonearm, one year old, latest version, boxed, immaculate, genuine reason for sale, might p/ex for less expensive model, £2,000: **01323 728118 or email: alanchamberlain1@hotmail.com (East Sussex).**

JUNGSON JA 88D amplifier Class A, new, excellent condition £900, but any reasonable offer considered: **07986124147 (Suffolk).**

MISSION Cyrus 2 amp (grey), Mission Cyrus PSX (black), Mission DAC 5 convertor. All leads and connections. Sensible offers please to: **01555 759124 or email: embt80@gmail.com (South Lanarkshire).**

ARCAM CD 36 boxed, as new with unused remote, buyer collects £550: **01329 668149 (Hants).**

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR FREE AD

YOUR DETAILS

Name

Address

Email address

Daytime telephone number

Date

YOUR ADVERTISEMENT

SEND YOUR ADVERT TO

Hi-Fi Choice, My Hobby Store Ltd, Hadlow House, 9 High Street, Green Street Green, Orpington, Kent BR6 6BG

To submit your advert to us, please email **letters@hifichoice.co.uk** or alternatively, use the postal form below. Please limit ads to a maximum of 30 words, ensuring all details, model names, etc., are correctly stated. Kindly also include your email, telephone number and home county. We regret that we cannot take adverts over the telephone.

Job title/position: Hi-End Audio field sales representative
Company: Flamingo Audio Ltd.
Location: Birmingham

Salary: Basic GBP 25,000 – OTE GBP 35,000 + company car + expenses

Job description: Sales representative to develop a national dealer network for a limited number of Hi-End Audio product ranges. The ideal candidate will be a commercially astute sales professional, enthusiastic about the audio hi-end sector, with field sales experience, schedule and attend sales call appointments with customers, build and strengthen business relationships with customers. Ensure that their needs are being met. Submit accurate daily/monthly reports and paperwork.

Qualifications/experience:

- Full clean driving licence.
- Field sales experience.
- Ability to convey information clearly, to help customers make buying decisions.
- Well organized, conscientious and courteous with strong verbal and written communication skills.

Apply to: Please e-mail your CV to Martha Milonas at flamingoaudio@hotmail.com giving details of your experience, abilities, qualifications and any other information about yourself that you believe is relevant to your application.

Date posted: 18/10/12

Epiphany Acoustics

Headphone Amplifiers . DACs . Interconnects



EHP-02 Portable Headphone Amplifier

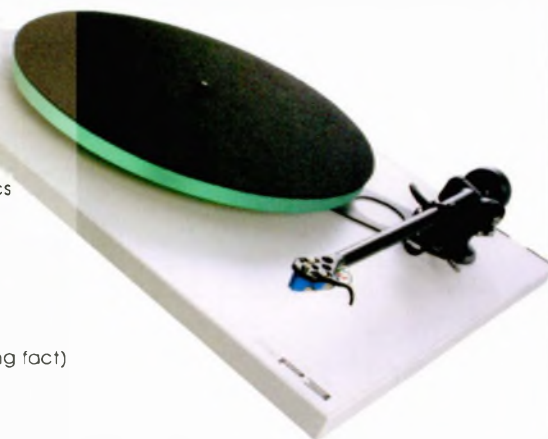


Find out why Epiphany Acoustics are rapidly becoming the name in affordable high end audio online at:

www.epiphany-acoustics.co.uk

- arcam
- dynavector
- epson
- focal
- grado
- isoblu
- hutter
- kudos
- linn products
- lyra
- naim audio
- neat acoustics
- nottingham
- primare
- ortofon
- pmc (including fact)
- rega
- sennheiser
- stax
- sumiko

new toys for black stuff: rega RP3



signals

hi-fi for grown-ups

ipswich (01473) 655171
www.signals.uk.com

020 7226 5500
www.grahams.co.uk



“One of the five best hi-fi shops in the world”

ARENA Magazine

Grahams Hi-Fi
 Canonbury Yard
 190a New North Road
 London N1 7BS

Is this your problem? Here's your answer



load too loud way too loud

It's a common problem. The usable range on the volume control is all down at the bottom end and fine control at low listening levels is either difficult or impossible. The noise floor may be audible, too. There is a simple and effective solution - the Rothwell In-Line Attenuators. They can be used with pre/power or integrated amps to cure the problems of excess gain and bring sonic benefits with even the most expensive equipment.



"this accessory is heartily recommended" Gramophone

£39/pair - post free

01204 366133 www.rothwellaudioproducts.co.uk

REVOX SERVICE

THE MANUFACTURERS' APPOINTED SERVICE COMPANY

REVOX SERVICE

Correct Revox Spare Parts Pricing
24 Hour Estimation procedure
Manufacturer Upgrades and Advice
Delivery and Collection Service
Comprehensive Guarantees

Factory Trained Engineers
Rapid Response Turnaround
Full Revox range serviced
Written Technical Reports
Late Evening Opening

THE AR TECHNOLOGY LIMITED

TTL House, Sheeptick End, Near Lidlington, Bedfordshire, MK43 0SF
Telephone 01525 841999 Facsimile 01525 841009

Oranges & Lemons

www.orangesandlemons.info

Audio-Visual
Hi-Fi
Multi-Room



020 7924 2040

61-63 Webbs Road London SW11
shop@orangesandlemons.info



hifi lounge here to listen...

WE ARE NOW OPEN Why not pop along and say hi, thanks to everyone who came along to our Grand Opening Weekend.

A NEW NAME IN QUALITY HIFI FOR THE HOME

Here to listen to your needs, selling only brands we are passionate about.

At HIFI Lounge we have created a listening environment for our discerning customers to relax and take their time away from the busy high street.

Set in a beautiful country setting yet only minutes from main routes. You will always be guaranteed a warm welcome.

01767 448121
www.hifilounge.co.uk

4 The Granary Buildings,
Millow Hall Farm,
Millow, Nr Dunton,
Bedfordshire,
SG18 8RH

ATLAS

ALCANTARA

GRADO

SONOS

JVC

SPENDOR

EMC

IAN HARRISON HIFI

SALE! UP TO 40% OFF!!

TEL: 01283 702875 ian.harrison@mercian.myzen.co.uk

SPECIALIST SUPPLIER OF TURNTABLES, TONEARMS, CARTRIDGES AND PHONO STAGES

INCLUDING: AMATEK, AUDIO TECHNICA, BENZ MICRO, CARTRIDGE MAN, CLEARAUDIO, DENDN, GOLDRING, GRADO, GRAHAM SLEE, HADCOCK, HEED, ICON, KDTSU, LEHMANN AUDIO, MICHELL, MOTH, ORTOFON, PRO-JEKT, REGA, SME, SUMIKO, THDRENS, TOM EVANS, TRANSGURATION, TRICHORD, WHEST AUDIO, ZYX,

SPECIAL OFFER!!

SPEND £2,000 OR MORE ON ANY TURNTABLE, TONEARM OR TURNTABLE AND ARM AND GET A CARTRIDGE WORTH £500 FREE!!

PLEASE PHONE TO CONFIRM PRICE & AVAILABILITY PRIOR TO ORDERING. ALL GOODS ARE BRAND NEW & BOXED WITH FULL U.K. GUARANTEES. NO EX-DEM OR EX-DISPLAY GOODS. NO GREY IMPORTS. GOODS ARE NOT SUPPLIED ON APPROVAL. SORRY NO GENERAL CATALOGUES. PLEASE PHONE OR WRITE FOR SPECIFIC REVIEWS, BROCHURES OR PRICES.

ESTABLISHED 1986.

MAIL ORDER ONLY FROM: IAN HARRISON, 7 MILL HILL, REPTON, DERBY, DE65 6GQ
TEL: 01283 702875 9am-9pm INCLUDING SUNDAYS.

Front End Problems?

contact:

The Cartridge Man

It doesn't have to cost an arm and leg to get the best

- listen to my Koetsu - and - Decca - eater.

Also agents for Croft, Moth, Hadcock & Mitchell & E.A.R. Graham Slee projects.

Valve equipment re-build service available.

- Plus cartridge re-tipping service

020 8688 6565

Website: www.thecartridgeman.com

To advertise please contact

Sonia Lawrence

on

01689 869899

sonia.lawrence@hifichoice.com

heed



obelisk si

Audio Destination	Tiverton	01884 243584
Basically Sound	Norwich	01362 820800
Chris Brooks Audio	Warrington	01925 261212
Faithful Audio	Birmingham	0121 224 7300
Home Cinema Centre	Edinburgh	0131 229 9350
Phase 3	Worthing	01903 245577
Unilet	New Malden	0208 942 9567

www.heedaudio.co.uk

sound cinergy

37 High Street, Aldridge
01922 457926

exposure

focal linn marantz michell
monitor audio okki nokki
onkyo optoma ortofon
project rel roksan trichord

Ample Parking Tue-Sat 10 - 5.30pm
www.soundcinergy.co.uk

WE HEAR...

THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANY SHORTAGE OF geeky audiophile CD formats to come from Japan, claiming superior sound quality thanks to better mastering and/or manufacturing. Blu-spec CD is a case in point, basically a Red Book CD of which the physical master disc has been prepared with a blue laser instead of a red laser, thus creating more accurate pits in the playing surface. The standard was introduced in 2008, and has sold in quietly respectable numbers, with nice things said about its sonics.

Now, Blu-spec CD2 is here, employing what Sony calls Phase Transition Mastering, the technology developed for mastering of Blu-ray discs. This involves the use of BD (Blu-ray Disc) cutting machine, which Sony Music claims is ten times more precise. Also employed is a master disc made from the same material as silicon wafers for IC manufacture, with a surface one sixth the roughness of conventional material. Finally, a different recording layer material is specified, giving better thermal control – this is said to give lower jitter. At the time of writing, 111 titles are available, all of which can be played on all CD players. For more details, click on www.cdjapan.co.jp.

OUR BEST WISHES GO TO TIM AND REVAI JARMAN on the birth of Matthew Tapiwa, who came into this world on the 21st October, 2012. We'll all be having a whip-round to buy him a classic 'My First Sony' Walkman!

ONE OF THE MOST INTERESTING THINGS SEEN AT THE MILAN SHOW a couple of months back was Micromega's new MyDAC. This little box should really take the fight to the likes of Arcam's rDAC, now that the UK retail price has been confirmed at £259. Watch out for our full review next issue...

THROUGH THE PAST, SMARTLY...



HI-FI CHOICE AWARDS ISSUE 2002

It's interesting to compare this year's award winning kit with that of ten years ago. The most significant and obvious change won't come as much of a surprise to those readers who've been following our increasing number of reviews in recent months for streamers and portable audio products. Ten years ago there was no sign of this hi-fi revolution, with dedicated CD and universal players consuming the first seven pages of the 2002 Awards special. Everything from a £330 NAD to a £3,650 Wadia. SACD was still an excitable prospect back then and Sony's £2,300 SCD-XA777ES player was considered a must-have. Turntables were also big business though, with Pro-Ject and Rega scoring top marks. Interest in amps and loudspeakers goes without saying in any Awards round-up, but in 2002 speaker packages were all the rage and three such systems were on hand from KEF, B&W and Mirage.

While the HFC team were busy quaffing down champagne at the annual Awards do, Argentina (not a strong contender in the hi-fi manufacturing stakes) was defaulting on its \$805 million World Bank loan, Iran banned US advertising (no doubt that included US-made hi-fi product) and a campaign against climate change took place in London (hopefully not caused by leaving too many valve amps switched on)!

One of the joys of being a vinyl junkie is the sheer beauty of the design of many turntables

Staring at a streamer for hours on end is hardly likely to stimulate your aesthetic sensibilities, but it's different with vinyl! It is nice to hear of a limited edition A1-sized poster then, one showcasing some of the sexiest record players that ever spun a disc. From Berliner's first gramophone to today's high end superdecks, it's packed with numerous black plastic spinning beauties!

Printed on premium grade 170gsm gloss paper, the poster measures 841x594mm and costs £14.99 plus £5.55 p&p. For more details, click on www.hi-fi-posters.com.



BACKCHAT NEEDS YOU!

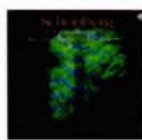
Got any hi-fi hearsay? Do your audiophile duty by emailing news@hifichoice.co.uk

DESERT ISLAND DISCS

This month **Peter Comeau**, Director of Acoustic Design at IAG, chooses his favourite albums...



WAILIN' JENNY'S
40 DAYS
The 'Jennys accomplish that most difficult of boundary crosses, bringing bluegrass, jazz and folk idioms to create a unique sound. I couldn't live without it!



SCHOENBERG
GURRELIEDER
Schoenberg's Gurrelieder is highly complex, overtly romantic and sprawling, while marshalling huge orchestral and choral forces.



DIANA KRALL
LIVE IN PARIS
Diana Krall has a voice that seduces and, when coupled with these brilliant arrangements by Claus Ogerman, it melds into something extra special.



BENJAMIN BRITTEN
VIOLIN CONCERTO
I can't believe how many speakers I have designed using this LP as the final arbiter of and dynamic string orchestration. This music just sweeps me away.



PERREAUX

★ SPECIAL OFFER ★

UPTO £1000
MINIMUM P/X
ON SPECIFIC MODELS

Conditions apply, please ask for details.



audioemotion



www.audioemotion.co.uk

e info@audioemotion.co.uk

f facebook.com/audioemotion

t 01333 425 999

£750
MIN
P/X



éloquence 150i
INTEGRATED

Only £4595



"New Zealand's Perreaux squeezes bona-fide high-end performance out of a lifestyle friendly integrated amplifier."

STEVE GUTTENBERG, TONE AUDIO

éloquence CDT
COMPACT DISC
TRANSPORT

Only £2595

éloquence 250i
INTEGRATED

Only £5995

£1000
MIN
P/X
on 250i



“

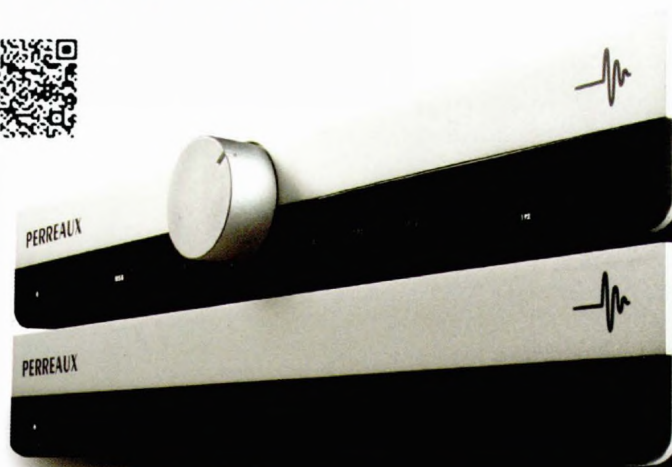
I WAS TAKEN ABACK BY THE PERREAUX'S SUBTLETY AND FINESSE... THE SOUND ITSELF WAS SO INVOLVING AND CAPTIVATING... THIS JOINS A SELECT GROUP OF SINGLE-BOX AMPS THAT WILL NEVER BETRAY ITS NON-SEPARATES STATUS. IT BEHAVES WITH GRACE AND GUTS. AND ÉLOQUENCE”

KEN KESSLER, HI FI NEWS.
250i AUG 2012

Immensely moving integrated amps that include all the hallmarks of Perreaux engineering design.

REINVENTING

YOUR MUSIC



BUY BOTH & GET
60 DAY
NO QUIBBLE
EXCHANGE
CALL FOR
DETAILS



NEW FOR 2012

AUDIANT DP 32-BIT
DAC / PRE Only £2190

- ESS Technology's 32-bit Sabre³² DAC
- Asynchronous 24-bit/192kHz USB input
- Fully balanced audio signal
- Two stages of jitter reduction
- Ultra-low distortion

AUDIANT IOOP STEREO
POWER AMP Only £1999

- High power MOSFET transistors
- Custom transformer and high-current power supply
- Triple filtered power supplies
- Audio-grade capacitors
- CNC machined aluminium monocoque

Music is our Passion

DIAMOND 100

SERIES



The classic entry point to true high-fidelity sound, Wharfedale's legendary Diamond speakers have been delivering sonic excellence to music fans since 1982. Now, 30 years on, Diamond is evolving again as Britain's most famous loudspeaker brand unveils the Diamond 100 Series: an all-new range that takes Diamond's high performance, low cost concept to an extraordinary new level. Advanced drive units and superior cabinet design deliver a sound that is crisp, focused and spacious, effortlessly dynamic yet firmly in control, thus maintaining Diamond's long-held position as the sparkling jewel in Wharfedale's crown.