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SENNHEISER CX300 IN-EAR PHONES ETYMOTIC ER-6i IN-EAR PHONES CYRUS LINKDOCK IPOD DOCK ANALOGUE MASTER: SONY WALKMAN PRO APPLE IPOD HI-FI vs. MONITOR AUDIO IDECK

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REVOLVER RW45i floorstanding loudspeaker

COOP

WORLD

CLEARAUDIO AMBIENT TURNTABLE ONRYO A 9755 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER QSONIX Q100: THE ULTIMATE JUKEBOX? CREEK DESTING INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER CASTLE COMPACT COLUMN LOUDSPEAKERS LIN TROMPONENT UP/SATELLINE LOUDSPEAKERS SLIM DEVICES SQUEEZEBOX PHILIPS WACS700 WIRELESS

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World Radio History

welcome

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hi-fi world

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Traditionally, summer is hi-fi's 'down season' - as previously passionate purchasers of audio hardware take to the roads, beaches or mountains and momentarily forget their unhealthy desire to sit inside and listen to music all hours of the day and night. But something strange happened in July 1979, something that was

to change everything. No, it wasn't the release of Supertramp's 'Breakfast in America' or even Wings' 'Greatest Hits'. Rather, what

sent shockwaves around the world was a rather curious paperback-sized tape player from Sony known as the 'Stowaway'...

Most people didn't think so much of it at the time. Hi-fi's 'early adopters' weren't too impressed with what was simply a portable cassette player – a format whose reputation for sonics was pretty much on a par with Medium Wave radio at the time. And also - so we thought - who on earth would want to listen to music out and about...?

Within a year, the Stowaway had been renamed the Walkman, and the rest – as they say – is history. The world, it transpired, *did* actually want to carry its favourite sounds around. The eighties went Walkman mad. By the end of that decade, the format it used (cassette) was the best selling music medium in history.

It's funny how easily we've forgotten all this, as today's commentators wax lyrical about Apple's iPod as 'cultural phenomenon', 'spirit of the age', etc. Exactly the same things were said about the Walkman a quarter of a century ago, and back then, it really was true. Sony, you see, created a global market and then defined it, year upon year. Five years ago, the iPod merely moved in on Sony's patch, and watched in amazement as Sony moved out...

Well, this month's supertest (p15) shows that Sony is finally back. Elsewhere in this special portable audio issue, we've got a vast range of iPod accessories, some from respected British hi-fi specialists, such as the Monitor Audio iDeck (p36). We've got headphones, small speakers, interconnects – all to get you wired for sound. And those with wire-less proclivities will be interested in our review of Slim Devices Squeezebox III and Philips WACS700 wireless music players (p40). In short, you'll find a huge amount of portable paraphernalia this month. But *Hi-Fi World* also has some seriously sexy grown-up products for those rainy summer days indoors - just look inside!

David Price, editor



simply the best extremely capable worth auditioning unremarkable seriously flawed keenly priced







testing

Hi-Fi World has its own advanced test laboratory and acoustically treated listening room, and a dedicated team of experienced listeners. We review thoroughly by extensive auditioning, rather than by quick-fire group listening tests. Our engineering team designs a wide range of products in-house. No other hi-fi magazine is so expert and dedicated.



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hi-fi world

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"Together there are few if any better ways to play music at the price." A-933 / C733 HI-FI World October 2005

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"If this is the way digital amplification is going, we're all for it!" HI-FI Choice Group Test A-933 April 2006

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BIG NAIM

Late April saw the unveiling of one of the best CD players that this magazine has yet heard. So it should be, perhaps, because at £14,000 Naim's new CD555 isn't exactly small change. The machine is stunningly well built, with standards of construction and finish on a par (or better) with Linn's late, great Sondek CD12 (which is really saying something). It's a two box machine, with the transport (Philips top 'pro' CD mech), DAC and analogue output stage in the upper, top-loading case, and the power supplies in the lower box. The 555PS power supply box can also serve as an upgrade to the company's hitherto top-of-the-range CD spinner - the CDS3. Brief impressions are of a startlingly fast, smooth and grippy sound; one that sounds more like state-of-the-art analogue than digital.Watch this space for a review soon! Naim Audio also announced its new Hi-Line interconnect – approximate price is around £500 for 1m DIN to DIN, but the improvement over the standard bundled stuff is dramatic, so much so that we wonder why the company didn't do it sooner... For more information on all things Naim related, click on www.naim-audio.com.









STAR CHASING

Leema Acoustics has launched its new Constellation system, the heart of which is the £2,995 Tucana stereo amplifier. Described as a "groundbreaking dual mono design", it uses three heavyduty toroidal power transformers, one for each channel and one for the control circuitry. Together with its bipolar transistor output stage, it can swing over fifty amps of current. It's also the system controller for the Leema Constellation system, able to "automatically and intelligently configure other devices into a multi-unit home cinema system of uncompromised audiophile quality". The £2,995 Hydra is an intelligent stereo slave amplifier having exactly the same topology as the Tucana. Used singly or in pairs, the Hydra's usual duty would be to drive the surround channels in a 5.1 or 7.1 home cinema system. It may also be used to bi-amp a stereo or multi-channel system. Input selection and volume controls tracks that of the Tucana via LIPS system bus commands. The £2,995 Corvus features both a single channel amplifier for centre channel use and a studio quality, comprehensive subwoofer control system. This section offers bass extraction, trim, filtering and phase control of mono, or uniquely, stereo subwoofers, in both multi-channel and stereo systems. Again, once set up, the Corvus takes its commands from the Tucana via LIPS, meaning that once installed, the system is easy to use and uniquely family friendly, says Leema. For more information, call Activ Distribution on 01635 291357 or click on www.leema-acoustics.com

NEWS



BIRD WATCHING

GT Audio have been appointed UK distributors for the redoubtable TW Acustic Raven turntable. The sub chassis, says Graham Tricker, is made from a very advanced polymer and using high purity copper in the platter ensures a very inert design. A very advanced bearing along with a custom made high torque DC motor and computer controlled speed and motor control ensures speed and pitch stability to within a claimed 0.000000002seconds (2nS)! The deck weighs in at 65kgs and can take up to four tonearms if required. Price is £4,995 and it is on permanent demonstration at GT Audio. For more information, call 01895 833099 or click on <u>www.gtaudio.com</u>.

SPOTTED:

Football crazy mobile music lovers now have the chance to listen to 'Three Lions' or 'World in Motion' on this, which we think is the world's first football shaped digital audio player. The 99 Matsunichi Libero 3.0 is 4.4cm across, supports WMA DRM (whoopee doo!), has an FM radio and 512MB of storage. It offers ten hours of music – longer than England are likely to play in Germany...



STAX ELECTROSTATIC EARSPEAKER SR-007

Reviewed in June 2006 issue to contact the distributor call:-Nigel Crump Symmetry 01727 865488 www.symmetry-systems.co.uk

CORRECTION:

We'd like to apologise to mbl for a couple of inaccuracies in our coverage of the 101E loudspeakers last month: the mbl system at the Manchester Show (p73) cost £82,000 (not several hundred thousand as stated, making it all the more impressive) and the Noble line preamplifier (page 12) was, in fact, working correctly.

COLOUR FIELD

Tangent's radio family has a new member. A DAB table radio available in five different colours, customers can choose between oak, walnut, black, white and the latest red piano high gloss, which definitely attracts attention. Described as



a "decorative, acoustically superior modern radio, wrapped inside a classical appearance", its design is inspired from classical transistor radios from the 1950s. For more information, call Eltax, UK on $\pm 44(0)$ 7802 279318.



TUNE IN

Designed to match Denon's latest Advanced Evolution hi-fi separates range, the £129.99 TU-1500AE replaces the classic TU-260II tuner, adding better sound, greater sensitivity, a better display, full remote control and sleeker styling, all for the same low price – says Denon. The new tuner is said to be well built, elegantly styled and contains "highly-refined FM/AM and audio circuitry". The FM tuner is said to be sensitive, and offer excellent sound quality. There's a two line dot-matrix display showing all Station and RDS info, a display dimmer function on front panel and also on the bundled remote control, 100 presets for FM/AM stations, a 'Last function' memory and Back-up memory. For more information, click on <u>www.denon.co.uk</u> or call 01234 741 200.

UTTER BRILLIANCE

Brilliance Hi-Fi's new Purity DCT Balanced Digital AES/EBU interconnect is designed for high end domestic and professional digital applications. The AES/EBU connection found on most professional recording equipment is regarded as the highest quality digital transmission format available and is being increasingly adopted for top domestic CD transport and DAC applications. The Purity balanced digital interconnect has a true 110 Ohm impedance- matched design using the latest shielded twisted pair (STP) cable and Neutrik XLR plugs with gold plated contacts. As per all of the Brilliance range of cables, the Purity employs Teflon insulation in order to deliver a very low capacitance of a mere 39 pF/m for minimal signal degradation on this the most critical of applications from the digital source of your audio system. Performance is further enhanced by advanced screening and termination topology, and the cable parts have been cryogenically treated in order to maximise the listening experience. Price is a very affordable £140 for the first half metre with an additional £30 for each additional half metre, (or part thereof). Hi-Fi World's brief chance to audition this cable has been encouraging; as we've found with the company's other products, it gives results way beyond those expected at the price. For more information, contact Mike Head at Brilliance Hi-Fi on 07963 117 341 or click on <u>www.brilliancehifi.co.uk</u>.

NEW DIVAs

Arcam announce the arrival of two new models in its 'affordable audiophile' DiVA range. The £1,500 DiVA AVR350 Is described as "the best ever sounding receiver from Arcam", and features two-way HDMI switching plus HDTV compatible component/RGB switching, a new "huge" toroidal transformer and 7×100 W. The new £1,250 DiVA DV137 is Arcam's first SACD equipped universal player; also playing CD, DiVX video, DVD-A and DVD-V. It uses "the latest generation Zoran Vaddis 888S core processing engine" and Arcam claim to be the first to have developed its integration (into the DV137). Also included in a considerable specifi-



cation is the excellent HDCD ability for suitable CDs, ABT1010 video scaler up to 1080i/p, new on board video set-up and new user interface. The DV137 also undercuts Marantz's latest universal player, the DV9600 by £250. In demonstration, this duo provided powerful, dynamic sound-quality to Peter Gabriel's 'Sledgehammer' and the movie 'Charlotte Gray'. The picture quality was outstanding, too. Both products utilise Arcam's 'Mask Of Silence' EMC damping to their chassis and internal components, which were previously only available on their upmarket FMJ series. For more details, contact Arcam at <u>www.arcam.co.uk</u> or 01223 203 200.



SHURE THING

Shure's new E500 Sound Isolating earphones are the company's new flagship product in their E Series earphone line. "Precisionengineered for audiophiles and those who demand top quality sound", they also boast an innovative "Push-to-Hear" option, which lets you alternate between complete isolation and a connection with the outside world. The new Shures sport "Triple Hi-Definition Drivers", effectively three miniature speakers -one tweeter and two woofers in a tiny "in-ear" package with a sleek and comfortable new black chrome design. Price is a hefty £369 complete with two-year limited warranty. For more information, click on <u>www.shure.com</u>.





DEPECHE MODA!

The new Moda 16:9 'audio visual furniture' range sees a number of materials - maple and chrome, steel and glass, warm cherry and dark oak – come together "to create striking models with beautiful expressions", says maker Omnimount. Yet despite the delicate designs, it is claimed to withhold up to 113kg or nearly 18 stone! Moda 16:9 takes its inspiration from film, with both form and feel echoing the classic

widescreen movies, and is "the perfect base for the new generation of flat screen displays, such as plasmas and LCDs". The five-strong Moda 16:9 series comprises the Frame in 100cm and 150cm widths, the architectural structure of Linear 150cm, the grace of Glace 150cm, and the simplicity of Glide in 100cm and 150cm widths. Each of these components can hold up to 113kg (the typical weight of three 42" plasmas. Completing the line-up is Pillar – two fixed height speaker stands that compliment the rest of the range. Prices start from £300. For further information go to www.moda169.com or call Midwich Ltd. on 01379 649200.

DISC SLIPPING

News that TDK has begun shipping its first write-once and rewriteable Blu-Ray discs to retailers in the United States shows that after all the talk, events are now happening fast on the ground in the HD/Blu-ray war. TDK's blank Blu-ray discs are rated at 2x speed and cost \$20 each for a 25GB write=once (BD-R) or \$25 for the rewriteable (BD-RE) 25GB version, with plans to offer higher capacity variants soon. It has been reported that Matsushita's Blu-ray support will never merge, nor will the company make a universal player that will support Toshiba's competing HD-DVD format, so the scene is set for another format war! Depressingly, a Matsushita spokesman has been quoted as saying, "the companies backing competing formats for next-generation DVD technology will never again talk about forming a unified standard". So it looks like the customer will decide, after an invariably protracted and confusing conflict, which will invariably confound any prospect of a forthcoming super high resolution audio disc format...

SPOTTED

Naim Audio's sales supremo Doug Graham claims a small part of England back for the Scottish. "Well, if you guys got Carlisle Castle, then I'm having the one in Rodborough", intoned the Glaswegian expat passionately, whilst clutching a DIN plug...



REVIEW

Hand In Glove

There's no such thing as the perfect power amplifier, and there probably never will be, but if you want an ultra versatile, super clean sounding high end device, NuForce's new Reference 9SE is the one, says David Price...

ne relationship between an amplifier and a loudspeaker is a special one, and the two have to be more than comfortable in one another's company. The problem with all the suitors that have been through my front door (amplifiers, that is) is that they've often done some great things, but have consummately failed to do it all.

For example, the Sugden A21SE (£2,000 Class A integrated) was a brilliantly lucid musical performer, but lacked the muscle to truly tickle

NEORCE

nu Force

Jungson's JA-88D (£900 Class A power amp) was an interesting diversion; a lot more power than the Sugden and only a little less musicality, but despite its vast acreage of heatsinking, still couldn't completely lock down those Yamaha woofers. Lyngdorf's SDA2175 (£800 semi-digital power amplifier) had superior low bass grip and oodles more power, but simply sat on transients at high levels, making things sound too dispassionate. Musical Fidelity's kW500 (£4,000 Class AB integrated) had a vice-like control,

once put it,"for a custom fit in an off-the-rack world", has been a frustrating and ultimately unfulfilling experience then. But just when I was contemplating switching back to my Quad 989 electrostatics as my main reference loudspeaker, along came NuForce's Reference 9SE, which proved the first thing I've heard that truly fits 'hand in glove' with my troublesome transducers...

N - A CLASS OF ITS OWN

It isn't just the distinctive burnt orange ("Rose Copper") aluminium

reference s

the Yamahas' fancy. It could sing like a canary, play tunes like Paul McCartney and generally bring joy to anything it touched, but didn't have the motive force to stamp its authority on these notoriously unforgiving loudspeakers.

but lacked charm and tonal colour. My own modded World Audio K5881 (£1,500 Class A tube amp) was deliciously fluid and tonally sublime across the midband, but fell to pieces down below.

Looking, as Martin Fry of ABC

casework that's different about the tiny Reference 9SE. Inside is a novel variation on Class D amplification. A very high frequency PWM switching circuit produces the output waveform from the power amplifier, and its very low distortion

10

REVIEW

is achieved by building in a local feedback integrator around the switching circuit to ensure that the average output voltage from each digital switching cycle is exactly equal to the reference (desired) output voltage. NuForce says this eliminates the need to take overall negative feedback from the output of the filtering circuits feeding the loudspeaker load, which complicates feedback and limits the bandwidth of Class D amplifiers.

The reduced component count increases overall energy efficiency over Class-D, and reduces heatsink and cooling requirements, overall size and cost, it's claimed. Essentially then, this is a modern digital amplifier with a twist.

Because of the diminutive dimensions, it's a real tight fit inside, with tightly packed SMT circuit boards, a sprinkling of bespoke NuForce ICs and NuForce audiograde capacitors. The 9SE boasts an elaborate power supply with a vast bank of small capacitors (as opposed to two large caps on the standard, cheaper non-SE version). Further enhancements include a separate switching power supply for the analogue front end, and improvements to the signal input section, including higher quality input capacitors, and the installation of premium 6-nines, oxygen-free copper input wiring.

It is surprisingly compact considering its claimed 160W RMS power output. With the 9SE being an American creation, we'll use 'old money' and quote its vital statistics as being 6.5x10.5x1.75in and 3lb (which to my aching back feels about one fiftieth of the bulk of the JungSon JA-88D!). It's just as amenable in other ways, too. Round the back is an IEC power socket and an on-off switch. With its tiny current draw, you can leave it on permanently if you so wish, and the unit auto-senses voltage (from 84-264V).

There's a pair of rhodium over copper speaker binding posts (superior sounding and about twice as expensive to make compared to gold plated, don't forget), and single Cardas phono input, plus an XLR input too (complete with a microswitch to toggle between balanced and non-balanced operation). The brushed, anodised aluminium casework is largely nonresonant, and electrically screened so the amps can sit one atop the other. Finish is superb - indeed the only thing I can think of that might count against it in the showroom are its aforementioned diminutive dimensions - it looks tiny and weighs next to nothing. Of the Musical Fidelity kW school of electronic design it is not!

SOUND QUALITY

The aforementioned Lyngdorf SDA2175 is an extremely clever semi-digital (ostensibly Class D) amplifier, and sounds it. The JungSon is a sort of 'uber Sugden' (Class A), and sounds it. Both have the same, single great strength - clean power - but deliver it so differently. The Lyngdorf is a tad cerebral and slightly undynamic, despite the truly high levels it's capable of, whereas the JungSon is muscular and transparent but a little zingy across the high treble. Strip these objections away and you have an amplifier that's powerful, muscular, dynamic and transparent almost to a fault - the NuForce Reference 9SE.

Suitably fettled, it's one of the best audiophile power amplifiers I've



"the Reference 9SEs hung on with total unflappability, their grip is sublime "

yet heard in some ways. It is at once effortlessly powerful but extremely musical too, and the fact that it has proved oh-so-responsive to any improvements elsewhere in the system shows how consummately transparent it is. Immensely revealing yet never cerebral or analytical, I find it a very special design. Whereas the Lyngdorf gives real, clean, visceral power but - at truly high levels - tends to sit on musical crescendos, the NuForce gives you all of the former's decibel count, but just keeps on getting louder gracefully. At full volume on my MF Audio Passive Preamplifier, the Ref 9SEs were pounding out swingeing sound pressure levels, yet when there was a heavily struck snare or kick drum on 4hero's 'Escape That', the amplifiers went louder still, effortlessly and with no sign of compression.

Importantly, this is useable power. The amplifiers are so clean that you can keep 'pressing the loud pedal' on your preamplifier (neighbours notwithstanding), going for ever high volume levels, with ease. The amps are so couth that, even at such high levels, you can easily hold a conversation with someone over and above the music (not that you'd want to), which is always the sign of really classy amplification. There's so little apparent compression (through my speakers at least), that the NuForces seem to goad you to listen ever louder, and then bowl you over with their control at such volumes. Yet

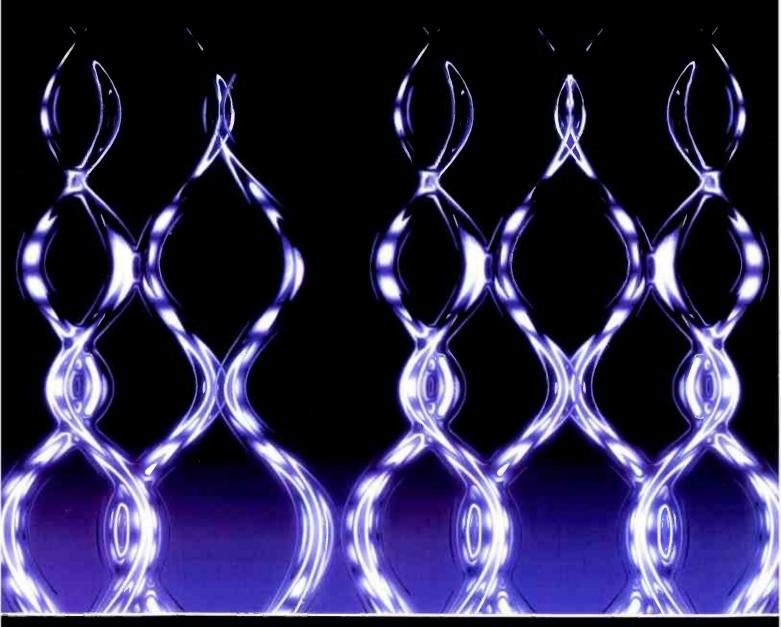
should you wish to return to more sane levels, they're no less enjoyable, displaying as they do tremendous speed and 'hear-through' clarity even a whisper-quiet listening levels.

Tonally, the NuForces aren't going to win over valve aficionados, although don't think for a minute they're monochromatic. They certainly don't sepia tint the music (as per many tube amps), nor do they add grey, solid-state-style (Class B) mush to the proceedings. Rather, they're largely neutral, and prove themselves brilliantly adept at revealing the respective 'acoustic signatures' of different recording studios (often several are used on one rock or pop album) or indeed different albums cut by different artists at the same recording studio. In the latter instance, for example, they're able to effortlessly signpost the distinctive sound of (the late lamented) Compass Point studios, Nassau, on both Grace Jones's 'Nightclubbing' and Tom Tom Club's 'Genius of Love'.

Randy Crawford's voice on 'You Might Need Somebody' showed how right the 9SEs were; to these ears (used to high end tube amplification), they're just a tad on the lean and bright side, but I don't mean 'lean' in the Chord Electronics or DPA sense, but rather that they're not ever-soslightly plummy or rich in the Quad II/40 sense. Smoothish as they are, there's no velvet lining to the 9SEs; they tell it like it is. This meant that



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Crawford's voice had a grainy, gritty feel, but still retained her trademark rich 'fruitiness' - and the result was a brilliantly natural feel.

Continuing with this classic slice of seventies jazz rock, and underneath her vocals an extremely powerful and engaging bassline pushed along the proceedings. Much as I love tube amplifiers, my fine example of the breed just could not compete - the NuForce showed itself to be highly rhythmically engaging (signposting the spaces between the notes as well as almost any high end Naim), yet strong and firm and unflappable too. At first, I'd thought the bass to be ever so slightly soft and soggy, but a change to Black Rhodium's Ninja loudspeaker cables (£200/m rather than £15 of the Black Rhodium Tango I'd been using [see MATCH MAKING] showed the disarming speed, grip and transient power the 9SEs were capable of serving up - given an adequate delivery line. I wouldn't normally recommend £200/ m speaker cables, but both NuForce and Yams showed how arrestingly capable they both are given the tools to do the job. With these 'uber cables', I heard a tremendously tight, taut, in control amplifier delivering massive sound pressure levels with relative insouciance; the NuForces just took it all in their stride with heady abandon.

Midband is much like the bass; it's even, fast and three dimensional. Frankly, I've heard tube amps give a more 'walk around soundstage' before, but I'm not sure if that's the euphonic sound of valves as opposed to the real recording. Still, the NuForces locked stereo images very tightly and confidently across the plane of the speakers. They are quite architectural; everything's in its place, virtually 'nailed down' to its proper location within the recorded acoustic. Again, they don't approach the best tube amplifiers in their front to back staging, but it's still very accurate and in control. With the Townshend Isolda DCT speaker cables, the stereo image appeared to hover just around the plane of the speakers, but moving to Black Rhodium Tango it dropped back slightly, and seemed happier projecting out when needed.

Midband clarity is breathtaking, as is speed. Michael Jackson's 'Don't Stop Till You Get Enough', a classic late seventies Quincy lones production, showcased the NuForces' dizzying speed. There's so much happening in this song, massive amounts of percussion coming at you with the speed of a machine gun, and where most amplifiers simply gloss

MATCH MAKING

MATCH MAKING My first few weeks of listening involved my Townshend Isolda DCT loudspeaker cabling, which I've found to be a super high end design. Compared to so many cables on the market it sounds deep, dark and velvety with most amplifiers and/or speakers, but the particular combination of Reference 9SE and NS1000M proved just a little too 'chromium plated' across the upper midband. The Yamahas, if anything, have tendency to sound slightly hard; it's only very slight, and if anything is as much about its partnering ancillaries as the speakers themselves. The Reference 9SEs are so crisp and upfront that the combination proved just a tad too imposing in the midband. The arrival of one Mr Graham Nalty, clutching a case full of Black Rhodium Tango loudspeaker cable (£15/m) just pulled back the upper midband enough for this amplifier/speaker combination to completely 'hit the spot'; it was magic – true 'big audio dynamite' – and this review was written with this amp-cable-speaker combination in mind. We'll review the cable a proper soon, but suffice to say it's one of the best I've heard at the price and is now an automatic recommendation. I also auditioned the Ninja cable (£200/m), and this had quite sublime effects, removing almost everything wrong about the sound that I'd incorrectly attributed to the NuForce Reference 9SE. It is stunningly fast, incisive and transparent – so clear it's almost frightening – and boasts a massively well articulated hass performance with firecracker dynamics. Expensive, but you might like to consider placing a Reference 9SE right next to each of your loudspeakers, and running a metre or so of Ninja between the amp and speaker, with a long balanced line level lead coming from the preamp (if your preamp is capable of this).



over it, the Reference 9SEs hung on with total unflappability; their grip is sublime. Moving to Black Rhodium's Ninja again underlined it; it's real edge-of-the-seat stuff normally, but the Ninjas had my knuckles turning white, such was the massive amount of musical information coming at me, at such speed and with such clarity. The treble is no different; brightly

lit yet silky when called upon so to be, it's strong and atmospheric as the occasion demands.

CONCLUSION

A truly special power amplifier from a company I had never heard of the NuForce Reference 9SE is an important arrival on the 'affordable' high end scene - and you'd be mad not to make its acquaintance. It is one of the few power amplifiers I've heard that doesn't make you aware of its weaknesses, however many obvious strengths it may have. It drives - I would guess - any loudspeaker with ease, and never makes you audibly aware that it's uncomfortable, flustered or in distress, even at extremely high programme levels. Some may not like it, simply

because of its lack of 'character' - it gets on with the job in hand, and does it with great aplomb. Switch it on and you won't think it's muscular, powerful, sweet, smooth or any other such thing, nor will you find any particular vice. Rather, love it or hate it, the NuForce Reference 9SE just plays music.

VERDICT

Superbly clean, musical and powerful sound makes this a brilliant audiophile buy.

U FORCE REFERENCE 9SE £1,550 HIAudio Distribution C)+44 (0)845 052 52 59 www.hiaudio.co.uk

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Because of the unusual behaviour of digital amps close to overload, the exact threshold of the NuForce Reference 9 SE wasn't precise; for example parasitic oscillation breaks out at high levels, so distortion from a thd meter (thd+n) is much higher than that from a spectrum analyser - and we use both. The Ref 95 Anduce around 32V into 8ohms and 4ohms before serious clipping (overload) occurs, translating to 130W / 260W. This level of power, delivered without heat or noise, seems a little uncanny.

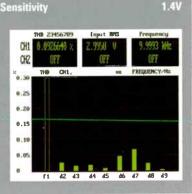
a inde uncanny. However, digital isn't drama-free. High frequency distortion levels were high, ranging from 0.1% at 1W to around 0.6% just below (-1dB) full output. Harmonics were extended and varied strongly with level. The NuForce isn't band limited to 22kHz, like the Lyngdorf for example, allowing upper harmonics through. This results in higher measured distortion levels. However, the midband is very clean, distortion hovering at 0.1% or less. A rise in output at high frequencies

(+0.5dB at 20kHz) will ensure the NuForce has a bright-ish sounding balance. Where other digital amps cut

off sharply at 22kHz or so, this one peaks up to +5dB at 70kHz - not ideal with SACD which outputs strong noise here.

The NuForce Reference 9SE is something of a mixed bag under measurement. It is likely to exhibit brightness and likely treble distortion. NK

Power	130watts
CD/tuner/aux. Frequency response (1dB) Noise (IEC A) Distortion	4Hz-36kHz -107dB 0.1%



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OUT-PERFORMS PRICE TAGS









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World Radio History

White Magic?

More than just a mere media player, for many, Apple's iPod has become the twenty first century cultural icon to die for. But is it truly all conquering, or are there superior rivals from Creative, Grundig, Rio and Sony? Patrick Cleasby finds out...

mere eighteen months ago, in the days before the 5G iPod became the first pure audio player to add video functionality, we carried out a group test to see if any of the alternatives to the (then) white supremo were capable of challenging the market leader. The answer was that they weren't, on purely audio criteria...

Well, we're still firmly in the same game of follow the leader and are considering here the latest offerings from many of the manufacturers whose products were reviewed in December 2004. Everyone is still playing catch up with Apple, at least in market share terms, albeit with new generation players.

Is video playback is a desirable addition to a small machine which already has to cram in several seriously intricate integrated circuits, we wondered here?

The supremacy of the iPod in the market can provoke a 'me too' response from competitors, notably from Creative. They do however make confident claims that their player is superior to Apple's - so how do these two 30GB A/V players compare?

Staying with video capable devices, we look at a machine that already has the 'landscape' screen presentation that the next, true video iPod is expected to use. The Grundig VP6200 is in many ways the spiritual successor to the Thomson Lyra we also reviewed in 2004, but does it cut the mustard for audio use?

Another option is to stick with small hard disk players which continue to restrict themselves to audio-only operation. Rio have some claim to a grievance against Sony, as the 6GB Rio Carbon which emerged around the time of our last group test is still current, and the much more recent Sony 6GB A1000 does seem to ape its small and sleek lozenge styling somewhat. Can either of them meet the challenge of the incredibly slim solid state iPod Nano?

The last time we did a similar group test there was much discussion of some of those players' ability to deal with the open lossless codecs FLAC and OGG. The machines here avoid such oddities entirely. Much as the player types split between audio only and audio/video, the playback support naturally splits between Apple and non-Apple, with all sides capable of dealing with good old MP3. So here it comes down to AAC audio and the H.264 flavour of MP4 video on the Apple side of the fence, MP3 and Divx-type MP4 video on the other.

On top of that we have the Digital Rights Managed (DRM) Windows Media Audio or Video (WMA and WMV) capabilities of the Windows 'Plays For Sure' badged product such as the Creative and Rio players. And finally Sony once again use their own proprietary codec, ATRAC, whose roots lie fifteen years back in the dawn of the now nearly extinct MiniDisc!

As I've said many times before,

the cost of disk is now so low that for the audiophile the only CD library encoding decision which really makes sense is to rip to lossless digital. Lossy formats like AAC, WMA and ATRAC all theoretically allow for lossless files to be created, but do all of these players allow their playback, and if they don't will they handle raw (i.e. uncompressed) 16bit 44.1kHz PCM? From a quality audio perspective the common ground among these players is essentially restricted to variable bitrate 320kbps MP3.

One certainty is that you won't be getting uncompressed audio with your video files. The tight, efficient MP4 codecs used to get video on these little boxes may result in sufficiently low bitrates to allow 1.5 inch hard disks to stream video, but that doesn't leave much headroom for audio, and these video codecs also require a lot of processing power to decode smoothly.

My testing method as ever is to try and use the highest quality codec settings on both audio and video to evaluate whether the machine really does what it says it can. Sensible everyday users would do well to ratchet the settings slightly down from the maximum to have reliable glitch-free operation.

See p25 for a glossary of digital audio portable formats, codecs and standards



APPLE 30GB IPOD £219

reviewed what is gen-

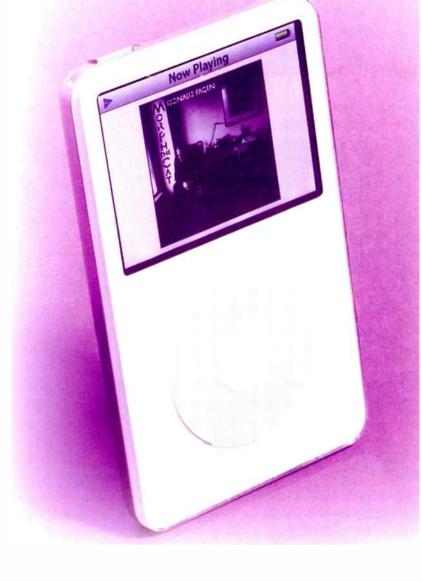
e have alreadv

erally called (even by Apple) the 5G iPod in its black 60GB version. That was a demo model from the first batch and when we picked up the iPod Hi-Fi reviewed elsewhere in these pages Apple were kind enough to include a white 30GB as part of the package, now shipping with 1.1 level firmware. This was then updated to version 1.1.1 easily and simply as soon as the iPod was plugged into my G4 PowerBook, automatically firing up iTunes, which detected the necessity of the upgrade. This contains a useful parental volume control feature to avoid deafening our children...

Since that last G5 review not much has changed in what is commonly called the iPod 'ecosystem'. Most notable is obviously the iPod Hi-Fi featured elsewhere in these pages, and it should be noted that while any iPod with a dock connector will happily sit on top of the iPod Hi-Fi, it is only with the Nano and the 5G that you get true integration, including speaker-specific equalisation settings appearing in the iPod's menus. Although I have not tried it, and it has the downside of being a relatively expensive option, the addition to the Apple family of the FM radio remote (for £35!) at least partially addresses the iPod's deficiencies when lined up against players with on-board radio like the Creative and the Grundig.

One of the strong arguments for going iPod is the massive market in non-Apple add-ons specifically for the iPod - check our accessories guide in this issue for details. There are also useful developments in the video encoding software area as well although the Handbrake-based method outlined in the previous review is still the most flexible way of encoding video files on a Mac (and there now appears to be a beta Windows version too!), those who prefer reliable boxed software with iPod (and PlayStation Portable (PSP) too!) video encoding - should now look to Roxio's Popcorn 2 on the Mac or their Easy Media Creator Suite 8 for PC.

Finally, love it or loathe it, the concept of Podcasting is taking ever stronger hold in the area of BBC listen-again type services, and this will undoubtedly soon spread to the video equivalent, once the Beeb have got the DRM issues cracked. Of



course there are non-Apple options for both audio and video Podcasting, but the market dominance of the iPod and the ease of operation for both audio and video using iTunes and its associated Music Store make Apple a safe bet.

It is notable that the pricing of this common or garden iPod has stayed stable since we reviewed its equivalent 18 months ago. As ever, iPod pricing is key to the prices the competition are able to set, and it is notable that from slightly higher launch pricing the equivalent 30GB Creative has had to drop to a similar price point to compete, despite its more substantial package and capabilities.

Regrettably for Creative they will receive even bigger price pressure as Apple have publicly

indicated that they see the iPod becoming cheaper during the current quarter (which would add a pound sign) - the benefits of economies of scale no doubt - there is talk of 85 million iPod sales likely

this year.

Borrowing from the last group test's source material, listening tests were done using David Sylvian's 'I Surrender'. In the case of the iPod allowing both the original uncompressed .WAV and the lossless AAC version of it, results were virtually indistinguishable. Adding the iTunes-created 320kbps variable MP3 version used on the other machines proved that the iPod was equally capable of giving a highly musical version of that codec. I may still have reservations about its ability with higher than 16/44.1 lossless, but video notwithstanding this is

still a great music machine.

DIMENSIONS: 104x61x11mm 136g

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:

PC with USB port or card (USB 2.0 recommended); Windows 2000 with Service Pack 4 or later or Windows XP Home or Professional with Service Pack 2 or later

Macintosh computer with USB port (USB 2.0 recommended); Mac OS X v10.3.9 or later.3.4

Obviously still where it's at in fashion terms, but videophiles would do well to wait for the next one, and audiophiles should seek out a good 4G before they're gone!

APPLE 30GB IPOD £219 Apple C+44 (0)800 039 1010 www.apple.com/uk/ipod/

FOR

- low profile
- style video implementation

AGAINST

- still locked to iTunes
- no Firewire interfacing
- poor high res 16

CREATIVE 30GB ZEN VISION:M £220

he first thing which strikes you about Creative's current flagship player is how substantial the box and its contents are in comparison to the now almost throwaway iPod packaging. The format list is probably the best starting point to get a handle on what the Vision: M can do. In these days of mixed audio/video/photo functionality the traditional 'number of tracks' based indicator of capacity is meaningless - more so in this case as although Apple would still rate their 30GB iPod as capable of holding 7,500 songs as 128kbps bitrate AAC (if used for nothing else), Creative claim 15,000 for the Vision:M by the simple expedient of estimating based on a paltry 64kbps WMA bitrate. In reality you get a usable capacity of just over 27 usable data Gigabytes which you can carve up as you see fit ...

Creative's big claim to superiority is the colour depth of the screen, and the 2.5 inch display manages an impressive 262,144 colours, besting the iPod's 65,000. On that you get to see an attractive and colourful menu system, photos or album art in an iPod-matching variety of common formats (BMP, GIF, PNG and TIFF as well as JPEG), and finally and obviously video.

As mentioned before, the Creative range are probably the prime exemplar of in-Bill's-pocket, Windows Media 'Plays For Sure' accredited devices, and the little badge on the packaging here has been expanded to elucidate that DRM'd WMA files are supported in both download and subscription models, while WMV supports download, subscription and rental.

Of course, what is far more common in the video download community is for files to be in one version or another of the Divx codec, and if your Divx files are encoded in the Simple Profile or the Advanced Simple Profile you may stand a chance of playing them. The legend states that Divx 4 or 5 are supported (although 6 appears to be reverse compatible), but is also keen to point out that this is not a Divxcertified device.

It is in areas of functionality which the Vision:M could be said to outstrip the iPod, with not only FM radio capability, but the ability to record it as well, and the in-built microphone also allows for voice recordings without additional, losable add-ons. That said the main downside of the Vision: M having migrated to an iPod-like dock connector is that rather than having a specific cable as the iPod does, you need a very losable small white adapter (included) to plug in a DC input, standard mini USB and (optional) A/V cables.

After our last review of the old Creative Zen Touch the company responded to the four colour iPod mini range with a wider range of brightly coloured Zen Micros, and that goes for the Vision:M. The review sample I received was in the violent but not unalluring green shade [1 had a seventies-tastic Triumph TR7 in that colour too! - Ed.]. While the finish looks good, there is the slightest of hints that the clear polycarbonate over the screen may be flimsy and susceptible to scratches in just the same way as that of the iPod, perhaps more so. Time will tell.

The Creative 'Explorer' type software interface keeps things simple, and there's Creative's MediaSource application for those with more complex requirements – this one is definitely starting to show its age with its dated, clunky interface. The installer also sets you up with Windows Media Player 10 if you don't already have it – thankfully the Creative package works well, including a transcode to WMV movie conversion option in Media Explorer. Regrettably it doesn't accept the .MOV format commonly found on Enhanced CD music videos.

Auditioning with David Sylvian in both .WAV and .MP3 variants revealed a sound which was much closer to the iPod than of old, and a sampling of a few music video conversions did suggest that those many colours added slightly more vitality when compared with the equivalent on the iPod, but it's difficult to do a realistic comparison due to codec differences, of course.

DIMENSIONS: 68x105x22mm 203g

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:

PC with USB 1.1 port (USB 2.0 recommended for faster transfers) Windows XP (SP-1 or higher) or XP 64-bit Pentium II 350MHz or AMD K6-2 450Mhz 64MB RAM (128MB recommended)

World Radio History www.fii-fiworld.co.uk JULY 2006 HI-FI WORLD

VERDICT

Despite its screen and facilities advantages this is patently still a 5G iPod-alike, and both will soon be superseded by the next generation, as clear standards for legal video downloads emerge.

£220

CREATIVE 30GB

ZEN VISION:M Creative (C) +44 (0)800 376 7954 uk.europe.creative.com

FOR

- screen
- now mass storage
- mains adapter

AGAINST

- no lossless
- aging software
- losable dock



GRUNDIG MPIXX VP 6200/30GB £280

suspect that only a very select, non-fashion conscious crowd will go for this one. It is actually very attractively, if plainly styled and extremely well put together, not wasting acres of dead black space around the visible screen as the Thomson Lyra did. The screen should be more satisfying to watch, measuring 3.5 inches compared to the 2.5 inches of the other two A/V players, but in fact more space just tends to show more artefacts...

Immediately apparent are the kind of built in features which make it feel more like a Dictaphone on steroids than an MP3 player. Like the Creative there is a recordable (128kbs stereo MP3) radio, and a built-in microphone for voice recordings, but there are also in-built speakers for monitoring your musings, and a swivelling camera which enables both still and moving image capture. The latter is with MP3 audio and creates an .ASF video file (essentially an earlier version of .WMV). So as long as you're not too hung up on top-notch quality you are getting a camera and camcorder into the bargain!

All of this is managed by an aesthetically unappealing but functional interface which is navigated using the Lyra-like mini-joystick and some of the buttons. It's reasonably intuitive, files created on the machine are neatly date and time-stamped. and are found in the 'Record' subfolder in the appropriate playback menu. Graphically the navigation uses that iRiver-like habit of making everything look a little bit like Windows 3.11 File Manager - soon nobody will remember what they are trying to emulate here! When you escape back to the menu there is a fairly naff 'parting screen' animation - gee whiz!

Packaged with the device are a cradle-type dock, which does little more than position the screen at a decent table-top viewing angle and allow the dock to charge the device using the supplied DC adapter, which can also be plugged into the side of the machine, where the input is concealed along with the mini-USB port. Then there is a case and the usual mini USB cable.

Thankfully this player is a proper open Mass Storage USB device, so is even navigable and updateable via a Mac. This is useful, as those in my



position with Mac music libraries (in need of mass MP3 conversion to play on here however!), and more Mac power for those lengthy video encodes can simply drop in Handbrake-created compliant Divx AVI files

There is almost a convention (outside iPod land) that video encoded for these types of portable device ends up as 320 pixels across vertically in the relatively standard MPEG4-SP encoding (Simple Profile - an indicator of the complexity of the codec used) with MP3 audio. This is the format the Thomson Lyra mentioned in the intro used, so happily if there are any fierce early adopters who already have a library of material in that format there is a chance of reusing those media without the time-consuming .WMV transcoding that the Creative Media Explorer often requires.

There is minimal guidance on compliant video specs in the 'Concise Operating Manual' supplied. There is a CD with a much more extensive manual, and also one with a rudimentary video conversion tool for PC, which installs the Divx-alike Xvid codec for you.

When you are spending this much on a device of this complexity it is to be hoped that firmware updates are achievable. The manual does promise that these may be made available at www.grundig.com (not the UK sales site), and although there is nothing there at the moment the process sounds simple.

Once again there is no lossless audio as the VP6200 is only capable of 320kbps for both WMA and MP3 (although VBR is permissible for the latter). It is here that surprise kicks in, because you may have expected all this lifestyle functionality to have compromised audio performance. but the VP6200 gives a decent rendition of 'I Surrender' through the customary reference Sennheiser MX500s, right up there with the other two A/V machines, and certainly better than the ageing Rio.



SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Windows 98SE/ME/2000/XP USB

VERDICT

This may appeal to some who want to skip the wait for legitimate TV downloads and record off their set top boxes, but that is probably the limit of its audience

GRUNDIG MPIXX VP 6200/30GB £280 Grundig C+44 (0)870 920 1101 www.grundig-uk.co.uk

FOR

- functionality - direct record-in
- screen
- AGAINST - styling

- bulk

- clunky navigation

RIO CARBON £129

he Rio Carbon range is now 'long in the tooth', but should certainly be high up on your shopping list if you are iPod-averse and prefer doing your download shopping at DRM-protected Windows Media sites. It requires a firmware upgrade to get it to work at its best - which is a bit alien to me, being a Mac-head and an unbeliever in the download (what no lossless?) model rather than the subscription model. But just to check that the update was as simple as Rio made it sound I ran the update through with my hoary old PC. It just about made the grade, as to perform this manoeuvre you will need XP Service Pack | (and obviously Windows Media Player 10, which thankfully Creative had just given me). Thankfully the Rio connected on the original USB1.1 port as the Carbon was the only player which didn't like my PCMCIA Belkin USB2 2.0 card - needing a reset after being attached that way.

The update was indeed a relatively straightforward matter of downloading a self-extracting executable for the firmware, running that, and then running the resultant executable file, whilst having the Carbon attached in 'updating' mode. This told me the Carbon had been at 1.4 level and was successfully updated to 1.95 level. Always read the instructions carefully with these procedures, as they also revealed that the new firmware required version 2.95 or higher of the Rio Music Manager (in fact 2.96 is the one needed for subscription services - a simple 20MB download needed).

The Rio web page was actually an education for me, as 1 had been wondering why the irritating Windows 'Let Media Player handle your transfers' dialogue had been calling the Creative device an MTP player. Meaning to look this up, the Rio splel filled me in. You will have noticed me talking about devices being USB Mass Storage – well these are termed Mass Storage Class (MSC) players. It is this that enables such players to function driverlessly with drag and drop updating on both PCs and Macs.

The 1.95 update enables the Carbon to function either as MSC or MTP as it sees fit, according to the machine it is connected to. MTP is necessary for using subscription services, and stands for Media Transfer Protocol. When attached in this mode the Carbon displays 'MTP Connected'.

One of the things I like about the Rio devices is that efforts are made to make them at least somewhat Mac friendly. If all you want to do is listen to 320kbps Variable bitrate MP3 on your Carbon there is no earthly reason why you couldn't use a Mac (MSC Connected). This is because Rio do what no one else seems to be able or want to do, and include a Mac iTunes plug-in on the install disc which makes the device show up in place of the usual iPod in iTunes, and enables tracks to be dragged from the library to the player.

And in terms of functionality there really isn't much more to say than that. 320kbps MP3 and WMA are both supported, and there is also support for the Audible talking book format, which can also be updated to the machine via Mac iTunes. The menu system is the now somewhat dated black on grey LCD, with the familiar Rio menu system. Operation is simple enough and probably more intuitive than the Creative. There is also an onboard microphone, with menu-activated voice recording, which could be a useful feature if you need it. Battery life is claimed to be a very healthy (but nowadays typical) 20 hours, and Rio prefer to cite its capacity as 96 hours for 128kbps MP3 – in Applespeak that equates to 1,500 songs. You also get a very nice leatherette pouch as well as a mains adapter and USB cable.

Listening tests however, did show that the Rio is lagging somewhat behind in the audio performance stakes. Although it was difficult to find explicit mention of the fact that it would support variable bitrate, the 320kbps David Sylvian MP3 did play, but had a slightly more brittle sound, with a less convincing soundstage, than on other players. It's also a shame it lacks the FLAC support of its big brother

64x15x84mm

JULY 2006

91g

its big brothe the Nitrus.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Windows 2000, XP. Intel Pentium II 233 MHz or higher 64MB RAM

VERDICT OOO£

If compressed audio is what you're after, but you want more capacity than the current iPod Nanos, this is worth a look, but the simplicity of flash memory players will surely be available in capacities greater than this shortly.

FOR

- no FLAC!
- appealing design
- Mac compatibility

AGAINST

- dated interface
- fussy USB
- sound
 - 19

Walrus



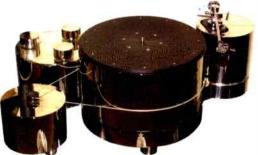
Shanling

Some of the most stunning products in recent years have come from this small specialist manufacturer, from the flagship limited edition CD-T300 "Omega Drive" at £3999 to the humble but extremely popular (and superb sounding) CD-T80 at only £650. All their products use valves for a natural but exciting sound, and, in this age of "plastic" products, all feature sturdy metallic construction finished to a very high standard irrespective of cost.



Hørning

The Hørning SATI Ultimate Transference turntable, only just available in the UK shows what can be achieved by a dedicated specialist manufacturer when not constrained by price. As well as being highly exclusive (it is only possible to make very small numbers) this turntable is one of the finest we have ever heard, having a neutrality coupled with incredible detail retrieval which has to be heard to be believed.



A2T

We have the amazing A2T Mezzos on demo now. These beautiful French made compacts (with a studio pedigree) offer wonderful detail levels whilst sounding utterly natural at a price lower than the performance would suggest. These just might be the answer to all your speaker problems!











Rack of Silence The ultimate in equipment isolation. No solid shelves to

Solid Tech

Solid Tech Radius

It looks like other

smart modern

stands do, until you

realise that virtually

concealed between

shelves and frame

is a cunning and

flexible adjustable

suspension system

which really does

isolate individual

components from

each other, and from

the outside world!

resonate, and up to three stages of isolation. A totally modular design which can be expanded as your needs grow. There is no better stand.

as we believe Swedish made Solid Tech to be ...

Solid Tech

What we really don't need is another brand of

equipment stand! Agreed, unless it's very special

11 New Quebec St, London W1

The Hørning Sati 300B amplifier (one chassis is the amp, the other the power supply) is equally impressive. Even jaded cynics (like ourselves) will be hugely impressed by the refreshing neutrality (a Hørning trademark) together with the insight available into the performance. We really are very pleased to be able to demonstrate these superb products!





Funk Firm

The new Funk V (V means Vector, not "five") is a stunning looking and affordable turntable (£750 without arm) that some of us have been waiting eagerly for since the sad demise of the designer's previous company, Pink Tr ..! Looks are striking, performance is stunning, well worth waiting for. Come and hear it now whilst it's still easily available.



What else is Hot right now?

Stirling Broadcast 3/5a, marginally updated version of the classic BBC monitor Tannoy Autograph Mini, a delightful scaled down Autograph, only 14" high! Graham Phantom tonearm, proving itself one of the top arms in the world Audio Aero's latest CD and SACD players are absolutely stunning Bocchino cables, outrageous interconnects from the well known plug manufacturer

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<u>World Radio</u> History

SONY 6GB NW-A1000 WALKMAN £140

ony have publicly admitted that they took their eye off the ball as the Digital Audio Player market matured, and everything they released since has been lauded as 'the new iPod killer'. After our last group test I spent some time with the candidate before the A1000, the HD5, and while it was attractively styled and well-built and had that swivelling display gimmick, I just couldn't get on with it. I even tried downloading ATRAC files from Sony's Connect service, but that did seem every bit the poor implementation of the iTunes idea that many had suggested...

The bad news for the A1000 started before it even began - it is not sold in the US (although available in Canada as the 'Aura'), but must have done reasonably well in the UK and Japan as Sony claim global annual MP3 player sales in the 4.5 million ballpark - still 10% less than the equivalent Apple figures at best. And the bad news continues - Sony have tacitly acknowledged that they have still not achieved their aim, claiming there will be major revisions to the player range and the online store at some stage in the next year. But the A1000 (and A3000) are what we have to look at now, so even if they can't beat the iPod hype, are they actually any good?

Well, the A1000 is a vast improvement on the HD5. There are some signs of genuinely pioneering physical design and innovative operating system thinking. The most notable feature is the virtually invisible screen area that blends into the thick purple polycarbonate faceplate. If you apply slight pressure it creaks somewhat, but seems solid enough. The same-colour buttons feel much more positive than the HD5's silver buttons, and the overall feel is very much authentically Walkman for those of us with cassette and MD Walkman backgrounds - the brushed metal back plate just feels right ...

The package is relatively standard; like the iPod the A1000 has a proprietary dock interface,

so you need the specialised USB lead supplied. There is no case, but there is a power adapter into which the Sony USB cable plugs. Sony have a range of dock and remote accessories available from their website.

The A1000, like the HD5, is a USB Mass Storage Device, but the visible file structure is cryptic and hostile to any drag and drop-type updating if you mount it on a Mac. So forgetting about that, what is the PC experience like? Well, I was better placed to tell than I was with the HD5, as I was sent a CD-R copy of version 3.3 of Sony's SonicStage software.

Of all the library management software I have tried on this group test this is the one that challenged my Pentium III 500MHz Laptop with 256MB of RAM the most. Once loaded however, it was possible to use the software to load the David Sylvian MP3 to the

A1000. Attempts to load the WAV file resulted in a dynamic ATRAC conversion as expected

- you can change the default 64kbps ATRAC3plus to specify a higher bitrate if you wish, up to 352kbps.

Once on the player, in common with the Vision:M, there is the useful option to delete from the player menu system. There are plenty of random and favourite play tricks, but as I tend to just play albums through these do not grab me. The sound, however does. The machine is much quieter than many of the others, but the Sylvian MP3 has a subtle tasteful sound far preferable to the more harshly voiced Apple and Creative players, and the variable bitrate MP3 sound was far preferable to 352kbps ATRAC. This time around, I would have to say the Sony edges it on the pure sound quality criterion.

DIMENSIONS: 55x88x18mm 109g

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Windows XP, Windows XP MCE, Windows 2000 with Service Pack 4

VERDICT

Every bit as seductive as the iPod, if you're PC oriented this is a brilliant non-video choice, with typically superb Sony design, build and audio standards. They're back

SONY 6GB NW-A1000 WALKMAN £140 Sony UK C+44 (0) 207 3652947 www.sony.co.uk

FOR

- design
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AGAINST

- Sony Connect Lock-In
- no Mac support
- no WMA



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conclusion

t is a moot point how many Hi-Fi World readers are really interested in watching music videos or even last night's TV on the train, going to work. However, with their Creative Future initiative, the BBC clearly sense that there is a demand from consumers who want to consume their Martini Media ('anytime, anyplace, anywhere' - groan) in that fashion, and although there are not yet clear routes to acquire media legally in this way, it will not be long.

It's horses for courses really - if you need to decide which horse to back in the video arena we are likely to be in the same game as for legal music downloads. Apple seem to be in pole position to add movie content to their current US TV offerings, and hopefully both will end up on the UK iTMS eventually. Steve Jobs is even trying to convince next generation disc issuers to include iPod video versions of their films in ROM sections of their discs...

But this is an audio magazine, and on that basis there is a reasonably clear pecking order here. Much as I like the Rio Carbon, its audio quality is clearly the lowest in the group using the common measure of variable bitrate MP3. Moreover the aggressive price movements in the market will only squeeze it harder, meaning that the only reason you would go for it against the equivalent Sony was if your preferred download site was WMA based. Do hunt around for bargains as it becomes near to end-of-life, though.

It almost seems a shame to rate the multi-faceted Grundig machine at four out of five globes and four out of five on this list, but it is just a bit too idiosyncratic and slightly too bulky to really appeal aesthetically as a portable MP3 player. But if your particular requirements encompass the many things the VP6200 is capable of, do not be afraid that you are making a slight audio compromise - this is a fine sounding machine, and all the other functions work with Teutonic efficiency.

Rather than second and third I would call the current iPod and the Creative Vision:M a close tie for second. They are essentially two sides of the same coin, if you are PC you could get either, but if your

preference is for Windows download sites you should obviously get the Creative. For the video-interested I do not find the visual qualities of the iPod screen

to be lacking in comparison with the Creative. The Creative screen also seems more pliable and possibly to scratching. They are also

very much equal on the audio front, although lossless lovers should stay with Apple until Creative address that one.

For me the clear winner is the Sony NW-A1000.1 would be quite happy to cram this one with variable bitrate 320kbps MP3 and go on a listening binge - and it looks and feels divine. If you go for the A1000 you would be getting S0% more capacity than a 4GB iPod Nano for at least £40 less - for the slightly bigger A3000 unit that would be five times

the capacity for a similar figure! The only thing which remains to be said is that assuming some of you really are interested in watching

SONY

Music Library

11 57

"the clear winner is the Sony NW-A1000 - I'd be happy to cram this one with music and go more susceptible on a listening binge ... "

> videos as well as music on the move, if you can afford to wait for the rumoured true video iPod - that will be a tech toy to die for. The rumours centre on a sideways, full screen player, with the clickwheel becoming a virtual touch screen representation of the brilliant operating control. Everyone will then have to react once again - it is only to be hoped that Apple can also address the slight retrograde steps that the first video iPod has imposed on its audio performance.

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LOSSY AUDIO CODECS

MP3 is short for MPEG (Moving Pictures Experts Group) I layer 3. With us for many years, its use continues despite better music encoding options being available – including lossless. Some claim high variable bitrate MP3 created using the LAME encoder can be as good as more modern codecs.

AAC – Advanced Audio Coding is a subset of the MPEG4 group of compression standards which encompass music and video. In theory it should be an open standard, but the Apple implementation of it is individual (enabling 'enhanced' podcasts) and, for iTMS (iTunes Music Store) purchased music, Apple's closed Fairplay DRM (qv) technology prevents other manufacturers supporting playback of these files.

WMA – Windows Media Audio is Microsoft's proprietary codec, claiming to be superior to MP3 at equivalent bitrates, but not widely held to be preferable in the real world. Most Non-iTunes Legal Downloads will be protected WMA.

LOSSLESS AUDIO CODECS

Apple and Microsoft - Apple's AAC has had a lossless variant for a couple of years now and you may see it referred to as **ALAC** – Apple Lossless Audio Codec. It has the advantage that it is playable on most iPods – Shuffle excepted. For home recording quality freaks iTunes will support lossless 24/96 on a Mac, although iPods only play up to 24/48.WMA from Microsoft is also available as lossless, but is hardly ever supported on portables.

The Others - There is a legacy of codecs originating from the Open Source computer world – co-operative development of things that are free. All of them achieve exactly the same trick as Apple's and Microsoft's version – reducing music files to nearly half their data size, but enabling bit for bit reconstruction of the original PCM files if desired. **Shorten** (.SHN), **FLAC** (Free Lossless Audio Codec), **Ogg Vorbis** (.OGG) and **Monkey's Audio** (.ACE) are all widely used on the internet for live show file trading and more nefarious pursuits. Encoders and Decoders for both PC and Mac are widely available and free. Of the four, FLAC and OGG are the ones that may be supported by Digital Audio Portables in rare cases.

VIDEO CODECS

MP4 is really inadequate to describe the Mac side of the video codec fence, as all of these codecs, PC or Mac are some flavour of **MPEG4** video or other. However, it is the file suffix of an iPod video compliant file created using Quicktime Pro, Roxio Popcorn, Handbrake or Podner, whether that file is generic MPEG4 internally or **H.264** – Apple's version of MPEG4 which will see widespread adoption as a next generation media video codec.

WMV is the other side of the fence, being the most likely format in which non-iTunes videos will be sold online, due to Windows and Plays For Sure compatibility. Much like WMA, quality is rarely up to the alternatives, but that notwithstanding the **WMV HD codec VCI** (originally VC9) has been adopted along with H.264 for video encoding in both Blu-Ray and HD-DVD.

AVI is the most open video file format, but the actual codecs used can be many and varied. The prevalent AVI codec is **Divx** (a flavour of MPEG4 once again), and that is the form in which illegal copies of television and movies are commonly disseminated, although rights-protected legal material is available. Not iPod video compatible, quality conversion of open Divx AVIs is possible with the right tools (Podner: www.splasm. com)

RIGHTS MANAGEMENT

Digital Rights Management is the catch-all term for any combined software and hardware system which prevents unauthorised use of digital media files. Its widespread adoption started with music, but will soon spread to video consumption as that moves to an On Demand subscription or download model.

Fairplay is the name for the Apple-based flavour of Digital Rights Management and the reason for the success of the iTunes lock-in. It polices the restrictions Apple impose on the number of computers and iPods you can use purchased files on. There are workarounds, but they are complex and (obviously) of dubious legality.

Windows Media does exactly the same thing for purchased WMA or WMV files, but the Windows **Plays For Sure** accreditation ensures that other manufacturers are able to implement support for the playback of protected media.

COMPUTER STUFF

USB – Universal Serial Bus. In its faster (480Mbps) 2.0 version USB has become the de facto standard for transfers to music and video portable players. Ironically Apple have almost killed off the use of their own original data transfer method **Firewire** (IEEE1394) for this purpose by not supporting it on the latest iPods (other than for charging)

Handbrake – a useful donate-ware tool for encoding both PC and Mac compatible video files for portables direct from DVDs on a Mac – there is a beta PC version but we have not tested it and it requires separate DVD decryption (which is illegal don't you know?). Check out http://handbrake.m0k.org. REVIEW

The White Stuff

Cyruslink Linkdock

Onkyo DS-A1

With so many i-prefixed, white coloured iPod add-ons available, we thought it was 'i time' that Hi-Fi World's premier podster Patrick Cleasby sorted the wheat from the chaff...

CYRUSLINK LINKDOCK £70

yruslink is Cyrus Audio's affordable lifestyle brand, a range to which they contribute their audio design expertise, but leave the manufacturing to the volume boys in the Far East. The LinkDock is an interesting little docking device at an attractive price.

The sample we were sent was a pre-production one, and there were issues with iPod disk activity causing audible interference, both through the speakers and on the output. That aside, auditioning proved it to be a worthy iPod accessory if you want to attach your iPod to decent hi-fi. Solidly built, available in shiny black and white and elegantly designed (with the exception of the purely functional DC power supply), its first trick is to deliver an enticing sound from the tiny in-built 4W per channel speakers. However there is no battery power facility to make

it a truly portable quality audio set up. As well as the usual multiple adapter support for all flavours of dock connector equipped iPod, the LinkDock features a 3mm line in port. The unit has touch sensitive volume controls, and comes with a remote.

The real benefit of Cyrus Audio's tuning work becomes apparent when the LinkDock is connected to a decent amplifier via its 3.5mm line out socket, (ideally using an iChord, see below!). I took the sample to my local Audio-T in Enfield to run it through a Cyrus 8/KEF Q set up, connected with iChord, and the results were highly pleasing to the ear. The only really fundamental downside to the LinkDock is that much like the iPod HiFi it doesn't cater for the docking needs of video users - rather than S-Video out of the back you are stuck with running composite video out of the headphone port. Still as an audio

device, as long as the crosstalk issues are resolved in production versions, this is an iPod essential.

ONKYO DS-A1 £60

Onkyo's dock offering addresses the main oversight of the CyrusLink by including the superior S-Video output. This was originally there to cater for iPod Photo players, but does indeed work as video output for 5G iPod owners. However the Onkyo has no speakers, so what is it offering to make it worth only ten pounds less than the neat LinkDock? It is also up against the £70 Apple iPod connection kit, featuring infrared remote control and A/V cables.

Well, Onkyo match the majority of that, including reasonable quality phono cable, S-Video cable and a 3.5mm mono cable to enable its trump card of functionality - support for Onkyo RI (Remote Interactive) control. In order to test this it was once again to Audio-T to hook up

26



Gear4 Pocketpower

the DS-A1 to an RI-equipped Onkyo mini-system, the £220 CR-505DAB. Once the 3.5mm cable was attached the unit's remote was indeed able to perform rudimentary iPod control including standby, play/pause, stop, forward/back and random/shuffle. The iPod alarm can also activate an amplifier set-up. As there is obviously no option on older remotes for 'iPod' there is a switch under the base of the DS-A1 that governs whether it reacts as Tape, MD, or CD-R. Remote functions are not available for video iPod use, so it's back up off your sofa and use the clickwheel if you want to skip videos...

Auditioning was done using the same material as the CyrusLink testing, through the same cable/ amplifier/speaker setup and the Onkyo had an aggressive top end and more raw sound than the smooth mellifluous tone of the LinkDock, and it is for this reason that I would recommend serious audio-only customers to spend the extra ten pounds – it is worth it! (Thanks to Chris Burnett and Maggie Oakman at Audio-T Enfield for being so accommodating during my dock testing.)

INTEMPO DIGITAL IDS-01 £40

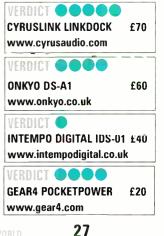
So here we go from the good and the not-bad to the irredeemably ugly. One of the downsides of the runaway success of the iPod is all the manufacturers who have rushed to issue cheaply designed and Chinesebuilt accessories which are just plain nasty and unnecessary.

I must admit I have never tested an Intempo DAB radio, but I believe them to be at least acceptable in quality - there is no excuse for the lamentable lack of quality the IDS-01 demonstrates. The enclosure and speakers look very cheaply made and the overall feel is horribly light and plasticky. There are plenty of options at this kind of price point, and the IDS-01 has nothing to distinguish itself and plenty of demerits. Actual audio quality is not completely awful, but is constantly plagued by highpitched interference from the iPod's operations.

One of the IDS-01's claims to utility is having a USB connection to allow iPod updating – it does work, but having it connected just causes the device to emit a horrible whine, and I just can't see the point – it implies some might situate it near to a computer, but to be honest most people's computers have better audio than this. Finally, although the box art shows a 3G iPod docked on the unit it should be noted that the charge icon is not active. Somehow the power routing must have emulated the USB route into the iPod dock, as 3G units cannot charge by USB, and don't on the IDS-01! Any other docking contraption will happily charge a 3G just as readily as any other iPod. If it had batteries this unit would just about be acceptable as a disposable set-up to go by the pool on holiday, but as it is I would suggest most purchasers would wonder where their £40 had gone ...

GEAR4 POCKETPOWER £20

UK company Gear4 used to be called Podgear, but changed name at the beginning of this year. Not usually a good sign, but some of the iPod companion products that Gear4 have been releasing are affordable, useful accessories. Chief among these is the PocketPower, a small white unit which comes with 4 rechargeable AAA batteries which can be charged off a computer using the enclosed male-to-male USB cable and then



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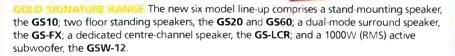


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used portably to ensure your iPod or other USB chargeable device doesn't run out of power away from home (providing you haven't forgotten your iPod's USB cable). Gear4 claim 8 hours of additional running time can be achieved, and there is enough power when the cells are fully charged to completely recharge a 5G iPod. Highly useful for those long journeys, and there is even an LED torch too!

GEAR4 LEATHERJACKET £20

Now that Apple don't include any decent cases with their iPods, the market is ripe for the likes of Gear4 to come in. Apple have some very high quality and ludicrously priced leather cases, but these Gear4 LeatherJackets are more affordable and more practical. LeatherJackets are available for the current Nano and 5G iPods, and Gear4 have recently added a bright white model to the previously available candy pink and black. I have found them to be a very convenient cover, while allowing access to the clickwheel and dock connector. The other alternative for Nano users for the same price is the IceBox X-Clip, an ingenious protective plastic sleeve which includes an optional headphone splitter – ideal for children who want to share!

CHORD COMPANY ICHORD £50

With nearly all of the digital music players and integration products covered this month there is a possible application for high quality 3.5mm stereo minijack terminated cable. Despite its naming and white colour suggesting it is focused on the iPod, the various flavours of iChord will meet all these requirements, giving quality stereo reproduction which far outstrips that attained using bundled cables.

The majority of docks (and the troublesome Apple Airport Express) which have 3.5mm line outs will benefit from the addition of a 3.5mm to phono pair iChord when attaching to a hi-fi (DIN options are also available for Naim owners and the like), and conversely playing in to the likes of the iPod Hi-Fi and the Monitor Audio iDeck will require either a 3.5mm to 3.5mm iChord if you're inputting from a non-iPod portable, or the phono-equipped cable in reverse if you're feeding your boom box from a network distribution source like the Slim Devices Squeezebox. Both cables could also prove useful in several computer-oriented audio in and out applications. The audible benefits of cable from The Chord Company are usually readily apparent, and the iChord is no exception. Particularly notable was the extra clarity and dynamic life imbued to the sparse but full of drama 'Sign 'O The Times' by Prince, playing from a lossless AAC version on a Slimserver via Squeezebox and into the Monitor Audio iDeck via iChord - an absolutely divine sound.

ETYMOTIC ER-61 ISOLATOR EARPHONES £100

It is a truth universally acknowledged (well, in these pages at least) that the best £20 upgrade you could ever get for your iPod is the set of Sennheiser MX550s that we constantly cite as our reference earbud-type earphone. As with everything else they are also available in white now, but why highlight that you have an expensive and desirable audio player on your person when you're out and about? My trusty old ones are still going strong, although due to the shape of my ears I do have to have them pointing out at Uhura-like angles to get any decent bass out of them ...

But I have been a naughty boy - I have been a sitting on a white review sample of these Etymotics for about a year now, and secondly, for a lot of that time I was challenging our prevailing MX550 orthodoxy, particularly when using the iPod on the tube. This was because the sound was pleasing, if a bit more abrasive than the smooth MX550s. On Grant Green's 'In The Middle' they also sound slightly less naturalistic, but are definitely acceptable. It is the isolation effects of the Etymotics that can be useful, and it is here that we get to the unpleasant bit - the way they work is by being inserted much further into your ear canal than you would do with conventional earbuds. Not everyone will feel comfortable with this (when I first started I had an ear infection, and it was painful). The 'i' of ER-6i does not refer to 'isolator' but to the fact that these apparently have greater sensitivity and more bass than

that stock ER-6, having been custom tweaked for iPods and the like. They are delicate, weighing under an ounce, but once inserted they are unobtrusive, and to be right up to date they are now also available in black. Case and replacement earwax filters included!

SHURE E4C ISOLATING EARPHONES £240

So to the 'phones that the really discerning thief will be able to tell that you spent as much as your iPod on! Shure's consumer earphones (and reputation) are obviously based on their expertise in in-ear monitoring for professional rock musicians, so what with that and the price, you might expect something special. What you get is along the same lines as the Etymotics with a different kind of sound

Build is certainly impressive, with both the 'phones and the cable looking more robust than the delicate Etymotics, so if you're clumsy these may be the





Shure E4C Isolating Earphones

ones to

go for. The price and their canal-phone nature puts the E4Cs in a competitive position with the ER-6i's elder brothers, the original range of ER-4 Etymotics. Regrettably I have never auditioned those, but it has to be said that while the Shures sound inferior to the ER-6is straight out of the box, give them a few days of warming up and they will outstrip them, and our venerated MX500s too.

Their voicing does however put more emphasis on the midrange, making older funky jazz material like Grant Green a soupy treat, but it may not be to everyone's taste. The congas on 'Sookie Sookie' are just more plausible than they are on either the ER-6is or the MX500s, and when the cool guitar solo kicks in it really sings.

Included in the package are a robust nylon case, the usual replacement nozzles and nozzle cleaner, and a plethora of alternative ear plugging methods in rubber, PVC and foam. To be honest I stuck to the triple flange sleeves as per the Etymotics - these tend to achieve the best isolation and quality results. Look for discounted prices about £100 shy of list (remember Froogle is your friend!) and you have a brilliant audiophile bargain.

VERDICT OOOO GEAR4 LEATHERJACKET £20 www.gear4.com

VERDICT CHORD COMPANY ICHORD £50 www,chord.co.uk

VERDICT **ETYMOTIC ER-6i** ISOLATOR EARPHONES £100 www.widget.co.uk

VERDICT OOOC SHURE E4C ISOLATING EARPHONES £240 www.shuredistribution.co.uk

Etymotic ER-6i Isolator Earphones



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REVIEW

Dock Of The Day

As ever more of us rely on iPods for our mobile musical life, docking 2 solutions have become highly desirable for out-and-about audiophiles. With this in mind. Apple introduced their own competitor, the iPod Hi-Fi. But how does it compare with the pick of the opposing bunch, Monitor Audio's iDeck? Patrick Cleasby decides.

umours of the iPod Boombox's existence (as many rumour mongers termed it) were circulating for some time before its March arrival, and then

after a flurry of somewhat lukewarm comment it seems to have taken a back seat in Apple's promotion of their family of music-oriented products.

It was an interesting move for Apple to risk putting out of joint the noses of the likes of Bose, but the market for docking loudspeakers was obviously going to be expansive given the runaway success of the iPod, and there is probably room for everyone.

Whereas previously the design and build of stylish computer audio for Macs has frequently been put out to the likes of Harman Kardon, Apple claim that the design and engineering of the iPod Hi-Fi was an entirely in-house effort, and they are known to have recruited from within the industry – are their claims that the result is an audiophile product justified?

The Monitor Audio iDeck has been around for a longer period of

time and has been very effectively marketed as a premium product and the preference of a variety of celebrities. These are close competitors - neither having any truck with video connections, they are pure audio devices.

There are many similar Apple competitors, but Monitor Audio made the brave move of reintroducing speaker cable clutter into the equation in making the speakers separate from the central unit. This was always bound to be a winner in the eyes of the audiophile community (if not their wives), at least conceptually, but does the actual experience match the expectation? Read on...

APPLE iPOD HI-FI £250

There are a couple of negative aesthetic considerations that strike you when you first set eyes on an iPod Hi-Fi. One is how silly the iPod appears when it is sticking up from the shallow indentation that accepts the relevant iPod Adapter and marries itself up to the iPod's dock connection. The other is the bland quality of the white enclosure's design, and indeed the fact that it has to be white at all.

Incongruous iPod aside, it is a tidy design, with the power supply being internal. A long butterfly cable is included, as are a vast range of docking adapters for every flavour of iPod supported and the usual mini Apple IR remote. Shuffles and pre-3G iPods will have to feed the 3.5mm analogue input, which also doubles as a (harsh sounding) 3.5mm optical S/PDIF input.

Contrasting with the aesthetics, the ergonomics of integrated iPod operation are very well thought through, as you might expect. If you have a Nano or a 5G iPod you will get full integration which includes speaker equalisation specific menu settings, tracked volume adjustment whether on the iPod or the Hi-Fi and attractive album art display on the iPod. The remote allows volume adjustment, track skipping and play/pause for the iPod. Equally the internal design of the 'speaker enclosure must be conscientious, as the construction is very solid, with much attention paid to rigidity. The result is a set-up that you can happily leave on maximum volume (this is a

REVIEW

very loud system, even on batteries) safe in the knowledge that it is next to impossible to make the sound distort appreciably.

I was particularly surprised to throw what I thought was an impossible challenge at it - maximum volume playback of the devastating drum and bass 'Slam' from Pendulum's 'Hold Your Colour' album in Apple Lossless. But the result was a tight and exciting rendition of the pulsing bass synths and splashing cymbals on this monster track. But it is impossible to evade the charge that there is something missing in the midrange voicing of the iPod Hi-Fi, and the stereo experience is inevitably hampered by the lack of separation in the driver placement. The latter does not place the iPod Hi-Fi at a considerable disadvantage faced with the majority of the competition, but it cannot match the separate speaker placement that the iDeck permits.

It is the missing midrange that is the real Achilles Heel of the iPod Hi-Fi - if it really sounded great one could overlook the anonymous physical design. It is to be hoped that Apple will build on these encouraging beginnings and deliver a real class leader next time

MONITOR AUDIO IDECK £200

The iDeck is packaged with a range of clearly labelled bezels that are far more convenient than the very losable iPod adapters for the iPod Hi-Fi, which are only identified by number. The box also includes a ho-hum quality 3.5mm to 3.5mm stereo cable (spend the £50 you saved against the iPod Hi-Fi on a replacement iChord if you wish to use the analogue line-in for non-iPod sources), and equally replaceable bellwire-type speaker cable. The power supply is a white wallwart. Just make sure you don't lose the slim RF remote, as there is no volume control on the unit itself!

Conveniently for me the same bezel accommodates the chunkiest iPods, the 3G 40GB, 4G 60GB and 5G 60GB units I juggle. The review sample I had was white, but black is available, as are more perky coloured speaker grills than the sombre grey supplied. Even a black iPod on this white unit looks less incongruous than any iPod does sticking out on top of the iPod Hi-Fi. The bezel slots firmly

onto the iDeck central unit and the iPod feels secure once it is docked on the raked-back iDeck.

It is a shame that provision was not made for battery power, as the iDeck would make an excellent holiday system, if a little bulky on the luggage front in its original packaging. It is however light, and does betray its 'Made In China' origins with its plastic and relatively cheaply finished enclosures

These limitations can be forgiven however, once you listen to the Monitor Audio at moderate volume levels. At maximum volume distortion can be introduced, and the Pendulum track suffers from this and lacks the impressive heft of the iPod Hi-Fi's version. But if you wind it down to sensible levels the iDeck reveals a level of clean detail and a tonal balance that the iPod Hi-Fi simply can't match. Listening to the likes of Grant Green's 'Sookie Sookie' evinces a delightfully balanced full-range acoustic, as opposed to a curiously flat, midrange scooped out, sound on the iPod Hi-Fi without the same top-end sparkle that the iDeck gives to the complex instrumental. Add the imaging achievable by separating the speakers out and it's game over. An excellent performer then, and very cleverly conceived and executed. Nice to see a Brit speaker specialist proving its mettle when asked to design in a different idiom, too!

CONCLUSION

Apple's first foray into audio completely under its own banner was always going to be difficult, and so it has proven. I have even heard of Apple employees who are prepared to admit confidentially that they prefer competing offerings from Bose or Altec Lansing...

The iPod Hi-Fi does have some claims to distinctiveness, but they reside in the areas of clever box engineering and all round tidiness rather than the outstanding design for which Apple are renowned in the areas of computers and iPods. Those who might purchase one nonetheless include the usual Mac Moonies (although even your Mac zealot author would resist the automatic urge to acquire one of these), and those who require a hell-for-leather distortion-free maximum volume experience.

On the other hand the iDeck has fewer obvious flaws, and even if it can never quite match Apple's ability to include tight iPod integration it runs the iPod Hi-Fi very close in that area. While it was never really going to be possible to award the iPod Hi-fi more than three globes, there was some debate over whether to award the maximum five to the iDeck. But our central criterion for that accolade is always whether we are prepared to shell out our own hard-earned cash for the product in question and with more than one of us preparing to do so, a maximum is justified. For audio performance, design and pure value reasons the iDeck is the clear winner here.

VERDICT

Although this excels at distortion-free ghetto blasting (even on batteries), Apple's claims of it being an audiophile solution are optimistic

APPLE iPOD HI-FI £250 Apple C+44 (0)800 039 1010 www.apple.com/uk/ipodhifi/

FOR

- powerful sound
- iPod integration
- battery operation

AGAINST

- missing midrange
- peculiar styling

Fine design, impressive flexibility and a lucidly musical sound make the iDeck the current iPod dock champion.

MONITOR AUDIO IDECK £200 Monitor Audio C+44 (0) 1268 740580 www.i-deck.com

FOR

- refined sound
- attractive styling
- separate speakers

AGAINST

- plasticky build
- no batteries
- remote dependency

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Push Pull Integrated Ampliners

There are two models in this range. The VP16 (12 watts per channel) and using 6V6 valves. Price £450. The MP60 (20 watts per channel). And using 5881 valves. Price £800 Both these models are very conservatively rated and will drive most loudspeakers.



Headphone Amplimer

The MP5 is an amazing bargain. Not only is it a headphone amp but also a 13 watt Integrated with a line stage input and a USB input. So you can link it to your computer or your MP3 player. Best of all it costs just £250



Power Amplifiers

There are two mono block power. Power amplifiers in this range. VP20 amps are 18 watt push pull designs with outboard power supply... Price £750, The VP300B amps are 10 watt SE Designs with outboard power supply. Price £950



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There are three models in this range The MP15 (15 watts per channel) and using KT94 valves. Price £750 The MP2A8 (8 watts per channel) and using 2A3 valves. Price £850 The MP30B (ten watts per channel) and using 300R valves. Price £999



Preampliners

The SL2000A is a remote control line stage Price £450. The SL2000 is a phono preamp with a line stage and an mm phono stage. Price £425



Reference Power Amplifiers

There are three SE Reference mono block amplifiers in this range. The DV Ref 300 B amps are 22 watt SE designs with 300B valves. Price £3250 The DVRef 845 are 36 watt SE designs with 845 valves. Price £2750 The DV Ref 805 amps are 60 watt SE designs with 805 valves. Price £3000



Products can be purchased from Kronos Hi-Fi or from a select list of dealers in UK.

Payment can be made by cheque/bankers draft, credit or debit card. Please contact us for carriage charges. So confident are we that you will be delighted with your Dared amplifier that all products are offered with a full 30 day money back warranty. (conditions apply) More product information can be found at www.kronoshi-fi.co.uk or www.dared tube.com

Kronos Hi-Fi, 8-9 Scotch Street Centre, Dungannon. N. Ireland. BT70 1AR. Tel 028 87753606. E mail david@kronoshi-fi.co.uk First dCS gave access to their legendary CD replay in one box at one quarter the price. Now comes the two-box version!

Two are

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Most opinion – including the US STEREOPHILE magazine – rates the three- and four-box dCS CD/SACD players as the best in the world.

dCS re-packaged their **GROUND-BREAKING TECHNOLOGY** into the slim one-box £6.5k P8i with remarkable results.

For the new two-box player the design team were told not to limit performance within the $\pounds IIk$ price – if it embarasses the big system "that just sets us a new challenge".

All dCS machines play SACDs and CDs and **UPSAMPLE CDs** to DSD, the format of SACD, for greater "ambience" and presence.

Higher performance with the twobox player comes from better power supplies, an Elgar family D/A circuit and enhanced WordClock.

Digital inputs allow for superb D/A conversion of other digital sources, eg DVD with optional upsampling to DSD. Integrate the player with a home theatre for stunning sound.

We always like to use the DIGITAL VOLUME CONTROL and connect directly to the power amp for the greatest realism and dynamics.

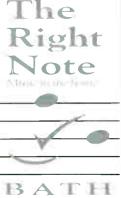
Your dCS investment is protected with one of the best UPGRADE SCHEMES. Software update is from a dCS CD and hardware upgrade is via part-exchange.

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You **AVOID EXPENSIVE MISTAKES**, enjoy music along the way and save money in the long run.

JUST LISTEN AND YOU'LL KNOW

CD: Accustic Arts, Audio Synthesis, Bel Canto, dCS (Elgar, Delius, Purcell, Verdi, Verona, P8i), Stello, Wadia. Vinyl: Avid, Basis, Clearaudio, DNM, Graham, The Groove, Lehmann, Michell, Origin Live, Sumiko Blue Point Special, Transfiguration. Tuners: Magnum Dynalab. Amplifiers: Bel Canto, CAT, DK Design, DNM, Gamut, Hovland, Sonneteer, Stello. Loudspeakers: Audio Physic, Dall, Ethos, NEAT, Totem. Cables: Argento, Chord Co., DNM, Nordost, Vertex AQ etc. Mains Vertex AQ, Supports: Arcicl, Stands Unique, Vertex AQ



01225 874728 or NEW lo-call 0845 230 7570 Audica's MPS-1 is one small 'style' speaker system that really rocks, says David Price...

on't let those 'lifestyle' looks deceive you, as here is a serious attempt to give 'real hi-fi' sound in a tiny, (dare I say it?)

iPod-friendly package. But with its multiple inputs and lack of iPod docking facilities, you could be running any digital portable (others, aside from iPods, are available, don't ya know?), or even an old-fashioned MiniDisc or CD 'Discman'. Then for the truly weird such as myself, there's always the option of all-analogue operation courtesy of your Walkman Pro cassette machine. So whatever source(s) you choose - from 1979 Sony Stowaway to 2006 iPod G5 - the Audica can accommodate them, and make a very nice noise in the process, too.

The package comprises those two gorgeous looking polished metal speakers (which feel spookily similar to Pewter), plus the aluminium encased amplifier and aluminium remote control unit. Round the back of the main unit, there are three 3.5mm minijack inputs selectable by fascia buttons or the remote. Input I is a higher sensitivity input designed for low output PC soundcards, so those with iPods and Sony Walkman Professionals (Patrick Cleasby and myself respectively) should use inputs 2 and 3. There are also USB and Firewire connectors on the rear panel to allow portable music players to be charged. Inside the control unit is a 25W RMS Class D amplifier (likely a Tripath chip, as per the Sonic Impact T-amp). The system includes speaker cabling, a single 3.5mm minijack to minijack audio lead, plus a 15V DC power adaptor (the system will work from any voltage from 100 to 240V). Total weight is 5kg.

UDIC

SOUND QUALITY

Metall-ica

Don't go thinking that you can throw away your main system – the drivers inside the Audica's speakers are only 50mm in diameter, so you're not going to find them satisfactory replacements for your JBL three-ways! But given the diminutive dimensions, the MPS-1 system produces remarkable results. It's not quantity we're talking here but quality, and it's obvious that the quality of the construction of the speakers and the amplifier chipset chosen has delivered in sonic terms.

Essentially, it's all about the midband – for that's all the Audica really has. Voices are extremely clear and well differentiated, with fine imaging (the system projects completely 'out of the box' and fills surprisingly large rooms with ease). There's good depth perspective, and you get a real insight into the recording. So much so that the Audica is easily able to differentiate between sources – my Walkie Pro sounds far better than my MD portable, for example. It's all smooth and not shouty, and there's a lot subtle, low level detailing.

Treble is decently finessed. Obviously, we're not talking massive incision, air and space here, but it's surprisingly couth. So much so that again it's well able to differentiate between the type of analogue interconnect you use. This is where the likes of Chord's iChord comes in handy - you can get it terminated with 3.5mm minijacks at both ends - where you'll get a noticeably smoother and more silky upper midband and treble compared to the bundled lead. Of course, the tiny Audica system was never going win prizes for bass, but what little there is is nicely tight and taut, and again the better the source you feed it with, the deeper and stronger it goes. You'll never find it less than tuneful (in the vein of the original Linn Kan), meaning that whatever music is played, it comes out with brio and vim. Overall, it's a great little system. Someone has really taken the time to design and build this one right, the result being that it does what it does extremely well. So if you don't want an 'l' thingie, and/or need the flexibility of multiple inputs and the ability to spread the speakers over a few metres, I can think of nothing else that does as well at this price.



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Wireless World

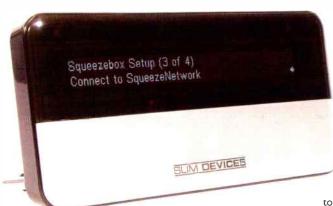
Kitting out our homes for wireless 'networked' music is the latest craze, but do you want to do it the hard way, or get something running out of the box? Patrick Cleasby looks at both sides of the coin...

> and in hand with the rush to rip our CD collections to one or another digital library for use on our digital audio portables (or

heaven forefend, buy compressed digital files online!), comes the desire to spread our music around the home without the hassle of cables. The technology which makes this achievable is what is commonly called Wi-Fi, a catch-all term which encompasses two current protocols (and will cover future, speedier implementations) - the legacy, slower 802.11b and the current 54Mbps 802.11g protocol. In Mac terms these are called Airport and Airport Extreme respectively.

It is a given that due to the market dominance of iTunes and the iPod (other portables are available, by the way!) we are now at a point where the majority of people contemplating a move to a wireless set-up will already have a digital music library on their computers. For most this will mean libraries in the iTunes structure on either PC or Mac, which if system defaults were not changed prior to ripping will mean 128kbps AAC files. Hopefully most audiophiles will realise that they should be using a higher bitrate codec, ideally lossless, for serious sound though!

For the last year or more we have covered some of the standalone devices available to get audio from the computer to the hi-fi wirelessly.



The only option which works (without quality loss) if you want to get iTunes purchased, Fairplay DRM protected tracks playing is the neat but basic Apple Airport Extreme. This is currently a difficult-to-recommend option as a number of purchasers are complaining of premature device death just past a one-year-warranty amount of constant use. Campaigns are afoot!

Since then we covered the Roku Soundbridge M1000, which adds library search and display with remote control, and the first two iterations of Slim Devices' Squeezebox, with its claims to be a more audiophile solution. Here we consider the latest, more stylish version of the Squeezebox, and the considerably more 'plug and play' option of a Philips Streamium system that should work right out of the box.

SLIM DEVICES SQUEEZEBOX III £200

The latest version of the integrated 802.11g wireless Squeezebox is much more aesthetically attractive than either its predecessors or the Roku, which is now available in a revised M1001 guise with in-built wireless 802.11b (rather than the previous compact flash card implementation), for around £50 less than the average price cited above for the Squeezebox. An Ethernet-only version of the Squeezebox is also available for around the same price as the Roku.

So why is the Squeezebox more expensive? Slim Devices make

the claim of being a superior audiophile product due to their use of Burr Brown DACs, but there are plenty more positives besides that. Foremost among these is the flexibility which the Squeezebox gains over the Roku due to its powerful Slimserver software. (The Roku works by picking up an iTunes library shared out to the home network using the Apple software's internal capability

to do that – originally designed for



inter-computer sharing).

The device does not ship with Slimserver - you are invited to download the latest version, which is not unreasonable given that purchasers of such a network device are unlikely not to have broadband internet. Score one is that the software is available for PC, Mac and Linux. Score two is that although this means you are not tied to the iTunes library, Slimserver is able to import the structure of and reference your iTunes library itself. Score three is that the standalone nature of Slimserver enables it to play out nearly every format imaginable, including the iTunes unfriendly but popular free lossless codecs Monkey's Audio (.ACE), Shorten (.SHN), Vorbis Ogg (.OGG) and FLAC itself. During my auditioning I managed to cover the majority of these formats, and 24bit Apple Lossless as well, and all of them played back without problems. As with nearly all non-Apple devices (the odd Motorola phone aside) there is no support for iTMS bought AAC - you will have to burn them to CD and re-rip.

I tested Slimserver on a humble stock early Mac Mini without issue – the installation puts a control into the System Preferences dialogue, offering a start/stop button for the Slim service, which can be set to start up every time the computer does. There is also a

40



button which directs you to the efficient web interface for the Slimserver, split vertically between library management and playback management frames. There will be a slight delay on the initial load of the metadata for a large iTunes music library, but you can then set it to periodically scan for updates, so the Slim map of your library stays in sync with the iTunes view. There are other side benefits of running a Slimserver for your music library too - when playing out from the software's web interface you can pick the feed up on other computers on the network either by adding a specific URL to WinAmp or iTunes or running Slim's software emulation of the Squeezebox.

Much less significant than the music serving implementation, but nonetheless extremely pleasing is the ease of operation (when compared to the Roku) brought by the larger display and the addition of alphanumeric keys to the remote. Rather than squinting at a small display and having to toggle through the alphabet, you can position yourself accurately by leading letter in long browse lists using multiple taps on the numeric keys for letters as per the three letters per key on a numeric phone keypad.

Much like the Roku, the Squeezebox is not entirely dependent on having a computer turned on to get some sounds out of it – there is a service called www. squeezenetwork.com which provides internet radio even when your computer is off. To set yourself up to use this you need to get your machines 'squeezenetwork' PIN from the set up menus, and go to the website and register yourself there.

It should also be noted that some of the codec benefits of the Squeezebox paradigm are already available to existing Roku users as with some minimal software updates (downloaded automatically) the Roku can work with the Slimserver, so they might have some interest in downloading the Slim software themselves. Indeed I ran a Roku alongside the Squeezebox during testing with no problem, with the Mac Mini serving both interfaces concurrently. Throughout testing I only once had an inexplicable few seconds of lock-up during playback, which then resumed. Bizarrely this

was when there was almost no other identifiable wireless traffic on the home network, whereas playback had not suffered at all during periods when there was much more intensive traffic sharing the network. Comparing playback of AAC files via an iPod's analogue dock output in a Monitor Audio iDeck and then from the analogue output of the Squeezebox did endorse Slim's claims for their product's DAC - imaging was clearer and the overall performance was much more dynamic. The new Squeezebox is a winner.

PHILIPS WACS700 £599

For a number of years now, Philips have been attempting to advance the concept of wireless entertainment under their 'Streamium' brand, a brand with which this music 'center' [sic] is emblazoned. The success of Sonos wireless multiroom systems at a few hundred pounds more than this Philips starter set-up show that the market is obviously right for wireless solutions, even for those who do not want to dig deep into the technicalities of networking.

The WACS700 system is a





has been quietly making cables to the delight of many an audiophile around the world. Now available in the UK, VIABLUE aren't iust another cable clone

Now available in the UK, VIABLU aren't just another cable clone maker. VIABLUE make offordable cables that bring music alive in such a startling way that when you first listen to them its truly a

> " it would be hard to think of another preamplifier of this price that could sound so intimate...

For a first time effort, and with a price ticket of £2,000 the SWL 9.0 SE is simply stunning value. This is one preamplifier that is fully deserving of your attention. "



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IXOS IXOTICA

of cables

"...an extremely transparent, almost 'glass clear' cable that scythes through the mix with tremendous alacrity...Overall, an absolutely super product that's ideal for those with smooth systems, and want to get to the heart of musical matters."

HI-FI WORLD IXOTICA IX1 REVIEW

MAY 2006

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package containing the pairing of the WAC700 'Center' unit and one of the WAS700 'Satellite' units. The idea is that if you want to scale up to more than the two rooms this would allow for, you can add up to a maximum of four additional WAS700 units, at a list price of £199 each. These can be found for as little as £175, and the base system for around £100 less than list.

The review system we were sent did what the system is supposed to do – i.e. the two devices are paired and worked right out of the box. For some reason that box was also missing the main manuals and the CD, so this was also a good test of how intuitive system operation was, and how well the system was served by Philips' support website. The answer in both cases was somewhat positive.

As is sometimes the case. the system was also loaded with a previous reviewer's music, but pretending it wasn't, there are two routes to create a library on the base WAS700 unit, which contains a 40GB hard disk. Most simply your CDs (including MP3 and WMA CDs) can be inserted in the slot at the top of the machine and ripped to either 128kbps or 160kbps MP3. Coherent track labelling is achieved by the machine holding an updateable version of the Gracenote CDDB database of CD information. All the computer-based music library management software uses this in real-time online queries.

One of the manuals I did receive was the 'how to integrate the WACS700 into existing networks' one. It is quite cogent, but immediately makes it apparent that to run the system in anything more than total standalone mode still requires a high degree of networking knowledge. I endeavoured to make the system join my existing network, and as the prescribed method was not working as the manual described I decided to test out the firmware update feature.

This worked well - like the periodic CDDB database upgrades. If you are not already wireless to your computer you can burn downloaded updater files to CD-R, feed them into the WAC700 and it does the necessary, including disseminating the update to the CD-less satellite unit. Even better, having done the firmware upgrade, the process for linking the system to my wireless system also went well (once a copy of the original installer CD had been downloaded and run with the PC attached to the Ethernet port on the back of the WAC700) - enabling

me to test the packaged Philips Digital Music Manager software. This is a rudimentary PC-only library management software, designed to pick up MP3 (up to 320kbps and including VBR) and WMA (not DRMed and not VBR or lossless) files on your system and move them to your WAC700, across either your wired or wireless network. This job it does well.

Once the audio files are on the unit, playback is managed using a small iPod-like grey LCD interface on either box (both also have reasonable remotes), with broadcast and 'music follows me' play modes available, along with FM radio and auxiliary inputs on both. The sound is everything you would expect a 50Hz to 16,000kHz frequency response rated music centre with 'Sound Panel' speakers to be...

The problems I have with the WACS700 system cleave into two categories. From an audiophile perspective this definitely does come across as the 21st century equivalent of the 1970s music centre, and Philips have the good grace (American spelling aside) to acknowledge this in tagging their baby as such. If we were to accept the satellite at a kitchen-type level of playback acceptability, would we really want a base music library in such a device at low bitrates, when we should really be using some lossless

codec or other on a computer? Secondly, "the Squeezebox is the best networked audio solution yet"

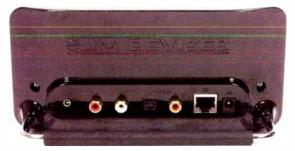
from the technical perspective, the

reality is most of us will have to be integrating it to some existing home networking, if not now, at some point in the near future. Mac and Linux are not supported, and keeping CD Database names anywhere near up to date still requires plenty of IT smarts, giving the lie to the implication of trouble-free operation for tech dummies. The system is also too closed – surely Mass Storage USB access to the drive would have been the best way to manage PC to WAC700 migration?

CONCLUSION

As someone who is quite happy to fiddle with network settings and who lives by his tidy iTunes library (but is not averse to, um, sampling bits of FLAC, SHN, OGG and ACE) it should be quite obvious that I would far rather integrate a smart device between my computer and hifi setups than add yet another small island of hard disc storage (and one which doesn't play nice with Macs or decent codecs) to all those terabytes

World Radio History



Rear of the Squeezebox 3

of music I maintain. The Squeezebox is the best networked audio solution yet for the inveterate tweaker - configuring Slimserver to your satisfaction could take a very long time itself, but equally it works wonderfully straight out of the box. You choose what amp and speakers to use, and there are also the Roku-beating benefits of an alphanumericcapable remote, 802.11g and quality digital convertors. Conceptually, the Philips

WACS700 system is exactly

what the computer and networking-

averse should be looking for, but for

a hi-fi audience this lifestyle system is

unlikely to satisfy the ear. It is difficult to see what market it is catering for,

and it is a shame that its concession



Rear of the Phillips WACS700

to track loading from PC takes it away from ease of use arguments back to computer tweakery. The Philips also has to struggle in the market against a wireless multiroom enabler which is setting the non-IT capable side of the market on fire – the Sonos system which we have yet to test.

Ultimately, I have a hunch that there is another threat to all these 'library to hi-fi enablers' which is every bit as convenient as the Squeezebox solution, and as simple as the Philips without the redundancy. For the gaming A/V crowd, an Xbox 360 under the TV, digitally connected to an A/V amp can read a USB attached PC or Mac iPod, or stream media wirelessly from a PC using Windows Media Connect or from a Mac using the third party enabler Connect 360. Just so you don't think I'm endorsing Microsoft too heavily, a Digital Audio Mac Mini with Front Row can do the same trick - including video.What else do you need?



The WACS700 system would be ideal for those without any existing digital library, but in audiophile circles those are the very people who wouldn't settle for a lifestyle music centre and compressed digital files.

PHILIPS WACS700 £599 www.consumer.philips.com

VERDICT OOOOO

With good looks, the most flexibility in terms of codecs and operating systems supported, plus great audio quality, there's no other sensible standalone choice.

£200

SLIM DEVICES SQUEEZEBOX III www.slimdevices.com











Initially intended to join **Castle's A/V Compact** range, the dinky Column floorstanders offer rather more musical substance than their size suggests, thinks Channa Vithana...

his is the second new Castle

release featuring the voicing talents of Karl-Heinz Fink. He also helped to develop the five-globe rated Richmond 3i which I think is one of the best budget stand mount loudspeakers available (see HFW January 2005 p48). The £550 Compact Columns feature Castle's renowned real wood veneer artistry, so build quality and finish is first-rate and flawless to the eye and touch. There's a choice of eight real wood finishes plus silver; the review units were maple. The cabinets use bituminous pad damping, two 110mm Klippel optimised mid/bass drive units and a 20mm ventilated coated fabric dome tweeter with neodymium magnet (see www.klippel.de for more advanced technical information on their driveunit optimisation resources). The cabinet measures 875x140x190mm minus spikes and grille. Claimed specifications are 50-40,000Hz, 6 ohm impedance and 87dB sensitivity - so don't expect subterranean bass extension, but tunefulness is there aplenty, as we shall see...

Indeed, the Castles handled the opening large orchestrated parts to the 'Elgar Violin Concerto' SACD with excellent balance and poise. The opening section has numerous dynamic crescendos that the Castles expressed with slam and power. The harmony parts to the non-lead violins and horns were well enunciated and nicely In time with each other. The delicately played lead violin by Hilary Hahn had good phrasing and especially fine timbre, where it was handled with finessed comportment instead of being diffuse or uncomfortably forward.

Karen Carpenter's peerless vocals on 'Yesterday Once More', from the 'Singles 1969-1981' SACD, were sublime in clarity, expression and communi-

inches

cation. Consequently, her voice spread out across my 6x4m listening room with beautifully rendered timbre and excellent phrasing. Instrumental separation was very good, resulting in clear and accurate positioning within the composition. The music timed brilliantly and the sound was effortless.

Bass tunefulness was impressive on Peter Gabriel's 'Red Rain' from the 'So' SACD, as basslines had a three dimensionality that was rare for a £550 speaker. As with the Carpenters before, instrumental separation was superb - clearly revealing vocals and instruments while the Castle's timing ability meant all of these individual parts were held together cohesively. All in all, despite its unprepossessing size, I found these Castles were an extremely well designed and executed little speaker.

CONCLUSION

I compared the little Castles to my much larger reference (£2,000)

Waterfall Victoria floorstand loudspeakers, with the same system and music, and they were equal in

terms of timing, bass tunefulness and

cohesion Hahn/Davis, 'Elgar Violin Concerto/Vaughn Willia The Lark Ascending' SACD (2004) Carpenters, 'Singles 1969 – 1981' SACD (2004) Peter Gabriel, 'So' SACD (1986/2003)

- impressive. considering they were almost a quarter of the price!

Obviously for a smaller loudspeaker, they don't scale the deeper bass extension

of a bigger floorstanding model, like the Victorias can. However, if a real wood veneered, beautifully built,

well-priced and convincing music maker appeals, then Castle's Compact Column must surely make your shortlist.

VERDICT OOOO£

Brilliantly well designed and built compact floorstanders with a surprisingly sophisticated and expansive sound.

CASTLE COMPACT

COLUMN £550 **Castle Acoustics Ltd.** +44 (0)1756 795 333

www.castle.uk.com

FOR

- build-quality, wood veneer
- excellent timing
- bass tunefulness

AGAINST

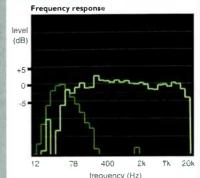
- large rooms

"music timed brilliantly, and the sound was effortless ..."



MEASURED PERFORMANCE

give good resulsts with competent



Impedance 100 10k **i**k 10

World Radio History feworld on uk

45

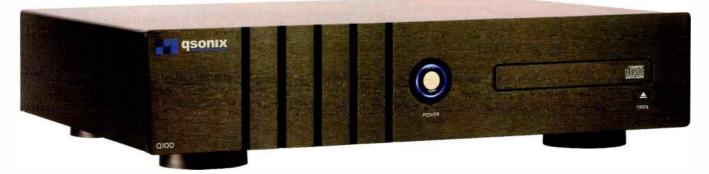
Small drive units commonly possess smoother output than larger ones, and you can see this with Castle's Tower. It offers a superb measure er. It offers a superb measured uency response that our analys rly shows is smooth from 63Hz o 20kHz. The -6dB bass limit is z, but the port offers output dov 1Hz, which should bolster thing a big room. The Tower will unlikel sound bass heavy or boomy as the bas driver is well damped by the port, our impedance enalysis shows, which is tuned to 48Hz.

REFERENCE SYSTEM: Onkyo DV-SP1000E universal player (£2,800 Moon Audio i-3 integrated amplifier (£1,595)

Sensitivity was a normal enough 87dB, helped by a 3.3ohm bass unit an an overall measured impedance verall measured imped Zobms - quite low. The dance characteristic is a little lumpy and reactive so, tugether with low impedance, this

isn't the easiest load. The Castle Tower should be used close to a rear wall, measurement suggests. It is smooth and accurate and sho

Jukebox Jury



New US Company Qsonix's first product, the Q100 audio jukebox, promises a radical user interface and audiophile sonic credentials, but can it deliver? David Allcock decides...

espite the overwhelming success of portable jukebox products such as the Apple IPod and Creative Labs Zen, hard disk based jukeboxes

disk based jukeboxes have failed to catch on in the home, predominantly due to poor sonic performance, coupled with interfaces which are mediocre at best. Now a US company, Qsonix, has decided to

tackle the audiophile market head on

with the Q100 jukebox. The package comes in two parts, a 17in wide black box which is the actual jukebox, and a 15in screen using a sophisticated touch-screen system. The main unit is featureless, bar a single central power button and a disc drawer on the right hand side. Around the rear are an IEC inlet, CAT 5 Ethernet connector, a pair of USB sockets, a pair of serial interface connectors, a VGA output, two pairs of RCA analogue outs and a coaxial S/PDIF digital output.

Setting this system up was simple, literally from box to working

end PC rather than high end audio.

The jukebox is designed to feed either two independent zones or a single digital output; I decided to connect it to both my reference system and the Perreaux SXH2 headphone amplifier. The Qsonix Q100 was slotted into two systems, the first my main reference system comprising Krell KRC-3 preamplifier, with power amplification including Bryston 3B-SST and Musical Fidelity A5, with both Hyperion Sound Design HPS 938 and Martin Logan SL-3 loudspeakers used.

A second, more modest system, was also used comprising Musical Fidelity X-80 amplifier, with both PMC GB-1 and Onix Rocket RS-550 MKII speakers. All equipment was connected to the mains via lsotek Orion and Titan filters with Isotek Elite power cables. Townshend Isolda DCT speaker cables were used along with Chord Company Signature cables whilst interconnect was either Chord Company Signature or Atlas Elektra.

"forced to choose between a regular audiophile single disc transport and the Q100, and the Q100 would win every time..."

in fifteen minutes, with more of that being taken with removing packaging than connecting it up. Build quality is good, but not about to worry Musical Fidelity or Bryston - typical of a high Loading music onto this system was simplicity itself. The system is connected to a broadband router (which it needs to look up CD information from the All Music Guide database), and to your audio system like a conventional CD transport. The connection to the Internet can also be achieved via a wireless network using a wireless bridge. You then simply load your CD into the drive, at which point the Q100 connects to the All Music guide website and uses a unique fingerprinting system to identify your CD.

Music can be stored either uncompressed, which is what I used for this review, lossless Windows Media Audio (WMA) and lossy WMA. Uncompressed this gives you about 360 CDs, lossless 1,100 CD whilst lossy WMA compression gives space for nearly 2,500 CDs. Whilst a comprehensive user guide was supplied, if you've used any kind of jukebox software on a PC before this will be completely intuitive in use and the manual went back in the box after less than half an hour.

The software is superb, with the ability to browse your catalogue by artist name, album name, by cover art and by track name. The cover art facility replicates how many people browse their collection, and the touch screen interface is effortless to use and is a stunning demonstration of a well thought out, highly functional user interface. Multiple playlists are available and can be built in minutes then saved for later use.

THE TRIAL

Sonically, the Q100 was a pleasant surprise, as the modifications to the fitted M-Audio soundcard proved to be effective, the sound exceeding anything I've heard from a PC soundcard with the exception of the

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high end M-Audio Audiophile cards and studio cards from the likes of RME. The O100 was able to give a wide soundstage which extended beyond the edges of the speakers, with precise instrument positions proving easy to locate, whilst the focus was not as precise as the Shanling CDT-80 or the Musical Fidelity X-Ray v3, for example.

Bass was good, but in comparison with the X-Ray lacked the extension and visceral grip on low frequencies which the MF unit possesses, yet still had excellent timing and speed, making for a lively presentation which propelled music along in an enthusiastic manner. The midrange was impressive too, but had a slight lift in the lower midband - no bad thing for many CDs, especially pop releases which can sound rather thin, this is a noticeable deviation from absolute neutrality, but once again I think this could have been engineered to give a slightly fuller sound on inwall and compact speakers which are used in many custom installations and commercial premises.

High frequencies were a little forward, but avoided becoming tiring or aggressive due to their smooth presentation. The only real criticism of the analogue outputs would be a loss of dynamic range, undoubtedly related to the current delivery available on the outputs which is invariably inferior to that of an audiophile CD player on all but the very best soundcards. Whilst this does not render the sound bland or lacking in involvement, it does mean music never develops the full scale and power that is expected.

Although the analogue outputs are very strong, many audiophiles will use the S/PDIF output to an outboard DAC or AV receiver. In this case I used a Perpetual Technologies P-IA/ P-3A Signature upsampler/ DAC combination. In both cases the improvement was far from subtle and dramatically outweighed the costs involved. Now The Q100 was acting as a sophisticated digital transport and in this role it was outstanding, certainly a match for anything I've heard sub-£1,000.

The soundstage expanded to beyond the room boundaries from the first bar, now becoming tightly

focused with excellent depth, and real air was now in the spaces between the musicians. The reservations I had about dynamic range were now eradicated, as were the other limitations in the sound quality, now the Q100 sound was dominated by the DAC, with the Q100 acting as a high performance transport with the convenience of the touchscreen interface. Ask me to choose between a regular audiophile single disc transport and the Q100, and the Q100 would win every time.

THE VERDICT

The Qsonix OI00 is an

exceptional jukebox system which benefits from excellent software design, innovative hardware engineering (such as the modifications to the internal soundcard and flash memory storage of operating system and software), and one of the very best user interfaces I've ever encountered. Couple this with a better than expected analogue output stage and an excellent digital output which, when mated with the £600 Perpetual Technologies P3-A, allows this unit to challenge any CD player under £1,500.

The downside is price - it's a costly system alright, and the hardware by today's standards is very average, so this system stands or falls by its user interface and sound quality. On these points I feel the Q100 does enough to justify its price tag, as it simply lets you access vast amounts of music with ease. but I still feel that it will need either a price reduction or an overhaul to its hardware specifications if it's to keep pace with the lightning-fast developments in the realm of media servers.



LOOKING INSIDE

Predictably enough, under the hood of the Q100 media unit lies a PC - albeit a highly modified one. This PC uses a 160GB hard drive and a high quality Sony CD drive, which is also a CD-R and CD-RW. functionality which is not used in this software but is going to be implemented in a future software release, apparently. Uniquely, the actual operating software does not run from the hard drive, instead it is loaded from a flash memory card. The operating system is an embedded version of Windows XP, truly locked down to ensure only essential functions are implemented, and the system can only run the dedicated Osonix application. This is an excellent idea, and even when attacked by a security test suite I use I was unable to access the machine and attack it with either a Trojan or multiple viruses, suggesting this machine will be impervious to the problems which plague many Windows systems!

VERDICT (

A truly innovative user interface mated with the best sonics from a 'iukebox' to date makes this the best media server around right now, but you pay for it!

QSONIX Q100	£3,99
Touching Stuff UK I	.td.
(+44 (0)1453 751	829
www.touchingstuf	f.com

FOR

- user interface
- best sounding jukebox
- secure and reliable

AGAINST

JULY 2006 HI-FI WORLD



- price







Tiny Satellites

Channa Vithana auditions Sennheiser's superb new CX300, which bring the noise cancelling and low-frequency benefits of ear-canal headphones to a new lower price-point...

ar-canal headphones by the likes of Etymotic Research and Shure, for example, tend to be quite expensive at £200 or more. But Sennheiser has developed

their CX300 ear-canal headphones for a modest £39.99. They plug into your ear for a very homely fit - you need to ensure they're properly inserted to maximise the claimed 18-21,000Hz frequency range. Once fitted, it feels like you're wearing a stethoscope and indeed, without music, you can hear yourself breathing or even your own heart beat. As a consequence, thuds and rumbles are also transmitted if you knock or move the signal cable.

The CX300s usefully come with three sizes of 'Ear-Fit Rings' (S/M/L). For practicality though, the CX300s would have been preferable with a protective case for their delicate enclosures. Also some form of outer flange to these enclosures would be ideal, as it's easier to incorrectly pull them out by the vulnerable signal cable. The CX300s come in silver or black, weigh a minuscule 4g and have a right-angled 3.5mm mini plug.

SOUND QUALITY

Listening to the Ysaÿe/Zehetmair 'Sonatas Pour Violon Solo' (2004), the CX300s reproduced some very nicely measured solo violin playing by Thomas Zehetmair, expressing excellent layering that allowed me to precisely follow the phrasing and deft handling of the bow, and the string timbre also. As you'd expect, there was an eerie lack of background noise, so fine detailing wasn't lost. I could clearly track the violin to its smallest audible note as the opening piece faded.

The beautifully atmospheric 'Steppin' Out' by loe lackson from his 'Night And Day' remastered CD (1983/2003) was really enjoyable. It wasn't bright or harsh, and instead the music pulsated nicely through the CX300s, with better than expected bass extension and tunefulness. Like the solo violin playing from the Zehetmair CD before, details like lackson's vocals and piano melodies were very accomplished in expression. Metallica's bleakest recording, 'Blackened', from 1988's '...

And Justice For All' was handled with surprising assuredness by the CX300s. I expected them to be overwhelmed and compressed. but instead they revealed excellent detail and instrumental separation at the price, while the music was held together nicely also - thus the entirety of the song was there to be enjoyed in all its nihilistic, bleak, glory!

Although directly aimed at MP3 portables, the Sennheiser CX300s acquitted themselves brilliantly and were comfortable in the more demanding and revealing milieu of a full-sized Rega Planet CD player (£500) and Creek Audio OBH-21 SE headphone amplifier (£250). Overall then, with fine bass tunefulness and high-quality detail retrieval, near-silent musical backdrops and good timing, they're highly recommended for portables and real hi-fi systems alike. The only downside is competition from Sennheiser's other, similarly priced but more conventional models - such as the 'on ear' MX-550 and the 'over ear' PX-100 - which are

cracking products offering, respectively, superior convenience and sound.

The ultimate affordable ear canal phones; only the strength of Sennheiser's other similarly priced models detract!

SENNHEISER CX300 £39.99 Sennheiser

©+44 (0)1494 551 551 www.sennheiser.co.uk

FOR

UN

- detail retrieval - instrumental/vocal timbre
- bass tunefulness

AGAINST

JULY 2006 HI-FI WORLD

need protective case

Minimalist masterpieces!



DRAY TOHOUGH HEARING ASKE YOU THUSY BELIEVE. TO LOCATE YOUR NEMERIC DEALER DALL ACTIV DISTURIATION ON 01635 291357 DRIVE ON TO WHICE EDUN-ACCENTICE, DOM



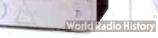
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01000



THE DRIVE WARDER





Chrome Alone

Dualit's lustrous looking DAB kitchen radio is different, says Steven Green...

ualit is the company behind the style-icon and much-copied-of-late 'industrial' stainless steel toaster. But these days, a lack of audio experience is no longer a barrier to entering the DAB market...

Inside this polished chrome confection is Frontier-Silicon's Chorus DAB receiver chip, which is the world's leading DAB chip, and is used in all of Pure Digital's products as well as many other DAB manufacturers. A Chinese company has designed the rest of the electronics, including the FM section. The casing is all Dualit though, with its trademark curved stainless steel being used on the front and back of the radio. On the front, a rigid silver-coloured metal grill covers the large single speaker. The top, bottom, back and sides of the case consist of a matt black rigid plastic (but not cheap) material that is velveteen to the touch. The weight of the radio (2.55kg) and the rigidity of the stainless steel case give it a very solid feel.

The control panel is located on the top of the unit and has rotary knobs at either end for volume and changing stations, as well as buttons for on/off, cycling through the display options, instigating auto-tune, five presets (five for each band), to enter setup, to change mode and to illuminate the backlight. Layout of the buttons is okay, but the tuning knob is too close to the aerial, making it slightly fiddly to turn. The volume knob also needs to be turned through a number of revolutions to go from maximum volume to mute, where one or at most two revolutions would suffice.

Near the bottom of the rear of the unit are connections for aux input, headphone, speaker output, S/ PDIF digital audio output and power input, as well as an on/off switch. The radio has a clock/alarm/kitchen timer, where the time and date are automatically set by tuning into DAB and the alarm and kitchen timer have all the options you would want from such features.

One thing rare on DAB radios is that it has an integrated rechargeable battery - a step in the right direction, in my opinion, although the advertised three to four hours battery life on DAB and seven to eight hours on FM leaves a lot to be desired. How on earth they only manage to get eight hours of FM playback from a fully charged battery is totally beyond me! Although the instruction manual said that the rechargeable battery uses Ni-Cad technology, Dualit assured me that they are changing to using NiMH batteries, which is a far better choice for this application. Unfortunately, the model I tested was a pre-production model and the rechargeable battery wasn't working at all, but Dualit is aware of the problem and they said they will not release the product until this is solved.

SOUND QUALITY

DAB was surprisingly good. Its 95mm diameter speaker can go very loud without distorting, and it provides a 'big', punchy and vibrant sound. This makes the radio most-suited to the stations that play pop or urban music, but in general its sound was well suited to stations that apply heavy doses of dynamic range compression to make their station sound loud - i.e. most of the commercial radio stations. It would be unfair to say that it's unsuited to the more refined end of the radio

performance on DAB, this radio is bad on FM. I've got a cheap and cheerful £25 Sony FM portable that manages hiss-free reception on all of the BBC stations, Classic FM and local FM stations. Yet there's hiss on most of the stations on this Dualit, and the FM audio is distorted. Another drawback with this radio is that FM doesn't have RDS whereas many of its competitors do. Then again, you wouldn't want to listen to FM on this radio anyway...

Overall then, this radio is undeniably attractive and its integrated rechargeable battery is a useful feature. It also provides impressive sound quality on DAB if your taste in music is towards the poppier rather than the classical end of the market. But you can get far more feature-packed DAB portable radios these days for significantly less, with superior FM reception. So if you're no longer interested in FM and love the style then it's an extremely nice bit of kit.



FOR

- DAB sound quality
 integrated rechargeable battery
- style/finish
- AGAINST
- bad FM reception
- expensive

market, though, and 'Late Junction' on Radio 3 sounded pleasantly engaging, Also impressive was the radio's ability to minimise the problems with the poorer-sounding stations on DAB. Reception quality on DAB was also relatively good. In contrast to the good

Black Celebration

David Price remembers the world's best audio portable yet made, Sony's WM-D6C, known to its many friends as the 'Walkman Pro'...



uch has been written about the iPod – too much for some. But there's no denying it's a prime piece of modern industrial design,

and capable of decent sonic performance too. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of it is when you place it next to Sony's Walkman Professional...

The WM-D6C (or Walkie Pro as it was known to its many fans) is a vast, massive, brick like thing compared to the latest iPod Nano.At 180x90x40mm it is vast and absurdly cumbersome by modern standards – rather like eighties mobile phone compared to the latest Nokia 8800. But when you look closer, you see what – to my money – is the very best portable ever made.

The iPod also lays claim to this title, but let's not forget that Apple did not invent the market for portable audio, Sony did, some twenty seven years ago. And let's also remember that Sony offered a massive variety of sizes and shapes, along with a single, take-no-prisoners, 'ultimate performance' variant – the Walkman Pro you see here before you.

More impressively, the Walkie Pro actually beat almost every full sized cassette deck hands down in a straight fight – only the true greats such as Nakamichi's CR-7E bettered it. Nice as the iPod is, even running Apple Lossless, it's no contest against a £250 hi-fi separate CD player – the latter pastes it. This shows the sheer scale of achievement of the Sony, and puts its brilliance into proper perspective.

The Walkie Pro was so special that it started a whole new 'mobile audiophile' sub cult. Audiophiles played their prized vinyl on their Linn Sondeks, plugged the WM-D6C into their preamp tape outs and recorded superb copies which they played out and about, or in the car on their top-of-the-range Pioneer or Kenwood car stereos. Backpackers took Walkie Pros to India in their gap year, broadcasters gave up their Uher Report 4000 open reels for them, and musicians spent countless hours out and about, recording 'sound FX' with them to mix into their latest creations. It was so damn useful, and so completely cool.

WALKMA

ALIORINOUS III AD

Why so special? Well, it came down to Sony's decision to use the very best heads and transport mechanism, allied to their ability to make them with such precision. Even when it came out in 1985, it was no fashion leader, but somehow that didn't matter, such was its consummate quality.

The Walkman Pro came in a graphite black metallised case, when all others were smaller, brighter and plasticky. Then there was the extra 'Record' button – something you almost never saw on a cassette portable of this type. The Dolby selector was another give-away, offering both B and C noise reduction systems on a little

slider switch. Then there was the bank of little oblong LEDs, with peak indicators flashing at +3dB and +6dB. Looking around the back was no

|°|||||^{\$}||||⁶

SONY

HEADPHONE

less intriguing – a facility to switch off the quartz-lock speed control to allow variable pitch playback. This was another tell-tale sign of its status, as most conventional cassette decks didn't boast such a thing. Then there was the mechanical tape counter, the large battery box packing four AA cells, and a long volume slider controlling one of the beefiest headphone amps going.

The transport, with its sturdy capstan and expensive looking heads, was quite unlike other portables. Clunky in an over-engineered sort of way, the WM-D6C lacked the airs and graces of most hi-fi cassette decks, and its non-logic assisted controls snapped into place in an agricultural way. But this didn't deter, as it had a 'hewn from solid' feel.

Feed it a good metal tape and instead of the usual splashy, mushy

treble, all was sparklingly clear and vivid. Gone was the traditional wobbly Walkman midband with vague imaging and fuzzy detail, and in its place a clean, confident soundstage with bold lateral and front-to-back imaging. Then there was the bass - run from batteries or a high quality DC supply, low frequencies had a speed and power like few other cassette machines ever made.

EO CASSETTE

The heads were so good that given a Sony Metal ES blank, you could get the record levels hitting +6dB with ease. The results were little less than astounding - so tight, so powerful, so clean, so dynamic, so musical. The usual cassette nasties (wow and flutter, tape hiss, compression) were comprehensively banished.

Indeed, the Walkman Professional was Sony's very best high end, single capstan hi-fi cassette transport, squeezed into a box and run from batteries. Its record/replay head was also a top dollar laser amorphous affair, and to compensate for the lack of dual capstans (too tricky to fit into such a small box), the WM-D6C had the first quartz-lock servo control to grace a Sony cassette deck. This explained its superb speed stability and fantastic overload figures...

Nowadays, the only problem with buying secondhand is that - thanks to their stunning build, many people abused them as a matter of course, running them into the ground. Faced with 'pro use', the transport can break easily and the lack of proper auto-stop (its only conspicuous fault) can wreck the motor. The heads don't last forever either: So be warned. A newish, mint, low use example is now worth £2S0, but there are dodgy characters out there passing off fifteen year old nails for upwards of £150 - don't even think about these. Find a good one though, and they're still a stunning bit of kit for analogue addicts, and put any iPod to sonic shame. Bigger is better, unless you like jogging to music!

REVIEW

Kompact Kraft

Channa Vithana finds that beautiful loudspeakers come in small packages, at least if they're Linn's new Komponents...

They are a four-way design and can be bi, tri or quad wired as well as up to quad-amped and connected with Linn's AKTIV-equipped amplifiers for efficiency, nominal 60hm impedance and 60Hz–20kHz frequency response. The 120 AKTIV Bass

Reinforcement loudspeaker is, like the 110, unconventional (for a 'subwoofer') as it is - elegantly dishproportioned at 500mm diameter and only 144mm height, wall mountable and beautifully designed. Internally, it has a 200mm bass driver (with two ports), 170W power amplifier and a 15 litre operating volume (the 110 has 10 litres). The 120 can be adjusted to suit music and room variability with a refreshingly simple menu system, via a small LED and three buttons, to adjust gain, phase, high pass or low pass filters.

In the absence of a multichannel processor for bass/ speaker management, I would have preferred a remote control option for these functions, especially if the 120 is wall mounted, or because they are already discrete, to simply locate them onto the top surface for easier access. This is important for a variety of musical styles and recording qualities, for instance Aphex Twin's 'Chosen Lords' has hidden and very deep bass frequencies that required a unique setting to sound great.

The 120 is very attractively designed though, and the build quality is first rate. It comes as standard with a wall mount bracket, which should make for the most attractive 120 location, or spikes and floor protectors. The 120 needs two phono cables if connected via a standard hi-fi amplifier, and I found it is worthwhile using a superior, matching set of interconnects, from source to

eeing as this issue is devoted to small, perfectly formed music making packages, what better loudspeaker to fit the bill than Linn's dinky little Komponents? The range comprises the £600 110 Floorstanding loudspeaker, £250 104 Compact loudspeaker and optional £150 stand, £500 106 LCR (Left Centre Right) loudspeaker and £750 120 AKTIV Bass Reinforcement loudspeaker. The

models for review here are the 110 Floorstanding loudspeakers and a 120 Bass Reinforcement loudspeaker (subwoofer).

All Komponents come in silver or graphite, with beautifully crafted extruded aluminium cabinets. The 110s feature finely proportioned and smooth openings for their drive units. fully active operation. There are five drive units; 16, 30 and 100mm drive units handle the upper frequencies while a 130mm bass and 130 mm passive radiator do the lower ones. The 16 and 30mm drivers are fitted within Linn's stylish 2K array which employs an isolated silver coloured cast alloy chassis.

At the top rear of the cabinet, there is a removable panel which accesses the eight binding posts. Running down from these is a very smart, hidden, cable management area within the cabinet to neatly conceal wiring. At the cabinet top, under a removable panel, is the fixing facility for the wall bracket and a separate magnetically mountable front grill is also included. The 110, without stands, measures 1005x180x155mm and weighs 11kg. It has a quoted 85dB amplifier to 120, because this makes for more convincing bass tunefulness overall.

SOUND QUALITY

Aphex Twin's 'Chosen Lords' comprises complex rhythms and beats that are intermingled with beautifully delicate melodies. The Linns handled the electronic music with poise and verve. There was excellent high-frequency communication of the melodies while instrumental separation was also good, where all the elements were very clearly revealed.

The masterful violin playing of Itzhak Perlman from the 'Violin Concertos & Tzigane' CD was reproduced with excellent phrasing and expression, where I could precisely track each note successively from the other without any rhythmic slurring. The music therefore was engaging, yet, like the Aphex Twin CD previously, was also full of subtleties. Itzhak Perlman's violin was revealed with good - if not the best - timbre at the price. Still, the music was reproduced with intelligibility and structure.

'La Habanera' by Yello was deep and expressive. The Linns maintained their excellent instrumental separation with the enjoyably complex and dynamic mix, very much in clarity. Bass response from the 120 was tight, tuneful and entirely transparent within the context of the 110s. Yello's 'One Minute' CD is predominantly cinematic in theme and execution, so I got to hear effects and instruments whizzing by with speed and power.

Nina Perrson's vocals emanated so beautifully commencing within the languid pace of 'Communication' from the 'Long Gone Before Daylight' SACD. The composition was appropriately deep and lush, setting the right mood for the music. The guitar melody was nicely textured and had outstanding timbre. The sound was enveloping and emotionally connected but never soft, artificially warm or diffuse. The bass lines were fulsome and tuneful while the midrange and treble frequencies had excellent cohesion where they were not forced. The Cardigans' music was consequently effortless through the Linns.

Comparing the £1,950 Komponent combination of 110s and a 120 to my reference £2,000 Waterfall Victoria loudspeakers provided some interesting results. The Waterfalls had a more sophisticated rhythmic ability and a more freer-flowing sound in comparison. The Linn was superior however, with

the instrumental separation and highfrequency communication with all the recordings, where melodies on the Aphex Twin and Itzhak Perlman CDs were better revealed than on the Waterfalls, which recessed them somewhat. The Cardigans SACD provided the most difference as the Linns were outstanding here - gifting the sublime vocals with captivating three-dimensionality. One could hear the inhalation and exhalation of breaths, expression and vocal phrasing with eerie precision. These qualities were also there with the instruments used on the Cardigans SACD

impressive considering this was only the CD layer.

CONCLUSION

It is imperative to very carefully set-up the 110s and adjust the 120 accordingly for different music. But once this is done, the strengths of the Komponent system are an almost forensic insight into instrumental and vocal timbre, impact and placement. With an outstanding recording like 'Long Gone Before Daylight' by The Cardigans on SACD, the music and sound was deep, communicative and satisfyingly enveloping.

I think the Komponent system

"looks stunning and is refreshingly compact is also in its favour."

I switched from my Waterfall, Onkyo DV-SP1000E (\pm 2,800) and Moon Audio i-3 amplifier (\pm 1,595) reference system to the Komponents with a Linn Majik system comprising Majik CD (\pm 1,950), Majik Kontrol preamplifier (\pm 1,750) and Majik 2100 power amplifier (\pm 1,400). This Linn configuration also took advantage of the quad wiring facility from the 110s with four runs of Linn loudspeaker cable and Linn interconnects.

The Aphex Twin 'Chosen Lords' CD had a more at ease sound in comparison to my reference when using the Komponents and Majik combination, as it was consequently a little less bright. There was better sophistication to the individual instrumental sounds within the composition and more refinement to

all the frequencies. The sound was also fuller bodied with the Linn system, if a little less upfront and exhilarating with the consecutive layering of notes Interestingly, where my reference system and the Komponents were somewhat self-effacing in their ability to reveal the timbre of the violin with the Itzhak Perlman CD, here the violins were more enjoyably explicit. The Yello CD had a confident, at-ease sound, with a deeper midrange while bass tunefulness was excellent. On the Cardigans' CD layer of their hybrid SACD, the all-Linn system portrayed the female vocals with superb spatiality. This made for better threedimensionality, and was

works much better when the (£750) 120 Active Bass-Reinforcement loudspeaker (subwoofer) is employed. And when connected, the 120 not only allows for better, deeper, bass extension but it also freed up the midrange where more body and spatiality to all of the music was revealed. That the 120 can be wall mounted, looks stunning and is refreshingly compact is also in its favour. Likewise, the elegant and finely crafted extruded aluminium enclosures of the 110s make for a stylishly designed and wall-mountable (if preferred) loudspeaker, that in combination with the 120, reproduces music to an excellent and sometimes explicit standard. Proof positive that less can be more!

VERDICT

Superlative build and packaging allied to a genuinely high fidelity sound make these exceptional, if unusual loudspeakers – but careful set up is essential.

LINN KOMPONENT 120 £750 Linn Products Ltd. (C) + 44 (0)500 888 909 www.linn.co.uk

FOR

- stylish, sleek design

- first rate build
- communicative highs

AGAINST

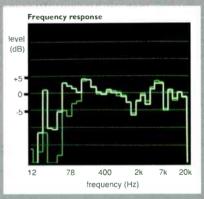
- 120 needs remote-control
- hard to optimise

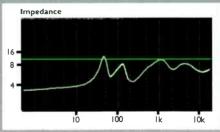
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The arrangement of midrange and tweeter domes in front of the bass/mid appears to result in some cancellations, as is likely, making the Komponent 110s response somewhat less flat than is common nowadays. Our analysis shows peaks and dips, but the overall trend is fairly flat. Low frequency response without the 120 subwoofer rolls down below 100Hz, but the subwoofer extends this to 50Hz or so, depending on its gain setting.

subwoofer extends this to 50Hz or so, depending on its gain setting Measurement with pink noise identified impedance as 6ohms nominal, and our impedance curve shows that, as usual, this arises from a 4ohm figure at low frequencies, rising to 8ohms above 300Hz or so. Sensitivity was normal at 86dB, with the subwoofer operating at G=2 and L=1 (i.e. turned down, but as flat as possible).

Sensitivity was normal at 8000, with the subwoofer operating at G=2 and L=1 (i.e. turned down, but as flat as possible). The Komponent 110 has been designed primarily for domestic acceptability, measurement suggests. It isn't as smooth, accurate in frequency response or as extended at low frequencies as is possible nowadays, although not poor either. NK





Lap Record

Revolver's new RW45i floorstanders are a subtle evolution of the endearingly popular, tubefriendly R45s. Who better then than valve head Noel Keywood to take them out on the track?



have a pair of the original Revolver floorstanding R45 loudspeakers at home, that i wheel out regularly. How come? Well, they've a wonderful ability to get along with just about any amplifier, from the most anaemic 9W valve single-ended types through to solid-state powerhouses. This consistency is supported by a clean, concise sound that is sufficiently well balanced to be enjoyable - and survivable!

With the new RW45i reviewed here, Revolver have taken the original model and tweaked it up. You still get what has now become a very popular drive unit/cabinet arrangement, where a basic two-way system is augmented by twin bass drivers operating in their own lower chamber. This has various subtle benefits. The simple two-way placed at the top of the array, at ear height, offers a focused sound with clean midband unlike, say, a D'Appolito arrangement, which gives a diffuse image. Keeping the bass/ midrange drive unit smallish helps keep both vocals and imaging tidy and clean, aided by the narrow cabinet front.

The downside of this is of course that bass power is limited from a small two-way, as there isn't enough cone area to get a big volume of air moving. Nor is there the ability to soak up amplifier watts without the shebang challenging George Foreman's business. So two bass/mid drivers are coupled together (electrically) lower down in the cabinet to move air and give decent bass heft. These drivers are nearly always the same as that used for midrange duties, simplifying inventory and resulting in a bigger single order; for lowest unit price.

Once upon a time cheap pulp cone drivers would have been used for bass duties, but nowadays in a loudspeaker like the RW45i you find the same quality glass fibre cone unit pushing air as well as vocals, which can't be bad. In this issue you'll find Castle using a similar arrangement in their Tower. This arrangement gives all the benefits of a two-way, augmented by stronger bass and higher power handling, all in a slim domestically acceptable cabinet.

JULY 2006

The RW45i uses an aluminium dome tweeter, protected by a metal mesh. The RW45is' black plastic dust caps remain unmodified, sitting in off-white bass fibre cones. Glass fibre mat is light, rigid and colouration free. However, if there was one property of the R45s I learnt to recognise, it was a strongly lit upper midrange that gave a great sense of clarity and insight but also, at times a slight edginess indicative of cone break-up, mostly at higher volumes. As an effect it wasn't upsetting, just characteristic of the loudspeaker. More heavily damped plastics tend to sound a little dead or quacky, but glass fibre commonly carries an edgy crack to it, whilst remaining clear and colouration free in the normal sense of the word. This gave the R45 a clean, dare-I-say glassy sounding upper midband, which I found insightful and nice enough to live with. Other loudspeakers typically sounded less forthcoming in the upper midrange, which invariably acted in the R45s favour. It was a balance well suited to smooth valve amplifiers, if less so to harder sounding solid-state amps. The new RW45i uses the same drive units so I was expecting similar subjective properties.

Two other factors worked in the original R45's favour to make it an amenable device. High sensitivity meant it needed little power, and plentiful bass output gave the impression of good heft even from the most challenged amplifiers. As you might guess, this also meant the R45 could sound overly Inflated in its bass output, according to the room and its positioning in it. Generally, this was a loudspeaker best kept away from rear walls, so as not to drive room modes too heavily.

The new RW45i comes with improved gold plated bi-wire input terminals and links, a more open tweeter grille, improved polypropylene capacitors in the crossover and silver plated oxygen free copper wiring to the drive units. The removable fabric grille has also been upgraded, although I never use loudspeaker grills during testing. Our review samples were finished with an attractive dark cherry veneer (RW stands for Real Wood). They stand 930mm high, 250mm wide and 318mm deep. There is a bass port close to the floor on the rear panel, where it effectively drives a room's vertical mode, bolstering upper bass output.

SOUND QUALITY

In many respects, the new RW45i was the same as the old R45 - against

which I compared it - but obviously different too. Where the originals were gentle, if quite specific in their delivery of highs, making cymbals obvious but not overwhelming, the RW45is bring a little more zest at high frequencies. This was quite obvious subjectively from the off, and running in over many weeks had no effect. The extra incision brought sharpened delineation of events. cymbals sounding harder etched but more concise, for example. I didn't find this unacceptable, all the same, and along with it went extra insight across the highs. The short, sharp stabs at ride cymbal on Scissor Sisters 'Lovers in the Backseat' clearly demonstrated how the new RW45i offers a clearer window than the R45.

The other big difference between original R45 and new RW45i comes down at the other end of the frequency spectrum. Revolver have pulled back bass output, giving an altogether drier, more damped and controlled bass delivery. As there have been times I felt the R45 bordered on excessive at low frequencies I can understand this. Measurement showed the original was peaked in its output around 100Hz and now this property has been tamed, measurement confirms. There's a little less boxiness at low frequencies in consequence.

Those are the differences. The new RW45i is lighter, drier, faster and more insightful. It sounds less

leaden and altogether more spry. Happily, this is still the loudspeaker that manages so well in all other areas, large and small, that make it such a good all-rounder. They are satisfyingly projective, setting up a large open soundstage that extends beyond the loudspeakers and has a good sense of depth. Large, generously proportioned instruments and singers populate this stage, all well defined and cleanly outlined. James Blunt's voice was very sharply etched, his sparse vocal style made obvious by the RW45is, because of their strong insight.

Swapping between the R45s, RW45is, Tannoy Kensingtons and a pair of Monitor Audio Silver RS8s underlined the efficiency of these speakers; heavens, they were as loud as the Tannoys! So the RW45is suit low power amplifiers, as always, What they don't now do is add weight to the sound, so amplifiers that are a little bass shy remain so. Quite what you experience here is very much room dependent, but measurement shows that the RW45i adds no emphasis to low frequencies.

Classical enthusiasts won't be unhappy about the way these loudspeakers present strings either. In fact, the glass fibre cones pull off this demanding feat rather well, managing a vivid insight that has instruments like violin and viola strongly lit and vividly detailed. Not from the RW45is do strings seem either confused or distant. Nor is the full force of the piano held in check; it was lovely to hear Bruno Gelber give a scorching performance of Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata' through these loudspeakers, his attack on the keys given full force by an Eastern Electric MiniMax CD player and Quad QC twenty four and Il-forty pre /power combo.

CONCLUSION

Here's a loudspeaker that is fundamentally right in what it does, and very easy to get along with too. With a broad range of real strengths, all in good balance, it remains a superb choice of budget floorstander. Always well worth hearing, the RW45is are a benchmark for sub- $\pounds1,000$ floorstanders – and all the more so if you're running valves.

The Revolver RW45 has a smooth frequency response over most of the audio band, our third octave analysis shows. It stays within tight limits of a few dB from 63Hz up to 12kHz, without the common dip around 3kHz due to crossover matching error. There is a steep rise in upper treble above 12kHz - difficult for the ear to detect but it may occasionally add a slightly piercing quality to discs that already display strong treble. This sort of effect goes unnoticed when there is no upper treble energy present though.

The loudspeaker has no lift in output at lower frequencies at all, so it will likely have a reasonably dry sounding bass performance unless used close to a rear wall. The port does, however, provide output around 25Hz.

The impedance plot shows a fair amount of reactance in the load. With a measured overall value of 7.5ohms, however, an amplifier will not be faced with heavy current demands, especially as sensitivity was very high at 90dB. The original model

VERDICT 0000 £

Excellent all-round floorstander that's clear, concise and truthfui, whiist being exceptionally amplifier friendly

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	394	1000	26	200	

FOR

- clean and insightful
- very sensitive
- suit classical and rock

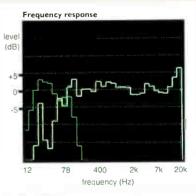
AGAINST

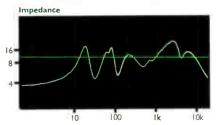
- dry bass lacking emphasis
- hissy upper treble
- dated styling

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

suited valve amps and this one should too.

The RW45 measures neatly all round. It should sound accurate, fairly bass dry but concise. NK





World Radio History

REVIEW

Compact classic

If ever there was a turntable to match the iPod in both aesthetics and packaging terms, it is the Clearaudio Ambient. Channa Vithana finds it an infectious combination of superb sound, fine ergonomics and supreme ease of use...

> ong-running German turntable brand Clearaudio has an enviable position amongst its competitors, as it in-house manufactures the

complete analogue LP replay system from cartridge to phonostage and beyond - with near-peerless construction quality. Lately, the new Ambient turntable takes things even further, as it represents a pioneering method of construction for claimed superior sound guality. As a result of this, I'd call it Clearaudio's most beautifully realised design to date.

The £2,630 Ambient turntable came as a stylish package with optional £570 Satisfy Carbon Direct Wire tonearm and £1,230 Concerto MC cartridge. Clearaudio says the Ambient Chassis is developed from the (flagship £11,100) Master

Reference AMG Wood, and consists of a high-tech sandwich of 'Panzerholz' between two precision-machined aluminium plates. The 'Panzerholz' is formed by highly compressing 70 fine layers of wood and synthetic resin under massive pressure resulting in a high density, acoustically dead and (incidentally) bullet-proof material (!). Panzerholz is extremely hard and more difficult to machine than stainless steel but when sandwiched between the aluminium plates, it produces "a combination

10

of ideal mechanical and acoustic properties" The Ambient features a polished, hardened steel bearing with a sintered bronze insert and a 40mm thick "precision CNC machined and polished GS-PMMA acrylic" platter. The motor is housed in a matching detached Panzerholz plinth, and includes a customised version of the Syncro Power Generator power supply (which costs £635 individually) that provides a selectable electronic 33.3/45rpm speed control via an attractive backlit blue display. The Ambient has a claimed 84dB S/N ratio, measures 535x330x150mm and

"it was impressive in its ability to locate individual elements and then reproduce cohesively, the complete composition..."

weighs approximately 14kg.

The £570 Satisfy Carbon Direct Wire tonearm is a new iteration on the established Satisfy model and is distinguished from it by a silver-coloured higher-performance carbon-fibre arm tube. It features Swiss-made sapphire vertical and lateral bearings, magnetic anti-skating screw-in/screw-out control and an uninterrupted Directwire cable that extends from cartridge pins to phono plugs, all of which are manufactured by Clearaudio.

The £1,230 Concerto MC cartridge is the entry-level model in Clearaudio's new high-end 'High Dynamic Range' which extends all the way to the £5,640 Goldfinger MC. The Concerto features 24kt gold coils, boron cantilever, Micro-HD Diamond tip, and a body made of beautifully machined satiné wood - and has a claimed signal-to-noise ratio of greater than 85dB.

clearaudio

SOUND QUALITY

Some dyed-in-the-groove vinylphiles won't take this Clearaudio package seriously, for two reasons. First, it's a 'one make system', and we all know that's a no-no, isn't it? Second, it's an exceptionally pretty and compact looking device, going against the trend for massive, oversized and excessively showy vinyl replay devices. However, if you cast your 'analogue addict' preconceptions aside, you'll be rewarded with an extremely impressive sonic performer – that just happens to look superb and is easy to set up too.

Kicking off with the 'Allegro' from the 1972 LP release of Haydn's 'Sinfonia Concertante in B-flat Major for Oboe, Bassoon, Violin and Cello', and the timing was accomplished. As such, the layering of successive notes for all the stringed instruments was excellent, with a seamless transition that did not highlight any one instrument or frequency as being distinct or forward. The quality of the violins, for instance, was impressive in their pin-point placement and superb leading edges, where the melodies were clearly articulated. The Ambient was never less than enthusiastically informative and communicative. Additionally, it was able to handle the dynamic crescendos with poise and assuredness, without strain or protest.

Musically, the Ambient was super-clear, detailed and powerful in its low-frequency ferocity with 'She



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V 15 V xMR	N/A			£213	Sony	ND 142/155 0	i, CN234	£13
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ProLogue Seven (NEW) 70W mono power amplifier Tubes: 2 x 12AX7, 2 x 12AU7 and 4 x KT-88 Input: RCA single-ended Outputs: 2, 4 and 8 Ohm

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Sells Sanctuary' by The Cult. I was pleasantly surprised at the ability of the Ambient, as there were no high-frequency ringing distortions via the lead guitars or cymbals from this somewhat bright recording. Consequently, I could appreciate the powerful, very clearly enunciated vocals and stunning guitar melodies for their individual qualities without strain or brittleness, as well as within the greater overall composition, of which these two elements were beautifully a part of. The Ambient was so composed in its ability to take control of the powerful, sometimes wayward dynamics of this song and it did so without stifling the music, which is the danger of some highend hi-fi instruments that are overtly analytical – not so the Ambient. The hard rock music from 'The Cult' was very enjoyable, being completely cohesive and it was delivered with powerful bass extension also.

A relatively simple recording with an acoustic feel, 'Heal The Pain' by George Michael, from the 1990 release of 'Listen Without Prejudice Vol.1', was a delight via the Ambient as the music was of a high resolution nature with excellent balance between the lead vocals, harmony vocals and instruments. The Ambient focused on the intrinsic structure and individual instruments of this song to produce a dynamic, vibrant and powerful reproduction that maintained my undivided attention throughout. It was very communicative in its ability to locate individual elements and then reproduce cohesively, the complete composition.

The energised, ultra-pop production of 'What You Waiting For?' by Gwen Stefani from the 2004 'Love.Angel.Music.Baby' LP was powerful, clear and thrilling in its resolute dynamic ability through the Ambient. Gwen Stefani's vocals were excellent in their clarity, definition and extension - which proved a delight. Instrumental separation was also excellent, as was the timing relationship between the individual instruments and vocals where the music was never dull or loose. Crucially, the music was not fatiguing or harsh either. Finally, the surging bass lines were powerful in their agility and extension, which helped to provide a huge dynamic quality to the Ambient's reproduction of this song.

I compared the £3,200 Clearaudio Ambient turntable and Satisfy Carbon tonearm combination with my more expensive £3,740 Origin Live turntable/arm reference where both used the same £1,230 Clearaudio Concerto MC Cartridge. With the Origin Live system, the reproduction of the 'Haydn: Sinfonia Concertante/Lira Concertos' was almost completely different. The melodies, harmonies and rhythms of the entire composition had a more free-flowing presentation in comparison to the Ambient. Here, the stringed instruments were more delicate because their successive notes became more finessed, where their timbres were better revealed. Overall, the accumulative contribution of the stringed instruments to the musical structure had even better timing than the already excellent Ambient. However, the Ambient was actually more powerful in bass extension (if no better in bass tunefulness) than the Origin Live, where it gave a bolder, structural account to the music.

With rock music by The Cult and the acoustic flavoured 'Heal The Pain' by George Michael, things were more intriguing. The Origin Live had superlor timing and bass tunefulness (but not bass extension) to the Ambient on 'She Sells Sanctuary' by The Cult, with more timbral acuity to the guitars and vocals, but it was less musically cohesive and solid with all the instrumental/vocal elements, which is imperative in communicating the sometimes wayward frequencies of rock music with an appropriate

sense of dynamism. It was very close, but I preferred George Michael's 'Heal the Pain' via the Ambient than the Origin Live, because it was more expressive and animated – importantly without losing out on timing and bass tunefulness. So predominantly, the Origin Live had better timing and timbral finesse, while the Ambient had superior separation and bass extension.

CONCLUSION

The £2,630 Ambient turntable, £570 Satisfy Carbon tonearm and £1,230 Concerto MC cartridge, as a package, is an excellent LP source - and also happens to be, in its ultragloss wood and satin-aluminium sandwich construction, one of the most beautiful designs you'll see. It's therefore compelling as a highend purchase, and being unsprung it isn't an annoyingly complex set-up either. Its strengths include supreme composure, outstanding instrumental separation and excellent bass extension, and crucially it didn't stifle the music or add any unwanted universal acoustical adjuncts, like sweetness or warmth, when they were not present in the recordings. It lacked the complete mastery of spatiality, timing and timbral finesse

that my Origin Live reference system had, but this is logical considering it's more expensive than the Ambient and Satisfy Carbon.

REFERENCE SYSTEM:

Origin Live Resolution turntable/Ultra+P/S & Encounter mkll tonearm (£3,740) Linn Linto phonostage (£995) Densen B-250/B-330 amplification (£6,000) Bosendorfer VC-2 loudspeakers (£4,750)

MUSIC USED:

Württemberg Chamber Orchestra, 'Haydn: Sinfonia Concertante/Lira Concertos' (1972) The Cult, 'Love' (1985) George Michael, 'Listen Without Prejudice Vol.1' (1990) Gwen Stefani, 'Love.Angel.Music.Baby' (2004)

Compared to Clearaudio's own £11,100 Master Reference AMG Wood flagship model, the Ambient is far cheaper and nowhere near as complex in assembly. Considering it is so by being unfussy, elegant and beautifully crafted, it merits serious audition.

VERDICT OOOO £

Superbly finessed sound plus beautiful build and finish make this an exceptionally high achieving 'all-in-one' turntable package.

CLEARAUDIO AMBIENT £2,630 CLEARAUDIO CONCERTO £1,230 CLEARAUDIO SATISFY CARBON DIRECT WIRE £570 Clearaudio Electronic GmbH () +44 (0)1252 702 705 www.audioreference.co.uk

FOR

- outstanding design & build
- excellent, cohesive sound
- deep bass extension

AGAINST

JULY 2006 HI-FI WORLD

- sound could be more open

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Pre-Owned Equipment

Digital

Audio Analogue Maestro Mkll , 3.5yrs old (£1500) Audio Analogue Maestro Mkll , 3.5yrs old (£1500) Consonance 2.2 Linear, brand new! (£1400) Musical Fidelity A308 CD, immaculate (£2000) Musical Fidelity DM25 DAC and Transport (£4000) Audio Analogue Paganini 24/192, boxed (£950) Musical Fidelity kW SACD player, boxed £4000) Urison Research Unico Valve output CD (£1250) DCS Delius 24/192 DAC (£5995) Shanling CDT-100 (3D acoustics UK model) (£1600) Tom Evans Eikos CD Player, two hox (£344) Shanling CDT-100 (3D acoustics UK model) (£1600) Tom Evans Eikos CD Player, two box (£3484) Resolution Audio CD50 cd player, boxed, black (£3k) Musical Fidelity A3.S CD player, boxed (£995) Unison Research Unico CD, latest spec (£1250) Marantz SA-1151 Flagship SACD player (£2000) Wadia 302 CD player, boxed as new, (£4000) Advantage CDIS in black, just fully serviced (£4595) Cyrus CD6, crackle black finish, unmarked (£650) Bel Canto PL-1, boxed as new, ex dem, (£6990) Bel Canto PL-1 Universal CD/DD-A/SACD (£9490)

Amplifiers

Michosh MC252 Power Amp, boxed as new (£3812) Olinpu A1.0x, ex What HiFi review model (£300) Croft TS1 with Epoch Pre, ex-dem (£3000) Qinpu A-8000 MK II, ex HiFi World review model (£1295) Micromega A120 int amp, boxed as new (£899) Micromega A80 amplifier, boxed as new (£695) Miricral Edditus Trivita Lateactad (£000) Micromega A80 amplifier, boxed as new (£695) Musical Fidelity Tri-Vista Integrated (£4000) Canary 301 Valve Power Amp, 300b, superb (£3200) Quad II horty Mono Blocks and OC24 Pre (£4000) Pathos Inpol2 Int amp, 6 months old, as new (£5650) Musical Fidelity kW500, one owner (£4000) JVC AXU1 Integrated, Pure Class A (£2000) Eastem Electric M520 Int amp, What Hi-Fi 5 star review McIntosh MA6500 integrated, boxed (£3317) Audion Silver Night 300B Valve integrated McIntosh MA6500 integrated amplifier (£4549) Audio Research SP14 pre-amplifier, boxed AVI Lab Series amplifier, boxed as new (£1500) AVI Làb Series amplifier, boxed as new (£1500) McIntosh C2200 Valve pre amplifier (£4318) Audio Note Meishu Integrated amplifier (£4300)

ATC SCA2 pre-amplifier, current (facelift) (£3999) Krell KAV500i integrated, very very rare (£5000) Hovland Radia Power amplifier - as new,(£7995)

EAR 864 valve pre amplifier, boxed as new (£2k) Bryston 4BSST-C series, power amp, black (£2750) Musical Fidelity kW (6112 Tube Pre (£3000) Musical Fidelity kW750 power amplifier (£5999) McIntosh MC501 Monoblcks(pair), ex-d (£7800) Roksan Caspian Integrated amplifier (£1000) Graaf GM50 Integrated Valve Amp (£4000) EAR 834L de-luxe line stage valve pre (£1123) Audio Analogue Primo Setanta, silver, ex-dem (£475) Audio Analogue Puccini Settanta (£950) Croft TS1 hybrid power amp, ex-d, unmarked(£2000) Pass Labs X350.5, supplied by us new (£7600) McIntosh MA227S valve int (£5773) as new, ex-dem McIntosh MHT200 8x140 watts, ex-dem (£6503) ATC SPA2 150 power amplifier (£3400) Audio Innovations 2nd Audio Monoblocks (£3000) Bel Canto Pre2, boxed as new, ex-dem (£2999) Bel Canto EVO 2i, boxed as new (£2750) Hovland HP100 pre+built in phstage (£5350) Hovland HP200 + phono stage (£732S)

Loudspeakers Living Voice Avatar II in maple, new in Jan 06 (£3k) Kef Reference 1.2, black, 2yrs old (£1350) Gershman Acoustics Avantgarde speakers, finished in Piano Black (£7900) Merlin VSM MM in exc condition 10/10 (f8000) Merlin VSM MM in exc condition 10/10 (FR000) Living Voice OBXR2 speakers, as new, ex-dem. (£4400) JAS Audio Supertweeters, review pair (£649) W[son Benesch Discovery, 5 months old (£5700) PMC OB1 speakers in cherry, bowed as new (£2700) ATC SCM-20A S (active) Tower spkrs, walnut (£5177) Ref 3a Dacapo i, boxed as new in maple (£2700) PEI CMODE in unwersite in comprism maple (£1200) REL Q400E subwoofer in premium maple (£1200) Wilson Benesch ARC's with stands, silver finish (**£2.5k**) Living Voice Auditorium II in Cherry (£2195) **World Radio History**

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1095	Dali Helicon 400, boxed as new (£3300)	£1995
1995	Triangle Heliade, Champagne finish (£595)	£395
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3795	Quad 988 ESL in Nouveau, cost new £3750	£2999
POA	Audio Physic Virgo III, Cherry	£2895
£395	Analogue	
2795	Trichord Dino with Dino+ psu, silver (£498)	£195
E69S	Lehmann Silver Cube SE Phono Stage (£2250)	£1399
£2S9	Wilson Benesch Full Circle, boxed as new (£2100)	£1495
£695	Roksan Xerxes with brand new Tabriz Zi arm	£795
£995	Trichord Dino + never connected power supply	£495
4995	Bluenote Bellaria Reference Tonearm (£1500)	£795
POA	Mark Levinson JC-1 phono stage, very very rare	£1495
3950	SME 10a, boxed as new 9mnths old only(£3600)	£1995
1995	Michelle Gyrodeck, Origin Live Tonearm,	£995
£995	Trichord Never Connected PSU+DC motor,	2775
POA	boxed, manuals, one owner, excellent. (£2000+)	
POA	Krell KPE Reference Phono Stage	£1395
3595	SME 10, boxed AS NEW (£2800)	£1895
1995	SME 20/2a + SME V tonearm (£5695)	£369S
	Nottingham Analogue Spacedec	£69S
1995	Trichord Dino - silver front	£199
E49S	Miscellaneous	
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THE VILLAGE GREEN PRESERVATION SOCIETY THE KINKS 1968

his a sort of concept album - although there's a lack of a basic topic, it does have a comprehensible - if slightly abstract - theme. 'Village Green...' examines English

traditions but looks at them in a nostalgic manner. It even notes their passing with a sad tone and a warm fondness for their memory. The entire album is full of stories packed with characters who live in this 'England'. A place that never really existed as a unified whole but as a type of created collective.

Kinks' front man and songwriter, Ray Davies, scanned his thoughts and memories for these disparate times and people and placed them into one place and at one time - within the boundaries of this album. 'Village Green...' also stands as an unabashed polar opposite to its contemporary, The Beatles' 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' which was awash with countercultural themes from the late sixties. This Kinks' release took its own viewpoint from the other side of the cultural fence. It represented the views of the befuddled middle classes who saw their old certainties fading away ...

"I go out of my way to like ordinary things," Davies said in a 1967 interview, about 'Village Green...'."I cling on to the simple values. I thought, well, why not write something about things you truly care about? I wrote this song about friendship, 'Do You Remember Walter?' It's about a real friend that exists. To me that was all-important. I wanted a record that would not necessarily get airplay but would be played for friends and at parties - just play the record like playing a demo. And I achieved that and it didn't get any airplay at all. It became a cult record as a result. I originally wanted it to be 'Under Milk Wood', something like that, but I never got the chance to do it because we had to make albums. Somebody told me that I preserve things, and I like village greens and preservation societies. The title track is the national anthem of the album."

The performances are lowkey, whilst the band are studied in their musical craft. There appears to be more introspection about the production but don't confuse that with banality; there are umpteen layers to this ground-breaking piece which was destined to influence many top British bands of more recent times.

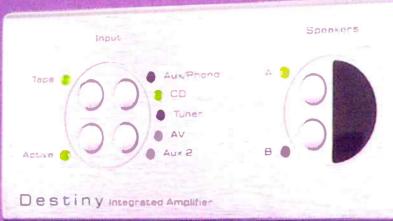
For CD users, the edition to hunt down is the Special Deluxe Edition via Sanctuary. Just about every other CD edition is to be avoided due to poor mastering. This 3CD version squeezes a lot into the package: the first disk includes a stereo mix of the album, bonus tracks and mixes whilst disk two features a mono mix of the album, more bonus tracks and mixes and, finally, the third disk adds further of bonus tracks, mixes and instrumentals. It is not perfect, mind you, as the sound quality is patchy.

The reasons for this are complex. Firstly, for those masters which have been used as a basis for regular reissues over the years, such as the original mono masters, they show both their age and wear. These poor original masters appear not to have received much in the way of restorative care and attention. Also, the original stereo mix of the album is not well engineered and sounds like it was constructed by a third party engineer – not the same chap who handled the monos (who, I hear, was Ray Davies himself). The problem, however, is that the stereo masters are the most listenable due to their better condition.

However, for those extra bonus track masters which have not been played too much, their reproduction is excellent. They are clear, dynamic and, for the first time, allow you to hear whole instruments in the recording. Importantly, one of the bonus tracks, 'Johnny Thunder', has been created, from scratch, as a new stereo master and sounds magnificent. In many ways, it is a crying shame because it illustrates just what the rest of the album could and should have sounded like.

For vinyl fans, the best current release is the excellent 3LP production from Earmark, which is similarly based on the Sanctuary masters but has been produced in Italy. It arrives in a thick card, fold out gatefold. The best version of all, in terms of sound quality, is the original UK vinyl release, followed by the original US vinyl release. **PR**

See page 130 for more Classic Cuts



Fate-I Attraction

The Destiny series is said to feature Creek Audio's best ever design and build. Here, Channa Vithana auditions the company's new high end integrated amplifier...

t £1,200, the new Creek Destiny integrated amplifier lands itself right into the middle of a very interesting and highly competitive sector. Here, upper-budget contenders such as the Naim Nait 5i (£699) and Sugden A21a (£899) are skirmishing with mid-priced integrated designs like the Eastern Electric valve M520 (£1,539) and Moon Audio's i-3 (£1,595) as best choice for an attainably priced yet high-performance machine.

How then does the Creek Destiny distinguish itself? Well, principally it's now superbly constructed and sleek-by-design, yet still retains the current Creek visual identity of slimline proportions and contrasting silver front panel. Compare it to a past Creek amplifier and you can literally feel its metal clad eminence, as the smoothly contoured surfaces utilising 4mm thick aluminium plates and excellent flush fitted panels make for an impressively damped enclosure, unlike much of its price competition. I have previously only seen this particularly elegant and effective resonance control, using 4mm aluminium casework, on products from the high

end German brand Phonosophie. Internally, Creek claim

improvement over previous models, saying that the Destiny's unique MOSFET power amp circuitry is an evolution of the design first used by Creek products in 1993. Improvements in the Destiny include, it is claimed, the use of SMT (Surface Mount Technology) to reduce the size and space of the amplifier performance", say Creek. In addition, both left and right channels now have their own low impedance DC power supplies, fed from two separate Schottky Barrier diode bridge rectifiers and multi-capacitor reservoirs, totalling 20,000 micro Farads. Input selection is now performed by a separate relay for each of the five line inputs plus the single tape loop. Input selection is

"it has an interesting and rare ability to provide a deep, fullbodied sound, with excellent timbre and dynamics..."

circuitry and improve the layout. This allows the signal path and amplification to be located on the top layer of the circuit board and the power supplies and ground plane to be located on the bottom layer.

'Dual Mono' construction and a massive 300VA low noise toroidal transformer with separate windings for the preamp and power amp circuitry "has greatly improved the visibly indicated by LEDs which have four user adjustable, brightness levels.

The Destiny has a range of useful functionality; firstly in the form of eight, biwirable, very high quality speaker cable binding posts at the rear and switchable A and B speaker selection for different zones via the Creek Link RJ45 connectivity sockets or off position for the headphone output at the front. Secondly, the gain

REVIEW



can be adjusted in three steps, where Creek says, "the Destiny amp has the unusual feature of allowing the user to choose between a sonically perfect passive (no gain) preamplifier and a high precision, active preamplifier. The active stage (on front panel switch), which uses a Burr-Brown OPA-2134 precision op-amp for each channel, has the added feature of a +3dB, +6dB or +9dB gain boost user selectable with a three-way slider switch, located on the underside of the preamp section".

The Destiny can be adjusted in use as a pre or power amplifier through extra phono sockets and a recessed switch in the back panel. Finally, new plug-in Destiny MM or MC phonostages and "in the near future, a high-end 24bit D to A converter to allow the amp to accept S/PDIF signals on both Aux1 inputs" can be fitted. Creek says that "the Destiny amp will automatically recognise which plug-in feature has been installed and indicate this on the front panel.". The basic product comes with a linking PCB that treats Aux I as a line level input. The

remote controlled Destiny measures 430x70x310mm and weighs 10kg.

SOUND QUALITY

Starting off with Elgar/ Barbirolli, 'The Dream Of Gerontius', and the opening non-lead violin sections of

the orchestra were well placed in my 6x4m listening room, and also had a high level of timbral detailing. Lead vocals were clear and nicely enunciated in timbre, as well as showing good phrasing from note to note. The backdrop to the music



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IAG House, Sovereign Court, Ermine Business Park, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 6XU, Tel 01480 447700 Fax 01480 431767 was particularly silent, enabling more than the instruments and vocals to be the Moon to expressed with excellent separation. music from th As such, the completely different Dream Of Ge timbre and expression of the male wider spatiality and female choirs were deftly vocals had be

and female choirs were deftly executed - where these seemingly opposite vocal renditions, which went from whisper-quiet tonal shading to powerful crescendos, were revealed with sophistication.

The music was nicely balanced with 'Flamenco. A. Go. Go' by guitarist Steve Stevens, and once again the musical backdrop onto which the instruments were revealed was very quiet. The eclectic and melodic mixture of electronic programming and beautifully played flamenco guitar was really enjoyable with the Creek. The timbre to the strings of the guitar was superb with a nice 'fat' tone which in combination with Steven's heady guitar phrasing and expression made for a captivating experience, as the sound was both fulsome and detailed.

With the new (AFX) Aphex Twin compilation 'Chosen Lords,' the Creek was animated and had a fine level of intelligibility in revealing the complex patterns of rough and smooth textures to 'Fenix Funk 5'. The beautiful trademark Aphex Twin melodies have returned in abundance with 'Chosen Lords', and were allowed to be expressed in their delicately layered entirety along with the pulsating programmed rhythms, with neither dominating the composition.

As the elongated feedback-like opening melody to 'Spanked' from Van Halen's 'For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge' gave way to the grinding guitar, bass and drums, the Creek did not struggle in revealing the compound assortment of superbly recorded instruments and vocals. This particular Van Halen CD can catch out lesser hi-fi instruments by sounding overblown in the bass and highly compressed overall. However, the Creek was more than capable of unravelling the busy and heavy mix so the subtleties within the composition were comprehensible along with the throbbing slam and dynamics.

How does the Creek compare with my current mid-price reference, the (£1,595) Moon Audio i-3 integrated? At approximately £400 more than the Creek, I was expecting the Moon to do well. And so the music from the Elgar/Barbirolli 'The Dream Of Gerontius' CD had a wider spatiality to it and the lead vocals had better layering, phrasing and fluidity. However, the Moon had a distinct disadvantage in that it had more background noise than the quieter Creek, which made it sound ever so slightly looser on the Elgar piece.

There was better timing on offer from the Moon with Steve Steven's 'Flamenco. A. Go. Go' DVD-A, with a more free-flowing attitude but the Creek had a finer, rounded instrumental timbre, especially to the flamenco guitar in comparison and thus the Moon was less full bodied.

Interestingly the Moon was less sophisticated than the Creek when it came to reproducing Van Halen's busier tracks such as 'Spanked' and 'Top Of The World'. The Moon had a higher level of spatiality and thus a more open sound along with better timing than the Creek, but the timbre and body of the vocals and instruments were not as solid or isolated enough to enjoy them as much in comparison. The Moon was more effortless and dynamic in feel, while the Creek was better at intricate details like the reverb/ echo to a vocal or guitar. This was

especially so with the acoustic instrumental track called '316' which is a beautifully lush and simplistically enticing guitar piece that the Moon reproduced with a crisp, expressive brio yet the Creek was deeper, bolder and more full bodied with the timbre and the amount of echo/ reverb on the recording was more prevalent.

The Creek is full bodied and rounded when the music requires it to be, as on the Van Halen CD. However, the Creek was almost the equal and just as expressive, in comparison to the more expensive Moon, when it came to 'Fenix Funk 5' by Aphex Twin. Here the Moon was just about better with timing but in all other respects, such as the resolution of the individual instrumental tracks within a song, the rhythm and feel of the beat programming; the Creek was also excellent in reproducing this vibrantly melodic piece of electronica.

CONCLUSION

This new Destiny Creek integrated has the rare ability to cut right through into a recording, showcasing the space around instruments that create atmospherics and emotional feel - without sounding in the least bit clinical. Indeed the Creek has an interesting and rare ability to provide a deep, full-bodied sound, with excellent timbre and dynamics. It may not have quite the timing, effortless speaker driving ability and rhythm of some, more expensive, rivals, but

MUSIC

Elgar/Barbirolli, 'The Dream Of Gerontius' (1965) Steve Stevens, 'Flamenco. A. Go. Go' DVD-A (2001) Aphex Twin, 'Chosen Lords' (2006) Van Halen, 'For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge' (1991)

REFERENCE SYSTEM:

Onkyo DV-SP1000E universal player (£2,800) Moon Audio i-3 integrated amplifier (£1,595) Spendor S9e loudspeakers (£2,995)

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

JULY 2006 HI-FI WORLD

The slimly packaged Creek produces a healthy 105W into 8ohms and 170W into 4ohms - enough to go very loud with most loudspeakers in most rooms. Whilst midband distortion is low there was a significant and unexpected rise toward high frequencies, more than Creeks of old I recall and more than is expected nowadays. Importantly though, the distortion was predominantly second harmonic and this pattern held under a wide range of frequency and level. It's likely this is deliberate as there are benefits, notably lack of distortion modulation. Even at 0.3% the level of second produced is too small to be audible.

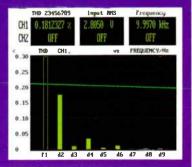
Bandwidth was a normal enough 1.5IIz-42kHz and noise low, due largely to low gain and insensitive inputs, as standard. Gain can be increased to 210mV maximum using a slide switch. The Destiny is a neatly engineered

amplifier that, measurement shows, is

World Radio History faworld co uk

a little specialised. It follows others in this and should sound both different and interesting. NK

Power	TUSWatts
CD/tuner/aux.	
Frequency response	1.5Hz-42kHz
Separation	71dB
Noise	-105dB
Distortion	0.18%
Sensitivity	600mV



REVIEW

VERDICT OOOO£

Superb build, useful power plus a deep full bodied sound make this an excellent mid-price buy.

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FOR

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- well-rounded sound

AGAINST

- timing

REVIEW



Any worldly-wise audiophile will remember the glory days of Onkyo. In the seventies and eighties, the brand had a redoubtable reputation for high quality sound. Now, in the A-9755 amplifier, the company is putting itself back on the map, thinks David Price.

t's just a feeling, but speaking to a number of Japanese manufacturers (rather than their UK distributors), I get the sense that Japan Inc. feels more than a little threatened by their massive next door neighbour, the People's Republic of China.

Chinese hi-fi, with its amazing perceived value and often very weird (and sometimes wonderful) styling and/or packaging, has made a big dent on a market that the land of the Rising Sun has had almost entirely to itself for three decades – budget to mid-price specialist hi-fi.

Of course, Japanese companies have been manufacturing in Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and so on for many years, but it hasn't been until recently that non-Japanese brands have sprung up and started stealing 'their' market share. – so marked is the success of the likes of Shanling, Ming Da, JungSon et al. The perception is simply that Chinese hi-fi gives more for your money.

Interestingly, in amplification,

the rise of Digital has handed the advantage back to the Japanese. Due to vastly improved thermal and electrical efficiency, the materials cost of doing a Class D amp is lower, but the expertise required for a serious sounding one costs much more – and this is where Japanese audio engineers are ahead.

Onkyo's Sekiya San is one such designer whose golden ears have given his company's products an extremely accomplished sound. Whilst he proved his mettle with Harman Kardon's famed Citation series back in the eighties, he's now working extensively with Class D, and has done more than almost anyone else in the industry (l'd say) to get great results from it at an affordable price – enter the A-9755...

Whereas the Chinese may be able to offer massive Class A power amps, with vast amounts of sheet metalwork (not especially well finished, it has to be said), Class D means the Japanese can now do brilliantly finessed, technologically state-of-the-art stuff, immaculately built and finished in Japan – and compete on price terms too.

Aesthetically, the A-9755 is a blast from the past; finished in factory black, it could be straight from 1986. I can't get excited about the look of this bit of kit; you can tell its tried and trusted, identikit Jap amp styling won't offend you're average Osaka salaryman, and that's about all there is to say.

However, as a tactile rather than an aesthetic experience, it's impressive. Flawlessly finished (the finely brushed aluminium front panel looks ten times better than anything from Shanling, for example) with large control knobs and buttons with a beautifully positive action (think Lexus switchgear), this is sheer joy to use, and reminds me why 1 first fell in love with Japanese hi-fi.

The fascia isn't exactly short of things to press, and many readers here will be horrified to see tone controls fitted, and even a Loudness button! Fortunately these can all be switched out, and better still, the entire preamplifier can be switched out by pressing the 'Main In' button in for three seconds. This done, the blue volume LED extinguishes and the 9755 becomes a power amplifier – and a very good one too (more of which later).

Pleasingly, there's an MM phono stage fitted (along with CD, Tuner, HDD, Tape, MD, and Line inputs), and it seems Onkyo have really taken this seriously. Whereas most RIAA phono equalisers use op-amps and negative feedback to get good signal-to-noise ratio and dynamic range numbers, the 9755 has a discrete transistor stage with thick copper bus bars are used for earthing. There's also switching for two pairs of speakers.

The amplifier is also equipped with Onkyo's Remote Interactive (RI) system, which as well as allowing other RI-equipped components to be controlled via the remote control, also makes it compatible with the new Onkyo DS-A1 iPod dock [reviewed on p26] which lets iPod owners operate their device via the A-9755's remote control, as well as listen to their music via it. Usefully, the dock also charges the iPod and works with all dockable iPods.

Being Class D, it of course, most of the amplification circuitry is done on just a cluster of ICs, so the not inconsiderable 13kg weight is explained by its 'Pure Stream Power Supply' which uses two sizeable frame type transformers. Inside, there's the associated gubbins that comes with PWM (Pulse Width Modulation) digital amps, but it's augmented here by Onkyo's VL Digital analogue-to-digital conversion technology (now in its third generation), which Onkyo says, "delivers a dramatic decrease in the pulse noise that plagues other digital amplifiers".

Onkyo's Optimum Gain Volume Circuitry is another bespoke bolt-on, said to adjust signal gain to decrease the amount of attenuation necessary at low volumes (to typically less than half the usual), which in turn means that the signal never comes even close to the noise-floor, "eliminating the possibility of noise polluting the audio signal". The output stage circuitry is all discrete, and there's serious attention to detail shown on earthing with a thick, low-impedance bus plate. Audiophile-grade capacitors are in evidence, and the whole shebang sits on a rigid, anti-resonant chassis fitted with brass stabilisers.

SOUND QUALITY

I'd had Onkyo's very own Sekiya San in my house just a month earlier, listening to his tiny A-933 'mini compo' amplifier drive my room to high levels with surprising alacrity, so I was interested to see what he'd done with 9755, which is essentially a 'full fat' 933. If you know the 933, you'll know it's a rich, warm and surprisingly powerful sounding little thing, which in absolute terms is a tad soft and over generous in the bass, hazy in the mid and overly silky up top. It's also not the most lithe and dynamic, but still makes a nicer noise "it's essentially an extremely powerful yet consummately couth performer ..."

than most other £500 amplifiers I've heard. It's flawed in the best, most euphonic way possible – which was the secret of the classic NAD3020's success.

GD

PHONO

TUNER

INTEGRATED AMPLIFER A-9755

TAPE

1 D

The A-9755 follows this general trend; working as an integrated (as opposed to via its 'Main In' power amplifier mode), it is big, plump and commandingly powerful. I have heard few similarly priced amplifiers come anywhere close in their ability to deliver clean power, including Marantz's very nice PM7100 K1 Sig. At the risk of boring our readers stupid, I kicked off with 4hero's



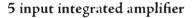
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KEL84 kit £325 KEL84 built and tested £499



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World Radio History

REVIEW

'Cosmic Tree', complete with its vast, menacing Moog bass lines – which really sort the men from the boys. The Onkyo was well up to it, the opening strings were decently smooth – duller, in fact, than Marantz's PM7100 K1 Sig, if a little less defined texturally. When the bass kicked in, I was left in no doubt as to how well the Onkyo's power supplies have been done – the 9755 was commanding.

Moving quickly to The Specials' 'Do Nothing' and the bass guitar had a tremendously fulsome sound that was tonally quite warm - almost valve like, in fact. Whereas the considerably more expensive NuForces are ultra tight and clean, it seems that Sekiya San has added a little fat for good measure here. This makes sense, as he's a massive tube aficionado. Despite being big downstairs, so to speak, the bass was still nicely tuneful, and most emphatically didn't follow the blueprint of many Japanese super integrateds I've heard in this respect, which is to seemingly be only able to play one note on the scale.

Midband was a veritable pleasure too. It's not the most tightly defined I've heard - especially in soundstaging terms it sounds rather diffuse, but boy is it big! The 'cinemascope' soundstaging is, I suspect, a cheeky bit of tweaking from Sekiya san in preamp section, because when I moved to using this amp in it's 'Main In' (i.e. power amp only) mode, things became far more neutral, accurate and tightly defined. As an integrated amplifier however, the 9755 pushes the soundstage wider than it should be, and the result is a vast, expansive sound that suits the budget ancillaries it's likely to be used with to a tee.

What you get, then, is a larger than life sound with a sumptuous bass bloom. Again, it's very '21st century NAD' - big, fat and almost supernaturally expansive. Again, compared to the excellent Marantz PM7001 KI Sig, it's a little less accurate and architectural, and more valve-like in the Quad II sense letting you get into the recorded acoustic and 'walk around it'. The Who's 'Won't Get Fooled Again' was a treat - everything was larger than life, bigger and better than perhaps it really should be, and immensely enjoyable as a result.

Capacious from left to right it may be, but it's not so hot from front to back. Things are a tad twodimensional; depth perspective leaves something to be desired. The image hangs back just behind the plane of the speakers, but still sucks you in thanks to its sheer left-to-right scale. At the price, I've yet to encounter anything that's convincingly superior in this respect, however. Up top, like all good digital amps, the Onkyo sports nice gentle, finessed treble detailing and just a little 'glint' that brightens things up slightly.

Okay, so it's an expansive sounding performer then, but how does it do in musical terms? Surprisingly perhaps, it's accomplished. Considering its aforementioned, big fat bass, you might be forgiven for expecting it to be rhythmically indistinct, but it isn't. In no way is it as explicit as a Naim NAIT 5i, for example, but it certainly isn't backward in coming forward to tell you about the timing and dynamic expressiveness of a song. Again, Lou Donaldson's 'Alligator Bogaloo' shows the Onkyo is a jaunty and musically engaging listen. Because its midband is essentially very right, the song just breezes along. It doesn't wow you with the 'spaces between the notes', but it's so naturally 'right' that its lack of Naim-like rhythmic syncopation doesn't detract. Put simply, you feel the dynamic expressiveness of the performance and languish in its warm, powerful sound.

One of the interesting things about the Onkyo A-933 is the change when you switch the preamp out of circuit. Sekiya san happily admitted that the preamp sections of his amplifiers are 'voiced' to add warmth and scale, simply because if the amp is used as a standalone, then it's likely it's going to be partnered with budget ancillaries, and this sort of euphonic colouration goes down very well indeed. Switch to 'Main

In' and you're into an altogether different ball game...

Well, driven by the excellent MF Audio Passive Preamplifier, the 9755's power amplifier section seems to 'dissolve'. The amplifier becomes altogether less 'present', and sounds far cleaner and more transparent for it. Compared to the substantially pricier NuForces, of course, it still sounds murky and indistinct, but you're still left in no doubt whatsoever that it's essentially an extremely powerful yet consummately couth performer. It took my Yamaha NS1000Ms by the scruff of the neck, and showed absolutely no qualms about pushing

REFERENCE SYSTEM:

- Michell GyroDec/TecnoArm/Koetsu Rosewood Signature
- Whest Audio PS.20/Msu20 phonostage
- MF Audio Passive Preamp
- NuForce Reference 9SE power amplifiers
- Marantz PM7001KI Signature integrated amplifier
- Yamaha NS1000M speakers

them really loud with no signs of stress or sibilance. In absolute terms, it's still a little full in the bass, a tad two dimensional and slightly diffuse in terms of midband detailing and image location, and not the most dynamically expressive, but it's still an extremely enjoyable listen. A CD player with a high quality variable output, plus the A-9755 in 'main in' mode, will be an extremely convincing combination at the price.

CONCLUSION

Considering its price, there are few integrated amplifiers that offer its blend of features, power, versatility and beguiling sound quality - if any. Rega's Brio is a brilliant budget bit of kit, and I have to say has a similar benignly coloured character, but the Onkyo adds massive power and the flexibility of tone controls and power amp direct operation, and as such is well worth the extra, if the aforementioned features seem in any way relevant to you. Don't let this amplifier's retro 'eighties' styling deceive you - this is an ultra modern, beautifully voiced performer offering fantastic sound per pound. That brilliant Japanese build (and concomitant reliability, I'm sure) is just icing on the cake.

VERDICT

Beautifully built, usefully versatile and truly enjoyable sonics make this another great superb affordable audiophile product from Onkvo.

ONKYO A-9755 £699.95 Onkyo ©+44 (0) 1494 681515 www.onkyo.co.uk

FOR

- large, full sound
- serious power
- build quality

AGAINST

- bland styling

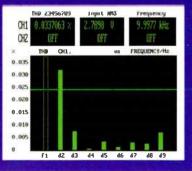
MEASURED PERFORMANCE

This is the most civilized digital amplifier I have yet measured, in that it doesn't spew out large amounts of RF around 350kHz, nor does it run the loudspeaker lines at +26V d.c. or so. Also encouraging was the fact that in audio terms it is pretty decent, producing 144W into 8ohms and 225W into 4ohms at not-excessive levels of distortion. Like the NuForce in this issue, the Onkyo breaks into parasitic oscillation at high outputs, and distortion residuals have an extended and highly variable harmonic structure, although having said that you will see our 10kHz / 1W analysis clearly shows second harmonic predominates. Managing around 0.02% distortion at 1kHz and 0.04% at 10kHz, at low powers the A-9755 is pretty good, if not up to a Lyngdorf. However, like the NuForce in this issue - and unlike the Lyngdorf - it is not band limited at 20kHz. Frequency response rises to +1.2dB at 20kHz and to +5dB at 76kHz, a feature that will ensure its

sound is bright.

As digital amplifiers go the A-9755 is a good one, measurement shows. It will have a bright balance though. NK

Power	144watts	
CD/tuner/aux.		
Frequency response	3Hz-19kHz	
Separation	82dB	
Noise	-94dB	
Distortion	0.04%	
Sensitivity	200mV	
D.C. Offset	6mV / 5mV	





Listen Carefully

Calm and intelligent equipment demonstrations for lovers of all types of music

Well, hello - and welcome to my world

I represent a handful of suppliers in my deliberately small specialist showroom in North London. Through choice I have no staff – and I probably never will.

This means that the ultimate size of my twin businesses (I own simply-STAX) is limited by the care I can offer my customers. If there's a danger that I'm spreading myself too thin, then I'll put the brake on expansion. I may even contract back until it becomes relaxed again. Fine. I'm happy with that possibility.

Every aspect of the demonstration & installation is taken care of by me. I am inescapably accountable for your total satisfaction. I wouldn't have it any other way – and neither would my customers

I represent the following:

Ayre (amplification and digital source). The Brinkmann vinyl replay system. Cassiel power cords. Esoteric (digital source). Grand Prix (isolation). LAT (XLR interconnect & power distribution). Mark Levinson (amplification & digital source). Lyra (analogue). Stereovox (interconnects). Sumiko (analogue). Thiel loudspeakers.

I don't have ...

Anything to do with plasmas, home cinemas, cable bandits, dynamics-crushing mains filters or anything else I'm not passionate about.

At heart ...

I'm a systems man. This means that while I'm happy to suggest and demonstrate various items that should and probably will make an immediate and worthwhile improvement in your current set-up, my specialisation is getting components to work together - *as a properly integrated system*. The benefits are clear.

Putting an end to costly and desperate upgrades

It's true that going the system route is a bigger initial investment in the short-term, but you save overall in the long-term by avoiding *unnecessary* upgrades.

Trade-ins?

I'm happy to discuss this.

System 1

Ayre CX-7e CD & AX-7e integrated. Thiel CS1.6 loudspeakers. LAT power distribution, XLR connections & speaker leads. Cassiel CAS4 power cords. This is by far the most musically satisfying system I've heard up to £10k - yet it costs far less. Add the Brinkmann Oasis and you have a magnificent vinyl replay facility too.

System 2

Ayre C-5xe digital multi-format. The Ayre K-1xe preamp & V-5xe power amp. The Thiel CS2.4 loudspeakers. LAT power distribution, XLR connections & speaker leads. Cassiel CAS4 power cords. And as an option, the incomparable Brinkmann VRS

It's very hard to get more musically satisfying than this. Hard, but not impossible - *at a price*. That's system 3.

System 3

No words of mine can do this justice Just come and listen. Then you'll understand.

Substitutions

Depending on taste and budget, Esoteric digital can be substituted for Ayre. Mark Levinson digital & amplification can be substituted for either Ayre or Esoteric.

There are no intelligent substitutions here for

THE BRINKMANN VRS (Vinyl replay system)

Quite simply the most musically satisfying vinyl system I have ever heard anywhere at any price.

Probably because I have the world's first **Brinkmann** 10.5 tone arm which is both electrically balanced and with XLR outputs. The reduction in background noise and increase in dynamics over the standard 10.5 is mouth-watering. Of course, bearing in mind that few preamps have XLR-equipped phono stages, you'll need a state-of-the-art phono stage. That's the **Ayre** P-5xe. Incidentally, the 10.5 is in effect a **Breuer** 8 Dynamic, but 10.5" in length. Naturally, it sits on the magnificent **LaGrange** turntable.

For Listen Carefully, Mr. Brinkmann personally sets up the 10.5, his **EMT Titanium** cartridge and **LaGrange** and fine tunes it through his **Lumen White** loudspeakers. The arm with the cartridge is packed in one heavy duty wooden case while the base and platter sit in another. It arrives in the U.K. personally tuned by the master. You're up and running in 7 minutes. Nothing is left to chance. Literally nothing.

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Brinkmann nor Thiel. Currently they stand head and shoulders above *anything* else in their price band!

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That's because I offer just one demonstration slot in the morning, one in the afternoon and occasionally one in the evening. No fuss, no hurry, no interruptions, no other visitors, no parking wardens – and no coercion.

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reek's beautiful new Destiny CD player is one of the best sub-£2,000 silver disc spinners around, and here's your chance to win one! Here's what

Patrick Cleasby said about it in June 2006's issue:

"Once fired up using the sleek brushed aluminium front panel switchgear, which sits snugly in a gorgeous 10mm thick aluminium front panel, the standby light goes from amber to green, the simple green display burns attractively and the transport welcomes the first disc. The musical results that emanate from the player are deeply satisfying. David Gilmour's 'Castellorizon' is a glorious tour-de-force stereo tester, with decaying guitar pings dropping from centre to right. The Creek portrayed this with great gusto and pinpoint accuracy; the orchestral work throughout is recorded beautifully, and the swell before the initial guitar solo was rendered with emphatic power, while retaining discrete appreciation of the sections of the orchestra. As the solo comes in, the orchestra seems intimately to hug the central image of Gilmour's blazing, rich guitar tone, giving a great sense of a cohesive blend of rock and strings.

Moving to 'On An Island' itself, which features the sublime high vocal harmonies of David Crosby and Graham Nash (which can be very hard indeed for a common or garden

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- THE EDITOR'S DECISION IS FINAL
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CD player to convey convincingly), and the Creek managed to present separate virtual audio images of the two legends, with none of the sibilant harshness that can result from less able players. This track was also a fine indicator of one of the most distinctive and enjoyable properties of the Creek - its ability to make bass guitar more than just a lowend presence in the room, making it sound like it is actually an instrument being played by a human. A brief spin of 'Also Sprach Zarathustra' from the RCA Living Stereo Hybrid SACD demonstrated an attractive panoramic orchestral soundstage and a creamy trumpet tone. The Creek really rocks then, and is a joy to listen to... (a) tremendously powerful, engaging and musically articulate CD spinner."

If you'd like to win this stunning CD spinner, then all you have to do is answer the following four easy questions. Send your entries on a postcard by 30th June 2006 to: July Competition 2006, *Hi-Fi World* magazine, Unit G4, Argo House, The Park Business Centre, Kilburn Park Road, London NW6 5LF.

QUESTIONS

[1] The front panel is made of what? [a] brushed aluminium [b] Perspex [c] pressed steel [d] carbon fibre

[2] What colour is the display? [a] green [b] fuscia [c] mauve [d] peach

[4] How did the Creek portray 'Castellorizon'?
[a] "with great gusto"
[b] "with consummate ease"
[c] "with unbridled passion"
[d] "with playful insouciance"

[4] According to Patrick, the Creek "really... then"? [a] "rocks" [b] "kicks" [c] "sucks" [d] "ticks"

July Competition Hi-Fi World magazine Unit G4 Argo House The Park Business Centre Kilburn Park Rd. London NW6 5LF

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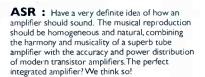
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VISA

we have.



Basis : The philosophies underlying Basis designs are sound principles of physics; provable concepts that result in the most accurate replay of records possible. Did we mention that they look visually stunning?

Kings Audio : We are the south coast main dealer for this exciting new range of affordable electrostatic loudspeakers from Kings Audio. If you love full-range electrostatics you must audition these!

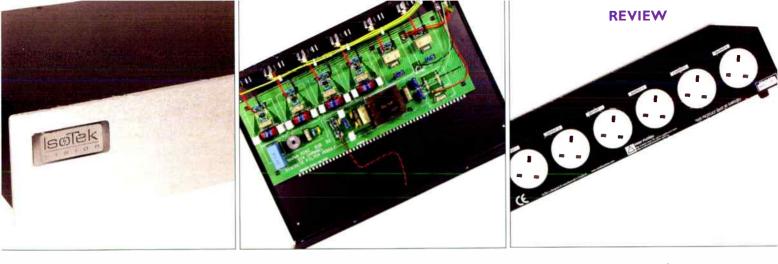
Luxman: A range of products are available and we just have to mention the L-509F Integrated model.

Falling in love with the sound of the L-509F Integrated Amplifier is easy but leaving our place without one could prove rather more challenging!

Music First: David Price says. "The MF Audio pre is extremely open and sophisticated musical performer that betters a number of even more expensive designs." We definitely agree!

Just a few of our latest used bargains...

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Audion Silver Knights with Border Patrol	£1800
Audio Research VS55	£1800
AVI Preamp	£295
Cadence Arca Speakers	£2750
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Conrad Johnson Premier 8A Monoblocks	£6500
Krell FPB250 Monoblocks	£4500
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Marantz PM17 Integrated Amp	£800
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Mark Levinson 383 Integrated Amplifier	£2800
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VTL 225 Deluxe Monoblocks	£2200



Looking like a power amplifier yet featuring six filtered power outputs, the Isotek GII Vision is claimed to enhance both hi-fi and AV systems with better quality mains. Channa Vithana listens in...

The Mains Thing

t's not everyone who would contemplate spending £550 on something you can buy from lkea for £5, but to be fair, this isn't quite comparing like with like. The pricier item is a an extremely well made and meticulously designed AC mains distribution unit, the latter a cheap-as-chips power block from China!

Indeed, the GII Vision does more than just distribute power. Isotek says that the six outputs are individually filtered to stop components 'talking' to each other or corrupting the clean supply provided by the unit. This is achieved by a series of delta filters on the outputs and a 'sophisticated filter circuit' inspired by work in cryogenics. The company says, "it harnesses the technique used for the switching of cryogenic coils", and talks of its so-called "'Polaris-X' technology that draws mains contaminants away from audio components plugged into the unit.

On the rear panel there six, numbered, unswitched sockets. Numbers one and two have higher current capability, and are rated at 10 amps, making them suitable for integrated amplifiers and plasma screens, etc., while the other four sockets can be used with a source component like a CD or DVD player each having a 6.3 amp rating.

Internally Isotek have hand soldered all the components with silver solder and use 'under stressed' parts for long life. The Isotek's large PCB also features a ground plane upper surface acting as a common mode filter across the whole board, which Isotek says allows the unit to act as a true Faraday cage, protecting itself from RFI and other components from the job it performs. The Isotek also has power surge protection for all units connected to it.

It's no small fry, the Isotek, and should be placed on a dedicated equipment shelf and kept off the floor to allow adequate ventilation from underneath. Its vital statistics are 444x85x305mm and 7kg.

SOUND QUALITY

With the lsotek connected, the gorgeous underlying melody to 'Allegro Moderato' from the Sibelius/ Nielsen CD became more lucid and involving while the main violin melody intro had enhanced timbre and air. As the composition swells, the violin goes from higher to lower frequencies, the main orchestration begins and - a vastly broader acoustic and musical weight was presented.

Blondie's 'Sunday Girl' was superb with the Isotek, where the music profused in definition and the inherently good musical timing of the reference system became even better. Of particular merit to the Isotek was how it made the hand accordion backing melody to 'Sunday Girl' an integral element with its own identity to an already beautifully sung main chorus.

The Isotek enhanced 'The Ever Lasting Gaze' by The Smashing Pumpkins and brought forth the huge dynamics of the music without any splashy distortions. The music was allowed to flow outwards with every instrument intact and clear, yet, all elements combined cohesively with a tight musical structure which simply allowed me to enjoy the musical complexity and exhilaration. The guitars on 'The Ever Lasting Gaze' had better timbre and the stunning but deft synthesiser melody which overlaps the chorus became expansive and augmented the ecstatic feel.

The re-recording of 'The Robots' by Kraftwerk became even more elegant because the midrange cultivated beautifully disciplined but delicate fluidity. The individually rerecorded tracks within 'The Robots' were rendered with greater authority imbuing better depth to the music. Timing was stunning while the bass now had finer tunefulness and texture.

CONCLUSION

TUNING

The Isotek GII Vision really did make a dramatic musical difference with much higher resolution, timbre, spatiality and impressively - even better timing. It is thoroughly recommend, but really requires auditioning at home as not everyone's mains could be enhanced in the same way.

A genuinely effective and surprisingly

cost effective upgrade, but results could vary so a home dem is recommended.
ISOTEK GII VISION £550

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- FOR
- effective mains upgrade
- better timing
- superb resolution/ timbre

AGAINST

home audition necessary

Substituting a standard mains lead with an optional £80 Isotek Elite from the wall socket into the back of the Vision created even more resolution, but sacrificed a little air and excitement. However, when replacing the standard leads for two Phonosophie AG chords (£180) to the amplification and three six-foot Moray James Cryogenic PWR2.5 chords (\$450/£258 approx) to the CD combination - the music gelled and the superior resolution increased and the air and excitement returned. Expensive, but it bore fruit.

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SOUND DEAD STEEL ISOPLATMAT £79.95

Placing the mat on any deck's platter is quite amazing; flick the circumference of the platter without the SDS mat and it 'tings' (especially if it's metal, or glass rather than Acrylic) - but then add the SDS mat and repeat the exercise and

it's far more akin to a dull 'thunk'

This shows how the mat takes so much

mechanical energy out of the platter, deadening it down more effectively than any rubber, felt, glass, cork or Sorbothane mat I've ever tried. If the 'finger test' proves its mechanical efficacy, then you should hear the difference it makes when records are spun in anger.

This is the best turntable mat I've yet heard. It may not work with every deck equally and may also require some experimentation (rubber mat on or off, arm VTA up or same, etc.), but I've tried it on a wide variety of decks (budget and high end. belt drive and direct) and every time I've wanted to keep it on rather than reverting back to stock. At well under £100, it's a bargain!

David Price - Hi-Fi World January 2006

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76

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Noise Abatement Society and **DEFRA John Connell Technology** Award Winner 2005

JULY 2006

NOTEWORTHY AUDIO hi-fi by enthusiasts



e of the exciting products we offer The Apollo is the latest player to come from British firm lega. Building on the strengths of its predecessor, the Planet, it reveals more information and places each instru-ment or voice in its own acoustic space, which is a very rare trait to find on a player priced at just £498.

snaming CDT-80 well deserves the accolades its already received in the press, its valve output stage imbues the sound with great refinement and its build quality is quite astonishing for a player costing just £650





The £1,250 Cairn Fog V2.0 may not yet be that well known in the UK but if you're in the market for a player at this level ther you really must here this. It has superbly extended and well defined frequency extremes combined with great imaging



The Consonance CD2.2 Reference

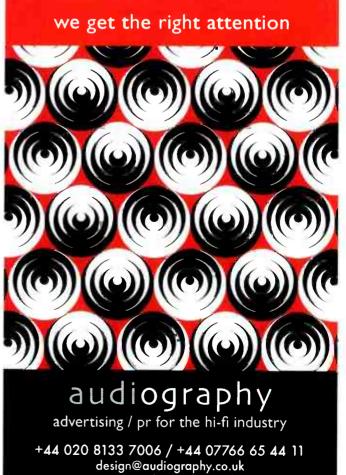
Linear is similar in approach to the CD120 linear featured above and takes the design many stages further. It uses a 6H30 triode output stage and has an air of refinement above most players at its £1,395 price tag whilst offering the exceptional dynamics and energy this type of design allows

The £2,850 Resolution Audio Opus 21 CD player is split into 2 half width boxes to separate the power supply and noisy circuits from the audio stages. This 705 kHz up-sampling player has a very open and airy presentation with quite stunning speed and imaging capabilities.



We also offer a wide range of two box solutions, all based aroun We also offer a wide range of two box solutions, all based arour the awesome one times oversampling filterless DAC's from Audio Note, starting with the Dac 2.1 at £1,600. We offer transports from Tatk Electronics and CEC, the former starting from £1,000 and highly recommend the superb Chord Signature Digital cable at £200.

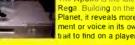
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The £695 Consonance CD 120 Linear is the player we've wished for for many years. It uses a non oversampling filterless design which always produces a thnllingly involving performance with exceptional speed and realistic dynamic contrasts





"contrary to what a few may think within the retail industry, it doesn't cost money to provide good service..."



dominic todd

oday I was given a rude reminder of the importance of customer service. After having just moved home again I'm now undergoing the unenviable task of swapping, changing and generally beating up all the utility companies involved. In actual fact the process has gone fairly smoothly, but there is one company that has driven me to despair...

Trying to get anywhere with 'a certain telephone provider' has proved a fruitless task. Aware of their poor reputation for customer service, the long wait in a call queue came as little surprise. What did though was the sarcastic disinterested attitude of the operator. The call resulted with the line being cut off as I was mid-way through sentence. It wasn't even as though I were rude, although in hindsight I wish I had been. Needless to say it left me feeling aghast that such shoddy customer service still existed and with little doubt that I should find a new service provider. Leaving this particular operator to one side, it did set me wondering as to the state of customer service within the hi-fi industry ...

For most of us, our main interface with the industry is, of course, with the retail industry. Whilst the way manufacturers handle customers is important, it's retailers that have the greater impact. By and large I reckon that UK hi-fi retailers score pretty well on this front. There are a few exceptions, but one result of the market becoming an increasingly tough one is that the remaining retailers are there for good reason - that of decent advice and customer service. Interestingly, I've found recent anecdotal evidence that suggests we stereotype hi-fi retailers

less than we used to.

It used to be common perception that if you wanted decent service then a small retailer with a bricks and mortar store was better than a large multi (or even inter)national with just a website. I think we're more savvy these days and realise that a dodgy independent dealer can leave just as bad a taste in one's mouth as any of the chains. Equally, you only need to look at website reports to see that some of the larger retailers actually have a pretty good reputation for service, store or no store. The key is that it doesn't matter how large or small the retailer is, but simply their attitude to customer service.

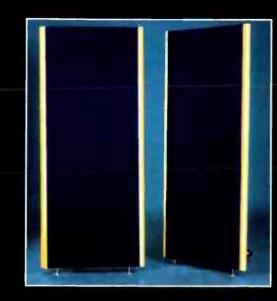
Contrary to what a few may think within the retail industry, it doesn't have to cost a lot of money to provide good service. One of the key areas in which customers feel let down is in unkept promises. It really doesn't cost much to return a call or post out an instruction book when you said you would. A sophisticated retailer will be well aware of this and not only have procedures in place but also follow the simple rule of under promising and over delivering. For example, if you've been promised an instruction book to arrive by the next morning's post, but it actually arrives two days later you'd be a little disappointed. If, on the other hand, you were quoted five days and it actually takes four, the reverse is true.

This typical scenario translates to all areas of retail business, from stock delivery times, service estimates and times, and communication via post, phone or email. Of course, the retailer does need to keep a sense of realism, but they must strenuously avoid promising service that they cannot provide. If the retailer can't keep their promises then simply keeping in constant communication with the customer is the best course of action. We've probably all experienced the feeling of being forgotten about, yet it's so easy to avoid from a retailer's point of view.

Of course, there are times when hi-fi retailers feel let down by the manufacturers and distributors. Yet here too, as the market has got tougher, so the rogues have died out. Although in some respects I'm in a privileged position as a hi-fi reviewer I do feel that the manufacturers either respond to me just as well as they always have, have improved greatly or have simply gone out of business. From a customer's point of view, I should think that the sort of back-up service offered by the likes of Quad, B&W/Rotel and Creek/Epos (to name but a handful) would prove a revelation after the bluntness or lack of communication offered by manufacturers and service industries in other fields.

We should be justly proud of a number of individuals within hi-fi companies who are not only friendly, polite and conscientious but will go above and beyond the call of duty to source a part or look for a technical fix to keep a customer's elderly component up and running. Whilst there are other industries where this happens, I suspect that the more usual response to keeping a product older than ten to fifteen years from the scrapheap is the, "bin it mate" attitude.

Whilst everyone can have a bad day, and it would be unrealistic to expect perfect service from every institution, retailer and service provider 100% of the time, making a customer feel happy to do business isn't as hard as some might think. Now, does anyone out there know of decent 'phone provider?



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"it's good to see the BBC is pushing forward with both multicasting and the interactive Media Player..."



steven green

n an article in the December issue I discussed some of the BBC's plans for distributing its channels via broadband. This month I'll give an update on those plans, and introduce another promising new Internet technology for multimedia distribution.

The previous article was predominantly about the BBC's plans to use multicasting, which allows broadcasters to distribute their channels at far higher quality than is possible with the unicasting technology they currently use. At the beginning of March, the BBC and ITV launched a six-month multicasting trial with all of the BBC's and ITV's TV channels and all of the BBC's national radio stations being available.

Some good news that has emerged since I wrote the December article is that the proposed move to provide the streams in the new MPEG-4 video and audio codecs has come to fruition, and the BBC TV channels are available at a bit rate of I Mbps (I million bits per second) using the H.264/AVC (Advanced Video Coding) codec, and its radio stations are available at 128 kbps (1,000 bits per second) using the AAC (Advanced Audio Coding) codec. The latter is especially good news, because 128 kbps AAC is capable of providing audio quality equivalent to good quality FM. Lower bit rate (350 kbps) streams of the BBC's TV channels are also available in Real Player and Windows Media 9 format for people with 512 kbps broadband connections, and ITV's channels are available in the Windows Media format.

Another recent development, although this won't be part of the six-month multicasting trial, is that the BBC has performed 8 Mbps HDTV test transmissions using multicasting, with more trials set for the summer. Unfortunately the multicasting trial is only available to broadband users on the JANET academic network and on the PlusNet, Cable & Wireless, Clara. net, Net Services, Zen Internet, KeConnect and InterVivo ISPs, but hopefully more ISPs will sign-up over the duration of the trial. For further information visit www.bbc.co.uk/ multicast/index.shtml.

Results from the BBC's interactive media player (iMP) trial have also been released recently. The iMP is a so-called 'catch-up TV' application, that allows users to download TV and radio programmes that they missed for up to seven days after they were broadcast. The iMP uses peer-to-peer (P2P) technology-which is the same technology used by the music filesharing networks-where users download small chunks of the requested file from other users that have the file on their computer, and then all the small chunks are reassembled into the correct order at the receiving PC. Like multicasting, the benefit for the broadcaster is that P2P technology vastly reduces the Internet server bandwidth required to distribute its content, so again the content can be encoded at good quality.

The 5,000 users in the trial, which ran from December to late February, were "overwhelmingly positive about the application", and a "strong majority" thought that it was something that the BBC should offer. The BBC Governors will make their decision about whether the iMP should be released to the public in the autumn, although I can't see any reason why they wouldn't allow it.

Ashley Highfield, the BBC Director of New Media, has also confirmed that they plan to make HDTV content available on the iMP, which could mean that the iMP is the first service on which BBC HD content is made widely available—the BBC is trialling HDTV on satellite, cable and Freeview from the summer onwards, but the Freeview trial is limited to 500 households in London and the satellite and cable trials are limited to subscribers to the pay-TV HD packages until free-to-air MPEG-4 HD-enabled satellite receivers become available.

Whereas everything detailed above is an update to the December article, a new and promising development is that the BBC hopes to make its TV and radio services available over the Internet using peer-to-peer (P2P) live streaming technology within the next 12 months. As mentioned above, P2P is best known for its use on file-sharing networks, but a Danish company called Octoshape was touting its P2P live streaming application to broadcasters last year, and piracy-led P2P streaming of TV channels has become popular in China recently using free software applications such as PPLive.

P2P streaming works in much the same way as P2P works with file-sharing networks, where users download chunks of data from other users, but with the additional requirement that everything must be done in real-time.

The reliability of P2P live streaming applications mainly relies on there being a sufficiently large number of users to download from, although if the Internet is particularly busy then streams could be interrupted. This problem is mitigated if there are a large number of users, though, so BBC services should be quite robust.

It's good to see that the BBC is pushing forward with both multicasting and the iMP, but the prospect of P2P radio streams using 128 kbps AAC tops the lot—in the short-term at least—because it combines availability to anyone that has broadband with the crucial factor that it's live.



A NEW RANGE OF KITS FOR THE AUDIOPHILE from WORLD DESIGNS

WD25T Aperiodic Floorstanding Loudspeaker Kit

Based on the WD25a Stand-mount design this extension to a floor standing loudspeaker brings new benefits to the aperiodic principle.

The larger enclosure offers a second chamber coupled through a resistive vent to the driver enclosure to achieve an aperiodic performance with bass extension and clarity that would be typical of a very much larger cabinet. The impedance is a smooth 6 Ohms which, together with the high sensitivity of 89dB, gives an easy drive load which suits all types of amplifiers.

Based around a 10 inch bass unit with soft paper cone and butyl rubber surround, the WD25t marries this, using a high performance, hard wired crossover, to the advanced XL treble unit from the SEAS Excel range featuring a 29mm SONOMEX fabric dome driven by a powerful Neodymium magnet system.

Kits are complete with bi-wire, gold plated terminals fitted to an oval terminal panel that carries the crossover PCB. Crossover components have been chosen for optimal performance to match the drive units and feature high power resistors and inductors and low loss polypropylene capacitors. LC-OFC cabling is used to connect to the drive units.

All internal damping materials, cabinet damping pads, aperiodic vent foam, screws and gaskets are supplied with all kits.

The optional cabinet kit is fully machined in oak veneered, high density MDF with precision internal grooving for easy assembly. The veneer is ready to be stained and lacquered to your colour preference using readily available wood finishes. Alternatively use a furniture oil for an easy maintenance, natural oak finish.

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WD25t STD kit£2WD25t XL kit£4Cabinet kit£3

£279 per pair £459 per pair £398 per pair

World Radio History

"the LP is still iconic of an age, yet is old enough to have become a living piece of music history..."

noel keywood

istory is the, err, 'new rock and roll'. Just switch on the telly, it's everywhere - UKTV History runs and reruns endless analyses of Stonehenge and the Nazis, or so it seems. There must be a reason for it, whether it's

must be a reason for it, whether it's nostalgia or a thirst for knowledge. In audio, classic hi-fi's all the rage and apparently vinyl sales are now steadily but substantially growing, as young people take to buying music on LP. There's a resurgence going on...

Like Abba or Hendrix, vinyl's coming back, showing that not all which derives from the past is necessarily outdated. Classical music illustrates this particular point well - much of it was composed in a time very different to our own, yet it's still appreciated today. Looked at like this, there is no reason why modern music (i.e. 1950s onwards) shouldn't be seen within the context of broad historical record, rather than uncool just because it was performed yesterday.

This is a refreshingly wide and socially agnostic approach. It's my generation that chose to define itself by itself, by what it believed to be its own moving modernity. The 1960s were, at the time, just so much more advanced than anything that went before, then came the 70s and they were too - and so it went on. Each decade had its milieu that at the time worshipped modernity to a degree that it had to reject what had just gone before. People now seem more relaxed with the past, including the immediate past, and less likely to reject it out of hand. It allows good musical performances to be

appreciated, instead of consigned to the dustbin of history as outdated.

I'm not a mad vinylphile, even if my best vinyl canes CD, but I do love listening to music from the past, as well as the present, which means I mix LP with CD and I now regularly meet people a fraction of my age who find it just as easy and enjoyable to spin Led Zeppelin on LP one minute and Arctic Monkeys the next. Television seems to have finally discovered there are large audiences for programmes other than soaps or shoot-it-outs - and there's endless mileage in rediscovering the past, especially when it's people's own immediate past. The LP is still iconic of an age, and is just about alive as a viable music medium - cutting lathes are still cutting are presses still working - yet it is old enough to have become a living piece of music history. All the same it isn't a relic, in the same way the bicycle has travelled through time unscathed by changes in fashion and engineering.

But apparently this whole thing is spinning up to be something bigger than I could ever imagine. We've all seen 'LP makes a comeback' headlines that have been largely wishful thinking, supported by enthusiastic usage of LP by DJ culture. Now it seems this is all changing. Appreciation of the LP's qualities is reaching critical mass, apparently, and it really is making a minor but significant comeback. New releases are commonly issued on viny! first in a limited edition run of a few thousand, giving instant collector appeal and value. This kick starts sales, which then continue on cheaper digital formats: CD or

download.

I'm sure some of the attractiveness lies in the LPs fulsome and smooth sound quality, as well as ability to produce powerful sounding bass. There are other attractions. The large cover area of the LP is so much more attractive than the CD. Anyone who remembers Roger Dean covers will know that the CD cannot carry such art effectively; the LP can - and has done. With LP today's bands can return to a product that better conveys the message they want to get across and, from my experience, many artists have a sneaking regard for LP and the sound that comes from it, one they never felt for CD. At this level, the CD is a technological wonder, the LP an artistic one. You could liken them to a modern landscape photograph - digital of course - perfectly reproduced on a photo printer to the technical imperfection of a Turner. How silly of Turner to be unable to paint a perfect simulacrum!

For whatever reason, no one - I hope - is going to prefer a nearperfect digital photograph to a beautifully crafted impressionist representation, and it may just be that the LP has it just right in this respect. Irrespective of the technical arguments, it paints a beautiful picture and arguing about it is as pointless as trying to argue that if Turner had held his hand steady, his pictures would have been more accurate. Thankfully, on this magazine we never bought the notion that because LP is old it's worthless, and in future there will be ever more coverage on how best to appreciate music from LP. It's a great piece of history to enjoy.



DIY FEATURE

bass-ic instinct

PART 6 - The Final part.

Designer Peter Comeau - Upgrading the WD25 STD Loudspeaker kit

Last month we dealt with possible modifications to the WD25 in XL form, both for the stand mount and floorstanding version. This month we are finalising the WD25 project by taking a look at what you can do to the crossover of the Standard version to tune it to give the sound you really want. And we introduce the floorstanding version too!

> irst of all you can apply the same mechanical improvement to the WD25A cabinet as recommended last month. Specifically this is to damp any vibration in the cabinet rear panel by applying thick, at least 5mm, bitumen or butyl rubber panel damping material.You will need a massy damping layer, like the 6mm thick Sonigs PDC material described on the World Designs website, to cover the central two thirds of the panel over an area 250mm x 150mm. 1.5 metres of Sonigs PDC is needed to modify two speakers.

Whilst you have the speaker apart it is time to attack the crossover. You can do this in two ways, either by modifying the circuit on the hard wired board and re-bolting it into the speaker, or by working on the crossover externally. If you want to 'tinker' with component values with the crossover outside the speaker then you can obtain blank TP1 terminal panels from World Designs so that you can wire the drive units direct to the rear speaker terminals. After removing the bi-wiring links you can then hook up the crossover to these terminals using some suitable speaker cable.

Of course, having gone to all this trouble, you may wish to leave the crossovers outside the speakers. Doing this removes the crossovers from any internal vibration and the effects of any stray magnetic field inside the speaker. These effects are small, but real nevertheless. Mount the crossovers in wood or plastic boxes, but keep them close to the speakers otherwise the extra cable impedance will affect the crossover performance.

STD CROSSOVER

Although there is a world of difference between the STD and XL treble units used in the WD25 designs that does not mean that we cannot aim for the same level of crossover performance.

If you were following the series of design articles you will have seen last month that the

main refinement to the XL crossover was through mapping the crossover slopes to a third order Linkwitz-Riley alignment. Theoretically there is no such thing as an odd order Linkwitz-Riley crossover, so what we have done here is apply the target function of L-R crossovers to a practical third order acoustic alignment. If this leaves you perplexed, don't worry, the key is in the listening, not the theory.

In essence the crossover, as we have developed it, springs from a first order electrical bass crossover which, in combination with the acoustic rolloff of the bass unit above 2kHz, yields an acoustic output that falls naturally at 18dB per octave from a turnover frequency of 1700Hz. For the XL treble unit, with its low fundamental resonance positioned well over an octave lower than the crossover frequency, we were able to map a slope which matched the bass characteristics accurately for a seamless acoustic crossover.

With the STD treble unit things become a little more difficult because of the higher fundamental resonance. Thankfully the latter is perfectly damped by SEAS with the inclusion of just the right amount and viscosity



of ferrofluid in the magnet gap to hide most of the acoustic effects of the resonance. Even so it needs some judicious juggling of electrical crossover to get a good phase alignment with the bass unit.

The first development of the crossover utilised a higher crossover frequency by allowing a modicum of midrange lift in the bass unit to extend its range up to 2kHz. However this does produce a 'forward' midrange which might not be to everyone's taste and gives the subjective impression of a 'light' bass output. This latest development therefore follows the lines of the bass performance achieved in the XL version, giving a smoother midrange in balance with a more powerful bass output.

To achieve this we have raised the value of the coil in series with the bass unit, L1, to 0.58mH. You can experiment a little with this value - 0.5mH gives the impression of a lighter, faster bass response whilst up to 0.6mH produces a darker, heavier bass performance. At the same time we removed the original L2, the inductor in the impedance compensation network in parallel with the

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bass unit, to allow C2 and R2 to help define the bass unit crossover slope. The icing on the cake is the inclusion of C1/R1 across the bass coil to enable us to accurately refine the slope to our target performance.

Actually the closest match to our acoustic third order target slope is with R2 increased in value to 47 Ohms. This has the compromise that the impedance throughout the midband now rises to 16 Ohms, though the minimum throughout the audible bandwidth is a benign 5.7 Ohms. This impedance peak won't worry any solid state amplifiers, and will cause only a minor mismatch with most valve amplifiers, but if you want a flatter impedance performance you can adjust R2 down to 15 Ohms. The choice is yours - just listen and see which you prefer.

Extending the output of the STD treble unit downwards to meet the new bass characteristic took weeks of listening and fine tuning with the aid of our LspCAD software. The listening tests were paramount to achieving that seamless acoustic crossover that moves the sound images outside of the speakers and into the room, whilst aligning the crossover slopes in LspCAD pointed the way to excellent phase alignment.

In fact the solution was simpler than we at first expected. Adopting the series capacitor combination of the XL crossover, 6.8uF in parallel with 3.3uF, required an adjustment

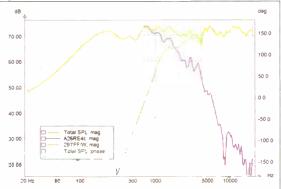


Fig. 2 Alignment to target 3rd order acoustic crossover

of the value of treble inductor L2 to 0.36mH to hit the required target crossover frequency. From there we massaged the treble level to bring it up to meet the midrange by reducing the final series resistance in the treble circuit to 2.7 Ohms. You can also give a touch more treble output if you require it by reducing the first resistor in this network to 1.5 Ohms.

As would be expected these changes sharpen the treble response and your initial reaction might be the same as ours in that the lower treble sounds a touch edgy on some discs. You can smooth this out, easily, by adding a small resistor in series with inductor L2. This smooths the kink in the crossover slope and actually improves the phase integration with the bass/midrange showing that it has done its job properly. 0.47 Ohms up to 0.68 Ohms is all you will need here – again try both and see which you prefer.

FINALLY THE JOB IS DONE

So our final preferred crossover is in Fig. 1.This provides a very transparent, hear-through performance where good recordings move the acoustic behind, above and around the speakers helping you to enjoy the music without the speakers making themselves noticeable. This crossover is also ideal for the floorstanding WD25T STD which makes a lower cost alternative to the XL version reviewed in this issue.

Figure 2 shows the crossover slopes as plotted in LspCAD while Figure 3 is a graph of the anechoic response of the speaker in red. We have also plotted, in blue, the response with the phase of the treble unit reversed to show the cancellation 'notch' indicating how good the phase integration now is. Finally Figure 4 shows the in-room performance of the speaker taken on-axis and 15 degrees off-axis. As you can see the midrange performance is similar in character right up to 10kHz indicating an excellent stereo spread across

> a variety of listening positions. It also means that the reflected sound in the room has an indentical timbral nature to the direct sound ensuring low perceived coloration.

If you wish to experiment with component values to suit your tastes and listening environment here is a summation of what you can expect when changing each component:

L1: 0.5 mH gives a forward midrange, 0.6mH a more powerful bass, 0.56mH is our

more powerful bass, 0.56mH is our preferred balance between bass and midrange.

R2: 15 Ohms gives a smoother, flatter impedance curve to match valve amplifiers but try raising it to 22 Ohms or 47 Ohms for better phase integration.

R3: Reduce to 1.5 Ohms for a higher treble output if you need a touch more 'sparkle'.

R4: 3.3 Ohms gives a very smooth treble but reduce to 2.7 Ohms for a better balance to the midrange

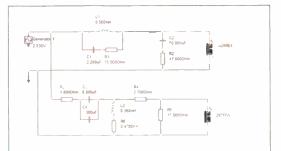


Fig. 1 Stage 4 crossover for WD25 STD

output.

C3/C4:We found the best integration with a combination of 6.8 uF and 3.3uF, but you can try two 4.7uF for a slightly more 'laid back' or 'distant' midrange perspective.

R6: Measure the DC resistance of your coil L2 and add a resistance here to bring the total resistance to about 1.3 to 1.4 Ohms. For example if the DC resistance of your coil is 0.9 Ohms then the value of R6 becomes 0.5 Ohms. You can increase this to 0.68 Ohms (for a total DC resistance of coil and resistor of 1.6 Ohms) if you find the lower treble slightly edgy or sharp.

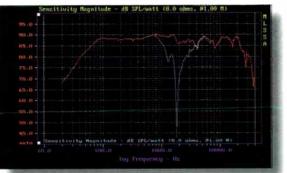


Fig. 3 WD25 STD measured on treble axis at 1 metre. Blue trace shows effect of reversing phase to the treble unit.

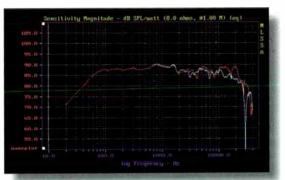
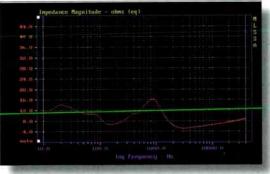


Fig. 4 Response taken on axis and at 15 degrees horizontal showing good linearity through the crossover region.



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Fig. 5 Impedance of WD25 STD.

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KT88 valve amp

Here is the first of a new generation of valve amplifier kits from World Designs. This month we are concentrating on the circuit description and how we chose to build this amplifier...

by Peter Comeau, World Designs.

he KT88 is a 1950s - comparatively modern - beam tetrode where, by careful design of the beam forming plates, the usual kink in the transfer characteristics of a Tetrode could be reduced to negligible proportions, minimising distortion. This classic Kinkless Tetrode structure was employed by GEC in their KT range of power valves, the best known of which are the KT66 and KT88.

The KT88 does not clip so abruptly as the American 6550, giving a smoother and cleaner overload characteristic, together with better recovery after a high power transient has passed. It is a sweet and musical sounding valve that neither embellishes nor degrades the source signal over a wide range of power conditions.

There are difficulties, however. It is a power-hungry valve, consuming a high heater current of 1.8 amps and demanding a driver that is equally gutsy when handling musical dynamics and transients. It also has a large glass envelope and needs plenty of space around it to avoid localised over-heating.

We have chosen to run in pure Class A to avoid crossover distortion. Here is designer Andy Grove's circuit description:

"The WD88VA is, essentially, a straightforward design. U1, half an ECC83 double triode, is used as the input stage. It is set up in the usual manner, with R21 as its anode load, and with a split cathode resistor. R3 is un-bypassed because it is the point at which the overall loop feedback is introduced. R2 is bypassed by C4 to ensure that the gain of the stage is not reduced by the resultant local feedback, which in this case isn't such an issue, but the same local feedback would greatly increase the stage output impedance. This would reduce the bandwidth of the stage, and of course increase the phase shift in or near the audio band, thereby making stabilisation more difficult.

The driver/phase splitter stage U2 is a 5687 double triode. It is a really meaty valve, and very linear. This is an advantage when driving larger valves like the KT88, especially when they are used in Ultra-Linear mode which requires more drive voltage. Also, the use of Ultra Linear removes one of the advantages of pure pentode operation, that is the very high AC input impedance. Ultra Linear is part way to being triode operation, and therefore there is some Miller feedback from anode/screen to the grid, and the input capacitance is higher than pure pentode.

The phase splitter is configured as a common cathode, or "long tailed pair" in modern parlance, the two sections of the valve communicate with each other via their connected cathodes. The connection between the input and phase splitter stages is made via a network of resistors and capacitors.

For the ECC83 to operate at a healthy current level it requires a fairly high anode voltage, this has been provided (150V), but if the two stages were directly connected, then the cathodes of the 5687 would be at a similar voltage level. There are two issues with this.

Firstly is that the extra voltage on the cathodes is effectively removed from the available power supply to the 5687, reducing the available voltage swing from the stage.

Secondly, the heater/cathode voltage rating could be strained, resulting in noise and premature failure. To overcome this there is a potential divider between the two stages. R4/R5 reduces the DC voltage to the 5687, R4 is bypassed to audio by C1, the whole arrangement forming a pole/zero network which can be adjusted to provide solid LF stability.

C3 and R11 is another pole/zero or step network to tailor the HF

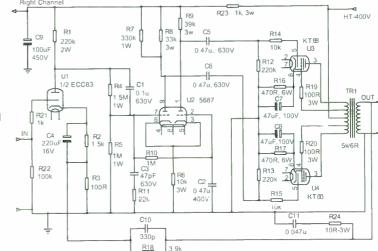


Fig 1. WD88VA Circuit Diagram for one channel.

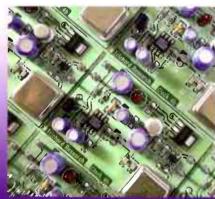




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response for stability. DC is fed to the second half of the 5687 via R10 and AC is bypassed to ground by C2, thus section two of the 5687 receives drive only via its cathode.

The anti-phase signals to drive the push-pull KT88s are taken from the 5687 anode resistors, R7/R8 and R9, which are unequal to make up for the imbalance in the stage caused by the finite resistance of the cathode resistor R6 (don't talk to me about current sources in this position).

The signals are fed to the KT88s via C5 and C6, and then via the two grid stoppers. Here I've used quite high value ones, so the effective drive impedance from the 5687 is increased, but generally I find that the bigger grid stopper makes the overload characteristics better. This is because, when the grid of the KT88 reaches OV, its impedance suddenly drops and the grid can be seen as a diode. If the grid stopper is a little bit bigger than usual then this damps the sudden changeover from high to low, gives an extra bit of headroom for the driver stage, and gives slack in the feedback loop for clean overload.

The output valves themselves are configured as a cathode biased Ultra Linear stage, where No2 grid of the KT88s is taken to a tap on the output transformer. This has several effects: firstly the transfer curve becomes more like that of a triode, secondly the natural damping factor of the stage is increased. This doesn't have a huge effect on speaker damping, but it does have an effect on stability, especially at low frequencies; more on this in a later article perhaps. The tapping point is around 40% of the entire primary.

If you are going to use Ultra Linear, the output transformer becomes a very critical component, even more so than is usually the case. Internal balance and coupling become very important, and often it has been alleged that Ultra Linear has problems when it isn't the circuit which is at fault, but a poor output transformer. Unfortunately 99% of the time the transformer is designed by someone who knows nothing of amplifier design, and the amplifier is designed by someone who knows nothing of transformer design...

Feedback is taken from the transformer secondary via R18 and C10 back to the input stage in the conventional manner. Effectively, it is fed into the ECC83 cathode. The output network R24/C11 is included in the schematic as a precaution, final testing will prove whether it is necessary for 100% rock solid stability.

The power supply is totally

standard, with a CLC (Capacitor-Inductor-Capacitor) filter. A solid state bridge was used in this case because of the heavy current draw of the big KT88 output valves. These operate at a high bias current and to utilise valve rectification would mean deploying two 5U4 rectifiers, or similar, together with a much heftier mains transformer to make up for the rectifier filament current and the drop in efficiency over the solid state diodes."

The output transformers are built on a 78 lamination core, with two inch stack optimised for both power output and linearity. The substantial amount of iron in this transformer lets the amplifier swing full output at low frequencies, ensuring a tight bass performance and good speaker control.

We chose a secondary of 6 Ohms to ensure good matching to the majority of speakers around today. There is plenty of evidence to suggest it is best to utilise all the copper in the transformer, avoiding the unused sections of a multi-tapped 4 / 8 ohm secondary.

Tag boards locate all the components, for two reasons. They allow the valve aficionado to try out boutique components without the worry of track lifting from a resoldered PCB. The other is that hard wiring to the bases of the KT88s is far more reliable than soldering them to a PCB. This is because the considIt is also, dare we say it, highly rewarding to hand build an amplifier with wiring and components neatly laid out. It is also easier for the constructor to see the exact signal and power supply paths and so pick up any faults that might occur during construction, as well as making the whole amplifier simpler to service.

Our construction is based around an all aluminium chassis to avoid eddy current fields, with ventilation slots to aid the chimney effect for cooling round the KT88s.

There are two amplifier versions, a straight power amplifier with single input and level control and an integrated version with five line level inputs. To avoid the multiplicity of input wiring to the front panel selector switch, the integrated amp utilises high performance reed relay switching on a PCB mounted over the rear input sockets. This simplifies the signal flow path too.

The mains transformer primary is multi-tapped for a variety of input voltages from 100v to 240v, making sure that the full 35W per channel output is achieved around the world.

The secondary provides the voltages for the valve anodes, a separate secondary for the KT88 heaters and a tapping for the input and driver valve heaters. The latter is DC rectified by bridge BRI. The HT voltage is first rectified by diodes DI-D4, chosen as Schottky diodes to avoid switching transients, and then

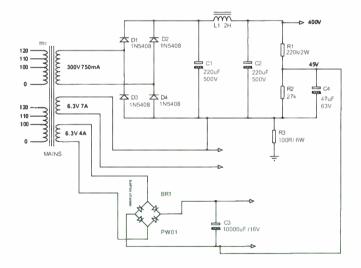


Fig. 2 WD88VA Power Supply Circuit.

erable heat conducted to the valve base causes thermal stress in a PCB mounting which can eventually crack the solder connection over time. Cooling of the Internal components is also aided by the ability of air to flow freely over a tag board construction without the impedance to air flow caused by an obstructive PCB. filtered through a Pi filter of C1, L1 and C2 to give an extremely quiet H.T. line – no hum and noise here!

Next month we will describe the internal layout and component specification for optimum performance.

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MICHELL ORBE SE 2002 £1916

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REGA P3 2000 £298 Great entry level audiophile deck with fine bundled tonearm.Tweakable, and responds well to careful siting on a Base platform.

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 £619

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SME MODEL 10A 1995 £3333 Exquisitely engineered deck and arm combo, but dry and clinical sounding compared to rivals. Accomplished performer with classical music, nonetheless.

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TONEARMS

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STANDARDS

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PUNKT C 2004 £1,000 The most secure tracking MC we've heard; its super clean, fast, detailed and neutral sonics make it a brilliant partner to warmer sounding turntables.

DIGITAL DISC PLAYERS

CREEK CD50II 2004 £699 Extensive revisions make this an altogether more beguiling machine, and one of the best at its price. Extremely musical sound that's surprisingly upfront for a Creek design. Excellent mid-price purchase, with only its Marantz rival to challenge it.

CYRUS CD82003£1000Highly incisive, engaging, grippy and dynamicsound, but needs careful matching to smoothancilliaries. Optional PSX-R adds bass anddimensionality.

LINN GENKI 1999 £995 Undeniably fast, lithe, musical and fun - but some won't take to its dry, wry character. Works best in all-Linn systems, where it really rises to the challenge!

ARCAM FMJ CD33T 2003 £1,300 Superbly detailed midband allied to excellent bass extension makes this a powerfully musical machine in the best traditions of Arcam CD spinners. Nothing to criticise at the price, everything to recommend it!



LINN IKEMI 1999 £1950

Has the brilliant focus and clarity of the previous Karik III with a dose more tonal richness and polish. More grip and poise than most at any price - still superb!

 MARANTZ CD17 II
 2002
 £800

 Oft-overlooked middleweight boasts a truly beguiling sound with lots of tonal flavour.
 Sits awkwardly between the £600 and £1000

 price points, where some brilliant value buys reside, though.
 Sits awkwardly between the £600 and £1000

NAIM CDX2-XPS2 2003 £4950

A fine high end machine, but add an XPS2 and it becomes one of the most charismatically engaging 16bit machines we've ever heard. Plays music with such passion!

NAIM CDS3 2003 £7050 The most polished Naim CD to date: tremendously capable and musical, but lacks the Rotweiler quality of the chaper CDX2-XPS2.

PHILIPS DVD963SA 2003 £400 Creamy CD sound allied to superb SACD and DVD video playback makes this brilliant value for money.

REGA PLANET 2002 £498 Rhythmic and beguiling performer, although lacks the warmth of tone needed to better its Marantz rival. Superb ergonomics and design, nonetheless.

MARANTZ SA-17S1 2003 £1400 Brilliant CD playback comes close to the best at any price, while SACD performance is almost as convincing - superbly warm and three dimensional nature makes listening a joy. However, the lack of DVD-Audio decoding and poor feature count makes it look middling value compared to some of the universal players here.



REGA JUPITER2002£1000A Planet on steroids, this machine adds depth
and breadth to its baby brothers already
impressive sound. Good, but facing stiff com-
petition.

MUSICAL FIDELITY TRI-VISTA21 DAC 2003 £1,200 Superbly neutral and expansive sound makes this offboard digital-to-analogue convertor an excellent upgrade to any mid-price CD player – fed by a decent transport, few 16bit players at any price come close.



CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 640C 2003

2003 £250 Tremendously well-rounded yet engaging sound makes this the best budget silver disc spinner by far. Build quality is excellent at the price, and the styling bang up to the minute. Blistering value for money.

CREEK CD5011 2004 *£699* Extensive revisions make this an altogether more beguiling machine, and one of the best at its price. Extremely musical sound that's surprisingly upfront for a Creek design. Excellent mid-price purchase, with only its Marantz rival to challenge it.

 DENON DVD-2200
 2003
 £499

 Superb do it all mid-price player; fine DVD-A and SACD sound allied to excellent
 video performance will be all many could ever want. Ultimately it's a little bright and mechanical sounding, but you have to go into high end territory to truly better it. Stunning value.

PANASONIC DVD-\$75 2002 £120

Real ability and fine measured performance for an unbelievably low price. Impressive in its own way, if not truly audiophile. If you just want a cheap DVD spinner with DVD-Audio as a bolt-on goodie, this is the one.

PIONEER DV-868AVI 2003 £799

Pioneer's most accomplished mid-price machine to date, this boasts full DVD-A/ SACD playback, a welter of facilities and the all-important HDMI video and I-Link audio digital outputs, making it nigh-on future-proof. Factor in fine – if not outstanding - sound and superb pictures and it's practically impossible to fault.

SONY SCD-XB790 2003 £250 Quite unlike any other budget Sony CD spinner we've heard, here's a very 'analogue' sounding machine that's smooth and warm and even. Factor in fine SACD playback and this machine is a brilliant budget buy – unless you want DVD-Audio that is, which it lacks.



ORELLE CD100EVO 2003 £1,200 Extremely engaging and musical sound, but maybe a tad too bracing for some tastes. Superb aesthetics complete an attractive package.

ARCAM CD73 2004 £400 The best all rounder at the price; unfailingly smooth and couth sound allied to fine build and attractive styling makes this a worthy upgrade to entry-level designs.

ARCAM DV782004£800We've not found a more capable 'real world'DVD player; peerless picture and CD soundat the price, although lack of universal play-back will deter some.

ARCAM FMJ CD33 2004 £1,300 Consummate smoothie with an unusually organic and natural sound, but lacks the command of some rivals. Its all round sonic, aesthetic and ergonomic polish will endear it to many.

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO AZUR 640C

AZUR 640C 2004 £250 The best budget CD spinner we've heard; warm and satisfyingly musical; fine build and aesthetics and that remote control make for unarguable package at the price.

DENON DVD-A11 2004 £1,600 Classic Japanese 'battleship' DVD universal machine does practically everything superbly, with no obvious weak points except the undistinguished CD sound.Top value.

EXPOSURE 3010 2003 £1,200 One of the most 'analogue' CD players. second only to the Shanling. Wonderfully beguiling balance leaves you looking for the tube output stage.

LINN CLASSIC MOVIE SYSTEM DI 2002 £2,500 Superh ergonomics and performance from

Superb ergonomics and performance from this one-box beauty. The best 'home theatre in a box' you can buy..

LINN UNIDISK I.1 2004 £6,500 Surely the ultimate universal DVD player; superb in every department, but its CD playback shines brightest considering it's not a bespoke Red Book machine. MARANTZ CD73002003£350Superlative build and styling for the money,
and the sound is as good as you'll get below
£600. Smooth, detailed and engaging beyond
its price

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-RAY V3 2004 £900 Striking looking mid-price stormer with very even, accurate and even sonics; perfect for those seeking detail and neutrality over character and/or colour.

 NAIM CD5I
 2004
 £825

 The most engaging mid-price CD player on the market, but with a surprisingly velvety sound. Delightful build and iconic styling make this one of Salisbury's true classics.

 PIONEER DV-8681
 2003
 £800

 The best mid-price universal player right
 now; CD sound is respectable, SACD and
 DVD-A impressive and the video truly special. Does everything very well for the price.

SHANLING SCD-T200C 2004 £2,150 Superb SACD player with tube output stage; arresting looks and truly special sound; be sure to go for 3DAcoustics version for best sound and UK aftersales support.

SONY SCD-XA3000ES 2003 £600 Surprising mid-price SACD spinner with multi-channel capability; sweet sound; not the best at the price but certainly the most versatile.

SONY SCD-XA9000ES 2003 £1,600 Slick, beautifully built high end SACD player with very transparent, if rather dry, sound. Unexpectedly sweet CD playback but not the most gripping at the price.

STELLO DP-200 2004 £1,495 Brilliant do-it-all upsampling DAC preamp with headphone output and phono in. One of the best digital to analogue convertors around, allied to mind-boggling flexibility.

DIGITAL RECORDERS

APPLE IPOD 40GB £399 Genre-defining best of breed, thanks to supreme ergonomics and build allied to fine sound.

PIONEER PDR-609 2001 £200 Brilliant value CD recorder that makes excellent recordings from its digital inputs. Half decent digital converters, too.

PHILIPS DVDR880 2003 £370 Poor CD audio playback, but makes great DVD video recordings and boasts fine ergonomics. Top AV value.

SONY RCD-W3 2002 £250 Usual superb Sony ergonomics make for nononsense budget buy. Fine direct digital copies, but analogue input poor. Middling sonics, but there's a digital output!

YAMAHA CDR-HD1300E2002 £600 HD means MD-style ease of editing, but compromises recording quality ever-so slightly. Add decent CD replay and it's a fine all rounder nonetheless - top value.



ONKYO MB-SI 2001 £1100 An interesting machine complete with MP3 functionality, but high price, fussy ergonomics and over-smooth sound make it mediocre value against the Yamaha.

PHONO STAGES

CREEK OBH-21SE 2003 £250 Musically enjoyable yet highly refined for the price - a superb buy. Gives the Dino a real hard time.

EAR 834P 1993 £400 Classic tube design with a deliciously warm and expansive sound - shame about the loose bass and veiled treble!

LINN LINTO 2000 £900 A musical and incisive performer, with more speed than the Delphini at the expense of detail and tonal colour.

QED DISCSAVER1995£35Rhythmic, bouncy sound via battery, although
it's bright and forward. Great value, but £100
more on the X-LP is well worth it!

TRICHORD DINO 2002 £299 Great all rounder with switchable MM/MC. Fast, fluid and smooth like no others at the price.

TRICHORD DELPHINI 2003 £995 The very latest 'Never Connected' variant is easily the best, bringing velvety smoothness to an already refined and engaging performer. Neutral to a fault - some will mourn the passing of the charismatic ISO.

MUSICAL FIDELITY XLPSV3 2003 £249

Fine all rounder at the price, which a satisfyingly full bodied sound that's smoother than the Creek but a tad less engaging. Only Trichord's Dino, with its easy upgradability for just \pounds 50, reflects badly on this fine bit of kit.

PROJECT PHONOBOX LE2004 £99

Great little box that improves on most bundled phono stages found in budget integrated amplifiers, adding detail and definition and a measure of smoothness too. If ± 100 is all you're prepared to spend, then do it happily on this, but you'll get obviously better results from the ± 250 brigade.

WHEST AUDIO PS.20 /MSU.20 2004 £1,000 Disarmingly clean, smooth, open sound makes this the very best phono stage we've

makes this the very best phono stage we've auditioned to date, but some will still prefer the gutsier feel of the Trichord Delphini.

GRAHAM SLEE ERA GOLD V 2004 £460

Wonderfully warm, open and musical nature makes this an essential audition for those wanting a top value mid-price phono stage.

AMPLIFIERS

ARCAM DIVA A65 PLUS 2002 £370 Classic budget Arcam fare - decently sweet and open with sensible facilities and plenty of power.



ARCAM FMJ A322001£1150For those who value serious power and laby-
rinthine facilities over outright clarity or grip.A very impressive all rounder with an unusu-
ally muscular power amp at this price.

AUDIO NOTE OTO SE 2000 £1199 This baby tuber is beautifully sweet and creamy, but lacks solid-state's clarity, detail and incision. Low, low power means speaker choice critical.

AUDIO NOTE SORO SE 2000 £1699 Wonderfully out-of-the-box sounding tube middleweight is all about sweetness and fluidity. Limited power and loose bass, but little the worse for it.

STANDARDS

CYRUS 6 2003

Cracking do-it-all mid price design, bringing svelte sound, good connectivity and upgradeability and stunning style and build.

CYRUS 82003£800Unusually warm and lyrical for a solid-stater,
with decent power and punch. PSX-R adds
dynamics, detail and dimensionality.



MERIDIAN 5511994£895Evergreen middleweight is a serious perform-

er even now.Tonally a tad dry, it's still very smooth and svelte with bags of power, detail and grip. Class act.

SUGDEN A21A 1993 £1020 The most musical amplifier at the price, bar none. Delicious Class A sound is smooth, sweet and wonderfully transparent with true tonal colour. Low power, so match carefully.

AUDIO RESEARCH VSI55 2003 £2,895 The Naim NAP250's tubular alter ego; oodles of power allied to a strong bass and smooth open midband makes this a brilliant all round amplifier. Lacks the subtlety and finesse of the low powered single-ended brigade but makes up for it with sheer brio.

CREEK A50IR 2004 £550

Consummately smooth yet engaging sound makes it a serious player at the price, but don't expect Creek's traditional sumptuousness. Fine value nonetheless.

MONRIO MC207 2003 £1,100 Powerful, muscular sound allied to real finesse makes this unusual integrated an essential audition at the price.

MARANTZ PM-17MKII KI MODIFIED

KI MODIFIED 2004 £1,500 Gloriously offbeat do-it-all design with a truly warm, smooth and three dimensional sound. Think of this as a latter-day Audiolab 8000a - with a good deal more colour and finesse - and you'll have its measure. Lowish power output at the price, but fine real world speaker driving ability.

UNISON RESEARCH S6 2002 £1,625

Tremendously musical and lithe sound with real finesse and subtlety too. Very slightly upper mid forward encourages careful partnering with ancillaries (Revolver R45s are ideal), but overall fantastic value for money.



ORELLE SAIO0EVO 2003 £1,200 Fine build, exquisite design and a wonderfully lucid sound make this an essential audition at the price.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-150 2004 £800 Brilliant shoebox-sized powerhouse is sweet-

Brilliant shoebox-sized powerhouse is sweeter and more mellifluous than Nait Si, but less taut in the bass. Oodles of power, striking aesthetics, sensible facilities and great build make this a rare bargain.

NAD C352

picture.

£600

Classic NAD mix of smooth, punchy sound with plenty of watts and sensible, real-world facilities; a great introduction to real hi-fi.

2004

£300

NAIM NAIT 5! 2004 £825 The most musically engaging integrated at or near the price; real sophistication in sound allied to grip and power aplenty. Iconic styling and great build complete a very pretty

NAIM NAC282/NAP200 2004 £4.000

Wonderfully taut bass, lightening midband and incisive treble makes for an enthralling listen; this cracking combination looks great and is superb value too.

PRIMA LUNA PROLOGUE I 2004 £800 Unlike almost every other budget tube integrated we've tested, it's nicely built, decently powerful and engineered well enough to let the benefits of tubes shine out load; sweet.

STELLO S200 2004 £1,495 Oodles of smooth, clean power with plenty of pace and pleasing subtlety too. Factor in exquisite build and a low price and this is true audiophile bargain.

AV AMPLIFIERS

open, liquid. Cracking value.

DENONAVR-2803 2003 £650 Superb mid-price 7. I channel extravaganza with nearly all the decoding power you'll ever need. Powerful, open and clean sound (at the price) makes it capable with music, and superb on movies. Fine ergonomics and great build makes this receiver hard to beat as an all-rounder.



NAIM AV2/NAP 150/NAPV 175

2002 £4,190

Brilliant audiophile multichannel pre-power amplifier combo: not as good with music as a two-channel Naim set-up at the same price, obviously, but surprisingly close. Elegant control layout plus a strong, clean and brilliantly engaging sound make this a serious crossover product. Ultimately lacks power compared to similarly priced Arcam gear, but is more musically involving.

PIONEERVSA-AX51 2004 £1,000

The ability to hook up to Pioneer's DV-868i via i-Link (nee FireWire) means that this multichannel AV amplifier can do all the digital conversion onboard makes the a very special product, which when used with the aforementioned DVD spinner sounds better even than the sum of its parts.



HEADPHONE AMPLIFIERS

SUGDEN HEADMASTER2003 (600) Unusual combined preamplifier and headphone amplifier, this boasts a surprisingly smooth and open sound which suffers only when compared to preamps at twice the price.

MUSICAL FIDELITY

X-CANSV3 2003 £249 Mr Michaelson's best headphone amplifier to date, with an extremely open and explicitly detailed sound plus serious bass wallop and the ability to drive any phones to very high levels. Errs towards brightness with some headphones, so match carefully and use smooth cables.

PREAMPLIFIERS

CREEK OBH-12 2000 £220 Brilliant value budget passive, giving little away in sonics to far more expensive designs. Connectivity and build aren't great, but what do you expect at this price?



MF AUDIO PASSIVE PRE2003 £1500 Novel and effective pre with switchable gain via a transformer, and balanced operation. Open and incisive sound, yet makes most active rivals sound edgy by comparison.

NAIM NACI12 2002 £660 Affordable admission ticket to the Salisbury high end experience. Detailed and dynamic, if tonally rather lacklustre.

LINN LK140 2000 £800 Dry and grey sounding, but decently dynamic and musically engaging all the same. A worthy worker in a budget Linn system.

 MUSICAL FIDELITY

 A308 CR
 2003
 £2400

 Superb transistor behemoth, worth partnering with any high end CD player or preamp.
 Oodles of grunt served up with poise and purpose.

MARANTZ SM-172001£700Useful budget power amp with plenty of
clean transistor power. Not the most transparent, but sweet and clean all the same. Fine
build completes a great value package.



NAIM NAP1502002£795Driven by a decent source and a NAC112,
this gives highly enjoyable results - providing
you like the Naim sound! Taut, fast and feisty
despite its relative lack of power.

QUAD 909 2001 £900 The latest current-dumper has a smooth and expansive character with enough wallop to drive most loads. Not the most musical, but super value all the same. Lovely build, finish and Quad's legendary service are nice,

CROFTTWIN STAR 2003 £1750 With a taste of the best of both tube and transistor, this latest update of the Croft classic is a truly endearing experience.



HI-FI WORLD JULY 2006

STANDARDS

GRAAF GM20 OTL 2003 £3,300

Awesome output transformer-less valve power amp gives dazzling speed and incision, with an ethereal soundstaging and delicious filigree detail. Tremendous punch belies its humble 20W power rating. Factor in one of the most exquisite finishes this side of an Aston Martin and it's very hard to say no...

SUGDEN MUSICMASTER 2003 £1.300

Quintessential Class A Sugden sound is not warm as many expect, but extremely neutral and open with real tonal colour. By comparison, tubes sound bloated and standard solid-state hazy and brittle. Superb when partnered with efficient loudspeakers like Revolver R45s, but many will find it underpowered.



LOUDSPEAKERS

B&W CDMINT 2002 £750 Fine clarity and imaging allied to pleasing warmth and great rhythmic cohesion make these standmounters an essential audition.

CASTLE CONWAY 3 2003 £930 Superbly smooth and crisp performers, with a big hearted musical sound. Ultimately coloured though, with a slow, plummy bass.

CYRUS CLS70 2001 £800 Charismatic performer with a fast, tight and open midband, but lacks cohesion and scale..

KEF QI 2003 £250 Highly polished and articulate standmounters at the price, but demand good ancillaries for best results.

KLIPSCH HERESY II 1997 £1100 An outstanding high sensitivity loudspeaker with midrange and treble horns coupled with infinite baffle 12" bass driver. Effortless, fast and accurate.

LINN NINKA 2001 ¢995 Major on rhythms and dynamics, making them an involving listen. Reasonably refined, too - but tonally disappointing.

EPOS ELS-3 2003 £200 Plenty of brio and a decent degree of refinement makes this budget baby a fine value contender.



MISSION 782SE 2003 £900 Bright and tight design capable of brilliant speed and grip, at the expense of warmth. Demands high quality, high powered ancillaries.

MONITOR AUDIO B4 2003 £350 An unusually smooth and lucid performer at the price, and its 3-way design means it drives rooms well. Fine engineering, but build and finish so-so. **REVOLVER R45** 2003 £899 Wonderfully easy to drive floorstanders that are a dreamboat for tube amplifiers, and great for party-minded transistor users too. Great attack transients, fluid and musical bass and midband and couth treble make them fine all-rounders.

W'DALE DIAMOND 8.1 2001 £120 Still the best baby budget standmounters around. Tight and grippy thanks to Kevlar drivers, but invariably limited in the frequency extremes.



MORDAUNT SHORT 9142002 £300 Warm, detailed and articulate performer, but a touch loose in the bass and veiled up top. Fine partner for budget valve amps.

NAIMALLAE2002£1990Taut and grippy like few others, this speaker
majors on transient speed. Surprisingly
smooth for a Naim box, with nicely etched
treble. As always, tonally dry.

QUAD ESL-988 2001 £3400

Wonderfully neutral and self-effacing with sublime imaging and projection. Treble lacks extension, bass lacks weight - although the pricier 989 answers the latter resoundingly.

PERIGEE FK-1L 2002 £5000 Charismatic Aussie ribbon design with deliciously open mid and treble, allied to fine bass weight. The right room and ancillaries essential. Engaging, musical and powerful sound. Superb.

TDK S-802002£90Ingenious NXT multimedia sub/sat systemhas a wonderfully even and open sound - likebaby electrostatics.



MARTIN LOGAN

CLARITY 2003 £2,895 Supremely transparent and open with brilliant depth perspective and image projection. The midband is up there with the very best at any price, while the bass and treble integrate well but don't especially shine. Dynamically limited, with middling bass punch, but that's not the point – that deliciously fluid and intricate midband wins great respect.

TANNOY EYRIS DCI 2003 £699 The combination of dual concentric treble/ midband drivers plus supertweeters make for a very spacious and expansive sounding loudspeaker, aibeit one that's a little bright and loose in the bass. An excellent mid-price design well worth auditioning.

MONITOR AUDIO GR60 2002 £2,295

In some ways, these come close to Yamaha's legendary NS1000Ms, thanks to their treinendous clarity, great transients and 'full-fat' wide bandwidth performance. Bright and clean, but never fatiguing or uncouth. A truly accomplished all rounder that gives a real taste of 'super-fi' at a reasonably affordable price.

TOWNSHEND MAXIMUM

2003 £800

Another brilliant niche product from Max, these ribbon aspirated supertweeters add space and atmosphere to any good high end loudspeaker, and more surprisingly perhaps make things more fluid and musical too. Superb affordable esoterica.

KEF Q42004£400Hard to argue with the value of this smallfootprint floorstander; very couth, even,dimensional and detailed sound works well inconfined spaces and large rooms alike.

ELAC FS207.2 2004 £1,000 Deeply capable mid-price floorstanders, distinguished by superb JET ribbon tweeter which is unmatched by class rivals: engaging, slightly warm nature needs serious transistor power to sing.

EPOS M22 2004 £950 Classic Epos blend of speed, attack, power and punch will delight rock and techno fans alike, but classical and jazz buffs will crave more colour and texturality.

MONITOR AUDIO S82003£800Very few can rival this floorstander's allround ability; highly smooth, warm and threedimensional sound allied to an easy load andgood sensitivity makes this hard to overlook.

REVOLVER RW16 2004 £400 Outstanding standmounter with tonal accuracy and speed that totally belies its price; good sensitivity for a small box makes it great with valve amps too. A budget audiophile classic.

SPENDOR S3/5E 2004 £950 A natural successor to the BBC LS3/5a, whose impressive neutrality, imaging and evenhandedness makes this a superior, if less charismatic, loudspeaker.

TOWNSHEND MAXIMUM

2003 £800 The best affordable supertweeter we've heard – you'd be amazed at the difference it makes! Classy ribbon design, flexible level settings, cool styling...

HEADPHONES

JECKLIN FLOAT TWO 1998 £99 Wonderful panel-like sound from these esoteric-looking headclamps.

SENNHEISER MX-500 1999 £19 Our unqualified recommendation for those seeking a serious sounding pair of in-ear phones. Smooth, detailed and musical.

SENNHEISER PX-100 2002 229 Cracking pair of lightweight open back cans ideal for personals, but good enough for real hi-fi use. Superb build allied to a smooth and engaging performance make them the spiritual successor to the HD400s.



SENNIHEISER HD-650 2004 £250 Not the best headphone in the world, but a superb all round reference all the same. Very crisp, detailed and even sound allied to superlative build and fine comfort makes all most people will ever want. Cable upgrade yields great results.

World Radio History-fiworld.co.uk

ami iudiophile aps bias king horning hyperion metaxas mtaudro shanling 3d shanling 3d sonies suprayox









The way the Hyperions marry the openness, resolution speed and transparency more usually associated with a panel to the weight extension and dynamics of a top-class box borders on the uncanny

David Vivian Hi-Fi Choice



It's hi-fi that images in 3D, goes loud without sounding forced and creates an almost tangible presence of real musicians in the room. But most of all hi-fi that prickles your scalp every time it catches your eye and every time you hit 'play'.

- David Vivian, Hi-Fi Choice



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

World Radio History

STANDARDS

SENNHEISER HD-590 1998 £199

The company's best real-world cans to date. Open and smooth with plenty of detail. Brightly lit midband makes them an ideal partner for a valve headphone amp.



INTERCONNECTS

WIREWORLD OASIS 5 2003 £99/MExcellent mid-price design with a very neutral, silky and self-effacing sound. Superb value for money.

CHORD CO. CHAMELEON 2£90/M

One of our favourites, these are musical performers with a smooth yet open sound.

VDH ULTIMATE THE FIRST £260/0.6M

Carbon interconnects that help you forget the electronics and concentrate on the music. Miraculous transparency. Tight and tuneful bass mixed with air and space results in a cracking cable for the money.



DNM RESON £40/M Neutral and transparent - a steal!

TCI CONSTRICTOR I3A-6 BLOCK 2003 £120

Top quality 'affordable' mains outlet block, with fine build and good sonics. Well worth the extra over standard high street specials, which sound coarse and two-dimensional by comparison.

NORDOST BLUE HEAVEN £150/M Some of the fastest and most transparent cable around.



TUNERS ARCAM T61

ARCAMT61 2002 £250 This sleek looking and refined sounding FM/AM tuner isn't the last word in musical involvement, but is fine value, nonetheless.



ARCAM DT81

A fine radio, hampered only by its seriously compromised DAB medium. Probably the best DAB tuner ever, but one for Digital Radio enthusiasts only...

2003

£650

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO

DAB300 2003 £150 Fine ergonomics allied to great ease of use and respectable DAB sound makes this superb value.



DENONTU-260L MK II 1998 £130 If you want the best FM sound at the lowest possible price, then this ancient tuner remains peerless after all these years. There are better analogue designs around, but are either near-impossible to find or are now long-deleted.

CYRUS FM X £500 Great for Cyrus users, but its dry and precise sound can't match the best of the rest at the price. Worthy, nonetheless.



MYRYAD MT 100 1999 £600 One of hi-fi's nice surprises, this is a beautifully designed and built bit of kit with a deliciously sweet and svelte sound which really does justify its high price.

NAD \$400 2003 £600 Highly accomplished specialist high end analogue tuner with a deliciously open and lucid sound, but it can't quite match the Myryad all the same.

PRIMARE T21

Seriously accomplished design with mature sonics, great styling and fine build.

2002

£600



PURE DIGITAL DRX-702ES

DRX-702ES 2003 £249 Great with Digital Radio, but thin a tad sounding on FM at times. It's a top hybrid, nonetheless...



SYSTEMS

DENON D-M31 2003 £250 Excellent CD receiver package with surprising sonics and a brilliant tuner as a bonus, although its amplifier section doesn't quite match the Onkyo. Optional speakers are mediocre.

ONKYO CS-210 2003 £300 Superb value thanks to excellent sound, gréat built and ease of use, but the bundled 'speakers rather let the side down.

LINN CLASSIK 2002 £995 The best one-box stereo system money can buy; superbly musical sound beats equivalently priced seperates. £2,500 Classik Movie Di deserves the same accolade, but adds DVD video playback and surround sound.



PIONEER NS-DV990 2003 £799.95 Whiz-bang technology fest with DVD universal playback, discrete display and NXT flat panel speakers. Superb for the spare room or study – truly intelligent and elegant design – but don't expect it to match the sonics of AV separates.

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White Noise

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Letter of the Month

THEORY, NOT CHAOS

In the May issue I particularly enjoyed your article 'Chaos vs Theory' (page 34). I want to state my agreement with the points made on allocating a smaller portion of one's overall hi-fi budget on CD players, than one would on vinyl front ends. You suggest 30% of a £2,000 budget on a CD player. I would urge your readers to spend an even smaller portion - more like 15% or even 10% on the front end of a CD system, as in my experience, it's the rear end that counts here.

Three years ago, my system comprised: Marantz CD63SE, Musical Fidelity X-A2 amp and Dynaudio Audience 62 speakers. All have now been 'upgraded'. My ten year old Marantz CD63SE (£350 sometime in the early 1990s), via a Musical Fidelity A3 24 192k upsampling DAC (£320 second hand - it would have been £900 when new), Musical Fidelity X10 v3 tube buffer (£299 new) and a Trichord Clock 2 (£50 but tricky to fit).

Each of these upgrades has brought small degrees of improvement to resolution, detail and presence. Crucially, none has 'revolutionised' the sound of my system in the way that upgrades to my amplification and speakers has. In total, these small degrees of improvement to the CD front end have cost me £669 (or £1,249 if all had been purchased new). The step up in amplification has been to a Musical Fidelity A3.2 integrated amp (£530 ex demo; it would have been £1,000 new). This has more grip, better dynamics, but still with all the delicacy.

With regard to loudspeakers, I am now using Dynaudio Audience 82s (£720 second hand. They were, I think, £1,700 when new). Fantastic frequency response. The Dynaudios particularly brought the performance of my system almost into the 'high-end' league (I like to think!). By comparisons the upgrades to my CD front end have constituted little more than 'tweaks'. Useful tweaks, but tweaks nevertheless. If for the sake of accurate price comparisons the new values of these products are used, the total cost of these upgrades is £3,949. This means that proportionally, the CD 'tweaks' make up 32% of this total (appalling value, and that doesn't even include the price or the original CD player), the amp 25% (good value) and the speakers 43% (excellent value).

From my own personal experience l can imagine only that designing, making and distributing 'good' CD players must be cheaper than the equivalent process for amps and even cheaper when compared to loudspeaker manufacture.

In conclusion, I urge your CD listening readers to throw even more of their cash at the rear ends of their systems. For a £2,000 budget: 15% on source; 25% on amplification and 60% on speakers.

keep up the good work! Ben Bishop

Tightly argued and nicely put Ben. I find CD players to be much of a muchness, largely because they are for the most part built around a few, similar chip sets and transports. The reason for this is the sheer complexity of the technology involved. Where someone breaks away from the mould, a major example being Rob Watts designed WTA digital filters, built on a Field Programmable Gate Array, then you do suddenly start to hear significant differences. For me this is educational. The only CD players currently to use WTA filters are Chord's DAC64 and Tube Technology's Fusion 64. If you can get to hear them, do. They might tip your figures a little, but otherwise little else will.

Glad a Musical Fidelity amplifier came in as good value and, of course, loudspeakers can make a huge difference. No good having a wonderful front end constrained by squeaky speakers. But then a ropey front end playing through good



Reader Ben Bishop recommends spending the majority of your system funds on the speakers...

speakers isn't too nice either. The debate continues! NK

CHAOS THEORISING

I just finished your feature article "Chaos versus Theory" and felt compelled to send you this thank you message. Your article was clear and easy to understand, especially for someone searching for the steps to improve his listening pleasure. Your article helped take some of the mystery out of system building for me. Now, it's out into the community to audition a dealer or two, listen, and start the journey. I look forward to your magazine every month. Larry Casey

Los Angeles, CA

Thanks Larry I felt compelled to write this feature because – quite literally – of the chaotic nature of many of the system building questions I get. Lots of them start with, "is the 'xyz' any good – I've just seen one on ebay for $\pm x$. Should I buy it?". Well, I love to chat about hifi new and old, but frankly that's no way to build a system. In my article, I

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simply wanted buyers to get clear in their minds what they're trying to do, and why (i.e. where they're trying to go)? A haphazard, slapdash approach to system building isn't going to get you anywhere in particular, although buying classic kit can be brilliant fun and extremely interesting all the same - especially if you happen to [a] get a bargain or [b] discover that what you've just bought is actually better than you expected. So get it straight in your mind whether you're after getting the best sound per pound (i.e. buying new, via careful auditioning at a dealer), or whether you're up for going on an odyssey of hi-fi discovery (i.e. buying unseen, unheard via ebay or the classifieds) - as they're two very different things.

Finally, I'd just like to point out that you can't have your cake and eat it; manufacturers and distributors don't like servicing items bought third hand. They'll do it, if at all possible, but don't expect preferential rates, discounts etc. on this. One very famous importer told me he has two rates on servicing/upgrades - those items bought into the UK by him get the full red carpet treatment, those bought abroad via the internet, or secondhand via someone else get charged three times as much for the same work. This might sound a tad aggressive, but he's invested vast amounts of time and money in setting up authorised service centres, training dealers, giving time consuming dems, setting up the kit, etc., - and he points out that this all costs. So, in a world that's getting increasingly diverse, buying an officially sanctioned new product from an authorized dealer may be initially more expensive, but it's rarely costlier in the long run - and you get far superior service in the meantime. Something to think on... DP

SYSTEM SELECTION

I couldn't let your article about putting a system together go by without comment. Yes, I am an ebay fiend and your classifieds, and have put together what I think is an excellent system, without extensive auditions. More by luck than judgement, I am sure, but it is do-able if you follow the golden rule 'do your research'.

I never buy on the basis of one review, but a collective view of a product, and I look for what I consider to be modern classics. You talk of synergy and I am sure you are right, but I believe the better the kit, the more likely it is to fit into any system. Two recent examples: a Lavardin IT integrated amp and Origin Live Resolution turntable. Both were bought without audition, and both are long term keepers.



Origin Live Resolution bought in haste, enjoyed at leisure!

Stick what you buy in your system and try it out. If you don't like it, sell it. If you have bought wisely, you shouldn't lose much, as an in-demand item nearly always sells easily. You can look at a second-hand buy as a prolonged home audition, because you should be able to sell at little loss. As you know, take a new bit of kit out of a shop and it loses one third of its value as you leave the door. Sorry, but I think buying new, even with a prolonged audition, is more of a risk. You have potentially more to lose.

I hate to disagree with you, but with care, I think you can build a good system the ebay way. It may take longer and there are real pitfalls, but I think it is mare fun.

David Wise

I see ebay as an addition to the traditional high street outlet, and an extra dimension to the hi-fi market overall. It's great to see good old products being appreciated, rather than tipped onto the scrapheap when one small part fails. Similarly I also love seeing restored old cars and motorbikes and am reminded that laguar and other car manufacturers realised some time ago a thriving second-hand market bolters the brand and adds to brand value. It is too narrow to see ebay as competition for new sales; we all need a thriving second hand market.

All the same, as much as 1 love old gear, for the most part 1 believe the best of modern design is still superior and worth having. Exceptions for me are the Leak Troughline vhf tuner, which is unmatchable when working well from a good aerial, and Garrard 401 turntable on Martin Bastin plinth, an item 1 use almost everyday. Otherwise, new has it for me, but all the same a great system for little money is possible via ebay if you don't mind the hassle and risks. **NK**

Agreed – classic hi-fi should be a compliment to modern stuff, not a replacement. As many readers know, l

use modern turntable, arm and cartridge (Michell Orbe, Tecno Arm a and Koetsu Rosewood Signature), preamp (MF Audio Passive Pre), classic power amplifier (of sorts - a modded World Audio K5881) and classic loudspeakers (albeit with new tweeters recently fitted!). This, I believe, betters (by and large) almost all all-new and all-classic systems. I think just randomly buying so-called 'classic' stuff in the hope of saving money is a false economy. Also, think on this; if everyone stopped buying new in favour of second-hand, where would the fresh second-hand hi-fi come from? Exactly, we'd have killed our whole industry and pushed ourselves headlong towards being 'hifi Dodos'! I think, as with everything in life, a sensible mix of the old and the new does best DP

RIPPING GOOD SOUND

I was interested by D. Ottley's letter in the May edition, regarding his loudspeaker modifications. I have an old pair of KEF Reference 105.2 speakers, one of which has a damaged 12" bass unit. It is a radial split, the full depth of the cone, and is currently held together with PVC tape on both sides, and the rubber surround resealed with impact adhesive. This has resulted in a surprisingly satisfactory repair, but with some reduction in clarity. KEF don't make a direct replacement, so could I replace the units on both speakers with any other 12in unit? The KEF units are fixed at only three points, but there's no reason to think it would be a problem to replace these with units with conventional four-point fixing. I wondered if there are units with a lighter cone material which I could use, instead of the rather cumbersome-looking (and sometimes sounding) Bextrene originals, to improve the clarity of the bass?

Normally, of course, it's not a good idea to replace original units with any other type in any speaker, but I feel that replacement with a new unit is better than searching ebay for a replacement of similar age, and possibly similar

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frailty. Also, are there any other modifications I could make, e.g. rewiring - the connectors which supply the signal to the mid/treble units look as if they could be improved upon.

I should say, with respect to KEF, that I have had the 105s from new for twenty five years and I look upon this as a possible opportunity to improve upon an already excellent speaker. Alternatively, how would the floorstanding World Design WD25T compare with the KEFs? In fact, how about an extensive comparative review of the many kit/DIY speakers available? **Tony Hackett**

I spoke to Dave Smith at DK Loudspeaker Service (tel: 01708 447344) about this and he said they can re-cone this drive unit for you. Their address is 10 Spring Gardens, Elm Park, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 5BO.

You can't put in a lighter cone drive unit without altering the bass tuning and alignment of the system. Best to repair the bass unit and possibly revamp the 'speakers with better components. Falcon Electronics (tel: 01493 751100) can help with parts, as can Wilmslow (tel: 01455 286603). This will likely pep them up a bit. **NK**

I have just had DK Loudspeakers re-cone both bass units of my Wharfedale E50s, and am staggered by the quality of Dave's work and the ensuing sonic improvements! Even before the old units went AWOL, they didn't sound anywhere near as tight or powerful as the newly re-coned speakers. They'll be more about this in our September 2006



Got a classic speaker that needs repair? DK Loudspeakers can fix it!

issue, but in the meantime DK come recommended wholeheartedly! **DP**

CLASS ISSUES

I read with interest the article on the JungSon JA-88D pure Class A amplifier in the May 2006 issue, this really looks like an interesting product. I have to agree with David Price that stripping out those silly meters can only help to make this a better product. I also agree with Mr Price's view on crossover distortion. Trannie amps all too often seem to have a grainy, grey mush superimposed on everything. When I first heard a Class A tube amp I was totally blown away by the 'see through' nature of the sound. surface (I prefer this side up to the plain side)

How does one acquire such a mat? The answer is simple. Go along to your ASDA supermarket, make your way to the pizza counter and ask the person there if you can have a polystyrene base for a 12 inch pizza. I kid you not! Mine was perfectly flat, but it's white. Does any reader know how to colour white expanded polystyrene evenly to any other colour?

If they won't give you one of these bases, it's worth buying a 12 inch pizza, it's that good, and the pizza is okay too. The only problem is that there is no hole in the centre. How does one find



JungSon's JA-88D – full Class A is the real deal.

It makes listening to classical music especially a real joy. I have since then built an AudioNote KIT I 300SE amp and although it is very low power it is truly gorgeous. I have also built a Class A trannie amp for headphone listening. This is a modified form of the Lindsey-Hood Class A amp and it also has a very transparent sound. Bill McCormack

Thanks Bill – there's no doubt that there's a lot wrong with Class AB, by and large, although that doesn't mean all AB designs are bad or all A designs are good (life is never that simple)! The JungSon is an extremely good amp – it's just I'd like to hack out a few of its dubious features to make it a great one! **DP**

PIZZA MAN

Following Noel's answer to Ian Davies' letter in the May issue, I thought that you might like to know about one of the best platter mats that I have tried and what's more, its free! It is made of nothing more than expanded polystyrene and is about 3mm in thickness, so arm height may need adjustment. Because of its lightness, this mat can be used on all turntables, including the sprung suspension Linn types, so Mr Davies can use one. One side is plain flat whilst the other side is lightly 'dimpled' and this makes only light contact with the record the exact centre for the hole? There are two ways. The hard way is to get a pair of compasses and draw intersecting arcs all over it or you can do what I did. Place an LP on the top and mark the centre. It's then a simple matter to push a pencil through.

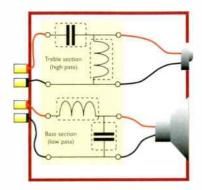
Do listen to this as a platter mat. It is free and better than most mats that I've tried, which includes cork, polymer, felt, rubber and others. The music opens up when compared to the polymer types and knocks spots off a felt mat. Alec Fray

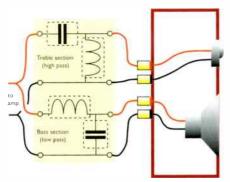
Ah yes, my answer was a bit lame - but I suspected this would throw up a few imaginative ideas. Nice one Alec. **NK**

I have to say, the Sound Dead Steel Isoplatmat is my current favourite, although it adds mass which can cause more problems on some decks than it solves. Conversely, this fact alone can also vastly improve sound – it all depends on your deck! **DP**

OUTSIDE MATTER

I was interested to see the letter from D. Ottley in the May issue, concerning speaker crossovers. My Musical Fidelity monoblocks drive a pair of Tannoy M20 Gold MkII speakers bought new in 1988 as a stopgap, until I could afford something better(!) then mildly





The crossover of a typical two-way loudspeaker (above) can be removed easily (below), to isolate it from sound and vibration, improving sound quality.

modified shortly after that using Spectra Dynamics pads, which made a tremendous difference in reducing colouration and improving dynamics.

Every few years, however, I audition a number of alternatives (most recently Monitor Audio and PMC in the £600-£1,200 range) but they never seem to present as good a compromise. Standmounters don't have the same dynamics, floorstanders seem to boom in my 7m long x 3m wide x 2.5m high room. So recently I decided to get in touch with Wilmslow Audio re: upgrading the crossover components, and am about to do this. For those who cannot wield a soldering iron or who are just plain lazy, Wilmslow will do the job for a charge of £30 on top of the cost of the components.

My main reason for writing however is that I was particularly interested in the idea of mounting the crossovers outside of the speaker box. I am a fairly regular reader and have been looking

through my back copies but cannot find the article referred to. **David Deeks**

I can't recall any recent article, but back in the mists of time we did run our own World Audio Design kit loudspeakers like this, as a preference. It's widely accepted that vibration does affect components and that mounting crossovers externally cleans things up usefully. With most loudspeakers it isn't a difficult process either. Access is usually though the bass unit cut out. Sometimes, simple crossovers are mounted onto the terminal panel, so access is via panel removal.

A typical two-way crossover is physically configured as shown in our diagram. This shows a bi-wire design, with external removable links joining low and high pass sections. These conveniently possess two pairs of terminals. Simply remove the crossover from the loudspeaker and connect tweeter directly to the top pair and bass unit to the bottom pair. Best not to unsolder wires from the tweeter though, as internal wiring can become disconnected. Instead, if the tweeter wires are too short then solder in an extension and tape it up (or similar)

Having done this you now have to decide what to do with the crossover. We'd put it in a plastic box, on the floor just behind the loudspeaker. Alternatively, you could position it near to the amplifier, running separate bass and treble cables. This is little different to biwiring.

Most people use a plastic (nonmagnetic) box for the crossover, but I do not see why an aluminium box should not be used. It should be earthed to the amplifier's chassis, rather than the loudspeaker negative line. An alloy box will screen the inductors and cut down rf pickup, which these days is rising, due to computer paraphernalia like wireless routers and what have you. Anyone carrying out these mods might like to write in to tell us what difference they make... **NK**

THE SPIN ON GARRARD

Following your edition featuring the Garrard 401, albeit a Martin Bastin conversion, my appetite was whetted to obtain one.

My first purchase was a bare 401 via ebay and I contacted Martin in order to determine what I needed to do next. Domestic circumstances meant that this went on hold, and browsing ebay a couple of weeks ago I spotted a late model, complete with an SME 3009/2 Improved arm, in a purpose-built teak plinth (it also came with manuals and a spare new SME headshell). I couldn't resist pitching for this and to my delight was advised that I had been successful!

Having collected the deck I went about introducing it to my system, to replace a highly modified Thorens 160 (custom mahogany plinth, Origin Live ultra dc motor and PSU, Mission 774 arm with pure silver interconnects and Eichmann Silver Bullet plugs and Music



Garrard 401 - forty years old, but still one of the best.



Maker 3 cartridge)

The 401 came complete with a Shure 75ED cartridge that, close inspection showed, had a near perfect condition stylus. So before installing my Music Maker into the other headshell I connected the deck, replacing the Garrard mat with an Ariston rubber one that I'd kept for the past twenty five years (and the VTA was completely out, so needed setting up) to my Musical Fidelity kW500.

Your comment about bass depth and attack was a bit of an understatement: it was simply staggering! LPs that I thought I knew really well provided further information, and while I considered that the detail was different, I couldn't say midrange was lacking, it was simply presented differently. Double bass on Dave Brubeck's 'Take Five' was resonant to the point of 'hearing' the instruments case - is that possible? Decay on piano was there like I have never heard before.

My question is, this set up is (not clear what age the Shure is but....) forty years old and musically it is so engaging as to leave me wondering what on earth we dumped over the years in the name of progress! What is curious is that the kW transport and kW DAC that replaced my SACD player present the music in a similar manner (my wife says that they are the least digital set up that she has heard). So much so that I don't think I have ever played quite so much music quite so often - and my wife even comes in and listens with me. She didn't even baulk at me buying a wall mounted turntable support so it must be good (we did try the Thorens on the support but it doesn't get close to the Garrard)!

Kevin Wood

CALL TO ARMS

Your April 2005 review of the mighty Kenwood (Trio) L-o7D turntable was a fascinating read. In fact, your recent mission to unearth the great Japanese designs from that xenophobic era of British hi-fi journalism is truly a revelation! I'm perturbed however to see the L-o7D tonearm maligned as a weak link without apparent proof. The source of this heresy appears to be Jon Marks' Olde Worlde review in the March 1998 issue of HI-Fi World, and has subsequently been repeated on several websites, not to mention every time your magazine prints its World Classics.

Upon reading the very thorough L-o7D website (click on www.l-07d. com) one must conclude that Kenwood's engineers comprehensively understood the importance of a "highly accurate and rigid pick-up loop", and that the tonearm is integral to the system design, not an afterthought conceived in isolation. Considering the dearth



Trio L-o7D – a brilliant turntable for sure, but what of the arm?

of evidence to the contrary, I would contend that this tonearm contributes to the stunning performance of the turntable rather than detracting from it.

Referring again to the website, only a handful of owners who have submitted photographs of their turntables have bothered to add a second tonearm to the sub-arm base, and even fewer have substituted it altogether, which is not to say that stellar performance wouldn't be achieved with other worthy tonearms. It is also compared favourably with the SME V.

A missed opportunity then - when DP pitted the Kenwood against his beloved Michell GyroDec last April the opportunity was ripe to mount the test cartridge on the L-o7D tonearm and report his findings in comparison to the similarly equipped TecnoArm. If the L-07D tonearm is to be eternally damned, let it be done under the 'strict laboratory conditions' DP described, not through hearsay.

Gront Nicholson New Zeolond

Well, what a great opportunity for me to give my two cents now! I did take the trouble of auditioning the Lo7D's tonearm against the TecnoArm, and I found the TecnoArm generally superior. In fact, it's better to say I found it different, and sonically very

pleasing, but less able to showcase the mightily high resolution offered by the deck itself. I was more impressed by the deck than the arm, and considering the deck is so superb, it's a shame not to run it at its full potential. The arm is an excellent device, and I have to say would suit the likes of Denon's DL-103 and Ortofon's SPU very well. It has a warm, widescreen sound that's effortlessly natural and musically lucid, but I found it a tad veiled up top and most definitely not as a tight as an SMEV in the bass. Still, we're back to the vital but oft ignored armcartridge matching issue here - this is all important. A cartridge well matched to the highish mass of the L-o7D's arm would easily give better results compared to a medium mass (i.e. Rega/Michell/OL variant). DP

DOWNSIZING

I would be grateful if you could help me to resolve a downsizing problem. I have recently moved house from one that had a large lounge/listening room of 23ft, to a more modest one with a dining /sitting /listening room of 15ft x 12ft. My IPL Acoustics Mk 4 S4TL transmission line kit speakers, although previously quite at home, now appear to be rather like a pair of aged, oversized and unwelcome guests in this demanding new space and



What better for a Naim user downsizing than the Acoustic Energy AE1 Classics?

MAIL

they too will have to be downsized. I was (see later) prepared to budget for up to about £800 for non-DIY alternatives, accepting that there will have to be some audio compromises.

The rest of my system comprises a twenty year old Rega Planar 3 with a Goldring 1012GX cartridge, Naim 32.5 and NAP110 amplifier, Rotel RCD 965BX CD player and Yamaha KX393 cassette deck. A Revox B77 open-reel recorder, mint, little used and regrettably doomed for ebay or whatever. QED cable and bog standard interconnects.

In this early search for a solution I've had as yet just one very tentative first audition of Kef iQ5s and Epos M I 2.2s, from my local High St. dealer. In this case using their ancillaries, including a Project 2 deck along with some of my Keith Jarrett Trio vinyl and a big Mahler/Rattle CD. The Kef iQ5s seriously disappointed, with KJ's piano sounding unconvincing. The Epos were superior and can clearly play music and gave me hope, but, unsurprisingly, don't have the drama or presence of my IPLs.

However since reading your thought provoking article Chaos vs. Theory in the May edition, I wonder if I may be on the wrong track anyway. Perhaps my downsizing should be viewed as an opportunity to review the entire system with more emphasis on the vinyl front end. I would be prepared to review my budget and target in the region of £2k or so in a phased upgrade of the system. If I did so, what should I do? Do I go for a GyroDec SE (maybe salvaging the RB300 from the Rega), or a Roksan/ Nima?

Should I keep the Naims as the system core, but get them serviced at some point, perhaps upgrading the NAP 110 to a 140? The cost of this, Naim tell me, could be about £500 tops. They sound and appear to be fine, and I have no desire to change them unless you suggest otherwise. Is the Rotel off the pace today or would it be worth stretching the budget a little further - for what?

Chris

The good news is that you already have a lot to work with. Obviously, you like the Naim sound and look for real musical enjoyment ahead of textural accuracy, so let's stay with the Naims. In the fullness of time, I'd send them back to Salisbury, as Naim provide brilliant servicing, and the expense would be justified, but first, I'd suggest you sell your Rega Planar 3/Goldring (£200-ish) and Revox (£850-ish) and convert these into a Michell GyroDec SE/ TecnoArm a and Ortofon Rondo Bronze cartridge. You'll now have an excellent front end, capable of surviving almost any future upgrade. Next, I'd counsel a

pair of Acoustic Energy AEI Classics, on Partington Dreadnought stands. You're wasting your time with midprice floorstanders in a room such as this, and the AEIs are brilliantly musically involving, which I suspect is precisely what you want. They won't set off your room's resonant modes, and you'll be able to take them to high levels without offending the neighbours. Okay, you'll lose some bass extension, but the fluidity (from the AEIs) and grip (from the Gyro) will more than compensate. **DP**

BIG TANNOYS

I have been a committed 'big Tannoys' fan since about 1975. One thing that reminded me after reading your (35 years overdue!) feature was just how out in the cold, how frowned upon and sneered at Tannoy ownership was by the Linn/Naim/Heybrook camp.

I had steadily progressed from a TD I 60 to Ariston RD I I to LP I 2 front end well before the famous Practical Hi-Fi Ivor T' article extolling the Linn mantra but what I just couldn't get at the time was the shrill, weedy, screaming top end, in your face 'sound' that was peddled by most 'serious' dealers of the time - and these people snorted when you mentioned Tannoy Dual Concentrics!

Anyhow to my point. There are a small number of 'pro' amp. manufacturers who take more than a passing interest in sound quality and wondered, given the realisation that pro pedigree speakers really do the biz, if you had considered a similar feature on the guys who power up the big 'uns in the pro arena? One immediately springs to mind: MC2 Audio who make incredibly powerful yet neutral sounding power amps. No, I don't have any connection other than I bought their M1250 to



Big Tannoys – never trendy, always cool...

drive my System I 5s and it was a revelation. Klark Teknik's chief designer (now MC2s) is responsible for what I think is the Holy Grail - a hi-fi pro amplifier.

Frank Cookson

There's always been a gulf in understanding, and outlook even, between pro-audio and hi-fi. As a generalisation I have found pro equipment a little harsh, lacking in subtlety. It does, after all, have a different and often more grueling job to do. These days the two worlds seem closer, however, as they should be, and we are always prepared to look at good pro items.

The Tannoy Dual Concentrics have been ignored, but then Tannoy have done little to push them, and not everyone wants such a large loudspeaker in their home (| think)! I may well be wrong here though. Whilst sales of really big, expensive loudspeakers may always be relatively small in volume terms, for the right sound people are prepared to pay and donate floor space, I have been told recently by dealers and a major manufacturer. That includes me; I have a few pennies set aside for a motorbike, but Yorkminsters will give more pleasure, so that's where the money's going! NK

RETAIL TALE

I have been following your exchanges with Anthony Carroll with some interest.

Taking his points about competition between retailers, I don't think it is very surprising that Anthony finds little competition between like-for-like retailers. Retailing is a business I have been involved in myself and it is a very high cost business to operate. All retailers who operate at similar levels face similar operating costs and as hi-fi does not turnover very quickly, profit margins need to be high so the poor old consumer is faced with very high prices when calling at the hi-fi dealers.

I don't find it too surprising to find similar prices for the same product across the country. This level of similar pricing exists throughout the retail trades. For example, if you were to survey a basket of well known food brands across the major supermarkets you would find very similar price levels between them all. Manufacturers are comfortable with this situation and like to maintain the status quo.

I have to say I don't think the hi-fi consumer gets the best deal from the hi-fi dealer network. For example, all the hi-fi dealers in my area are dominated by Linn/Naim and all stock similar products. If you wanted to listen to, say, a tube amp you would be struggling around here. They would tell you they don't do tubes because they are unreliable or they don't sound as good as Linn/Naim/Rega, or they are difficult to service!

I once called in to my local dealer wanting to hear a top line Arcam CD player. They said they didn't stock this product because the Naim ones were so much better even though they were Arcam dealers!

I suppose one problem is that the general hi-fi dealer is a small business and from his point of view it makes sense to tie up with a handful of companies who will support him and give him some protection in the marketplace. Anthony is kicking against the system and I know how he feels. Some of his questions are legitimate but I really cannot see things changing in the short term. Nobody really wants and, I suspect, this is giving rise to an expectation of similarly low prices within the UK marketplace. Volume produced CE items of this nature sound dreadful in my experience, making the prices asked for decent sounding product quite reasonable. Proper hi-fi products will never be priced at this level and it is not a conspiracy that they are not. **NK**

STRONG ARM

I recently spotted an advertisement in your esteemed journal, advocating 'turbo charging' my Rega arm. As I have an RB300 and have recently started to delve into my vinyl collection once more, this caught my attention. After all £75 isn't too bad a sum to invest in an upgrade. The questions are: what do they do and will I gain a sonic epiphany?



Rega RB300 tonearm – a good tonearm made great by Origin Live's structural modification.

to rock the boat and things continue imperfect for the consumer, the manufacturer, the retailer and the mag publisher in the middle.

Finally, I must agree with the point Anthony raises about personal attack. It is very bad taste to use your platform as a magazine publisher to attack a reader when you as editors control his right of reply.

M. Booth

On the last matter, Anthony's concerns have been aired by us, even though his assertions came with no proof. The very fact his letter was published and given reasonable consideration is enough in itself to show we respect his views, even if we don't agree with them. I also asked the Office of Fair Trading whether they were aware of retail price fixing - and they were not. If allegations of retail price fixing simply stem from the fact that no one is offering ultralow prices anywhere then it is, as I said initially, down to the fact that there is a lower limit determined by manufacturing cost and subsequent profit margins. There are no conspiracies, cartels or anything like it, as far as I am aware, setting retail prices.

Fully automated production in China is nowadays slashing the cost of Consumer Electronic products Also, I recently obtained an Alpha One CD player for very little money, but can't find out much about it. It sounds very smooth and seems to have more bass extension, but is perhaps a little less articulate than my Marantz CD63. How would it have stood both in value and quality terms, against my Marantz and Rotel RCD 855?

For audiophiles searching for good quality phono to 5 pin DIN interconnects, I have discovered a company called Flashback (www. flashbacksales.co.uk) that can supply. Their staff are knowledgeable, helpful and friendly and the service is swift.

Finally, for those out there with (as I had) AR speakers that the foam has deteriorated around the bass drivers, I have a cheap and effective solution. An American company Simply Speakers (www.simplyspeakers.com) will supply replacement kits for these and other makes. They cost me \$26 and are easy to fit, coming with full and easy to follow instructions that with care and patience have revived my trusty AR 18s. I contacted the company over the internet and received the kit within a few days and my speakers now sound as good as new.

Terry Symonds

Thanks for the info Terry. It all helps keep hi-fi alive, fettled and kicking. **NK** The Origin Live Structural modification, which is what your first question refers to, adds far superior bass grip, a cleaner midband and smoother treble – it's a brilliant mod for any Rega arm owner, and comes thoroughly recommended. The Arcam Alpha One was better than the stock Marantz CD63, I'd say, although it would have struggled hard against the CD63 Ken Ishiwata Signature. Having not heard the Rotel, I can't comment. **DP**

SORRY FOR RAMBLING

Let me start by saying how much I like your magazine. I've been buying it on and off since 1991. I still have a copy of your June 1991 (No. 4) issue! I'll buy your magazine, even if there isn't anything in it in which I'm specifically interested. I just like reading your views and like that you tend to review some unusual products that I'm not likely to read about elsewhere.

I also like that you still recommend old products such as the Leak Troughline and don't consider everything new to be an improvement. Most magazines seem to say that products get better every year. If this were true then stuff from ten years ago wouldn't compare with this year's models, which obviously isn't true in most cases. Just because it's new doesn't mean it's better. I loved your articles in January 2004 comparing a twenty year old Meridian MCD Pro with a new Meridian 507 and your comparison of recorders in which the Nakamichi ZX-9 analogue cassette deck came out on top.

I also like the fact that you point out that just because it's old doesn't necessarily mean it's good either. Good is good, bad is bad, indifferent is indifferent. Doesn't matter when it was made.

I note that you showed a cover of "The Flat Response" from 1985 in your March 2006 issue. Wow that takes me back! I don't have any old copies of "The Flat Response" but I do still have a few old issues of "Hi-Fi Review" going back to 1987, which as we old fogies should know was the same magazine. Looking back at these it seems to me that it must have been something of a challenge for Noel to work there. If it wasn't made by Linn or Naim it wasn't any good! Now I know that Linn and Naim stuff is pretty good, but there is a lot of equipment out there that, in my opinion, is a lot better than Linn and Naim stuff. Noel's like of the Leak Troughline, SME Series V, valve amps etc. must have been difficult to integrate with the rest of the writers.



Musical Fidelity A1 – classic or clunker?

In the same issue I see you recommend the Ikea Billy bookcase. I prefer the Markor bookcase, it's a bit more expensive but it is made from real wood, not particleboard, and looks much smarter. Also it is a bit deeper than the Billy and vinyl records fit almost perfectly. In fact I suspect it was designed for records as the fit is just so good!

I found Andy Blockley's comments in the Phonosophie turntable article, in the same March 2006 issue, interesting. He says "I had heard the Michell and Voyd turntables but their musical presentation did not suit me as much as the Linn and the Roksan."This suggests that the various turntables are not better than one another, just that their performance is different. I would have to agree with this comment; there is no perfect component, we all have to pick what suits our preferences.

When I bought my present turntable in about 1989, I also auditioned a number of first class turntables - when you're spending this much money why wouldn't you? I auditioned the Alphason Sonata, Linn Sondek, Michell GyroDec, Roksan Xerxes, Pink Triangle PT Too and Voyd Valdi with various different tonearms & cartridges. I, however, liked the Linn and Roksan models the least.What did I pick? The GyroDec of course, no comparison. This took some nerve as the GyroDec got very little press coverage back then. By the way, mine still has an AC motor and I'm praying that it keeps working. I've heard the DC version and I, for one, do not think it is anywhere near as involving as the AC version. I'm still

using the old Gyro Power PSU as it still suits me best.

When I moved to the U.S. in 1992 I contacted the U.S. distributor about purchasing a new 120 volt power supply. They said that the Michell power supply "wasn't very good" and suggested an Inouye power supply, which I duly bought. This totally emasculated the GyroDec, causing it to sound more like it had the standard "wall wart" supply, producing ill defined bass and taking away most of its ability to make my toes tap. I then did what I should have done in the first place. I looked at the Michell supply and found that with two links on the pcb it could be converted to 120 volt operation. Once this was done, the great bass and wonderful rhythmic presentation were back. I'm also still using two drive belts as this, to me, still gives the best performance. I've tried only using one belt but find the result to be less involving.

I find your love of the Yamaha NS1000M odd. I heard these many years ago and found them to be bright and piercing. I do note that you say to "partner carefully" and perhaps it was the combination with a rough sounding seventies solid state amp that was the problem. Or perhaps we just like a different presentation. But as we both like the GyroDec I suspect our tastes are more similar than dissimilar. So probably the amp...

Which brings me to the Denon DL103. (I'm sure you're sick of hearing about this one by now!) I have a DL103 - as a back up to my Koetsu Black (glad to hear you're in love with Red Signature). The Koetsus are not exactly neutral, but the sound, the music... Well, what do I think about the DL103? I don't think it is as bad as you seem to think it is, but it certainly isn't the saviour of mankind that some people think it is, and despite what Ken Kessler says about it, that spherical tip emphasizes surface noise. As you say, it isn't as good as a Dynavector DV10x4, but then it is half the price. By the way, the Dynavector I7D2 is the gem of the Dynavector range, much better in my opinion than your oft recommended Ortofons.

I find it interesting that in your World Classics you have the Musical Fidelity AI. Odd that, as I seem to remember you not liking it when you reviewed it back in 1991. It kind of annoyed me at the time as I owned an Al back then. I still have a copy of your November 1991 issue (No 9) and going back and re-reading, I find you said "The AI's idiosyncratic sound and its low power prevent it from being universally recommended, but for some the sound will be so seductive that there may well be no other choice." Not as bad as I remember, but still not exactly a glowing review either.

By the way, I consider the AI to be the best product that Musical Fidelity ever made. I'm not really a big fan of any of their other stuff. Of course the AI was designed by Tim de Paravicini, so it's more of an EAR product than a Musical Fidelity one. Well that's about all for now. Once again, sorry for rambling. Dave Bennett

Well, that's an interesting meander through sixteen odd years of Hi-Fi World (I'll let readers make their own minds up about my choice of phraseology here)! I can't say I share your views on the twin belts on the Gyro. Before he died, John Michell told me the story that the second belt was added purely to assuage one particular very famous reviewer's criticism of the deck, despite all

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Linn Akurate 221 Centre - Rosenur (2Yr G/tee) (2250.00)

Linn Ikemi CD Player Silver - New (2Yr G/tee) (2200.00)

Naim CDX CD Player S/H (1Yr G/tee)(2400.00)

PMC OB1 Speakers - Oak E/D (2Yr G/tee) (2450.00)

Sugden PhonoMaster Bijou Preamplifier (2Yr G/tee)(679.00)





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sonic evidence to the contrary (he added, and I agree), to ensure that the review appeared in a certain famous hi-fi magazine! Basically, he saw the extra expense of redesigning the deck as worth it, just to get that review! Nor can I agree about the AC motors; I think the DC was an obvious improvement, although you're right that the old one was more 'zingy' sounding – which may match dull sounding systems...

The NS1000s have been done to death, so I'll not get into these; suffice to say that my experience of them suggests they're better than 99.999% of all amplifiers and/or interconnects, and when used with inadequate partnering equipment, merely tell you what's wrong with them in a very matter-of-fact way!

The Musical Fidelity A1 was a honey, but also a very niche product that simply doesn't work well with most loudspeakers. As for the Denon cartridge – well, we're running a three pager on these very soon. I have to say I've been surprised by the volume of correspondence on these, though! **DP**

Thanks for all that Dave. Your experiences will interest a lot of readers I believe. And I couldn't agree more that we should keep an open mind about product and not judge it by age, or price, alone. I will be checking out the Markor bookcase too, as I want to re-house my LPs, books in something a bit classier than the cheap Billy. I have learnt that tall bookcases like this can act as great bass traps if corner sited, and they gobble up mountains of kit too.

Flat Response was an eighties dedicated hi-fi 'fanzine' that published regular pieces, like Curse of the Claw, that were very close to the edge. It was a great read. At the time, Private Eye had a strong influence and the audio business got Private Eye-Fi too, a trade mag that also sailed dangerously close to the wind. Out of Flat Response came the more commercial Hi-Fi Review. Whilst editor and publisher Chris Frankland was considered 'opinionated' and much in love with Linn and Naim, I found him less censorious than the other magazines and journalists, not more so. He had his views, based on his own preferences, but he allowed others theirs. We got along well and I enjoyed working for both mags. You may have seen recently both editor David Price and other readers, often from outside the UK, allude to the traditional insularity of the U.K. hi-fi press. I personally found this more stifling - and still do. There's nothing we won't consider at Hi-Fi World,

which brings me onto the next subject!

Two boxes arrived the other day. On them were printed the words 'Denon DL103'. Er - thanks chaps! I promise to have a listen soon, and they will be measured, of course. Methinks we should take a listen to the Dynavector you recommend also. It's all very well for David and I to love Ortofon's Kontrapunkt b, but it is expensive. I can't say I am a great fan of the cheaper Ortofon MCs, from MC10 up to MC25, but perhaps it wouldn't hurt to look at them again, alongside the DL103. I feel a review coming on! **NK**

SOMEONE OUT THERE LIKES ME...

I am the proud owner of a pair of Tannoy I 5in Monitor Golds that I have built into some rather large (300 litre) cabinets. I drive these with a nominal 18 watts of Audio Note Soro Phono SE Signature amplification (Signature meaning it uses some better components - Jensen and Black Gate caps, etc.)...

Prompted by my Tannoy interest I bought, for the first time, a copy of Hi-Fi World (April 2006) and have been really impressed by your magazine. What a welcome break it is to read honest modern players.

Reading around this player on the net I have noticed that multi-bit DACs are far from despised these days, but I may have got this wrong. I wonder if you could suggest a replacement player for me that would provide the same kind of sound the Arcam produces but which, I would hope, might even have been improved upon with the passage of time. I would hate to go to the expense of a new player just to find that I didn't enjoy it as much as the old Arcam!

In the April issue (response to letter headed Transport 2006) I read about how the battleship-build of yesteryear is missing from many of today's players/ transports. The trouble is, is it possible to buy better transports integrated into players at all these days?

My Tannoys were re-coned by a dealer who suggested £900s worth of Lector DCP-06T CD player. Have you any thoughts on this?

Currently I use a Garrard 301 turntable on a Martin Bastin heavy plinth, with Denon high output DL-110 MC cartridge in a Linn LVX Basik arm. The arm and cartridge are the items I would consider changing as I'm attached to the Garrard and don't think it's particularly letting the side down. So, could you help me here too, please?



Origin Live Conqueror tonearm - one of the best money can buy.

reviews that put the reviewed equipment into a real-world perspective and to read well-argued and constructive replies to letters that also, as an added bonus, appear to actually answer the question! Whatever next? I feel my twelve year subscription to a rival magazine is in danger.

So, to my specific questions. My Arcam Alpha 5 CD player is packing up. I did buy the machine all those years ago using my ears (not literally, you understand) and it can sound depending on the disc - marvelous with the Audio Note and the Tannoys. At the time I bought the Arcam the shops were awash with all sorts of one-bit-this or delta/sigma-that DACs, but this multi-bit Arcam just seemed to do all the details and get the dynamics right. I don't have any breadth of knowledge about CD players of this era and would welcome your opinion on the Alpha 5 and how it was regarded then and how it fits into the quality of sound one finds today in

Interconnects are Kimber cheapend and speaker cable is Kimber 4TC. As a guide; the sound I currently enjoy is very dynamic and clear almost all the time, with lovely bass, so don't get the idea that there are no good times! However, high-midrange events can very occasionally get over excited at high amplitude, for instance on classical singers vibrato peaks. This may be the Tannoys, but if there's a passage that does produce this distortion, it also distorts at lower levels of replay. Consequently, I don't think it's the amp running out of steam. It may be the recordings themselves as the same symptoms persist when I use my MiniDisc player as a DAC, or it may be that the transport in the Arcam is in some way contributing a bit of distortion?

This failing isn't particularly apparent with similar material via my LPs, but maybe LPs were created without such demanding peaks in

the first place? Perhaps it's the old chestnut of there being too much level in the original digital recording? I would welcome your thoughts on this; your combined experience here would help me to analyse this correctly. Perhaps Noel can help here with his recent and past Tannoy experiences? Keep up the good work. You know I really feel someone out there is on my side! Jim Simon

Hi Jim. You'll see Geoff Watkins says (next letter) that his Tannoys have "unruly top". My Yorkminsters aren't unruly, but you could see they are brightly lit and not exactly smooth. They also project in a manner that is so unforgiving that it gives partnering items a hard time - in fact an almost impossible one. I have tried many good solid-state amplifiers, for example, and it's best not to talk about the results. But the valve amp is a different matter altogether. Its glories (also Jensens, Black Gates, etc, but with 300Bs and no feedback) are also magnified. One reason I need a critical system like this is that it makes reviewing so much easier. Swapping phono stages, pickup cartridges or CD players in front is a night and day experience, making assessment more certain. But if you take the critical, projective nature of the speaker with its unflattering delivery, you do end up needing highly specific partnering items. That's why you use a tweaked up Soro, to point out the obvious! I strongly suspect you are hearing the limitations of the Arcam CD player, which I don't remember as anything to write home about. If you want to hear good multi-bit, audition Naim. Both David Price and John May swear by them. I have not heard the Lector DCP-06T CD player, so cannot comment.

I use a 12in SME312 tonearm with a Garrard 401 on a Martin Bastin plinth, fitted with Ortofon Kontrapunkt b, and feel no great need to upgrade, although I should. As lovely as the 12in SME is, it was originally intended for cartridge test work, due to its low tracking distortion. I am very reluctant to cease using it but am swayed by Origin Live's Illustrious, which is an impressive design. This is a universally praised arm that seems about right for you. NK

First, the Arcam Alpha 5 - it was a very nice budget/mid-price CD spinner in its day, and you'll struggle to find anything to comprehensively outclass it under £1,000. I'd suggest you listen to the Naim CD5i if you want a very tight, taut, explicit

sound (somewhat akin to multibit), or the Eastern Electric Minimax CD if you want a better rounded, fuller sounding machine. If you opt for the latter, change the tube for a New Old Stock (NOS) Mullard device, or suchlike. Both these will be advances on the Arcam, and you'll find they're worth the extra expense.

As for your arm/cartridge, you don't state a budget, so it's tricky - and we could be here all day going through the permutations. For maximum bang, the Origin Live Conqueror tonearm is about as good as it gets with conventional pivoted arms, but it will cost you around £2,500! The Cartridge Man's new £1,500 Conqueror parallel tracking air bearing arm is immense, and a brilliant value purchase, although it's fiddly and hard to get set up thanks to the noise from the air pump (which in truth has to be in a separate room). Down to around £600, and the Origin Live Silver 250 is the one; easy to use and capable of SMEV beating performance (in musical terms, if not bass grip and insight). I'd say go for an Ortofon Kontrapunkt b or c (approx £750 or £1,000 respectively), for superlative musicality and tracking/finesse respectively. There are so many more choices, but unless you're more specific, I'd cite these as your best all round options. DP

DENON DL103 BARGAIN

I note with some amusement the continuing denigration of the Denon DL103. Has anybody actually listened to the poor old thing? It does cope with some tasks rather well really. For instance it has possibly the tightest bass delivery of any moving coil cartridge (almost Decca like) and the midrange is decently open and detailed. Yes, I know it falls down on treble detail and refinement and doesn't track brilliantly, but at the price, it really ain't that bad! Sold mine years ago, but I've kept my DL304. A real sonic bargain and probably well due for another review.

I'm currently using a Technics EPC 305 MC, which I bought new many years ago. It's rare, very special and now highly sought after by some (it sounds wonderful). I do have a problem though, I'm addicted to Tannoy Dual Concentric loudspeakers (I can hear the groans already) and despite their flaws, keep going back to them, after defecting to other brands periodically. I'm well aware of the colourations, rather plump bottom end and unruly top, but that point source imaging and mid transparency is something I can't go without and I suspect I'm not the only one.

Has anybody noticed how good old Meridian CD players still sound? I'd forgotten, but last summer I bought an old 206 just as a back-up to my 507, which had been backwards and forwards to Meridian for repairs - and to be honest, I was amazed! It's not as detailed or transparent as the 507, but it's so musical. On some music, in particular female vocals, I'd say it sounds better and it seems happy whatever equipment I use it with. Remarkable for a player nearly twenty years old!

I'm looking forward to reading about your forthcoming KT88 amplifier project and who knows, I might be tempted away from my trusty EL34s. Keep up the good work. **Geoff Watkins**

Yes, we have listened to the DL103 but as you'll see from an earlier reply, due to popular demand we will be doing so again. In our forthcoming vinyl issue, Neal Gibbons is trying both the 103 and 103R, with fascinating results...

Tannoys driven from valves make supreme sense. Tannoy need to smooth the midrange horn, that's for sure and they could do this fairly easily. Interestingly, the Yorkminsters



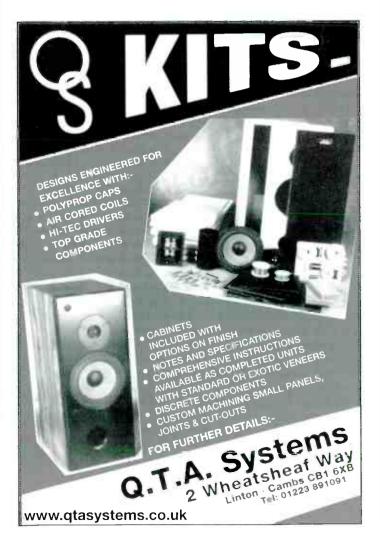
Or perhaps not?

don't boom or sound bass heavy in my lounge, but 1 do use a lot of absorption.

A well designed KT88 amplifier is always a treat. This is the great universal amplifier in my view: fast, clean and modern, superbly dynamic yet crystal clear and hash free. It suits valve heads, but also those weaned on the transistor sound. It's an act of faith for designer Andy Grove, but also Peter Comeau and myself, that this amplifier will have a superb transformer set, ensuring plenty of bass drive and crisp clean treble. Anyone thinking of changing from solid-state to valves should consider this amplifier. NK

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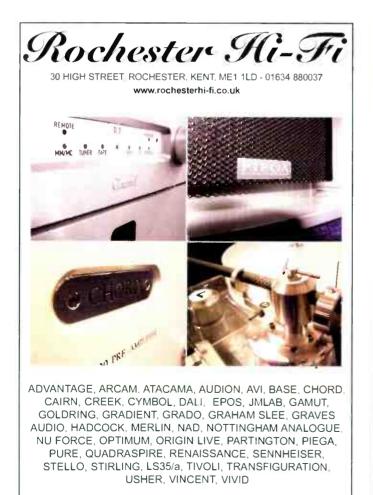
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Alstrodabitive Amplifier TB& trode connected lovely warm sound, [(1450) (730) QUAD 31/44 pre-amp, and Power Amp. (42) CECID QU-OF Advance QD payer Extern Extern Kinning appear amp (48) CECID QU-OF Advance QD payer (43) CECID QU-OF Advance QD payer Extern Extern Kinning appear amp (48) CECID QU-OF Advance QD payer (43) CECID QU-OF Advance QD payer AUDIO NDE TOTO mergated (13) KF1 107) reference, as new, valuut, [(2500) (13) Advance QD payer AUDIO NDE TOTO mergated (13) KF1 107) reference, as new, valuut, [(2500) (13) Advance QD payer AUDIO NDE TOTO mergated (13) KF1 107) reference, as new, valuut, [(2500) (13) Advance QD payer (13) AUDIO NDE ANT COLT NHI ((150) (13) KF1 107) reference, as new, valuut, [(2500) (13) Advance QD payer (13) AUDIO NDE ANT COLT NHI ((150) (13) KF1 107) reference, as new, valuut, [(2500) (13) Advance QD payer (13) AUDIO NDE ANT COLT NHI ((150) (13) KF1 107) reference, as new, valuut, [(2500) (13) (14) (13) AUDIO NDE ANT COLT NHI ((150) (13) (14) (14) (14) (14) (14) <td< th=""><th></th><th></th><th>A DECEMBER OF STREET, ST</th><th></th><th></th><th></th></td<>			A DECEMBER OF STREET, ST			
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Existen Electric Himmas power ang(280Espoure Super & Power Amg(215Sonic Tooniers stall (2099)]LECIOR valve hybrid, integrated, as new(135)KET 107; reference, as new, valuut, [22500](135)MakANTZ CO17 MIL [2650]AUDIO NOTE OTO integrated(135)KET 107; reference, as new, valuut, [22500](135)MakANTZ CO17 MIL [2650]AUDIO NOTE OTO integrated(135)KET 107; reference, as new, valuut, [2500](135)AUDIO NOTE OTO integrated(135)KET 107; reference, as new, valuut, [2500](135)AUDIO NOTE OTO integrated(135)KET 107; reference, as new, valuut, [2500](135)AUDIO NEELA KITUS, Dave as an evand boxed(135)HIMANT CO00005E LEHIMANT CO00005E LEAUDIO NEELA KITUS ALTO STREMA AND(135)Sonic Toolog (NFW)(147)Audion Steing, MIL E134(135)CMUSTA EX3;(135)Audion Steing, MIL E134(135)CMUSTA EX3;(136)Audion Steing, MIL E134(135)CMUSTA EX3;(136)Audion Steing, MIL E134(135)CMUSTA EX3;(136)Audion Steing, MIL E134(135)CMUSTA EX3;(136)Audion Steing, MIL E134(136)CMUSTA EX3;(136)Back Cas Electronics; XALWAP, PARA of HOND Locs [Lowrhers/Iaron](215)HIMANT (LANARTER) IS "goldsAudion Citi, Auri Mill, MIL E147(136)CMUSTA EX3;(136)Audion Citi, Vare Mill, MIL E1479(137)MILL E1479(136)Audion Citi, Vare Mill, MIL E1479(135)MILL E1479(136) <td< td=""><td>Affordable Valve Amplifier KT88, triode connected, lovely warm sound, [£1450]</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>£650</td></td<>	Affordable Valve Amplifier KT88, triode connected, lovely warm sound, [£1450]					£650
LECOR value hybrid, integrated, 50 watts, NEW £150 PATNOS Classic L, integrated, 32 new £150 EAR 83 integrated [2200] £1250 EAR 83 integrated [2200] £1250 EAR 83 integrated [2200] £1250 BEARD 755 ML power amp, £130 MOND AUDITOR LISEAR ML 1820 integrated [2200] £100 MOND AUDITOR LISEAR ML 120 £100 MOND AUDITOR LISEAR ML 121 £100 MUDID AUDITOR LISEAR ML 214 £100 <t< td=""><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>£425</td><td>LECIOR DCP-061 valve CD player</td><td>£920</td></t<>				£425	LECIOR DCP-061 valve CD player	£920
Name Construction Name Name Name Construction Name Construction Name AUDIO NOTE OTO integrated, and Construction Construction Construction Name AUDIO NOTE OTO integrated, and Construction	Eastern Electric Minimax power amp	£989	Exposure Super 8 Power Amp	£315	Sonic frontiers scall [£2995]	£850
PATIOS Classic L, integrated as new (875) KEF 1073 reference, as new, valanut, [C2500] (175) MAILT 2017 MKII [6850] CARD BAS integrated [C500] (175) (CASTLE 73) (215) MAILT 2017 MKII [6850] CANDO RESE TOD integrated (175) (CASTLE 73) (215) MAILT 2017 MKII [6850] CANDO RESE AND RAD RES As a new, (685) (KIPSCH KIL203) immaculate, board (175) (CASTLE 73) (215) BEARD P33 MKI pover amp, (67) (FOURE LOOKING FOR EXCITING, ONAMIC, FULL BODIED STAND. HEART CD60000 SCE 12 (77) WORLD AUDIO EL14 pover AIP (55) MOUNTS THEN YOU MUST AUDITION USKERS - S20°S ONE OF THE BES HINING SCD-1200(FKW) HEART CD60000 SCE 3: new board Audion Sericing MKI EL3 (650) USHER S-S20 piano black (216) (1500) POURTE ACOUSTA EX33 (216) Stack Ca Electronics PX4Vider, PAKI of MOND Alor, S1 (57) (1500) POS M12.25 poliano black (2100) NAIL SPEAKES I'VE HEARD (2100) AUDIO NOTE in 4 (450) (1500) (1500) POS M12.25 poliano black (2100) (1500) POURTE ACOUSTA EX33 (210) (210) (210) (210) (210) (210) (210)	LECTOR valve hybrid, integrated, 50 watts, NEW	£1050	and the second se		KUKSAN Caspian CU player	£475
Lan 03 milligrated [L230] L1230 KLIPSCH KLH20's immaculate, based L1250 CMBU DADA SPSK As new and based BEAD D35 MKI power amp, L430 IF TOU TRE LOOKING FOR EXCITING, OYNAMIC, FULL BODIED STAND KLIPSCH KLH20's immaculate, based L125 HART ClobBOODS EL CT BEAD D35 MKI power amp, L350 IF TOU TRE LOOKING FOR EXCITING, OYNAMIC, FULL BODIED STAND BART ClobBOODS EL CT Audion Stering MNI E134 C550 SMALL SPEAKERS I'VE HEARD! MTAD COID Doved Audion Stering MNI E134 C550 LOWTRER ACOUSTA EX33 C150 Back Cat Electronics SHATaive, PAIR of HOND bloc's [LowThers/Jamp] LOWTRER ACOUSTA EX33 C150 Back Cat Electronics SHATaive, PAIR of HOND bloc's [LowThers/Jamp] C150 TANOY CANCENTERS I'S "old C160 Back Cat Electronics SHATaive, PAIR of HOND bloc's [LowThers/Jamp] C150 TANOY CANCENTERS I'S "old C170 Back Cat Electronics SHATaive, PaiR of ADV Suparaton 1 C200 ONGEN LIVE ENCONTER ACOUSTE AND C170 Back Cat Electronics SHATaive, PaiR of ADV Suparaton 2 very natural sound C190 ONGEN LIVE ENCONTER ARM C175 CNGEN LIVE SUPER ARM Corls Super back as stere valve integrated C130 SMAR MCed's In certry back with stands as new	PATHOS Classic L integrated as new	£875				£825 £595
Lan 03 milligrade [LSU0] LT30	AUDIO NOTE OTO integrated	£1250	KEF 107's reference, as new, walnut, [£2500]	£1250	Audia Inconstant Scheme ED TUNER based as now	£225
AUDD RESERVE US, pre-simp, based as new, estable Stand, based of the stand of		£1250	CASTLE 7's		CYRIIS DAD7 & DSY as new and boxed	(725
BEAD 935 MKI power amp. (415 WOURD AUDIO EL34 power APP (550 Audion Stering MKI EL34 (560 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150 Back Cat Electronics MV Valve, PAR of MOND Block [Lowthers/Tannoy] (150	AUDIO RESEARCH LS9, pre-amp, boxed as new,	€850			NEART CDADAONSE LE	£750-00
WORLD AUDO F134 power AMP(550MOUNTS THEN YOU MUST AUDITION USHER'S 5-520'S ONE OF THE BEST MILLAS PRAKERS I'VE HEARD!!WITAD COLO Doold MIRAD COLO Dood MIRAD COLO Dood 	BEARD P35 MKI power amp.	6475	IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR EXCITING, OYNAMIC, FULL BODIE	D STAND-	CHANLING GOD TOOOGNEND	£2150
AUDION EL34 INTEGRATED STERED AMP (99) USHER 5-520 piano black (21) Audion Stering MKI EL34 (75) (2180 C20 boxed Audion Stering MKI EL34 (75) (2180 F260 C20 boxed Black Cat Electronics X14 Valve, PAIR of MON bloc's [Lowthers/Jannoy] (215) (2150 TANNOY LONNER/TORS J 5'' golds (210) Black Cat Electronics X14 Valve, PAIR of MON bloc's [Lowthers/Jannoy] (215) (2150 TANNOY LONNER/TORS J 5'' golds (210) Black Cat Electronics X14 Valve, PAIR of MON bloc's [Lowthers/Jannoy] (215) (2150 TANNOY LONNER/TORS J 5'' golds (210) Coll Super Thircs tube phono/pre-amp (215) (2150 TANNOY LONNER/TORS J 5'' golds (2160 THE ISOLATOR-unbelievable results!! Audion OIV File (215) (2150 TANNOY LONNER/TORS J 5'' golds (216) Audion OIV File (215) (216) (216) (216) Audion Stering Law Person P (215) (215) (216) (216) Audion Stering Law Person P (215) (216) (216) (216) (216) Audion Nater Phono Pre-amp (215) (216) (216) (216) (216) (216) (216) (216) (216) (216) (216) </td <td>WORLD AUDIO EL34 power AMP</td> <td></td> <td>MOUNTS THEN YOU MUST AUDITION USHER'S S-520'S ONE O</td> <td>F THE BEST</td> <td>Marantz CD6000 OSE as new boxed</td> <td>6175</td>	WORLD AUDIO EL34 power AMP		MOUNTS THEN YOU MUST AUDITION USHER'S S-520'S ONE O	F THE BEST	Marantz CD6000 OSE as new boxed	6175
Audion Sterling MXI E134C450USHE & S220 piano blackC428MYRAD CD20 boxedAudion Sterling MXI E134C550UDWTRER ACUDITA EX33C550CAIRN FOG 2 ex-dem [£150]Audion Sterling MXI E134C750EPOS M12.23 plus matching standsC550CAIRN FOG 2 ex-dem [£150]Black Cat Electronics FX4 Valve, PAIR of MOND bloc's [Lowthers/Tanony]C750TANNOY LANKASTERS 15" goldsC1400Black Cat Electronics Stunning Valve line stage/FETPhonostage/PREMPC750TANNOY LANKASTERS 15" goldsC1400Croft Super Micro tube phono/pre-ampC750TANNOY LANKASTERS 15" goldsC1400Audion CDI Valve pre-amp - Caisy soundC750TANNOY LANKASTERS 15" goldsC1700Audion Chi Valve pre-amp - Caisy soundC750TANNOY LANKASTERS 15" goldsC1700MITCAL SAB (pre-amp add)C750TANNOY LANKASTERS 15" goldsC1700AUDIO NOTE Kit A 1ELS 4 single ended stereo valve integratedC750TOTEM MITE (£1409) AS NEW hoxedC775BAT SK, hybrid, phono stage, boxedC125CARTINGGE - MAN carrindgesC125CARTINGGE - MAN carrindgesBAT SK, hybrid, phono stage, boxedC125CARTINGGE - MAN carrindgesC125CARTINGGEQUAD ELS 157: black rebuilt & service by BIGEARSC125ULIN SONDEK LP12, Dailala, LWAAN, LINK NF 0A FARINGEQUAD ELS 22. serviced, excellentC155SPENDOR BC15 MINTC125C125QUAD ELS 22. serviced, excellentC155SPENDOR BC15 MINTC125C125QUAD ELS 22. serviced, excellentC150Nalve RARS, Golo			SMALL SPEAKERS I'VE HEARD!		MYRAD CD10 boxed	Ω
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AUDION 3008 INTEGRATED STEREO AMP ex-dem [2150] (1500 ETGS M12.2 plus materials stands (2160) Black Cat Electronics PX4 Yalve, PAIR of MONO bloc's [Lowthers/Tannoy] (2176) TANNOY CONNER YORKS 15" reds (2140) Black Cat Electronics Standing Valve line stage/FETPhonostage/PREAMF (2150) TANNOY CONNER YORKS 15" reds (2160) AUDIO NOTE kit 4 (650) ETALON Supraton 2 very natural sound (1950) OKGIGN LIVE ENCOUNTER ARM Audion CD Yalve pre-amp - classy sound (215 TATNNOY CONNER YORKS in cherry bautiful, boxed (2775) ORGIN LIVE ENCOUNTER ARM (2150) ANTIEME NI EL 34 single ended stereo valve integrated amplifier (215) TOTEM MITES [2499] AS NEW, boxed (2175) TOTEM MITES [2499] AS NEW, boxed (2160) (2175) TOTEM MITES [2499] AS NEW, boxed (215) (2160) (2175) (2160) (2175) (2161) (2175) (2161) (2175) (2161) (2175) (2161) (2175) (2161) (2175) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) (2176) <				£750	CAIRN FOG 2 ex-dem [£1500]	€950
Black Cat Electronics YL Valve, PAIR & HOND blo2's [Lowithers/Tannoy][2750]HAMOT CARCASTERS'S goids[2140]Black Cat Electronics Stunning Valve line stage/FETPhonostage/PREAM[6150][6160][150]Black Cat Electronics Stunning Valve line stage/FETPhonostage/PREAM[6160][617][617]Croft Super Micro tube phono/pre-amp[617][617][618][618][618]Audion CDI Valve pre-amp - classy sound[618][618][618][618][618]Audion CDI Valve pre-amp - classy sound[618][618][618][618][618]Autil CDI Valve pre-amp - classy sound[618][618][618][618][618]BAT 3Ki, hybrid, phono stage, boxed[618][618][618][618][618][618]SONIC FRONTIERS ANTIREM 1ELBA's intergrated[625][040][613][618][618][618]AUDION valve phono pre CUAD ELSIST, black, trabuit & speakers rare matched pair ex-BBC SONIC FRONTIERS ANTIREM 1ELBA's intergrated[625][626][627][618][618]AUDION valve phono pre CUAD ELSIST, black, trabuit & speakers rare matched pair ex-BBC SONIC FRONTIERS ANTIREM 1ELBA's intergrated[615][618][618][618][618]AUDION valve phono pre CUAD ELSIST[618][618][618][618][618][618][618][618][618]AUDION valve phono pre CUAD ELSIST[618][618][618][618][618][618][618][618][618][618][618][6			EPOS M12.2's plus matching stands	£570		
Black Cat Electronics stunning Valve line stage/FETPhonostage/PREAMP £1250 HAND CONCENTRY STRES AUDIO NOTE kit 4 £650 ETALON Supratron 1 £1250 Corli Super time: to tube phono/pre-amp £1250 HAND Supratron 2 very natural sound £1750 Audion CD I Valve pre-amp - classy sound £2300 HC INUE SUVER ARM AUTIO NOTE Kit 4 £1250 NAIM Credo's in chremy beautiful, boxed £1750 ANTIE IN LIVE SUVER ARM £2300 ORIGIN LIVE SUVER ARM £1750 Audion CD I Valve pre-amp - classy sound £235 KEF 104/MS's with stands as new £2150 ALL Graham Slee phono stages ANTIE IN LIVE ALVER ARM £1250 QUAD ES L573 black, rebuilt & service by BIGEARS £2150 GARRARD 401, very good cond, SME plinth, 3009 arm, Ortofon cart, MITE SOLAUGA-UNDER LP12, ANTIALA, LIVE ARM, LINN K9 CARTRIDGE SONIC FRONTIERS ANTIFEM I EL84's intergrated £215 GARRARD 401 very good cond, SME plinth, 3009 arm, Ortofon cart, MITE SOLAUGA-UNDE KP12, CANGIN LIVE MOTOR UP-GRADE, BASIC PLUS ARM, 2010 very good cond, SME plinth, 3009 arm, Ortofon cart, MITE SOLAUGA-UNDE KP12, CANGIN LIVE MOTOR UP-GRADE, BASIC PLUS ARM, 2010 very good cond, SME plinth, 3009 arm, Ortofon cart, MITE SOLAUGA-UNDE KP12, CANGIN LIVE MOTOR UP-GRADE, BASIC PLUS ARM, 2010 very good cond, SME plinth, 3009 arm, Ortofon cart, 2010 very good cond, SME plinth, 3000 very good cond, SME plinth, 3000 very good cond, SME plinth, 3000 very good co	Riack (at Electronics PX4 Valve P&R of MONO bloc's [Lowthers/Tannov]					
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Croft Super Micro tube phono/pre-amp277EIALUM Supratron 2 very natural soundE1950EIASUM Supratron 2 very natural soundAudion CD I Valve pre-amp - classy sound277NAM Credo's in cherry beautiful, boxed277OKIGN LIVE ELCUM/EEARAMANTHEM XI EL 34 single ended stereo valve integrated amplifier6525KFE I OdA/B'S with stand as new277GKIRIDGE-HAN cartridgesBAT XK, hybrid, phono stage, boxedC1950QUAD ESL57's black, rebuilt & serviced by BIGEARS6205GKARRAD 401, very good cond, SHE plinth, 3009 arm, Ortofon cart,MIDION valve phono preQUAD ESL57's black, rebuilt & service by ONE TING6205Jorah Watts Modular speakers rare matched pair ex-BBC6205QUAD II's, plus 22, serviced, excellent6205Jorah Watts Modular speakers rare matched pair ex-BBC6205Jorah Watts Modular speakers (Top Tweeter Model)QUAD II's, plus 22, serviced, excellent6205SpenDor BC1's II's II's mono power amps6475Phybrook Quintets, gold pietzo tweeter (£1450)MAGNUM REFERENCE MF 125 mono power amps6475Hybrook Quintets, gold pietzo tweeter (£1450)6425OKKIN IVYE AURORAMAGNUM REFERENCE MF 125 mono power amps6475Hybrook Quintets, gold pietzo tweeter (£1450)6430GEARGO GEARAGO GIU, very auritaria grand mounter, RUARK SABRES, cherry, Celestion SLG's excellent cond.630GEARGO GEARAGO GIU, very auritaria grand mounter, RUARK SABRES, cherry, Celestion SLG's excellent cond.630GKAI mitegrated, class A, 100 wattsMAGNUM REFERENCE MF 125 mono power amps6475Phybrook Quintets, gold pietzo tweeter (£1450)6450 <td< td=""><td></td><td></td><td>ETALON Supraton I</td><td></td><td></td><td>£599</td></td<>			ETALON Supraton I			£599
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ANTHEM XI EL 34 single ended stereo valve integrated amplifier 6525 KPT 104W D S MIRW 6212 CARTRIDGE - MAX carridges BAT 3Ki, hybrid, phono stage, boxed C1400 GARRARD 401, very good cond, SME plinh, 3009 arm, Ortofon cart, BAT 3Ki, hybrid, phono stage, boxed C1400 GARRARD 401, very good cond, SME plinh, 3009 arm, Ortofon cart, BAT 3Ki, hybrid, phono stage, boxed C1400 GARRARD 401, very good cond, SME plinh, 3009 arm, Ortofon cart, MISTRAL S8B vartinegrated C1250 GARRARD 401, very good cond, SME plinh, 3009 arm, Ortofon cart, AUDION valve phono pre C125 GARRARD 401, very good cond, SME plinh, 3009 arm, Ortofon cart, QUAD II's, plus 22, serviced, excellent C155 SPENDOR BC1's MINT C155 CLAS STEREO 60 C157 Speakers completer stervice by ONE THING C1250 MAGNUM REFERENCE MF125 mono power amps C475 E10 brilliant small stand mounter, C1250 RIAK SABRES, cherry, Celestion SLG's excellent cond. C225 C275 MAGNUM REFERENCE MF125 mono power amps C475 Heybrook, Quintets, gold pietzo tweeter (£1450) C215 MAGNUM REFERENCE MF125 mono power amps C475 Heybrook, Quintets, gold pietzo tweeter (£1450) C215 MIX AN X4 set-dem [C1300]<			NAIM Credo's in cherry beautiful, boxed			£1570
BAT 3Ki, hybrid, phono stage, boxed (1400 OUTCH INTEC (1479) // Si CHC, yooked (1400 MISTRAL 5881 push-pull 20 watt integrated (525 OUAD ESL 53 back, rebuilt 8 serviced by BIGEARS (1400 SONIC FRONTIES ANTHEM I EL84's integrated (525 OUAD ESL 53 back, rebuilt 8 serviced by BIGEARS (1400 QUAD US, plots, plots						
MISTRAL \$881 push-pull 20 watt integrated \$555 QUAD \$155 rd stark rebuilt a serviced by DORETNING \$600 SONIC FRONTIERS ANTHEM 1 EL84's integrated \$625 QUAD \$15 rd stark rebuilt a serviced by DORETNING \$1250 LINN SONDEX LP12, faihalla, LVV ARH, LINN K9 CARTRIDGE QUAD II's plus 22, serviced, excellent \$6255 Speakers completer service by ONE TNING \$1250 LINN SONDEX LP12, ORIGIN LIVE MOTOR UP-GRADE, BASIC PLUS ARH, OLD & ARH, John Morris SPIRALEX plinth-SHURE V15 UAD II's plus 22, serviced, excellent \$675 Speakors completer service by ONE TNING \$1250 LINN SONDEX LP12, ORIGIN LIVE MOTOR UP-GRADE, BASIC PLUS ARH, OLD & ARH, John Morris SPIRALEX plinth-SHURE V15 UAD II's plus 22, serviced, excellent \$6750 Speakors completer service by ONE TNINT \$2350 THORENS TD125-SME 3009 ARH-John Morris SPIRALEX plinth-SHURE V15 LEAK STERED 60 \$6750 Monitor Audio Monitor 3 Speakers (Top Tweeter Model) \$275 MICHELL Technodec \$2350 MAGNUM REFERENCE MF 125 mono power amps \$475 Hychoo Quintets, gold pietzo tweeter (£1450) \$4250 OKIN UVE AURORA \$2350 OKIN NUKH VARA GOLD \$4250 OKIN NUKH REFERENCE MI 1250 \$4500 OKIN NOKKI record cleaning machine \$4500 OKKIN NOKKI record cleaning machine \$4500 OKKIN NOKKI record cleaning machine \$4500 </td <td></td> <td></td> <td>TOTEM MITES [£499] AS NEW, boxed</td> <td>£325</td> <td>CARTRIDGE-MAN cartridges</td> <td>(10)</td>			TOTEM MITES [£499] AS NEW, boxed	£325	CARTRIDGE-MAN cartridges	(10)
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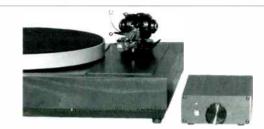
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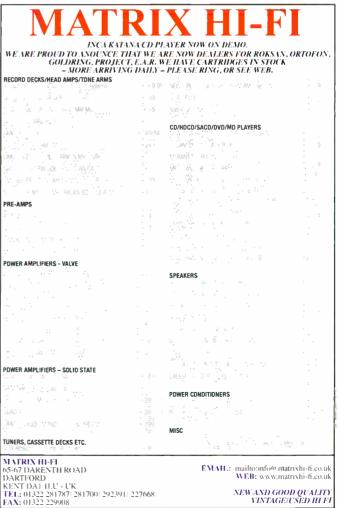
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AUDIO ALCHEMY ACD CD PLAYER/TRANSPORT	GC	£325	AUDIO INNOVATIONS 1000 SERIES 111 (6L6 VALVES)	MINT/BOXED S MINT/BOXED S	E1250
AUDIO ALCHEMY DDE V.III HDCD DAC TOS/COAX/I2S (NEW OLD STOCK) AUDIO ALCHEMY DDE V1.2 HDCD OAC TOS/COAX/AES.EBU/I2S (NEW OLD STOCK)	NEW/BOXED NEW/BOXED	£350 £275	RDGUE AUDIO TEMPEST MAGNUM (FEW HOURS DEM USE £2800) ROGUE AUDIO 66 MAGMUM REMOTE PRE AMP	EXCLT/BOXED	£995
AUDIO ALCHEMY DDE V1.2 HDCD OAC TOS/COAXAES.EBU/2S (NEW OLD STOCK) AUDIO ALCHEMY DDE V1.1 HDCD DAC.TOS/COAX (NEW OLDS STOCK AUDIO ALCHEMY DAC IN THE BOX	NEW/BOXED EXCLT	£250 £99	ROGUE AUDIO STEALTH PHONO STAGE (NOT VALVE £800 NEW) MICHAELSON AUDIO CHRONOS (4 BOX) PRE/PSU & MONOS (£10,000 NEW)	EX DEM EXCLT :	£3995
LINN KARIK/NUMERIK III CD & DAC (WITH SYNCLOCK)	MINT/BOXED	£1295	JADIS DEFY-7 (STEREOPHILE CLASS A AMP)	EXCLT	£2995
CEC TL ETTRANSPORT/51 DAC (COLD EINISH) FY DEM (\$2500)	MINT/BOXED	£1695	LOUDSPEAKERS		- 1
MICROMEDA DUO CO-3 TRANSPORT & BS-2 DAC MICROMEGA DUO CO-3 TRANSPORT & BS-2 DAC MICROMEGA CLASSIC SOLO (22500) XLR/RCA OUT PIONEER PD-95 ULTRA RARE FLAGSHIP PLAYER (SUPERB) TECNNICS SL-2000 REF.PLAYER (APPROX £1000 TRICHORD UPGRADES) TECHNICS SL-21000/SH-X1000 FLAGSHIP TRANSPORT & DAC (GOLD/WALNUT)	MINT/BOXED EXCLT/BOXED	£895	EGGLESTONWORKS ANDRA II	NEW	£9995
PIONEER PD-95 ULTRA RARE FLAGSHIP PLAYER (SUPERB)	MINT/BOXED	£1250	EGGLESTONWORKS ROSA EGGLESTONWORKS FONTAINE II	NEW	
TECHNICS SLP-2000 REFPLAYER (APPROX £1000 TRICHORD UPGRADES)	MINT BOXED	£795 £1750	SOUNDLAB M-3 BI-WIRE TOROIDAL TRANSFORMERS (£9300+)	EX.DEM	£5495
ACCUPHASE DP-90 TRANSPORT AES/COAX/GLASS ETC	EXCLT	£3250	EGUESIONNO'S I OTRAILE II SOUNDLAB M-3 BI-WIRE TOROIDAL TRANSFORMERS (£9300+) SOUNDLAB M-3 TALON KHORUS-X (AWESOME!)	MINT	£2895 £6995
THETA CARMEN CD/DVD TRANSPORT RARELY ON THE MARKET. ALCHEMIST FORSETTI APD33A TRANS. & APD34A DAC INC.VOL.CONTROL	MINT/BOXED MINT/BOXED	£1695 £1595	KLIPSCH LEGENDARY CURNER HURNS BIRDS ETE MAPLE	EXCLT	£2995
AUDIOMECA DAMNATION TRANPORT AES/EBU BNC/COAX	EXCLT	£575		EXCLT EXCELLENT	£2750
MARANTZ CD-94 TRANSPORT AUDIO.SYNTHESIS MOD. (AT&T GLASS ETC)	EXCLT EXCLT	£595 £350	SNELL 1YYE A-II MIRAGE MI3 BI POLAR LOUDSPEAKERS DYNAUDIO CRAFFT REF. MONITORS & DEDICATED STANDS (£3400+ NEW) TANNOY BERKLEYS 15 INCH REFURBISHED AT LOCKWOODS ALR JORDAN NOTE-5 SPECIAL BOBINGA WOOD FINISH (£2/2.5K NEW) CELESTION A-2 (SANTOS ROSEWOOD) LAST PAIR (£1500+) CURA CA-30 BIRDS EYE MAPLE (£2700+ 7 NEW) CURA CA-31 BIRDS EYE MAPLE (£1700+ 7 NEW) TRIMUTX ANIOT TOILORT E OOPSTANDERS TRIJWIEF	MINT/BOXED	£1695
TEAC P-500 TRANSPORT MARANTZ PROFFESIONAL STUDIO TRANSPORT (EX BBC) PERPETUAL.TECHNOLOGY P1-A/P3-A/ PSU ALL SIG-2 LAST 1	SCRUFFY	£275	TANNOY BERKLEYS 15 INCH REFURBISHED AT LOCKWOODS	LOVELY EX.DEM/BOXED	£1195 £1250
PERPETUAL.TECHNOLOGY P1-A/P3-A/ PSU ALL SIG-2 LAST 1 CHORD 1500E 2 DACS + EXTRA 96/192 kHZ MODULE & VOLUME CONTROL (£6800 NEV	BRAND NEW	£1795	CELESTION A-2 (SANTOS ROSEWOOD) LAST PAIR (£1500+)	BRAND NEW/BOXED	£1195
MSB LINK DAC 24/96khz MODULE (FANTASTIC FOR THE MONEY!)	MINI/BUXED	£375	CURA CA-30 BIRDS EYE MAPLE (£2700+? NEW)	MINT/BOXED MINT	£1250 £750
Z SYSTEMS Z-3src UPSAMPLER (£1450 NEW)	MINT/BOXED	£450 £195	TRINITY AUDIO TRIDENT FLOORSTANDERS TRI-WIRE		£895
DENON DPF-J3030 200 CD MULTIPLAYER PRIMARE V-25 DVD PROGRESSIVE SCAN ETC (£1000) LAST ONE!.	NEWBOXED	£495	RED ROSE SPIRIT RIBBON LOUDSPEAKERS (£1250 NEW)	MINT EXCLT	£750 £895
DENON DVD 2800 (GOLD)	MINT/BOXED	£395	RUNTI ADDO TUDEVE EDODALOUDSPEAKERS (£1250 NEW) PROAC STUDIO 150 CHERRYWOOD AUDIONOTE ANE-D ROSEWOOD		£795
VINYL			KELLY KT-3 HIGH 95 DB SENSITIVITY CHERRY VENEER	MINT/BOXED	£650 £695
LINN LP-12 LINGO/CIRKUS/TRAMPOLIN/EIKOS/ARKIV/LINTO	MINT/BOXED	£2795	CASTLE HOWARD-2 (PREMIUM BEECH FINISH) CASTLE AVON	EXCLT EXCLT	£375
QUASAR SKELETAL TURNTABLE/ REGA ARM	EXCLT/BOXED	£1250 £995	ACOUSTIC ENERGY ASW FB-110 SUBWOOFER	AS NEW	£350 £395
ALPHASON SONATA/SEPERATE PSU/HR-100 MCS ARM VD.HUL WIRED LINN LP12 NEW NORTON AIRPOWER PSU. NEW LID (ROSEWOOD)	MINT/BOXED	£695	REL STORM-1 SUBWOOFER KEF Q4 FLOORSTANDERS	VGC MINT/BOXED	£395 £275
LINN LP-12/VALHALLA/AKITO/NEW CARTRIDGE LINN LP-12 BASIK LVV CURVED TONEARM/VMS20F LOVELY ORIGINAL SPEC.	EXCLT VGC	£550 £395	ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE-109 FLOORSTANDERS	EXCLT	£275
LINN AXIS/BASIK PLUS TONEARM/CARTRIDGE	MINT/BOXED	£273	TUNERS /TAPE/DAT/MINIDISC/MISC.		
ROKSAN XERXES COGNOCENTI ROSEWOOD/PSU/REGA ARM & CARTRIDGE NOTTS. ANALOGUE. SPACE DECK & HEAVY KIT	MINT/BOXED MINT/BOXED	£750 £950	SONY 700ES 3 HEAD TAPE MACHINE	MINT	£250 £195
CLEARAUDIO CHAMPION LEVEL -1 & UNIFY ARM (RETAIL £2200 +)	20 HOURS USE	£1595	LYNX THETA (VERY RARE) QUAD 34 TUNER	VGC EXCLT/BOXED	£195 £225
ROGUE AUDIO STEALTH PHONO STAGE MM/MC (£800) MOTH MM/MC PHONO STAGE	EX.DEM EXCLT		RACKS/STANDS.		
REGA RB-250	EXCLT	£75	SOUNDSTYLE XS 100 4 SHELE (2 ONLY)	BRAND NEW/BOXED	£195
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300	EXCLT	£120	SOUNDSTYLE XS 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-105	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED	£275
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300 HADCOCK GH-242 INTEGRA (FEW HOURS USE) FIDELITY RESEARCH FR-64 & MC-702 CARTRIDGE	EXCLT MINT/BOXED EXCLT	£120 £495 £550	SOUNDSTYLE X5 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-105 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED	£275 £250
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300 HADCOCK GH-242 INTEGRA (FEW HOURS USE) FIDELITY RESEARCH FR-64 & MC-702 CARTRIDGE AUDIO ALCHEMY VACI IN THE BOX (NEW OLD STOCK)	EXCLT MINT/BOXED EXCLT NOS.	£120 £495 £550 £195	SOUNDSTYLE XS 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-105 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 ISOUNDSTYLE ST-95 MIDI RACK (1 ONLY)	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW BOXED MINT	£275 £250 £195 £275
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300 HADCOCK GH-242 INTEGRA (FEW HOURS USE) FIDELITY RESEARCH FR-64 & MC-702 CARTRIDGE AUDIO ALCHEMY VAC IN THE BOX (NEW OLD STOCK) GRAHAM SLEE EL EVATOR EXP STEP UP/PSU (FEW HOURS USE)	EXCLT MINT/BOXED EXCLT	£120 £495 £550 £195	SOUNDSTYLE XS 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-105 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE ST-95 MIDI RACK (1 ONLY) SONUS ELITE 4 SHELF SOUNDSTYLE XS 105 (1 ONLY)	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW BOXED	£275 £250 £195
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300 HADCOCK GH-242 INTEGRA (FEW HOURS USE) FIDELITY RESEARCH FR-64 & MC-702 CARTRIDGE AUDIO ALCHEMY VACI THE BOX (NEW OLD STOCK) GRAHAM SLEE EI EVATOR EXP STEP UP/PSU (FEW HOURS USE) SOLID STATE	EXCLT MINT/BOXED EXCLT NOS. AS NEW/BOXED	£120 £495 £550 £195 £375	SOUNDSTYLE X5 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-105 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE ST-95 MIDI RACK (1 ONLY) SONUS ELITE 4 SHELF SOUNDSTYLE X5 105 (1 ONLY) TARGET R-2 FILLED STANDS SILVER OR BLACK ATTACAMA B-724 LEAD ELIED 24" STANDS	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW BOXED MINT EX.DISPLAY EXCLT MINT	£275 £250 £195 £275 £169 £195 £195 £195
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300 HADCOCK GH-242 INTEGRA (FEW HOURS USE) FIDELITY RESEARCH FR-64 & MC-702 CARTRIDGE AUDIO ALCHEMY VACI THE BOX (NEW OLD STOCK) GRAHAM SLEE EL EVATOR EXP STEP UP/PSU (FEW HOURS USE) SOLID STATE SONY TAE-1 PRE & TAN-1POWER AMPS (AWESOME) GRYPHON ALLEGRO SONATA FLAGSHIP DUAL MONO PRE AMP (6 MONTHS USE)	EXCLT MINT/BOXED EXCLT NOS. AS NEW/BOXED MINT/BOXED MINT/BOXED	£120 £495 £550 £195 £375 £6500 £4995	SOUNDSTYLE XS 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-105 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE ST-95 MIDI RACK (1 ONLY) SOUNDS ELITE 4 SHELF SOUNDSTYLE XS 105 (1 ONLY) TARGET R-2 FILLED STANDS SILVER OR BLACK	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW BOXED MINT EX.DISPLAY EXCLT	£275 £250 £195 £275 £169 £195
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300 HADCOCK GH-242 INTEGRA (FEW HOURS USE) FIDELITY RESEARCH FR-64 & MC-702 CARTRIDGE AUDIO ALCHEMY VAC IN THE BOX (NEW OLD STOCK) GRAHAM SLEE EL EVATOR EXP STEP UP/PSU (FEW HOURS USE) SOLID STATE SONY TAE-1 PRE &TAN-1POWER AMPS (AWESOME) GRYPHON ALLEGRO SONATA FLAGSHIP DUAL MONO PRE AMP (6 MONTHS USE) SONIS FABER MINICA	EXCLT MINT/BOXED EXCLT NOS. AS NEW/BOXED MINT/BOXED MINT/BOXED BOXED	£120 £495 £550 £195 £375 £6500 £4995 £1250	SOUNDSTYLE X5 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-105 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE ST-95 MIDI RACK (1 ONLY) SONUS ELITE 4 SHELF SOUNDSTYLE X5 105 (1 ONLY) TARGET R-2 FILLED 5TANDS SILVER OR BLACK ATTACAMA R-274 LEAD FILLED 24" STANDS ELEMENTAL 20 INCH LOUDSPEAKER STANDS FANTASTIC SEE PIC ON WEB CABLES PLEASE SEE WEB FOR FULL LIST	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW BOXED MINT EX.DISPLAY EXCLT MINT	£275 £250 £195 £275 £169 £195 £195 £195
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300 HADCOCK GH-242 INTEGRA (FEW HOURS USE) FIDELITY RESEARCH FR-64 & MC-702 CARTRIDGE AUDIO ALCHEMY VAC IN THE BOX (NEW OLD STOCK) GRAHAM SLEE EL EVATOR EXP STEP UP/PSU (FEW HOURS USE) SOLID STATE SONY TAE-1 PRE &TAN-1POWER AMPS (AWESOME) GRYPHON ALLEGRO SONATA FLAGSHIP DUAL MONO PRE AMP (6 MONTHS USE) SONIS FABER MINICA	EXCLT MINT/BOXED EXCLT NOS. AS NEW/BOXED MINT/BOXED BOXED MINT/BOXED EX.DEM/BOXED	£120 £495 £550 £195 £375 £6500 £4995 £1250 £1695 £2795	SOUNDSTYLE X5 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-105 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE ST-95 MIDI RACK (1 ONLY) SONUS ELITE 4 SHELF SOUNDSTYLE X5 105 (1 ONLY) TARGET R-2 FILLED STANDS SILVER OR BLACK ATTACAMA R-274 LEAD FILLED 24" STANDS ELEMENTAL 20 INCH LOUDSPEAKER STANDS FANTASTIC SEE PIC ON WEB CABLES PLEASE SEE WEB FOR FULL LIST LOUDSPEAKER	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW BOXED MINT EX.DISPLAY EXCLT MINT	£275 £250 £195 £275 £169 £195 £195 £195 RING
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300 HADCOCK GH-242 INTEGRA (FEW HOURS USE) FIDELITY RESEARCH FR-64 & MC-702 CARTRIDGE AUDIO ALCHEMY VAC IN THE BOX (NEW OLD STOCK) GRAHAM SLEE EI EVATOR EXP STEP UP/PSU (FEW HOURS USE) SOLUD STATE SONY TAE-1 PRE &TAN-1POWER AMPS (AWESOME) GRYPHON ALLEGRO SONATA FLAGSHIP DUAL MONO PRE AMP (6 MONTHS USE) SONUS FABER MUSICA CONRAD JOHNSON PFR REMOTE CONTROL PRE AMP (£3000 NEW) BEL CANTO PRE-1 PREAMP & EVO 200.2 POWER AMP TOCA SECA LTD. (COLUM WONFOR CLASS A DESIGN £3650 NEW) POWER AMP	EXCLT MINT/BOXED EXCLT NOS. AS NEW/BOXED MINT/BOXED BOXED MINT/BOXED EX.DEM/BOXED VGC	£120 £495 £550 £195 £375 £6500 £4995 £1250 £1695 £2795 £995	SOUNDSTYLE X5 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-105 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE ST-95 MIDI RACK (1 ONLY) SONUS ELITE 4 SHELF SOUNDSTYLE X5 105 (1 ONLY) TARGET R-2 FILLED JTANDS SILVER OR BLACK ATTACAMA R-274 LEAD FILLED 24" STANDS ELEMENTAL 20 INCH LOUDSPEAKER STANDS FANTASTIC SEE PIC ON WEB CABLES PLEASE SEE WEB FOR FULL LIST LOUDSPEAKER DPA BLACK SLINK 4 METRE PAIR X 2 LOCKING WBTS RAPPORT UAS 5 METRE PAIR EX.DEM	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW BOXED MINT EX.DISPLAY EXCLT MINT	£275 £250 £195 £275 £169 £195 £195 £195 RING
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300 HADCOCK GH-242 INTEGRA (FEW HOURS USE) FIDELITY RESEARCH FR-64 & MC-702 CARTRIDGE AUDIO ALCHEMY VACI THE BOX (NEW OLD STOCK) GRAHAM SLEE EL EVATOR EXP STEP UP/PSU (FEW HOURS USE) SOLID STATE SONY TAE-1 PRE ATAN-1POWER AMPS (AWESOME) GRYPHON ALLEGRO SONATA FLAGSHIP DUAL MONO PRE AMP (6 MONTHS USE) SONUS FABER MUSICA CONRAD JOHNSON PFR REMOTE CONTROL PRE AMP (63000 NEW) BEL CANTO PRE-1 PREAMP & EVO 200.2 POWER AMP TOCA SECA LTD. (COLIN WONFOR CLASS A DESIGN £3650 NEW) POWER AMP PERREAX SA-3/PMF-150 PRE (MM.C./POWER AMP5 (300 WATTS X 2)	EXCLT MINT/BOXED EXCLT NOS. AS NEW/BOXED MINT/BOXED BOXED MINT/BOXED EX.DEM/BOXED VGC GCC GCC	£120 £495 £550 £195 £375 £6500 £4995 £1695 £1695 £2795 £995 £375	SOUNDSTYLE X5 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-105 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE ST-95 MIDI RACK (1 ONLY) SONUS ELIFE 4 SHELF SOUNDSTYLE X 105 (1 ONLY) TARGET R-2 FILLED DTANDS SILVER OR BLACK ATTACAMA R-274 LEAD FILLED 24" STANDS ELEMENTAL 20 INCH LOUDSPEAKER STANDS FANTASTIC SEE PIC ON WEB CABLES PLEASE SEE WEB FOR FULL LIST LOUDSPEAKER DPA BLACK SLINK 4 METRE PAIR X 2 LOCKING WBTS RAPPORT USA 5 METRE FAIR EX.DEM TARA LABS PRIME 1800 18 FEETI! PAIR BI-WIRE AS NEW BOXED ETC PS ALDIOX.TREAM BI-WIRE 3 METRE PAIR	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW BOXED MINT EX.DISPLAY EXCLT MINT	£275 £250 £195 £169 £195 £195 £195 RING £795 £795 £795 £750
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300 HADCOCK GH-242 INTEGRA (FEW HOURS USE) FIDELITY RESEARCH FR-64 & MC-702 CARTRIDGE AUDIO ALCHEMY VACI THE BOX (NEW OLD STOCK) GRAHAM SLEE EI EVATOR EXP STEP UP/PSU (FEW HOURS USE) SOLID STATE SONY TAE-1 PRE & TAN-1POWER AMPS (AWESOME) GRYPHON ALLEGRO SONATA FLAGSHIP DUAL MONO PRE AMP (6 MONTHS USE) SONUS FABER MUSICA CONRAD JOHNSON PFR REMOTE CONTROL PRE AMP (£3000 NEW) BEL CANTO PRE-1 PREAMP & EVO 200.2 POWER AMP TOCA SECA LTD. (COLIN WONFOR CLASS A DESIGN E3650 NEW) POWER AMP PERREAX SA-3/PMF-150 PRE (MM.MC.)/POWER AMPS (300 WATTS X 2) EXPOSURE SUPER XV INTEGRATED ELECTROCOMPANIET EC 4.7 REMOTE PRE AMP	EXCLT MINT/BOXED EXCLT NOS. AS NEW/BOXED MINT/BOXED BOXED MINT/BOXED EX.DEM/BOXED GC MINT NEW/BOXED	£120 £495 £550 £195 £375 £6500 £4995 £1250 £1695 £2795 £995 £375 £375	SOUNDSTYLE X5 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE X5-100 SOUNDSTYLE X5 105 (1 ONLY) TARGET R-2 FILLED STANDS SLVER OR BLACK ATTACAMA R-274 LEAD FILLED 24" STANDS ELEMENTAL 20 INCH LOUDSPEAKER STANDS FANTASTIC SEE PIC ON WEB CABLES PLEASE SEE WEB FOR FULL LIST LOUDSPEAKER DPA BLACK SLINK 4 METRE PAIR X 2 LOCKING WBTS RAPPORT USA 5 METRE FAIR X 2 LOCKING WBTS RAPPORT USA 5 METRE FAIR SLOEM TARA LABS PRIME 1800 UB FEETI! PAIR BI-WIRE AS NEW BOXED ETC PS AUDIO X-TREAM BI-WIRE 3 METRE PAIR NEWNAM AUDIO SL-SERIES 2 3 METRE PAIR BI-WIRE AS NEW BOXED ETC	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW BOXED MINT EX.DISPLAY EXCLT MINT	£275 £250 £195 £195 £195 £195 £195 RING £795 £795 £795 £750 £750 £475
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300 HADCOCK GH-242 INTEGRA (FEW HOURS USE) FIDELITY RESEARCH FR-64 & MC-702 CARTRIDGE AUDIO ALCHEMY VACI THE BOX (NEW OLD STOCK) GRAHAM SLEE EI EVATOR EXP STEP UP/PSU (FEW HOURS USE) SONUS FATE SONY TAE-1 PRE & TAN-1POWER AMPS (AWESOME) GRYPHON ALLEGRO SONATA FLAGSHIP DUAL MONO PRE AMP (6 MONTHS USE) SONUS FABER MUSICA CONRAD JOHNSON PFR REMOTE CONTROL PRE AMP (£3000 NEW) BEL CANTO PRE-1 PREAMP & EVO 200.2 POWER AMP PCGA SECA LTD. (COLIN WONFOR CLASS A DESIGN 23650 NEW) POWER AMP PERREAX SA-3/PMF-150 PRE (MM.MC.)/POWER AMPS (300 WATTS X 2) EXPOSURE SUPER XV INTEGRATED ELECTROCOMPANIET EC 4.7 REMOTE PRE AMP PASS LABS ALEPH-P PRE AMP LEGENDARY! AV1 2000 PRE AMP 2 WONOBLOCS & SYSTEM REMOTE	EXCLT MINT/BOXED EXCLT NOS. AS NEW/BOXED MINT/BOXED BOXED MINT/BOXED EX.DEM/BOXED GC GC GC MINT NEW/BOXED MINT NEW/BOXED MINT	£120 £495 £550 £195 £375 £375 £1250 £1695 £1295 £2795 £2995 £375 £995 £1150 £1150 £195	SOUNDSTYLE X5 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-105 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE STATUS SOUNDSTYLE STATUS SILVER OR BLACK ATTACAMA R-274 LEAD FILLED 24''S STANDS ELEMENTAL 20 INCH LOUDSPEAKER STANDS FANTASTIC SEE PIC ON WEB CABLES PLEASE SEE WEB FOR FULL LIST LOUDSPEAKER DPA BLACK SLINK 4 METRE PAIR X 2 LOCKING WBTS RAPPORT USA 5 METRE PAIR SLOEM TARA LABS PRIME 1800 18 FEET!! PAIR BI-WIRE AS NEW BOXED ETC PS.AUDIO X-TREAM BI-WIRE 3 METRE PAIR EX DEM. FACTORY TERMINATED AUDIONOT AN-L3 METRE PAIR FAIR EX DEM. FACTORY TERMINATED SUDDIO SUDALS SUDA SUDA SUDA SUDA SUDA SUDA SUDA SUD	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW BOXED MINT EX.DISPLAY EXCLT MINT	£275 £250 £195 £169 £195 £195 £195 RING £795 £795 £795 £750
REGA RB-250 REGA RB-300 HADCOCK GH-242 INTEGRA (FEW HOURS USE) FIDELITY RESEARCH FR-64 & MC-702 CARTRIDGE AUDIO ALCHEMY VACI THE BOX (NEW OLD STOCK) GRAHAM SLEE EI EVATOR EXP STEP UP/PSU (FEW HOURS USE) SONUS FATE SONY TAE-1 PRE & TAN-1POWER AMPS (AWESOME) GRYPHON ALLEGRO SONATA FLAGSHIP DUAL MONO PRE AMP (6 MONTHS USE) SONUS FABER MUSICA CONRAD JOHNSON PFR REMOTE CONTROL PRE AMP (£3000 NEW) BEL CANTO PRE-1 PREAMP & EVO 200.2 POWER AMP PCGA SECA LTD. (COLIN WONFOR CLASS A DESIGN 23650 NEW) POWER AMP PERREAX SA-3/PMF-150 PRE (MM.MC.)/POWER AMPS (300 WATTS X 2) EXPOSURE SUPER XV INTEGRATED ELECTROCOMPANIET EC 4.7 REMOTE PRE AMP PASS LABS ALEPH-P PRE AMP LEGENDARY! AV1 2000 PRE AMP 2 WONOBLOCS & SYSTEM REMOTE	EXCLT MINT/BOXED EXCLT NOS. AS NEW/BOXED MINT/BOXED BOXED MINT/BOXED EX.DEM/BOXED GC MINT NEW/BOXED MINT/BOXED MINT/BOXED	£120 £495 £550 £195 £375 £6500 £4995 £1250 £1695 £2795 £375 £995 £375 £995 £1150 £995 £1150	SOUNDSTYLE X5 100 4 SHELF (2 ONLY) SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-105 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE ST-100 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE X1-100 SOUNDSTYLE STATUS RANGE X1-100 SOUNDSTYLE X5 105 (1 ONLY) TARGET R-2 FILLED STANDS SLVER OR BLACK ATTACAMA R-274 LEAD FILLED 24" STANDS ELEMENTAL 20 INCH LOUDSPEAKER STANDS FANTASTIC SEE PIC ON WEB CABLES PLEASE SEE WEB FOR FULL LIST LOUDSPEAKER DPA BLACK SLINK 4 METRE PAIR X 2 LOCKING WBTS RAPPORT USA 5 METRE FAIR EX.DEM TARA LABS PRIME 1800 18 FEETI! PAIR BI-WIRE AS NEW BOXED ETC PS.AUDIO X-TREAM BI-WIRE 3 METRE PAIR NIRVANA AUDIO SL-SERIES 2.3 METRE PAIR EX.DEM. FACTORY TERMINATED AUDIONCTE AN-L 3 METRE PAIR (FACTORY TERMINATED SILVER SPADES) MIT MH-350 3 METRE PAIR	BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW/BOXED BRAND NEW BOXED MINT EX.DISPLAY EXCLT MINT	£275 £250 £195 £195 £195 £195 £195 £195 £195 £195
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Orchid LWQ speakers ex-demo PRE-AMPS: Mark Lewisson No. 26 Balanced Rotel RC995 Pre Amp Corrad Johnson MC-10 Pre Amp Musical Fidelity 3A Pre Amp Mark Lewisson 255 phono stage with PSU Naim Nace 92 with Nap 90/3 amp Proceed PAV pre-amp	£1995 £295 £395 £175 £2395 £2395 £595 £1395	CD PLAYERS & TRANSPORTS Arcam Diva CD82 CD Player Mark Levitson 31 5 CD Transport Theta Data basic CD Transport Denon DCD 590 CD Player Sonic Fronters Transport 3 (5K new) Denon DCD 590 CD Player Sony CDPMA1 CD Player Poneer PD-S502 CD Player Counterpoint DA-10E DAC	£395 £395 £395 £60 £195 £60 £60 £95 £395	TURNTABLES, CARTRIDGES & TONEARMS Audio Note TT2 Turnlable with Arm 1 Mark Leanson 255 with PSU My Sonic Emment (EX review) Audio Tekin Carindge with step up (Ex review) Blue Pearl (the prototype) Turnlable with Graham Phantom arm Audio Tekine Carindge with step-up transformer My Sonic Emment carindge (new) Project 9: S carbon fibre silver wired arm MASTER CARD - AMEX - DINERS CLUB WELCOME.	£695 £2395 £1995 £2250 £9995 £2995 £2995 £2750 £375
ALL USED CARTRIDGES ARE CHECKED UNDER	A MICROSC	OPE BEFORE BEING OFFERED FOR SALE.	WE TAKE PART EXC	HANGE ON NEW & USED STOCK and buy in for cash	

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N	1. SME Model 20 Mk 1/V/Transfiguration.SH. One owner from new. £2950	No box.
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Te ch	15. Densen Beat B-340. Power amp. Rev. Albino. 17. Densen Gazt B-340. Power amp. Rev. Albino. 17. Densen Gizmo. I have two of these – both brand new in boxes. 18. Moon is integrated amp. Black. No remote. Remotes are available separately from importer or me. ED. 19. LFD LS1 linestage pre-amp. Black. SH. No box.	50 each £1950
Tube	 If Display and the state of the state in the relative are available separately form importer of me. ED. If IFD LS1 linestage pre amp. Black. ED. Plinius SA102 power amp. Black. ED. Plinius M8 pre amp. Black. ED. 	£375. £2995.
101	21. Plinius M8 pre amp. Black, ED. 22. Red Rose Spirit amp. ED.	£1600
	22. Red Rose Spirit amp. ED. 23. Red Rose Rosette amp. ED. Brilliant – especially partnered with R3 speakers.	£695. £1250.
	 Red Rose Rosette amp. ED. Brilliant – especially partnered with R3 speakers. Red Rose R3 speakers. Maple. SH. Red Rose R3 speakers. Maple. ED. Red Rose Rosebud 11 speakers. Piano Rosewood. ED. Red Rose Spirit speakers. Foreh Afromosia. SH. 	£1750. £1995.
	26. Red Rose Rosebud 11 speakers. Piano Rosewood. ED. 27. Red Rose Spirit speakers. Rosewood. ED.	£2250. £650.
as I	28. Red Rose Spirit speakers. French Afromosia. SH. 29. Proac Tablette 2000 speakers. Walnut. ED.	£700. £425.
ŝ	30. Acoustic Energy Reference AE1 speakers. Gloss Black, With stands, ED, Very little use, £1850	£650
	32. Musical Fidelity A300CR power amp. All Silver. ED (unused)	£1500.
Audic	 Musical Fidelity A3.2 Integrated amp (last model) Unused. Consonance JS000 Plus 300B integrated valve amp. ED. Consonance M100 Plus 300B integrated valve amp. ED. 	£650. £1095.
	36. Wadia 301 Mk 3 cd player. Variable output: Silver ED	£1150. £2250.
	37. Audio Synthesis Transcend Decade of transport. Still up there with the best, ED.	£2000. £2250.
1	 Audio Synthesis Desire Decade power amp with Black Gate capacitor upgrade. ED. Avid Diva turntable. No arm. ED. Audio Analogue Maestro. An absolute monster of a integrated amp. ED. 	£975. £1995.
untire	 Audinote Meishu Line 300B valve amp. New 300Bs. One of my all time favourite amps !! ED. DNM 3B Twin 2 box pre amp. SH (Cost new £3000) 	£1800. £1350.
	43. Exposure XX111 pre amp. New.	£99S
	AS Exposure XX71 (1) player New	£995 £995.
	45. Exposure 2010S (D Jager, New. 47. Exposure 2010S (D Jager, New. 47. Exposure 2010 (Not" S") power amp. New.	£350 £275.
	49. Consonance Cyber 50 valve line ore amp. Mahonany top. ED	£325. £725
	50. Consonance Cyber 40 valve phono stage for m/m and m/c. Cherry top. ED. 51. Living Voice Auditorium speakers, Cherry, Black plinths, ED.	£650. £1250.
SM	52. Audio Synthesis Passion phono m/c phono stage. 53. Audia CD One cd player. Black/Silver. ED.	£795. £2750
	54. Audia Flight pre amp. Black/Silver, ED. 55. Audia Flight 50 power amp. Black/Silver, ED.	£2750. £3000.
	56. Vienna Acoustics Haydn speakers. Rosewood. ED. 57. Vienna Acoustics Mozart speakers. Beech (one grille is broken) ED.	£400.
Bio B	58. Vienna Acoustics. Beethoven speakers. Black Ash. ED.	£850. £1500.
Aud	59. Anthony Galto Reference 3 speakers. Black/Silver. ED. 60. Harbeth HL-Compact 7ES speakers. Birds Eye Maple. ED.	£1800. £950.
intro	60. Harbert Int-Compart 7.2 Speakers, bruts by wapte, EU. 61. Harbert IN LP3ES 11 speakers, Cherry, ED. 62. Michell Technodek/RB250 turntable, New. 63. Talk Electronics Thunder 3.18 of player. Fixed output, Silver, ED. 64. Talk Electronics Thunder 3.18 of player. Fixed output, Silver, ED.	£550. £475.
	63. Talk Electronics Thunder 3.1B cd player. Fixed output. Silver. ED. 64. Talk Electronics Hurricane 3.1B pre amp. Black. ED.	£1450. £1350.
	65. Talk Electronics Tornado 3. 1B monoblock 200 watt power amps. Black. ED. 66. Veritas "20" speakers with matching stands, Piano Black. ED. 67. Veritas "20" Speakers with more fielded how conclusion 2014 how this in Class Black. ED.	£2150. £995.
Rose M	67. Veritas H3 Floorstanding folded horn speakers. 102db sensitivity Gloss Black. ED. Paul Messenge these as one of his products of the year when he reviewed them (cost new £5995) £3500. N	er rated
	68. Totem Model 1 speakers (not Signature version) Cherry, SH.	£750.
ks B	69. Chord Co Signature interconnect cable (RCA) 1m. ED. 70. Chord Co Signature interconnect cable (RCA) 1m. New.	£300. £350
	71. Alon 1 speakers. Light Oak (cost new £1695) ED. 72. Alon Petite loudspeakers. Walnut (cost new £1295) ED.	£650. £600.
	73. Origin Live Encounter tonearm. Little use. ED. 74. Proac CC1 Centre channel speaker. Mahogany. Slightly marked. ED.	£650. £350.
Cone	75. PS Audio P600 Multiwave mains regenerator. ED. 76. Audionote ANE/SpX speakers. Light Oak. ED. With dedicated MAF stands. £1500 Incl	£1995.
	77. Audionote ANK/SpX speakers. Walnut, SH. 78. Audionote P Zero 8 watt push-pull valve mono block power amps. Never used !!	£550.
	79. Audionote AZOne speakers (the original design) Never used.	£400. £250.
	81. Meadowlark Swift speakers. Light Oak, ED.	£750. £550
	This cable is one of the very very best. ED (Lost new £1875)	£1200.
	 Audionote AN-Vx Interconnect terminated with AN-P Silver phono plugs. 2m set. ED (cost new £1024) 84. Musical Fidelity X-80. New. 	£650. £275.
1	85. Musical Fidelity X-150, New. 86. Musical Fidelity X- PreV3. New.	£495.
d	87. Musical Fidelity X-150. ED. Never used-displayed only.	£495. £450
Ortafon	 Musical Fidelity X-80. ED. Never used- displayed only. Wheaton Triplanar MkV11 tonearm. With fly lead terminated with RCA phono plugs. Brand new 	£250.
1.04	and unused. Complete with manual and gauges. 90. Pathos Logos hybrid valve amp. ED.	£2750. £2150.
006	91. Shanling CDT100 valve (d player, E0. 92. Isol-8 Powerstation 200 mains regenerator. 2 mains outlets. Perfect for cd players, phono	£1250.
alpered.	staggs and prolamor. Not for hig power amore ED	£995.
	scages and pre-anips. Not for big power anips. Los. 93. Quad ELS of electrostatics. Still a world class speaker. This pair are in Walnut, 25 years old but serviced by Quad within the last two years and in perfect working order. No boxes. SH.	£750.
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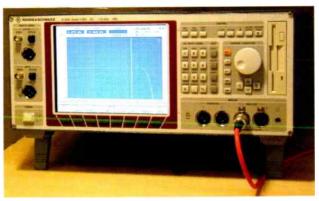
Hi-Fi World measures all incoming products before sending them out to reviewers and is unique in having such a rigorous vetting system. It reflects our dedicated approach to assessing audio equipment. Nothing gets by before thorough scrutiny.

In-house measurement is costly and time consuming, yet it has always been central to our belief that both readers and manufacturers deserve it, because there is no alternative if complex technologies are to properly assessed.

Measurement achieves many things. It ensures a product is working properly before it is subjectively auditioned. We pick up problems like loudspeaker drive units wired out-of-phase by accident, digital filters that roll-off in a bizarre fashion due to design error, a transmission line loudspeaker with no bass (!), amplifiers with excessive d.c. offsets, excessive jitter and all manner of other funnies.

Manufacturers published data is then checked against our measurements. There is usually little problem here.

The reviewer is then given the results. This gives useful guidance on what to watch out for in listening tests. For example, if three CD players use the same chip set they may well sound much alike in their basic attributes, if not identical. This is useful information for a reviewer.



Hi-Fi World uses a range of test equipment from around the world, including a Rohde & Schwarz UPL for testing CD and DVD players. Amplifiers are tested with 8903B Audio Analysers from Hewlett Packard. Loudspeakers are measured with a Bruel & Kjaer measuring microphone and Hewlett Packard 3561A spectrum analysers. We use three of these for basic test work and to ensure our listening room and conditions are balanced. Tuners are measured with a Leader 30125 Lab generator and Marconi 2015 RF generator, plus external MPX filters and equalisation.

We continue to upgrade our testing to keep up with the latest standards, to ensure that both readers and manufacturers receive the most accurate information possible about the items we review. No one does it better than Hi-Fi World.

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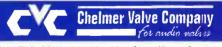
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A reference guide to Britain's manufacturers and distributors

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12 Avebury Court, Mark Road, Hemel Hampstead, Herts, HP2 7TA. Tel. 01442 260146 E-mail:info@creekaudio.com Internet: www.creekaudio.com Creek Audio manufactures in the UK. Current products

include A50i, A50iR and 5350SE integrated amplifiers, CD50 Mk2 CD player, and T50 tuner. All products are similarly styled providing an easy mix and match choice depending on budget. Our miniature OBH range includes two phono pre-amplifiers, two headphone amplifiers and a passive pre-amplifier.

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Innovative design and superior sound distinguish EPOS speakers from other brands in similar price categories. Nine models in total including a S1 surround system. All available in 3 finishes. Supporting stands and plinths complement the speakers. In addition to its two channel appeal, Epos is now equally sought after in the fast expanding world of home cinema. -

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24 Brook Road, Rayleigh, Essex SS6 7XL Tel 01268 740 580. Fax 01268 740 589 e-mail: info@monitoraudio.co.uk website: www.monitoraudio.co.uk Monitor Audio designs and manufactures British loudspeakers of the highest quality. Since 1972 Monitor Audio has been developing and perfecting the implementation of metal drivers, innovative crossovers, and exemplary speaker cabinet construction and finish to further the ideal of achieving sound which to the original is "as close as it gets".

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T+A INTEGRATED amp £1800. Audion Quattro Triode 845 single ended monoblocks 30 watts £1500 pair. Linn LP12, Ittok LVII arm, Karma cartridge, £550. NHT sub-woofer system, active crossover, 250 watts mono amp £600. NHT amplifiers 250w monoblocks £400. Tel: 020 8531 5979 (Jul)

TANNOY III LZs Monitor Golds £375. Ruark Sabres £150. Quad 33, 303, FM3 £275. Sansui AU217 II amplifier £70. Sansui TU200 FM tuner £30. Yamaha CA710 amplifier £50. Naim SBLs £600. All mint. Tel: 01722 334 694 (Jul)

FOR SALE: Rose RV23S valve pre-amp, new valves and tube rings. Mint, box and manual. £290 plus carriage. Rose RP190 power amp, 70 watt, mint, box and manual, £200 plus carriage. Monarchy SM-70 Pro 25Watt Class A, mint, box, manual (£900) £420 plus carriage. Tel: 01903 247 779 (Sussex) (Jul)

WANTED: SHARP GF-777 Ghettoblaster 4 band stereo radio cassette recorder double cassette player from the 1980's. Must be in mint condition, 100% unmarked, no signs of wear and no broken damaged parts, also fully operational. Offering £1400. Tel: 01865 378 578 evenings 5pm-9pm or Email: fiskallen@aol.com (Aug)

PIONEER ELITE MD-17] MiniDisc recorder c/w 110-230 VAC transformer. As new, very little use c/w packing. £325. Tel: 01945 463 077 (Jul)

NORDOST BLUE Heaven speaker cable. One pair 4.5m for £300 and two pairs 2.5m for £200 each pair. Terminated bananas one end. As new. Tel: 01945 463 077 (Jul)

AUDIO INNOVATIONS L2 pre-amp and Second Audio power amps. Late manufacture. £900. Professional upgrade including high grade components. Plus new 4-pin valves. Boxed and mint. £2500. Tel: 01935 432 417 or 07811 195 327 (Jul)

LINN SARA speakers, wood finish with Linn Sara stands £275, AVI SM20001 intergrated amp £275. REL 150E Subwoofer - Offers. Tel: 01223 720 181 or Email: g.burnett3@ntlworld.com (Jul)

LEGENDARY CROWN DC300A power amplifier in superb condition, recently serviced AB+B output configuration. Freq Response DC - 20kHz. T.H.D. 0.0005% at full power. Will drive into any load. 2 x 150 watts into 8 ohms. 2 x 300 watts into 4 ohms. £375.00 ono. Tel 07932 664480. (Sep)

CHORD SIGNATURE speaker cables, 6m pair, 4mm banana terminations, brand new, unused, boxed, cost £1400 from Chord dealer, can post or for collection (Surrey) £900. Tel: 0033 6214 78996 (Mon-Thurs) Email: mwilliam@nildram.co.uk (Jul)

HI-FI PLUS magazine, copies 1 to 38 in binders. Good condition. Any offers? Buyer collects. Tel: 0121 476 8507 (Birmingham) after 6pm. (Jul)

KOETSU ROSEWOOD retipped saphire cantilever £850 ono. Naim CDX £1000 ono. Snell Type E speakers £300 ono. Origin Live 250 silver £320 ono. Matched pair PX25 valves N.O.S. (CI 1060) £550. Single, used PX25 (CV 1040) £200. Pair 211 valves GE VT4C N.O.S. £120. Tel: 01492 516 875 (Jul)

BURMESTER MONO'S 828 MkII 200 watts German Hi-End. Recent factory service. Excellent condition, lots spent, £1000. Audio Research SP14 pre, excellent condition, silver, £950. World Audio power amp, 40 watt, excellent condition, £500. Tel: Steve 01733 561 375 (Aug)

NAIM CDI £300. Naim 72 preamp £300. Naim 140 amp £300. Naim NAT03 tuner £200. Naim SBL speakers £300. Alphason glass rack £50. Russ Andrews Powerblock £50. Tel: 07743 630 656 (Jul)

GRADIENT REVOLUTION speakers, new Feb 06, £2000 ono. Mirage OM9, one year old, £450 ono. Magnaplaner MGIIc, slight fault on one, £60. Elite Rock turntable, Excalaber arm, £350 ono. Tel: 01634 323 683, 07901 893 982 (Jul)

MVL SES-567 CD and MiniDisc Audio Enhancer. As new c/w racking. Very rare, £150. Tel: 01945 463 077 (Jul)

B&W CDM I SPEAKERS, Black Ash, vgc, some spike marks on bottom. Complete with Atacama Nexus stands, Black 20in. £300 o.n.o. Wanted: DPA Black slink interconnect. Tel: Rob 01604 788 746(Jul)

MARANTZ MA700 MONO-BLOCK 200w amps. Two pairs available. As new with packing. Rare bargain. £400 per pair. Tel: 01945 463 077 (Jul)

TEAC VRDS 10 CD £395. Tannoy Revolution R2 floorstanders, black ash £175. Audiolab 8000A integrated £195. Marantz PM66 KI £165. Rega Planar 2 with Linn Basik Plus £115. Tel: 01260 295 804 (Jul)

AUDION SILVER Night 300B push pull monoblocs, gold plated, chassis, Billington Gold and Philips valves, volume controls, 24 WPC for normal speakers. Just serviced. Vgc, £800. Tel: Dave 01844 212 522 (Oxfordshire) (Jul)

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LEHMANN BLACK Cube SE MM/MC phono preamp. Proper remote PSU fully adjustable. Boxed, manual, as new, real high end. Cost £650 sell £175. Tel: Dave 01844 212 522 (Oxfordshire) (Jul)

211 VALVE AMPLIFIER Emporium's Black Beast, excellent, £1050. Garrard 301, SME 3009 in slate plinth, vgc, £600. Stax 1980s mega CD player, 2 power supplies! £350. Tel: 01603 300 944 or Email: jon.templeman@virgin.net (Jul)

AUDIO RESEARCH VSi55 integrated valve amplifier £1450. Tel: 020 8647 7419 (home) or 07714 216 755 (mobile) (Jul)





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CYRUS CD7Q CD Player, silver, mint condition, boxed, normal price £1100, will accept £650. Tel: 079505 94569 (Jul)

NAIM CDS CD Player with power supply. Both recently serviced by Naim. Both mint condition with boxes, £1990. Naim 3.5 CD player. Excellent condition with remote and box. £390. Sony WM-D6C Walkman professional cassette recorder/ player. Hardly used in mint condition, £290. Tel: 0116 241 5435 (Jul)

ACCUPHASE DP55 CD player, excellent working condition, £80. DIY speaker enthusiast, retiring, hence selection of new drive units 6.5" to 15" offered. Wanted: John Hardey, please contact Mike re Toshiba turntable. Ring Mike 0118 969 3377 (Jul)

NAIM SNAXO 3 - 6 £150. Wanted: Naim XPS2 power supply with or without Burnpy lead. Tel: 0121 553 1120 (Midlands) (Jul)

WANTED: NAD C660 CD recorder. Must be un-marked and working perfectly. Alternative machines considered, particularly Pioneer PDR 609. Tel: 01341 422 111 (Dolgellau, Gwynedd) (Jul) VALVE MONOBLOCKS Shanling SP-80 built in Pre-amplifier/ Metal remote control. Silver & gold finished. OPT EL34s. (Impressive sound) approx (30 kg) Mint GBP £1,695. Meridian 501 stereo pre-amp/MSR Remote control. Mint GBP £495.00. Ortofon/Telefunken S-600 Stereo Turntable + Shure V3 MK111 Cart. Ortofon stereo arm 1960s (s-shaped) all in perfect condition.12kg. GBP, £395.00 ovno. Tel: 07958 607 613. (Jul)

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NORDOST VALHALLA; speaker cable. 1.5m factory biwire £1850 (£3750). Interconnects; 0.6m factory RCA £850 (£1900), 0.6m XLR £550, 0.25m RCA £275. Sony DVP-S7700 DVD/CD player £175 (£900). Tel: 0131 661 0126 or 0781 133 5060 (Jul) TANNOY III LZs Monitor Golds £375. Ruark Sabres £150. Quad 33, 303, FM3 £275. Sansui AU217 II amplifier £70. Sansui TU200 FM tuner £30. Yamaha CA710 amplifier £50. Naim SBLs £600. All mint. Tel: 01722 334 694 (Jul)

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PIONEER ELITE MD-17J MiniDisc recorder c/w 110-230 VAC transformer. As new, very little use c/w packing. £325. Tel: 01945 463 077 (Jul)

MVL SES-567 CD and MiniDisc Audio Enhancer. As new c/w racking. Very rare, £150. Tel: 01945 463 077 (Jul)

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GUIDELINES FOR BUYING AND SELLING SECOND-HAND EQUIPMENT

FOR THE BUYER

- Not everyone is honest -
- Buyer Beware!
- Don't send cash!
 Accept no verbal
- Accept no verbal guarantees.
- Have you heard the item or something similar? If not, why do you want it?
- Don't pretend to have knowledge - it's your fingers that will get burnt!
- Is it working? If not, why not?
- 7. Has it been modified and, if so,
- have notes been kept?
- 8. Was it any good in the first place?
- 9. Don't send cash!
- If you are in the slighest doubt, arrange an audition (see point 5) If it's too far, wait for another time.
- Either buy it or don't: vendors are excusably impatient with 'consultation' exercises.
- 12. Don't send cash!

FOR THE SELLER

- Not everyone is honest -Seller Beware!
- Make no verbal guarantees.
 Even 'nearly new' is still
- second-hand. If the manufacturer's guarantee is no longer in force, your price should reflect this.
- There is very little intrinsic value in second-hand hi-fi; it's only worth what someone will pay for it.
- 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.
- Amateur second-hand dealing is not a big money game: you win some, you lose some.
- Be prompt with despatch. If in doubt about buyer's bonafides, either wash out the deal or send C.O.D.
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M25 AUDIOJUMBLE. Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall, Ashtead, Surrey, KT21 2BE. M25 Junction 9. Sunday 11th June, 11.00am. Tel: 07730 134 973 (lul)

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vintagewirelesslondon.co.uk Buy-Sell-Exchange. Vintage HI-Fi. Repairs, Spares, Restoration. All valve equipment Wanted for cash. Tannoy, Quads, Garrard and audio valves. Please call us at. 17 Bell Street, London, NWI 5BY. Tei: 020 7258 3448 Fax 020 7258 3449 Email: vwirelesslondon@aol.com (Jul06)

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78 Otley Road, Headingley, Leeds, 0113 217 7294. Yorkshire's newest Hi-Fi retailer, stockists of Naim Audio, Rega Research, Conrad Johnson, Sugden, Dynavector, (cartridges and amplifiers) and many more. Please call for advice. (Jul)

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are recommended by the HiFi press as an effective turntable upgrade.Vinyl Alignment offers a high quality Cork Turntable Mat at only £27.49 from www.vinylalignment.co.uk enq@vinylalignment.co.uk 01274 428070 (Jul)

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STUDER C37 £1800, A810 VU £1200.A80 VU £950.A807 £550.A725 £450.A710 £450. Revox PR99 III £1200.A77 £350. C221 £450. B710 £450. Rogers LS 5/8 £750, Uher 42001C £150.Tel: 01246 275 479 (Jul)

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PUNCHED cabinets for DIY amplifiers. Three heights, variants for valve and transistor amplifiers. Cosmetic options (supplied with labels, screws and feet. Also (Class A) heatsinks, handles and sockets. www.designbuildlisten.com (Jul)

M25 AUDIOJUMBLE. Ashtead Peace Memorial Hall, Ashtead, Surrey, KT21 2BE, M25 Junction 9. Sunday 11th June, 11.00am.Tel: 07730 134 973 (Jul)

FOR SERVICE, Repairs, Upgrades and Re-Manufacturing of all valve audio equipment. Leak Troughline specialists, re-aligned etc. For more info contact E.F.G. (London) Ltd inc. E. Gane and Son Est 1948 on 020 8743 2727 (Jul)

VINYL LP's Wanted: Folk, Blues, Jazz, Reggae, Soul, Rock, Classical. Good prices paid. Must be in excellent condition. Phone: 07941 220 296 Send lists to: vvrecords@bigfoot.com Website: http://www.vvrecords.co.uk/ (lul

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CORK TURNTABLE MATS are recommended by the HiFi press as an effective turntable upgrade.Vinyl Alignment offers a high quality Cork Turntable Mat at only £27.49 from www.vinylalignment.co.uk enq@vinylalignment.co.uk

CLASSIC CONTACTS

When a classic goes 'pooof' your troubles have just started, but there may be a good ending. Replacing failing parts can improve the sound, so here is a short listing of all those companies who specialise in getting a classic up and running again after its deposited a small ring of soot on your ceiling!

CLASSIQUE SOUNDS

Raul Greenfield, Lexester) ESL-STX restored, rebuilt, fully renovated or improved. Leak, Quad valves armps etc Tel 0845 123 5137 / Mob 0116 2835821 Fmirl r1string usingts@valboc.co.uk www.flashbacksales.co.uk/classique

GT AUDIO

(Graham Tricker, Bucks) (Graham Tricker, bucks) Leak Troughline specialists Also Quad and most classic tuners, radios and amplifiers restored, repaired Tel 0.1895 833099 / Mob 07960 962579

AUDIOLAE

Phil Pimblott, Leeds) Renovation, repair and restoration. Specialist in valve hi-fi, radio transmitters, cinema amps, kit building Tel: 0113 244 0378 iolabs co uk

QUAD ELECTROACOUSTICS (Cambs)

Quad's service department, able to repair almost all Quad products from the very first Tel: 0845 4580011 w.guad-hifi.co.uk

(Shropshire) Garrard 301/401 restoration, renovation and service Special plinths, rumble cures, etc. Tel. 01584 823446 LORICRAFT AUDIO

Grog O'Sellevan, Bucks) arrard 301/401 and their own 501 repair, spares and service Tel 01488 72267 www.garrard501.com

Dr MARTIN BASTIN

LOCKWOOD AUDIO

(London) Tannoy loudspeaker parts, restoration and repair Also Epos and TDL loudspeakers Tel: 020 8 864 8008 www.lockWd00audiu.c.uk CARTRIDGE MAN

(Len Gregory, London) Specalist cartridge re-upping service and repairs. High quality special cartridges Tel 020 8 68 6565 www.listen.to/thecartridgeman TECHNICAL AND GENERAL

(East Sussex) Turntable parts - wide range of spares and accessories. plus arms and cartridges. Tel 01892 654534

REVOX ves. Cheshire) (Brian Reeves, Cheshire) Revox tape recorder spares, service and repair Accessories also available. Tel: 0161 499 2349 Email. brian@revoxservice co.uk www.revox.freeuk.com

SOWTER TRANSFORMERS

(Brian Sowter, Ipswich) Large range of audio transformers for valve amps cartridges, line drive, interstage plus all associated Tel 01473 252794

ONE THING

(Coventry) Spacialist in nlocrinostatic panel manufacture and repair. Can refurbish ESL 57s and 63s as well as Leäk Troughlines and Quad IIs Email one thing@ntlworld.com w.onethingaudio.com

OCTAVE AUDIO WOODWORKING

(Bristol) Unit **2**, 16 Midland Street, St Phillips Bristol Tel 0117 925 6015 www.octave-aw.co.uk

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ARKLESS ELECTRONICS (Northumberland) Specialist in repairs, restoration and modifications to all amplifiers, valve or solid state, ancient and modern Tel 01670 829891

Email: arkless electronics@btinternet.com WEMBLEY LOUDSPEAKER

MarCallam, London Comprehensive loudspeaker servicing Tel 020 8 743 4567

Email paul@wembleyloudspeaker.co.uk www.wembleyloudspeaker.com EXPERT STYLUS COMPANY

(Wyndham Hodgson, Surrey) Stylus replacement service for all types of cartridge Including precise prufiling for 78, Tel (0.1372, 278004 Email whodgson@btclick.com

CLASSIC NAKAMICHI

Paul Wikins, Worthing West Sussex) Restore, Repair & Service Nakamichi Cassette Decks. Tel 01903 695695 Email: paul@bowersandwilkins.co.uk www.bowersandwilkins.co.uk

SURFING THE WAVES



No, not the wet and foamy ones... August's Hi-Fi World is a veritable 'tsunami' of audiophile radio receiving devices, otherwise known as 'tuners' to you and me. We'll be fishing around for the best affordable 'catch' on the market, and living the high life with one of the biggest fishes in the tuner sea too. Here's just a selection of what we hope to bring you:

Tuner Supertest:

Arcam DT91, Creek T50, Denon TU1500AE, Harman Kardon TU970, Marantz ST7001, Myryad MXT2000, Pure DRX702ES Magnum Dynalab MD-100: the last FM tuner you'll ever need? Choice Cuts: the HFW team name radio's tastiest bites! Table Talk: the latest DAB portables tuned in Software Defined Radio: a duffer's guide Deutsche diamond: Vincent STU-3 On Air: radio, a history

plus:

- Q Acoustics 1020 loudspeakers
- Audion SilverNote power amplifier
- Phonosophie Impuls 2 CD player
- Monitor Audio GS60 loudspeakers
- NAD C325BEE integrated amplifier
- The Cartridge Man Conductor tonearm

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SEVENTEEN SECONDS

THE CURE SEVENTEEN SECONDS 1980

uring the creation of The Cure's second commercial release, 'Seventeen Seconds', band leader Robert Smith became fixated on four, seem-

ingly unrelated and random pieces of music. The first was 'Madame George' via Van Morrison, the second was Nick Drake's 'Fruit Tree', the third was Aram Khachaturian's ballet piece, Gayaneh Ballet Suite No. I Adagio and the last was Jimi Hendrix's version of 'All Along The Watchtower'. Then there was an album which never left his turntable, David Bowie's 'Low'.

This array of music served as the essential elements for the forthcoming album from The Cure. Bowie's 'Low' period was cool yet not exactly chirpy; Hendrix was pure rock in every way; Khachaturian's music, which Smith had seen in the science fiction classic film, '2001: A Space Odyssey', offered nothing more than the bleak desolation of space and Khachaturian's theme became its anthem; not so much 'bleak' as 'bare' was the Nick Drake track that took sadness to another level; as for Van Morrison's track, this was an inward looking, brooding piece.

"I was trying to get a combination of all the things that I liked about those four things, even though they were so disparate," explained Smith. The album itself was cut in just thirteen days. Not bad for an '80s production but the short time frame was both a testimony to the band's method of preparation before entering a studio and, possibly more importantly, their financial state, they were strapped for cash and could not afford much studio time in the first place, "We mostly had it all before we went into the studio," drums/keyboards man Lol Tolhurst explained.

Despite the album's sometimes grim, dour atmosphere, the making of the same was upbeat. The band were in fine form, especially bassist, Simon Gallup, who had recently left the drudge of factory work, "Staying up until three in the morning, drinking," he remembered, misty eyed.

'Seventeen Seconds' was also the first time Robert Smith took complete creative control over The Cure's output, "I knew exactly what sound I needed for 'Seventeen Seconds' – I wanted it to be inspired by Nick Drake with a clear, finished sound of Bowie's 'Low'. Everything about it was exactly what I wanted. I produced it, although they said I wasn't capable. 'Seventeen Seconds' is a very personal record and it's also when I felt The Cure really started."

The album is sombre but never dull, it features some beautiful soundscapes, many lyrically creative highs plus some crackingly good riffs, such as on one of The Cure's most impressive singles, 'A Forest' - a band and fan favourite, certainly if its longterm place on gig set-lists is anything to go by. It was, apparently, based on a Smith dream, where he felt trapped in a forest without any means of escape. Ironically, that was how many of the band members felt about the song itself. Because of the track's inertia, many band members were never sure when the piece should

end, "It was one that used to go on and on," recalls Gallup.

'Seventeen Seconds' can be bought in a remastered version via Polydor or as an excellently presented expanded version, complete with a second disk of rarities. However, despite most reviews stating that the original album had been remastered using 'original master tapes', there is some question as to exactly what master tapes these reviews refer to ... Robert Smith was interviewed, during the late-'90s, before the new edition was released, stating that the original master tapes had been destroyed. Apparently, Chris Parry, the owner of Fiction Records, kept the masters by an old washing machine and the magnetism from the electric motor erased the tapes.

In 1990 The Cure released their 'Mixed Up' album, which features remixes of older Cure songs. One of the tracks listed for the album, 'A Forest', had to be completely rerecorded. Robert Smith and Simon Gallup sampled Lol's old drum sound from another song. Then Simon found his old, original, bass and Robert sought out his original guitar and amp. Then they played 'A Forest' again, note for note. They did have to change the solo at the end, because Robert couldn't remember how the original one ran and no one in their vicinity had a copy of the original at that time. Hence, the original CD issue of the album is the best and safest digital version to hunt for and, of course, the original vinyl version is the best analogue version. PR

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