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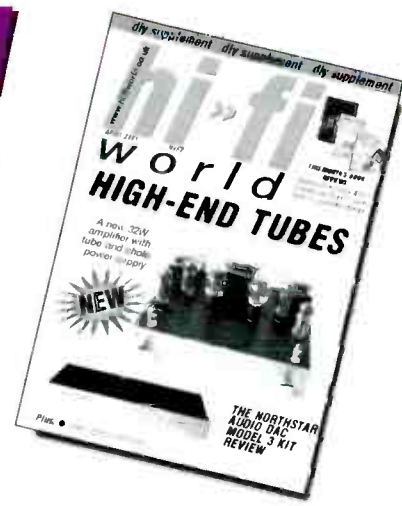
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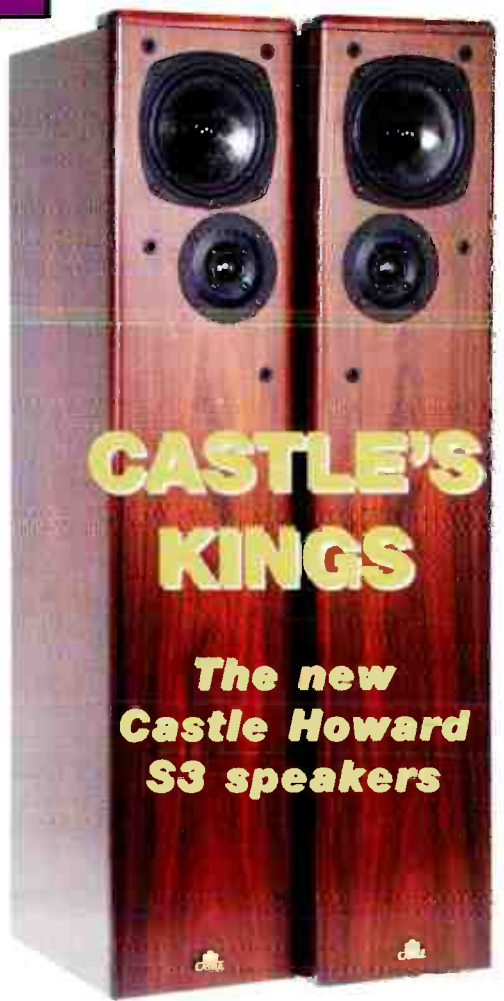
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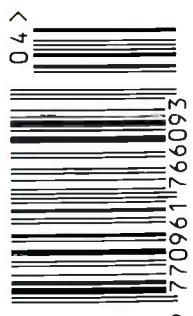
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Browsing through the day's newspapers before my Sunday lunchtime snooze, I came across something that woke me from my slumbers like forceful slap around the chops. Vinyl is back with a vengeance, apparently. With sales of vinyl albums up a staggering 41% in the year 2000 compared to the previous year, it looks extremely promising, especially when CD album sales were up a 'mere' 15%. Okay, so the total sales figures are slightly different but it's still heartening to us record players. And, according to the same source a predicted 70% of the British public have turntables, so eat your words big Japanese corporate types who predicted vinyl's demise!

Of course, since the dance boom of the early nineties, sales of vinyl have always been guaranteed. This must be much to the chagrin of most consumer electronics companies, apart from Technics of course which has a popular little model called the SL-1200 out there in clubland. Apparently though, it's not just dance music that's creating the growth.

In the audiophile world, many enthusiasts soon tired of CD's nasties and ran crying back to their tonearms and turntables, guilty of a wayward dalliance. Now it seems the same is true of the public in general, and I for one can second this observation. Friends and acquaintances who dumped their turntables for something more domestically pleasing now plead for a Sunday lunch invitation, to which they'll arrive laden with dusty LPs recovered from the loft. It's an afternoon with the GyroDec they're after, rather than my food and company, not that I was under any misapprehensions in the first place! It may appear that I'm teaching granny to suck eggs but the advantages of vinyl over CD are numerous. Not least in the bass, and those in the dance music business realise this. I have a selection of various drum 'n' bass 12" 'singles' which question the structural security of my house on a regular basis. DJs won't touch anything with more than one track per side with a barge pole, so LPs become collections of 12" singles. A whole 'side' is available for one track and the result is high level cut with

enormous groove excursions, often giving awesome sound quality.

The new high resolution formats are sold on the premise that they'll bring a new dimension to audio; the idea being that you'll be brought closer to live music and therefore glean more emotion from it. I disagree. I've experienced excellent performances from both two channel SACD and DVD-A, but neither conveys a sense of 'being there' more than the old Decca analogue late 50s and 60s recordings. They have a sense of a live performance with minimum takes, and include such accidental luxuries as stage shuffles, subsonic rumbles of passing lorries and even 'off-stage' birdsong! More and more classical music fans are discovering through these vinyl recordings that the old ones are superior.

Never underestimate the power that the film industry has on the masses - it also appears the Big Screen is helping to enhance vinyl's lure to the movie watchers. Both 'High Fidelity', adapted from Nick Hornby's novel of a music obsessed record collector and the new Tomb Raider film in which the delightful Angelina Jolie possesses a Clearaudio Master Reference turntable, are helping to bring back vinyl. Just think, when these titles are available on DVD thousands will be exposed to turntables and records. It could even lead to the masses dumping their DVDs for Project Debuts or LPI2s. Okay, maybe that's one step too far, but who said home cinema doesn't have its place? ■



Simon Pope

HI-FI WORLD

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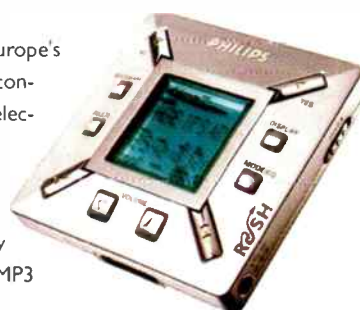
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world news

||> SPIN DOCTORS



Fans of the evergreen Technics SLI 200 series of turntables (of which there are a great many, and deservedly so) will be interested to hear that there's a veritable visual feast at <http://mdma.mit.edu/1200/>. Alternatively, those after serious amounts of information on the Technics Direct Drive turntable family should point their browsers at

<http://www.backspin.org/turntables.html>

||> ELECTRONICS GIANTS LINK TO CYBER DEALERS

As the internet becomes an unavoidable addition to everyday life, so companies are adapting to life on-line. Philips, for example, are currently flourishing in the development of hard disc and internet technology. At the opening day of the CES show in Las Vegas the Dutch electronics giants announced they are to launch an online marketing strategy that will apparently link customers to over 60,000 Philips dealers around the world. The company have signed a deal with an American software company, iMediation inc., after European trials to deal with online

purchasing. It will let customers view products and contact dealers.

It seems that Philips have learned a lesson from another electronics giant Sony. Last year they announced they were to launch their own website, SonyStyle.com which would put them in direct competition with their dealers. After much wailing and gnashing of teeth from their dealers Sony are apparently reviewing and reworking their on-line strategy, although the SonyStyle website is still in operation.

||> ROTEL GO HIGH RES



Rotel are the latest company to announce the launch of a DVD-A player. At present only available in the US, the RDV-1080 is a descendant of their CD player design and employs the use of Rotel's Balanced Design engineering in the new format. The machine, priced at \$1,500, will play DVD-A, DVD-V CD, CD-R/RW and CD-V discs. Featuring the latest specification LSICs (large scale integrated circuits) and 24bit/192 kHz DACs, the 1080 will "easily handle" stereo PCM,

Dolby Digital, dts, and MPEG audio formats. Rotel's distributors in the UK, Gamepath said they expect the player will not be available on these shores until "at least three months' time". UK price has yet to be confirmed but expect the usual pounds-for-dollars equivalence.

Gamepath Ltd.
28 Heathfield
Stacey Bushes
Milton Keynes MK12 6HR
Tel: 01908 317707
www.rotel.com

||> CYRUS ICONOGRAPHY

It was only a matter of time before Cyrus joined its erstwhile partners Mission on the ever lengthening list of NXT licensees (over 210 at the last count!). The new Cyrus Icon is both the company's first NXT flat panel speaker system, and the very first use of the technology in a high end hi-fi application.

Not all NXT panels are created alike of course, and with the budget available to them commensurate with a \$5,000-per-pair loudspeaker, Cyrus's engineers have been able to create a bespoke mid-hi NXT panel drive unit of very high quality. Supporting this is a moving coil bass reflex woofer giving a 10-octave range in total. Cyrus claims that the Icon's NXT panel technology improves on the many benefits found in the



best high-end electrostatics, like speedy attack transients and hear-through transparency. The new 'speakers should be in British shops by the time this issue goes to press.

Cyrus Electronics:
Ermine Business park
Huntingdon
Cambs
PE29 6XY
Tel: 01480 435577

||> 'UNIVERSAL' CHIP LAUNCHED

A new high resolution DAC from Texas Instruments makes the universal high resolution format audio player one step closer. The giant electronics company, makers of Burr-Brown DACs, announced the launch of a chip DAC designed for high resolution professional and domestic applications. This includes CD, DVD-A/V and SACD players and A/V receivers, as well as professional products such as mixing consoles. This relatively inexpensive chip, the PCM1738, employs the company's new Advanced Segment DAC design and is capable of 24bit resolution and 192kHz sampling rate, but it can be used in any application that uses between 16-24bit data and up to 200kHz sampling. As well as having an external digital filter mode, it also possess a DSD decoder interface for SACD playback. You never know, it could force both Sony and Matsushita to sit around the table!



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World Radio History

▶▶ DIGITAL DEBUT FROM CHORD



Chord Electronics are claiming a "world first" with their new DAC64. Professing to be the only 64bit/up to 384 kHz stereo digital to analogue convertor on the market, it uses fourth generation Pulse Array DAC technology and the 64 bit filter is also accompanied by an all new receiver chip. The DAC64 has Chord's unmistakable industrial build of the E range and has 3 inputs

(coaxial, balanced XLR and fibre optical) along with outputs for both RCA phono and XLR balanced. A RAM buffer switch that operates at three different levels is also included. Expected to be joined soon by Chord's first CD player and an A/V processor, the DAC64 will be priced at £1,900.

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The Pumphouse
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East Farleigh
Kent ME16 9NB
Tel: 01622 721444
www.chordelectronics.co.uk

▶▶ DOLBY AT CES

January's CES in Las Vegas was the venue for Dolby Laboratories to showcase its new consumer electronics technologies, spanning home theatre, computer and online audio, DVD-Audio and virtual surround sound: Pro Logic II is Dolby's new generation of Dolby Surround which turns any existing stereo mix into surround, as well as also making existing Dolby Surround mixes sound more like discrete 5.1-channel surround.

As well as working with CDs, Dolby Surround-encoded VHS tapes, MP3s and radio broadcasts, Pro Logic II is claimed to not introduce the artefacts created by other matrix decoding technologies. DVD-Audio using MLP (Meridian Lossless Packing) allows 5.1 channels of 24-bit/96 kHz resolution audio on a single DVD.

Dolby Headphone is a clever signal processing system claimed to make conventional stereo headphones realistically portray the sound of a Dolby Digital five-speaker playback system.

AAC (Advanced Audio Coding) is the new audiophile coding technology that many see as the logical successor to MP3, since it is both 30 percent more space efficient than MP3 and sounds better too!

▶▶ EC ON THE TRAIL OF THE 'BIG FIVE'

The long-standing problem of CD price fixing in Europe looks like it's to be tackled at last. The music biz's 'Big Five' (Universal, Sony, Warner, EMI and BMG) are being closely investigated by the European Union antitrust team. They are considering the fact that the quintet could have conspired to keep software prices in Europe at an excessively high level, some of the highest in the world. It is suspected by the European Commission that competition between the publishers has been discouraged in a sort of unofficial, 'gentlemen agreement'.

A selection of retailers have apparently been

asked to submit purchasing data to the European Commission for perusal.

The investigation is at an early stage. It could apparently take up to two years before a decision is reached.

This new EC investigation was launched after a similar action in the United States, by the Federal Trade Commission, which resulted in the abandonment of the previous Minimum Advertised Price scheme for recorded music in May last year. It also resulted in many lawsuits against major record labels.



▶▶ A NEW SPIN FROM NAD

Still much in the two channel hi-fi business, NAD have announced details of another new affordable CD player. Hoping to continue their tradition of value for money CD spinners, the new C521 will be priced at £200. As usual the company's emphasis is on sound quality rather than esoteric bodywork and in an attempt to achieve this goal they have included "sophisticated circuitry" behind the typically modest front panel.

It features a buffered coaxial output that is also isolated from the convertor by a transformer. Attention has also been paid to the output impedance which NAD claim is a precise 75Ω to ensure easy matching. Number crunching is dealt with by a 20bit Burr Brown chip

chosen for its "excellent low level linearity and detail retrieving capability".

Lenbrook UK Ltd.
Unit 2, Old Wolverton Rd.
Old Wolverton
Milton Keynes MK12 5NP
Tel: 01908 319360
www.lenbrook.co.uk

STAGE RIGHT

Hot on the heels of the 5 Series from Naim comes their new phono stage designed to "keep vinyl in fashion well into the twenty-first century". The Stageline is actually the company's first stand alone, outboard phono stage that was designed to partner the 5 Series amplifiers. Power to the Stageline comes from special sockets on either the Nait 5 or Nac112, or for increased performance, from a separate Naim power supply such as the new Flatcap 2. Available in both Moving magnet and Moving Coil versions, the Stageline is priced at £175.

Naim Audio
Southampton Rd.
Salisbury
Wilts SP1 2LN
Tel: 01722 332266



JUST ADD TV!

Denon have launched a complete surround system that could well be the best bet to get mass market appeal. The company's new AV-F100 mini components surround system is the first of its kind to be supplied with flat panel discrete NXT 'speakers. Consisting of a DVD-V player, home cinema receiver and multichannel power amplifier, each measuring only 270mm x 84mm x 250mm (w,h,d) the AV-F100 is based on the popular D-F100 mini system and comes finished in champagne gold.

Denon have worked closely with Mission to create the compact NXT 'speaker system, consisting of five flat panels and a powered subwoofer. The output of the power amp is 25W per channel, with 50W for the subwoofer. The complete system including the 'speakers and all cables is £1,200. The system is also available for £750 without the 'speakers and the 'speaker package is available separately for £450.

Denon UK Ltd.
Tel: 01753 888447

next issue

Here's a small selection of the audiophile delights that await you next month.

KENWOOD DV-FR9030 DVD-A/V PLAYER

This is the first DVD-A player to cross Hi-Fi World's portals. See what we make of this £700 'budget' option from Kenwood next month.

SONY SCD-555ES SACD/CD PLAYER

This brand new SACD player from Sony sits in the 'affordable audiophile' ES series. Will it turn out to be as impressive as its siblings?

PLINIUS 8100 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

From the land of the All Blacks and Kiwis comes this powerful bruiser. Will it turn out a Jonah Lomu or a dead sheep?

Sharp



Maestro of the mainstream Sharp has turned its hand to high-end audio with a £6,000 SACD/CD player and 1-bit amp package. Simon Pope investigates. . .

It's fair to say that '£6,000' and 'Sharp' rarely appear in the same sentence, especially when the former is attributed to a product from the latter. However, don't rush down to the optician just yet, as your eyes haven't deceived you. This isn't Sharp's first venture into high end digital audio - that came with the launch of its first digital amplifier at £10,000 last year. It's still a slap around the chops to see Sharp venturing into the higher realms of digital engineering, though. The Japanese giant has already made a name for itself in the world of MiniDisc portables - which have been very well received thanks to

their excellent sound quality - but the high-end is a different ball park. They've entered it in form of the DX-SX1 SACD/CD player and SM-SX1 1-bit digital amplifier, and done it with an undeniable sense of style.

The styling of both amplifier and SACD player is a weird mix of edgy, hi-tech minimalist modernism combined with a nod to audiophile credibility. What first attracts the eye is that protruding lilac item from the front of the amp, that looks like it was designed for use on a rather large-lipped woman. It's actually a volume control, and one that will be used, as amazingly, there's no remote for the amplifier.

This, according to Sharp is apparently because any type of remote attributed to an amplifier in its native Japan is seen as a downgrade from true high-end status. Strange one this, as you'd imagine sound quality would be the true mettle of a high-end product, wouldn't you? This fetching lilac colour is spattered across both products and is actually quite appealing. Other stylish touches are the mirrored front panels, complete with easy to use metal buttons (with natty blue-lit surround on the amplifier to identify the input in operation).

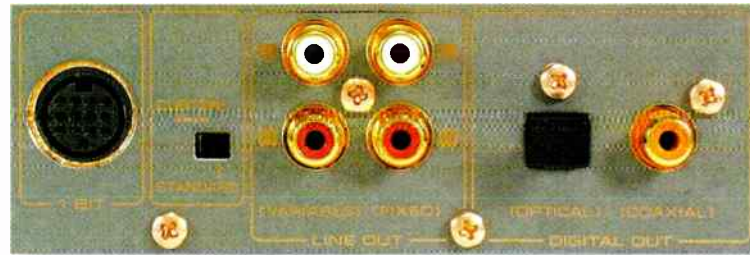
However, it's round the back



Entry

where we find the true claim to fame of this combination. In what is a first in any domestic product, the SACD player can be linked to the amplifier via a 13 pin connector which transmits the SACD Bitstream data. This opens the door to a problem - namely piracy - a hot potato as far as new digital formats are concerned. To accommodate this, Sharp has designed the connector as bi-directional, so that the amplifier recognises the SACD data from the connection and vice versa (a sort of 'handshake') which results in a short delay whilst each reacquaint themselves with each other in SACD mode. The connector will only transmit SACD data information, so connection for CD playback has to be made via one of the bog-standard' digital inputs also found to the rear of the amp - both optical and coaxial as well as a Toslink output. One pair of 'speaker terminals are present, and they're a bit of a nuisance, as 4mm plugs cannot be inserted into either the ends or the titchy 2mm hole found in the main screw shaft, so bare wire is the order of the day.

The DX-SX1 SACD/CD player is, to the best of my knowledge, the first from outside the Sony/Philips camp. It's supplied with a remote control (obviously no stigma when it comes to players, then) which is a basic plastic job found with most budget CD players and nothing much else in the



way of surprises. The usual outputs (except the aforementioned 1-bit job) are present, including a variable analogue option.

THREE O'CLOCK SHARP!

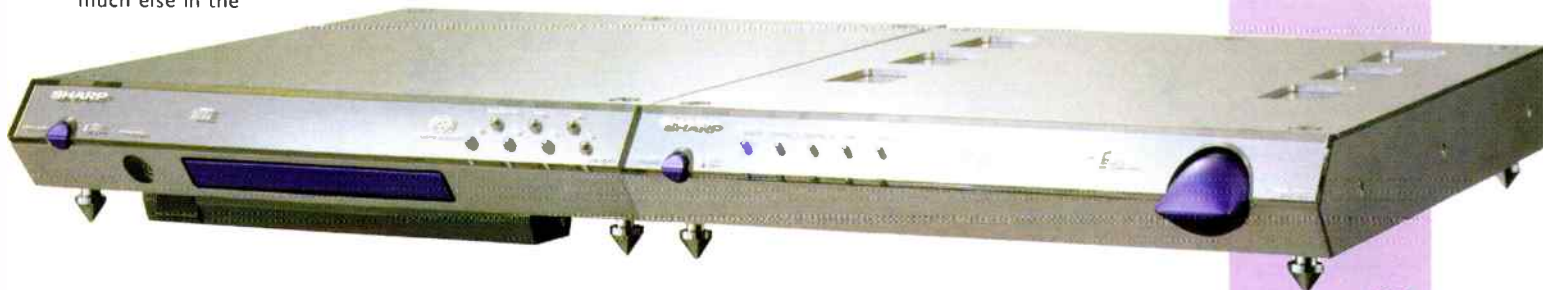
First, a warning. If you give this combination a listen, make sure you're using high sensitivity 'speakers - a minimum of 88dB to be safe, more like 90dB to get the best results. Whilst using a pair of Quad 988 electrostatics (just for the hell of it, at 83dB!) gleaned perhaps the most detailed performance, it was severely lacking in grip and punch with the volume set at 3 o'clock! A change to KEF's Reference One -Two floorstanders was called for. Although quoted at 50W per channel, our measurements show that at 8 ohms the best the SM-SX1 could muster was 15W, and it's not a valve 15W either, so the sound isn't full and rich!

Once partnered satisfactorily, I started with Orbital's 'In Sides' on CD. This is a nice, clean recording with a wide frequency range, and



the Sharp combo picked up on the intricate detail in the mix. It's a very forward and exact sound that some will find cold. But the lack of warmth is substituted for a detailed and clean sound that many associate with high-end audio. It's exciting as well, rhythms are strong and fast but lacking in clout (thanks to the puny output of the amplifier). If you crank it though, you'll get a roughish sort of digital sound that verges on the harsh, especially at climaxes. This was demonstrated best with the guitar rumpus of Green Day. Although separation and image depth were good, and the drums were analysed with excellent detail, vocals and guitars on the heavier tracks were edgy and blurred around the edges.

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1-bit connection in operation, I fed a Harmonia Mundi disc of Beethoven's third piano concerto into the player. Again detail and presence were highlights, with phrasing of the violins brought to the fore through sheer detail. Knowing that woodwind instruments are one of SACD's selling points, I wasn't that surprised to hear realistically flighty flutes and rich yet light clarinets and bassoons bobbing away to the rear of the mix, but I was impressed with the way the Sharp combo delivered it. Another SACD in the shape of Clare Martin's 'Take My Heart' on Linn Records again had the Sharp delving the detail depths. Martin's vocals were precise and forward but again erred to the shrill at climaxes, due more to the amp, I fear, than the recording or SACD player.

There's no mistaking the detail and insight this combination brings

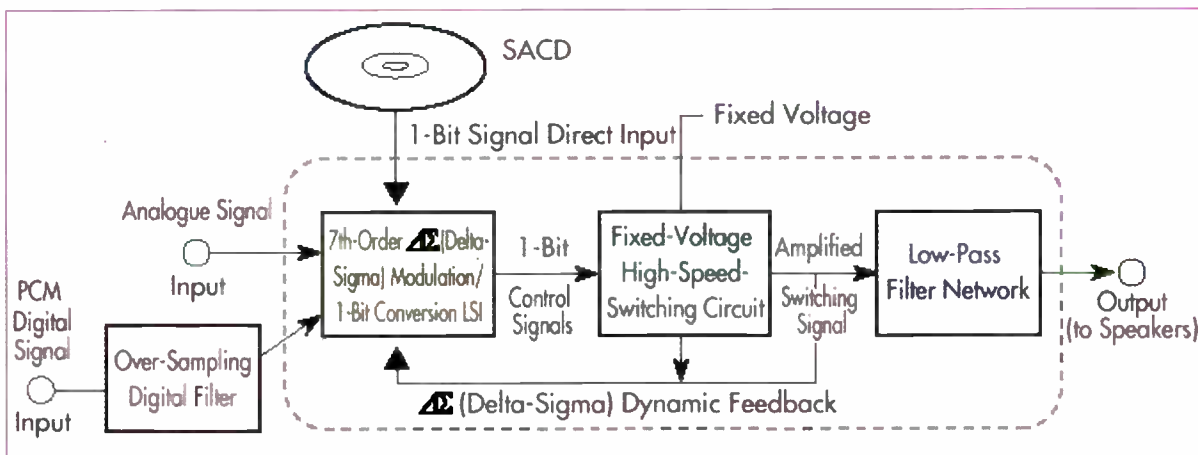
to music, but to keep up with the similarly priced opposition, Sharp need to do better, especially in the amplifier technology. Admittedly the digital amp phenomenon is still in its infancy but people expect more clout and drive from an amp than the SM-SX1 can deliver at present. Using the two of them as separate components, I found the SACD player the better of the pair, with insight and detail retrieval up there with the best, although its CD sound is a bit harsh compared to SACDs. The amp suffers from lack of power and coldness, especially at high volumes, but still matches the DX-SX1 in the low level detail department.

It's hard to imagine what kind of market Sharp is after here, apart from those with a high disposable income, of course. It's a mixed bag. Dyed-in-the-wool audiophiles will treat the digital amp process with a certain amount of trepidation, as it's still in the early stages and

can't deliver the power that many need to match their existing equipment. And more mundanely perhaps, they won't go for its 'minimalist space age' look. Those who crave that studious, analytical quality in hi-fi (neck brace, hot-spot types) may well warm to its coldness, whereas those who like music with emotion may want more. Whatever. It's an important product as far as both hi-fi and Sharp are concerned and they should be praised for having the guts and confidence to go for it. ■ ▲

Sharp DX-SX1 SACD/CD player £2,700
Sharp SM-SX1 1-bit amplifier £3,300

Sharp Electronics UK Ltd.
Sharp House
Thorpe Rd
Newton Heath
Manchester
M40 5BE
Tel: 0161 205 2333



HOW SHARP'S DIGITAL 1-BIT AMP WORKS

Sharp's SM-SX1 uses the concept of the class-D operating system, but employs 1-bit signals to control switching of the fixed voltage power instead of the usual PWM signals of other digital designs (which have an analogue-like width on the time axis and are used to control the switching in ordinary class-D). A delta-sigma Dynamic Feedback circuit feedbacks fluctuations of

voltage power to a 7th order delta-sigma modulation LSI chip and corrects the 1-bit signal in real time. The amplifier creates the 1-bit signal faithful to the input data by sampling delta-sigma modulation.

As the diagram to the left shows, the control signal is fed from the LSI chip to a high speed switching circuit and results in the amplified switching signal being finally fed to a low pass filter network. This large filter converts the digital switching signal into an

analogue signal and is fed out to the 'speakers'. This process means there's no analogue amplification from the signal input right through to the 'speaker outputs'.

Digital amps benefit from power efficiency due to their relatively simple ON/OFF switching operation. Incoming data in effect controls the DC power supply level, so box size is kept to a minimum but with maximum efficiency - both good selling points for many of today's consumers. ■ ▲

World Verdict



Super clean and detailed, but lacks both power and raw emotion. High price ensures a limited customer base.

Measured Performance
see page 111

the single life

David Price has a swinging time with Unison Research's brand new S.6 parallel single-ended integrated tube amplifier.

Unsurprisingly, Hi-Fi World often gets labelled a 'valve magazine' thanks to our penchant for little glass bottles that glow in the dark. As a result, we're regularly contacted by tube amp manufacturers and distributors asking for a review. We duly find ourselves agreeing, then listening and measuring the review sample, then pulling the review - simply because it isn't good enough to feature, let alone recommend.

The trouble is, standards are often shockingly bad in the wonderful world of valves. There are a lot of chancers and fly-by-nighters who lash up old textbook designs with poor quality components and charge a fortune in the hope of making a fast buck. Time and time again we come across this sort of product, and are then forced to refuse it 'the oxygen of publicity', lest some poor sod buy one! So it takes a good one to make it to print.

It's all the better then when we find ourselves reviewing decent valve amps. Having been long in the game, we can tell when something's a lemon or a plum. And years of reviewing experience has taught us that anything from Unison Research invariably falls into the latter category. This Italian manufacturer of over fifteen years experience never seems to do a duff amp. Moreover, every new creation seems even more special than the last. The £1,600 S.6 is no exception to the rule.

Handmade with a heavy gauge metal chassis, stainless steel baseplate and the best solid hardwoods finished

with natural organic lacquers (not just for effect, because as well as looking great, the timber damps the chassis too), it's a sight for sore eyes. Unfortunately its brick outhouse construction will give you a sore back too - much of its 330x450x200mm, 25kg bulk is taken up by its hefty output transformer and mains power supply.

The S6 is an integrated amplifier, meaning you get a volume control and source selector (complete with mad precision-turned stainless steel knobs), a tape monitor and a full wireless remote control. To those tube users who feel lucky to have an on-off switch, this thing feels as sumptuous as a Maserati Biturbo with all the options. You even get a metal valve guard as standard, which hinges up and down effortlessly for easy access and doesn't impede air circulation. Very classy, so it's a shame the power switch is a rather Heath Robinson affair stowed round the back next to the IEC mains input socket.

Unusually at this price, the new Unison is a parallel single-ended design, producing a very substantial 35W (claimed - see our measurements) per channel. The preamp stage uses two direct coupled ECC82 triodes, while three EL34EHs per channel handle the power amplification duties. The output tranny is a bespoke Unison Research affair that's hand wound at the factory, and taps for both four and eight ohm 'speakers are fitted.



The designers claim the shortest possible signal paths have been used, and all connections to the outside world are gold plated for the best electrical contact.

Unison recommend switching the amp on with the volume control set to minimum, which will hardly fill high end speaker owners with confidence, but the good news is that if you forget to heed the advice (which of course I did the second time I powered her up) you should be greeted with little more than a dull thud. Just as well for me, considering a single tweeter in my reference Yamaha NS1000Ms costs over £200! Those in the know will doubtless be questioning my sanity by now - 'what the hell's he doing using those things with a valve amp?' Well, you'd be right - the Yams have a highish 91dB sensitivity (therefore go loud with relatively little power) but are big, bad muthas in terms of the load they present to a power amplifier. Their impedance drops low enough to trip the protection circuitry on half decent transistor monoblocks (Audiolab 8000Ps, Naim NAPI 60s), so any valve amp that can drive them is definitely of the hairy chested variety. Much to my approval, you can

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► count the S.6 in that category!

Of course, I've come across a few tube amps that have performed the miraculous feat of not going pop at the merest whiff of my Yams. I reviewed a mad Russian Omak push-pull design back in 1995 and that didn't bat an eyelid, but then again it was probably once part of a Soviet radio transmitter back in the 1930s - it certainly looked that way! Unlike the Omak though, the Unison neither looks nor sounds quite as agricultural. Fed by a Michell Delphini phono stage, the result was quite the opposite. Kicking off with an innocuous bit of power pop, Blondie's 'Union City Blue' instantly impressed. Even at low volumes I found the S.6 extremely listenable - music flowed out of the speakers in an effortlessly organic way. Aside from the unusually clear, hear-through acoustic, I most enjoyed Debbie Harry's voice, which was amazingly direct and up-front, yet so clean and unsullied.

In other respects, the S.6 was just as satisfying. Obviously coloured, there's definitely that EL34 sepia tint that you also hear on other similarly aspirated amps. It is, however, more a patina than a full-on blind, as the Unison lets you discern a wide variety of tonal flavours. While lacking the sheer hear-through transparency of more expensive AudioNotes, you nevertheless get an inkling of how real music can sound if it's spared transistors. Lead guitars had a rough, grainy feel which contrasted Debbie's earthy vocals and the saccharine sound of those hi-hat cymbals. Rather than smoothing out or hardening up everything, the S.6 you left in no

doubt there were shades inbetween, which is an impressive feat for anything anywhere near its price.

Indeed, it proved a joy with a whole range of acoustic music. Female vocals are where parallel single-ended tubes excel, as the Unison so ably demonstrated. Kate Bush's 'December Will Be Magic' was gripping from start to finish - I felt 'direct coupled' to that voice, which wafted louchely out of my speakers with an eerie presence. Then I put on some classic R&B in the shape of Soul II Soul's 'Keep On Moving' and - hey presto - the Unison worked its spell again. It was like you could swim in those harmonies...

What then of the other things which amplifiers must do, such as keeping control of proceedings? Well, considering this is a tube amp and not a brace of Naim NAPI35s, it did an admirable job. Frankly, you're not going to get transistor levels of dynamics and grip from valves - even the very best can't match a good mid-price tranny amp like the Cyrus 7/PSX-R I had on standby. But many similarly priced tube amps are far inferior to the S.6 in this respect.

Go back to the beginning of 'Keep on Moving' and the opening bass sequence is - let's be honest here - loose and a trifle overblown - but it does manage to retain a coherent sense of rhythm that even many solid-state amplifiers lack. Although hardly the grippiest of basslines, it

somehow syncopates rather successfully with the looped snares further up the frequency spectrum. Again it's that 'ole PSE magic - cue up 4Hero's 'Universal Love' and the intricate snare/hi-hat/rim-shot patterns come over wonderfully lucidly. They do with Naim amps too, but somehow both products get there from completely different starting points. Despite having less obvious grip, the Unison manages to cohere the music's rhythms together like few products at any price.

Okay, so bass is a bit woolly, soundstaging a little constrained, imaging a touch vague and the overall dynamics curtailed. Yes indeed, the S.6 suffers all these trad tube maladies, yet it still manages very successfully to transcend them thanks to its strengths elsewhere. Its strong, confident power delivery, wide tonal palette, sweetness, warmth, rhythmic alacrity and deliciously clean, open sound more than compensate. Indeed, you could say Unison Research's S.6 is valves without tears. One of the few tube amps around that will drive difficult loads



reasonably loud, it can confidently be slotted into most home hi-fi systems and work straight out of the box. Thus installed, you'll soon start to appreciate its obvious talents, and yet you won't miss your previous solid state amp too much either. Matched with reasonably sensitive loudspeakers and a clean, neutral source, this thing could well prove a revelation. At the price, it's easily the best tube amplifier I've heard, and is a good enough all-rounder to make even hardened transistor users sit up and listen. Heartily recommended. ■ ▲

UNISON RESEARCH S.6 £1600
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Bucks
SL0 9DA
Tel: 01753 652669
www.ukd.co.uk

World Verdict
£★★★★★
Beautifully built and voiced amp offering a taste of the high end at a reasonably affordable price. Superb value for money.
Measured Performance see page 111

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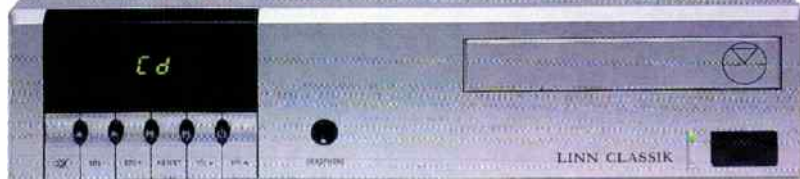
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HI-FI WORLD'S

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WIN A FANTASITIC LINN CLASSIK/KATAN COMBINATION WORTH OVER £1600 IN THIS MONTH'S GREAT COMPETITION GIVEAWAY!



There's a lot of hot talk about all-in-one hi-fi systems, and here's a product that proves it! While it's true to say that many integrated audio solutions aren't much cop, there are designs around like Linn's Classik that will radically assault any preconceptions you might have.

Launching this baby was a very brave move by the established Scottish hi-fi manufacturer. Not only has the company entered a market niche that many others have assiduously avoided 'on pain of death', but by putting out a product focussed as much on convenience and usability as it is on sound quality, it solemnly risked its purist audiophile credentials.

All this meant that the Classik had to be right first time, which it most obviously is. Not only do you get a wealth of facilities, including a proper CD player, tuner and amplifier, in a case the size of a shoebox, but it sounds the business too.

As a self contained hi-fi system, the £995 Classik has all you need for great sound out of the box. Lurking inside its beautifully hewn metal casing is a CD player with a Delta Sigma DAC, plus a 75W amplifier with extensive input options, a headphone output, twin sets of speaker terminals for biwiring, and even a decent pair of 2.5m speaker leads terminated with plugs! There's also an AM/FM tuner with 80

user definable presets and a digital signal strength meter. Then there's the remote control unit that offers everything from Treble, Bass and Balance controls to independently switched Listen and Record selectors. There's a digital clock with timer and sleep functions, which also controls a switched AC outlet on the back panel. This, Linn points out, means your Classik can wake you to music in the mornings and brew up your coffee too!

In short, it's awash with sensible, useful, real world facilities for music listeners - but hey audiophiles, don't let that put you off! Sound is top notch too - better than any equivalently priced separates system. This is because Linn's designers have extensively used circuitry from its widely acclaimed, mid nineties range of 'entry level' hi-fi separates - the £800 Mimik CD player and £749 Magik-I amplifier! The Classik proves conclusively that less really can be more.

In his review of the Classik in November 2000's Hi-Fi World, David Price concluded that its sound was superb. "You get an extremely finely etched midband with loads of detail. Strings are smooth and refined, voices powerful and immediate. Drums - especially snares and rim shots - machine-gun out from the recorded acoustic with a verve that an equivalent separates system simply

can't match. Best of all, the Classik frames all this action beautifully, giving the impression of a song on the move, of building up to a climax rather than just ambling along."

To complement the Classik, we're offering a pair of Katan loudspeakers and matching stands worth over £600. An attractive two-way bass reflex design, they feature a new dome tweeter with a neodymium magnet for a clean, open sound, plus a new custom polypropylene bass/ midrange driver with a strong die-cast chassis and dual field shaping magnets for an extended bass response. A high specification crossover ensures accurate music reproduction across the frequency range, and high quality internal cabling deliver optimum signal clarity to each drive unit. The Katans are fully shielded and can be easily configured as passive or active loudspeakers by Linn's clever reversible-link connection boards.

To win this superb Linn hi-fi combination, simply answer these questions on a postcard, and send it to the following address before March 31st, 2001. The lucky winner will be picked out of Hi-Fi World's now threadbare baseball cap. ■ ▲

Competition Questions

[1] What type of DAC does the Classik use?

- [a] Delta Sierra
- [b] Delta Sigma
- [c] Dark Sierra
- [d] MASH and peas

[2] The power output of the Classik is?

- [a] bangin'
- [b] kickin'
- [c] mingin'
- [d] 75W per channel

[3] Katan is the name of what, exactly?

- [a] a rare mutation of the Tunisian Dinar bird
- [b] an erstwhile Hi-Fi World scribe
- [c] a Linn loudspeaker
- [d] James Tiberius Kirk's titular nomenclature

[4] Linn Products' website address is?

- [a] www.linn.co.uk
- [b] www.hi-fiworld.co.uk
- [c] www.computeraudio.co.uk
- [d] www.spacer.net

Please send all entries to:

April Competition
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Eager audiophiles should keep Saturday June 9th free. At an exclusive central London venue Linn Products in conjunction with Hi-Fi World will be demonstrating both a top spec CD12 system and an LP12 system. It's your chance to compare the company's flagship £12,000 CD player to the world's reference turntable. Top staff members of both Hi-Fi World and Linn will be in attendance and we hope to hand over the prize to the lucky winner of the above competition. It's an event that no hi-fi enthusiast should miss! See next month's issue for further details of how you can attend this exciting event.

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...to Mr. William Jones of Rotherham, the winner of our February competition. A pair of Mission 783s are on the way!

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ATOMIC KATAN

Will Linn's new entry-level standmounting loudspeaker fend off the best of the rest? Simon Pope gives the Katan a blast.

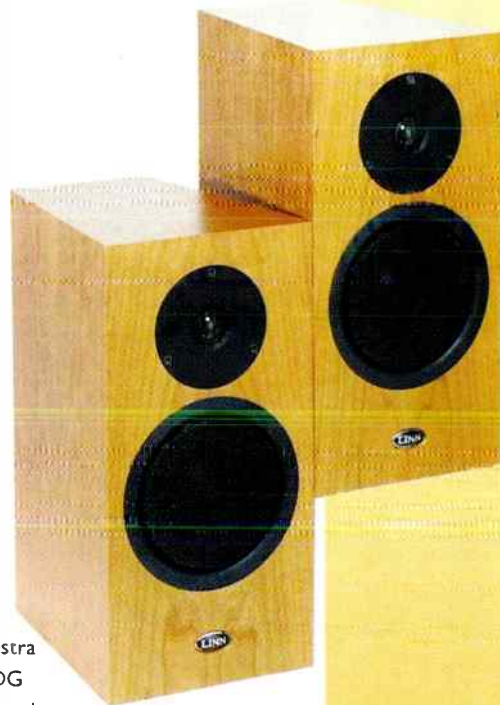
First came the Kan, then the Tukan, now it's the turn of the Katan to fly Linn's bookshelf loudspeaker flag. The Katan was launched with the Ninka, a large infinite baffle floorstander that recently impressed us with its bass depth and taut, fast sound. It also looked much better than the company's previous efforts. This also goes for the Katan. Gone is the 'square' appearance of the Tukan, and in its place is an attractive tapered cabinet with fixed metal grilles over the drivers - far better than the old granny's tights that had to be stretched over the Tukans with the aid of an elastic band!

The Katan is a two-way bass reflex design (unlike the closed cabinet Ninka) featuring a new dome tweeter with a neodymium magnet, plus a new polypropylene mid/bass unit with a strong die-cast chassis and dual field shaping magnets. The drivers are fully shielded to ensure placement next to a television for A/V applications. Like the Ninka a choice of reversible connection boards beneath the inputs link the terminals for either single or bi-wire passive and bi-amped active playback, where the inputs will link directly to the drive units and bypass the crossover.

Described as a bookshelf, wall mount or standmount 'speaker, I found the Katan worked best between four to eight inches from a rear wall. Another trait of the Katan I noticed, which our measurement confirmed, was that they need a bit of power to drive them. 4W valve amps are not the order of the day here, so I used Linn's own LK85 power amp and a 200W Meridian 557 power amp to glean the best

from them. I would recommend a minimum of 60W per channel, otherwise you may find your amp gain set at 3 o'clock! These 'speakers perform best with punchy rock or pop such as Green Day's 'Dookie' or Blur's 'Best Of', both of which I played through Meridian's 206.24 CD player. What I heard was a fast and vibrant sound similar to the Ninka, but lacking the obvious bass depth of the floorstanders - although there's lower bass here than the Tukans could muster. The sound was also a tad thinner, in that vocals lacked a bit of warmth and guitars could sometimes sound edgy. What these 'speakers did exceptionally well was keep time and deliver the music with excellent staging and clarity. There's no woolly bass flab found in many other reflex designs here - even when close to a rear wall, there was very little boom, although there is some 'bloom'. Tracks like Blur's furious 'Song 2' sounded grippy and controlled, with a terse, visceral presence.

Moving to classical chamber music in the form of Borodin's string quartets on vinyl, the Katans showed a good sense of detail but phrasing wasn't absolutely the best, due to a little greyness present that drained acoustic instruments of their natural timbre. This didn't distract too much from the performance but it wasn't as accomplished a sound as the larger and slightly softer sounding Ninkas. Orchestral music like Stravinsky's Rite Of Spring, while exciting and forceful, suffered from a closed in sound that couldn't escape the boxes, despite being perfect in imaging and detail. But orchestral fullness in the recording (Boulez with the Cleveland



Orchestra on a DG CD) was lost somewhere along the line.

Like many Linn products, the Katans are excellent rock 'speakers with oodles of punch and excitement. Used with at least 60W of power they'll sound fluid and controlled, giving life to anything you wish to chuck at them. Like previous Linn 'speakers, they don't quite give classical music their full attention but will still sound highly detailed, if not over-warm. Overall I'd say they're an improvement on the slightly thin sounding Tukan, and well worth a listen if this is the sort of 'speaker you're looking for. ■ ▲

Linn Katan £600 (black) £635 (white, cherry and maple)

Linn Products Ltd.
Floors Rd., Waterfoot
Glasgow G76 0EP
Tel: 0141 307 7777
www.linn.co.uk

World Verdict



Exciting and attractive little 'speaker with detail and punch. Better with rock than classical.

Measured Performance
see page 111

THE SPIRIT OF MUSIC



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Tel: +49 (431) 64 774-0 Fax: +49 (431) 68 21 01 Web: www.elac.com

Sound looks

cameo

Inner value



WHAT HI-FI? August 2000

"The Myriad is a fine sounding system,
as you might expect from this brand."

MYRYAD

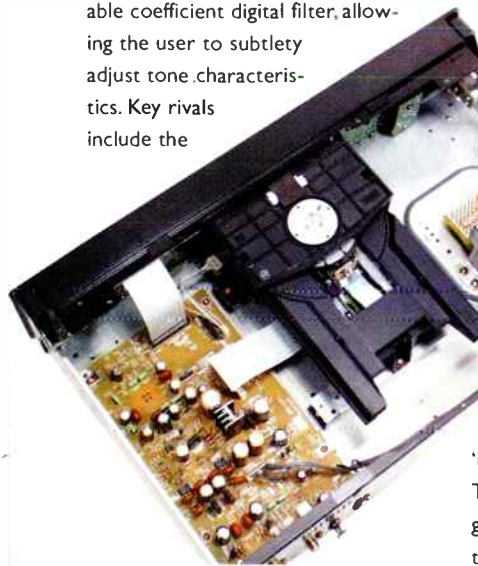
Myriad distribution by Sennheiser UK Ltd. **FREEPOST**, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 3BR.
Brochure Line: 0800 652 5002 Fax: 01494 551 550 email: info@sennheiser.co.uk www.sennheiser.co.uk

Mechanical Engineering

Dominic Todd listens to Sony's latest CD player for the UK market. Will it see of the £200 competition?



Let's get the bad news out of the way with first. Unlike its big brother, the 940, the new Sony CDP-XB740E is not a Super Audio Compact Disc (SACD) player. Perhaps that's asking too much for a player costing £200 at this stage in its development. Neither does it feature Sony's intriguing fixed laser transport, whereby the disc passes over the laser rather than vice versa. However, Sony hasn't been idle in improving their QS range CD player. The removal of the headphone socket and associated PCB and level control should make for less interference inside the machine. Sony also claims an upgrading of capacitors, resistors, wiring and damping materials. A glimpse inside shows typically neat construction, although don't expect Marantz KI Signature quality components on the cheap, despite improvements. This is also Sony's cheapest machine to feature their 24bit variable coefficient digital filter, allowing the user to subtly adjust tone characteristics. Key rivals include the



Kenwood DPF-3030 (£180), NAD C520 (£170) and Cambridge D500 (£200).

The dynamic, but slightly bright 'Absent Minded Friends' by Moloko set the ball rolling. Immediately apparent was a strong taut bassline that successfully gave the track suitable bounce. Separation was good even through the more complex passages. Less impressive was a 'glassy' element to vocal reproduction, which spoiled otherwise fine projection. As I've found before with Sony products, changing the filter setting didn't have a profound effect upon the over all balance. Setting 2 emphasised the slightly harsh treble reproduction, whilst setting 3 simply appeared to veil the music. In short, I found the filter at its best left in the 'std' position.

Turning back the clock, my next choice of disc was Nina Simone's 'Why (the king of love is dead)'. As anyone familiar with the song will testify, it's an emotionally charged performance. Sadly though, the 740 failed to truly capture this. Technically, with regards to price, the piece was extremely well presented. The sound staging showed a fine lack of constraint with particularly fine height of sound apparent. 'Red Spaces' by Lobe (from the Swim Team label) suited the Sony to a far greater extent. The Ambient nature of the track allowed the 740 to excel at

what it's best at. The upper bass response was particularly strong, and whilst real bass weight was absent, I've yet to hear a CD player at anything like this price do better.

The brilliantly titled 'Lucille Has Messed Up My Mind', by the inimitable Frank Zappa provoked a mixed response. The track was transparently reproduced with fine percussion detail in particular. No complaints about the timing, either, with the strong upper bass driving the piece through with gusto. Less good, however, was the vocal performance. It was rather blandly portrayed, missing out on subtle nuances of voice.

I've no doubt that the Sony would give many years of faultless, consistent performance, yet musically it's something of a mixed bag. If your tastes are focused more toward the Classical or Dance genres, then there's much to recommend the 740. Fine timing, a spacious sound stage and good definition are the main attributes. However, for those who listen to a vocal based source of music, it's rather less convincing. By no means a bad machine then, but just make sure you get a listen to the opposition before taking the plunge. ■ ▲

SONY CDP-XB740E £200

Sony UK Ltd.
The Heights
Brooklands
Weybridge
Surrey
KT13 0XW
Tel: 01932 8160

World Verdict



A good player well worth audition but suits ambient instrumental music better than vocal.

Measured Performance
see page 111

HOWARD'S

Noel Keywood listens to Castle's latest 'speaker in the Classic series, a revamped version of an old friend.

▶ **T**he arrival of Castle's new Howards in the office was greeted with anticipation by me. The Howard is one of those long standing designs with a set of qualities I like. Each new iteration is not only a welcome chance to reacquaint myself with this entertaining floorstander, but also an opportunity to see just how Castle might have moved the game on. Castle are obviously happy with the design too, since it's now up to version three, full name Howard S3.

It was stimulus I needed to spend a few hours sorting out my much loved but slightly feared 300B valve amplifier, because the Howard is something of a 'perfect load' as far as amplifiers are concerned. As such it's a great match for a valve amplifier, but equally perfect for transistor amplifiers too - just one of its strengths. It will get the best from any amplifier and is one of the few loudspeakers currently available that can do so. The Howard might not look radical, but underneath its conventional exterior Castle have built a clever and advanced loudspeaker that in the past has delivered fine results. I looked forward to testing this new version.

At 992mm the Howard is tall. Luckily it is narrow at 210mm and not too deep either, at just 320mm. So it doesn't loom large in the room and consumes little real estate. Behind a small front grille lie just two drive units in a normal enough arrangement comprising bass/midrange and tweeter. But there's grille in the top panel too and here things get interesting. The top unit handles most of the audio range and fires up at the

ceiling. Bouncing sound off the ceiling adds some height to the sound stage, making it seem more expansive and also more solid and plausible, I found. But that's not all. This upward firing unit also drives a long bass line that ports onto the floor, beneath the loudspeaker. This novel arrangement is responsible for the Howard's fine bass and excellent load characteristics.

In a nutshell then, the Howard is a high quality two-way, with augmented bass and stereo imaging. It might sound simple but there's a lot of special cabinetwork that you become aware of when unpacking; these 'speakers are heavy, weighing 25.5kgs (56lbs) apiece. Each cabinet has a large port in its bottom face that exhausts onto a plinth. The plinth must be screwed to the bottom of the loudspeaker, spacers holding the two apart by around 4mm to allow the port to 'see' the outside world. Large spikes can be screwed into the base to aid stability.

Two sets of shielded heavy duty terminals cater for bi-wiring. There are no links to allow the use of a single cable. The crossover networks use a couple of very large iron-cored inductors, high quality capacitors glued down and hard wiring. Castle solder all connections, even to the drive units. It's a high quality crossover, thankfully not so complex as to be riddled with components. The cabinets are beautifully finished, in keeping with the high overall standard of quality adopted for the Howard, since this is their flagship model in the Classic range.

I measure loudspeakers before listening to them - and measurement



says a lot. Castle tell me their carbon fibre drive units are a new design over which they've spent a lot of time. Working with a soft dome tweeter the new drivers give an exceptionally flat frequency response and doubtless Castle are proud of this. It's an approach fast becoming popular amongst U.K. manufacturers - if they can boast extreme accuracy, why not? My observation on this, drawn from my own experiences designing our kit loudspeakers, is that it gives a glassy bright tonal balance. Orchestral strings are moved forward and given a more prominent role in a performance, with some edginess at times creeping in, probably from a 5kHz peak attributable to the 'whizzer cone' Castle use. However, the Howards have real transparency and stage depth. From the Righteous Brothers singing You've Lost that Loving Feeling through to Toni

END?

Braxton's Spanish Guitar, vocalists come over as full in body and healthy in voice. Instruments are layered backward in the mix and choirs fill the room convincingly. The upward firing drivers help embody singers by strengthening central images, whilst also lifting the sound stage. They also fill the room with sound, making the Howards sound equally good whether you're sitting, standing - or even out of the room! Apart from being very insightful and detailed the Howards paint an expansive picture that conveys an impressive sense of scale. This is uncommon and a feature of the 'speaker that sets it apart. From Rock through to Classical these loudspeakers sound nothing other than impressive; there's little like them.

Creating a sense of scale demands good, deep bass too. The Howards have this in plenty. Their quarter wave transmission line gets low and notes step down with real authority. It's always a treat to hear a good, large speaker almost breathe bass into the room, bass so low you feel it gently moving the fabric of your surroundings. Cesar Franck's intriguing Choral No2, played on the organ of the Basilica of Saint Sernin, Toulouse, through these 'speakers had the sort of grandeur that makes this work complete, the organ majestically stepping down to its 16ft pipes which the Howards reproduced as a 32Hz rumble that seeped through the building. Impressive stuff.

I knew from measurement though that there was likely to be some box colouration from a broad peak in the output of the upward firing driver, and this was so. Modern digital recordings in particular, like George Michael's Roxanne from Songs from the Last Century sounded a little box bound. From Eddy Grant's Electric Avenue, spinning at 45rpm, to the very clean, close-miked and powerful digital recording of the Overture of Wagner's *Reinzi* from Teldec, kick

drum to kettle drum had the Howard sounding a trifle coloured. It can be over excited, Mission's Cyrus 7 solid-state amplifier getting more power out of the low impedance bass section than my valve 300B amplifier, producing a fruitier sound as a result. As loudspeaker cabinets get bigger and loading arrangements more complex, colorations like this tend to creep in. It's a small price you pay for the Howard's complexity.

Castle have pursued an interesting design aim with the Howard. This is a loudspeaker wrought to present music with a sense of scale; it's not just a bigger box with more drivers,

like so many top of the range models. Using quality components in a beautifully made and finished cabinet, the Howard S3 was better than ever. It remains one of the most accurate, entertaining and revealing of the large loudspeakers. ■ ▲

Castle Howard S3 £1349.00
 Castle Acoustics
 Park Mill Shortbank Road,
 Skipton
 North Yorkshire
 BD23 2TT
 Tel: 01756 795333
 Fax: 01756 795335
www.castleacoustics.co.uk



World Verdict



Tuneful deep bass, see-through clarity and spacious imaging mark out the Howard S3 as a first class loudspeaker. It produces music on an impressive scale and is hugely entertaining.

Measured Performance
 see page 111

SALISBURY

As soon as you spin a disc, you'll hear that Naim's CD5 is a Compact Disc player at the height of its powers, says David Price.



Regardless of fad or fashion, Naim has ploughed its own furrow for over twenty five years. If buyers, dealers and reviewers want to come on board that's fine, but the company has never once pandered to the hi-fi business's whimsical ways.

The Naim sound holds that rhythmic and dynamic accuracy is paramount, and all else is secondary. It's something they once shared with LInn. Of the two, Naim has been its stronger proponent. As well as making audio equipment, Naim has become something of a hi-fi paradigm. In the same way most motorists know the difference between, say, a Volvo and a BMW driver, so audiophiles talk in terms of 'Naim owners'. A cliché maybe, but I challenge you to go into someone's house, notice a brace of NAP135s, and not know how they like their music!

Naim styling always struck me as something of a missed opportunity. It wasn't as if the company was skimping on the looks to invest money elsewhere - because the build of the higher end stuff (such as the CDX 1 reviewed last year) is supreme. It's just that the company seemed either unconcerned or even wary of 'styling' its products lest

people start buying them because they looked nice - perish the thought!

Well, the advent of the NAP500 was obviously an important moment. Not only did it represent a nod to the high end, but also introduced a new aesthetic template which Naim's lesser models have gone on to adopt. The entry level '5' range - as someone once said - wears it well. My first encounter with the sculpted contours of the fascia, divided into three clearly delineated regions, was courtesy of the NAIT 5 - and what a happy occasion that was. With its die-cast Zinc and aluminium (58.4x432x301mm) casework, and tactile, backlit control buttons. The CD5 is no less impressive to look at and touch.

The quality continues inside. Naim has paid great attention to the stability of the RF signals read by the laser, resulting in a suspended transport and low mass magnetic puck clamping system. Paths between critical components are said to be as short as possible, and meticulous attention has been paid to earthing and mains issues.

There are fourteen low-noise, regulated power supplies on the CD5 main circuit board, separate digital and analogue transformer windings

plus additional screening to reduce the intrusion of RF interference.

Mechanical engineering is no less thorough - aside from that beautifully hewn, low resonance casework, there are 'low-energy-transfer' feet, physically decoupled circuit boards and a CDX-style glass reinforced front loading drawer mechanism.

Finally, as with all other Naim products, you can add a Flat-Cap, Hi-Cap or even a Super-Cap external power supply to be connected to the analogue circuitry.

SOUND QUALITY

Generally, when people talk about Compact Disc players, they think in terms of two generic types - 'smooth' and 'lively'. The former often have a drooping frequency response and get their inoffensive sonics simply because they don't excavate much of the dynamic and timing information on the disc. The latter may seem to do great things in the detail department, but this is often because of the artificial edge their noise and distortion adds.

To understand the CD5, you have to think beyond this. In one respect it's very slick, with no piercing upper midband nasties whatsoever. Yet in another way it is amazingly fast and engaging - not because of any added

THRILL

digital hash, but rather down to its supreme grip and speed. It treads a brilliantly judged path between the blood-on-the-carpet dynamism of eighties multi-bit, and the slickness of nineties Bitstream.

Scritti Politti's 'Lover to Fall' is a complex exercise in sequenced drum programming, to which some pretty elaborate keyboard patterns are added. The result is an intricate piece of pop that can all too quickly become a torture track for some CD players. Indeed, even at the CD5's price point, many players just gloss over many of the song's rhythmic and dynamic intimacies. I can count only two players at this price point which have successfully negotiated it to date - Arcam's FMJ CD23 and Meridian's 506.24. Well, now there's a third.

When a note starts, the CD5 will be the first player in its price bracket to tell you about it. Likewise, that note's sustain and decay are carried superbly too. All this information is then sewed together in a fantastically coherent and natural way, giving a tremendously engaging sound.

Indeed, while the Naim lacks the almost unipivot-like (I hope this analogy still means something even to non-vinyl users!) fluidity of the Arcam and the wonderfully warm, open and expansive soundscape of the Meridian, it blows both into the weeds in its ability to impart this song's deliriously complex rhythmic inflections. Crank the volume up, sit back and prepare to be amazed - it's a gas!

Winding my way through my CD collection, I was amazed by the wealth of detail the CD5 threw out. Compare two average thousand pound CD spinners using Grace Jones' 'My Jamaican Guy' and one might sound a little more communicative than the other, but generally the differences aren't huge. But the Naim proved no ordinary Joe - positively bursting with stuff I'm sure I hadn't heard before (little bits at the back of the mix, subtle



rhythmic shifts and flurries), it didn't have me entertained and amused so much as transfixed.

And still it gets better. While it's undoubtedly the most transparent sounding machine in its price point, the CD5's party trick is the way it sews all this mass of information together in a way that makes complete sense. Some have called it clinical - but I don't think this is fair - it isn't just an efficient communicator but a gifted performer in its own right. It's both technically accomplished and in tune with the music's emotion. This is why it works so well with so many different types of music - from T Rex's 'Cosmic Dancer' to Michael Hedges' 'Aerial Boundaries'.

Such is the essence of the CD5. It's a Naim and it sounds like one - it isn't as neutral or impassive as, say Copland's CDA289, or as even handed and level headed as the Meridian 506.24. Its bass isn't the most natural and organic sounding - indeed it can sometimes sound a little synthetic - but it's as tight and supple as you'll get under two grand. It doesn't have an awful lot to tell you about the tonal and textural delights of a recording either, but its capacity to move and groove you is



simply sublime.

Another beautifully designed, manufactured and voiced product from Naim then. Easily the most thrilling listen at or anywhere near the price, it's wonderfully presented and screwed together, and frankly I'm surprised by how close it comes to its far more expensive CDX brother I reviewed last year.

If you're interested in 'the Naim sound', there's never been a more compelling reason to get down to a dealer to experience it for yourself. ■ ▲

Naim CD5

£1125

Naim Audio
Southampton Rd

Salisbury

Wilts

SPI 2LN

Tel: 01722 332266

World Verdict



Superbly built, reasonably priced and with a fantastically exciting yet sophisticated sound, the CD5 is one of Naim's best products yet.

Measured Performance
see page 111



J A Michell | Gyrodec SE Turntable **£974.95**

Founded in Borehamwood by mechanical engineer John Michell. For over thirty years, Michell Engineering have been at the forefront of quality audio, with world-wide appreciated products like the GyroDec and Orbe Turntables.

In the early eighties, the revolutionary GyroDec Turntable, with its elegant and effective suspension system, was introduced. The **Gyro SE** is a smaller and cheaper package that retains the classy sound of the GyroDec and can be upgraded to the full GyroDec specification by adding a plinth and dustcover. **Price includes Rega RB300 Tone Arm**

CYRUS

CD7 CD Player **£799.95** 7 Integrated Amplifier **£699.95**

The new **CD7** combines the latest transport developments with 24-bit DAC technology. The CD player can be easily upgraded by adding the external PSX-R power supply.

The 60 Watt **Cyrus 7** is a powerful integrated amplifier and system controller that can be upgraded in many directions. This flexible unit will form the cornerstone of your system and provide access into Cyrus' Audio Visual and Multiroom systems.

Whether you want a high quality music, multiroom or audio visual system, there is a Cyrus system to fulfill your needs.



MISSION



782 bases its performance on a 165mm Nomex bass unit fitted to a reflex enclosure that extends low frequency output to reach the lowest fundamental of bass guitar - an astonishing performance for such a graceful and compact cabinet.

783 houses a larger 200mm bass unit with massive motor system, capable of floor shaking, yet tightly controlled low frequency extension. Both use Keraform midrange drivers for outstanding clarity and midrange detail coupled to superb dynamic range together with the smooth and finely detailed Mission silk dome tweeter.

780 and **781** are the pinnacle of Mission's research into creating a three dimensional soundstage. extensive bandwidth and dynamic range from the smallest possible cabinet dimensions. The **780** is diminutive in form but massive in its sonic capabilities. Its 130mm Keraform bass unit is carefully matched to a novel reflex enclosure for full bodied bass extension, the qualities of Keraform produce a dynamic and ultra detailed midrange. In the **781** a 165mm Keraform driver takes advantage of a larger, stand mount cabinet to extend bass performance and increase efficiency whilst maintaining that superb midband transparency and finely detailed treble.

Cyrus Selection

5 Integrated Amplifier	£499.95
FM7.5 FM Tuner	£399.95
PSX-R Power Supply	£349.95
Smart Power Amplifier	£549.95
APA7 Mono Power (ea)	£949.95
AV5 AV Processor	£999.95
CLS70 Loudspeakers	£799.95

Mission 780 Series

783	£999.95
782	£699.95
781	£499.95
780	£299.95

Please Note: Some products may not be available at all outlets. Advertisement valid until at least 14th March 2007, L&OE.



more entertaining

World Radio History



ARCAM

DiVA Series

CD72 CD Player	£399.95
DV88 DVD Player	£899.95
A65 Integrated Amplifier	£369.95
A75 Integrated Amplifier	£429.95
P75 Power Amplifier	£299.95
P85 Power Amplifier	£499.95
T51 Tuner	£279.95
AVR100 AV Receiver	£799.95



DiVA CD92 CD Player **£849.95**
DiVA A85 Integrated Amplifier **£699.95**

Arcam's quest for higher performance, has led to the development of the new *DiVA* series, the most complete range of high performance home entertainment equipment ever launched by a specialist audio manufacturer. Innovative design and production techniques have enabled Arcam to build on established values of excellent sound quality and value.

The *DiVA* series comprises, two CD Players, three Integrated Amplifiers, two Power Amplifiers, an AM/FM Tuner, a high performance DVD Player and Arcam's first Home Cinema Receiver. All models are available in either silver or black.



Please Note: Price Excludes STAE1 Stands.



ACOUSTIC ENERGY

AE1 Series II **£699.95**

In 1988 the original AE1 was launched. Designed to satisfy the needs of the professional audio sector of the market, by offering great accuracy, precise stereo imaging, dynamics, and transparency coupled with high power handling and linearity. The AE1 quickly acquired a global reputation with musicians, recording artists and studio engineers.

Subsequently the AE1 won the British Hi-Fi Award for Best Speaker in 1991 and 1992, and acclaim within the hi-fi press grew world-wide.

Unrivalled in its class the AE1 is renowned for superb bass, speed and dynamics.

The **AE1 Series II** retains these qualities and provides greater clarity, transparency and harmonic timbre, coupled with a larger stereo sound stage and increased sensitivity.

Critical matching of the voice coil and metal-cone have improved the mid-range, allowing for a much simpler, short path crossover network achieving gentle first order acoustic slopes and a seamless blend between the drivers.

The crossover features upgrades to the internal wiring and Industrial grade encapsulation is also applied to the total crossover assembly eliminating resonance, microphony and increasing power handling.

ROKSAN

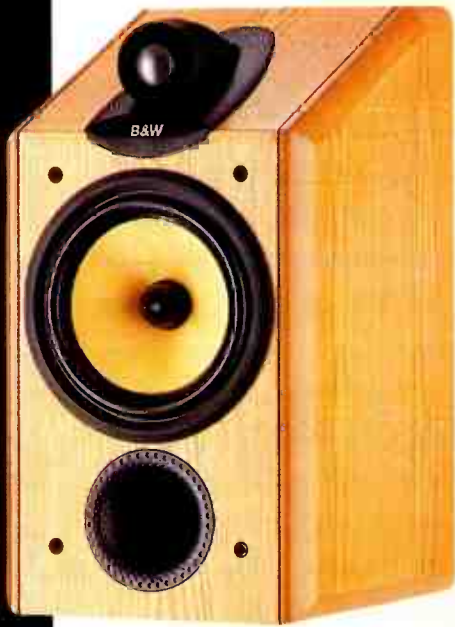
Kandy is the starter system from Roksan. Without compromising its high-quality sound performance, the *Kandy* system offers a complete musical experience at a very affordable price. Its CD player, tuner and amplifier are all designed and built to the exacting specifications for which Roksan are renowned.

Minimal, stylish, ultra-modern, this system is available in a choice of unique colour panels, a complimentary feature to any modern interior.

Also Available: *Roksan Caspian Series*



World Radio History

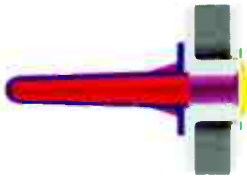


CDM™NT Series

The CDM™NT series from B&W combines the unbeatable sound purity of their highly acclaimed Nautilus 800 Series and the classic looks of their predecessors, the CDM SE. Complete in both looks and sound quality, this is one of B&W's finest loudspeaker ranges to date. The CDM™NT Series is available in a choice of beautifully finished real wood veneers.

CDM™NT Selection

CDM™1NT	£749.95
CDM™7NT	£1249.95
CDM™9NT	£1799.95
CDM™CNT Centre	£399.95
CDM™SNT Surround	£749.95



Nautilus Tapered Tubes
The most effective way of absorbing unwanted sound from the back of the drive unit.



Kevlar Cones The same properties that make Kevlar the right material for bulletproof vests also benefit the design of wide bandwidth drivers.



Flowport™ Technology
Golf ball aerodynamics theory points the way to lower distortion reflex ports.



LINN
the only sound™

Founded in 1972, independent precision-engineering company. Linn Products Limited, specialise in top performance sound reproduction.

Linn's first product was the revolutionary Linn Sondek LP12 Turntable. 25 years later it is still, for many, the reference Turntable. Today, Linn's hi-fi range includes over 50 products including CD Players, Tuners, Amplifiers and Loudspeakers.



Classik CD Receiver £999.95

The **Classik** is an alternative to the sound and looks of mass market compact systems. Designed to be useful throughout the home, the Classik is simple and stylish with all the advanced features needed to satisfy the most demanding hi-fi enthusiast or discriminating music lover.

The Classik combines an extensive and flexible control system, high quality CD, Tuner, and powerful Amplifier, capable of driving any Loudspeakers, in a single, compact package and is available in a choice of colours.



Genki CD Player £994.95

The **Genki** is a versatile, high performance CD Player combining value and multi-zone flexibility. With both fixed and variable outputs, the Genki can be connected to a Pre Amplifier in the conventional way or, using its local volume control, connected directly to a Power Amplifier. **Features include:** HDCD playback capability, Delta-Sigma digital-analogue conversion, carefully implemented low-noise circuitry to deliver pitch accurate sound, surface mount electronics for optimum signal routing and layout and Linn proprietary Brilliant silent power supply technology.

Pekin AM/FM Tuner £544.95

Integrating the knowledge gained from developing other Linn Tuners such as the Kremlin, the Kudos and most recently the Classik, the **Pekin** AM/FM Tuner takes it one step further, to produce a powerful and truly musical performance to the unique standards that you expect from Linn.

Features include: 80 memory pre-sets, upgradeable software, fully screened low-noise circuitry, high overload margin and high sensitivity, low noise switchmode power supply and two audio outputs.



Linn Selection

Ikemi CD Player	£1949.95
Majik Integrated Amplifier	£694.95
LK85 Power Amplifier	£494.95
LK 140 Power Amplifier	£749.95
Katan Speakers	£634.95
Ninka Speakers	£894.95
Kolektor Pre Amplifier	£494.95
Wakonda Pre Amplifier	£794.95



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MUSICAL FIDELITY

Musical Fidelity's A-Series is a ground-breaking range of CD Players, Pre-Power and Integrated Amplifiers. The whole series has received enormous acclaim and has won many hi-fi awards worldwide.

X-Ray CD Player	£749.95
X-A2 Integrated Amplifier	£449.95
A3 Pre-Amplifier	£999.95
A3 Power Amplifier	£999.95
A300 Integrated Amplifier	£1399.95
A3 Tuner	£599.95
HT600 5 Channel Power Amplifier	£1999.95
HTP Surround Processor	£1999.95



A3 CD Player **£799.95**
A3 Integrated Amplifier **£849.95**



MONITOR AUDIO Gold Reference Series

Monitor Audio has been designing and manufacturing high quality British Loudspeakers since 1972. In the mid-eighties, the R852MD was launched utilising Monitor Audio's unique C-CAM™ Metal Dome Tweeter. It sounded significantly smoother and more musical than its rivals and formed the basis for a whole new generation of Monitor Audio Loudspeakers. The company has been at the forefront of Loudspeaker technology ever since.

The new **Gold Reference** Series introduces advanced Drive Unit technology and the highest standards of engineering currently available. Each cabinet is hand crafted from 22mm thick MDF, using mirror matched veneers. Multiple internal bracing is positioned at critical resonance nodes to eliminate flexing and audible cabinet artifacts.

ARCAM FMJ

Arcam's approach to hi-fi has always been to provide the best combination of performance and price in the hi-fi separates market. The FMJ series not only continues this tradition but also evolves and extends it.

It quickly became apparent to Arcam's design team that the significant performance improvements gained from using more advanced chassis and casing materials and a solid metal front panel, could be taken further by revisiting the mechanical design of the units.

All FMJ products have finely textured, 8mm thick, aluminium machined front panels. These panels are then "sealed" by baking them in industrial ovens to ensure the durability of their high quality finish. Even the control knob on the A22 Amplifier is turned from solid aluminium before being given the same finishing treatment.

The **CD23** benefits from a second power supply transformer. This, like the power supply transformers used in nearly all Arcam amplifiers, is a toroidal transformer. Whilst being expensive compared to the alternatives, toroids are known to dramatically improve the audio performance of many hi-fi products. In this product, both transformers are custom made for Arcam and are used to supply the analogue and digital circuits separately.



Please Note: Some products may not be available at all outlets. Advertisement valid until at least 14th March 2001. E&OE



who are **sevenoaks?**

Founded as Sevenoaks Hi-Fi in the summer of 1972, the original shop, in the market town of Sevenoaks, Kent, quickly gained a reputation for offering a wide range of products at competitive prices, and providing excellent service.

Exciting new technologies like compact disc, meant that throughout the 1980's there was considerable interest in hi-fi and Sevenoaks were able to grow. By 1990, the company was established as one of the leading independent hi-fi specialists in the country.

More stores were opened and a number of the original shops were relocated. In 1995 the important decision was made to change the name to Sevenoaks Sound & Vision, reflecting the wide appeal of new audio visual products.

After twenty-eight years of trading, the company has more than forty outlets nationwide, and is for many of the UK's leading manufacturers of electronics and loudspeakers, their largest and most successful retailer.

solutions

The people at Sevenoaks appreciate that customers have a choice. This appreciation has meant that over the years Sevenoaks have had to adapt.

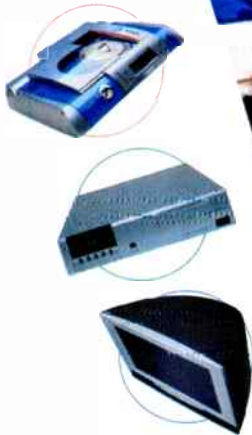
As new products and technologies have arrived, the staff have been trained to ensure that they can explain the issues, simply and informatively.

This orientation to customer service remains, and the implementation of a company charter is one example of this commitment.

By staying true to the original ideals of offering a wide range of the latest products, at competitive prices, and providing superb service in pleasant surroundings, Sevenoaks are able to listen, recommend, demonstrate and supply the products that best suit the needs of their many customers.

As the world becomes a more complex place and people search for entertainment and relaxation, Sevenoaks Sound & Vision believe that whatever the requirement, they have the solution.

solutions



DVD Video is a great way of enjoying movies at home

brochure

available in all outlets





scotland and north

- Aberdeen** 491 Union Street **01224 587070**
- Edinburgh** 5 The Grassmarket **0131 229 7267**
- Glasgow** 88 Great Western Road **0141 332 9655**
- Hull** 1 Savile Row, Savile Street **01482 587171**
- Leeds** 112 Vicar Lane **0113 245 2775**
- Liverpool** 16 Lord Street **0151 707 8417**
- Manchester** 69 High Street, City Centre **0161 831 7969**
- Newcastle** 19 Newgate Street **0191 221 2320**
- Preston** 40-41 Lune Street **01772 825777**
- Sheffield** 635 Queens Road, Heeley **0114 255 5861**

midlands and east

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new outlets

Towards the end of 2000, new outlets were opened in **Edinburgh, Lincoln, Liverpool** and **Nottingham**.

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With the introduction of their 'entry-level' **Five Series**, which includes the CD5 CD Player and Nait 5 Integrated Amplifier, Naim Audio have enhanced their long established reputation still further.

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VINYL REVIVAL

Is vinyl really making a comeback? Noel Keywood looks at new figures from the music biz that suggest it is. Meanwhile, other formats plummet. . .

► I was intrigued to see a report on BBC Breakfast News giving healthy coverage to a vinyl revival. The story was that vinyl sales were on their way up, fuelled by Scratching and Dance.

In the past, vinyl revivals have been more a case of wishful thinking than anything else. I've written about them when things looked encouraging, only to see LP sales sink inexorably shortly afterward. The vinyl LP sells in miserably small quantities these days and I've come to see 'revivals' as little more than the last twitches of a dead format. It's true that the music business hastened the LPs demise but all the same, for the average Joe or Jane, the fragility of a stylus was a serious impediment to a wild Saturday night in. There's no real, serious chance of a major vinyl revival; the CD is just too convenient. People are as likely to go back to spinning LPs as they are to wearing Terylene.

All the same, I was intrigued. The Beeb report and another in the Observer newspaper were triggered by third-quarter (July-September) 1999 trade delivery figures from the B.P.I. which certainly looked good but were more likely a blip rather than a trend, I supposed when I inspected them some months

ago.

The B.P.I. have just released fourth-quarter (Oct-Dec) results for 1999 and they suggest that vinyl's popularity seems to be more than a blip, even if it is not a full blown revival. Healthy survival is more like it. There are other stories to be told from these figures as well. Vinyl isn't the only medium in flux.

level, down from a peak of 91m reached in 1975.

By way of contrast, CD sales currently stand at 177m and have just risen 9%, so the CD remains enormously popular. Since third-quarter LP sales were up 34% it looks like the LP is gathering strength again, which raises the question: who is buying it and why?

Quarterly Analysis by Format

BPI

		Oct/Dec 1998	Oct/Dec 1999	Oct/Dec 2000	% Change 1999-00
7" Singles	Units (000)	192	201	128	-36.3%
	Value (£000)	£195	£281	£114	-59.4%
12" Singles	Units (000)	1,332	1,991	2,081	+4.5%
	Value (£000)	£2,936	£4,175	£4,356	+4.3%
Cass Singles	Units (000)	5,554	5,449	3,682	-32.4%
	Value (£000)	£5,021	£5,702	£3,961	-30.5%
CD Singles	Units (000)	15,215	14,167	11,256	-20.5%
	Value (£000)	£25,791	£29,672	£23,427	-21.0%
Total Singles	Units (000)	22,293	21,808	17,147	-21.4%
	Value (£000)	£33,943	£39,830	£31,858	-20.0%
LPs	Units (000)	569	690	976	+41.4%
	Value (£000)	£1,776	£1,790	£2,956	+65.1%
Cassettes	Units (000)	13,265	7,825	4,262	-45.5%
	Value (£000)	£48,878	£32,080	£16,267	-49.3%
CDs	Units (000)	69,903	71,770	82,705	+15.2%
	Value (£000)	£370,573	£393,006	£429,589	+9.3%
MiniDisc	Units (000)	124	175	77	-56.0%
	Value (£000)	£925	£1,265	£533	-57.9%
Total Albums	Units (000)	83,861	80,460	88,020	+9.4%
	Value (£000)	£422,152	£428,141	£449,345	+5.0%
Total Value		£456,095	£467,971	£481,203	+2.8%

BPI trade delivery figures for Oct-Dec 2000

The latest BPI figures we show here list an apparently spectacular 41.4% rise in LP sales, reaching a new annual total of 3.2million. LP sales bottomed out in 1996 at 2.4m and have been bumping along at that

The answer to this is to be found in the Dance market where 12in vinyl singles sales have been on the increase for many years now, amounting to nearly 8.5m last year, up 22%, the highest figure since 1995.

That's a lot of records and a trip down Oxford Street to the Megastores showed long lines of Dance vinyl in racks. It's got a high profile where there's space for it.

Most of these discs spin at 33rpm, unlike the 12in singles of the 1980s, which spun at 45rpm. However, just to confuse matters some of them also spin at 45rpm and rotational speed isn't clearly marked. I bought a 'single' (Cevin Fisher, It's a Good Life) that spins at 33rpm one side and 45rpm the other! As Simon Pope points out in his editorial this month, when running times are short, cutting engineers will allow massive groove excursions, making for dramatic sound quality.

It's curious that rotational speed suddenly seems to have become unimportant to a generation of buyers. Here, it seems, the market isn't constrained by old practices and ways, appealing instead to a new user not weaned on pernicky belt drives where changing speeds is a 'get out and get under job', but on the Technics SL1200 which moves effortlessly from 33 to 45 rpm at the flick of a switch. The only problem with this hypothesis is that a new Technics SL1200 M3D costs a cool £600 or

so, whilst the outgoing model is £400. This turntable apart, it isn't clear what the Dance crowd use to play their vinyl, other than budget turntables lying around the house, remnants from an old midi-system, or newcomers like the Project Debut, as well as Far East cheapos like Limit and Sherwood. It's a peculiarly ill defined market at present, but with 8.5million discs finding their way into UK homes last year there are more turntables being used now than for a long time. The BPI tell us that "the UK singles market was second only to Japan and was 6% larger than North America's". Something is going on out there.

What about 33rpm LPs? The Oxford Street Virgin Megastore had none in their entrance and just a desultory collection elsewhere. They still think MiniDisc is about to get big, judging by their displays. Wakey, wakey.

HMV had a healthy stock of LPs. I guessed around 40% of current releases were covered, looking at lines of LPs stacked alongside CDs in the crucial entrance area. The B.P.I. told me that in 1999 30% of the top 500 acts were available on vinyl, so quite a lot of effort still goes into

producing LPs and HMV is the place to go for them. This is likely due to HMV's historic link with EMI, who still press LPs at Hayes, Middlesex - and make a fine job of it. If there are no LPs in your local shop then it's quite likely down to their stocking policy, rather than real availability. LPs are a minority interest now, they are heavy and take up space, so you may have to travel for them.

Prices of LPs hover around the £15 mark, sometimes rising to £25. HMV had some vinyl LP classics in their racks but they were distributed into musical categories around the edges of the store mostly, so if you choose to visit these superstores you will have to search around.

The curious story of vinyl's revival isn't being repeated elsewhere. Prerecorded MiniDisc sales are plummeting, and so are pre-recorded cassette sales, both down over 40%.

It's looking good for the LP. Dance singles appear to be re-introducing a whole generation to the turntable and vinyl disc. The dramatic sound quality of 12in singles, especially at 45rpm, is likely a factor in all this. If the LP does survive because of the single it'll be a surprising conclusion to a long drawn out decline.



SPINNING A SINGLE

well designed. The SL1200 can cope with 33 and

give a great sound, it will also impose little wear or damage. Poor cartridges sound bad and damage discs when they mistrack.

Good cartridges come from Shure, Ortofon, Stanton and Goldring.

Nowadays, many amplifiers lack a phono stage. The low output of a cartridge needs extra amplification and equalisation. Budget external phono stages are available from QED (tel: 01276 451166) as the battery/mains Discsaver and NAD (tel: 01908 319360) as the mains powered PPI. Naim, Linn, Project, Cyrus, Roksan, Musical Fidelity and Michell make quality external phono stages, and World Audio Design make an all-valve phono stage kit. ■ ▲

Top of the tree for DJ and Dance use is the SL1200 LTD turntable shown here, recently superseded by the SL1200 M3D. The SL1200 was originally aimed at the hi-fi market, but complex direct drives never caught on. It's fast-start motor suited DJ use though, and it has a pitch control and a cueing light, conveniences not found elsewhere. The arm is sturdy yet light, with a removable headshell, so even in this crucial and difficult area the SL1200 is

45rpm singles easily.

Hi-fi turntables mostly run at 33 and 45rpm, but the ease with which speed can be changed varies. Some decks virtually have to be dismantled to change speed.

Whilst hi-fi decks are less suited to heavy use than budget DJ decks, they come fitted with a better cartridge. Here we come down to the issue of sound quality. A Project Debut deck comes with an Ortofon already fitted and this will not only

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ICE COOL

Not all in-car entertainment is created equal.

David Price reviews Nakamichi's latest CD-45 car CD tuner.

If you're anything like me, the mere thought of 'car hi-fi' sends you into a spiral of depression. No matter how hard you try, it seems almost impossible to find any half-decent sounding hardware or a dealer with more than two working brain cells.

Nakamichi will be familiar to Hi-Fi World readers as the purveyor of top quality cassette decks, but did you know it also does serious in-car entertainment?

The CD45z tested here is the second in the company's CD tuner range and retails for £450. Anyone familiar with Nakamichi cassette decks will find its simple, fuss-free ergonomics as delightful as that famous name. The front panel isn't the easiest to attach or detach, but once on it has a reassuringly solid, mechanical feel to it. The unit also comes with a classy looking wireless remote control, which will doubtless delight the back seat drivers of this world.

The middle of the fascia is dominated by the rotary volume control. Rubber edged and silky smooth in action, it's a delight to use and far superior to the up-down buttons used by certain other brands. There are also dual purpose buttons for Mute (Clock), FM/AM (RDS EON), RDS mode and Sound Tuning (Loudness). When pressed, the latter offers a menu of Balance, Fader, Bass, Mid and Treble tone controls.

Once you've set the tone controls to suit your car's acoustics (mine needed very little trimming at any frequency), you can appreciate the CD-45's very special sound. I've tried

a range of CD head units in the past (Alpine 7840, Clarion 9575Z, Kenwood KRC-7080) and the Nakamichi sounds by far the most transparent.

Poor DACs are the bane of low and mid price CD tuners - many manufacturers skimp on the quality in order to bankroll showroom-friendly

features like motorised faceplates, neon light shows and what have you - and this explains the grey, cold, transistory sound you get from so much in-car stuff. In this respect, the CD-45 is a class above almost all its price rivals. Sliding Goldie's 'Angel' into the disc loader, I got a remarkably clean, detailed and even handed sound. Female voices - always the acid test - were brightly lit but not coarse, hi-hat cymbals were crisp and spry yet never harsh. Imaging was bold and soundstaging deep with a very low noise floor - the acoustic seemed to fall back much further than I've heard from other CD tuners.

While not quite up to the dizzy heights of the CD player, the tuner section is a conscientious effort. FM sound isn't that far removed from CD, with a very clean and detailed flavour and sharply defined stereo imaging. With a quoted 15dBf (IHF) sensitivity, it isn't the most flexible I've tried - with my car's twig at least, the CD-45z struggled to receive BBC Radio 4 on stretches of the M4 that

my previous budget Sony took in its stride. AM was superb - with a strong and full bodied sound, it was one of the best performers I've heard in-car.



The amplifier section is excellent too - 4x43W isn't going to blow out your windscreen, but it's easily enough to shift large amounts of cabin air. Impressively, it showed few signs of strain even near its highest volume setting,

and never let go in the bass as cheaper designs invariably do.

If there's any criticism I can make about the CD-45, it's that it's almost too good for the money. Its £450 retail price makes it just about cheap enough to be slotted into your dashboard in lieu of your standard radio/cassette. Only then will you realise how hopelessly inadequate your standard speakers are, so you could find yourself spending a lot more. Other grumbles? If like me you use dark blue/green dye CD-Rs from the likes of TDK, you may find the Nakamichi mistracks near the end of the disc. Use light dye blanks, though, and it'll play flawlessly. Oh, and if only it had CD Text and Radio Text like Kenwood. Still, if ever there was car audio designed to be heard and not seen, Nakamichi's CD-45z is it. ■▲

Nakamichi CD-45z £450

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World Verdict



With sound quality that wouldn't disgrace a decent domestic hi-fi, plus superb build and ergonomics, this is one of the most desirable car CD tuners around. Expensive, but superb value nonetheless.



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Swing low sweet Chario

From the shores of Italy comes the new Constellation Cygnus from Chario. Will Simon Pope be star struck?

Chario makes a wide variety of loudspeakers, from affordable budget 'department store' designs to the upper echelons of high-end esoterica. It has three basic model ranges, comprising Reference, Constellation and Academy, in ascending order of price and sound. The last Charios we heard were the £1,200 Academy Millennium I - sophisticated and cultured stand-mounters in the archetypal Italian mode. This time it's the turn of the visually arresting £1,000 Cygnus from the Constellation series, which is the smaller of two floorstanders in the range.

As we've come to expect from an Italian 'speaker of this money, the cabinet is both beautifully built and attractive to the eye. Its sides are constructed from three panels of solid hardwood intricately joined together, whilst the rest of the cabinet is formed from Medite, including the bottom plinth to which the cabinet is joined by Medite feet. These gaps between cabinet and plinth are not solely aesthetic but normally involve an attempt at bass reinforcement, in the form of either a downward firing port or bass drive unit. In this case it's both, making the Cygnus a three-way bass reflex design. All drivers are made by Chario (proving it's no simple 'potting shed' outfit) - the 130mm mid/bass units are constructed from doped paper and the tweeter a 20mm silk dome model. Spikes are provided to attach under the plinth.

Using a Meridian 506.24 CD player, Cyrus 7 integrated and Meridian's 502/557 pre and power

amps I started the listening with Mahler's 6th symphony played by the Vienna Philharmonic under Pierre Boulez on DG. First impressions were of an innate smoothness and richness to the sound in which strings, especially violins, were treated with a sympathy bereft of many 'speakers on the market. The opening movement starts with a brisk, menacing march, the cellos and double basses pulsating fiercely, with the theme on the violins. The Charios showed power and depth in the bass but also a smidgen of bloom, which although not distracting was nevertheless obvious. This, I felt, was due to the down firing port rather than box boom.

Highs were handled well with a warm and very sweet sound, woodwind instruments rich and full and high percussion sparkingly fresh but not over bright. They sounded very much at home with a few of Beethoven's middle quartets played by the Quartet Italiano on a 1970s Philips analogue recording. String tone and phrasing were brought to the fore and again the balance between instruments was superb. These attributes together with the fine overall tonal balance, showed the Cygnus to be an accomplished classical music speaker which is able to handle large scale music commendably well despite its relatively small box volume.

Moving to the rock sounds of Skunk Anansie's 'Weep', the Charios handled Skin's vocals with aplomb. The slightly rich nature of these 'speakers brought a certain fruitiness to the voice which was great. What

let them down however was their lack of speed with bass and drums - I felt they needed a large espresso to kick them into life. While open guitar lines and cymbals sounded fresh and clean, the bass felt like it needed to catch up with the upper parts. This same effect happened again with Underworld's admittedly fast and pumping bassline in 'Push, Upstairs' from 'Beaucoup Fish'.

Here's a loudspeaker voiced for classical chamber and orchestral music, with a smooth sophistication matched by a clean and detailed midrange. I enjoyed my time with them, and would declare them well worth a listen if you preferences lean this way. ■ ▲

Chario Constellation Cygnus £1,000

Musical Design Company
Tel: 01992 573030

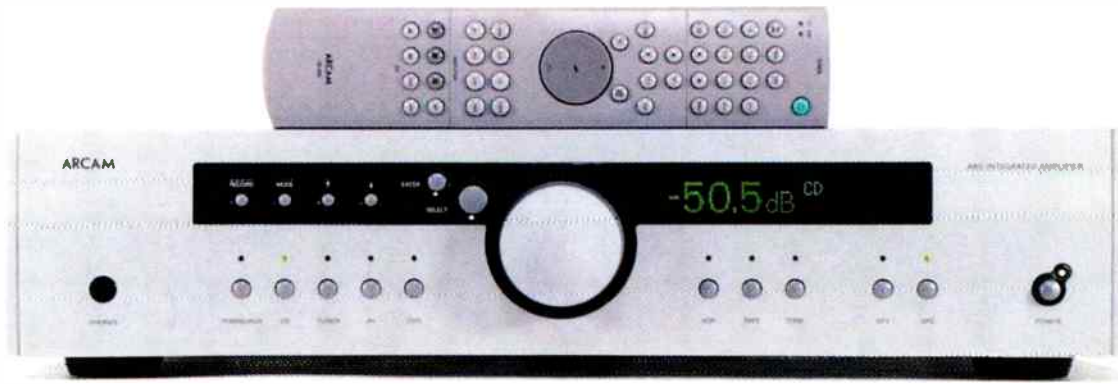


World Verdict



Enjoyable, smooth sounding and finely put together. Good with classical but sound a tad loose with bass heavy music.

Measured Performance
see page 111



PRIMA

Simon Pope takes the romantic lead with Arcam's A85, top of the range integrated amplifier in their new DiVA series.

"The past couple of years have been difficult ones for manufacturers. With declining sales in some sectors of the two-channel separates market many have felt the need to expand their product range to encompass A/V products. The audiophile likes of Musical Fidelity, Roksan and now the "UK's leading manufacturer of hi-fi electronics", Arcam are turning their attention to DVD players, processors and multi-channel amplifiers. However not forgetting their audio stereo roots, the launch of Arcam's DiVA series (Digitally integrated Video & Audio) sees the company producing not only an audiophile DVD player and AV receiver but also a seven-strong two channel product range.

This new range of products features a radically new look from the company always associated with a high quality sound from somewhat staid looking components. Arcam called on the services of out-of-house industrial designers to work on the new range. Consequently, the new DiVA series (available in either black or silver) has a sleek and stylish look more akin to their flagship FMJ range than the grey box Alpha products. Dare you brand them 'boring' now?

Arcam have always regarded amplifiers as the heart of any hi-fi since they started making them back in the mid-seventies and that tradition continues. The DiVA series

contains a total of five two channel amplifiers, two power amps and three integrations, of which the A85 is the top dog. An awesome amount of electronic design work has gone into the range, most of it masterminded by the company's new head of R&D, a certain Johnny Reckless (I jest not!). If ever a name was destined for rock stardom, it's his. Instead he turned his talents to audio design and now heads up a sixteen-strong team at Arcam's HQ in Cambridge.

The flagship A85 integrated is the only one of the three to feature a comprehensive display window, necessary for all the hi-tech facilities it's veritably stuffed full of. There's undoubtedly a lot of very clever stuff going on here, thanks to the use of a microprocessor based control system which gives awesome flexibility to the A85. There are a total of seven inputs, each one of which has adjustable sensitivity and can be assigned its own bypassable tone control setting. This feature can make the switching between a CD player to Radio 3, for example, less an agonizing trauma and more a sensuously seamless integration. A slight exaggeration perhaps but you hopefully understand what I'm getting at.

Further luxurious delights are found when altering the volume control. With the current obsession for everything 'oversize' - hotel beds, restaurant plates and cutlery, etc. -

the beautifully clean dot matrix window displays the volume level (in minus dBs) in an impressively large numerical display. Although not too large to make the whole effect 'Fisher Price' style, if it's not to your liking it can be changed to a more 'sensible' bar graph display. Those like me, who like to live dangerously though, will love the chunky numbers - especially when you hit 'mute' on the sleek remote and the display counts down (or rather, up?) to -73dB in a flash. Sublime!

The A85 has a totally new circuit design for both the pre and power sections. The whole amp is direct coupled from the input to output with no capacitors in the signal path. The heart of the power supply is a weighty toroidal transformer which gives a quoted output of 85W per channel into 8Ω and 130W into 4Ω. Being a newly conceived series for the future, Arcam have made sure that future formats will be properly served and SACD and DVD-Audio can be fully appreciated through the A85. There are two remote switchable pairs of 'speaker outputs and a Headphone output. An optional MM/MC phono stage is available and pre-amp outputs are provided which can be supplied in a three channel version for multichannel use.

SOUND QUALITY

You may well have realised by now the A85 immediately impresses with



DONNA

its facilities and looks but at the end of the day, the proof of the pudding is in the eating and it was time to get the A85 cooking.

Diving straight in at the deep end without arm bands, I treated the A85 to a bit of an onslaught courtesy of Rage Against The Machine's latest earbashing, 'Renegades'. The album is well mastered with awesome use of compression and level. Pearl Harbour had nothing on it and I'm glad to say the Arcam had the neighbours politely popping round for a quick, friendly chat. The pounding kick drum of the scorching rap-metal track 'Pistol Grip Pump' was delivered with a powerful dead thump, and the bass guitar was as tight as the proverbial duck's rear quarters - and deep to boot. This amp certainly has life. Vocals (or rather shouts) were clean and forceful and the blazing guitars showed a detailed and open midrange. All this power and drive had perfect control however, I never once thought the express would derail.

Calming both myself and my neighbours down I next fed Miles Davis's seminal 'Kind Of Blue' into the Meridian 506.24 CD player. What followed was an aptly cool and refined performance. Again bass was tight and well controlled below

Davis's barren blowing in 'So What'. The trumpet kept smooth and lyrical, rather than raspy but when Coltrane's silky tenor entered via the left channel, I felt the sound was just a tad colourless. Presence and phrasing were perfect but a little warmth which sometimes benefits this sound was missing. Apart from this there was nothing to fault and the A85 did its job well.


Classical orchestral music in the shape of Tchaikovsky's fifth symphony with the Oslo Philharmonic under Jansons on Chandos records showed up the superb sound staging of the A85. Here was depth and breadth in abundance as the timpani thumped well back in the mix and the double basses growled from stage left. Rhythms were powerful and exact, driving the music on excitingly, whilst the lyrical nature of instruments such as the opening clarinets of the first movement was brought to the fore. Again a little more instrumental colour could have been present but frequency balance was good and the sound nice and open.

CONCLUSION

This is a fine integrated for the money that merits a serious

demonstration if you're in the market for a sub-£1,000 integrated. It has excellent control and poise with power enough to easily drive all but the very toughest.

It suits all types of music well but will deliver rock, dance and jazz a tad better than classical due to a slight greyness to the sound that could restrict the true timbre of some instruments. It's a trait of solid state amps though. I'm comparing the Arcam to more expensive power and valve amps, and in many other respects, such as sound staging, it's excellent.

For an integrated under £1000, little can touch it musically apart from Musical Fidelity (slightly more transparent) or Audio Analogue (slightly more lyrical). With a wide range of facilities and good upgrade potential, this is an ideal all rounder. 

ARCAM A85 £699.90

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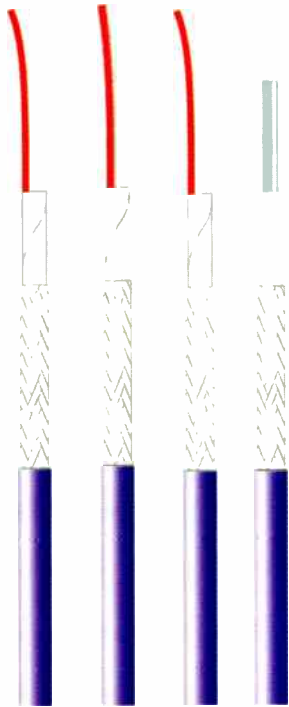
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New Format War Beckons

Hi-Fi World reports exclusively on RDA. A fascinating new development that promises to give the latest audio formats a run for their money.

There's no doubt that digitally downloadable music is fast becoming the format of choice for today's technology-conscious music buyers. Not everyone is convinced that this is progress however, which is why a group of hardcore hi-fi nuts has come up with a new format designed to redress the balance. RDA (Retro Digital Audio) is claimed to satisfy the needs of unreconstructed audiophiles who grew up listening to music 'the proper way'.

The brainchild of a consortium of 1970s hi-fi journalists intent on enjoying pure, perfect sound forever, RDA's technical spec reads like a trip down memory lane - 44.1kHz oversampling with 16bit words on a 30cm optical disc.

The RDA Consortium's Technical Director Mike Spike, ex-editor of 'Audio Stack'

magazine, told us that the new format offers the best of all possible worlds. "Well first, it's on a disc" he commented, "which means reviewers can get on mailing lists for free music again. Ever since MP3 was invented, the record companies stopped all that and we had to buy our own bloody music again!"

Asked why RDA had 'gone back' to Philips' original 16/44 digital audio specification developed back in the seventies, Spike replied: "Well, like we all said at the time, it's pure perfect sound forever. I'll never forget when I

first heard 'Dark Side of the Moon' on CD back in '83 - it was so realistic I thought I was going mad, with spiders crawling up me back and all that."

Another 'interesting' aspect of RDA is that it uses old fashioned, twelve inch discs. How so? "Well, at the time CD replaced vinyl, many of us had grave reservations about the format's ability to fully reproduce subtle information and details like the gatefold sleeves found on seminal

industry. While some companies have been gearing up to produce state-of-the-art flash memory-based audio devices, others see the format as affording them another opportunity to make stuff people don't want to buy anymore.

Britain's major manufacturers, gave a mixed reaction. A spokesperson for one major UK hi-fi manufacturing business commented "Och, we've no plans for an RDA player as yet but you can bet your

elk's backside that if we had, then ours would be better than anyone else's, Jimmy" A London based manufacturer, famous for its cylindrical shaped power amps said, "Well, of course dear boy, if it's popular we'll have a ten strong range of players out by next Wednesday". A Huntingdon based pipe and slipper manufacturer was out



Scoop spy shot - note the player's extensive retro styling cues, extending to the tonearm-style laser pickup and wood veneer plinth-encased DAC

classic rock albums. I mean, 'Trick of the Tail' in a jewelcase? What were they thinking of?"

"By combining the best characteristics of the Compact Disc and Vinyl LP, we believe that music buyers will abandon that stupid downloadable crap and flock back to disc-based audio in droves. I mean, why download 'Crime of the Century' on your computer when you can buy it on double gatefold RDA for only £26.99?"

News of RDA has caused a mixed reaction within the British hi-fi

to lunch when we called, and one Salisbury company asked if the format permitted the use of DIN plugs.

Many experienced hi-fi industry observers believe RDA is just what hi-fi needs. "Thank God for RDA," said I'm D' Istortion of 'What Rack?' magazine, "it's just what we all need to have a good old barny amongst ourselves while no one else is listening." Bill Others, a leading audio public relations supremo said, "It's big, it's fun, it's sexy, it's very you, darling. Ermm... can I have a receipt for that please?" ■ ▲

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

READING AND WRITING [1]

Do CD players read discs differently? The reason I ask is because we have three CD players in our house, and my TEAC VRDS-7 sometimes will not even play new CDs, and absolutely never CDs from a library. My daughter has a Technics 490G and it gladly plays anything you throw at it, likewise my son's cheap TEAC. I find it hard to believe that, as a service person told me, it's just a question of changing the laser on my machine. My local record shop owner laughed when I told him about my problem. He told me that in his experience the same machines from the same companies reacted very differently regarding their reading abilities. I use Colgate toothpaste with baking powder to clean the unreadable CDs, and sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Can you help?

Greg,

Greg, do us a favour and keep the baking soda in the kitchen and the Colgate on your toothbrush! The chemical and abrasive properties of the two together is more likely to ruin your hi-fi than clean your discs!

There are several reasons why your TEAC isn't reading discs properly. The most obvious cause is a dirty laser lens - this happens to all players but is aggravated by smoky or dusty air in your listening room, not to mention baking soda particles. There are fixes - easiest is to buy an Audio Technica CD Lens Cleaner (there are others available, but we've found this to be the best), dab a bit of fluid onto it, load it into your player and give it a spin. It doesn't work with all transports, but when it does, it works well.

Better still, clean your lens manually. Disconnect your VRDS-7 from the mains, remove the case and taking care not to touch ANY of the electronics inside, gently clean your laser lens with a cotton bud dipped in Isopropyl alcohol in a circular motion. Then dry it with the other end of the cotton bud, put the case back on and try it now. This often works wonders, and can actually drastically improve your CD player's sound even if it isn't mistracking. If it's still faulty then it's likely that either the laser is dying or the transport alignment is out - either way it's an expensive trip back to the importer



or manufacturer. As your VRDS-7 is a decent player though, I'd say it was worth fixing.

If you ever need to 'power clean' CDs, the easiest way is to squirt some washing up liquid on them, run them under the hot tap until all the grease, fingerprints and congealed toothpaste has come off, then wipe them dry with a soft cotton towel in a radial motion with your index finger, from the inside of the disc going outwards. Really stubborn marks should get a second cleaning with the aforementioned Isopropyl alcohol. For CDs with just a few marks on, the above is too

Store your discs like this and you could end up with some skipping!



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drastic - best just blow on the disc so it mists up, then wipe the moisture off in a radial outwards motion with a clean cotton towel. **DP** ■

DP's right about the baking soda and toothpaste. It's a bit of an old wives' tale, along with Brasso. Whilst great for polishing your gnashers, CDs are a little more sensitive to the stuff. I speak from experience. Although previously believed to be a quick fix for problem discs, applying baking soda and toothpaste to my once-cherished 'Rage Against The Machine' disc resulted in disaster and the only use for it now is as a street-wise, in-car accessory to be dangled below the rear view mirror.

If your disc is shot to pieces anyway then give it a try as a last resort, but otherwise stick to more conventional methods. Like good old vinyl, prevention is the best cure. Using them for drinks coasters and playing frisbee with the dog will soon result in a skipping disc. Giving you CDs a regular wipe over with accessories such as Ross's Disc Wipes (cheap, available from dealers and some High St. stores) will help preserve your discs shelf life. **SP** ■

There are several reasons for your Caspian being all at sea. First, the lens could be dirty - see the above query for an answer. Second, the unit could be faulty - after you've cleaned the lens it would be worth going back to your dealer with the player for him to check it. Three, you're playing the wrong sort of CDs - many CD players simply don't like CD-Rs, thanks to their lower reflectivity. Some brands and colours of CD-R are better than others, but the darker (blue) dyes used by Sony and TDK can rub some machines up the wrong way, especially towards the end of the disc. The answer is to copy your CD-Rs onto higher reflectivity CD-R media (just do a direct disc copy with your CD-R in the CD-ROM and a fresh blank in the CD writer). The best thing is to try out several brands and colours, to see which suits your Roksan best. Also, at all times avoid the 80 minute blanks, which are simply more than many hi-fi CD players can cope with.

As for speakers, it sounds like you're looking for a high quality, mid price solution that's not too big or imposing. Mission's 782 (£700) is an ideal choice, thanks to its compact, small-footprint dimensions and high efficiency. The former is important considering your room size and the latter an essential qualification considering your Alabaster's modest power output.

Alternatively, B&W's CDMINT (£750) is the latest evolution of what, for my money at least, has been a very impressive speaker. With its high tech Kevlar mid-bass unit it's very sensitive, a very musical listen at low levels, and being a standmounter won't over drive your room either.

DP ■



Mission's 782 - slim yet powerful

RM TRANSPLANT SURGERY

I have an AR EB101 turntable which I am unable to use at the moment as the wiring in the arm is faulty. I am unsure whether to have the wiring replaced in the arm, replace the arm with a new one or replace the whole turntable. I'd appreciate your thoughts. My budget would be up to £100 for the first two options or £250 for the last. If you think the first option is most appropriate, do you happen to know any reputable firms in the north west? Thanks for an excellent magazine, and in anticipation of your kind assistance.

Peter Steele

It depends what you want to do with your vinyl - is it a primary source, or something for the, erm, weekend? A quick fix would be to get Origin Live (tel: 02380 442183, net: www.originlive.com) to rewire the arm with standard Litz cable for a very reasonable £38. This would be a small improvement on the original arm, but if you really wanted a noticeable difference, you should go for a standard Rega RB250 at £109.

Fitting the RB250 to your AR is certainly possible - indeed it will go on most decks. If you can't find a pre-drilled Rega armboard (try asking some local dealers), then you should remove the old arm and drill a single 24mm hole in the armboard, with a 222mm gap from the centre of the arm pivot to the centre of the platter spindle. When working out the position, remember the length of the arm from its mounting hole centre to the end of the headshell is 245mm, and the rear arm overhang is 50mm to the end of the counterweight stub.

When mounting it, the tip of the stylus should be 240mm from the pivot. In approximate terms, the armboard mounting hole should be such that the cartridge stylus will overhang the record centre spindle by around 17-19mm for an arm that is of 229-250mm. Check this by swinging the stylus over the record spindle. For your reference, here are the RB250's vital statistics:

Effective length:	240 mm
Overhang:	17.24 mm
Offset angle:	22.92 deg
Mounting distance:	222.76 mm
Effective mass:	11 grams


When you've drilled your hole and bolted in the new Rega, you may

READING AND WRITING [2]

Recently I squandered my hard-earned money on a Sonneteer Alabaster amplifier and Roksan Caspian CD player. Whilst I think the equipment is good, the Caspian will only play about two thirds of my discs properly. This is unlike my now defunct Meridian which would play nearly everything, including those from my attempt to transfer vinyl to CD via the computer. Is the Caspian usually this fussy, or could mine have a fault?

My main query however relates to my next step in the upgrade, the purchase of 'speakers and cables. I've started looking and already am getting confused by the advice given. Generally it seems the more expensive the 'speaker, the more power they like to perform at their best and I generally listen with low to moderate volumes. Do you have any recommendations? I don't mind floor or stand mounted but would prefer something that can be placed reasonably close to a wall. I mainly listen to older pop music, with forays into folk classical and country in a room about twelve feet square.

P.V. Rackett



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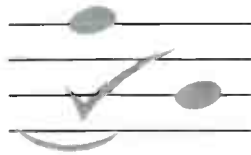
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be left with an unsightly hole where the AR arm once sat. You can cover this by making up a large circular plate washer of black card or aluminium. If the VTA is wrong, try making a spacer from a tap washer, or buying the rather more elegant Origin Live VTA adjuster for £48. This done, you'll have a fine sounding deck capable of taking a very good cartridge such as a Dynavector DV10X4 high output MC (£199), which would be your next logical step.

Alternatively, your third option would be to find a used Systemdek IIxe/RB300 for around £250, which would give you a marginally better and more upgradeable deck. Personally I'd install a Rega into the AR and then buy a decent cartridge, leaving the field open to start saving my pennies for an LP12 Basik or Michell GyroDec SE. ■ DP



2 TONEARM WITH TAP WASHER (COURTESY OF REGA)

II ► SWEET AND LOW

I am currently in the wilderness that is the complete upgrade of my Hi-Fi. To date I have been satisfied, and restricted due to cash flow, with a budget system that cost me about £100. This then started to sound a little flat and dull in comparison to others I stumbled upon and so I decided to upgrade. After some demos and reading pretty much all the opinions available I have decided to go for an Arcam CD72 with an Arcam A65 or A75. This sounds great in the demo room but I have a problem. The room in my flat where the new kit is to sit is 14 by 12 feet, with concrete walls and floor. The problem is that I play most of my music at reasonable 'family' levels in what is a small room so most of the speakers people recommend with this type of system are large and don't really show their true colours until played at higher volumes. Large isn't a problem in itself, I reckon I could get the KEF Q35.2's past my girlfriend's aesthetically critical eye. So my request is some advice in what I should look for in a speaker for low to medium volumes, and some specific sets for me to try out. Also does the power

of the amp have any bearing on this? If you think I should try a different set up entirely my budget is £1000 for a CD, amp and speakers.

Thanks for any help you can provide

James Benfield

Hi James. You're right to say that not all 'speakers come into their own at low levels. And the ones that do, such as Quad's £3,500 ESL-988s are well off target, price-wise. The fact is that 'speakers that deliver superlative detail and presence at low levels unfortunately rarely come cheap. For my taste you'll need something with ideally excellent detail and a good bass response - tight and pronounced rather than merely deep and boomy. Sticking to standmounts, you could always try out a pair of Mission's cracking 780s at £300. Whilst these aren't particularly high sensitivity (which will give you good presence at lower levels), they are exceptionally well detailed thanks to their Keraform ceramic bass/mid drive unit and will convey many important aspects of the music whilst played at lower levels. Another standmount to try for exceptional detail and speed is the SuperZero from NHT which has an audiophile sound that's well beyond the humble £275 price tag. These both take a bit of driving, so the A75 would be a better option here but the sonic rewards would more than make up for the extra few quid spent on the amplifier.

However, it's not always the case that floorstanders will possess too big a sound for your room. If you're only playing at low to medium levels there should be little problem. What you do need though is good balance throughout the whole frequency range. If you can push the boat out a little Tannoy's Revolution r3s are a nice choice but are also £550. However, these have a well balanced sound with little coloration and boom due to the solid cabinet and will be a good match for your Arcam system. Although we haven't yet reviewed the CD player or amps you have in mind, I have heard them all in demos and have spent a long time with the top of the range A85 and know them to be of high quality. Whatever your choice, try to get a home demonstration. This will confirm if you can live with a certain sound or not. ■ SP



II ► HANDS ACROSS THE WATER

As a recent transplant from that other English speaking country to the west (not Ireland or Canada) I have had the pleasure of getting familiar with all sorts of audio gear (or 'shiny things' as my wife would have me call them) I had only previously seen in magazines. In moving across the pond I had to part with many toys that would be incompatible or difficult to work with the different electrical grid.

As I begin rebuilding my system I have found your magazine most helpful. Recently I acquired a Rega Planar 2 with a RB300 arm. Sadly the included cartridge (Linn K5 most likely) is sans stylus. Could you suggest where I might find a replacement stylus (K9 or K18) or recommend something different? My last set-up was an AR ES-101 (classic and well regarded American table) with a Shure V15 MR of late '80s vintage. I would like something good but reasonably priced. While my present record collection is somewhat limited I plan to start mining car boot sales in search of the jazz, blues, and classical that I have come to appreciate. I would also like to stick with an MM as it will be more easily compatible with my present kit. If there could be one word I would like to use to describe my desire in a cartridge it would be 'accurate'. If you can help me in my search you will gain a happy and loyal reader.

Richard Oelerich

Greetings to our wondrous, sun-drenched country Richard - hope you enjoy your stay. Unfortunately 'accurate' budget moving magnet cartridges are as rare here as in your neck of the woods - better to think in terms of the least inaccurate! You already have a fine deck, so you'd do well to treat it to a Goldring 1042 cartridge for around £120, which is a step up even from the likes of a Linn K18. A high output MM with a very high quality stylus profile, it has a smooth, sweet and detailed sound that also happens to boast a very lively, punchy nature. Having used one on a Planar 3, I know them to suit the relatively dry and clinical tonality of the Regas.

This done, get your tonearm's counterweight modded by Origin Live (see 'ArmTransplant Surgery' for contact details), and site your deck on a Base SP01 sub-table (£70). Don't just do car boot sales by the way, but look also to record fairs, which are a tremendous source of vinyl bargains. You can find details of fairs in your area in publications like 'Record Collector'. **DP** ■



Goldring's little gem!

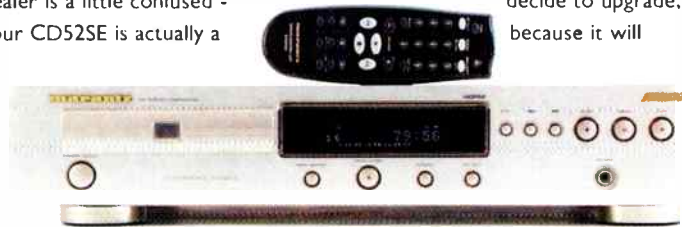
AND FINALLY... NINETIES NIGHTMARE?

My system comprises a Marantz CD52SE CD player, Pioneer A400 amplifier and Mission 780SE 'speakers. Where do I go from here? It's time for an upgrade, but I've only just come back to hi-fi since the early nineties when I originally bought the system. I like a powerful, punchy sound. I was thinking about the new Marantz CD6000OSE, which I've just heard at a dealer. The salesman told me CD players have come along massively since mine, and that I should upgrade to a Bitstream model like this. I also have an old Dual CS505 turntable and Nakamichi BX300 cassette deck. I'd like better sound from my vinyl - which everyone keeps telling me sounds better than CD, but not to my ears! Also, the Nakamichi is my pride

and joy, but I'm thinking about getting into MiniDisc because of the easy CD copying and editing facilities. How would something like Sony's MDS-JB940 compare to my Nak?

**Rod Carr,
Via email.**

Where you should go depends on how much money you've got. Your dealer is a little confused - your CD52SE is actually a



Bitstream design. (The CD50 before it was Marantz's final multibit budget player). The difference between it and the CD6000OSE is surprisingly small - of course CD players have evolved, but the largest limiting factor on your CD52SE's performance was not the available technology back in 1992, but the cost cutting going inside what was ostensibly a budget Philips machine. Put the two together and you'll hear a little more detail, a less brightly lit treble, and maybe slightly stronger dynamics, but all this really doesn't justify an upgrade (I'm sure Mr. Ishiwata would disagree!)

No, what you need is one of the latest crop of thousand pound players, which are a real step up from the budget designs (of today and of yore). Buy an Arcam FMJ CD23 and you'll hear a far smoother yet more musically involving sound, with a much more natural - dare I say it 'analogue' - presentation. Any lesser player and you'd get an upgrade but it probably wouldn't be such a 'sea change' that the Arcam (or Meridian's 506.24, which has a slightly softer, fuller sound) would bring.

As for the rest of your system, the A400 is still an excellent budget design - excepting its mediocre onboard phono stage. With a deck of your Dual's modest calibre, you're not losing too much, but upgrade it and you won't hear the benefits. I'd recommend you think about your future plans. If you're keeping your amp then buy a decent phono stage such as LFD's superb Mistral (£300). You can then buy a Rega Planar 3/Goldring 1042, or a more expensive deck, at your leisure. If you do plan on changing amps, Naim's

NAIT 5/StageLine would be the one given your musical preferences and the need for a top class phono stage. This would also compliment the softer sounding Meridian or Arcam CD source. Your 'speakers are actually still pretty good for what they are, and should be upgraded last of all - come back to us for a recommendation on these when you decide to upgrade, because it will

depend on how your system has evolved. Finally the Nakamichi vs. MiniDisc debate. No, if it's still properly set up and serviced, a Sony 940 would struggle to beat it. If you got a £600 (discounted) Sony MDS-JE55ES, that would be another matter entirely. Still, there's no doubt MD is brilliant for editing and compilation making - if this is your primary consideration then 940 is perfectly adequate. It's an excellent sounding machine for under £300, just not the equal of your Nak. Good luck! **DP** ■

Another option would be to sell the lot and splash out for a new trio of components. I'd go for a pair of Mission's new £300 781 standmounts featuring Aerogel 'Keraform' ceramic mid/bass drivers. These will give you plenty of drive and punch and have a especially good midrange. A good match for these would be (if money allows) the excellent new £700 A85 inegrated amplifier from Arcam, which has plenty of power (85W per channel) and control, along with great styling and an abundance of features plus an optional phono MM/MC stage to boost your vinyl sound. My option for a CD player to go with these two is either the new Arcam CD 72 at £400 or the Sony SCDXB940 which gives you the added option of SACD for just £500.

This will give you a complete system for less than £1500 that will last you at least until it's time to upgrade in another ten years or so. As for the Nak, how much do you want for it? **SP** ■

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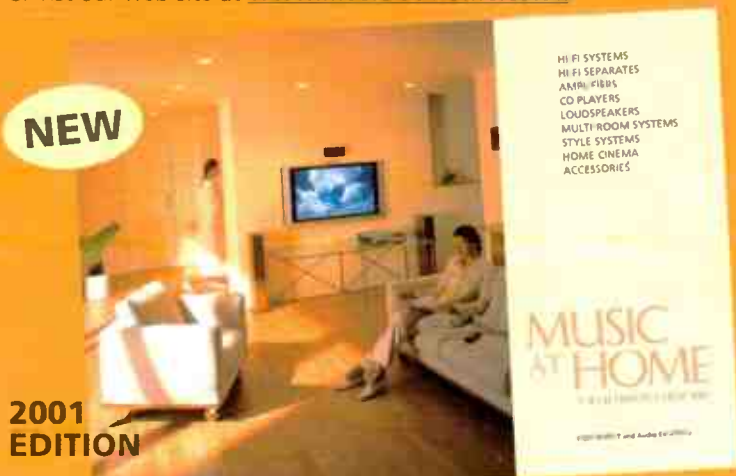
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A full blown 24bit, 96kHz PC soundcard for peanuts, plus the world's most useful PC audio gadget for notebook pilots...

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From Europe's largest consumer electronics giant comes the very special MP3 walkie

REAL NEWS

MP3 portables are all the rage right now, but they're looking increasingly likely to be replaced by wireless handheld 'PalmPilot' type devices with music recording and replay software programmed into them. Texas Instruments has announced it is to collaborate with RealNetworks to provide Internet multimedia solutions for next generation wireless and digital audio devices. Streaming and downloadable audio and video capability will be embedded into the next-generation of wireless consumer devices.

TI says that the forthcoming third generation (3G) of DSP-based Internet appliances such as portable Internet audio players, mobile handsets, and personal digital assistants will be able to watch breaking news, listen to music and receive the latest entertainment updates via the RealAudio and RealVideo formats. Over seventy portable digital audio players from the likes of Sony, Samsung and LG Electronics already incorporate TI's TMS320C5000 series of DSP chips.

The company also announced that its RealJukebox software will be the exclusive music management software for forthcoming new range of Secure Digital (SD) Memory Card devices, including their two e-wear portable audio players that Computer Audio World exclusively previewed in February. The software will let consumers record CDs or download music to their RealJukebox then transfer it to their Panasonic SD portable music players. The new devices will be available in the US from February, with Europe to follow later. See www.real.com

ICE COOL

Although we've been reading about car MP3 players for a while now, Kenwood's £500 Z919 is the first to reach Britain's High Streets. Packed with features, including FM/AM radio (with full RDS EON facilities) and CD player with CD Text, it also plays MP3 files recorded as data files from your PC's CD-RW. As you can fit around 650 MP3 files onto one disc, it's obviously ideal for the state of Britain's roads.



World Radio History

SANYO FIRST WITH AAC

Dolby Labs has just announced that Sanyo's AAC-equipped SSP-PD7 digital portable will be on sale in Europe and the US soon. The device, as previewed in February's Computer Audio World, uses Dolby's Advanced Audio Coding to provide higher-quality sound while using around thirty percent less storage space. It supports playback in both AAC and MP3 formats, and includes CD-ripping software, which allows users to encode CDs in AAC format. Dolby says that since AAC encoding at 96 kbps can exceed the quality of 128kbps MP3, the player can store more songs than MP3-only playback devices on the bundled 32MB MultiMediaCard flash memory card. It also supports Liquid Audio's Secure Portable Player Platform (SP3) format that allows for the secure distribution of digital music to portable devices in accordance with SDMI guidelines. Users can access over 120,000 high-quality music tracks from hundreds of websites, as well as extras such as lyrics, liner notes, and album art. For more information about AAC, check out www.aac-audio.com.

LABTECH PULSE 415

This new £65 American sub-and-sat package is dead simple to use - just plug the 5W satellites and PSU into the 15W subwoofer, and go. Bass is punchy, treble clear and undistorted. You get reasonable detail and lively dynamics considering the budget price, too. For more information, point your browsers at: www.labtech.com.

THE NEW MINIS

Sony's SRS-Z500 are a dinky pair of active desktop speakers designed for MD or MP3 portables. The 6W amplifier is well up to the job and you get basic facilities like the usual volume and power on-off controls, plus magnetic shielding for near-monitor use. Good mini mobile music makers, but for raising the roof look elsewhere. You can contact Sony UK on: 01932 816400.



FIREWIRE BURNING

Sony's new CRX1600L CD burner is the very first FireWire CD writer to market. Its i.LINK (which is Sony's trademarked name for the FireWire IEEE 1394 interface) offers 12x CD-R burning, 8x CD-RW writing and 32x CD-ROM capability. There's a 4 MB buffer - which might be regarded as quite modest considering its writing speed - plus standard RCA phono audio outputs at the back and a quoted 150ms access time. Watch out for a full review soon!

2's COMPANY

Marian isn't a brand familiar to UK audiophiles, but its new Marc 2 digital audiocard could easily change that. David Price spends some time with it.



For just £199, this German-made Marian Marc 2 PC soundcard offers the full 24bit, 96kHz digital monty, which at a stroke puts it far closer to true audiophile status than any of its price rivals currently available in the UK. Here's a card for the serious audiophile, rather than gamers.

Designed as a 'mastering soundcard for PCs', the Marian offers a fearsome set of specs, considering its pocket money price tag. Build quality isn't anything to shout about - the board design looks pretty run of the mill apart from that innocuous little Crystal Semiconductors CS8427 DSP chip in the middle of the card. All the same, it offers full 24bit stereo (2-channel) line inputs and outputs via 1/4 inch stereo jacks, plus full stereo digital inputs and outputs using either optical (TOSLINK) or electrical coaxial connections.

There's a direct 'Digital Audio' CD input (running at 16bit, 44kHz) and Marian's SyncBus which lets you daisy-chain several cards together for multichannel recording and playback. Oh, and it also happens to be available for the Mac platform, too!

Quoted specs are 95dB signal to noise ratio and THD of 0.005% at 90dB! Frequency response is quoted at 20Hz-40kHz at 96kHz sampling.

INSTALLATION

It's pretty straightforward to fit, sitting in a PCI connector, held tight by a single screw through the end bracket to the rear casing. If applicable it can be connected the 2-

pin S/PDIF out of a CD-ROM drive. Next, the drivers go in. Insert the supplied CD-ROM into your machine, point the wizard to the marian\drivers\marc2\win9x\english directory and Windows copies the driver files and installs the card. This done, the Marc 2 Manager appears in the Windows taskbar.

The bundled manager software is some of the best I've tried. Unlike a worryingly large amount of the stuff that comes with soundcards, this actually lets you set levels without resort to Windows' resident Volume Control - which can be a hassle to find and use.

The Marc 2 Manager lets you monitor all your ins and outs, and set levels. High resolution peak meters that point from -60dB to 0dB are included, along with stereo faders working from -72dB to +18dB, a channel link (to fade up/down both channels simultaneously) and a mute.

Optical, coaxial and internal CD direct digital inputs can be selected, as well as digital output monitoring.

Last but not least is the Automatic Latency Adjustment, which manages system resources so the card's digital audio buffers don't get overloaded by the CPU.

PERFORMANCE

Sound quality was generally very good. Superb in some areas and just okay in others, it's best characterised as extremely fluid and well extended. Playing 16/44 CD audio and A-B the Marian's onboard DAC against my Cambridge Audio DACMagic 2, the

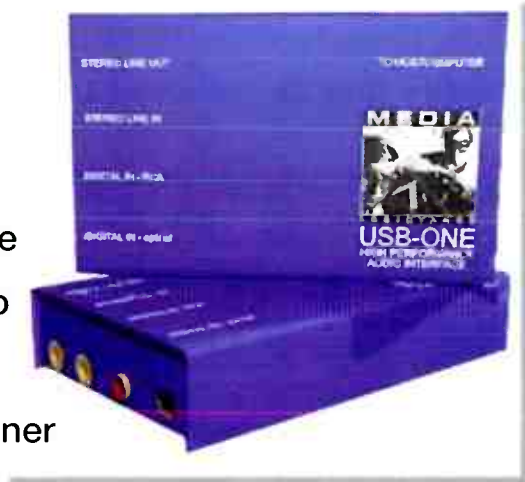
Marian comfortably outperformed it in a number of areas. This was a good sign, as most soundcards I've auditioned over the years are comprehensively inferior.

Kicking off with Thin Lizzy's 'The Boys are Back in Town', the Marian struck me by its subtle musicality. Where the reference DAC sounded rigid and wooden, the Marc 2 let the song flow along much better, giving the impression of a musical event involving real musicians rather than just a bunch of sequencers. Soundstaging was better too - whereas those famous guitar power chords felt boxed in with the Cambridge, the Marian let them hover in space more. Stage depth wasn't quite as wide, but it nevertheless felt more natural and airy.

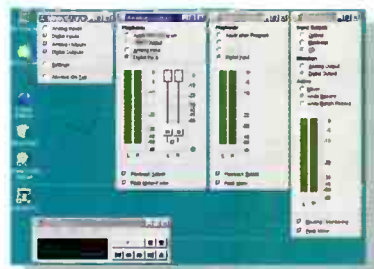
Lou Donaldson's 'Alligator Bogaloo' again had the Marian sounding more fluid and beguiling with the beat ebbing and flowing better. Better still, there was a far more tangible atmosphere around the drum kit, with the ride cymbals in particular far better carried. By comparison, the DACMagic sounded as if a curtain had been placed over the speakers. The only area where the latter comprehensively outclassed the Marc 2 was in the bass - the Cambridge has quite firm and solid low frequencies, compared to which the Marc seemed a little

ONE LOVE

Marian's USB-ONE 'high performance digital audio interface' is another winner



from the German company, says Nick Tate.



▶ lightweight and uncommitted.

Middling bass apart, this is one of the most analogue-like digital soundcards I've heard. Switch to 24/96 resolution and things get even more natural, with a truly expansive soundstage, spacious treble and smooth, detailed midband. With an extremely open and liquid sound playing CDs, and great potential for better things at higher sampling frequencies, Marian's new Marc 2 really is a cut above almost every other price rival. The only other consideration is Guillemot's superb MaxiSound ISIS, which is the one to get if a breakout box (with its myriad inputs and outputs) is important. If on the other hand, the 24/96 option could be useful to you in future, go for this with a clear conscience. It's one of the very few budget cards around which is perfectly comfortable in the company of decent hi-fi. ■ ▲

MARIAN MARC 2 £199
www.etcetera.co.uk

World Verdict



Excellent budget audiophile product that brings real hi-fi performance to your PC, with the option of 24/96 recording and playback to boot.

This small blue metal box of tricks, of fairly agricultural appearance, is one of the most handy computer audio gadgets I've seen in a while - especially if, like me, you're a confirmed notebook PC user who takes his music with him wherever he goes. The thing is, the soundcards in most computers - especially notebooks - are, in a word, pants. By plugging the USB-ONE into your Universal Serial Bus (fitted to every PC since around 1996), you have a direct line to the digital audiostream whizzing around your motherboard. This then means you can record digital audio straight to your hard drive (from CD, DAT or MD) without having to buy a soundcard with a digital in. Cool, huh?

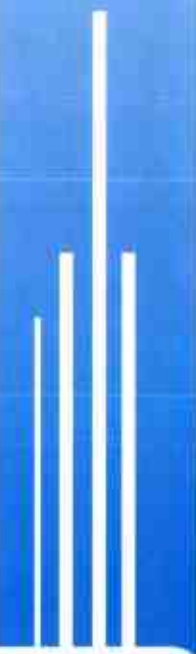
You can also get high quality analogue into your PC via the USB-ONE's built in A/D converter - which is much better than most of the rubbish on budget soundcards.

Want to record some of your friend's records? Simple, just bring your notebook round to his place

and run a lead from the Tape Outs on his amp to the USB-ONE. Click on Cool Edit (or suchlike), and suddenly you've got well over ten hours of recording time on your average hard drive at 16/44 resolution! When you've drowned your poor little PC in WAV files, you can play them back through the USB-ONE's internal DAC, which again is a very respectable sounding device that's probably far better than the one in your computer.

I just loved this thing. It installs perfectly, works flawlessly and has a very open and smooth sound right across the frequency spectrum. Those internal A/D and D/A converters are classy items. At a stroke it turns your computer into another hi-fi source component, which is very handy if like me you've got half your vinyl and most of Napster on your hard drive! I want one. ■ ▲

MARIAN USB-ONE £139
www.etcetera.co.uk



World Verdict



In a word - brilliant. Many computer audiophiles will find this the most useful thing since food was invented.

Ortofon



Pro-Ject

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SMALL WONDER

In the USA Klipsch are known for large loudspeakers. David Price checks out their move into multimedia with the Promedia S2.

The Klipsch name will be familiar to a good many dedicated audiophiles. An American company famous for its horn-loaded hi-fi loudspeakers, including the uniquely spectacular, high-end Klipschorn, the company now makes everything from home cinema to pro audio designs.

Founder Paul Klipsch designed a charismatic range of speakers focussed on reproducing transients and dynamics - hence his propensity for horn loading. The Promedia 2.1, it is claimed, carries the tradition to the computer audio sphere.

There are many reasons why baby active speaker systems should work well. By letting the separate subwoofer perform most of the air shifting duties, the satellites can be made small and narrow. This saves on the largest fixed cost in loudspeakers - the cabinet. The aurally sensitive presence region is handled by satellites, which are less prone to resonances that muddy the sound. Because the drive units are smaller, the mid-bass driver can be mounted closer to the tweeter, better approximating a point source.

Done properly, this all results in a clean, tight sound with great imaging and soundstaging. However, successful integration between a subwoofer and satellites isn't easy to do. Many systems end up sounding hopelessly disjointed. What then of these baby Klipsches?

For the £170 asking price, build is good. Compared to all other price rivals currently on the market, the 2.1s seem better put together and finished. Even the VideoLogic Siroccos, which are amazingly sturdily built for the money, possess a finish which looks home made by comparison. The system comprises the 240x248x260mm subwoofer with its single 165mm doped paper drive

unit, plus two 220x105x144mm two-way satellites using tiny paper coned mid/bass drivers and horn loaded plastic dome tweeters. The left satellite has controls for master system and subwoofer volume, plus an 'auxiliary/MP3' input and 3.5mm headphone jack. Usefully, the satellites feature removable grilles.

The sub is ported as you'd expect, and has spring-clip terminals on the back to connect up the satellites. One of the satellites has a built-in flying lead which plugs by its 3.5mm minijack into your computer soundcard or CD portable (or any other line level source). The sub also contains the amplifier, which is said to feature discrete linear output transistors and high current power section. It gives the system a claimed output of 2x35W, plus 135W from the sub (peak music power).

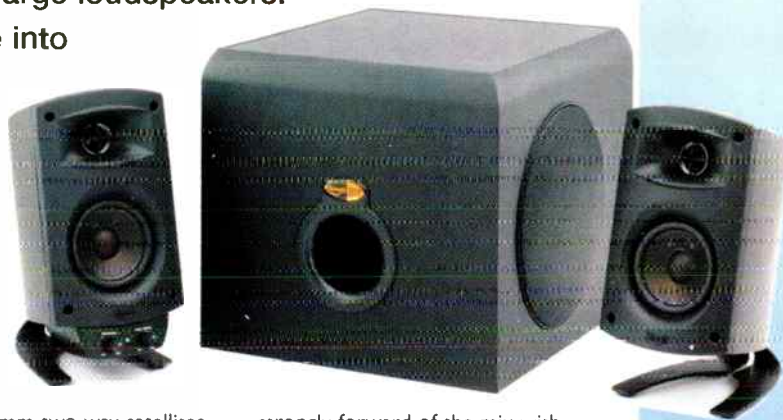
From the moment they were powered up, the Klipsch system impressed. Sound is fantastic for the money. Indeed, my problem was that I stopped listening to them as budget multimedia designs and started scrutinising them like they were a £1,000 pair of hi-fi speakers! Super clean, open, fast, rhythmic, dynamic and musical, they're remarkably engaging performers considering their price tag. I put them on the end of my Sony MZR-90 MiniDisc player (via the Line Out) and couldn't stop listening. Essentially, the Klipsch system gives a dry, detailed sound that's slightly mid-forward. The rhythm guitars on Chic's 'Le Freak' were really pulled out of the soundstage and projected beautifully. Likewise vocals imaged

strongly forward of the mix with tremendous confidence - you rarely hear hi-fi speakers do this so well. Treble wasn't splashy at all, but of course lacked the tonal variety of more expensive hi-fi loudspeakers. Best of all, the Klipsch system drove the room, effortlessly shifting air like a pair of Martin Logan hybrids. I got true 3D soundstaging and oodles of low level detailing. The result was a sound far bigger, punchier and more engaging than you'd ever think possible from three small boxes.

With my pedantic hat on, I have to say the sub is the least successful part of the package. Don't get me wrong, it isn't one of those hideous boom boxes, it's just that you have to be careful with both positioning and the level control to stop it from sounding disjointed. I used just a touch of boost, whereupon the whole system sang. Thus tuned, it crossed over pretty seamlessly - although there was always a very slight upper bass dip before the sub stepped in. Any more sub level and things boomed, without filling out the upper bass region appreciably more.

Overall though, it's thumbs aloft for this Klipsch system - I've heard worse hi-fi speakers at twice the price. It goes loud without strain, is clean, musical and dynamic, drives rooms well and always raises a smile. Short of VideoLogic's Sirocco, perhaps, there's no other £200 multimedia speaker that even comes close. ■ ▲

Klipsch Promedia 2.1 THX £170
Klipsch UK Ltd. Tel: 0131 333 5179
www.klipsch.com



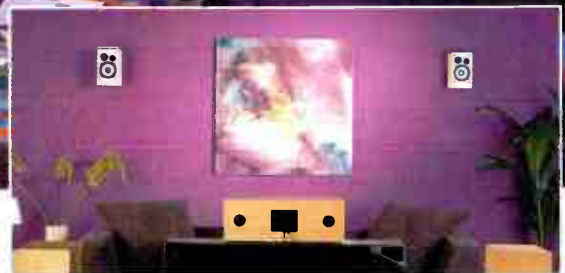
World Verdict



Extremely musical and bags of fun, these sound far better than they've a right to considering their modest price.

mercury mX

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RUSH RELEASE

It's taken a long, long time for Philips' much publicised Rush SA-126 Digital Audio Player to reach the shops. At last, David Price gets a chance to give it the treatment.

This is getting boring. Having played with the Rush now for a week, I can confidently say it's the best MP3 portable I've yet to review. It's boring because the world's electronics manufacturers have been on a strong learning curve with this particular type of product since the first Diamond Multimedia Rio PMP300 hit the shops in Summer 1999. This has meant that each successive design seems to knock the former off the top spot, and ends up in me writing dramatic stuff like this.

In the case of the Rush though, it definitely has the feeling about it of being more than a bit special. And so it should - it's the first digital walkie from one of the world's leading - if not the leading - consumer electronics giants. To wit, it would be surprising if it wasn't a significant development on one of the many 'me-too' MP3 portables from Korea. So it's easily the best all rounder I've come across, usurping the other leading contenders by quite a margin. And that includes Sony's first Digital Walkman, Samsung's YP-E64 and s3's latest Rio 600, too!

Why do I like it so much? It has the most potent combination of build quality and small size I've seen. Most impressive of all though is the sound quality, which is the stuff of real hi-fi. I remember reviewing Philips' first ever DCC portable back in 1995, and being impressed by its clean, smooth, sweet and sophisticated sound and marvelling at its modest proportions. Six years on, the Rush weighs a fraction of its size and sounds just as good - transpotters will doubtless point out the DNA that MP3 shares with the now-defunct DCC!

It weighs 50g and measures 70x 70x 17mm, takes two AAA batteries. It comes with a standard 64MB SmartMedia card, which gives around an hour of decent quality MP3 music.

Build and finish is superb - with a metallised plastic case and a classy centrally mounted alphanumeric display. It's got lots of info, including a handy 'MB FREE' feature as well as the usual track name, track number, elapsed time, bitrate, battery and play mode.

The pack contains AC adapter, stereo in-ear headphones, both parallel port and USB connection cables, a Flash Memory card and what Philips call a 'stylish pouch'!

Moving swiftly on, you also get RealNetworks' RealJukebox on CD-ROM, complete with a clumsy patch for it to work on Win98 systems - bizarrely there are no drivers as yet for Win ME or NT. Installation was simple enough, the USB drivers auto-installed without a fuss and the RealJukebox software handled file transfers relatively painlessly, taking around 25 seconds to download a three minute audio track.

Sound quality is superb for a portable of any format - even driving Musical Fidelity XA-200 monoblocks direct (via the Rush's headphone output and digital volume control) through my Yamaha NS-1000M loudspeakers - it sounded very smooth and open. Think of a Philips CD player and you get the picture - on the warm side of neutral but still quite dry and detailed in a 'Teutonic' way.

Hefner's 'Residue' (at 256kbps) was a fine showcase for the Rush's talents. Bass was lithe but not light - there's no added oomph but neither is it artificially anaemic - instead you get a nicely rounded bottom end with decent extension and a touch of warmth. Midband is impressively detailed, but not in an overt, in-your-face way as with Sony's ATRAC3-powered NW-MS7 or s3's Rio 800. Instead, the Philips puts all the pieces together in an unusually

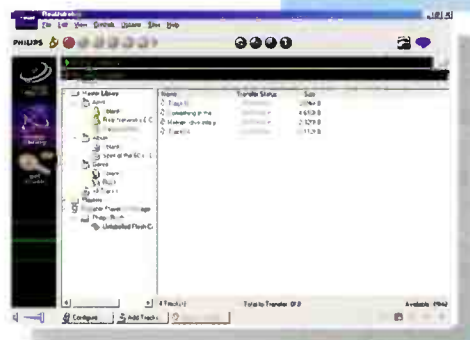


organic and cohesive manner. Rhythms aren't as punchy and vivid as the Sony, but the player still boogies just as well. Treble

is very slick and sweet, with none of the swimmy quality I got from the Sony MS Walkman. At high bitrates (192kbps or higher) you'd be forgiven for thinking you were listening to a good budget CD player.

I've got just three criticisms. The first is that there's no backlight on the display, the second is the annoying RealJukebox software and the third is that (unlike s3's Rio 600 and others) the Rush doesn't seem to offer downloadable codecs, meaning its future compatibility with AAC and WMA is questionable. Sticking with MP3, the standard RealJukebox MP3 ripper only records at up to 96kbps (unless you buy the full retail version) and doesn't have the great sounding Fraunhofer MP3 codec as standard. In this respect, bundling MusicMatch Jukebox would have been so much better. Still, this can all be got round or lived with - the fact remains that the Philips Rush offers the best sound, size and build combination yet created! ■ ▲

Philips SA-126 £230
www.philips-electronics.com



World Verdict



Fantastic sound, beautiful build and small size put it head and shoulders above all that came before it.

probably the best

NEW DEMONSTRATION ROOM NOW OPEN AT 12A SPRING GARDENS, NEWPORT PAGNELL,

KEL84 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

This is our brand new low cost, beginner level amplifier kit, featuring the popular a pair of EL84 valves in push pull configuration per channel, providing 15 watts into an 8 ohm load, plenty for most medium sensitivity loudspeakers. The output transformers are Ultra Linear, keeping distortion down to a minimum. Up front we have the ECF80 valve a extremely smooth pentode/triode tube. The Kel84 has an extremely low hum level, to solid state standards. The kit is based on a printed circuit board. We have given the kel84 a high class look with a 3mm anodised front panel and our famous chrome custom made knobs. The amplifier has the capacity to receive 5 line level inputs, plus one monitor input, with a tape output included, all controlled from the front panel. Both the phono sockets and 4mm banana socket speaker terminals are the gold plated. The Kel84 mains switch is, positioned at the rear of the amplifier and is

easily accessible, the mains is received via an IEC lead, an earth post is also positioned at the back.

This kit is suited to the beginner in that the instructions now include pictures as well as diagram, making them very easy to follow. At a UK price of £250.00 all inclusive you cannot ignore this kit. Simon Pope says, "The quality that can be gleaned from this amp is a fine introduction to the joys of the valve sound. The KEL84 will highlight all the intricacies and depth of detail in your favourite recordings whilst retaining a warmth and fullness. This combination of both detail and warmth is almost the exclusivity of pure valve amps and is rare at this price point." The Kel84 weighs in at 10kg. External dimensions with valves are 300mm(w) x 270mm(d) x 150mm(h).

£250



KIT88 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT & KAT88 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT

Here is the amazing KIT88. The circuit is similar to that of the ever popular KEL34 with a few changes to incorporate the Tesla, JJ branded KT88 power tetrode. This is a pure Class A push-pull design providing 36 watts into an 8ohm load. Gary Devon has come up with a gem of an output transformer (E1). Combined with the KT88 it offers a virtually unmatchable result for a valve amplifier. Frequency response measured 11Hz to 75kHz, separation 71dB, noise 96dB, sensitivity 400mV and distortion 0.03%. "As valve amplifiers go, the KIT88 is one of the best measured performances I have ever come across", says Noel Keywood. Jon Marks says, "The KIT88 pulled a series of surprisingly fast, meaty basslines out of its trickbag when dealing with Suzanne Vega's Nine Objects Of Desire album. As if

this wasn't enough, the mid and treble were nice too - cymbals had a deliciously natural, golden shimmer without sounding soft, and vocals were extremely transparent and crisply defined. KIT88 didn't hang around when it came to exploring the virtues of its four output valves on numbers such as 'Leaves' and 'Suspect Sustain' from Cirrus' Land's End Jazz CD. Saxophone had a wonderfully smooth, realistic character, and acoustic guitar mixed speed with harmonic richness to very impressive effect. Asian Dub Foundation and Moloko showed no sign at all of the sluggish, woolly bottom-end and poorly-delineated bass beats that most valve amps are to blame for. Which makes the KIT88 an all-round, high-end bargain." Weight 16kg, external dimensions with valves are 330mm(w) x 300mm(d) x 190mm (h).



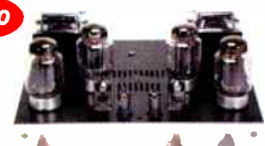
£425

KaT88 upgrade kit now available £140

KaT88 VALVE POWER AMPLIFIER KIT

£440

KIT88 upgrade kit now available £150



KIT88 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER KIT

ALL NEW SERIES II MODULAR PRE-AMP KIT

The PRE-II is a valve pre-amplifier with six inputs, tape monitor and two sets of output sockets. It utilises a high quality line driver transformer and x5 gain. The PHONO-II is a dedicated valve phono stage that incorporates a step up transformer for MC users. Finally,

PSU-II is a power supply unit that feeds both the PRE-II and PHONO-II.
Power Supply Unit (PSU-II) £175.00
Pre-amplifier (PRE-II) £175.00
Phono Stage (PHONO-II) £100.00
Moving coil step-up transformer £70.00



300B PSE MONOBLOC KIT

Our Parallel Single Ended amplifiers offer the ultimate sound quality, featuring two of the beautifully linear 300B directly heated triode in the output stage (per monobloc) pushing out 20 watts into an 8 ohm load. At the front we have a 6AU6 pentode and the famous ECC82 as the driver valve and the kit utilises a 5U4 rectifier valve for the power supply in combination with a 10H choke, giving an extremely quiet supply. For the mains and output transformers we have used the E1 type. Feedback is

switchable for all those purist out there and the kit is totally hard-wired. For those that require valves we provide the superb Tesla 300Bs, Russian 5U4s and European 6AU6s & ECC82. Simon Pope says, "Not to put too fine point on it, the sound these monoblocs create is among the finest that can be encountered in hi-fi." Our 300B PSE kit bears an affordable price of £795.00 (UK price) excluding valves. Each monobloc weighs 23kgs., external dimensions with valves: 25cm(w) x 38cm(h) x 22cm(d) per monobloc.



£795.00

KEL80 MONOBLOC AMPLIFIER KIT

Following the success of our budget KEL34 40watt kit amplifier, we have come up with a 'bigger brother' design. The output stage utilises two pairs of TESLA EL34 pentodes in parallel-push-pull mode, allowing KEL80 to turn out 80 watts into an 8ohm load. Heading up the input stage we have the wonderfully linear Russian 6AU6 working into an American 5687 phase-splitter. KEL80's output transformers are 4ohm and 8ohm tapped. With an input sensitivity at

around 380mV for full output, it will happily partner both passive and active pre-amplifiers. It is easy to assemble. Simon Pope says, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating and the KEL80 is a feast for the ears, with solid bass attack, lightening fast reactions, that emphasises musicality as well as power, at 590.00 GBP a pair, a definite valve winner. Each monobloc weighs 12kgs., external dimensions with valves: 14cm(w) x 8cm(h) x 43.5cm(d).



£590 A pair

HD83 VALVE HEADPHONE AMPLIFIER KIT

The HD83 is our new headphone amplifier, a beautifully simple design using Mullard ECL83 valves, a triode and power pentode housed in the same envelope. It works directly from any source, be it CD, tape, tuner etc., or from an amplifier's tape out or pre-amp sockets. The circuit utilises high specification output E1 output transformers that will drive any headphone load from 16 ohms to over 300 ohms depending on how the secondaries are

wired up. The HD83 is a single-ended design with the power pentode wired up in triode configuration for that added purity and is a quiet as a mouse. For sound quality Jon Marks says, "The bass is punchy and controlled without becoming artificial, while treble has the crispness of the best solid-state, with the tonal purity, delicacy and speed associated with valves. External dimensions 18cm(w) x 30cm(l) x 8cm(h) weight 4kg.



£175

parts directory

mains transformers & chokes

Kel84 mains transformer
1.5 inch stack, 90mm(h) x 80mm(w) x 95mm(d) drop through fitting with zinc cap
Secondaries: 0V-240V, 300mA, 3.15V-0V-3.15V, 5.5A, suitable for 120/240V operation
KIT88/KaT88 mains transformer
120mm dia x 60mm(h)

Secondaries: 195V-0V-195V, 450mA/0V-27V, 100mA/3.15V-0V-3.15V, 9A, suitable for 120/240V operation
300B PSE mains E1 transformer
130mm(h) x 95mm(w) x 115mm(d), drop through fitting with zinc cap
Secondaries 380V-0V-380V, 180mA/150V-0V-150V, 25mA-0V-5V, 1.2A-0V-5V, 1.2A-0V-5V, 3A-3.15V-0V-

3.15V, 0.4A suitable for 120/240V operation
Kel80 mains toroidal transformer (encapsulated)
130mm dia x 65mm(h)
Secondaries: 195V-0V, 195V, 390mA/0V-27V, 100mA/3.15V-0V-3.15V, 5.5A, suitable for 120/240V operation
HD83 mains toroidal transformer
80mm dia. x 35mm(h)

Secondaries: 0V-165V, 75mA/3.15V-0V-3.15V, 1A, suitable for 120/240V operation
PSU-II mains toroidal transformer
80mm dia. x 35mm(h)
Secondaries: 0V-270V, 60mA/0V-10V, 2A, suitable for 120/240V operation
TRANS1 mains toroidal transformer
95mm dia. x 50mm(h)

Secondaries: 0V-370V, 150mA/0V-6.3V, 3.5A
300B E1 choke 65mm(h) x 70mm(d) x 80mm(w) open frame fitting, 10H, 180mA
Kel84 E1 choke
0.5 inch stack, 40mm(h) x 35mm(d) x 70mm(w) clamp fitting, 1H, 250mA
PSU-II E1
40mm(h) x 35mm(d) x 70mm(w) clamp fitting, 15H, 20mA

KIT34 mains transformer
2.5 inch stack, 120mm(h) x 115mm(w) x 95mm(d), drop through fitting with zinc cap, Secondaries 365V-0V-365V, 300mA/0V-5V, 6A/3.15V-0V-3.15V, 7.5A, Suitable for 120/240V operation.
KIT34 choke
1.25 inch stack, 65mm(h) x 105mm(w) with fitting holes x 60mm(d), clamp fitting, 2.5 H, 350mA

diy kits in the world

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KIT34 VALVE INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER

The Kit34 is a 32 watt stereo valve integrated amplifier. Featuring a pair of EL34s, in push-pull mode, per channel, with an ECF80 pentode/triode as input/phase splitter. The power supply is valve rectified (2 x 5U4) incorporating a heavy duty choke to achieve exceptional smoothing. The output transformers are 14% Ultra Linear tapped to keep distortion down to its lowest level and the kit is totally hard wired utilising 3 tag boards. It offers 5 line level inputs, plus, a tape in

and tape out, all controllable from the front. As you can see the Kit34 looks amazing, a true classic in the making. Simon Pope says, 'The Kit34 carries a true valve signature. It has everything you could ever want and more from a tube amp, a absolute winner. Weight 22kg. External dimensions with valves fitted - 390mm(w) x 360mm(d) x 210mm(h)



NEW KIT

£495

KLS10 HIGH TECHNOLOGY COMPACT MONITOR

Our mini-marvel uses an Audax carbon fibre bass/midrange unit, married to the world's most advanced tweeter, the piezo-electric gold dome HD3P from Audax. KLS10 offers high performance from a small package. The main 'speakers are designed to work alone, or with a dedicated subwoofer to extend their bass. Alone, they are suited to near-wall mounting and can be tuned by port adjustment to suit personal taste and

location. They are easy to drive and need just 30-60watts. KLS10 is unique. Technically advanced, yet compact and relatively inexpensive. There is little to match it. Sensitivity 89dB 1W/1m. 15mm MDF, internal volume 9Ltrs. external dimensions 19cm(w) x 31cm(h) x 23cm(d). Drive units & Crossover KIT £394.00 Drive units only £358.00



£394

KLS10 GOLD SUBWOOFER

Designed to compliment KLS10 Gold stand mounters by providing a deep and open bass. The subwoofer is inexpensive, easy to build, comprising a simple crossover network to a high quality 8 inch Aerogel dual voice coil unit. A must for all KLS10 Gold customers. Sens. 89dB.

volume 25 litres. external dimensions 28cm(w) x 43cm(h) x 34cm(d). DRIVE UNIT & CROSSOVER KIT £149.95 Drive unit only £71.00



£149

KLS9 TWO WAY FLOORSTANDER

Here's a storm for you - KLS9, with its BB4 alignment bass cabinet and Audax High Definition Aerogel 8in bass/midrange unit. Designed by Noel Keywood to possess optimal bass damping and a clean step response. Aided by a teensy bit of bass lift, KLS9 really thunders: it will re-arrange your furniture. But it does not waffle, falling silent when there's no bass in the music. Aided by a high power 1in fabric dome tweeter, KLS9 is

detailed, evenly balanced and images superbly. It is an easy 12ohm load and is 88dB sensitive. For amps up to 60W. Easy to build and great for beginners. Internal volume 70Ltrs, 18m MDF external dimensions 25cm(w) x 93cm(h) x 40cm(d). Drive units & crossover kit £230.00 Drive unit pack £160.00



£230

KLS3 Gold Mk II

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY
THREE WAY LOUDSPEAKER

KLS3 Gold uses the latest version of Audax's innovative oval gold dome piezo electric tweeter, giving it the sweetest and most extended treble. Married to a 4in. carbon fibre cone midrange driver for neutral and clear reproduction, and a powerful 8in. bass driver for superb depth, this is our top-of-the-line reference 'speaker. Sensitivity

90dB at 1W/1m. 25mm MDF, internal volume 60Ltrs, external dimensions 26cm(w) x 100cm(h) x 35cm(d). Drive Unit & Crossover kit £575.00 Drive Unit Pack £450.00



£575

Upgrade your KLS3s to Gold status. Includes latest oval gold dome piezo tweeter and all components.

£330

capacitors, potentiometers & upgrade kits

- a. BLACK GATE 220uF, 50V electrolytic
- b. BLACK GATE 4700uF, 16V electrolytic
- c. JENSEN 0.47uF, 630V paper in oil capacitor
- d. LCR 22.5uF 440Vdc polypropylene capacitors (wire leadouts radial) 100mm(h) x 45mm diameter
- e. ANSAR 22.5uF 630Vdc polypropylene capacitors (wire leadouts radial) 85mm(h) x 45mm diameter

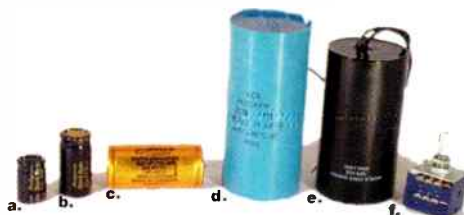
- f. ALPS blue audio grade 50K or 100K dual log potentiometer 8.5mm diameter fitting hole

Kit88 upgrade kit

- 4 x Jensen 0.47uF, 630V
- 4 x Black Gate 220uF, 50V
- 2 x Black Gate 4700uF, 16V
- 1 x 100K alps pot

Kat88 upgrade kit

- 4 x Jensen 0.47uF, 630V
- 4 x Black Gate 220uF, 50V
- 2 x Black Gate 4700uF, 16V



output transformers

- Kit84 E/I Ultra Linear push-pull output transformer 1.25 inch stack, 76mm(h) x 65mm(w) x 76mm(d) Primary-secondary 8K with 12.5% UL tap - 8ohms, max o/p-15watts, max current 150mA valves EL84 etc
- Kit88/Kat88 E/I push-pull output transformer

- 80mm(w) x 95mm(l) x 100mm(h) Primary-secondary 10K - 8ohms, max o/p-40watts, max current-160mA valves-KT88, 6550 EL34
- Kit34 E/I 14% tapped Ultra Linear push-pull output transformer 2 inch stack, 80mm(w) x 95mm(l) x 100mm(h), drop through fitting with zinc cap. Primary-secondary 6.4K, 14% UL taps. Secondary 8ohm, max

- output 24watts, max current 150mA, valves EL34, 6L6, 6CA7
- Kit80 E/I parallel-push-pull output transformer 95mm(w) x 115mm(l) x 133mm(h) Primary-secondary 4 6K - 8 & 4ohms, max o/p-80watts, max current-250mA valves-EL34, 5881, 6L6
- HD83 E/I single ended output transformer 40mm(w) x 50mm(l) x 55mm(h) Primary-secondary 4K - 4 x


- 64ohms windings, max o/p-1watts, max current-25mA valves-ECL83 etc
- Pre-II E/I driver transformer 80mm(w) x 60mm(l) x 65mm(h), 6:1 step down transformer, max current-10mA valves-6922 etc pre-amp stage
- printed circuit boards
- Kit84 Printed Circuit Board

- 280mm(w) x 135mm(l) x 1.6mm(d)
- Kit88/Kat88 Printed Circuit Board 140mm(w) x 310mm(l) x 2.4mm(d)
- Kit34 Printed Circuit Board 140mm(w) x 310mm(l) x 2.4mm(d)
- Kit80 Printed Circuit Board (a pair) 120mm(w) x 215mm(l) x 2.4mm(d)
- HD83 Printed Circuit Board 140mm(w) x 160mm(l) x

- 1.6mm(d) PSU-II Printed Circuit Board 105mm(w) x 130mm(l) x 1.6mm(d)
- PRE-II Printed Circuit Board 105mm(w) x 130mm(l) x 1.6mm(d)
- PHONO-II Printed Circuit Board 105mm(w) x 130mm(l) x 1.6mm(d)
- Tag board 2 x 16 connections (hard wiring) 40mm(w) x 140mm(l) x 3mm(d)

parts directory

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amplifier kits description

Ki734 valve integrated amplifier kit (with valves)
 Ki734 valve integrated amplifier kit (without valves)
 Kel84 valve integrated amplifier kit (with valves)
 Kel84 valve integrated amplifier kit (without valves)
 PSU II power supply unit module
 PRE II pre-amplifier module
 PHONO - II phono stage module (with valves)
 Moving Coil step up transformers
 Ki788 Valve integrated amplifier kit (with valves)
 Ki788 Valve integrated amplifier kit (without valves)
 Ki788 upgrade kit
 Ka788 Valve integrated amplifier kit (with valves)
 Ka788 Valve integrated amplifier kit (without valves)
 Ka788 upgrade kit
 HD83 Valve Headphone amplifier kit (with valves)
 Kel80 Valve Monobloc amplifier kit (with valves)
 Kel80 Valve Monobloc amplifier kit (without valves)
 300B PSE Valve Monobloc amplifier kit (with valves)
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 Kel84-K240/K120 (without valves)
 PSU - II - K240/120
 PRE - II
 PHONO II
 MC - step up (pair)
 Ki788-K240/120 (with valves)
 Ki788-K240/120 (without valves)
 Ki788 upgrade
 Ka788-K240/120 (with valves)
 Ka788-K240/120 (without valves)
 Ka788 upgrade
 HD83-K240/120 (with valves)
 Kel80 -K240/120 (with valves)
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 300B PSE-K240/120 (with valves)
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parts description

Ki734 transformer set
 Ki734 mains transformer
 Kel84 E/I mains transformer
 Ki788/Ka788 mains toroidal transformer
 Kel80 mains toroidal transformer(encapsulated)
 HD83 mains toroidal transformer
 PSU-II mains toroidal transformer
 TRANS1 mains toroidal transformer
 300B PSE E/I mains transformer
 Ki734 E/I choke
 Kel84 E/I choke
 300B PSE choke
 PSU-II E/I choke
 Ki734 E/I UL push pull output transformer
 Kel84 E/I push-pull output transformer
 Ki788/Ka788 E/I push-pull output transformer
 Kel80 E/I parallel-push-pull output transformer
 HD83 E/I single ended output transformer
 Pre-II E/I driver transformer
 300B PSE E/I output transformer
 Kel84 Printed Circuit board
 Ki788/Ka788 Printed Circuit Board
 Kel34 Printed Circuit Board
 Kel80 Printed Circuit Board
 HD83 Printed Circuit Board
 PSU-II Printed Circuit Board
 PRE-II Printed Circuit Board
 PHONO-II Printed Circuit Board
 Tag board 2 x 16 connections (hard wiring)
 Alps blue audio grade 50K dual log potentiometer
 Alps blue audio grade 100K dual log potentiometer
 LCR 22.5uF 440Vdc polypropylene capacitors
 Ansar 22.5uF 630Vdc polypropylene capacitors
 Jensen 0.47uF 630Vdc paper in oil capacitor
 Black Gate 220uF 50Vdc electrolytic
 Black Gate 4700uF 16Vdc electrolytic
 K5881 chassis
 Kel34 chasis
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 Kel84 - mains T
 88 - mains T
 Kel80 - mains T
 HD83 - mains T
 PSU-II - mains T
 TRANS1
 300B - mains T (each)
 Ki734 - choke
 Kel84 - choke
 300B - choke
 PSU-choke
 Ki734 - O/P T (pair)
 Kel84 - O/P T (pair)
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 Kel80 - O/P T(pair)
 HD83 - O/P T(pair)
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 88 - PCB
 Kel34 - PCB
 Kel80 - PCB(pair)
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 PSU-II - PCB
 PRE-II - PCB
 PHONO-II - PCB
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(240/120 option - delete the voltage NOT required. If you wish for a built item, please phone for a quote / Valves included except where otherwise stated)
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wanted

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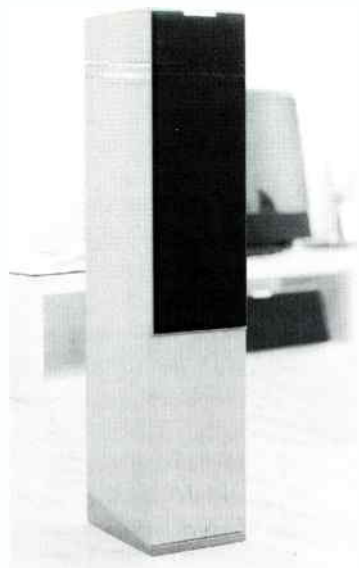
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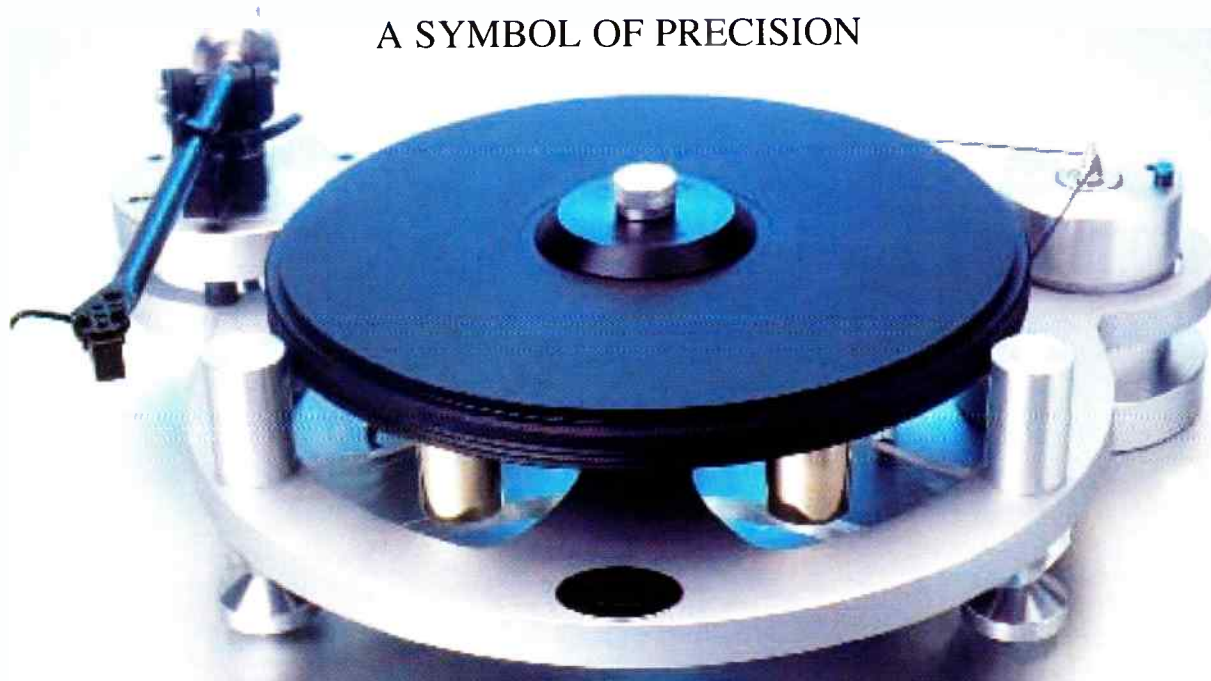
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★★★★★ **WHAT HI-FI?**
 June 1999

Michell Engineering Ltd, 2 Theobald St, Borehamwood, Herts, WD6 4SL
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My year started with a bang. It was the fuse of my 300B amplifier blowing at switch-on and I knew from experience it meant trouble. Valve amps sound wonderful, but they're like old cars - characterful but unreliable. At least, by modern standards. Worlds apart in technology but unusually close in sound is the Cyrus 7 amplifier I've also grown partial to and comparing them is interesting. The Cyrus sits quietly on the shelf, in its small, black unassuming case. Not so 300B; it is a majestic monster that demands attention. When the fuse starts going, however, I look at it in fear.

In spite of designing and building valve amplifiers over a lifetime, I still quake at the thought of repairing my beloved 300B. It's the push-pull design we released in our 4th DIY Supplement, August 1993. From the outset this was one difficult amplifier to make work properly. I conceived it with Tim de Paravicini to be as simple but near-perfect as possible and it is the basic concept of this amplifier that makes it special.

However, 300B push-pull (as I call it to set it apart from our recent single-ended) was always a hairy design that pushed the limits. The main source of fear is its internal power (HT) line that runs at 550V. Sensible designers try not to work at voltage levels this high because high voltage parts are expensive - and because when something goes bang, it does it big-time.

How I remember slaving over the power supply of this amplifier with designer Andy Grove, trying to get it right. This experience taught me to respect 550V much more than the usual 350V or so valve amps run at. Massive blue sparks would crackle through the tortured GZ34 rectifier valves we tested as they gave up under the strain. I looked on in awe and trembled a little every time I had to haul the power supply board out, testing the HT line repeatedly to make absolutely sure, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that the capacitors had discharged. I know that being hit by 550V is like being hit by a truck.

I was reminded of the power behind this supply every time a test prod slipped,

shorting HT to ground. There'd be a massive flash and bang, bits of PCB track would evaporate, burn marks scar the board and weld holes appear in the prods. I'd fly backwards in fright.

In spite of the difficulties we succeeded in getting 300B working stably and, with a sense of satisfaction, I wrote up our experiences in the September 1994 issue of Hi-Fi World. Development had taken a year.

Although the amplifier was expensive at £850, because of all the special parts, it sold well. With good justification in my view because this still remains one of my favourite amplifiers. I absolutely love listening to music through 300B. Lacking feedback, it has the most open, spacious sound I have ever heard.

This time around it looked like the diodes had gone again, but after struggling

” In spite of designing and building valve amplifiers over a lifetime, I still quake at the thought of repairing my beloved 300B.

upstairs to my workshop with all 20kgs (44lbs) of the beast there was seemingly nothing wrong. I cleaned the power supply board and inspected it for tracking or arcing. Yet again I managed to discharge the electrolytics accidentally, which produced a vicious flash and bang. I decided it was time to get serious and fit the bleeder resistors that were always meant to be there; we just hadn't bothered on this prototype.

This gorgeous power amplifier is now back working again, sitting on the concrete base of an empty fireplace where it gets a good, cool draught and, if disaster does strike, it will not set the house alight! After all these years I still view it with a little suspicion, even though it was carefully designed to run safely at 550V. We even had power supply special capacitors made, flashover tested to 800V.

In spite of its idiosyncrasies, I wouldn't live without 300B. There's a healthy 'thrum' at switch on and it sits there glowing heartily all day long, fed by a KLPP1 valve preamplifier. This is a

real battleship of an amplifier, King George V scale - not a toy! The Cyrus takes up a fraction of the space, produces more power and almost no heat. How enormously sensible it is, proof that you don't need to suffer for a great sound. It's modern, clinical efficiency isn't intriguing though. Visitors might love listening to it, but they won't see it. Not so 300B: visitors gawp.

With 300B, size is deceptive though. The circuit was designed to be as simple as possible: there are just four amplifying devices in each channel. The circuit arrangement uses no fewer than five transformers and two chokes, hence its weight and size. Cyrus 7 is far more complex.

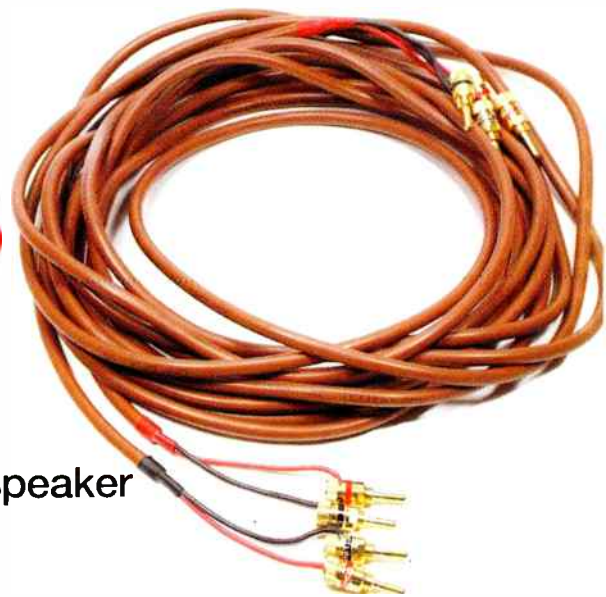
Readers often ask what we use at home. I hesitate to mention 300B because it is hair-shirt and unavailable commercially now. Something like this means little to most people. That's another reason I'm thankful for Cyrus 7. It is the nearest solid-state equivalent, sounding smooth, detailed and atmospheric. It has firmer and more lucid bass too, if not the sense of deep spaciousness of 300B.

Cyrus 7 has more power too but in terms of loudness there's no choice: 300B gives much louder bangs. This is the amplifier for me! ●



Noel Keywood

Cables Talk



Simon Pope listens to two single wire loudspeaker cables priced under one hundred pounds.

SONICLINK AST-150
£4.00 PER METRE/£48.00
TERMINATED 3 METRE PAIR

Not the catchiest of names or the most fetching of colours (it's also available in white as well as the brown we had), but the price is most definitely right. Under fifty quid for two three metre runs is good value from any company but from cable specialists SonicLink it's great.

The AST-150 employs the company's Aero Space Technology (AST) that uses "advanced materials developed for aerospace applications". It's a two core cable with plated conductors - an attempt to reduce high frequency distortion - with a not too chunky diameter of 7.5mm. Each core consists of thirty 0.2mm tinned copper strands. The cable is terminated with 'sandwich' type plugs.

A performance of Harris's English church anthem 'Faire Is The Heaven' as sung by the excellent Cambridge Singers on Collegium Records showed this cable's excellent transient attack. I find choral music a good test for cables - it showcases their abilities with detail retrieval, high frequency response and the sense of air and space. The AST-150 fared well, with an immediate and realistic presence. Where it let itself down slightly was in the upper voices, where sopranos sounded a little shrill at climaxes and consonants a tad sibilant.

Moving to Rock from the Foo Fighters, the SonicLink proved fast and grippy, with tight, controlled rhythms. Bass was a little thinner than I'd expected but what it lacks in bass

depth it makes up for in detail.

Overall, it's fine value for money. Little at this price gives as much detail, but thanks to its forward sounding or dullish systems, where it will quicken the sound. An excellent value buy and a big step up from the budget stuff.

SonicLink
 Tel: 01332 361390

KIMBER CABLE 4PR
£94 TERMINATED 3 METRE PAIR

Like SonicLink, Kimber's products range from this, their cheapest terminated 'speaker cable, to the dizzy heights of the Select range (the KS-3038 being £6,300 for a 2.5 metre pair!). So, you'd expect some high-end experience to trickle down to the lower end of the price spectrum. The 4PR is no spring chicken and has been in existence since 1979 but is still going strong. It has the familiar knitted conductor look of the more affordable models, this time in black and brown - 4 of each. The conductors are made from high-purity copper and the cable is terminated with Kimber's excellent little 4mm banana plugs or PostMaster spades. Starting the ball rolling with Harris's 'Faire Is The Heaven', the 4PR had a well balanced sound. The cable brought warmth and smoothness to the acoustic and the phrasing of the choir was also highlighted. There's a fine sense of lyricism and line, with smoothness and transparency by the bucket.

A nice open midrange was present in male voices, plus a good sense of space. There was little sibilance in female voices and no shrill edge at high notes or climaxes.

With the Foo Fighters there wasn't the same sense of immediacy as with the SonicLink, the emphasis being more on musical cohesion. Everything was very well put together, so to speak, the drums integrating beautifully with the bass guitar and Dave Grohl's vocals were strong and lyrical. The various guitar layers were all conveyed with clarity, and the whole performance shone in terms of staging and imaging. This cable is twice as much as the SonicLink and what you get for the extra money is more cohesion and lyricism. The sound isn't mechanical or dry, but open and extremely well balanced across the frequency spectrum. Bass is also good and taut. An excellent all round buy that will fit well into most systems up to £2,000. ■ ▲

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Perfect Pitch



Pioneer's classic PL600X turntable was an ideal 'people's turntable' for the late seventies - it's just a shame no one noticed, says David Price.

The PL600X found itself somewhat overshadowed by Pioneer's 'sexier' products when it was introduced back in 1980. It was unashamedly fully automatic, the Japanese not seeing the need for fiddling around with the cueing lever if they could possibly avoid it.

Back then, in Britain at least, fully auto turntables were about as fashionable as Michael Foot's duffel coat. This was because unless the automatic mechanism was done meticulously well, it invariably wrecked the sound. True to the spirit of Pioneer's high end products however, the PL600X's was executed perfectly. Everything from the actuation motors to the microswitches were of the highest quality, which was completely in keeping with the rest of the deck's engineering.

Indeed, you just can't help but be impressed by the build of this

deck. The tonearm is a beautifully crafted stainless steel S-shaped affair with a rigidly mounted counter-weight, with the tightest and smoothest bearings you'll find on an auto deck. This, and the heavy, dynamically balanced cast aluminium alloy platter and thick rubber mat are isolated from the deck's all-aluminium plinth and steel base using Pioneer's clever 'coaxial' suspension system. This means the arm, platter, bearing and motor hang from rubber coated internal struts (not dissimilar to SME's Model 30), immune from the vibrations the platter and base pick up.

The bearing housing is a robust alloy casting which encloses a finely machined spindle, and the motor a brushless, slotless linear design with a Phase Locked Loop Quartz circuit that keeps wow and flutter down to a quoted 0.02% WRMS - a figure comparable to Technics' broadcast-quality SP10/II.

A tell-tale sign of a classy turntable is its bass. When the low frequencies sound unusually deep and powerful - AND tight and fast - you know you're listening to something that's been properly engineered. The PL600X is just such a deck. With an

amazingly crisp attack-sustain-decay envelope, you can hear bass strings being struck with tremendous speed and then falling off naturally, like few turntables of any vintage. It makes for an extremely enjoyable sound which only today's best high end belt drives come anywhere close to bettering.

In other areas though, the Pioneer isn't so hot. Thanks to its low tech tonearm the midband isn't as transparent as today's top decks, and treble's a bit ragged too. Factor in its inability to handle major dynamics and it's clearly flawed in absolute terms. It's still great fun to listen to though - like many other high end Japanese decks of its day, it's always an involving performer.

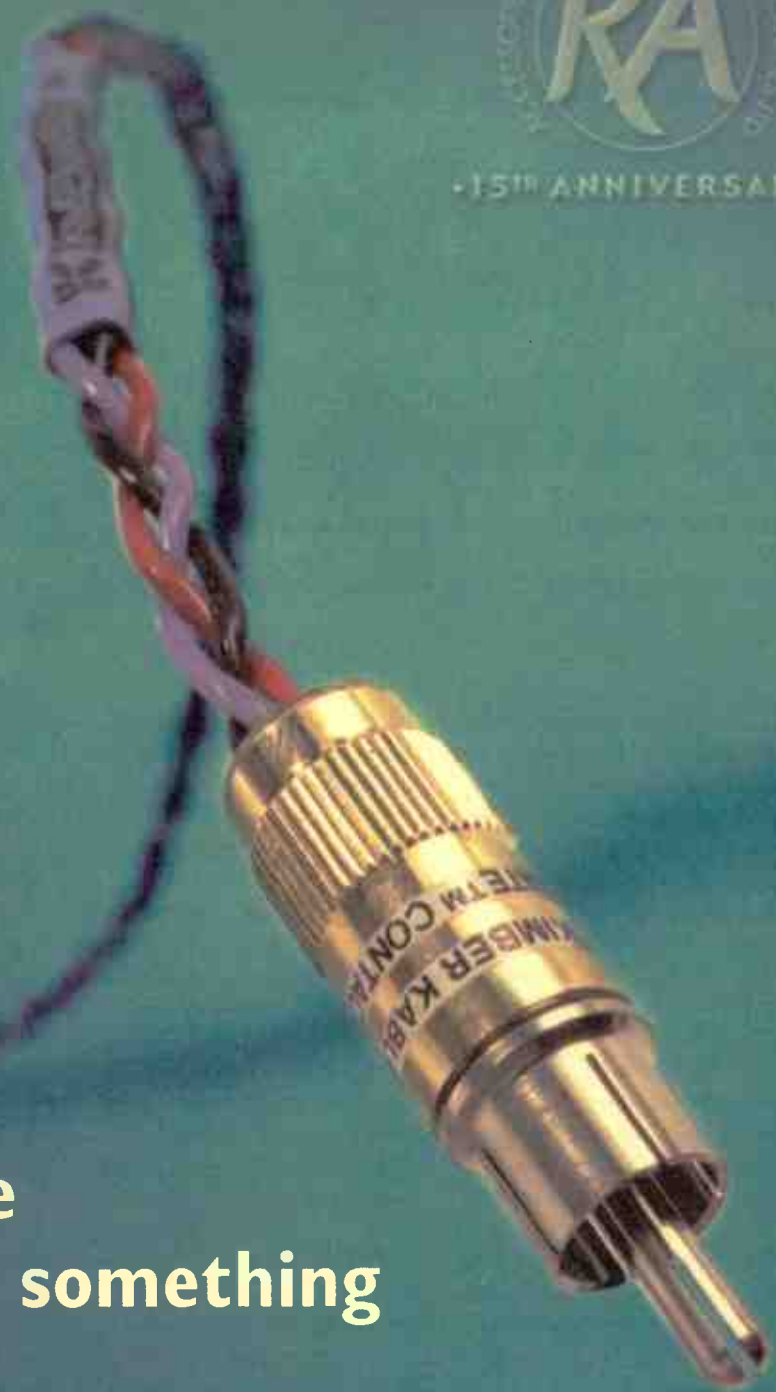
These days, PL600Xs are few and far between in Britain. An unloved deck that originally sold for £250 in 1980 (nearly as much as a Linn Sondek LP12 at the time) is never going to be abundant. But if you're looking for a cheap automatic disk spinner, then any Pioneer PL200, 300 or 400 is worth a look, not to mention the PL512, PL514, PL516 and PL518 that preceded them.

Pay between £40 and £100, depending on model and condition. The arm can be replaced with a Dynavector DV10x4 (to the high enders) or Audio Technica AT110E (to the budget decks) to improve things. Then you'll have a reliable disc spinner that will run your flash new CD player uncomfortably close! ■ ▲





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Richard Black, Hi-Fi Choice
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Ever walked into a hi-fi shop and asked the sales assistant for something, only to be greeted by a look of abject bemusement? I have, and it happened several times in one day, too.

I wasn't asking for an idler pulley screw for a Garrard AP75 turntable, or a stylus guard for a 1977 Shure M76-5. Disc clamping mechanisms for the later B version of Marantz's early CD63 CD player weren't on the shopping list either. In fact, what I wanted was completely new, current and recently released - a Super Audio Compact Disc. "You wot, mate?", was the general consensus of opinion in the five Bristol hi-fi shops I asked.

The first problem was most sales assistants' failure to understand basic English. Although I'd simply asked, "do you sell SACDs?", three out of the five dealers assumed I meant the hardware rather than the discs I was actually looking for. Considering that most trained hi-fi salespeople know the distinction between CDs and CD players, this confusion seemed a bad omen, and I was not wrong.

Although two of the five dealers sold SACD players, my request for software to play in them provoked a reaction tantamount to me having just teleported in from the planet Tharg. "You sell SACD players, don't you?", I meekly enquired. "Yes sir", they replied. "Then do you sell the discs?", I asked, "Err.. no." They might as well have replied, "of course we bloody don't, stupid".

Next came the false dawns. Several suggested I try the Virgin Megastore in Broadmead, but the kid on the desk just said, "you wot, mate?" Another suggested a specialist record shop, to which I energetically went with high hopes. "Do you sell SACDs?", asked I. "What, you mean those audiophile things with Dire Straits and that on?", the guy replied. The implication that I wanted to buy 'Money For Nothing' was bad enough, but that the fact that the guy had a smile on his face when he said it was too much. In the interests of journalistic enquiry, I swallowed my pride and nodded.

He went over to his CD rack and picked out an HDCD. Doh!

Okay in hindsight I'll admit that breezing into high end hi-fi shops that sell high end SACD players and asking for high end discs to play in them was naive. Ironically, the most helpful store was Richer Sounds, where someone suggested Vivante. Quite right too, because Vivante does sell SACDs, and even bothers to keep some in stock. This, in the software-starved world of Super Audio, is a right royal feast.

All in all, it took me the best part of five hours pounding the rainy February streets of Bristol to come up with a big fat zero. Which is why I can see the new format having rather an uphill struggle. Click on Vivante's website (www.vivante.co.uk) or even Sony's (www.sony.com/sacd) and

“ what stands between SACD and success is getting the bloody music.

you'll find there's actually a half decent selection of titles, it's just getting them that's the problem.

While audiophiles like us delight in DSD's stratospheric bandwidth and stonking dynamic range, what stands between SACD and success is getting the bloody music. Time after time, the great listening public has proved that avail-

ability and price is all a format needs for success. Napster, lest we forget, has had over thirty million downloads and practically as many satisfied customers. As far as SACD's concerned, judging by my Shanks's Pony-based market research, you can divide that figure by around one million.

Let's do a quick reality check here. You can buy a decent CD player for £200, and a second-hand turntable from Loot - that will sound better than most CD players at any price - for half that. You can get vinyl for 50p an album at a car boot sale or record fare, CDs for not much more, and if you happen to own a computer you can have MP3s of any music you ever wanted for free. By any draw of the cards then, SACD features a bit of an uphill struggle.

"But it sounds great", I hear you cry. And so it does, in the same way that TVRs are top fun to drive and a Yamaha R1 is no slouch on the open road. But that isn't where most people are at, or ever will be. If the general public is even going to aspire to listening to SACD, it must first be able to experience the software in the flesh. Pounding the streets is for journalists, not music fans. ●



David Price

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The compulsive spend of the New Year has just struck again. Christmas for me means work. Whilst I'm something of a party pooper at just the time of year all my friends are letting go of their inhibitions, money and waist lines, at least I've plenty of readies left for the new year.

Last January a new car was order of the day, the year before a new house. This time around something had to be done about the hi-fi.

It was the house that left the hi-fi in something of a sorry state, especially when it came to vinyl. My beloved Roksan Xerxes and Artemiz were scarified in order to pay the moving costs. A worthy NAD 533 (aka Rega Planar 2) has played host since. The trouble is it hasn't really played host at all. In fact it's played very little!

As good as the NAD is as a budget deck, it never encouraged me to go racing down to the record shop to pick up the latest realises on vinyl. Instead I focused upon CD. Something had to be done. The trouble was, buying a first home two years ago and just having paid seven hundred quid for car insurance, didn't leave me quite as flush as I'd hoped. Still, I reasoned that £300 should be enough to get a decent improvement upon the NAD if I scoured the second hand pages. Perhaps it wasn't quite enough to get something as good as the old Roksan, but it would be a challenge to see just how close I could get.

The scarcity of kit at this time of year didn't bode well, yet a solution appeared right under my nose. At the shop I manage there were two Ariston RD90 Superieur decks, both in a rather dilapidated state. They'd been there for longer than I have (at least seven years now), and I'd often thought about attempting to rejuvenate them. Neither had tonearms so a listen was out of the question. A review in another magazine gave the 90 a mere "good" for sound quality. Still, if the price was right I was tempted.

After a little convincing my boss of the delapidated state of them, forty pounds later my winter project had begun! I'd bought both the units, but one of them had shed its plinth and broken a motor housing clamp. It was a sorry sight, but at

least it had an armboard. The other unit was in one piece, so I decided that it would be the one to play host to the other's generous donations.

Finding a power supply proved surprisingly easy. Once I knew that I needed a 24V 800ma thing-a-me-whatsit, I simply went down to Maplins and asked for one. Admittedly the "Sunpower" PSU probably isn't a patch on the original, but it did the job of revolving the RD90 without going pop! Total cost was so far £55.

The hunt for a tonearm proved rather trickier. The SME fitting limited my

” Last January a new car was order of the day, the year before a new house. This time around something had to be done about the hi-fi.

choice severely to an SME, Audio Technica or Odyssey. The latter two were ruled out on the grounds of scarcity, so an SME it had to be. No bad thing really as the boys at Scale Model Engineers makes some pretty tasty contraptions. The trouble came in finding one. As much as I'd have loved a 309 (or better), finding one for less than £450 proved impossible. This would have completely blown my budget, and as tempted as I was, I decided to turn to the decidedly vintage 3009. I say vintage, but this World Favourite is still actually made today! No need to buy new though, as there are plenty around second hand and superb build quality and parts availability ensures longevity.

Although familiar with

the arm I hadn't quite realised just how many incarnations they'd been making, choosing one was difficult. I settled on a fixed head 3009 Improved. Partly because I've always preferred fixed heads for their extra rigidity (and I rarely change cartridges anyway), and partly because it was the only one Classique Sounds of Leicester had left! I bought it there and then for a reasonable £95. The Ortofon MC15 Super came off the NAD to complete the deck.

Putting it all together took about 9 hours, much cursing and several trips to the hardware shops to buy the necessary Allen keys and nuts and bolts, but the end result is pretty good. Whilst I'd be the first to admit that, by modern standards, it's a little weak at frequency extremes, and it doesn't have quite the solidity of soundstage as the Roksan, listening to vinyl has become a real pleasure once more. There's plenty more I can do to tweak the performance. For half the price of my original budget you could say that I'm "well pleased". In fact I'm just off down to the record shop now! ●



Dominic Todd

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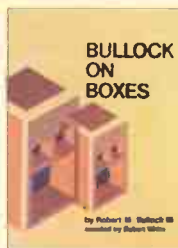
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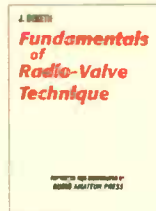
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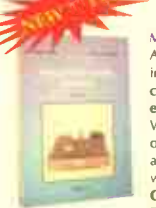
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Commonsense sturdy CD player of exceptional ability. Clear and detailed with high quality internal processing system. The X-Ray is inclined to show up poor recordings, but it's only doing its job! (Feb 99)

NAD S500 £1000
This dynamic top of the range Silverline spinner delights with any type of music. Exciting, sophisticated sounding and highly recommended. (Jun 2000)

ROKSAN CASPIAN £895
The Caspian has a smooth, slightly bright sound with some of the clearest treble in the business. Very engaging, dynamic character. (Aug 97)

ROTEL RCD 951 £300
HDCD capability at a midrange price. Plain Jane looks but solid construction. There is some higher than average measured distortion which may take the edge off this otherwise tempting product. (Aug 99)

COMPACT DISC TRANSPORTS

SONIC FRONTIERS TRANSPORT £6999
Cutting-edge design and technology combine to make this one very desirable product. The only problem is the fantasy hi-fi price. (Sep 98)

TEAC P-30 £2500
Cheap it isn't, but then it sounds like a million digital dollars. Nothing short of superb. (Jun 97)

TEAC VRDS-T1 £600
Excellent mid-price silver disc spinner with a powerful, expansive and warm sound. Easily beats most sub-£1000 designs. A good choice for the budget concious who want the best. (Feb 95)

CD TRANSPORTS

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO DACMAGIC 3* £99
Superb value for money with extensive facilities and solid, detailed sonics. Upgrades any sub-£300 player.

DCS ELGAR £8500
Future-proof convertor which will handle 24/96 and 24/192. Extremely open and natural performer. (Nov 97)

DPA LITTLE BIT 3* £299
A taste of the high end on a budget. Rich, clean, punchy sound transforms budget CD players.

MIDIMAN FLYING COW £299
Excellent as a DAC and doubles as an ADC for archiving to CDR. (Jun 98) Great value, as is junior version Flying Calf at £109. (Feb 99)

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-DAC* £300
A bargain for normal CDs and even better with HDCDs. (Nov 97)

SONIC FRONTIERS PROCESSOR 3 £6999
Quality never comes cheap! This DAC oozes class and when matched with the Transport 3 is certainly up with the best. (Sep 98)

TURNTABLES

LINN SONDEK LP12 BASIK £1100
Off the pace these days in many respects but still an extremely sweet and engaging listen with a quintessentially analogue sound.

MICHELL GYRODEC SE £775
Exquisitely built, infinitely upgradeable deck that gives true high end sound at mid-fi prices.

MICHELL ORBE £2000
Fantastically capable all rounder with commanding, powerful, detailed sound that gets the best from almost any arm and cartridge. Supreme build, brilliant value. (Apr 95)

ORIGIN LIVE STANDARD (KIT) £145
Good in standard form with AC motor; frighteningly good with a DC motor and battery PSU.

PINK TRIANGLE TARANTELLA £680
Not only does the Tarantella have more style than a catwalk full of models, it also combines PT's usual clarity with real authority. (Oct 97)

PRO-JECT DEBUT £110
Straight out of the box and onto the shelf! Nothing short of a bargain. Vinyl's never had it so good, so cheaply!

REGA PLANAR 2 £214
Brilliant starter deck with extremely polished manner. Better built £274 Planar 3 is a great all-in-one package that eats mid-price CD players for breakfast.

ROKSAN XERXES X £1295
DSU or XPS 3.5 power supply £150/170 extra. Excellent pitch stability from a new Swiss motor and outboard power supply. Very tight bass, fine dynamics and revealing clarity. (Jan 97)

SYSTEMDEK IIX900*/RB250 £330
A fine all-rounder and easy to upgrade too. More depth and breadth than Rega Planar 3. (Sep 94)

VESTAX BDT-2000 £225
A stylish looking deck with infinitely variable speed 16-90 rpm DC belt drive and built-in MM phono stage. Good value, with plenty of chassis room for alternative arms, if required. (Sep 99)

TONEARMS

HADCOCK 242 SE £649
Latest of a long line of unipivot arms. Added mass makes the 242 suitable for both low compliance MCs and straw-in-the-wind high compliance types. Revised geometry and chromium plating completes a first-class job. (Jun 2000)

NAIM ARO* £975
Truly endearing and charismatic performer - wonderfully engaging mid-band makes up for softened frequency extremes

REGA RB300 £180
Some may prefer the simpler RB250 at £130. Detailed, tight, rhythmic sound but tonally rather grey and cold-sounding. Still excellent value, though.

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What Hi Fi July 98 ★★★★★
Home Entertainment Oct 98 ★★★★★
Stereoplay (Germany) Feb 99 **Outstanding** ★★★★★
What Hi Fi June 99 ★★★★★
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Prices shown are those at the time of the review



Musical Fidelity X-Cans2
Warm, sumptuous, sweet sound

SME 3009SII £309
Once state of the art, but no longer. Weak at frequency extremes and detail, but its legendary serviceability makes it a cult in Japan. Can be picked up for peanuts second-hand. (Jan 93)

SME 309 £689
A down-market version of the IV and V with aluminium arm tube and detachable headshell. Tight, neutral sound with good tonality, but lacks the IV's pace and precision. Like the older SME 3009 series, this arm is also available in 10" and 12" versions. (Jan 93)

CARTRIDGES

AUDIO TECHNICA AT-110E £30
Great starter cartridge that's refined, detailed and musical beyond its price. Best value MM under £50

GOLDRING 1012GX £74
An accomplished MM with a solid bass, slightly forward midband and clean transients. Very reasonable price for such an able performer. (Jul 93)

DNM MICA £185
Better than Goldring's 1042 and costs only £135 on trade-in. An assured and transparent MM. (Feb 98)

DYNAVECTOR DV20X-H £299
The best modern budget MC combines deliciously sweet sound with fantastic get-up-and-go. High output version works a treat with valve phono stages too.

MUSIC MAKER £575
When mated with a good quality arm, this hand finished high-output pick-up gives an ear-boggling account of itself. Very high compliance ensures maximum information retrieval. An absolute (grain orientated) gem. (Feb 99)

ORTOFON MC 7500 £2000
Conclusive proof that there's hope for the world. It's a long time ago now but this high-priced favourite still earns its niche - CD lovers would die if they heard it. (May 94)

ORTOFON MC 15 SUPER II £140
Not quite as good as the dearer Supremes but the Super II is a splendid introduction to the joys of moving-coil cartridges.

GOLDRING 1042 £130
One of the best Moving Magnet cartridges going, with beautiful treble and muscular bass. New low price makes it a bargain.

ORTOFON ROHMANN £1000
In a way it's MC 2000 meets MC 7500 with great tonal strengths and a dynamo sound. (Apr 96)

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

AUDIO ANALOGUE PUCCINI SE £595
This superbly-built Italian integrated has a lucidity and control which leaves others nowhere. Sound stage a wow. (Dec 97)

AUDIOLAB 8000a £495
Well rounded integrated with smooth and detailed sound plus a huge feature count. Great build makes later versions a top used buy.

DENON PMA-250SE £160
It might not have bags of grunt but the Denon can sound exceedingly natural and open. (Feb 97)

McINTOSH MA6800 £3735
The MA6800 not so much plays music as takes control of it, with effortless bass drive. (Sep 95)

MISSION CYRUS 2 £299
Classic eighties minimalism combines arresting styling with clean, open, lively sound. Further upgradable with PSX power supply.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-CANS2 £160
Warm, sumptuous, sweet sound h/phone amp. gives startling results with a decent set of headphones.

NAIM NAIT 3 * £575
Superb rhythms and dynamics make for great music making, but tonally monochromatic. Super optional phono stage makes it ideal for vinyl junkies.

ROKSAN CASPIAN £695
Smooth, warm integrated with remote control that works happily into most 'speakers. (Dec 97)

SONNETEER ALABASTER £995
Builds on the strengths of the Champion with ample control, colour and drive. (Oct 97)

PHONO STAGES

CREEK OBH-8 SE £180
Punchy, rhythmic character with oodles of detail makes this a great budget audiophile product.

LFD MISTRAL PHONO STAGE * £300
The Mistral has a warmth and involvement that make many pricier stages sound overpriced.

MICHELL DELPHINI MONOBLOCS £1995
Analogue tour-de-force gives supremely clean, detailed and finely resolved sound with breathtaking dynamics. Great value, even at this price.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-LP £125
One of the famous MF X series. Full marks throughout for clarity and detail. Switchable between MM and MC. Indestructible build! (May 99)

PRO-JECT PHONO BOX £39
Not the last word in many respects but a thoroughly honest piece of work. Inexpensive introduction to all that vinyl has to offer. MM and MC provision plus choice of two impedances.

ROKSAN ARTAXERXES X £950
With the Atessa PSU the Artaxerxes X MM/MC stage still shines. Great stage depth, neutrality and tonal colour. (Oct 97)

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Featured - CD5 Player (Top) £1125 & Nait 5 (Bottom) £799

world favourites I

SONNETEER SEDLEY £399

Combines transparency and fine dynamics with excellent rhythmic ability. (May 98)

PRE-AMPLIFIERS

AMC 1100 £150

Suffers from un-defeatable tone controls but an extremely good value piece of kit. Partners the similarly budget level AMC 2200 power amplifier, also at £150. Comfortable beginners' choice. (Mar 99)

AUDIO ANALOGUE

BELLINI £475

Showcases AA's characteristic mix of clarity and musicality and blasts the competition. (Apr 98)

CHORD CPA1800 £1800

Clarity, insight and control are second to none - an addictive mixture. (Mar 98)

CROFT VITALE £350

A modestly priced valve pre-amp with exceptionally transparent performance. MM phono stage plus three line stages are standard. Volume controls are separate for each channel, thus giving balance adjustment. A remarkable item in all respects. (Feb 2000)

XTC PRE-1 * £1000

Almost valve-like in its smoothness, the level Pre-1 is warm and seductively clear. (Nov 96)

POWER AMPLIFIERS

ARCAM 9 * £400

With 70W on tap, the 9P will drive most loudspeakers with a spacious and detailed sound. Good bass welly too. (Dec 96)

CHORD SPM400 £1400

There's a sense of effortless power to the Chord that gives music real scale and presence. (Mar 98)

MARANTZ MODEL 9 * £8000

Authentic reproduction monoblocs still more than cut the sonic mustard. Highly expensive and highly sought after. (Mar 97)

MICHELL ALECTO £1989

Crisp, clean and beautifully controlled with gorgeous styling. Partnered with the £1650 Orca this is a superb winning combo. (Oct 98)

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-A200 £1000/pair

200W of high-end monobloc power in a grooved tube. (Aug 98)

NAIM NAPI80 £1060

Partnered with a NAC82, this has classic Naim control, and a superbly rhythmic presentation.

TUNERS

CAMBRIDGE T500 £180

An extremely engaging tuner with a performance at odds with its low price. Not exactly a Troughline, but you may not notice... (Feb 99)

CREEK T43 £399

Excellent detail, separation and dynamics. A great little tuner and unbeatable at this price. (May 98)

MARANTZ ST17 £600

A positive dreadnought of a tuner. Sweet and refined but with a heavy punch when needed. A tuner of this quality demands a decent aerial. (Jul 99)

MISSION CYRUS FM7* £300

Clear and lucid sound puts it up with the best. Superb build too. (Apr 94)

NAIM NAT03 £595

The NAT03's warm, atmospheric sound is further proof of Naim's proficiency with tuners. (Sep 93)

SONY ST-SA3ES* £250

Beguiling RDS tuner for the sonically discerning. Good ergonomics and sensitive too. (Apr 97)

CASSETTE DECKS

AIWA AD-S750* £200

Sonically a very decent machine at the price. Comes fitted with Dolby B, C and the dead handy Dolby S. (Apr 96)

AIWA AD-S950* £300

A stable transport, superb head and Dolby S make the AD-S950 an excellent all-rounder. (Feb 95)

KENWOOD KX-3080* £160

A simple deck, but excellent-quality head and transport give top quality sound. (Oct 96)

PIONEER CT-S740S £430

A great piece of engineering from Pioneer, with first-rate sound. (Jun 96)

YAMAHA KX-580SE* £250

The 'SE' tag is more than a marketing gimmick. Sound is solid and clear with Dolby S. (Sep 97)

LOUDSPEAKERS

CASTLE EDEN £469

Impressively vice-free 'speakers that offer great transparency and involvement. One of a select band that simply makes music regardless. (Mar 97)

EPOS ES12 * £495

Strong, punchy bass is allied to finely detailed, articulate midrange and sparkling treble. (Oct 96)



Kef Cresta I loudspeakers
A very musical sound.

KEF CRESTA I £100

Delightfully sophisticated presentation for the price. Won't blow the roof off, but will deliver a very musical sound. (April 2000)

KLIPSCH HERESY II £1100

An outstanding high sensitivity loudspeaker with midrange and treble horns coupled with infinite baffle 12" bass driver. Effortless, fast and accurate. (May 99)

MISSION 752 * £495

Cracking mid-price mini towers combined HDA drive units and metal dome tweeters with surprisingly warm results. Benign load characteristics makes them great for valves.

MISSION 771 £170

Characteristically fast, punchy Mission sound from the Aerogel mid/bass and silk-dome tweeter. (Jul 98)

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CD Master Player £1249

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QUAD ESL 63* £3450
A reference against which all other loudspeakers are judged, the '63s have superb imaging and genuine transparency.

TANNOY AMS8* £2700
Bold sounding pro active monitor with solid bass, clear midrange and delicious treble. (Aug 96)

TANNOY MERCURY m2* £140
A true audiophile bargain which embarrasses many more expensive boxes. Never mind the price, let your ears decide. (May 97)

MINIDISC PLAYERS

KENWOOD DM-9090 £500
One of the best MD players yet. ATRAC 4.5 gives clean and very musical recordings from this Kenwood. (Jan 98)

SONY MDS-JB930Q £250
Great mid-price machine that adds better build and facilities to the '530's already excellent sonics.

SONY MDS-JA50ES* £1300
This Sony can put the wind up Nakamichi cassette decks when used with better blank MDs. (Apr 98)

SONY MDS-JE55ES
MiniDisc recorder £520
The best sounding MD deck made so far, thanks to awesome build and heroic ATRAC-DSP Type R coding.



Alesis Masterdisk
A glimpse of the future

SONY MDS-JE510 £300
An impressive sound and unmatched convenience make this MiniDisc player an excellent buy.

DIGITAL RECORDERS

ALESIS MASTERDISK £1400
A groundbreaking hard disc recorder with a built-in CD drive. An amazing bit of kit, and a glimpse of the future. (July 2000)

KENWOOD DMF-9020 £500
An excellent tool for home recording, combines convenience, superb sound and a fair price. (Aug 99)

MARANTZ DR-17 £1100
Probably the best sounding CD recoder on the market. Built like a brick out house with a true audiophile sound. HDCD compatible. (July 2000)

PHILIPS CDR-765 £360
One of the first twin deck recorders/players that boasts high speed dub facility. Playback could be warmer, but still a bargain. (Oct 99)

PIONEER PDR-555RW £480
Excellent mid-priced CD recorder that both plays and records with equal panache. (Oct 99)

SONY TCD-8 DATMAN* £599
Super clean and detailed sound makes this an amazing portable. Not as robust as it should be though.

DVD PLAYERS

DENON DVD-5000 £1600
Monster build, as you'd expect at this price. Facilitates and gadgets galore and drop-dead high end looks. A very smooth and sophisticated sound, although not as good as similarly-priced CD players. (Mar 99)

PIONEER DV-717 £700
Well built and a solid performer, with a 'true' 24/96 digital output. Facilities in abundance and a controlled, exciting way with CD replay. Shame it lacks a Dolby Digital decoder! (Sep 99)

SONY DVP-S725 £490
One of the best buys in the DVD market. Available in a dodgy white case, but the facilities and performance more than make up for this. Excellent with both music and visuals, and a whole host of up to the minute facilities to keep you occupied. (Mar 2000)

HEADPHONES

JECKLIN FLOAT MODEL TWO £99
Wonderful panel-like and open sound from these esoteric-looking headclamps. Do not wear in public unless you like being made a fool of!

SENNHEISER HD-490 £50
Good value cans with an exciting and bassy sound. Everything one should look for in headphones at a sensible price.



Nordost Blue Heaven
A simple and effective upgrade

INTERCONNECTS

CHORD COMPANY CHAMELEON 2 £90/m
One of our favourite favourites, the Chameleons are musical performers with a smooth yet open sound.

DNM RESON £40/m
Neutral and transparent, and a steal at forty quid!

NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN £150/m
Some of the fastest and most transparent cable around. A simple and effective upgrade.

VAN DEN HUL ULTIMATE THE FIRST £260/0.6m
Carbon interconnects that help you forget the electronics and concentrate on the music. Miraculous transparency.

LOUDSPEAKER CABLE

CHORD COMPANY RUMOUR £9.95/m
The Rumour is our reference at the price. Tight and tuneful bass mixed with air and space results in a cracking cable for the money.

DNM RESON £6.95/m
This cable has a transparency of sound that's rarely heard at the price. Excellent value for money.

NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN £375/3m pair
This isn't cheap, but it sounds absolutely fab. An open and spacious sound that simply carries music.

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Linn Isobarik Aktive Speakers (1Yr G/tee)	(3500.00)	£995.00	Naim SBL Passive Speakers S/H (1Yr G/tee)(2475.00)		£1595.00
Naim CD3 CD Player S/H (1Yr G/tee)	(949.00)	£550.00	Naim SNAXO 2/4 Crossover S/H (1Yr G/tee) (770.00)		£475.00
Naim NAC 72 Preamp E/D (1Yr G/tee)	(790.00)	£499.00	Nakamichi DR3 Cass/Deck S/H	(449.00)	£249.00
Naim NAP 140 Power Amp E/D (1Yr G/tee) (815.00)		£569.00	ProAc Tablette 50 Speakers	(599.00)	£350.00
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Naim CDI CD Player S/H (1Yr G/tee)	(1650.00)	£929.00	Rotel RB991 Power Amp (2Yr G/tee)	(650.00)	£489.00
Naim NAC 92/90 Pre-Power S/H (1Yr G/tee) (978.00)		£675.00	Rotel RB981 Power Amp (2Yr G/tee)	(400.00)	£299.00

World classics

CASSETTE

NAKAMICHI DR-2

A great machine with Nakamichi's legendary heads. The lowest cost 'true' Nakamichi at the time, retailing for £600.

NAKAMICHI CR-7

The last of the great ones, and definitely the best Nakamichi ever (yes, better than a Dragon)

YAMAHA TC-800G

Early classic in serious cassette. Its ski-slope looks got it a cult following once it had ceased to be simply ugly.

CD PLAYERS

MERIDIAN 207

Beautifully-built two-box with pre-amp stage. Very musical although not as refined as modern Bitstream gear. No digital output.

PIONEER PD-91

Built-to-last player with easy upgrade routes for modifiers. Not knockout as it stands but get one cheap and have a go!

CAMBRIDGE CD1

The first two box player with weighted mechanics and even an optional Dropout/error counter. Radical and effective at the time - a classic.

AMPLIFIERS

LEAK POINT ONE, TLI2 & TLI10

Ancestors of hi-fi, consequently expensive nowadays. As with all vintage valve stuff, overhauling is de rigueur before use, using original parts if possible.

LEAK PRE-AMPS

Line of 'good for their time' pre-amps. Use of EF86 pentode valve for high gain rules out ultra performance. Not the highest-fi.



Garrard 401
A legendary turntable.

LEAK STEREO 20

Excellent workaday classic valve amp. In good order the 20 will not disgrace itself. Various upgrades are available from specialist repairers.

LEAK TLI2+

Plentiful monobloc equivalent of Stereo 20. Reasonably inexpensive and a tweakers' dream. Genuine valve hi-fi on a budget.

NAD 3020

You can't argue with success! NAD's budget transistor integrated gave thousands their first taste of hi-fi and remains great value.

QUAD 33/303 PRE/POWER

Great style and construction, also bullet proof. Warm and wooly sound, but easy going. A good introduction to early transistor audio classics.

QUAD 22/II PRE/POWER

One of the all-time classic valve amplifiers. Unusual circuit but it works beautifully. 22 pre-amp not up to today's standards.

SUGDEN A21

Seventies transistor integrated has an eminently likeable smoothness and musicality. Limited inputs via DIN sockets.

TECHNICS SE-A5 Mk2

Nice transformer and electronics, shame about the casework. With tweaking, this 150watter can sound sweet.

LOUDSPEAKERS

KLIPSCHORN

Not exactly plentiful or cheap but a splendid beast. For efficiency they have seldom been equalled. Space hungry!

LEAK SANDWICH

Rather warm sounding big infinite baffle but cheap with it. With a reasonably powerful amp can sound quite satisfying.

LOWTHER PM6A

High quality full-range driver; still manufactured. High sensitivity, as fitted to many classic horn designs.

MAGNEPLANAR SMGa

Touch dry in the bass but a technological loudspeaker with genuinely musical abilities.

MISSION 770

Father of the 77 range which continues to this day. Well mannered with a warm sound and a kind load to amplifiers.

QUAD ESL57

Unrivalled. Properly serviced there is nothing like them. Their natural presentation may make them caviar to the general.

YAMAHA NS1000M

Hi-tech favourites of the Japanese and Americans. Viewed more warily in the UK but can give excellent results.

TANNOY GRF & AUTOGRAPH

Folded horn monsters which certainly sound good if you have the space. For Tannoy vintage see HFW November 1998.

WHARFEDALE SUPER 8 RS DD

Ideal experimenters' driver. High sensitivity ~14,000 Gauss magnet and extended frequency range. Inexpensive too!

TANNOY YORK, LANCASTER

Many similar models of infinite baffle or reflex design. Not the last word in tautness but the drivers work well in modern cabinets.

VINYL

ACOS LUSTRE

Very honest piece of kit, well made and easily adjusted. Vinyl beginners could do very much worse.

ALPHASON HRI00S

First class arm, up to present-day standards. Buy carefully, though, as there's no service available now.

ARISTON RD11

A one-time king of turntables very similar to the Linn LP12. Now deposited but worth a look at the right price.

LINN AXIS

Uncomplicated, lower-price version of the famous Sondek. Less expensive than some of its stablemates.

GARRARD 301 & 401

Legendary turntables, once fairly plentiful. Excellent back-up available; many different custom plinths available. High quality.

GOLDRING LENCO 88 & 99

Great deck for the kitchen table enthusiast. Garrard fans won't look at 'em but cheap and capable. Servicing available.

HADCOCK 228

Recently out-classed by Hadcock's updated 228 Special Edition but a proper hi-fi arm for all that. Makers still service.

MICHELL FOCUS ONE

20 years and still going strong. Early runner in the 'modern' turntable cycle with a first class arm. Factory servicing available.

SHURE M75

Recent line-contact improvements have left the M75 behind but the wide range of needles make it a handy tool.

SME 3009 IIS

Everlasting classic tone-arm. Spares permanently available from SME. No longer the last word but peanuts second-hand.

THORENSTD124

Best classic deck ever? Judging by the prices they fetch it's possible - 78rpm too!

THORENSTD150

Mid-price deck with a keen following. No real difficulty with servicing - novices may find the suspension system unnerving.

TRIO L-07D

Knockout heavyweight from 1980 with stainless bearing and 11lb platter! Not a give-away and beware! - spares scarce.

TUNERS

LEAK TROUGHLINE (ORIGINAL)

Interesting ornament but no longer hi-fi. Limited coverage of 88MHz to 100MHz only.

LEAK TROUGHLINE II & III MONO

Arguably the best-sounding tuners ever. Adaptation for stereo easy via phono multiplex socket.

LEAK TROUGHLINE III STEREO

Excellent tuner with indifferent stereo decoding circuit. Best when adapted to use modern outboard decoder.

MARANTZ ST-8

Possibly the ultimate Tardis console, including an oscilloscope for checking the strength of signal. Expensive even now.



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AMPLIFIERS		
Audio Research LS-8 Valve Pre. MINT / Boxed / Manual	1450.00	895.00
Metaxus Charisma Pre. (M.M./M.C. Phono-Stage) MINT/Boxed (Sounds Superb)	1600.00	695.00
Rega Hal Pre. / 4 x Exon Power-Amps. (Phono / Remote) (250 Watts Per Channel Bi-Amp) MINT / Boxed / All Cables (May Split)	3390.00	1795.00
Counterpoint SA-1 Valve Pre-Amp / Phono-Stage (Dual-Mono) VGC (Bargain)	1000.00	+ 299.95
Golden Tube SL-50 Remote Int. Valve Amp. MINT / Boxed / Manual	1100.00	695.00
Krell K5A-50 Class A Power-Amp. VGC	2500.00	+ 850.00
Audio Innovations Series 800 Anniversary Power Amp. MINT / Boxed	1500.00	695.00
Naim NAC-92 / NAP 90.3 Pre. / Power (M.M. J-Boards) MINT / Boxed	975.00	695.00
Naim Hi-Cap (Inc. Snaic 5) (New-Style) MINT / Boxed	720.00	450.00
Linn LK-1 Pre. + Dirak Power Supply. (M.M. / M.C. Phono-Stage) VGC / Boxed / Manuals	N/A	275.00
Linn Pretek Pre. (M.M. / M.C. Phono-Stage) VGC	400.00	179.95
Croft Vitale Valve Pre-Amp. (M.M. Phono-Stage) The NEW Pre-amp. (Superb at this price) Available to Special Order Only (Selling Very Well And Delivery Times Now Approx. 10-Days) NEW Standard		350.00
*Deluxe (Timber Fascia / Brass Control Knobs) (Matching "Musica" Power Amp. Now Available: Please Phone For Details)		400.00 *
Moth Series 30 Active Pre. / Power-Amp. (2 x 30 Watts) MINT / Boxed (Black Ash Version)	600.00	269.95
Quad 77 Pre / 77 Power / Remote Control Station. (2 Sets in Stock) MINT	1750.00	899.00
Quad 33 Pre-Amp. VGC / Boxed / Manual	N/A	79.95
Quad 405 I Power-Amp. VGC / Boxed	N/A	189.95
Audiolab 8000A Int. Amp. MINT / Boxed / Manual	500.00	329.95
Meridian 101B (M.M. Boards) (Black) MINT (Rare Black Version)	N/A	149.95
NAD 106 Pre / 906 Power (Six Channel Power-Amp) GC	880.00	399.95
Musical Fidelity XA-200 Mono-Blocs (2 x 200 Watts) MINT / Boxed (Black-Gate Upgraded) VGC / Boxed	1200.00	695.00
Musical Fidelity "The PreAmp" (Balanced-Out Etc.) MINT / Manual	280.00	129.95
Musical Fidelity B-1 (2 x 40 Watts Int.) VGC	300.00	119.95
Rotel RB-990 BX Power-Amp. (2 x 200 Watts) VGC / Manual	600.00	329.95
AMC 3050A (2 x 45 Watts / Full Remote Etc.) MINT / Boxed Etc.	300.00	+ 119.95
NAD 3020i (2 x 25 Watts Int. / Phono-Stage) MINT / Boxed	180.00	99.95
Pioneer A-300 X Int. MINT / As New	230.00	119.95
Creek CAS 4040 Int. MINT / Boxed	180.00	99.95

DIGITAL		
Teac P-500 / D-500 (Transport & DAC) VGC	1200.00	549.95
Meridian 602 Transport / 606 D.A.C. (MSR Remote Control Station.) MINT / Boxed / Manuals	3100.00	1195.00
Meridian 203 D.A.C. (Bitstream) VGC	500.00	129.95
Rotel RCC-955 (5-Disc Multi-Player / HDCD) (2 in Stock) MINT / Boxed	525.00	249.95
Technics SL-PS 840 (Remote Etc.) MINT	420.00	229.95
Technics SL-PS 490 (Remote Etc.) MINT / As New / Boxed	100.00	79.95
Q.E.D. Digit / PS.U. (Digital to Analogue Converter) VGC	150.00	59.95
AMC CD-9 (Remote) MINT / Manuals / Digital Out	250.00	99.95
Audio Alchemy Data-Stream Transceiver (Powered C.D. Connection) AS NEW	200.00	99.95
Arcam Alpha GC / Digital Out Etc. / No Remote	350.00	129.95
Arcam CD-67 II Original SE (Remote / Digital Out) VGC	350.00	169.95
Soundstream (Krell) DAC-1 18-Bit DAC NEW / Unused	400.00	249.95
DPA Little Bit (DAC) Digital To Analogue Converter MINT	520.00	189.95
Harman Kardon HD-7500 (Remote) VGC	350.00	99.95
Sony CDP-XE 900E (Remote) MINT / AS NEW	300.00	139.95
NAD Monitor 5000 (Digital Out) VGC	310.00	99.95
Musical Fidelity X-24K 24-Bit DAC MINT	300.00	179.95
Pioneer PD-91 Reference MINT / Boxed / Manuals	1000.00	449.95

VINYL		
Linn Sondek LP-12 (Afrosmosia) Valhalla / Alphason HR-1005 / Goldring Electro II Boron M.C. MINT	1500.00 +	595.00
Linn Axis / Basic Plus / Ortofon MC-1 Turbo M.C. MINT / Boxed / Manual	600.00	329.95
Garrard 401 (Motor-Unit) VGC	N/A	175.00
ADC 1600 Direct-Drive / Ortofon VM5-20E Cartridge VGC	300.00	99.95
Musical Fidelity XL-P2 (Mono-Bloc Phono-Stage / X-PSU) NEW and Superb (M.M. / M.C.) (Switchable Impedance) (Ex-Display)	NEW	379.90
Audio Alchemy Vac-In-The-Box. M.M. / M.C. Phono-Stage / Power-Station-One PS.U. VGC	250.00	119.95
Monacor SPR (M.M. Phono-Stage) NEW / Excellent Value	N/A	29.95

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MISCELLANEOUS		
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Sony DVP-8725D Remote DVD Player (Multi-Region) MINT / Boxed / Manuals	600.00	289.95
Kenwood SS-3300 Remote Pro-Logic Processor (Centre / Rear Amps) MINT/Boxed	250.00	89.95
Mordaunt Short Decoder One (Dolby Pro-Logic Decoder) MINT / Boxed Etc:	400.00	79.95
Kef Q-75C Uni-Q Centre Speaker MINT	200.00	129.95
Mission 77C Centre Speaker MINT / Unused	200.00	149.95
Technics SB-LV500 Rear-Surrounds MINT	200.00	139.95
Musical Fidelity X-PSU Power-Supply Upgrade For X-Series MINT	140.00	90.00
Pearl Coolers (8 x EL-34 Valve Coolers / Dampers) MINT	64.00	40.00
Target B-4 Gloss Silver Stand (Glass Shelves) NEW Slight Second	230.00	189.95
Target B-4 Gloss Silver Stand (Glass Shelves) NEW Slight Second	243.80	199.95
Target TT-2 (2-Shelf Spiked Stand) VGC (4 In Stock) Each	N/A	40.00
Target TT-2.5 (4-Shelf Spiked Stand) (Same As TT-2 Above But With Two Additional Half-Shelves For Naim / Cyrus Etc.) VGC	N/A	N/A
Target TT-1 Wall-Support Shelf (For Turntables Etc.) VGC	N/A	N/A
Sound Organisation 5-Shelf / Glass MINT	180.00	119.95
Foundation Heavy 24" Spiked Stands VGC	N/A	49.95
Target R-1 (4-Column Heavy Stands) MINT	280.00	189.95
Target H5-60 Piano-Black Spiked L.S. Stands NEW	105.80	89.95
Target HM-50 Spiked L.S. Stands NEW	90.30	79.95
Target SP-60 Spiked Stands MINT	60.00	35.00
Target 24" Spiked Stands (Electric Orange) MINT	90.00	50.00
Stands For LS-35a, Kans or Pro-Ac Tablettes Etc: GC	N/A	40.00
Monacor SPS-35 Spike Kit (Gold or Anodised Black Finish) 'speaker Spikes NEW (Per 4)	9.95	9.95
Monacor SPS-45 Spike Kit (Small) Loudspeaker Spikes (Per 4)	NEW	7.95
Monacor SPS-65 Spike Kit (Large) Loudspeaker Spikes NEW (Per 4)	NEW	9.95
Roni LSS 2 (2-Way Speaker Switch-Box)	NEW	18.95
Roni 4 m.m. Banana Plugs (Gold Plated) (Screw-Type, No Soldering) Per Four	NEW	6.95
Roni Optical Line Cables (C.D / Minidisc to D.A.C. Etc.)	NEW	10.00
Audio Source Twin-axial Digital Incon. 0.7 Metre / MINT	45.00	25.00
XLO/VDO Digital Incon. 4 Metres / MINT / Boxed	70.00	39.95
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Monacor SPS-20 Anodised Adjustable Polished Cone Equipment Supports (Superb Spike System at a very good price) (Black Anodised Or Gold Finish) Set of 4	NEW	19.95
XLR Cannon Line-Sockets (Gold-Plated) High-Grade XLR NEW	Only	5.95 Each
discwasher CD Radial Cleaner VGC / Boxed	N/A	12.00
Parastatic Disc Preener VGC	N/A	5.00
John Michell Engineering "Sweep-Arm" MINT	N/A	20.00
Monacor Power Concept Incons (0.8M. / 1.5M)	NEW	9.00
Excellent Value Interconnects NEW Only 7.95 0.8M. or 10.95 1.5M. (Blue And Black)	NEW Only	3.50
Van den Hul CS-122 L.S. Cable 2 x 2 Metres Terminated	NEW Only	1.25
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Quad FM-3 Stereo Tuner VGC / Boxed / Manual	N/A	99.95
Revox A-76 FM VGC / Boxed / Manuals	N/A	179.95
Sugden DT-48 FM (Digital Display / Pre-Sets) Fair Condition	N/A	149.95
Sony STS-117 FM Digital Tuner MINT / Manuals	140.00	79.95
Q.E.D. T-231 VGC	N/A	49.95
Luxman T-88 V VGC	N/A	85.00

RECORDING EQUIPMENT		
Pioneer CTS-5505 (Dolby S Etc.) MINT / Manual		250.00
Denon DRM 550. (HX-PRO Etc.) MINT / AS NEW	160.00	89.95
Denon DR-171 (Variable-Output / Mic. Inputs) GC	N/A	50.00
Nakamichi RX-202E (Auto-Reverse Mechanism Etc.) VGC	N/A	369.95
Marantz SD-53 (HX-Pro Etc.) MINT	200.00	99.95
Aiwa ADF-640 (3-Head / 2-Motor Etc.) MINT		300.00
Sharp MDMS-200 (Portable Mini-Disc Recorder / Headphones / Power Supply) MINT / Manuals	300.00	129.95

LOUDSPEAKERS		
Quad ESL-63 Electrostatics (Afrosmosia / Brown Cloth) Circa '83 MINT / Manuals		3450.00
Kelly KT-3 (95dB / Bi-Wire Etc.) MINT (Cash Sale)	1300.00	600.00
DynAudio Contour 1.1 (Cherry) MINT / Boxed / Manuals	880.00	549.95
Audio Note ANE / D. (94dB / 150 Watts / Bi-Wire Etc.) Rosewood L.S. And Stands VGC / Boxed	1769.00	850.00
Audio Note ANK / D. (92dB / 100 Watts / Bi-Wire VGC / Boxed	620.00	329.95
Meridian M-3 Active Monitors (Black 101B Pre Available, Please See Amplifier Section) MINT / Long-Lead Kit / Stands	1000.00 +	329.95
Rega Ela Floorstanders VGC	300.00	179.95
Ref Strata II 60 Watts Active Sub. (2 In Stock) VGC / Manuals (Each)	600.00	329.95
B&W DM-603 Floorstanders VGC / Manuals	550.00	299.95
Spendor BC-1 BBC Monitors GC / Original Trolley Stands	N/A	189.95
System 959 Reference Monitors (Cherrywood) MINT	1500.00	750.00
Kef Q-55 Floorstanders MINT / Boxed	500.00	349.95
Arcadyis ASC Stand-Mount MINT	400.00	229.95
Royd Minstral / Bases MINT (Rosewood)	300.00	159.95
Mission 752 Freedom (Silk-Dome Tweeters Etc.) VGC	650.00	349.95
Mission 730 Floorstanders GC / Cabinet Marks	N/A	179.95
Mission 780 Minis (Bi-Wirable) (Black) GC	250.00	109.95
Linn Kaber (Black) GC / Boxed	2000.00	575.00
Mordaunt Short Festival III MINT	350.00	119.95

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Cyrus 7 Integrated Amp	700.00	450.00
Manley Stringray Valve Integrated 50watt	1895.00	1725.00
Manley Purist PreAmp Valve	1645.00	1115.00
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Thule PA250B 5 Channel Amp	£On Dem	£1,549.95

Pre amplifiers

YBA Passion Pre + mc	£On Dem	£5,595.00
Boulder 2010 Pre	£p.o.a.	£25,000.00
Conrad Johnson PV10 al	£795.00	£1,100.00
Plinius 16L	£2,800.00	£3,200.00
Krell KSL pre	£1,295.00	£ -
Audible Illusions LI	£1,795.00	£2,000.00
C.A.T. ultimate reference Pre Amp Int/ Phono Stage	£5,195.00	£5,750.00
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JM Lab Electra 915.1	X-Demo	£1,895.00
Audio Physics Tempo III	£On Dem	£2,000.00
Jamo Concert 8 Anniversary Piano Black	£1,395.00	£1,850.00
Cadence Arca	£6,995.00	£10,000.00
Naim SBL's	£1,695.00	£2,225.00
BC Acoustics Tibre	£795.00	£1,100.00
ClaraVox Magnifica	£9,500.00	£14,500.00
B & W CD M7	£695.00	£1,000.00
BC Acoustics Araxe	£895.00	£1,195.00
Ensemble Speakers PA1	£995.00	£2,000.00
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Audio Physics Caldera	£On Dem	£10,000.00
Audio Physics Libra	X-Demo	£4,799.00
Audio Physics Rhea Sub	£2,350.00	£3,099.00
Audio Physics Spark	£On Dem	£1,749.00
Audio Physics Steps	£On Dem	£999.00
Audio Physics Virgo	X-Demo	£3,295.00
Electrocompaniet Qube	£895.00	£1,400.00
Jamo SW3105 active sub	£495.00	£800.00
Orelle Swings	£795.00	£1,200.00
Rogers ABI Sub (new)	£450.00	£598.00
Rogers LS3/ 5A Black (new)	£575.00	£798.00
Rogers LS55 (new)	£330.00	£430.00
Wilson Cubs	£4,995.00	£6,000.00
Wilson System 5.1	£8,500.00	£18,000.00

Power amplifiers

YBA Passion Stereo	£On Dem	£5,995.00
Krell FPB 300c	£8,500.00	£10,000.00
Krell FPB 200c	£7,500.00	£8,500.00
Sunfire 300 Power Amp	£1,795.00	£2,400.00
Sugden Master Class	£1,995.00	£3,000.00
Plinius 50s	£On Dem	£3,000.00
Krell FPB 250M Monoblocks	£7,990.00	£10,796.00
Krell FPB 200	£4,750.00	£7,000.00
Musical Fidelity XA50 Monos	£350.00	£500.00
Plinius 250 mk IV	£Dem	£6,000.00
Audio Note Kasi	£14,950.00	£30,000.00
Cary 805c	£on-Dem	£8,250
Lavardin Model IS Integrated	£1,495.00	£2,200.00
Boulder 500 AE	£3,495.00	£5,500.00
John Shearn Ref 5 Mono blocks (as new)	£1,395.00	£1,700.00
Audio Note Neiro (as new)	£7,995.00	£16,500.00
Audio Note Ongaku (new)	p.o.a.	£45,000.00
Audiolab 8000 S	£550.00	£800.00
Burmester 850 Monoblocks	£1,295.00	£3,000.00
Cary 300 se LX20 Monoblocks	£On Dem	£5,250.00
Cary 572 SE Monoblocks	£1,950.00	£2,350.00
Counterpoint SA12	£795.00	£1,400.00
Exposure IX Power supply	£795.00	£1,500.00
Exposure VIII	£450.00	£700.00
Jadis Defy 7 MK III	£2,000.00	£4,790.00
John Shearn Reference Phase 2 Integ.	£575.00	£799.00
John Shearn Reference Phase 3 Power Amp	£550.00	£749.00
Kenwood L1000C pre/ L1000M Power Amp	£1,495.00	£2,500.00
Krell FPB 300	£6,500.00	£9,990.00
Krell FPB 600	£8,995.00	£12,900.00
Meracus Intrare 6 (int) X-Demo	£1,795.00	£2,000.00
Sugden AUS1	£995.00	£1,500.00
Pioneer A300 Int	£90.00	£180.00
Quad 77 Intergrated	£450.00	£900.00
YBA 3x Pre/PWR	£1,495.00	£2,400.00

CDplayers DACS

Boulder 2020 dac	£p.o.a.	£24,000.00
California Audio Lab Sigma II dac/Delta Transport	£1,495.00	£2,400.00
Meracus Tahto CD player	£1,195.00	£1,495.00
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Krell KAV 300 CD	£2,750.00	£4,290.00
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Oracle CD 2000 Transport	£p.o.a.	£7,299.00
Pink Triangle Da Capo	£795.00	£1,595.00
Teac P500	£395.00	£600.00
Theta Data II Transport AT + link	£1,995.00	£4,000.00
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Lavardin Reference Phono	£ -	£2,500.00
Michell Syncro RB300	£450.00	£ -
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Kenwood 9010X Clock 3 moded Transport S/H	N/A	249
Mark Levinson 31.5 Transport S/H	9500	5999
Mark Levinson 39 CD Player (9 months old) S/H	4999	3999
Monrio 18B2 DAC Ex-Demo	950	399
Rega Jupiter Transport/I/O DAC Ex-Demo	975	750
Resolution Audio D92 24/96 Dac/Processor Ex-Demo	1500	949
Resolution Audio VT960 DVD Transport Ex-Demo	3500	1899
Roksan DP2T Transport S/H	1295	599
Roksan DA2 DAC S/H	599	299
Roksan DS5 PSU S/H	579	399
Theta Digital Pearl Transport S/H	1349	899
Theta Digital Progeny DAC S/H	1099	649
Theta Digital Pro Prime II DAC S/H	1699	599

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Basis 2000/RB300 (New & Boxed)	2000	1599
Benz Micro Ruby (New & Boxed)	1500	799
Dais Turntable Motor Unit Only S/H	N/A	199
Heybrook TT2 Belt Drive Turntable S/H	N/A	99
Lehmann Black Cube Phono Stage (New & Boxed)	399	299
Linn Sondek LP12/Black/Rega RB200/Goldring1020 S/H	N/A	379
Linn Sondek LP12/Afro/Lingo/Ekos S/H	3000	1099
Mantra Manticore Reference/Musician/Eroica) S/H	2100	695
Nottingham Analogue Paragon 1 Linear Tracker Tonearm S/H	1600	349
Naim Flat Cap PSU S/H	370	250
Rega RB250 Orgin Live Modification S/H	300	159
Roksan Arterxerxes MK1 Phono Stage S/H	495	195
Roksan DS 5 Attesa PSU Ex-Demo	549	399
Roksan Radius 3 Turntable (98) Ex-Demo	470	250
Roksan Xerxes Piano Lacquer XPS 1 (SME Cut) S/H	1295	399
Trio K500/SME 3009/E77 S/H	N/A	150

Preamplifiers	Was	Now
Audio Research LS9 Remote Solid State (Ex-Demo)	1999	1399
Densen DM20 Preamplifier Ex-Demo	1380	899
DPA Enlightenment New Style Ex-Demo	799	449
Graaf GM13.5 II Valve Preamplifier Ex-demo	4000	2999
Michell ArgoHR/Hera S/H	N/A	475
Naim Audio 32 MM/MC Preamplifier S/H	N/A	99
Quad 33 Preamplifier S/H	N/A	45

Amplifiers	Was	Now
Audio Analogue Puccini SE S/H	635	449
Audio Note P1SE Ltd Edition (Silver Wired) S/H	1600	849
Audio Note P2SE Valve Power Amplifier S/H	1499	795
Audiolab 8000S Integrated S/H	900	499
Audion Sterling Integrated Line Ex-Demo	799	399
Bartolomeo Transperenza ST140 Power Amplifier S/H	1500	695
Bow Technologies Wazoo XL S/H	2499	1895
Graaf 50/50 Push Pull Power amplifier (New&Boxed)	2100	1695
Graaf GM100 (New&Boxed)	4450	3299
Graaf GM20 OTL S/H	2950	1995
Quad II Anniversary Mono Valve Power Amplifiers Ex-Demo	6000	1999
Rega Big Brio Amplifier Ex-Demo	298	199
Rega Maia Power Amplifier Ex-Demo	475	349
Sugden SP30 Class A Stereo Power Amplifier S/H	950	599

Loudspeakers	Was	Now
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ProAc Tablette 2000 Light Oak Ex-Demo	695	450
VelodyneTX810MK2 Subwoofer S/H	695	379
Yamaha NS1000M Black S/H	1200	595

Cables & Accessories	Was	Now
Air Sus Cherry Platform Ex-Demo	169	99
Audio Research BL1 Balanced Converter S/H	888	399
Audio Sculpture 2m RCA Interconnect Ex-Demo	380	149
Bow Technologies Wand Remote S/H	349	199
Deskadel 1M Interconnects WBT/RCA S/H	300	150
Einstein Octopus 8 Way Mains Block (Ex-Demo)	199	149
G- Flex isolators (New & Boxed)	199	75
Lindsey Audiophile 2m Satin RCA Interconnect New	495	199
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Nordost Red Dawn 1M Balanced Ex-Demo	330	199
Shakti On Lines (New&Boxed)	85	45
Shakti Stones (New&Boxed)	195	120
Slate Audio Stands 21" S/H	489	199
Tara Labs Master RSC Gen II 3m Balanced S/H	1250	499
Target 5 Tier Silver Stand MDF Shelves Ex-Demo	249	145
Vdh Skytrack 2X4M Bi-wire Speaker Cable S/H	75	39

Tuners & Tape Decks	Was	Now
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Cymbol C DAB Digital Tuner (Ex-Demo)	1000	750
Magnum Dynalab FT101 Analogue Tuner (New&Boxed)	850	679
Rega Radio R Tuner (Ex-Demo)	350	249
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CREEK OBH-11	XD	£129	£89	SONIC FRONTIERS TRANSPORT 3	XD	£7000	£4500
CRIMSON 610c PRE	SH	£450	£250	SONNETEER ALABASTER	XD	£900	£599
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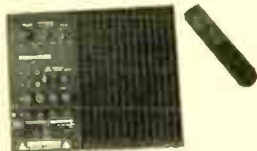
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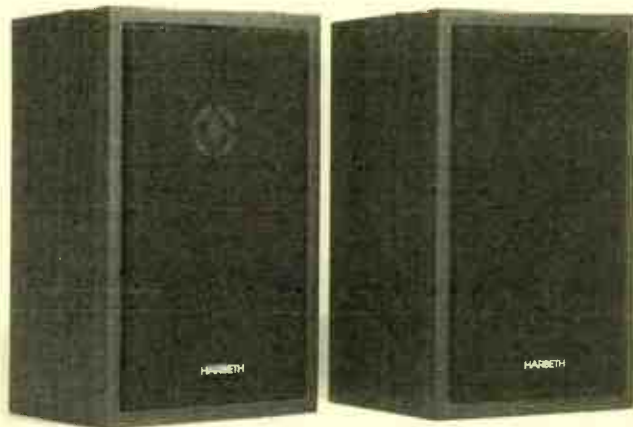
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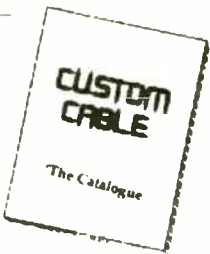
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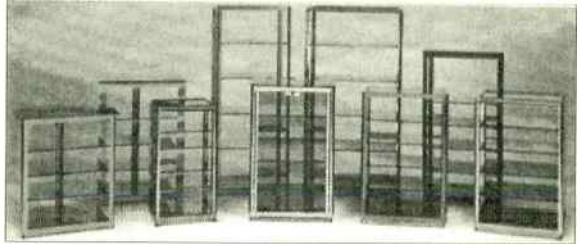
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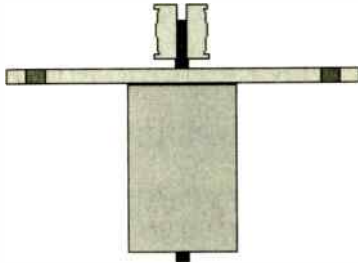
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"Its value is nothing short of tremendous" LISTENER MAGAZINE



Whether you own a Linn Valhalla/Lingo, Rega or any other deck, the results of upgrading to the Origin Live dc motor and power supply are simply astounding. This high grade motor kit is designed as a drop in replacement for almost all turntable motors. Decks benefiting so far from this ultimate of upgrades include Linn, Roksan, Michell, Systemdeck, Rock etc. With a 12 Volt power supply it is safe and easy to fit. Guidance instructions are provided. At £250 (add £25 for fully soldered and tested regulator board) with money back guarantee this is a bargain out of all proportion to it's value in terms of performance. An optional, larger purpose made transformer is also available as an add on at £175

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HI-FI WORLD

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STEREO TIMES

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SOUNDSTAGE

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Make cheques payable to Origin Live and send to address shown We can take credit card orders if you wish. Remember there is a no risk money back guarantee if not entirely satisfied.

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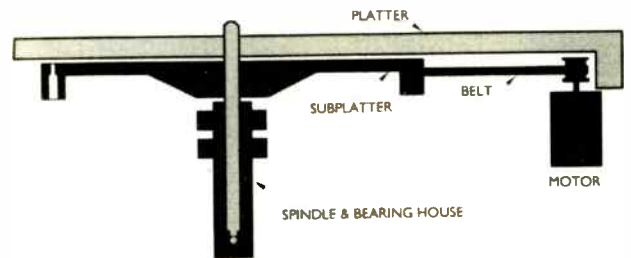
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HI-FI WORLD SUPPLEMENT

"is exceptionally easy to build and professional in both sound quality and appearance"

HI-FI NEWS SUPPLEMENT



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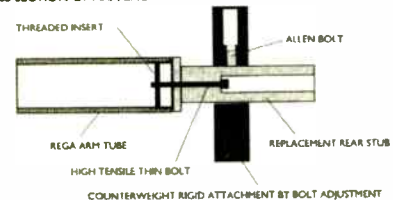
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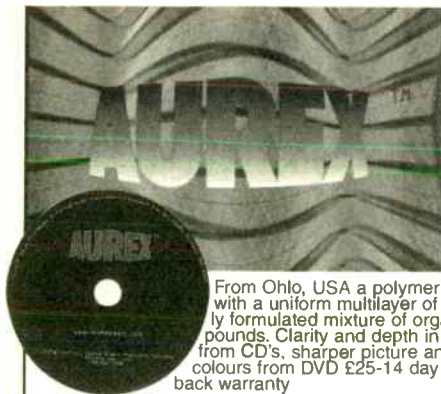
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418 -★★★★★ WHAT-HIFI, What Hi Fi Ultimate Hi Fi Guide

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Hi-Fi World Aug 99
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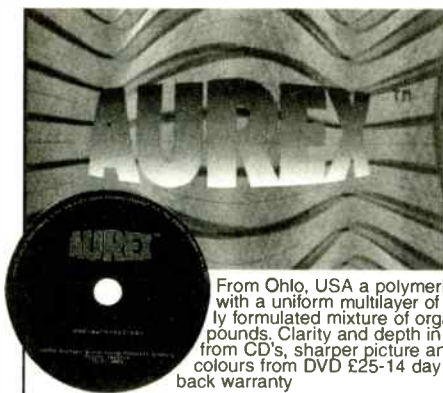
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MEASURED PERFORMANCE

LOUDSPEAKERS

CASTLE HOWARD S3

The forward firing drive units of the new Howard provide a flat measured frequency response down to 150Hz, within very tight limits of 1dB or so, on axis or just a little above. Below 150Hz output drops suddenly from the forward unit, but all the same reaches down to 40Hz, -5dB.

An upward firing unit works from 5kHz right down to 63Hz, measurement showed. As frequency decreases sound becomes less directional and below 200Hz its contribution to forward energy will increase, helping raise the apparent -5dB level loss below 150Hz.

Unfortunately, the upward firing unit peaks strongly at 300Hz, due to a cabinet effect, meaning colouration will be apparent from this unit. Since its output is reflected from the ceiling I'd expect the Howard to work best in a room with some ceiling height, say 8ft or more, otherwise the reflected energy might be very strong.

The upward and forward firing drivers are identical. Our analysis of upward firing output shows the parasitic centre cone of this driver peaks sharply at 5kHz. There's a peak at this frequency in the forward response too which is almost certainly responsible for some sharpness in the Howard's sound. Ideally, the parasitic centre cone of this driver should be made less resonant or a notch filter used to control this peaking, to smooth the sound.

The top firing driver is loaded by a long tapered line that vents onto the floor. The vent peaks at 63Hz and rolls off slowly below this frequency, extending output down to 25Hz and lower. In a big room it will give very deep bass; in a medium room it will drive the modes well - especially the height mode - to make things shake.

CHARIO CYGNUS

A noticeable feature of the Cygnus is a strong treble peak in its frequency response at 16kHz. Although it looks serious, it is so narrow that response only starts to lift at 10kHz. Whether this sort of thing is audible or not depends very much upon the music played, since if there are no strong harmonics at 10kHz or above then equally there will be no audible effect. Put on a recording with strong harmonics, something like closely

The impedance curve of this loudspeaker is superb. An impedance curve says a lot about a loudspeaker (and the skills of its designer). Perfect flatness is a design goal rarely achieved. We managed it once at Hi-Fi World with a quarter-wave transmission line design (DIY Supplement No 14, April 1995) but I have never since returned to the transmission line. The Howard S3 behaves very similarly. What's more, not only have Castle engineered a flat bass impedance, but they've knowingly kept the impedance curve flat right up to 20kHz.

A flat impedance curve means many things. Down at the bass end it means the drive unit is seeing optimum acoustic loading, with near-perfect damping. So we can expect smooth, tuneful and tight bass. I know from experience of course the Howard produces this.

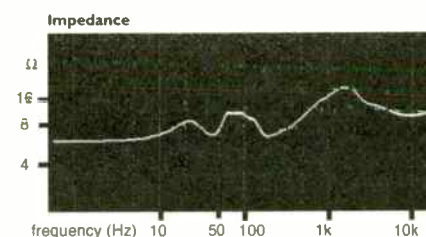
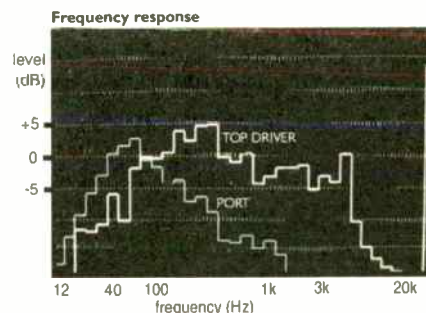
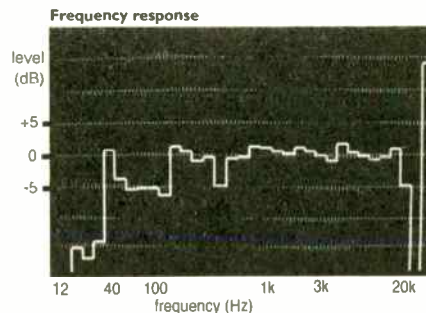
Absence of sudden impedance changes also means that as a load this loudspeaker is largely resistive, so it doesn't return energy to the amplifier. With feedback amplifiers, as all solid-state designs are, the Howard is not driving the amplifier in a way most do - something I can't help feeling accounts for more problems than we know about.

Finally, measured with pink noise the Howard is an exact 8ohm load - perfect for valve amps and easy for transistor amps too. The only downside of this high impedance is that it limits sensitivity a little. Castle claim 88dB but I measured 86dB, a reasonable if not exceptional figure.

Because the Howard drives a room's height mode strongly and reflects energy from the ceiling too, listening room height is important. This loudspeaker is likely to suit rooms with high-ish ceilings. The forward response is very flat, my only slight

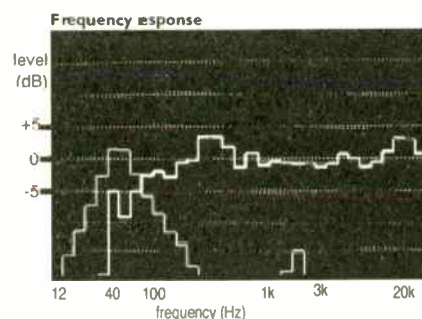
miked guitar, and a peak like this will become suddenly noticeable as a sharp edge - almost a sting in the sound. For most of the time the Cygnus' are likely to sound quite normal in balance though.

The two visible drivers are aided by a downward firing unit in the base of the cabinet. Measurement showed this unit added nothing to bass extension though, unlike a port. Forward response of the Cygnus reaches down to 40Hz, with



reservation here being perfect flatness to 20kHz often results in a glassy type of brightness and the 5kHz peak doesn't help. As a load the Howard is one of the easiest going on the loudspeaker market today so it will get the best from amplifiers.

The Howard might look trad but it sets out to do much more than most expensive loudspeakers and achieves its goals with success. This is an interestingly different loudspeaker, very well engineered, even if there are a few minor blemishes that could be tackled. **NK**



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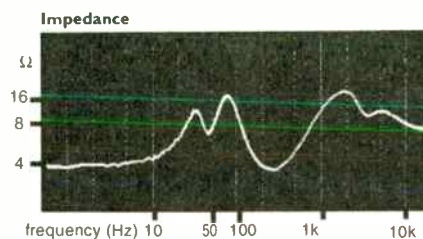
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unevenness related to floor effects. Bass may sound a bit uneven because of this.

Although impedance measures 4ohms up to 300Hz, meaning the speakers draw bass current from an amplifier, sensitivity was low at 84.6dB. A powerful amplifier with good current handling is needed. There's a large rise in imped-

ance across the midband, signalling reactance and energy storage. All in all, this loudspeaker is not an easy or well tailored load.

The Cygnus looks a little unimpressive in its measured performance. It has no particular strengths and some small weaknesses. **NK**



LINN KATAN

There are a few obvious features characterising the bass/midrange performance of the Katan. The overall response is lumpy by modern standards, meaning it will be 'characterful'. From an engineering point of view this doesn't look so good, but from a listeners view it may well give the Linn something other 'speakers don't have. There's no lift at low frequencies to add body to the sound and bass rolls off smoothly and steadily. Both factors suggest a fairly damped system intended for use close to a (rear) wall. Well damped 'speakers work best with a powerful amplifier possessing grip; the result is a fast, tight sound that suits Rock in particular.

The response lumpiness is due to three effects. There's a peak 160Hz that signals the presence of a box effect, meaning there'll be some colouration in there somewhere, likely most audible with deep male vocals, as well as bassoon, string bass, etc. The port whistles at 1.25kHz, seen as a peak in port output, and this again reflects back into forward response. The bass/mid gets peaky at its upper limit, a common enough problem.

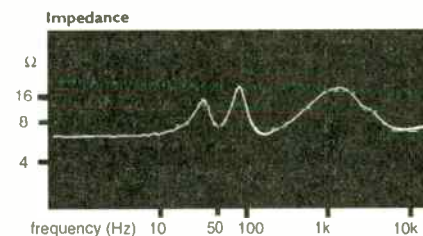
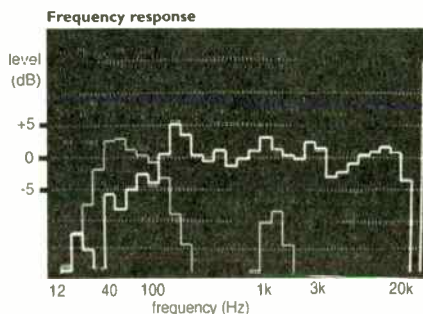
The port is tuned to 52Hz but extends output down to a useful 30Hz, so in larger (18ft) rooms the Katan might

excite a length mode quite well to give some strong lows.

The crossover region shows some lift or peaking in the bass/mid driver's response plus slow take up from the tweeter. I'd expect a little sharpness to be heard from that peak. Upper treble might sound a little thin or divorced, but the tweeter is smooth and not given too great a role, so it shouldn't be prominent. Overall the Katan has a balanced response characteristic that's quite flat.

Overall impedance, measured with pink noise, measured out at exactly 8ohms. Together with a resistive nature this makes the Katan quite an amenable load as far as any amplifier is concerned. Unfortunately, it is very insensitive, partially as a result of high impedance, producing just 82dB SPL from one watt of input. This means a powerful amplifier with plenty of voltage swing is still needed for good volume, around 100W being likely usable.

The Katan is no triumph of loudspeaker engineering but it's basically accurate and will likely have a fast, tight sound with good bass. Used with a powerful amplifier, on firm stands close to a rear wall the Katan should give a distinctive sound. **NK**



AMPLIFIERS

ARCAM DIVA 85 AMPLIFIER

Producing 105W into 8ohms and 156W into 4ohms, the Arcam 85 amplifier has plenty of grunt. Better still, it stayed more linear than many designs as current was drawn, so the output stage will cope with today's low impedance loudspeakers rather better than many, giving plenty of volume and staying relaxed sounding whilst doing so. The only small blemish was a rise in high frequency distortion at low output levels, something that can be avoided these days. With a trace of third harmonic measuring 0.02% this should not be a problem though.

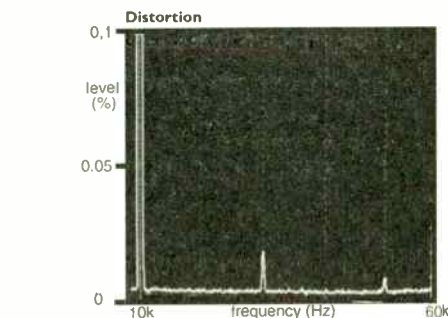
Input sensitivity was unusually low at 700mV. Whilst modern sources usually give a volt or more of output, old cassette

decks and tuners only manage 300mV or thereabouts. The Arcam will be fine with modern items then, but will not match older product. As a result of low gain, noise was low too.

Frequency response stretched from 4Hz-88kHz, plenty enough for SACD and DVD-Audio.

This is a tidy amplifier with plenty of power for modern loudspeakers. It should sound smooth enough too, but it does not match 'legacy' sources. **NK**

Power	105watts
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Frequency response	4Hz-88kHz
Separation	75dB



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SHARP DIGITAL AMP

Digital amplifiers would have been on the market some time ago were it not for their problems, the worst of which are distortion, as well as high frequency rubbish (above 20kHz) so strong as to produce radio interference. I looked forward to testing Sharp's new digital amplifier, hoping to see how they had managed to overcome these difficulties. I got a shock.

In spite of its size and weight the SM-SX1H amplifier produced just 15W into 8ohms. It didn't like 4ohms, protection circuits kicking in quickly to limit output current. However, it produced 30W and would manage this with short term music peaks into a low load. Because current limiting kicks in so quickly, and because most loudspeakers these days are 4ohms at low frequencies, the Sharp may well trip out if pushed too hard.

Since the amplifier got warm I can only assume efficiency is low, around the 50% mark, where Cirrus and Zetex are claiming 90%. As Sharp's amplifier approached clip RF noise on signal peaks grew, becoming fierce at clipping (overload). It looked grim on the oscilloscope, as our time domain shot (fig 1) shows, and it looked evil on the spectrum analyser (fig 2). As this amplifier moves into output overload it produces up to 0.5V of hash above 50kHz (fig 4), so will transmit RF interference from the speaker leads. It's a classic digital amplifier problem and Sharp have found no solution.

At low levels the SM-SX1H produces large amounts (1%) of low order distortion (fig 3). As signal level increases the distortion pattern changes, harmonics extending further up the audio band, level measuring around 0.25%. As full output is

approached progressively more high frequency rubbish is produced.

I'd expect these levels of distortion to be audible. Perhaps surprisingly, the highest level produced - 1% at 1W - is likely to be least audible, because it is innocuous second harmonic. The real problem is both the appearance of high order distortion harmonics and the horrible way the distortion pattern modulates. It's the latter effect that ensures audibility and will probably result in roughness. Of course, with just 15W available this amplifier needs unusually efficient loudspeakers if it is not to be driven into clip.

Noise output was high, the signal-to-noise ratio being a miserable -76dB, even though there was little overall gain, input sensitivity measuring a poor 600mV. This amplifier generates noise in its output stage, whereas noise in conventional amps comes primarily from the input stage.

With its low power, low efficiency, high levels of distortion and strong RF interference Sharp have produced no advances here. Cirrus, Zetex and Linn have digital amplifiers with better specifications. By normal standards it looks very poor, to the point of being unacceptable as a hi-fi amplifier. **NK**

Power	15watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	7Hz-51.5kHz
Separation	65dB
Noise	-76dB
Distortion	1.3%
Sensitivity	600mV
dc offset	4/1mV

UNISON S6 AMPLIFIER

Getting power from a single-ended amplifier is hard work. They're only 30% efficient or so, meaning you have to dissipate lots of plate power to get much output power. Unison have stacked three EL34s in parallel in the S6 to get goodly current through its output transformer. And the problems don't end there. The transformer core must be massive to survive d.c. magnetisation and be able to handle low frequency power. My tests inevitably probe this aspect of performance, an SE being quite a different animal to a push-pull. Output power was high at 24W in the mid-band, but the S6 could manage only 20W at 40Hz, going into quite severe clipping asymmetry. Its high frequency performance was fine however, with no output limitation at 10kHz.

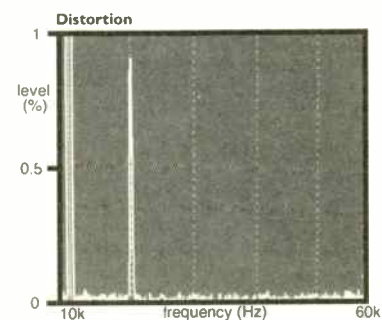
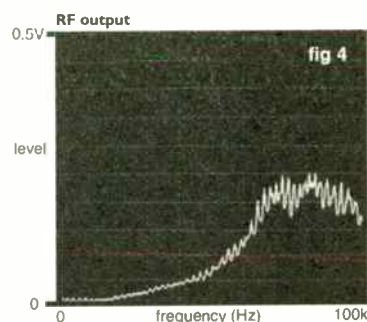
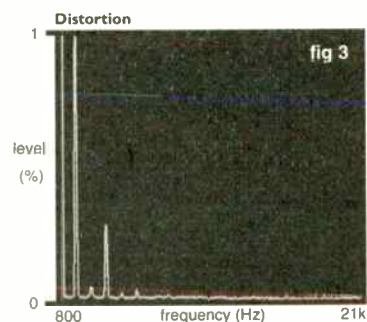
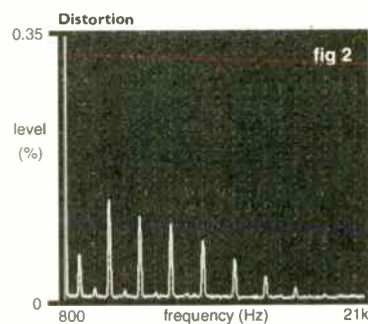
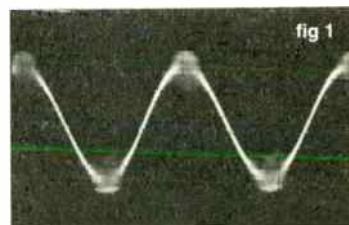
Frequency response was a wide 6Hz-63kHz with a smooth roll-off at high frequencies. The transformer looked quite

good in this area. Unison have given the amp good sensitivity, yet it has low hum too, always something of a difficulty with valves, since high gain plus high input impedance tends to result in hum unless great care is taken. At 1.3mV or so this will not be a problem though.

Single-ended amps produce distortion of course, but it usually does not rise with frequency. This is how the Unison measured, our analysis showing no less than 0.8% distortion at 10kHz, one watt output. However, it is all second-harmonic and there's no sign of higher order distortion here, unlike a transistor amp. Since second harmonic is innocuous, resulting only in a lightening of timbre at levels of 3% or more, the subjective impact of such distortion is not great.

The S6 is a well designed single-ended producing as much power as is possible without getting impossibly large. **NK**

Power	24watts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	6Hz-63.7kHz
Separation	65dB
Noise	-94dB
hum	1.4/1.3mV
Distortion	0.7%
Sensitivity	200mV



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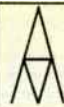
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CD PLAYERS

SHARP DX-SX1H SACD

I tested this player via its digital connection through Sharp's 1-bit SM-SX1H amplifier, also tested in this issue, because the two will almost certainly be used together. The performance of the amplifier swamped the player in some areas, notably distortion and noise.

Being noisy, the amplifier's noise floor dominated, giving a poor signal-to-noise ratio, but this is how it would be in practice.

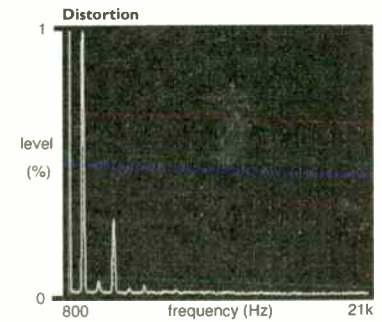
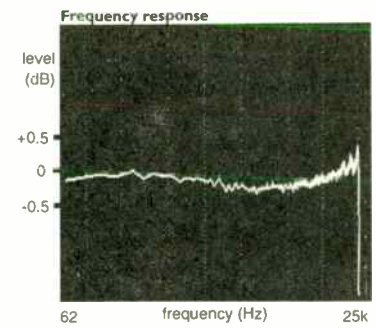
Likewise, distortion levels were high until harmonics disappeared under noise, making the -90dB impossible to glean in a realistic fashion. So the CD player doesn't benefit from its advanced SACD specification. The idea is that, by being converted to analogue in the amplifier's output stage there'll be no analogue degradation of the signal within the amplifier. This is a rather notional benefit though, when the final conversion process is so flawed.

Frequency response of the player dis-

played a little treble lift at 20kHz, as our analysis shows. This is likely to brighten its sound a little.

The measured performance of Sharp's SACD player looks none to good when paired with the DX-SX1H digital amplifier, but it's the amplifier that dominates matters. **NK**

Frequency response	4Hz-21.25kHz	
	left	right
Distortion		
-6dB	0.7	0.7
-30dB	3	3
-60dB	10	11
-90	-	-
Separation	left	right
1kHz	68	68
20kHz	67	67
Noise		-76dB



NAIM CD5 COMPACT DISC

Although Naim are known for their forceful sound, with powerful bass and unabashed treble, when it comes to CD they choose to round things off a little at the top end. Our convolved impulse frequency response analysis of the CD5 clearly shows this at far right, where above 10kHz there's a gentle roll off up to the cut-off point of 20.8kHz (-1dB) for this player. Perhaps it's their roots in analogue LP that persuade them to this course, although it's common enough amongst U.K. designed CD players. The roll off isn't great and the consequence not dramatic either, but it does tend to give a slightly easier to cope with treble presentation from CD than super-flat responses, which come across as bright. This is not to say the Naim will sound either dull or warm, since the roll off is too small.

CD players invariably extend flat down to 4Hz and Naim's was no different here, working right down to subsonic frequencies.

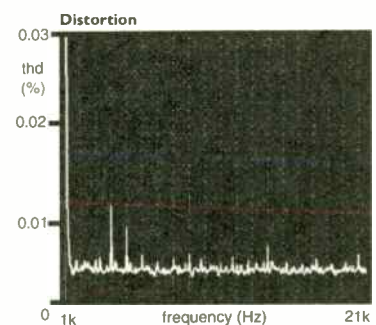
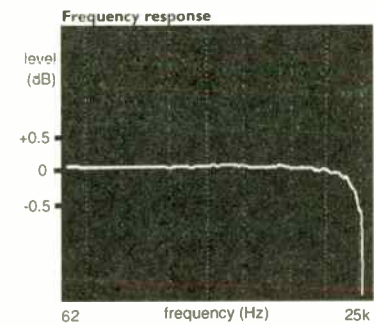
Nowadays digital-to-analogue converters are pretty linear and here the player showed it is well equipped. Distortion was minimal right down the dynamic range of the machine, from full output at 0dB with a figure of 0.009% to -90dB where it rises, with 16bit, to 29%. It's the -30dB to -60dB range that seems to be most important, even though most music these days is compressed up to the 0dB to -30dB range to avoid digital distortion. Our analysis of

distortion at -30dB shows a small amount of energy in 4th and 5th harmonics, but rms level of all harmonics up to 20kHz measured a low 0.02%, as good as 16bit CD gets.

The distortion analysis shows a fairly low noise floor which helps matters. Down at -60dB the player was again respectable, producing a 0.38% thd figure, which is up with the best. This results in a healthy 109dB EIAJ dynamic range figure.

Output was a normal 2.15V and channel separation high at 113dB. The Naim CD5 measures well in all areas; it should give a smooth sound, and likely an impactful one. **NK**

Frequency response	4Hz-20.87kHz	
	left	right
Distortion		
-6dB	0.009	0.009
-30dB	0.015	0.018
-60dB	0.4	0.38
-90	29	28
Separation	left	right
1kHz	113	112
20kHz	106	105
Noise		-105dB
with emphasis		-105dB
Dynamic range		109dB
Output		2.15V



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SONY CDP-XB740

Sony CD players have always possessed a better measured performance than any other except those from Philips. Both companies seem to take it as a matter of pride that, as inventors of this universally used medium, they set the performance standard. In this player, however, Sony give users an option of four filters, each of which alter frequency response and impulse behaviour.

Sonys generally measure ruler flat, so it isn't surprising that the STD (standard) position on this player was flat and gave the widest bandwidth (i.e. the best response figure). I measured the upper limit of this filter at 21.3kHz.

The next filter, number 1, gave an early roll off, reaching just 16kHz. This will give a softer, warmer sound than usual from CD.

Filter number 2 really gave more of the same, as our analysis shows - namely an early roll off, but this time with a little treble lift - to brighten things up a little perhaps. The response limit was 15.5kHz.

Filter No 3 looked good, giving a nice smooth response without ringing, right up to 19kHz. This looks like the best to me. However, bright CDs might be best played with filter 2 or 3 This player certainly gives enthusiasts plenty of options.

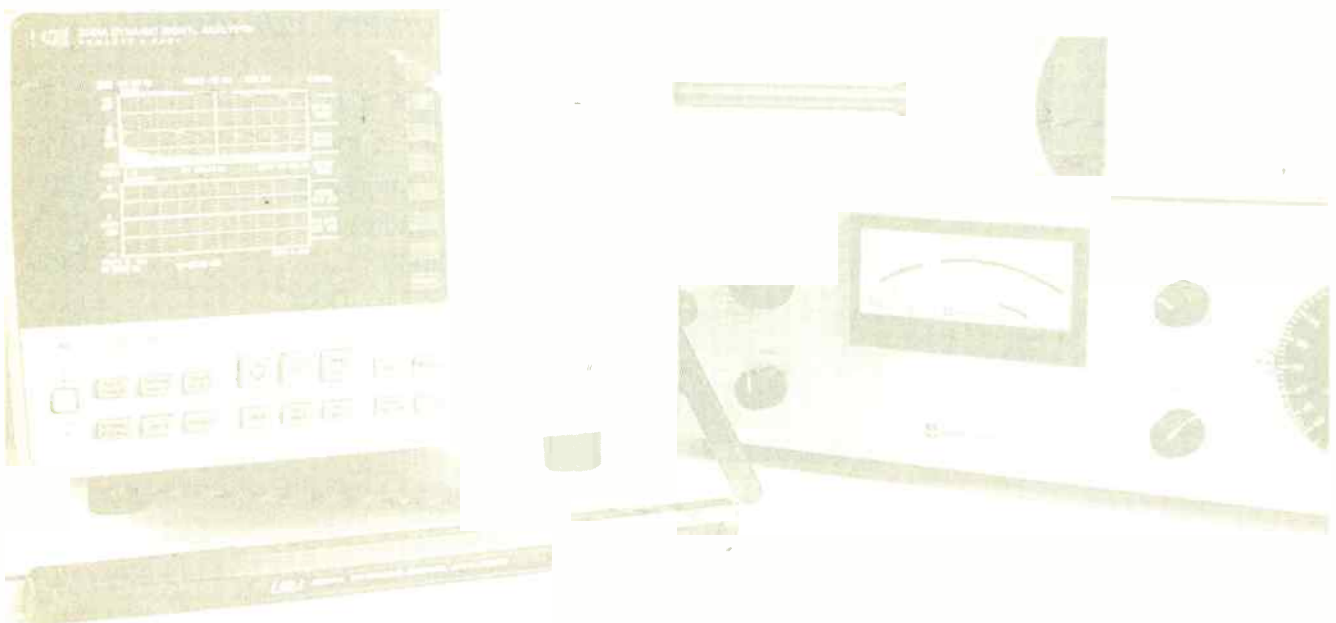
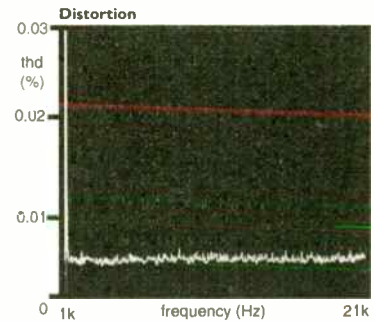
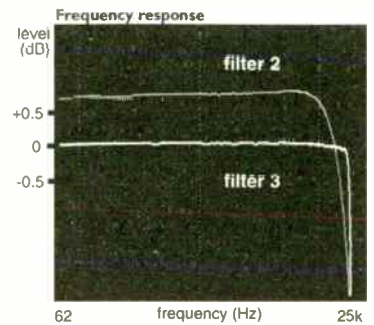
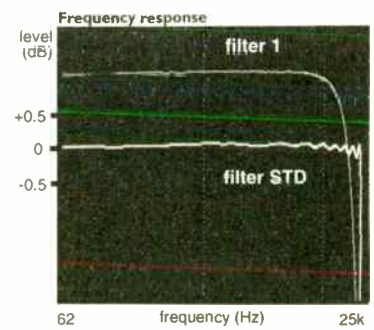
At -30dB our analysis shows there's absolutely no distortion or quantisation noise. The noise floor is low too, leading

to a fine set of distortion figures right through the operating range, from 0dB down to -90dB. Only the -60dB result can be improved upon these days, or low levels smoothed out with a processing scheme like Kenwood's DRIVE. The XB-740 will sound clean, there's no doubt about that.

Output was high at 2.38V, +1.5dB above the 2V standard, giving this player a bit more apparent oomph in any side by side comparison. All other figures were perfect.

The XB-740 measured extremely well in all areas. Like all Sony players it will likely sound clean and bright in STD, but the choice is yours. **NK**

Frequency response	4Hz-21.3kHz	
Distortion	left	right
-6dB	0.005	0.005
-30dB	0.017	0.017
-60dB	0.41	0.4
-90	29	28
Separation	left	right
1kHz	116	116
20kHz	91	92
Noise	-106dB	
with emphasis	-106dB	
Dynamic range	109dB	
Output	2.3V	



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Heart (Holland) CD5000 Valve CD-Player (Brand New)	£299
Heart (Holland) CD6000 Valve CD-Player (Brand New)	£449
Meridian 203 DAC	£100
Kimshaw Overture DAC	£70
PRE AMPLIFIERS	
Michell Argo with Hera power supply	£300
QED Reference (Upgraded)	£200
POWER AMPLIFIERS	
Alchemist Forsen APD20AM MKII	£800
Oxyzen (single-ended, Class A Triode) Brand New	£650
Cabasse AXI1000 Monoblocks	£1000
Conrad-Johnson Sonographic SA250	£550
INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS	
EAR V-20	£1850
Accuphase E-202	£350
Magnum Class A SE	£450
Musical Fidelity A-X1	£350
NVA 9 Box Amplifier	£850
Triangle TB60	£850
LOUDSPEAKERS	
Chario Academy 2 (Walnut)	£1000
Apogee Centors	£550
Lowther Bior 200 (DX2 drive units)	£550
Proac Response One	£550
Sonus Faber Sygam with A/Stands	£1350
Cabasse Skiff 301 (Beech)	£950
Cabasse Farella 401 (Bubinga)	£550
B&W Matrix 2 SE (Black)	£400
B&W DM 70 Electrostatics	£600
Triangle Scalene (Black)	£300
JBL LX-90 (Black Ash)	£300
CASSETTE DECKS	
Nakamichi 1000 ZXL	£1000

All the above come with 12 months warranty
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For a full list of our agencies please see **ORPHEUS AUDIO**
(GREATER MANCHESTER) in the DIAL-A-DEALER Section

Special Internet offer
see page 130 for details

YBA 2 PREAMP and mains filter (£1700 new) £650. View specification at www.phlox-electronique.fr. Musical Fidelity CDT valve CD player £375. X10-D The Missing Link £75 Rotel RC970 BX and two RB970BX's £295. Tel: 01282 867 819 (Apr/I)

TAGMcLAREN PA20 preamp, TagMcLaren monobloc's 125M, two Kimber high current power cords (3 feet) Wattgate plug and Nordost Blue Heaven speaker cable x 3 metres terminated. All mint condition, boxed with manuals, reasonable offers. Tel: 01423 881 260 (Apr/I)

CYRUS TWO amplifier and PSX in non matching cases good condition £175. Tel: 01306 880 574 (Dorking) (Apr/I)

PHILIPS CDR 870 compact disc recorder £185. Videologic DRX 601E DAB tuner £250. Linn Majik amplifier. Line £435. All boxed. Tel: 01932 785 065 (Surrey) (Apr/I)

SUMIKO BLUE Point Special, few hours use, still under warranty £150. L.F.D. integrated Zero £290. Epos ES 14 speakers £240. P.S. Audio 4.6 £220. Tel: 01202 429 353 weekdays after 4.30 (Bournemouth) (Apr/I)

WANTED J.M. Reynaud speakers, Offrende preferred, or Trente, mint condition. Stands optional. Tel: Bernard 020 7730 7332 or 01189 343 818 (Apr/I)

EPOS ES30, 4 months old, 150 watts per channel, light cherry finish, cost £2500 selling for £1500. Immaculate condition, immaculate sound. Tel: 01892 527 971 (Apr/I)

TECHNICS SP 10 Mk 2 decks in good order £400. SME 3009 arms no cartridge £75. Part manual and circuit diagram checked can be seen working. Tel: 07802 403 851 (Apr/I)

GAMMA AEONS 211 valve monobloc's late champagne facia model. 20 watt SE silver construction. Excellent sound quality 2 years old £1395 ono. £4999 new. Tel: 02392 662 772 after 6pm (Hampshire area) (Apr/I)

SUGDEN MASTERCLASS phono stage tremendous sound from the masters of class A amplification. As new, 4 years unexpired Sugden warranty £800 ono (cost £1250). Demo will convince. Tel/Fax: 0113 284 3770 (Leeds) (Apr/I)

CYRUS PREAMP + XPA amp. £200 Cyrus. 3 DADQ CD. Updated 24 bit £400. Tel: 020 7253 3883 daytime, 020 7278 8371 evenings (Apr/I)

SPENDOR SPZ/Z speakers black bi-wirable with purpose made stands £500. Tel: 01733 810 516 (Peterborough) (Apr/I)

CHAMELEON RUBY balanced unbalanced power amp 200 wpc £450 ono. Pair Transparent Music Link balanced interconnects £150 ono. Rebuilt Quad 405 power amp phono inputs £250. Tel: 01302 370 578 (Apr/I)

AUDIOLAB 8000P S/N 209D50223 boxed £380 (ovno). Croft Epoch Elite S/N 351 boxed £500 (ovno). Interconnects: Chord Solid (0.5m) Van Den Hull The First (O.G.M.) £30 each pr. Black Slink (0.5) £50 pr. Tel: 01823 324 243 (Apr/I)

MUSICAL FIDELITY A300 amp mint condition/new £950. Creek CD 43, mint condition £350. Pioneer Elite Pro Logic receiver hi-fi amp/tuner, mint condition £250. Heybrook HBZ's average condition £35. Marantz CD63 SE mint condition £100. All boxed. Tel: 020 8959 3611 ext 233 (Apr/I)

LINN KUDOS tuner, as new £400. Pink Triangle LPT record deck, Origin Live RB300, Ortofon MC15 II, £480. Michell Iso phono pre-amp £220. World Audio Design 5881 PSE valve amp £300. Tel: 01252 870 861 (Apr/I)

ATC SCM 50 SLA active speakers. Latest SL drivers, immaculate piano black £3800 (list £7000+), A.V.I. preamp/monoblocks £1300. Music Labs pre/power £1200 (list £3000+) Tel: 020 8875 9696 day 020 7937 0856 evenings 07768 738 372 mobile (Apr/I)

REGA PLANAR 3 turntable with RB300 arm and Elys cartridge. Three months old, boxed, as new £295. Project phono stage £30. Tel: 01428 713 146 Hants/Surrey (Apr/I)

EXPOSURE 25 integrated amplifier mint £600 (£1100). Neat Petite Mk1 good £250. B+W CC6 Mk1 centre mint £120 (£200). Neat Critique Mk1 excellent £150. Tel: Rod 020 8689 8750 (Apr/I)

LOWTHER ACCOUSTA Auditoriums. Rare horn design with two PM2C's per cabinet. Walnut veneer, compact floor standers £450. Dulci 4 wpc SE poweramp upgraded £160. Together, £575. Tel: 01709 555 403 (Rotherham) (Apr/I)

TAGMcLAREN CD 20R £800. DAC 20 £800. PA10 pre £450. 125m monoblocks x 2 £1600. B+W 604 S2 speakers £650. Naim Flatcap £250. All above boxed as new. Contact 07880 770 179 (Apr/I)

SONY AMPLIFIER TA-FB 920 E £95. Sony CD player. CDP-XB 920E £95. Kimber PBJ CD interconnect £30. Kimber Hero CD interconnect -11dB £55. Kimber 4TC pair speaker cables 15ft £110. Tel: 01634 363 374 (Kent) (Apr/I)

AUDIOLAB 8000S/8000P excellent condition both boxed with instructions £795 ono. Moth Series 30 phono stage £140. Trichord Digiwire BNC/BNC £25. Tel: 01908 260 112 (Apr/I)

PINK TRIANGLE Anniversary turntable, rosewood, SME 309, Ortofon MC 3000 MkII, +£4000 new, only £995. Helius Syrius I loudspeakers, light oak, non-parallel sided cabinets, 4 x 8" bass each. Cost £2850. Bargain £500. Pink Triangle Pip II preamplifier excellent phono stage. 3 box. Battery PSU. Cost £3500. Sell for £995. Tel: Harry 07974 784 638 (Devon) (Apr/I)

AUDIO RESEARCH Ref 2 preamp (black) boxed as new £6200. Audio Research PH2 phono stage (black) boxed £1100. Tel: 020 7702 4984 after 6pm (Apr/I)

DYNAUDIO CENTOUR 1.3a Mk II cherry speakers 16 months, boxed, mint (£1200) £849. Rotel RCD99L (AE) CD player HDCD compatible remote boxed 5 months old (£825) £549 Tel: 07747 762 672 or 0115 952 1820 (Nottingham) (Apr/I)

Classified Ads

S/hand and ex-demo clearance items - April'01

CD Players & DAC'S

	Was	Now
Audio Note DAC 3 Signature Ex -Demo	2850	1495
Densen Beat 400 CD player HDCD S/H	1280	899
Kenwood 9010X Clock 3 moded Transport S/H	N/A	249
Mark Levinson 31.5 Transport S/H	9500	5999
Mark Levinson 39 CD Player (9 months old) S/H	4999	3999
Monrio 18B2 DAC Ex-Demo	950	399
Rega Jupiter Transport/Io DAC Ex-Demo	975	750
Resolution Audio D92 24/96 Dac/Processor Ex-Demo	1500	949
Resolution Audio VT960 DVD Transport Ex-Demo	3500	1899
Roksan DP2T Transport S/H	1295	599
Roksan DA2 DAC S/H	599	299
Roksan DS5 PSU S/H	579	399
Theta Digital Pearl Transport S/H	1349	899
Theta Digital Progeny DAC S/H	1099	649
Theta Digital Pro Prime II DAC S/H	1699	599

Turntables Tonearms & Cartridges

	Was	Now
Basis 1400/RB250 (New & Boxed)	1200	899
Basis 2000/RB300 (New & Boxed)	2000	1599
Benz Micro Ruby (New & Boxed)	1500	799
Dais Turntable Motor Unit Only S/H	N/A	199
Heybrook TT2 Belt Drive Turntable S/H	N/A	99
Lehmann Black Cube Phono Stage (New & Boxed)	399	299
Linn Sondek LP12/Black/Rega RB200/Goldring1020 S/H	N/A	379
Linn Sondek LP12/Afro/Lingo/Ekos S/H	3000	1099
Mantra Manticore Reference/Musician/Eroica) S/H	2100	695
Nottingham Analogue Paragon 1 Linear Tracker Tonearm S/H	1600	349
Naim Flat Cap PSU S/H	370	250
Rega RB250 Orgin Live Modification S/H	300	159
Roksan Artexerxes MK1 Phono Stage S/H	495	195
Roksan DS 5 Atessa PSU Ex-Demo	549	399
Roksan Radius 3 Turntable (98) Ex-Demo	470	250
Roksan Xerxes Piano Lacquer XPS 1 (SME Cut) S/H	1295	399
Trio K500/SME 3009/E77 S/H	N/A	150

Preamplifiers

	Was	Now
Audio Research LS9 Remote Solid State (Ex-Demo)	1999	1399
Densen DM20 Preamplifier Ex-Demo	1380	899
DPA Enlightenment New Style Ex-Demo	799	449
Graaf GM13.5 II Valve Preamplifier Ex-demo	4000	2999
Michell ArgoHR/Hera S/H	N/A	475
Naim Audio 32 MM/MC Preamplifier S/H	N/A	99
Quad 33 Preamplifier S/H	N/A	45

Amplifiers

	Was	Now
Audio Analogue Puccini SE S/H	635	449
Audio Note P1SE Ltd Edition (Silver Wired) S/H	1600	849
Audio Note P2SE Valve Power Amplifier S/H	1499	795
Audiolab 8000S Integrated S/H	900	499
Audion Sterling Integrated Line Ex-Demo	799	399
Bartelomeo Transperenza ST140 Power Amplifier S/H	1500	695
Bow Technologies Wazoo XL S/H	2499	1895
Graaf 50/50 Push Pull Power amplifier (New&Boxed)	2100	1695
Graaf GM100 (New&Boxed)	4450	3299
Graaf GM20 OTL S/H	2950	1995
Quad II Anniversary Mono Valve Power Amplifiers Ex-Demo	6000	1999
Rega Big Brio Amplifier Ex-Demo	298	199
Rega Maia Power Amplifier Ex-Demo	475	349
Sugden SP30 Class A Stereo Power Amplifier S/H	950	599

Loudspeakers

	Was	Now
Audio Note AN-K/SP Light Ash Loudspeakers Ex-Demo	1070	629
Audio Note AN-Z Two Floor standers (Black) Ex-Demo	549	395

Loudspeakers (Con't)

	Was	Now
B&W CDM1SE Cherry Loudspeakers S/H	599	399
Diapason Karis Walnut 2 Way Monitor (New&Boxed)	1250	950
Indigo Centre Ex-Demo	199	129
JM Lab Colbalt 807 Cherry Ex-Demo	595	425
JM Lab Colbalt 815 Dark Cherry Ex-Demo	950	749
Martin Logan SL3 Hybrid Electrostatics S/H	3400	2495
Royd Sourceror Walnut S/H	650	379
ProAc Tablette 2000 Light Oak Ex-Demo	695	450
VelodyneTX810MK2 Subwoofer S/H	695	379
Yamaha NS1000M Black S/H	1200	595

Cables & Accessories

	Was	Now
Air Sus Cherry Platform Ex-Demo	169	99
Audio Research BL1 Balanced Converter S/H	888	399
Audio Sculpture 2m RCA Interconnect Ex-Demo	380	149
Bow Technologies Wand Remote S/H	349	199
Deskadel 1M Interconnects WBT/RCA S/H	300	150
Einstein Octopus 8 Way Mains Block (Ex-Demo)	199	149
G- Flex isolators (New & Boxed)	199	75
Lindsey Audiophile 2m Satin RCA Interconnect New	495	199
Madrigal HPC 2m Balanced Interconnect Ex-Demo	310	149
MIT MH750 2X21ft Speaker Cable S/H	N/A	699
Nordost Red Dawn 1M Balanced Ex-Demo	330	199
Shakti On Lines (New&Boxed)	85	45
Shakti Stones (New&Boxed)	195	120
Slate Audio Stands 21" S/H	489	199
Tara Labs Master RSC Gen II 3m Balanced S/H	1250	499
Target 5 Tier Silver Stand MDF Shelves Ex-Demo	249	145
Vdh Skytrack 2X4M Bi-wire Speaker Cable S/H	75	39

Tuners & Tape Decks

	Was	Now
Fanfare FT-1 FM Tuner S/H	1399	599
Cymbol C DAB Digital Tuner (Ex-Demo)	1000	750
Magnum Dynalab FT101 Analogue Tuner (New&Boxed)	850	679
Rega Radio R Tuner (Ex-Demo)	350	249
Roksan Caspian Tuner AM/FM (Ex-Demo)	599	399
Yamaha CT7000 Silver Tuner S/H	N/A	399

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QUAD ESL63 excellent £1000. Gradient subs £700 or both £1600. Tel: 020 8510 9237, Mobile: 0973 228 095 (Apr/I)

THETA DIGITAL, surround processor, RF, circle surround, Dolby digital, DTS, excellent condition, can demonstrate, new July 99, boxed (new £5000+) £3750. Three Ecosse reference monocrystal MS2 balanced interconnects (new £350) £200. Tel: Paul 020 8804 9293 (Apr/I)

SONY WM-D6C Walkman professional with ECM 909 stereo microphone excellent condition little used £150. Tel: 01274 491 962 Bradford (Apr)

FOR SALE, genuine Cambridge Audio R50 transmission line loudspeakers in superb condition and lovely sound. Also Sony CDP XE530 CD player hardly used. Tel: 01463 811 779 (Apr/I)

LEAK FM Troughline 3 mono tuner, Radford FM7 stereo tuner, Quad FM3 stereo tuner, Quad 33 Meridian p/amp also Sansui Sony A&R Cambridge Mission 771 amplifiers chokes available for vintage amps EMI BTR2 ex BBC offers. Tel: 0131 332 7536 (Apr I)

FOR SALE – Audio Research L.S.7 valve preamp, mint condition, boxed with manuals £700. Tel: 01752 787 459 (Apr I)

EPOS ES22 floor standing speakers. Dark cherry veneer. Boxed in immaculate condition £700. Tel: Day 020 8774 4248 evening 01483 486 442 (Woking, Surrey) (Apr/I)

MERIDIAN 101 preamp (black) rare. 105 monoblock power amps (black) 104 tuner (brown) all mint. Can demo amps £325. Tuner £75. Together £350. Tel: 01279 724 804 evening, 01442 286 740 daytime (Herts) (Apr/I)

PINK TRIANGLE PT TOO, Rega RB300, AT 37E £375. Leak Troughlines 2+3, mono, teak case £70 - £80. Leak Stereo 30+ teak case £35. Naim CDi remote £25. P.Metals Alpha £15. Tel: 01722 334 694 (Apr/I)

EPOS ES15 £400. Monitor Audio Studio 2SE £300. Musical Fidelity Nu-Vista interconnect 1.2m £60. QED Silver Spiral £40. D.N.M. speaker cable 4m bi-wired terminated £85. Chord Cobra 2 £25. Tel: 07967 646 089 (Apr/I)

CELESTION DITTON 33 speakers all veneered, excellent condition £50. KEF104 homemade speakers £80. Leak Sandwich 250 speakers £60. Designwise Glen speakers £25. Leak Mini-Sandwich speakers £40. Tel: 01379 898 676 evenings and weekends (Suffolk) (Apr/I)

TEAC TI transport £300. Quad 34, 405 MkII, FM4 £400 ono. Onkyo Grand Integra DX-G10, 27 kilo, 18bit, 8x o/sampling, very rare (£1700) £550 ono. NAD C160 pre 218 THX power 200wpc new 2 year G'tee (£1280) £850. NAD 533 T/Table (£230) £110. Musical Fidelity 24/96kHz DAC £150. Ixos Ixotica interconnect (£200) £90. Marantz CD12 remote, brand new £65. Will do deal with Quad 66 or 99 Series. Wanted: Hoods for B&W 801 in brown. Tel: 0121 742 2015 (Apr/I)

AVI 2000MM 150 watt monobloc power amplifiers £650. AVI FM tuner £290. Meridian 201 preamplifier and 209 remote £240. B & W P4 speakers £340. Harbeth bass speakers/stands for HLP3 and similar £120. Tel: 01892 536 919 (W.Kent) (Apr/I)

MICROMEGA DUO CD3 and Duo Pro DAC total quality in sound, build and looks, mint, boxed with manuals, less than third original price £750. Tel: 01892 538 126 or 07836 234 347 (Apr/I)

DENON DCDS 1011 14kg CD player £650 (£1300). Denon PMAS1011 30kg top quality integrated amplifier incorporating quality MM/MC phonostage £700 (£1400). Straightwire Maestro 2 interconnect (Stereophile recommended) £100 (£250). All excellent condition boxed with instructions. Tel: 01582 881 149 (Apr/I)

INFINITY MODULUS 50 speakers piano black EMIT ribbons matching shot filled stands £320 (£1000 new). Technics SL7 turntable new cartridge and spare stylus £200. Technics EPC-205Mk3 cartridge £150. Tel: 01387 263 252 (Apr/I)

PLINIUS 8150 integrated amp 150 watts, 16 months old, mint, boxed £1195. Sugden AV51 DAC £545. EAD T1000 transport £545. Both boxed, mint, sale due to upgrade. Tel: Paul 01283 716 443 (Apr/I)

PROAC RESPONSE speakers, Target stands, absolute mint condition, cost £1500, accept £700 for quick sale. Tel: 01204 393 606 (Apr/I)

HEYBROOK QUARTETS, boxed, black/walnut, matching stands £430 (£800). Linn Isobariks, stands, teak, boxed £450 ono. Mission 770's offers. DPA white Slink, metre pairs £25 each. Tel: 0151 480 3566 Email: Bob.Hignett@Instem-lss.co.uk (Apr/I)

AUDIO SYNTHESIS Passion Vishay passive preamp £345. Micromega Duo 3.1 Acutrans CD transport acrylic top loader stunning £525. Celestion SL600s with heavy master stands £400. Tel: 07909 697 060 or 0118 981 5681 (Apr/I)

LINN LK1 preamp £140. Ruark Sabres speakers £140. Linn Kusound speakers stands £40. Marantz CD50 £90. Aiwa 1800 cassette deck £40. Creek stereo tuner £50. Yamaha PS70 subwoofer £130. Vgc. Tel: 020 8406 4460 (Croydon) (Apr/I)

LINN: PRO-KAIRN slimline 'Brilliant' £700. Late spec Isobariks + Active/Dirak £600. LK140, Sep 2000, £600. 5103 processor pre-amp (silver) July 2000, £3300. All boxed, excellent condition. Tel: 01622 858 085 (Apr/I)

LINN KARIK transport and Numeric DAC (mark 2) with boxes, cables and remote £950. 1 metre pairs of gold phono terminated Kimber KCAG £200, Van Den Hul 501 mk2 £50, 102mk2 £50. Tel: 0141 945 1993 (Apr/I)

MONITOR AUDIO Silver 7's in Rosema £250. Rel Strata II subwoofer £350. Marantz CD 67 MkII £120. Arcam 8R 8P amplifiers £400. All items boxed. All 18 months old. All excellent condition. Tel: 07976 574 728 (Apr/I)

CLASSIQUE SOUNDS. (LEICESTER) INC ONE THING VINTAGE HI-FI & VALVE SPECIALIST

FOR SALE PRE/POWER AMPLIFIERS

Radford MA15 MK2 mono valve amplifiers X 2 consecutive serial Nos 1/AV SC4 pre-amp. Mini cond.	£1500
NVA A80 mono power amplifiers X 2. Good cond.	£ 799
NVA P80 passive pre-amplifier. Good condition	£ 199
Alchemist Forestry pre-amplifier. Mint. Boxed	£ 599
Quicksilver Line stage valve pre-amplifier. Stunning	£ 599
Pair Meridian 005 mono amplifiers. Good condition.	£ 990
Musical Fidelity Pre-S pre-amplifier. Mint. Boxed	£ 175
Exposure 1V power amplifier. Excellent condition	£ 505
Mini SPL pre-amp & Spare MC board / X Pak 2 Power supply	£ 450
Quad 606 MK1 power amplifier. Excellent condition	£ 399
Leak stereo 50 valve power amplifier. Very rare	£ 495
Pair Heathkit MA12 mono valve amplifiers	£ 249
Yamaha DSP-590 Dolby prologic digital sound field processor. C/w centre and rear spkrs & remote. Mint. Boxed	£ 250
Oxford Acoustics Mistral int amp. Cost £450.	£ 149
Quad 303 power amp. Ex cond. Serviced New caps	£ 195
Musical Fidelity The Pre amplifier with MM/ MC	£ 199
Cambridge P25 integrated amplifier. Ex condition	£ 99
Rotel RB970 BX power amplifier. Mint.	£ 99
Arcam Zeta 1 Prologic Cinema amp. Cost £999.00	£ 450
T/Vac line level valve pre-amplifier. Mint. Boxed	£ 350
Leak Stereo 20 valve power amplifiers from...	£ 200
Arcam Alpha 2 amplifier. Mint. Boxed/mstr	£ 95
Quad 11 Various. Price depends on condition	£ 90
Power A400 amplifier. Ex condition. Boxed	£ 195
Naim Nic 42.5K pre-amplifier with MC board.	£ 90

TURNTABLES

Wood THB VOFDE 3 motors & outboard PSU	£ 799	NVA phono 2 MC pre amp + 2 X PSU. Awesome	£ 499
Thorens TD125/Audio technica 1100 arm/plinth	£ 250	Roksan series X152 PSU. Black finish/RB250	£ 550
Rega Planar 2 turntable/RB250. Ex condition. Boxed	£ 120	Revolver Platable / Linn BasiK + VT. Mint. BXD	£ 69
Michell Ficus. One with Linn BasiK. Linn arm. Ex con	£ 199	Rega Planar 2 c/w rega RB200 arm. Wood plinth	£ 195
Lusmaa PD277. Direct drive. Ex cond.	£ 170	Rega K2 PS50 Direct drive turntable	£ 170
Denon System Deck Turntable. Complete with Syntr 2 pick up arm. The original & the best. Ex condition	£ 350	Arison RD110 turntable. Cut-out for SME. 3009	£ 150
Thorens TD110 turntable. Cut-out for SME. BsdC	£ 149	Thorens TD1125 in SME. 2000 plinth. Cut-out for SME	£ 60
Thorens TD1163C Deck only. Cut-out for SME. BsdC	£ 149	Garnant 301 & 401 motor units all serviced in situ	£ 125

SPEAKERS

Quad ESL57 speakers. All fully serviced with full 3 months warranty. Hear what ESL57s should sound like from	£ 750 pr
Pair Quad ESL57 spkrs. Fully rebuilt. 1e 4 Rec on bass & 2 recon treble units. All new electronics. 12m warranty	£1199
Naim Intro speakers in black ash. Mint. Boxed	£ 450
Pair of Meridian Short performance 860 speakers. Mint condition. Phono black finish. Boxed. Cost £1895	£ 899
Celestion Diton 25 in. teak. Very good condition.	£ 139
B&O Beovox 3800 speakers. Nice sound. Large	£ 49
B&W DM220. Slight cabinet marks. Boxed	£ 79
Meridian Short MS20 Pearl. Black finish. New.	£ 259
Cambridge R50 transmission line speakers. Rare	£ 259
Kel Kit 62 with H1-891110 Scanspeak. D2995 9300 tweeters. Expensive X Covers. Gut wrenching. Base. Awesome	£ 295
Rogers LS6 speakers in teak. Mint. Boxed	£ 125
Spendor SP2/3. Black finish. Boxed/instructions.	£ 595
Sony Andrews Tority speaker stands. Cost £599	£ 249
Base powered Acoustimas 3 spkrs. Unused/boxed	£ 295
Rusk Sabre. Black finish. Mint condition	£ 170
Snell J2 speakers. Black finish. Ex condition. Boxed	£ 295
Pair Rogers Studio 5 speakers. Rosewood finish	£ 480

OTHER ITEMS

Sugden SDT1 & SDM1 Transport & Disc/remote.	£ 849	Quad rack for 44/405/m4	£ 40
Naim CD13.5 CD player. Mint. Boxed	£ 749	Sony pro walkman WMD6C with leather case. Mint	£ 200
Quad PM4 tuner. Late model. Grey finish.	£ 199	Spare armature for SME series 3. New. Unused. Boxed	£ 55
SME 3009 Series 3 Tone-arm. Mint. Boxed	£ 149	Schreiber HD350 MK2 Headphones. Unused. Boxed	£ 55
Scanspeak Rack. 4 shelf. 4 legs. Black finish. Exe	£ 120	Teac TR450 tuner. AM/FM synthesized/RDS. Boxed	£ 69
Linn Tuner. Mint. Boxed. Very unusual. Cost £549	£ 249	Quad FM2 Valve tuner. Nice condition. Rare.	£ 160
National Panasonic 20FC11 low impedance stereo cartridge complete with SME style headshell. Unused. Boxed	£ 59		
Arcam Alpha 5 cd player. Mint. Boxed/remote	£ 195	Phillips 100 cd player. The first. Good condition	£ 100
Aiwa AD-750 Dolby B/C S/H/Ls pro Cassette. Mint.	£ 75	Denon DCD1700 CD player. Cost £650. Boxed	£ 100
Aiwa AD14370 cassette deck. Dolby B/C. HiSpn. Bsd	£ 40	Marantz CD 50 CD player. Ex condition. Boxed	£ 80
Leak singleline 3 stereo tuner. Fully serviced	£ 195	Revox B77/2. 2 speed reel-reel player. Ex condition	£ 395
Leak stereo/tuner. Similar to Troughline	£ 35	Leak 2300 tuner. Serviced by One Thing. Mint.	£ 49
Marantz CD52 MK2 CD player. Mint. Boxed	£ 99	Audax HD 11D 34H tweeters. New old stock	£ 25
Sugden F48 tuner. Sounds superb	£ 95	Arcam Black Box S/DAC. Unused. Cost £480. Mint	£ 240
Meridian 203 MKV B/S DAC. Mint. Boxed	£ 160	Tro K1880L synthesiser tuner. AM/FM. Black	£ 75
Hendek tone arm with Linn arm-board.	£ 149	Technics SL 15620A CD player/remote	£ 75
Quad 34 moving coil module. Mint. Boxed	£ 40	SME 3009 tonearms from	£ 95
Technics Class AA 3 head cassette deck. Dolby B/C	£ 119	HiX pro Adjustable digital control. Good condition	£ 80
Aiwa XT950 tuner. Boxed. Final w/MS. CW. tin...	£ 50	Arcam Black Box B/MC. AM/FM tuner. Serviced	£ 150

QUAD ESL57 PANELS/SERVICING ETC

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Captain Beefheart	Grow Fins Volume 3		£TBC
Richard Thompson	Action Packed (Best Of) 2LP		£17.90
David Bowie	Man Who Sold The (SV)		£TBC
David Bowie	Diamond Dogs (SV)		£TBC
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Paul Simon	You're The One	£16.90
Queens Of Sone Age	Rated R	US LP £14.90
Sonics	Here Are/Boom	Each £12.90
Stephen Malkmus	(Ex Pavement)	£12.90
Captain Beefheart	Trout Mask Replica	£22.90
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AVI NEU-NEUTRONS marble & steel stands £300. Arcam Delta 70.3 CD £200. Quad 77 amp £300. Wanted: Linn Kairn Karik 3 Grado SR 60's or SR80's Linn Pekin 0121 246 0486 (Apr/I)

CARDAS GOLDEN Cross speaker cables, 2m pair, single-ended spades, not run in yet, runner-up Stereophile 'Product of the Year' (December 2000) (£2k) £900. Tel: 020 7715 8374 (May/I)

CLASSIC COLLECTORS items. 1964 Philips EL330 cassette. As new, boxed, never used, offers. Technics SL7 LP sized linear tracking turntable, little used marvel £250. Decca Export Gold, damaged £30. Tel: Norman 01702 527 983 (Apr/I)

NAIM NAIT3 with MM phono board £295 ono. Naim Nait1 £120 ono, Rogers LS7 BBC speakers £150 ono. Meridian 204 tuner £295 ono. All very good. Tel: Nick 01733 896 581 (Peterborough) (Apr/I)

AUDIO INNOVATIONS valve power amps: 800 Mk1 £275, Series 200 Mk2 £195, Nikko transistor poweramps 40wpc Class A 100 volts £175 each with transformers. Celestion Ditton 33 speakers, teak, £35. Tel: 01202 767 873 (Apr/I)

QUAD ESL57 two pairs, £400, £550. Meridian 602, 606 £900. Tel: 0121 459 9616 (Apr/I)

QUAD ELS63 Afromosia and brown, as new condition, serviced in 1993. Serial Numbers 11171, 11172. Hi-Fi World review tells you all you need to know. O.I.R.O. £1100. Tel: 0121 745 6516 (Birmingham) (Apr/I)

R.M.S. REVELATION speakers £850. Oydseus valve amp £550. Metexa pre £395. Revox H11 cassette deck £600 ono. Acoustat Electrostatics £350. Arcam 9 amp £300. Arcam 5 CD £150. Rel Q50 £200. Tel: 01626 774 246 (Apr/I)

LEAK 2075 speakers £375. Immaculate condition. Quad 303/405 pre-amp £275. Recently serviced by Quad. Please call 0121 707 0791 evenings (Apr/I)

B&W CC6 S2 Centre speaker £75. Target Hi-Fi stand, 5 glass shelves, cost £240, bargain £110. Volt 10" bass unit £45. All items excellent condition. Tel: 01604 661 052 (Apr/I)

KOETSU RED, boxed, original stylus, 300 hours £495. Koetsu Black £275. Linn Isobarik tweeters (latest) 3 as new £75. Linn Keltik/Kaber tweeters (3) £95. Naim 250, boxed £550. Tel: 00 3531 295 4076 (Apr/I)

AUDIO SYNTHESIS DAX DAC and Roksan ROK1 transport. The classic combination. Both excellent condition £1350. Tel: 01823 443 825 (Taunton) (Apr/I)

LINN AXIS Akito £250. Roksan Tabriz £75. Both boxed, excellent. JBL centre speaker, excellent £35. Connoisseur BD101 (12" platter) SME 3009, good, £70. Tel: 01344 750 440 (Bracknell) (Apr/I)

NAKAMICHI BX100E cassette deck, very little use, immaculate condition, excellent performance. boxed with instructions £130 ono. Tel: 01625 260 903 (Stockport) (Apr/I)

AUDIOSTATIC ES 100s Electrostatic (full range) speakers, black, Kimber 8TCM and base weighted/spiked modified for even greater fidelity, total cost £3100+, sell £1500. Pink Triangle D.C. supply, needs service £400. Tel: 0141 954 8030 evenings (Apr/I)

WANTED: 4TH ORDER passive crossovers and speaker stand mounting panels for Linn Isobariks. Tel: Dave 0115 953 2621 (Nottingham) (Apr/I)

ROGERS SPEAKERS pair of original BBC monitors, 15 ohm £500. Pair of Sonic Link Red and Silver Pink interconnects £25. Quad 405, good condition £150. Tel: 07721 470 286 (Apr/I)

MARANTZ CD10 CD player Trichord Clock modifications perfect condition £300. Roksan Attesa ATDP3 CD transport fitted Audicom Superclock with Sumo Theorem Two DAC balanced and unbalanced outputs, brilliant sound £400. Tel: 01633 279 173 (Apr/I)

NAIM NAP90 £299. NAC72 £375. Castle Harlech light oak immaculate £499. Tel: Steve 01793 643 930 or 07971 605 383 (Swindon) (Apr/I)

PROAC RESPONSE ISC loudspeakers in rosewood and in mint condition, boxed, instructions, (£1350) with dedicated Target loudspeaker stands (£230), £800 ono. Tel: 01508 499 586 after 4pm (Apr/I)

REVOX B77 Stereo tape recorder hi-speed, fully serviced by Audio Labs Leeds October 2000 and according to them is in perfect condition and running to Revox specifications. £575. Tel: 0113 281 2693 (Apr/I)

GUIDELINES FOR BUYING AND SELLING SECOND-HAND EQUIPMENT

FOR THE BUYER

1. Not everyone is honest - Buyer Beware!
2. Accept no verbal guarantees.
3. Have you heard the item or something similar? If not, why do you want it?
4. Don't pretend to have knowledge - it's your fingers that will get burnt!
5. Is it working? If not, why not?
6. Has it been modified and, if so, have notes been kept?
7. Was it any good in the first place?
8. **Don't send cash!**
9. If you are in the slightest doubt, arrange an audition (see point 4). If it's too far, wait for another time.
10. Either buy it or don't: vendors are excruciatingly impatient with 'consultation' exercises.

FOR THE VENDOR

1. Not everyone is honest - Seller Beware!
2. Make no verbal guarantees.
3. Even 'nearly new' is still second-hand. If the manufacturer's guarantee is no longer in force, your price should reflect this.
4. There is very little intrinsic value in second hand hi-fi: it's only worth what someone will pay for it.
5. The best guide to pricing is last month's Classifieds: that a 'classic' was worth £xxx a year or two ago is no guide. Values fall as well as rise.
6. Amateur second-hand dealing is not a big money game: you win some, you lose some.
7. Be prompt with despatch. If in doubt about buyer's bona-fides, either wash out the deal or send C.O.D.
8. There will always be time-wasters; be tolerant within reason!

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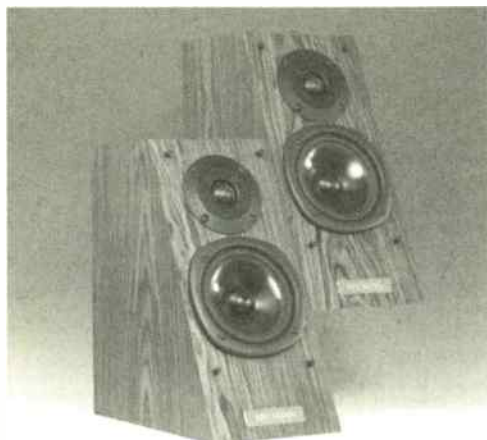
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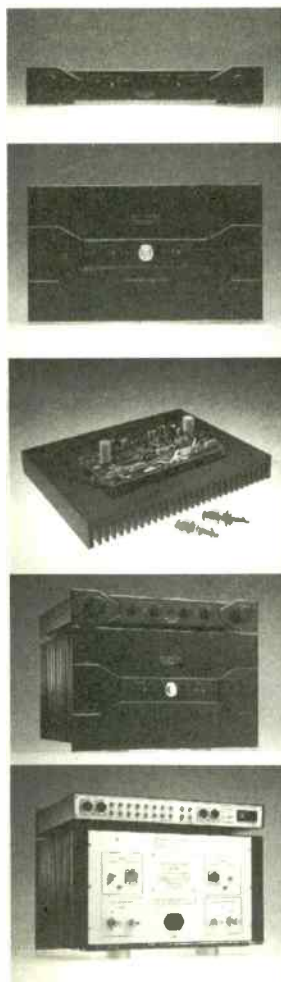
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Hi-Fi World June 99*

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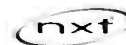


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