

HI-FI WORLD

AUGUST 2010

UK £3.90

www.hi-fiworld.co.uk

FREE READER CLASSIFIED ADS IN THIS ISSUE!



MUSICAL FIDELITY M1 digital converter **EXCLUSIVE!**



Q ACOUSTICS 2050 loudspeakers **EXCLUSIVE!**

EXCLUSIVE!

FUNK FIRM SAFFIRE II

turntable



COMPETITION
£4,560 OF TELLURIUM Q
CABLES TO BE WON!
(UK ONLY)



AUGUST 2010



9 770961 766178

- PHONO STAGE SUPERTEST
- LINN UPHORIK PHONO STAGE
- INSPIRE APOLLO TURNTABLE
- OLDE WORLDE: PIONEER SA9500
- SAMSUNG BD-C7500 BLU RAY
- SENNHEISER HD800 'PHONES
- MICROMEGA CD30 CD PLAYER
- XTZ CD100 CD PLAYER



12 PAGES OF LETTERS - THE BEST WINS A PAIR OF KEF IQ30 LOUDSPEAKERS! (UK ONLY)

EXCEPTIONAL SOUND SHOULD BE PART OF THE FURNITURE

"Wonderfully articulate speakers"

Sonus Faber Liuto Monitor – *BBC Music* (September 2009)

"There is a graceful musicality about this speaker that marks it out as special"

Sonus Faber Liuto Monitor – *Hi-Fi Choice* (August 2009)

For such bijou speakers, the Toy's audio performance is immense"

Sonus Faber Toy – *BBC Music, Best Loudspeaker of 2008*

Sonus Faber has always believed that owning a pair of speakers should be a total aesthetic experience. Technology honed over decades to turn every piece of music into a special auditory occasion is part of the story. But equally important is the meticulous styling and natural materials chosen for the cabinets which house the drivers. Inspired by the craftsmanship of the original makers of classical instruments such as the lute and the violin, Sonus Faber's blend of fine woods and leather adds up to the last word in aspirational Italian elegance.

And yet, thanks to Sonus Faber's latest creations, such luxury costs less than you might think. The new Liuto loudspeaker collection reflects the smooth contours and classic joinery of the lute, delivering a sprightly musicality, as sensitive, rich and graceful to listen to as it is to look at. The lute shape is not just visually pleasing; its curves serve to stiffen the cabinet and dampen unwanted resonance, whilst the leather cladding stretched across the front baffle enhances dispersion. The result is a soaring, soulful sound.

Sitting alongside the Liuto range, Sonus Faber's Toy series sets out to destroy the notion that small speakers can't deliver wonderfully engaging sound. The warmth and responsiveness of their performance would challenge speakers three times their size, whilst never losing the sense of the fun and joy that the name evokes. Clad from head to toe in barred leather, these lovingly designed speakers are set to become style icons for the musical fashionista whilst simultaneously satisfying the audiophile.

Both collections have been specially selected for you by Absolute Sounds, the UK's leading importer and distributor of the finest, most desirable audio equipment the world has to offer.



The Liuto collection

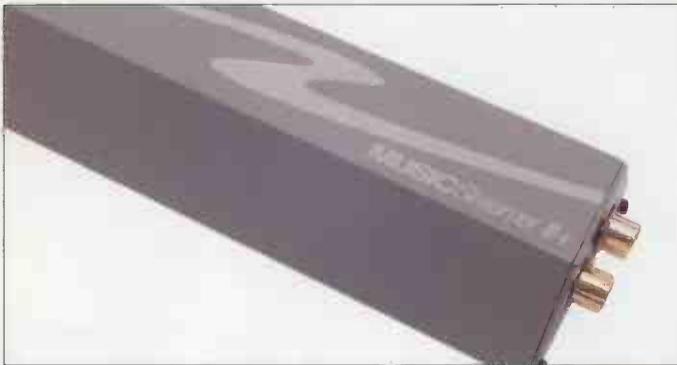


The Toy collection

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



66 HRT Music Streamer II+ - a great computer audio DAC.



68 Musical Fidelity M1 - a brilliant, affordable digital convertor.



86 Pioneer SA-9500 - classic Japanese amplifier bruiser!



106 Linn Uphorik - the company's new flagship phono stage.



100 Inspire Apollo - a very fine mid-price turntable.



30 Q Acoustics 2050 - top value entry level floorstanders.

LOUDSPEAKERS

Q ACOUSTICS 2050 30

Noel Keywood samples a superb pair of budget floorstanders.

ONIX CONCERTO I 64

David Price auditions an interesting mid-price standmounter.

DIGITAL

XTZ CD100 36

Adam Smith enjoys this beer-budget CD player.

SAMSUNG BD-C7500 56

Noel Keywood tries this stylish Blu-ray disc spinner.

HRT STREAMER II+ 66

Patrick Cleasby is most impressed by this computer audiophile gizmo.

MUSIC FIDELITY MI 68

David Price discovers a brilliant new budget DAC.

MICROMEGA CD30 78

David Price is beguiled by a charming Gallic CD spinner.

FEATURES

OLDE WORLDE 86

Tim Jarman gets into Japanese heavy metal with Pioneer's classic SA-9500.

THE GLOBIES 112

A wry look at some of the products we've reviewed over the past twelve months!

ACCESSORIES

TELLURIUM Q 29

Paul Rigby auditions a whole new range of loudspeaker cable.

BURSON AUDIO AB-160 40

An interesting new audio buffer gets the Paul Rigby ear!

SENNHEISER HD800 63

David Price enjoys the company's new flagship headphone.

VINYL

VINYL NEWS 98

Paul Rigby with all the latest black plastic releases.

FUNK FIRM SAFFIRE II 12

Adam Smith tries out the new flagship Funk turntable.

PHONO STAGE SUPERTEST 17

Tony Bolton rounds up six sub-£1,100 designs.

INSPIRE APOLLO 100

Adam Smith auditions a smart new mid-price turntable.

LINN UPHORIK 106

David Price hears Linn's brand new flagship phono stage.

AUDIO TECHNICA AT-F7 110

Tony Bolton tries this lively £300 moving coil cartridge.



7 NEWS

words from the front...

42 MAIL

Twelve pages of your thoughts on matters hi-fi and life!

72 WORLD STANDARDS

Brand new, updated guide to the latest and greatest hi-fi hardware.

55 COMPETITION

Over £4,000 of Tellurium Q cables are up for grabs this month, for several lucky winners!

82 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Ensure your copy every month and save money too!

84 AUDIOPHILE CD

Paul Rigby rounds up the latest audiophile CD releases.

89, 91, 93, 95, 97 OPINION

The team get to grips with matters music, hi-fi and life!

61, 105 SOUNDBITES

Paul Rigby tries the Audio Desk Systeme CD Sound Improver and the Nespa Professional Optical Disc Finalizer, then the Furutech DF-2 and Walker Audio Prelude Deluxe.

120 DIAL-A-DEALER

A comprehensive guide to UK hi-fi retailers.

123 CLASSIFIEDS

Two pages of second-hand bargains.

127 CLASSIC CONTACTS

When a classic goes 'poof' these are the people to contact.

128 NEXT MONTH

what we hope to bring you in the next sizzling issue...

129 ADVERTISERS' INDEX

130 CLASSIC CUTS

Matt Monro's 'The Complete Singles Collection' is celebrated by Paul Rigby.

Bowers & Wilkins



The origin of true sound

The all new 805 Diamond When it comes to faithfully reproducing sound at high frequencies, no other material on earth matches diamond. But up until recently, diamond dome tweeters were reserved for our largest, most expensive reference speakers. No longer. The 805 Diamond is the first

of its kind: the only Bowers & Wilkins bookshelf speaker to incorporate true studio-grade technology in the form of a diamond tweeter. Now you can experience the thrill of true sound in places you never thought possible.

www.bowers-wilkins.co.uk

news

SCHOOL OF ROCK

Cambridge Audio's new NP30 network music player is designed to unleash the potential of digital music stored on computers and home networks, allowing premium quality 24bit playback anywhere in the home through any hi-fi or home entertainment system, the company says. In addition the NP30 offers fast and easy access to a wide range of streaming music services and over 15,000 Internet radio stations. Housed in a compact, low resonance all-metal chassis, the NP30 is intuitive to use with its clear four line LCD display and remote control. Cambridge Audio will simultaneously launch UuVol, a new online music service. UuVol simplifies set-up and use of the NP30 and future Cambridge Audio network music players by providing a unified online service, allowing users to customise their system to their own personal preferences. "Better than CD" 24bit/96kHz playback is standard, allowing the streaming of studio quality WAV, PCM and FLAC downloads. From launch, the NP30 will access a wide range of free and subscription based services (depending on their location). Price is to be confirmed, but should be affordable.

The company has also unveiled the new 350A integrated amplifier and 350C CD player, which "represent a new age in high performance, good value hi-fi separates". Taking cues from the highly acclaimed 550 and 650 Series launched in 2009, the 350 duo feature redesigned casework with new displays and knobs, a more substantial brushed aluminium front panel, seamless wrap-over lid assembly and dual-layer damped feet. The £229.95 amplifier has 45W RMS into 8 Ohms, an audiophile grade toroidal transformer and substantial extruded heatsink, a new precision ALPs 'black box' volume pot, new low dissipation polypropylene signal capacitors and custom made electrolytic capacitors in critical positions. The identically priced CD player has a new proprietary Cambridge Audio S3 servo, Wolfson WM8728 DAC, all PCBs and DAC stages feature double-sided, surface mount technology, and there's an accurate master clock oscillator and carefully designed impedance-matched clock buffering, an audiophile grade toroidal transformer and a new reverse black DFSN display with CD text. For details, call +44 (0)20 7551 5418 or click on www.cambridge-audio.com.



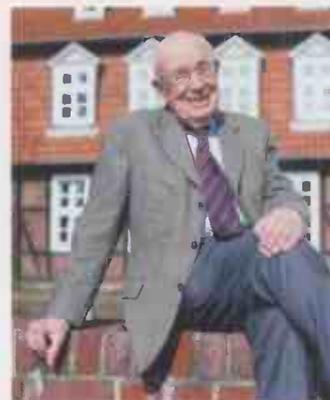
AUDIO TECHNICS, A?

Looking spookily like a Technics SL1210, Audio Technica's new AT-LP120-USB is described as "a professional-quality USB turntable and software package". The new deck is said to be durable to meet the demands of professional use, yet provides consumers with the flexibility to enjoy top-quality vinyl playback and easily transfer records to digital media files and CDs. The AT-LP120-USB includes a turntable and phono cartridge, PC and Mac-compatible software, USB cable and other accessories. The turntable features a high-torque quartz locked direct-drive motor with selectable 33-1/3, 45 and 78 RPM operation. There's a built-in switchable phono preamp, RCA output cables and adapter cables allow connection to a wide variety of music and home entertainment components and systems. The deck features a heavy-duty cast aluminium platter with slip mat, and a balanced pickup arm with soft damping control and adjustable tracking force, anti-skating and vertical tracking angle (VTA) for optimum playback performance. The AT-LP120-USB is supplied with a magnetic phono cartridge with replaceable stylus. The included USB cable enables plug-and-play connection to a computer. The PC and Mac-compatible Audacity software converts the audio on a record to MP3, WAV or other format digital audio files, which can then be played back on portable audio players, computers, home media centres and car audio systems. The software includes a host of audio editing features including equalization and noise removal. Price is £255; for more details call +44 (0) 113 277 1441 or click on www.audiotechnica.co.uk



FRITZ SENNHEISER (9/5/1912 – 17/5/2010)

Few individuals have made their mark on one particular sector of the hi-fi market more than Professor Dr. Fritz Sennheiser, so it's sad to have to announce his death in Wedemark, Germany on 17th May, 2010. Through his company Sennheiser, started in summer 1945, he had an important influence on the development of sound transmission technologies and was instrumental in forging many developments in electro-acoustics. In 1982 he retired from the management of the company, handing over to his son Jörg. For more information, click on www.sennheiser.com.



INTO TOMORROW

Munich's High-End Show saw the launch of a brand new Naim digital audio player and server called UnitiServe. Designed to provide secure CD ripping and storage, it offers local playback through its digital output, and provides multiple streams from the Naim written UPnP server. This would be ideally suitable to single- or multi-room systems using NaimUniti or UnitiQute, Naim says. Streams are at native bit rate unless the UnitiServe is configured to downsample the streams on the fly, should the UPnP renderer require it. There are up to six StreamNet streams of CD quality to supply a NaimNet multiroom system.

There are two versions of UnitiServe, a standard version including a 1TB Pipeline low-noise drive for local storage of up to around 1,200 CD rips. The -SSD variant substitutes the 1TB drive for a 16GB Enterprise grade Single Level Cell (SLC) Solid State Drive (SSD). UnitiServe-SSD has no local storage and is designed to save to NAS giving almost infinite storage capability. UnitiServe can play most common audio formats from files stored on a network providing they are not subject to Digital Rights Management. WAV, FLAC, AIFF, ALAC and AAC together with MP3 and more are easily found, with Network Scanning, and played. This includes hi-res music files up to 24bit/192kHz, the current limit of S/PDIF and TOSLINK standards. Ripping utilises the same Naim secure ripping engine that helped the Naim HDX gain its superb reputation. Rips should only be carried out once – they need to be the best rips possible. Ripped music is stored in Naim's preferred WAV format which requires no further processing, thus reducing processor current draw and power supply pollution; hence improving sound quality.

There are many ways to control a UnitiServe. In its server mode it can be installed, set up and then fed CDs as desired. It will rip, catalogue and store the rips efficiently, serving them to the finest UPnP or StreamNet standards, the company says. As a player the UnitiServe can be controlled by a Naim Handset, an Apple iPod Touch or iPhone running the HDX app, or by a computer running an internet browser supporting Adobe Flash. PC users can also run the Naim Desktop Client, with its Explorer-style interface. UnitiServe can be a Server and Player simultaneously.

Meanwhile, the Naim HDX is now being offered with a 16GB Enterprise grade Solid State Drive. This totally silent drive will contain the operating system and includes space for future upgrades. The HDX-SSD also gets significant performance improvements with double the RAM to reduce paging and therefore reduce variable current draw and more importantly a new Naim designed low-profile PCI audio card. This new card is designed for a single stereo output, and is further optimised and consumes less current than the one it replaces. This delivers a twofold opportunity for a sound quality improvement, the company claims. Existing owners can upgrade their HDX with the new RAM and PCI card at their Naim retailer. The upgrade to the SSD drive is also possible but this would require a return to Naim or the local distributor. For more information, call +44 (0)1722 426600 or click on www.naimaudio.com.



Naim HDX SSD



dCS CONVERTED

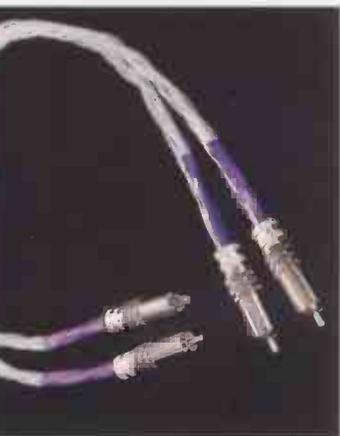
News comes that dCS Ltd. has moved to a new factory. With immediate effect, the company's new address is: Data Conversion Systems Ltd., Unit 1, Buckingway Business Park, Anderson Road, Swavesey, Cambridge, CB24 4AE. Their phone number is +44 (0)1954 233950.

MAKE IT BIG!

Exposure Electronics Ltd. are pleased to announce that they're moving to a larger factory, and so their address has changed to: Exposure Electronics Ltd., Unit 18, Winston Business Centre, Chartwell Road, Lancing, West Sussex BN15 8TU. The phone number and email address remain the same as before, at +44(0) 1273 423 877 and info@exposurehifi.com. For more details, click on www.exposurehifi.com.

SILVER DREAM MACHINES

Artisan have introduced an enhanced version of their Ultimate Silver Dream interconnects, with superior quality locking RCA plugs. The new plugs are designed to be pushed on to the RCA socket, while the housing is loose. You then tighten the housing, at which point they grip tightly on to the RCA sockets, giving a very secure and low-loss connection, the company says. Inside the plugs, the pure silver wires connect directly to the silver-plated centre pin, in a solderless connection - reducing losses still further. The cables use 8 separate solid silver conductors, each sheathed in Teflon, with an air-gap, to provide a near-ideal dielectric. Prices start at £289 for a half metre pair. For more details, click on www.artisansilvercables.com.



TWO WHEELS GOOD!

The new Cy-Fi Wireless Sports Speaker is described as being an ideal companion for your cycling commute. It comes with a clamp for fixing it to the handlebars of your bike, and is said to have "very impressive sound quality too"! Buttons for changing the track and adjusting the volume mean that you don't have to fiddle with the iPod in your pocket while you're trundling along. Simply plug the audio transmitter into your iPod, press play and let the CD-quality Cy-Fi do its thing. The speaker itself is light and small enough to pop in your coat pocket, and it has a range of 30 feet. You can sync up to 4 Cy-Fi speakers for especially large groups of people, and then pack it all away in the neat little carry pouch. Charging for 2 hours via USB gives over 6 hours of listening. Vital statistics are 122x100x290mm. See www.cyfi.co.uk.





STAR SIGN

Celebrating twenty five years of high end loudspeaker manufacturing, Audio Physic have launched a new version of their Virgo model. The Virgo 25 follows the Tempo 25 launched earlier this year. Inspired by the driver and crossover technology of their top model the Cardeas, the midrange drivers and tweeters are identical and the tweeter additionally boasts SSC decoupling from the loudspeaker cabinet. This means that there is no way that resonances of the cabinet can impair the work of the tweeter, the company says. For details, see www.c-techaudio.co.uk.

OUT OF TIME?

Owen Watters of Roberts Radio has challenged the timetable for DAB migration. Following the Enactment of the Digital Economy Bill in May, which sets out the critical path for digital television and radio in the UK, he has questioned entirely if the criteria for DAB migration was achievable by 2015. The BBC and Commercial broadcasters need to urgently agree a funding strategy to implement the Act's requirements for a DAB network equivalent to current FM before migration can be implemented, he argues. "The BBC has already committed to increase the transmitter network to 230 by mid 2011 and this still only covers 90% of the UK. To match the current FM coverage (around 94%), between four to six hundred more transmitters are required and the BBC acknowledge this could take up to seven years to complete, even if funding were agreed today", he said.

Watters adds that, "the single biggest issue to address is the family car. Will consumers accept that they have to purchase an additional 'converter' to continue to listen to their favourite radio programme? With over thirty million cars on the road today, the vast majority of which have an analogue radio fitted, converting all these listeners to DAB for their cars is a mammoth task and consumers need a complete and simple solution. Current 'solutions' are far from ideal and frankly a hassle. Most of the current converters rely on FM re-broadcasting which is too patchy, and consumers are going to resent paying out to upgrade or convert their existing system, never mind buying or installing a new one, whatever the digital broadcast capability." Meanwhile car manufacturers continue to fit analogue radios to the majority of new cars, he points out.

Commenting on the ongoing investment that will be required to bring the country up to DAB capacity by 2015, Watters said that the target date was unrealistic, and highly dependent on a fully committed government. "Bearing in mind there will be at least another election taking place in this period, a lack of will, or a change of priority, in investing in the necessary infrastructure could become a major obstacle to the digital migration process... A more realistic target date for migration is likely to be 2020, but even this could be ambitious."

TOTAL ECLIPSE

A six year research programme into the fundamentals of loudspeaker design, materials and technology, has allowed Fujitsu-Ten to deliver this new flagship Eclipse TD loudspeaker. The new TD712zMK2 Black (£5,300) is described as "a floorstanding Time Domain design with a huge 'power-to-weight' ratio". Every element of the design is focused on speed and accuracy, the company says. "The TD712zMK2 is built to deliver only the signal from the drive unit, with the cabinet itself adding nothing". It sports a more powerful motor system for the drive unit, new ultra-efficient high-power magnet structure, a redesigned damping system for the driver surround, high-density zinc internal components, a new design of coupling to the integrated stand and a cabinet 50% larger in volume. The advanced single 12" drive unit is retained, in a "completely integrated non-resonant structure". Construction is superb, from steel, zinc, aluminium and composites with black nickel plated metal parts; the speakers weigh 25kg apiece and stand 989mm tall. For details, call +44(0)20 7328 4499 or click on www.eclipse-td.net.



NAME THAT DUNE

The Dune BD Prime 3.0, imported to the UK by DAD Audio, is an all-in-one movie box sporting networking capabilities. The system can be connected to your home computer to stream music, movies and photos on to a TV system. Users can also download media content from the web through a WiFi or Ethernet cable connection. Featuring a built-in Blu-ray player, it delivers movie content in super detailed 1080p. It also has the ability to be fitted with a 2.5" hard drive. With this installed, you can store movies and entertainment right under your TV – a must for any movie buff's TV cabinet. Dune BD Prime 3.0 is now available at www.advancedmp3players.co.uk and amazon.co.uk for £369.

THIN'S IN

Advanced-Loudspeakers have been appointed exclusive UK agents for RAAL ribbon tweeters. For more details, call David Gammon on +44 (0)1773 783339 or write to: 48A New Street, South Normanton, Derbyshire DE55 2BS. You can also click on www.advanced-loudspeakers.co.uk.

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 650BD BLU-RAY CORRECTION

It's standard procedure during Blu-ray player measurement to set loudspeaker size to Large in the set-up menus. However, this step was missed in our Cambridge Audio 650BD review, June 10 issue, and accounts for early bass roll off noted. We should have spotted this rather obvious mistake! Our apologies to readers and Cambridge Audio.



audio T

Sound & Vision Solutions

While many of our competitors have chosen to focus on home cinema and screens, at Audio T we've never lost sight of our roots... set down in 2 channel hi-fi over 44 years ago. That's not to say we don't sell home cinema, we do, but we also have a range of 2 channel brands that is second to none.

All our stores have enthusiastic staff and a comfortable demonstration room (where we can even make you a decent cup of tea).

So if you love music and want a system that will make you listen to more, you know where to come.

Basingstoke 01256 324311	Cheltenham 01242 583960	Reading 0118 958 5463
Blackpool 01253 300599	Enfield 020 8367 3132	Southampton 023 8025 2827
Bolton 01204 395789	Epsom 01372 748888	Swansea 01792 474608
Brentwood 01277 264730	Lancaster 01524 39657	Swindon 01793 538222
Brighton 01273 609431	Manchester 0161 839 8869	Tunbridge Wells 01892 525666
Bristol 01179 264975	Oxford 01865 765961	Warrington 01925 632179
Camberley 01276 685597	Portsmouth 023 9266 3604	Worcester 01905 619059
Cardiff 029 20228565	Preston 01772 883958	

Buy Now, Pay in 12 Months Time*

On the following brands: Naim, Cyrus, Electrocompaniet, Rega, Bryston, Chord Electronics, Linn, Arcam, NAD, Marantz, Quad, Roksan, Sugden, Michell, Project, B&W, Dynaudio, Focal, KEF, Monitor Audio, PMC, ProAc, Spondor, Tannoy, Totem, Wharfedale, Pure Sound, Rotel, Pioneer, Denon, Dali, Vienna, Vita and Tom Evans.

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

www.audio-t.co.uk

KEEP BRITAIN TIDY!

Another debut at the Munich High End back in May was Neat's Motive SE2 loudspeaker. Based on the Motive 2, designer Bob Surgeoner has added an EMIT planar/ribbon type tweeter, which replaces the inverted titanium dome used in the standard Motive 2. This new version of the EMIT device is compliantly mounted to provide isolation from cabinet vibration effects. Internally, the cabinet includes additional bracing and damping, and is divided into discrete volumes. The tweeter is housed in one, to isolate it from the back pressure developed by the main 134mm coated paper cone mid/bass driver. This now operates in a smaller internal volume than previously. The downward firing reflex port has been retuned accordingly. This brings tighter bass, the company says, plus higher sound pressure levels. The hard-wired crossover has been optimised using upgraded components, including differing value polypropylene film capacitors wired in parallel and oxygen-free copper air-cored inductors with reinforced glass-fibre formers. Vital statistics are 765x160x200mm.

Also announced was Neat's new Ultimatum XL6. A floorstanding design, it sports "an ultra-rigid birch-plywood enclosure, innovative baffle-decoupling technology and isobaric bass loading", plus twin EMIT ribbon-type supertweeters. The enclosure comprises five discrete internal volumes. The Bass and Mid/Bass volumes are large to suit the low frequency tuning while the HF cabinet is small to increase rigidity and to stop back pressure from the mid/bass driver, adversely affecting the rear chamber of the tweeter. The two EMIT supertweeters are similarly isolated. The drive unit baffles are constructed from a 45mm thick sandwich of Birch Plywood, polyethylene damping membrane and MDF. The two hidden isobarically loaded Neat 168mm bass drivers are flux optimised for the purpose and use dustcaps for rigidity. The main mid/bass driver is a special version of the Neat 168mm driver with an aluminium phase plug, loaded by a low Q reflex tuning. A sealed sub-volume contains the main HF drive unit, a modified SEAS XL Sonomex domed unit with additional damping. A separate sub-volume contains two supertweeter drive units. There is a sealed volume in between the two units, and the main enclosure is reflex-tuned. The crossover is a minimalist five element type employing precise-tolerance, low-loss air-cored inductors and high tolerance polypropylene film and foil capacitors. Vital statistics are 1000x220x370mm and 44kg apiece. Call +44 (0)1833 631021 or click on www.neat.co.uk.



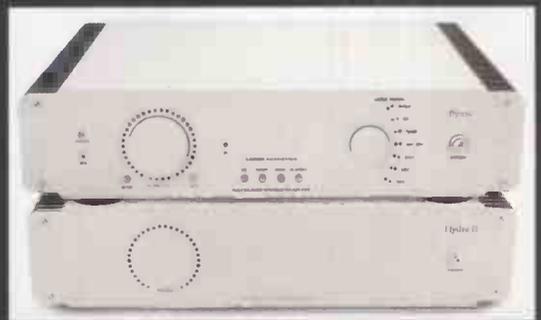
Neat Motive SE2



Neat Ultimatum XL6

TALE OF THE UNEXPECTED

Leema's new Hydra II amplifier is said to offer "exceptional dynamic range, resolution of exquisitely fine detail and remarkable clarity", thanks to "two massive toroidal power transformers: one for each channel, and a third transformer for the control circuitry". There's also a "highly refined" output stage that features a very low output impedance and high current capability. Leema's Intelligent Protocol System is fitted, making it a great mate for Leema's Reference Series Pyxis preamplifier. In addition, rear panel switches on the Hydra II select use as either a stereo amplifier, a left or right channel mono amplifier, or even as a two channel amplifier designated as left or right. In this mode the system is acting as a bi-amped set-up in which the amplifiers can be placed behind the speakers, allowing short speaker cable runs. Output power into 8Ω is a claimed 160W RMS per channel and the price is £3,495. Call +44 (0)1938 811900 or click on www.leema-acoustics.com.



ON AIR

Micromega's new AirStream WM-10 wireless DAC is the ideal solution for streaming digital music to a high-quality audio system, the company says. It combines a high-quality digital-to-analogue converter and a built-in Wi-Fi receiver, to deliver the best possible sound quality. The unit is designed for placement within a hi-fi or AV separates system, just like any other source component. Audio data may be streamed wirelessly from a PC or Mac (or an alternative Wi-Fi enabled device like an Apple iPad) to the AirStream WM-10, whereby the signal is converted to analogue and fed to the user's amplifier via the unit's audiophile-quality output stage and high-grade cable connectors. For more information, call +44 (0) 20 8971 3909 or click on www.absolutesounds.com.

HEAD CANDY

Musical Fidelity's new M1 HPA is a pure Class A headphone amp/preamp that's said to have "vanishingly low distortion, an ultra low output impedance line in/loop out, a USB input and superlative sound". The £499 M1 HPA's technical performance is said to be "outstanding", with distortion claimed at less than 0.0005% across the band, and frequency response is "ruler flat". The HPA's low output impedance means that it can drive any headphone with linearity and low distortion, says Musical Fidelity. The HPA has two inputs; line and USB. It has two headphone sockets on the front panel and a loop out facility, plus a variable line output so that it can be used as a high quality simple preamp. For more details, call +44(0)20 8900 2866 or click on www.musicalfidelity.com.



Purple Haze

Adam Smith gets into the groove of the new Funk Firm Saffire II turntable...



The job of designing a turntable is often thought to be a simple one. After all, all it has to do is rotate at a steady 33 or 45rpm without any wow, flutter or rumble, and not pick up any vibration from external sources that could affect the sound. Seems pretty easy, really! Trouble is that, once you come up with a smooth and free-running bearing, you then need to consider your suspension and isolation options. Linns, Michells and the like go for the suspended method, where the springs isolate the deck to stop any unwanted vibrations

making their way inside in the first place. This is a fair method but one that requires complex setup, careful positioning and the occasional tweak to keep everything on top form. A simpler method is the pure mass one, where a hefty plinth sinks any vibrations before they can do any damage but this one tends to be expensive and can be unwieldy. The third method is one that seems to be less popular, probably because it needs to be implemented very carefully to ensure it works, but is the idea of naturally absorbing any vibrations through the use of combinations of materials that are inherently

dissipative. This is where the Funk Firm Saffire II comes in, as its chief design ethos is to ensure that the energy coming down the arm from the cartridge is dissipated so that it cannot reflect back to the stylus, and so the deck has a three-layer armboard incorporating constrained layer damping to assist in this.

The next big thorn in the side of the turntable designer is how to drive the platter, but it's obvious then, really, isn't it? A nice simple belt is the way to go. Take your motor, control it carefully and spin a decently weighty platter with a rubber belt and all your problems



"the Saffire II approaches music-making with a languid sense of ease and pleasure – it seems to be enjoying itself as it plays..."

are solved. No idler-style rumble worries or direct drive cogging or torque concerns, just a simple system that offers its own level of noise isolation thanks to the belt itself. The problem is, there are downsides but, unfortunately, they are not as immediately obvious as with a direct or idler drive unit. Take the belt itself – few people realise just what sort of quality control has to go into the manufacture of a turntable belt as, if it does not stretch evenly or if the surface is not smooth, then you will very soon hear the results. Don't believe me? Try swapping your deck's belt with

one of those red rubber bands that postmen are always dropping and you'll see what I mean!

Another big issue with a drive belt is that it can put undue stress on the bearing and motor, and usually in one direction only. This is a problem that Arthur Khoubesserian of the Funk Firm identified several years ago, coming up with his Vector drive system as a result. This puts the belt around the motor, platter and two further freewheeling pulleys, all in a triangular configuration to equalise the pressure on the platter's bearing. One motor means still

only one potential source of noise and vibration, but the three pulleys mean an equalised drive around the platter, removing unwanted forces that can find their way into the stylus and obscure the music.

The new Saffire II is the latest turntable to incorporate this drive system and, as the name suggests, it has recently undergone a significant upgrade. The platter is now an acrylic item with a delightfully curved edge that matches the plinth perfectly, and incorporates an Achromat recessed into it. The lovely acrylic base has remained, along with the mad LED illumination,

which Arthur describes, as "fully revised; gone is the tedious industry blue. In now is a highly individual amethyst (okay, pink, if you must!)". The motor drive electronics of the 'Solus' power supply are housed in a very stylish nickel-plated cylindrical pod with the biggest and funkier on/off switch I have seen for a long time,

Kradle, and a matching dust cover will be available later in the year.

SOUND QUALITY

With my Cardas-wired Alphason HR100S and Ortofon Kontrapunkt b loaded onto the deck, I began listening and realised that the Funk family traits were more than obvious,

the fun of being able to follow the action so easily as it zipped around the room. Also highly praiseworthy was the way in which the Saffire II affected a disdainful sense of ease when asked to really capture the innate nature of the instruments playing. Brasses rasped satisfyingly, the double basses offered up a delightfully woody 'thrum' and the movement of bow across violin string struck the perfect balance. I could tell that the instrument was capable of a nasty screech if provoked, but the Funk Firm deck made sure that this never became a worry.

The bass end of things from a turntable can often be something of a disappointment to those of us used to a Garrard 301 and I was pleased to note that the Saffire II had no difficulties in this area. Initially it seemed a little bass light but as I listened, I realised that this was the 'Achromat effect' taking hold! Basically, whenever I have listened to a deck with one of these fitted or, in the case of the Funk Firm, a deck with a platter designed around one, the initial experience does seem to be one that slightly lacks impact. However, as one listens further, it becomes obvious that this device does such a good job of cleaning up the low end that it is actually just removing a few artefacts - bass overhang in other words - that simply shouldn't be there.

Spinning Toots Hibbert's 'Spiritual Healing' on twelve inch single, followed by 'Sarah' from the 'Fur and Gold' LP by Bat for Lashes, was enough to convince me that this deck has no difficulties where bass

"where the deck really scores is across the midband, pulling the action into the room and spreading it beautifully wide..."

plus another small switch on the rear to turn off the LEDs if you find them all a bit much!

Two speeds can be selected by the main switch and trimpots underneath permit the speed to be fine-tuned. On this topic, setup of the Saffire II revealed something that may well explain the issues found by Noel when measuring the deck before it arrived with me. Quite simply, the motor securing bolt had worked loose in transit which, although not enough to make the motor obviously sloppy, did allow it to swivel on its axis once the belt was fitted and the turntable started. Straightening the motor pod, tightening the bolt, repositioning the belt and resetting the speed using the trimpots had the Saffire II spinning silently and smoothly at exactly the right speed without any hint of fluctuation during its stay in my listening room. Finally a new isolation platform, the Kinetic

which is definitely no bad thing at all. The Saffire II seem to dig just that little bit further into recordings than most other decks at the price, and this means that it is constantly surprising the listener with little extra snippets of information that either were not noticeable before, or just passed unregistered in the background. Where the deck really scores is across the midband and lower treble, pulling the action into the room and spreading it beautifully wide across the plane of the loudspeakers and beyond their lateral limits.

Letting the Boston Symphony Orchestra get into their stride with 'Jupiter' from Holst's 'Planets' Suite, the Saffire II seemed to be filling the area in front of me with performers. Each instrument appeared to have been drawn in space by some mystical 3D pencil and, shutting my eyes, I found myself grinning with



is concerned, even if it does lack that very last hint of sheer idler drive power. With both tracks it dug nicely deep and yet there was no sense of overhang or wallow; each note started and stopped just as it should and rhythms were as taut as a bowstring. Following up with 'Telegraph Road' from Dire Straits showed that the Saffire II also has no trouble when it comes to dynamic impact. This is a well recorded track that, on the surface, shows almost any turntable off well, but can actually sound a little bland and lacking in impact if the drive system of the unit in question is not up to scratch. I was very pleased to hear that, through the Saffire II, everything proceeded with vim and vigour.

Switching to Kari Bremnes and the track 'A Lover in Berlin' from her 'Norwegian Mood' LP, the Saffire II made the very best of the lady's delightful vocals. This track is a huskily intoned, almost semi-whispered performance that picks up in volume and intensity towards the end of each verse and the deck really made a lovely job of it. The backing double bass line underpinned everything expertly, without ever intruding, and the percussion stepped out of the shadows to make itself felt by just the right amount. I did feel that perhaps the Saffire II wasn't quite offering the central image solidity that my usual Garrard 301 shows but, switching to The Eagles 'Long Road out of Eden' revealed that the presentations of the two turntables were just slightly different. The Garrard does indeed lock everything slightly more firmly into focus, but the Saffire II seemed to let everything 'breathe' a little better, imbuing the music with a better sense of organic flow and effortlessness. By comparison, the 301 seemed a little rigid and over-controlled.

CONCLUSION

The Funk Firm Saffire II is a very capable record spinner indeed and mates a well designed motor and power supply to a very cleverly engineered platter drive system. I personally think the styling is fabulous and the big kid in me loves the illuminations! It has no complex requirements for setup and once this operation is performed, it is extremely user-friendly in action. All in all, it makes some of its competitors look over-fussy and clumsy.

ARMED FORCES

The review Saffire II deck came supplied with a £1,175 Funk Firm FXR II arm and this is an intriguing concept that has stemmed from the work on the A.N.T.I. arm that Arthur carried out a couple of years back. It's a heavily modified Rega arm, its armtube replaced with a new aluminium variant of the Funk F.X affair that first made an appearance in carbon fibre on the A.N.T.I. and then went on to become a worthy Linn Ittok upgrade. The concept is interesting and has the potential to work well. You can also spend another £499 on the Wraith arm cable. Listening tests shows much promise, the arm offering great poise, natural flow and insight to the music, with the F.X armtube removing the standard Rega's rather grey tonality completely. Watch this space for a full review soon...

Sonically, Arthur Khoubessarian's hard work on its design can be heard in the way in which the Saffire II approaches music-making with a languid sense of ease and pleasure – it actually seems to be enjoying itself as it plays and this, in turn, makes it an immensely enjoyable listening companion.



REFERENCE SYSTEM

Alphason HR-100S arm
Ortofon Kontrapunkt b cartridge
Anatek MC1 Phonostage
Naim Supernait amplifier
Ferrograph S1 loudspeakers

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

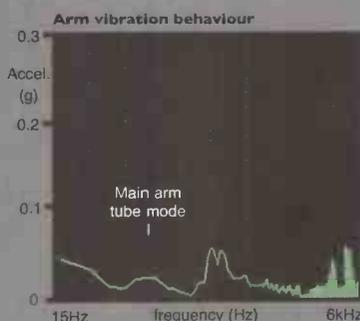
The Saffire came supplied with an arm that uses a Rega RB300 arm pillar assembly, with a new arm tube grafted on. Comparison with the old tapered aluminium arm is interesting, even though the assemblies are a lot different. The lowest, primary arm tube vibrational mode is lower on the Saffire than the RB300, at around 150Hz our analysis shows, but it is well damped and of very low amplitude. This leaves the rest of the lower midband clear of unwanted vibrational behaviour, which bodes well for bass dynamics, image stability and general tidiness. There is a small double hump just above 1kHz, and this is attributable to the Rega arm pillar assembly it appears because a similar effect can be seen in the RB300 and 301 arms. Above 2kHz the Saffire arm tube and headshell are unusually free of high frequency ringing, much of this being attributable to the inverted headshell saddle cartridge fixing; headshells, integral or not, always measure worse than clamps like this. So the Saffire measures surprisingly well for what is, visually, an unprepossessing design.

The turntable as supplied was less stable than earlier designs, as speed would hold fine then vary. Speed adjustment was coarse, hence we were in error by 0.6% even with a meter to show speed. Time was spent ensuring the belt was running untwisted and at the centre of the two

idler pulleys, not an easy process. Then speed measured 3170Hz, compared to a target 3150Hz, or 0.6% fast, which is too great an error. Unweighted wow and flutter hovered around 0.13% and most was low speed drift. Weighted wow and flutter was very low at 0.05%, so higher speed variations were well suppressed.

Our deck measured a little off the pace then, but we subsequently found this was down to a motor bolt that had worked loose in transit; see text. NK

ARM VIBRATION



WOW & FLUTTER



VERDICT

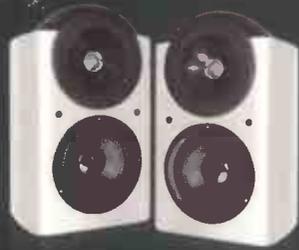
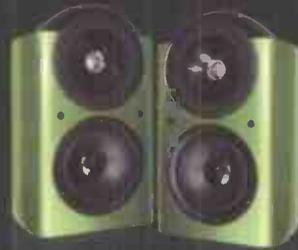
An organic sense of purity and ease to its presentation is the Saffire's trademark; it really shows vinyl at its best.

FUNK FIRM
SAFFIRE II £2,995
The Funk Firm
☎ +44(0)1273 585042
www.thefunkfirm.co.uk

- FOR**
- expressive midrange
 - capacious soundstaging
 - effortless treble
 - ease of setup
 - styling/illuminations!

- AGAINST**
- stiff competition at the price

COLOURS OF REFERENCE



The multi-award winning KEF Reference Series now available in 12 custom 'special order' finishes as well as any colour you like*.

www.kef.com

*Any colour you like option by special sampling and quotation process, please contact your KEF authorised Reference Series stockist for full details.
GP Acoustics (UK) Ltd. Eccleston Road, Tovil, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6QP
Telephone: +44 1622 672 261 Fax: +44 1622 750 653



KEF
INNOVATORS IN SOUND

Stage Fright!

Yes, it's that time again! The relentless procession of new, improved phono stages continues, and it's enough to get prospective purchasers in a spin. So we tasked vinyl virtuoso Tony Bolton to investigate six of the latest and greatest mid price designs...

Several months ago I investigated six phono stages ranging in price from £300 to £2,000. I particularly enjoyed both the ANT Audio Kora 3T and the Icon Audio PS 3, and was interested to discover that both companies had produced new models to their range. ANT have produced an updated version of the 3T, now with a proper outboard power supply rather than a wall wart, and Icon Audio have made a 'Signature' version of their PS 1.2 unit. So for this test, both of these products were lined up with others in a similar price range for this, the latest in our ongoing exploration of the world of vinyl reproduction. Most of the contenders were new products to me, such as the Tom Evans Microgroove Plus, the Luxman E200 and the Astin Trew AT8000, whilst the Roksan DX2 is the latest version of a unit that I enjoyed when I reviewed it several years ago.

Each was given fifty hours running in before serious listening commenced and was fed with signals from the Ortofon Kontrapunkt a mounted on the Clearaudio Master Solution and my Sondek, using both a MusicMaker III moving Iron cartridge and an Audio Technica AT F7 moving coil cartridge that is reviewed elsewhere in this magazine. The Sondek fed a Bent Audio Tap-X passive preamp into a pair of Quad 303s, bi-amping Kelly KT3 loudspeakers, whilst the Ortofon's signal went through a Leema Acoustics Tucana II amplifier, powering my Chario Ursa Major loudspeakers.

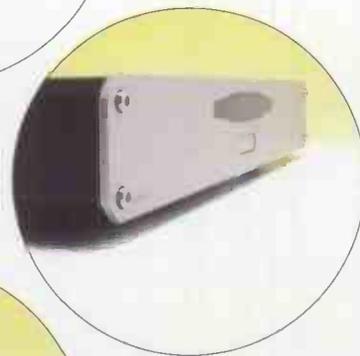
After running in, each phono stage had an evening of rambling through my record collection,

before going back to back with records including Jascha Heifetz playing the Bruch Violin Concerto, Banco De Gaia's LP 'Big Men Cry', 'Noel Coward At Las Vegas' and Janis Joplin's 'Cheap Thrills'.

The diversity of design approaches proved interesting, with both thermionic and solid state circuits in use, some having a simple plug in and play approach, whilst others came fitted with mono/stereo switches and alternative cartridge loading facilities. The sheer diversity of approaches in carrying out the task of amplifying the signal from a pick-up cartridge displayed the great deal of effort that has obviously gone into designing these products and bodes well for the medium in the twenty first century; vinyl is alive and kicking! So without further ado, and in no particular order, I started my listening...

THE CONTENDERS:

ASTIN TREW AT8000	£880	p18
TOM EVANS MICROGROOVE PLUS	£950	p19
LUXMAN E200	£1,095	p21
ANT AUDIO KORA 3T LTD	£995	p22
ROKSAN CASPIAN DX2	£869	p23
ICON AUDIO PS1.2 SIGNATURE	£999	p25





ASTIN TREW AT8000 £880

Astin Trew have rapidly built themselves a reputation for making reasonably priced, well designed products. The casework, measuring 305x160x115mm, is a long and thin aluminium box, with just a blue LED at the front and input and output phono sockets on the back, alongside the mains IEC input and an earthing post. There are a pair of silver plated XLR sockets alongside the unbalanced inputs. Adjustments for gain and cartridge loading are accessed through three holes in the bottom of the box, which are then plugged with rubber bungs to keep dust out. Internally the power comes via a large toroidal transformer feeding a dual mono circuit design which is mounted on a PCB that has gold plated copper tracks. High quality components populate the board and the RIAA and amplification circuits are shielded by a Faraday cage for RFI rejection.

SOUND QUALITY

I started using the AT8000 on my upstairs Linn Sondeksourced system. Initial impressions were of a very smooth and rather sophisticated sound that occupied all of the space between the speakers, but which stayed resolutely within the cabinet boundaries. I started off with the Joplin LP, and found that her vocals, which can be a little grating through some systems had the characteristic gravelly tones, but with a little of the rawness smoothed out. She sounded less edgy and passionate than I am used to hearing her, as if she were on best behaviour. It was an enjoyable listen but not as gut wrenching in its intensity as I would like.

Changing musical direction to the Bruch Violin Concerto and the Astin Trew seemed more comfortable. This record

is a late fifties mono pressing on HMV that looks to be in near mint condition, but has unfortunately been played with a damaged stylus at sometime in its life and gets a little crunchy when the music crescendoes in a couple of places. Considering there was no mono switch I felt that the AT8000 coped well with this recording. Surface noise was reasonably well muted and the groove damage was displayed without too much fuss. The mono image itself was wide, nearly filling the space between the speakers, whilst not having quite as much depth as some of the other contenders here. Tonality was good, although again I felt that there was a tendency to focus on the smoothness of presentation. The rasp of a bow drawn across a violin string was not quite as cutting as I have heard it, but neither

was it softened into the syrupy gloop that some overly smooth equipment produces. I would describe it as 'honest reticence'!

Staying in the land of mono, the next musical stop was Noel Coward 'Live at the Desert Inn, Las Vegas' in 1955. There are two pressings generally available, one on Philips, and the other being this one on Columbia Masterworks. I prefer the latter, finding the former rather muted and lacking in impact. Here the more open nature of the Columbia pressing balanced the restrained sound of the Astin Trew to make for an enjoyable listen, although I still felt that I would have preferred more openness in the sound. Background detail, such as the audience response was there on display but still took a little listening into.

Reverting to stereo, and modern, full bandwidth recordings with the Banco De Gaia LP suited the Astin Trew better, with far more detail coming to the fore. Changing systems to use moving coil cartridges seemed to confirm the well mannered but somewhat restrained nature of this unit. I found it well behaved but a little too well mannered for my tastes, in either of my two systems.



MEASURED PERFORMANCE

At maximum gain (High) and 100 Ohm loading and fed from an MC like source, the AT8000 phono stage has a warp filter that introduces -18dB attenuation to warps at 5Hz, our analysis shows, and it inserts a +2dB hump in response at 60Hz, enough to provide subjectively obvious bass lift. Otherwise, equalisation is very accurate across the audio band and lacks the common treble lift in the 75uS characteristic. As a result I would expect the AT8000 to sound smooth, but its low end delivery will likely have obvious added strength.

Gain varied from x360 (51dB) at Low, to x600 (55dB) at Medium to x1060 (60dB) at High. The lowest value is high for MM cartridges and input overload a little low at 20mV as a result, but this is still just acceptable. The High gain value is just enough for most MCs, although super low output types benefit from more gain.

Noise was low with MM, but not with MC due to the shared input stage, measuring 0.3uV. That makes the AT8000 +11dB hissier than an MC stage with 0.08uV input noise (typical), meaning the unit isn't suitable for top quality, low output types.

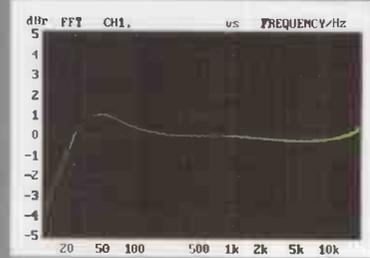
The AT8000 measures well for MM

but is best suited to MCs with strong output. NK

MC	
Frequency response	17Hz-25kHz
Separation	68dB
Noise (input noise, A wtd)	0.3µV
Distortion	0.002%
Gain	x1060, x600 / 60, 55dB
Overload	7.12mV in / 7.5V out

MM	
Frequency response	17Hz-25kHz
Separation	68dB
Noise (input noise, A wtd)	0.35µV
Distortion	0.002%
Gain	x360 / 51dB
Overload	20mV in / 7.5V out

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



VERDICT

Smooth and svelte sounding solid-state phono stage, but possibly too soft for some.

ASTIN TREW AT8000 £880

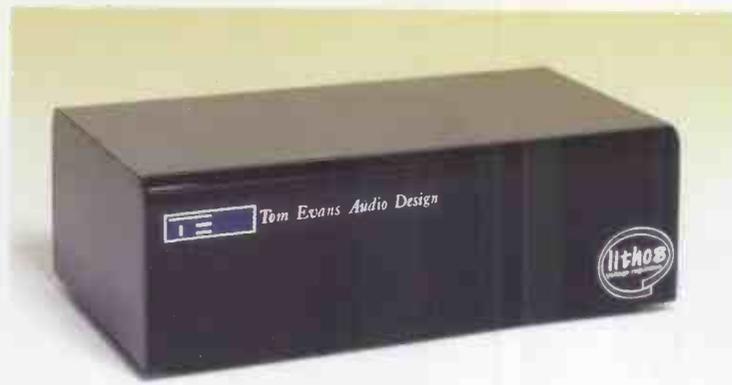
Astin Trew
 ☎ +44(0)1491 629629
 www.astintrew.co.uk

FOR

- smooth and sophisticated
- switchable loading
- wide soundstage

AGAINST

- too laid back



TOM EVANS MICROGROOVE+ £950

Tom Evans Audio design was founded in January 1990, its first product being the well respected ISO phono stage designed for Michell Engineering. In 1998 the Groove phono stage made its debut and now forms part of a range of four products ranging in price from £480 to £4,500. The Microgroove plus is the second up in the series and boasts a DC coupled circuit with two gain stages and a passive RIAA equalisation circuit in between them. The second gain stage contains an active servo which eliminates DC offset. The Plus differs from the standard Microgroove in having a discrete Class A regulated power supply. This is the Lithos 7 unit, as found in the company's amplifiers. (*Lithos* being the Greek for 'rock'). This is claimed by the manufacturer to produce a -132dB noise floor when fed with a 1kHz signal. All of this is housed in a 60x200x70mm black plastic box with just a name ornamenting the front, and well spaced gold plated phono sockets at the back for input and output. Power comes from an outboard PSU, its presence being indicated by a blue glow from the rear mounted LED on the phono stage. Various cartridge loadings can be set by rear panel mounted dip switches.

SOUND QUALITY

The inky blackness of the casework certainly matched the dark, almost impenetrable silence that greeted me as the stylus hit the run in groove of the Banco De Gaia record. The opening notes start with a drum beat that gradually builds to include instruments and chanting voices. All this seemed to rise out of nowhere, building to a pulsating rhythm that was very engaging. The spread of sound was quite wide but had more depth than I had found

with the Astin Trew, and seemed to come forward into the room more, creating a more three dimensional space in front of me.

Staying in stereo with Joplin's 'Cheap Thrills' the Microgroove was in its element, delivering the grainy sound of her voice, along with the cutting edge of the accompanying guitars in a well defined, but not overly analytical way. I found that I was peering into the mix without much effort and finding superb definition, without over emphasis. If I had a complaint it would be a slight lack of weight in the lower bass regions, but based on my experience of listening to this device as it was running in, I would say that this process was not yet complete, and I would want to put in another hundred hours listening. Throughout the running in process the sound had

very gradually been expanding in all directions, and although the higher frequencies were quite well explored after fifty plus hours of use, I felt that the bass still had a way to go before reaching its full capabilities.

Moving to the Bruch was interesting. Despite the quite open nature of the sound, and the lack of a mono/stereo switch, surface noise was very well controlled, making a fleeting and unremarkable appearance. Even the groove damage to this fifty-something year old record was noted, and then dismissed as irrelevant which impressed me given the potential this has for rendering the record unlistenable to.

Ortofon's Kontrapunkt a cartridge has always been well mannered in this respect so I decided to try provoking a reaction by using the rather more forward sounding Audio Technica AT-F7. The Coward recording was played with aplomb, micro-details of his snatched breaths during a blisteringly fast delivery of 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen' were noticeable, but any wear acquired during a half century of use was minimised. I was left with the sensation of having listened to a particularly well thought out design whose only drawback seemed to be the inordinate amount of time required to get it bedded in.



MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Microgroove X has slightly less attenuation in its 75uS curve than is correct, meaning it rolls down treble less than it should and will sound brighter than other stages. In effect, it has +1dB treble lift in its frequency response above 1kHz, quite enough to make for an obviously bright balance. This will raise levels of apparent detail in the sound, but as MC cartridges have strong midband output due to low generator impedance, it may result in glassiness with some, even many.

Changes in sound quality from altering input loading are likely to be subtle, since most cartridges are designed for 100 Ohms and do not need higher load values, as offered by the Microgroove X. Lower values, down to 10 Ohms, have more affect, better damping the generator, so reducing top end zing.

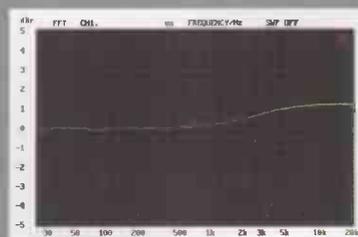
Gain was high at x3300, or 70dB, enough to ensure matching between low output cartridges and insensitive

amplifiers. Overload values were satisfactory too.

The Microgroove X will have a bright sound, but with plenty of gain it will work in most systems. NK

Disc MC	
Frequency response	5Hz-71kHz
Separation	70dB
Noise (input noise, A wtd)	0.1uV
Distortion	0.015%
Gain	x3300 / 70dB
Overload	2.7mV/9V out

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



VERDICT

Detailed and open moving coil phono stage, with superb insight.

TOM EVANS
MICROGROOVE PLUS £950
 Tom Evans Audio Design
 ☎ +44(0)1443 833570
 www.audiodesign.co.uk

FOR

- open, explicit sound
- musical and engaging listen
- unflustered by surface noise

AGAINST

- slightly light bass
- needs running in

IsoTek®

The power to deliver 'clean' power



Aquarius replaced the companies GII Mini Sub and is the latest product in IsoTek's unique range of multi-award winning power conditioners that are designed and hand made in England using the finest materials and built to the highest of standards.

Formed in July 2001 IsoTek's vision has been to create high-quality mains power conditioners that stretch beyond current conventions. Through careful market analysis and extensive research, IsoTek has been able to launch products that dramatically improve the performance of all components used within an audio or visual environment, a fact that has been proved by countless international reviews and over 25 audio awards.

"IsoTek is the leader in mains conditioning products"

HI-FI NEWS

"IsoTek is the UK's biggest name in mains filtration"

HI-FI CHOICE

"Not all mains conditioners are created equal... IsoTek has built itself a reputation as a purveyor of mains conditioners that actually improve (as opposed to just alter) the sound"

HI-FI WORLD

For more information and to obtain your free IsoTek brochure please call:

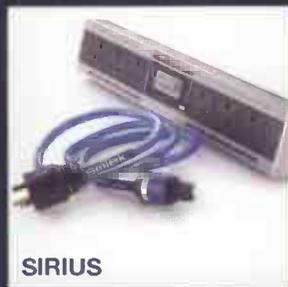
01276 501 392

info@soundfoundations.co.uk

www.soundfoundations.co.uk www.isoteksystems.com

"The whole auditioning process took about 30 seconds. Play a piece of music on GII Mini Sub. Play it again on Aquarius and wonder why you were so attached to the GII Mini Sub." "Very highly recommended"

HI-FI PLUS. ISSUE 68,



SIRIUS



ACCESSORIES



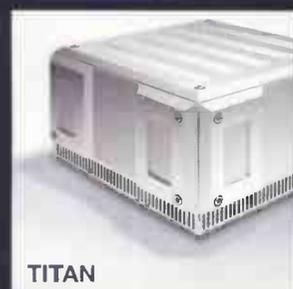
ORION



VISION



SIGMAS



TITAN



LUXMAN E200 £1,095

The Luxman name has always been synonymous with Japanese high end products. In the mid-eighties the company was bought by Alpine, who focused on the home market for the next fifteen years, with affordable product. In 1999 the original owners bought the company back, returning to premium quality products. Export performance was weak however. Recently the Chinese IAG Group, owners of Quad, Castle, Wharfedale, etc, bought Lux. Now in their eighty fifth year, the brand has re-established itself selling products that are usually priced in the thousands of pounds, rather than the £1,095 for the phono stage reviewed here.

Despite its (by Luxman standards) modest price the E200 is well equipped, sporting two moving coil sensitivities as well as a moving magnet input, a mono switch, two inputs for use with multi-arm decks such as my Clearaudio, and, most unusually, a cartridge demagnetiser (labelled 'Articulator') and a low frequency filter for eliminating the resulting cone flap if playing less than flat records.

Housed in an aluminium case measuring 84x364x257mm, the front panel is furnished by a button for power, four small buttons for the previously mentioned filter, mode and input selection as well as the 'Articulator'. The choice of cartridge type is decided by turning a large rotary knob on the right hand side. The back panel houses the grounding post, and well spaced, gold plated phono sockets for the two inputs and the output. Mains input, via an IEC socket, resides on the right.

SOUND QUALITY

This time I started listening with the Bruch, and having briefly tried the unit in stereo, switched to mono and was rewarded with most of the surface noise disappearing. The

damaged areas of the groove wall were negotiated with little audible comment, although I was still aware of their existence. I found the tonal balance to be quite good although I came to the conclusion that elderly classical records were not really this unit's forte. It played the music in a pleasant manner but seemed to lack some of the insight that I found with the Microgroove Plus. Moving to the Noel Coward pieces seemed to perk things up a bit. Coward, who was a stickler for clear diction, would probably have approved of the definition given to his vocals, but I still felt that it wasn't totally at home with this sort of music.

Putting on the Joplin was a

revelation. All of a sudden the E200 seemed to spring to life, the wail of Janis's opening vocal in 'Summertime' leaping out of the speakers, closely followed by the twangs of the electric guitars and the build up of the bass and rolling beats of the snare. I didn't quite see the E200 head-banging to the more up tempo numbers, but it wasn't far off it. I felt that this was the most satisfying rendition of this record yet in this review.

This liking for beats and big sounds suited 'Big Men Cry' as well. The almost tribal drum drive to the tracks 'Drippy' and 'Drunk As A Monk' propelled the tune along in a way that put a smile on my face. In fact it was so enjoyable that I digressed from the comparison playlist and ended up digging out an old 45 of the Rolling Stones 'Paint It Black' followed by a host of other 60s R&B classics, before returning to the job in hand!



MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Equalisation was accurate when set to High, but exhibited bass roll off at Low, likely due to interacting with our generator. As the generator has low impedance like a real cartridge, the Low setting of the Lux offers very low loading to a cartridge: we measured just 1.6 Ohms DCR. This compares to 4 Ohms at High, and 18 Ohms in the Icon 1.2. So there are few turns on the transformer and using Low will slug the cartridge generator, damping it heavily. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it is untested territory and I wonder whether Lux appreciate this. A common rule of thumb here is to make the load at least 10 times greater than the generator source impedance, meaning 10 Ohms.

Few turns also means ultra low (thermal) noise from the wire and at Low the Lux was predictably ultra quiet, possessing just 0.016uV input noise (e.i.n., A weighted). This makes it no less than -14dB quieter than most MC stages, so it truly exploits the intrinsic 'silence' of MC cartridges. Low also gives very high gain of x2366, or 67dB, just enough for the lowest output cartridges, providing the amplifier is reasonably sensitive (200mV or so).

The High setting offers very low gain of x620, or 56dB, barely enough for most MC cartridges, but again input noise was very low at just 0.03uV. This setting will be useful with high sensitivity (gain) amplifiers and may subjectively offer stronger bass.

The MM setting provides little gain of x68, or 37dB, only useful in

conjunction with a sensitive amplifier. Input noise was again low (as MM goes) at 0.2uV.

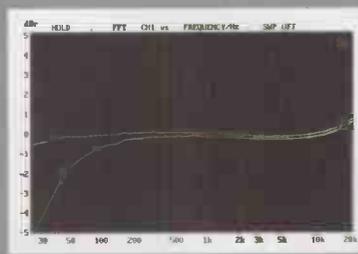
The switchable warp filter measured -3dB at 35Hz and attenuates low bass heavily, so will be effective in preventing cone flap.

The E-200's MC input transformers are a little extreme in their specs, but should give good results. This is an interesting phono stage but can only be validated by audition. NK

Disc MC	
Frequency response	12Hz-22kHz
Separation	35/58dB
Noise (input noise, A wtd)	0.016uV
Distortion	0.001%
Gain	x620 / x2366 / 56, 67dB
Overload	14 / 3.9mV in / 9V out

Disc MM	
Frequency response	2Hz-40kHz
Separation	65dB
Noise (input noise, A wtd)	0.2uV
Distortion	0.001%
Gain	x68 / 37dB
Overload	132mV in / 9V out

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



VIBRANT ●●●●●
Fluid, propulsive sounding performer with an esoteric name.

LUXMAN E200 £1,095
Select Audio
☎ +44(0)1900 813064
www.selectaudio.co.uk

FOR

- flexibility
- near valve-like midband
- excellent rhythmically

AGAINST

- prefers MC to MM!
- preset MC impedance may not suit some cartridges



ANT AUDIO KORA 3T LTD £995

Regular readers will be becoming familiar with the unassuming little black boxes that bear the ANT Audio logo, as am I after reviewing the previous version of this limited edition model in my previous group test back in the July 2009 edition of this magazine. I enjoyed that version and recall that I was looking forward to this updated version with a proper PSU, instead of the previous version's wall wart. A couple of other 'under-the-bonnet' changes have gone into this, such as a tidying up of the circuitboard. The simplicity of the original design remains with just three transistors per channel, but the Black Gate capacitors have now been replaced with Elna Stargate items.

Such a simple circuit requires little room so the 70x35x135mm casework remains the same, as does the rather bright, green LED on the front panel. At the back are two pairs of phono sockets and the usual grounding post, alongside a small knob. This fine tunes the DC operating point of the circuit by slightly changing the DC bias and allowing adjustment of the circuit in use. The factory default position has the pointer at 12 o'clock, with adjustment between the 7.30 to 5.30 positions. When used with the Kontrapunkt a I found that the factory setting gave the best results. When tried with the Audio Technica I tweaked the setting to about the 2 o'clock position, finding this seemed to produce a feeling of a little more air and space in the sound.

SOUND QUALITY

Whatever setting is used, one thing about the Kora shone through; that being the near

thermionic smoothness and depth to the sound, along with one of the biggest soundstages exhibited by any product in this review. I felt that the Microgroove actually had the edge on depth, but couldn't match the Kora for width of the image. The assembled drums and voices of 'Drunk As A Monk' seemed to occupy a fairly large chunk of my living room carpet, rising from a deep dark pit of rhythm. Here I felt that this version improved on the last with better stopping and starting of the bass notes, tightening the timing of the beat as a result.

The Noel Coward LP was rendered very well, despite the lack of a mono switch to subdue the occasional unwanted pops and

crackles. Background detail was there, although not as well lit as either the Microgroove or the Luxman, but still allowing the listener insight into the events taking place in Nevada in June 1955. Staying in the fifties, found the LSO, with Sir Malcolm Sargent conducting, in their element accompanying Heifetz through the Bruch. The age of the recording seemed irrelevant as the Kora seemed to shed the years from the vinyl. I wouldn't say that it sounded modern, but it certainly had more life and energy in it when compared to listening through either the Astin Trew or the Luxman.

The only point where this unit failed to impress me was when playing 'Cheap Thrills'. I felt that the desire for smoothness had slightly overtaken the need for tonal accuracy and was left with the feeling that Janis had sucked a throat sweet during the interval. Her voice had a little less grit than I expected, and the searing edge of the guitars was slightly moderated, although seeming to have a bit more body in the lower frequencies. A good performance, but I didn't feel that rock music was really the Kora's genre of choice.



MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Much like the MM 3T we measured November 06, the output swing was a little lower than normal at 6.4V. To get adequate input overload this means gain must be kept in check and the Kora 3T MC comes in at a low x1292, or 62dB. This is enough to convert 0.2mV to 258mV so providing any accompanying amplifier has reasonably high input sensitivity, matching will be satisfactory, even though volume will have to be turned right up. The Kora will not suit either low output MCs, or systems with 400mV input sensitivity, or both. It is best used with high-ish output Ortofon cartridges and suchlike.

Noise (equivalent input noise, IEC A weighted) was low, measuring 0.07uV, so the Kora is quiet, almost as good as the best.

Equalisation was very accurate our analysis shows, with a small lift at high frequencies plus a deliberate roll off below 20Hz to give -10dB attenuation at 5Hz, where warps are at their worst.

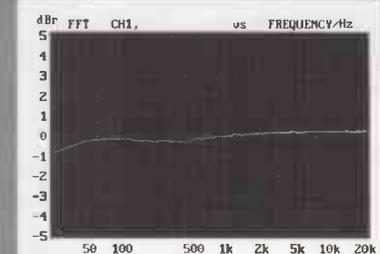
As before, distortion was a little higher than that from ICs, but at 0.08% mainly second harmonic for 1mV input

it is not a problem.

Like its MM brother the Kora 3T MC is a clever, minimalist design quite different from the usual integrated circuit solution found in most solid-state phono stages. It measures very well and, as before, is likely to sound good as a result of its elegant simplicity. NK

Disc MC	
Frequency response	22Hz-77kHz
Separation	70dB
Noise (input noise, A wtd)	0.07uV
Distortion	0.08%
Gain	x1292 / 62dB
Overload	5mV/6.4V out

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



VERDICT ●●●●●
Consummately smooth and subtle, this remains a standout performer at the price.

ANT AUDIO KORA 3T LTD
£995
Sound Hi-Fi
☎ +44(0)1803 833366
www.soundhifi.com

FOR
- beautifully smooth sound
- lucid musicality
- tonally well balanced
- expansive soundstage

AGAINST
- too laid back for some?



ROKSAN CASPIAN DX2 £869

Roksan make two versions of their phono stage, one being the DXPSE and the other the slightly cheaper standard DX2 version seen here. Both share the same full width bodywork of the Caspian range measuring 432 x 330 x 80mm and weighing up to 12kg, depending upon which power supply options are taken. The user manual lists a plethora of options that can be installed in this cabinet, depending whether the purchaser wants just a phono stage or wishes to include a power supply for the Xerxes turntable in the same unit. In this case just the phono stage in standard form was specified so it came fitted with the DC powered Artaxerxes X reference phono amplifier module, powered by a 30VA low noise toroidal transformer via the DSU power supply module. User adjustable settings include gain settings for moving magnet and four different moving coil options. Capacitance and resistance can also be adjusted via the dip switches mounted underneath the unit. Given the size and weight of this product, it would have been more convenient to have these mounted in a more accessible place, but unlike a reviewer, most owners will probably set things up as required and then forget about them, so it shouldn't be a problem.

SOUND QUALITY

After the unobtrusive sound of the A.N.T., the Roksan seemed to produce a sound as large and solid as the unit itself. I started off by playing the Joplin record and was greeted by a wall of sound that came halfway across the room to meet me. There was plenty of colour and life to the performance, grounded in a reassuringly sturdy and musical bassline. In some ways it was not too dissimilar to the way that the Luxman played the same pieces. There was plenty

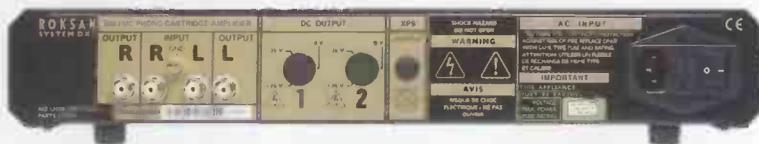
of power in the struck chords, an energy to the beat and a feeling of sheer scale which none of the other units so far managed to match.

Banco De Gaia was treated in the same way, with lots of energy flowing from the record grooves into the room, holding my attention, but in an unforced manner. Some big sounding equipment can get a bit tiring after a while - you end up feeling that you want a tea break from the intensity. Not so with this unit. The energy levels stayed just within acceptable boundaries, pumping the music along without leaving the listener feeling exhausted.

The two older recordings used here came across quite well,

although I felt that the reproduction of classical music lost a little of the filigree detail and subtleties that I had enjoyed when listening through either the A.N.T. or the Microgroove. Both seemed to use a slightly finer paint brush when describing the sonic picture than the Roksan, although I would still categorise the latter's performance as good. Whereas the Luxman tolerated classical, but seemed a little uninterested in it, the Caspian was interested, but just lacked a little of the finesse of the Kora and Microgroove.

The old bugbear of surface noise was quite well controlled, and the groove damage was handled quite well, although I was still aware of its presence. The Noel Coward disc seemed to gain a little body, without losing much in the way of background information. His voice had a slightly richer timbre than I had heard previously, which seemed to flesh out the bones a little more, seemingly defying the age of the record. Overall a very good performance but if you already have a full bodied sound then this unit might add just a little too much into the equation, leaving the listener a little overwhelmed.



MEASURED PERFORMANCE

This is another phono preamp that uses the same input stage for both MC and MM cartridges, like the Astin trew AT8000. However, Roksan have used a much quieter input device, the result being a low 0.06V input noise (A wtd) with both MC and MM cartridges. With MMs this will be swamped by thermal noise from the cartridge's generator coils, but with MCs it will not, there are so few turns. The result will be very low hiss with MC cartridges. As gain is quite high at x2000 maximum, the Roksan will work well with most systems, if not between a very low output MC cartridge and an amplifier with low input sensitivity, where volume would have to be turned right up to almost maximum. Low noise means the Roksan will otherwise be a good match to low output MCs though.

Equalisation was accurate, as our analysis shows. There is some slight roll off in low frequencies putting the -1dB lower response limit at 20Hz. Warps at 5Hz were suppressed by a modest but useful -6dB.

Gain for MM cartridges was x100 (40dB), but x517 was also available, either for MMs or MCs.

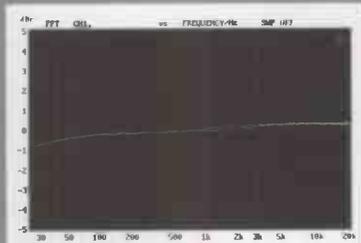
The Roksan stage worked well all

round. It has no foibles or weaknesses and will suit both high quality MC cartridges, as well as MMs. NK

MC	
Frequency response	20Hz-95kHz
Separation	85dB
Noise (input noise, A wtd)	0.06µV
Distortion	0.0006%
Gain	x2000, x517 / 66dB, 54dB
Overload	6.5mV, 25mV in / 13V out

MM	
Frequency response	20Hz-95kHz
Separation	85dB
Noise (input noise, A wtd)	0.06µV
Distortion	0.0006%
Gain	x100 / 40dB
Overload	130mV in / 13V out

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



RECOMMENDED £

Big hearted and bold sounding phono stage with a variety of power options.

ROKSAN CASPIAN DX2 £869

Henley Designs

☎ +44(0)1235 511166

www.henleydesigns.co.uk

FOR

- powerful, punchy sound.
- strong rhythmically
- fine imaging

AGAINST

- may overwhelm in full bodied systems

audioemotion

www.audioemotion.co.uk

e info@audioemotion.co.uk
t 01333 425 999

Music is our Passion

- Loudspeakers
- Amplification
- Digital
- Analogue
- Cables
- System Infrastructure
- Accessories
- Pre-Owned

➤ OUR CURRENT PRE-OWNED STOCK LIST:

AMPLIFICATION

Quad 909 Power amp. One owner from new in silver, boxed, mint, only a few months old. (£1000) only £649

Quad 99 Power amp. Finished in black, mint, boxed, one owner. (£600) £349

Leema Tucana integrated amp. One owner from new, boxed in excellent condition. (£3000) £1295

Ayre AX-7E integrated amp. Boxed in excellent condition, one owner from new, stunning reviews. (£2450) £1295

Cyrus 8 XP Integrated. Only a few weeks old, Quartz finish, mint, boxed. Stunning performance. Cost new £1300 bargain at £895

Cyrus Smart Power Plus (£349 mint) and **Cyrus Hark 7 Tier stand (£265)** also available.

Icon Audio Stereo 40 mk III. Only a few months old (Upgrade valve model) with a spare set of valves. Remote control, mint, boxed. (£1295) only £795

Quad II Eighty Valve mono blocks. One owner from new, in unmarked condition, stunning performance and great reviews. Original box/packing. 5-year warranty for the new owner. (£6000) £3795

Chapter Audio Preface and Couplet pre/power combination. Boxed with original flight cases in excellent condition. These cost new over £9k, so at less than half price they represent amazing value for money. £4295

Myryad Mi Multi-Source System. Ex-demo unit, with the optional 'Blue Play' module, only 6 months old, immaculate condition, Original Box, Packing, Manual and Remote Control. Outstanding performance from this 'all in one' solution. (£1295) only £895

Art Audio Diavolo (inc Volume Control). Simply stunning in polished chrome (chassis and control knobs). Original Box and Packing, 18 months old and in immaculate condition. Includes Shuguang Black Treasure Valves (along with spare pair of Golden Dragon 274b's) (£7240) be very quick at £3295

Yamaha AS2000 Integrated amp. Current specification model, excellent condition with original box, packing, manual remote etc. Light coloured wooden side cheeks, one owner from new. (£1249) £625 with a 5-year warranty. (Matching CDS200 SACD player also available)

Art Audio VPI Pre Amp (with MM Phono Stage). Finished in the highly desirable chrome, in spectacular condition with original boxes and packing. (New £2600) only £1295

Quad II Forty mono blocks. One owner from new with original box/packing. Excellent condition and a 5-year warranty for the new owner. (£3800) £1895

Bef Canto EVO2 Gen II amp. Great condition (one small mark on front lhs), boxed, manual, RCA and XLR inputs, Cost new £2600 a bargain at £795

MBL 9008A reference mono blocks (x2). Finished in black/gold. Original flight cases, one owner from new in excellent condition and a 5 year warranty. Cost new £41000. Amazing value for money at £19,995

Deltech DPA50S power amp. Complete with Deltech 500S Slink speaker cable. Boxed, manual etc. (New was £990) Now only £495

Audio Analogue Puccini Settanta rev2.0 integrated. Ex-demo, finished in black and in as new condition. (£1449) £795

Eastern Electric MiniMax Prepower combination. One owner, supplied new by ourselves In unmarked condition, 2 months old, 5-year warranty. Stunning performance, amazing reviews. (£2195) £1295

Audio Analogue Verdi Cento integrated (current spec). Ex-demo, finished in black and in as new condition. (£1599) £895

Counterpoint SA-12 Hybrid Stereo Power Amp. This dual channel tube/mosfet power amplifier is one of these amplifiers that you forget how good it is until you hear it again! (£1250) Only £495

DIGITAL

Townshend TA565 CDSACD Player. Stunning one owner from new player. Finished in black, great reviews and a rare opportunity. (£3000) only £1595

Marantz Ki Pearl SACD. Mint, as new, boxed only a few months old. Great reviews on this special edition. (£2500) £1795

Vincent CD-S6MK CD player. New model and only a few months old. Balanced and Single Ended Outputs. Ex-demo (finished in silver), immaculate condition with full warranty. (£1600) £1149

Yamaha CD-S2000 SACD player. One owner from new, mint, boxed, manual, light wood side cheeks. (£1249) £549 with a 5-year warranty. (Matching amp also available).

LOUDSPEAKERS

Hyperion HPS 938 UK Speakers. Finished in high gloss black. Stunning condition, one owner from new, original boxes and packing. Cost new £4750 and a bargain at only £2595

Dynaudio Focus 110 Speakers. Finished in cherry. One owner from new in as new condition. Original boxes/packing. These cost new £1200, so with a 5-year warranty £649 is a bargain.

Monitor Audio Platinum Series PL100 Loudspeakers. Finished in Piano Black, months old, and in immaculate condition. Original boxes, packing and manual. (£2500) Only £1649

Celestion 'A Series' A Compact Loudspeakers. Finished in Cherry, and in immaculate condition, with original packing and boxes. (£695) only £295

Amphion Argon 3L Loudspeakers. Finished in Scandinavian Birch with original boxes, packing and accessory pack. Only 8 months old. Hi-Fi Choice "Best Buy" and Group test Winner (Issue 322). (£2600) only £1695

Audio Physic Scorpio II, Latest model, finished in cherry, ex-demo, unmarked condition. (£3773) £2750

Quad ESL 2905 Speakers. One owner, mint and boxed with very low hours. Amazing reviews (£7000) only £4990 with a 5 year warranty

ATC SCM-11 Loudspeakers. Finished in cherry, and one owner from new. These acclaimed loudspeakers have for 4 years running won the What Hi-Fi Group Test for loudspeakers under £1000. (£956) Only £599

Audio Physic Tempo VI Loudspeaker. Finished in the maple. These are a one owner pair, 6 months old, completely unmarked with original packing, boxes and literature. (£2612) bargain at £1995

Ruark Prelude Speakers. Finished In yew, these are virtually in as new condition. One local owner, fantastic sound and a bargain at only £299! No boxes, so collection only.

Audio Physic Sitara Loudspeakers. Finished in rosenut. These are unmarked with original packing, boxes and literature. Recently 'Highly Commended' by Hi-Fi News, these loudspeakers feature the new Hyper Holographic Drivers. (£2000) £1395

Audio Physic Scorpio. Boxed in cherry, one owner from new, good (some very minor marks) condition. (£3800) £2195

ANALOGUE

ROTEL RQ-970BX Phono Stage. Finished in black, with all original box and packing. (£195) Only £95

Tom Evans Micro Groove Phono Stage. Stunning performance, excellent condition. Cost new £469, our price only £269 with a 5 year warranty

Eastern Electric Minimax Phono Stage. This probably holds a record (no pun intended) for the most outstanding reviews of any product currently available. Boxed in unmarked condition. One owner from new, only months old. Simply sensational (£1495) £920

Quad QC 24P Phono Stage. This is a mint one owner example and is as new. Great reviews. (£1200) £795

Whest PS20 complete with MSU20. One owner from new, stunning 2-box phono stage in black, original box and packing. Incredible reviews. (£1299) £595

MAINS CONDITIONING

Vertex Silver Plus Jaya. One owner from new (raised badge current spec model) in excellent condition. The reviews speak for themselves. Grab yourself a bargain. (£560) £365

ISOL8 Substation Vogue. One owner from new (Originally supplied by us). In mint condition, stunning performance flagship mains conditioning. (£2595) £1495

Vertex Silver Plus Jaya. One owner from new (flat badge original spec model) in excellent condition. The reviews speak for themselves. Grab yourself a bargain. (£560) £349

Vertex AQ Taga. 6-way distribution mains filter. Great reviews. One owner from new, unmarked. (£868) £595

CABLES

Kimber Select KS-3033 2.4m reference speaker cable. One owner from new in excellent condition. Boxed etc. Cost new a staggering £2737, so a bargain at less than half price £995

Vertex AQ Silver Solfon XLR interconnects. One owner from new in excellent condition. New price £1382, a bargain at £695

Vertex AQ Mini Moncayo Speaker Links. Set of four Links with the 80 x 65 x 30mm acoustic absorption module. Simply sensational. (£540) £395

Chord Signature speaker cable. One owner from new, boxed, as new. 2.5m, amazing reviews. (£750) £425

Transparent MusicLink Super RCA. 1m, cost new £429 a snip at only £195

ACCESSORIES

Finite Element Segment X Rack, (£400) finished in black and silver. A few minor marks (very, very minor). Comes complete with the five piece dedicated spike set (£200). One owner, assembled once (only a few months old) £275



ICON AUDIO PS1.2 SIGNATURE £999

This is an upgraded version of the well received PS 1.2 phono stage, baby brother to the PS 3 which I looked at a year ago. The standard PS 1.2 retails at £750 for the MM/MC version (MM only costing £549). This Signature version features Jensen Caps, costing an additional £200 and gold pin valves (another £50). The casework is the standard Icon Audio unit measuring 88x310x134mm, with the slightly heavier power supply (4kg for the latter, 3kg for the former) measuring 82x165x80mm. On board are two ECC 83 valves and an ECC81. All components are hardwired with silver Teflon cable in the usual Icon manner and mounted on a polished stainless steel chassis. The RIAA equalisation is passive. The front features a volume control, allowing the unit to drive power amps directly, alongside a mono/stereo switch and a selector for MM or MC input. At the back is the umbilical lead the connects to the power supply, the usual two pairs of phono sockets for the signal in and out, the earthing post and a switch to lift the earth if an earth loop causes any hum problems.

SOUND QUALITY

As the only valve powered unit in this collection I was expecting certain things from the PS 1.2. I'd hoped for a full bodied and tuneful bass, good imaging and a seemingly endless liquid musicality; and I was not disappointed. Starting with the Coward LP I found myself appreciating the subtext of the piano accompaniment to 'The Bar On The Piccolo Marina'. This tale of a recently widowed, rather stuffy English matron who discovers life is for living seemed to have a little more depth to the instrumentation

than with any other unit looked at here. My focus altered a bit from the lyrics, to include more of what the orchestra were doing. Added to this was a perception that the audience's response was marginally more obvious and I found myself slightly more immersed in the performance than I had been before.

The Bruch was treated equally well from a musical point of view, although the damage to this record was more noticeable through the PS 1.2 Signature than it had been through either the Luxman or the A.N.T. Anyone who thinks valves gloss over issues should have a listen to this device! There were a couple of occasions where I almost wished for a slightly more rose-tinted view

of the condition of this record. It wasn't unlistenable but there was certainly more honesty regarding the condition of the groove walls than I would necessarily have liked. Swapping to the Audio Technica from the Kontrapunkt a seemed to emphasise this, so I did not regard this as a good combination. Moving over to the MusicMaker III restored a little more decorum to proceedings and listening continued apace...

Fed with modern records the Icon revelled in displaying colours and textures to sounds that some of the other phono stages had only hinted at. The depth and solidity of the bass was matched by an energetic pace to the timing of 'Drippy' that made it romp along in an uninhibited and pleasurable way. Taking advantage of the onboard volume control, I removed the Tap-X from the system and fed the Icon directly into the Quads. The result was sheer magic, moving me several layers closer to the music, and adding another layer of detail to an already complex picture. In comparison with this version I felt that he standard PS1.2 was a little euphonic in certain places. This one was a little more honest, but at times could be a little too much so. Match with a top quality front end and vinyl thought, and it is dynamite.



MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Frequency response via MC was flat, with no treble lift, but 0.5dB plateau lift at low frequencies, giving what will be perceived as a fuller, or warmer tonal balance. However, with MM there is a steep treble roll down above 10kHz, so this will be even warmer sounding. However, as modern, good quality MCs measure flat, but modern MMs often have excessive mid and treble, this actually makes sense. It does not suit older 'warm' sounding MMs though. The volume control impedance matching problem has been cured, so now frequency response changes little with level.

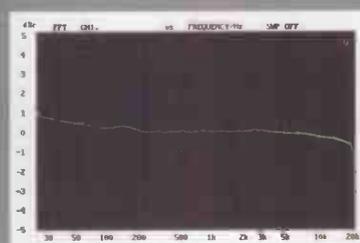
The input transformer has more windings than that of the Lux so has more thermal noise, input noise measuring a low 0.15uV. However, this was low frequency noise (a trace of hum) rather than hiss, the analyser showed, even though A weighting was used. The Lux, not using valves, avoids this. The Icon offers a higher input load though, 18 Ohms DCR, and huge gain of x4000 (72dB), enough for any situation. The volume control allows this to be trimmed down, and also allows the PS1.2 to feed a power amp direct. Overload levels were very high, in spite of the gain, a strength of valves.

The Icon Audio PS1.2 offers great all round performance, masses of gain for any situation and the convenience of a volume control. NK

Disc MC	
Frequency response	4Hz-20kHz
Separation	80dB
Noise (input noise, A wtd)	0.15uV
Distortion	0.001%
Gain	x4000/ 72dB
Overload	7mV in / 27V out

Disc MM	
Frequency response	4Hz-10kHz
Separation	80dB
Noise (input noise, A wtd)	0.6uV
Distortion	0.001%
Gain	x421 / 52dB
Overload	66mV in / 27V out

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



Exceptionally enjoyable valve sound with great flexibility.

ICON AUDIO PS1.2 SIGNATURE £999
Icon Audio
+44(0)116 244 0593
www.iconaudio.co.uk

FOR
- lavish all triode sound
- onboard volume control
- mono switch

AGAINST
- nothing at the price

"Hipness is not a state of mind, its a fact of life"
Cannonball Adderley



Fidelity

with SOUL

Chord Indigo Plus Digital

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

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

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

THE
CHORD[™]
COMPANY



www.chord.co.uk

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

Group tests are always interesting to do, because they spotlight the respective differences between a range of products which you don't normally get to sample. Although I'd heard several of these in isolation beforehand, or their precursors, there's nothing like putting them back to back to see how the land lies...

The first thing to say is that there is *not* a bad one here; as their high globe ratings show, each one reviewed has very real merits. Yet that doesn't mean they're the same; they come in different flavours and are purposed for different things. We also need to remember that each listener has different priorities, systems and musical tastes, so what's good for the goose won't be good for the gander. All of which makes ranking them a tricky process, but to my ears there was still a clear order of merit...

Firstly, the Astin Trew AT8000, which I found a touch too soft and inoffensive to my ears in both my systems. It's true to say that both of these err to the richer side of things, and I found the AT8000 didn't really get going with either. It's a consummate smoothie, with a very tidy, delicate presentation, and needs 'bringing out of itself' to really fly. It's most interesting to note that editor DP found it a superb performer in his system, which having heard on numerous occasions I find rather too vivid and seat-of-the-pants. As such, the new Astin Trew is obviously to be prescribed for unrelentingly explicit systems, but owners of smoother sounding sources, amplifiers and loudspeakers should look to the following, instead...

The Tom Evans Microgroove Plus was almost an inverse Astin Trew, with a very searching midband, a slight (but quite audible) treble rise and an extremely propulsive nature. You could put your least liked music on your turntable, cue up the stylus and suddenly the Microgroove would make you realise why people had taken the trouble to record it. It goes into the groove (if you pardon the pun), like a crack Special Forces team, tasked to extract the hostages (i.e. the music)! It's a truly compelling listen already, but don't match it to bass-light systems. In my own slightly warm and fulsome systems it worked very well but still didn't sound quite as sturdy down below as it should. I'm sure more running in will help in this respect, but it's never going to be a Roksan in this respect. Which brings me to the Caspian DX2.

Blood and guts, heart and soul

- the Roksan wears its big heart well on an unusually large lapel, and boy don't you know it! If the Astin Trew is all soft subtlety, and the Tom Evans super fast, fleet footed musicality, the Caspian is thunder in the mountains. Whatever music you play for it, it's as if the Roksan has injected it with body-building steroids and taken it for a work out. It's a compelling, captivating listen - and one that will not only perk up some more somnolent systems but make music an unremitting roller coaster ride. Many will adore its presentation; I certainly loved it. But it's important to point out that it shouldn't go into hard, punchy systems as it might just overwhelm. Conversely, I can imagine it working brilliantly in a Roksan system, which sports a very finely judged mix of solid-state 'get up and go' with just a touch more finesse that you'd normally expect from transistors. It's an interesting one this, and well worth considering.

Tied in terms of rankings is the Luxman E200, which is a truly esoteric device. Whilst the three previous products have all been obviously built and finished to a price, shall we say, displaying decent if prosaic production values (although the Roksan is better than the AT or Tom Evans, it must be said), living with the Luxman is like winning the lottery. All lavish brushed aluminium and lovingly finished casework in the best Japanese tradition. It sounded a bit like it looked, in a way. It's swish and svelte, but it does have a very lucid midband which is just plain enjoyable. You don't get the bright light of the Tom Evans, or the

"the Icon Audio PS1.2 Signature has a lavish, expansive character that you can't fail to like..."

blustery delivery of the Roksan, but instead a very easy and engaging midband with a pretty neutral tonality. Not so big in the bass though, which brings us to this...

In second place comes the ANT Audio Kora 3T Ltd. In its latest guise (there have been minor changes) it remains a peach, with an extremely smooth and sumptuous (for a solid-state stage) sound. Indeed it's true to say that it's 'valve-like'; if you've never heard a tube phono stage then this would be most people's idea

of what it would sound like. Warm, full, expansive, musically lyrical and beautifully silky in the treble, there's nothing to criticise here and so much to celebrate, except to say that again, as per the Astin Trew, it won't help already over smooth systems or sources. In my main system it worked very well, because my Ortofon cartridge is very much a neutral performer, tonally speaking. But I can see it becoming too smooth with the wrong combination of ancillaries; conversely it's superb in a bright, dramatic system such as editor DP's.

For me, it was the Icon Audio PS1.2 Signature that did more than any other phono stage to make my music magic. In its special 'tweaked' guise it is a truly special performer, possessed of a big heart like the Roksan, the smoothness of the ANT Audio and Astin Trew, and the lucid musicality of the Luxman and Tom Evans. But it's not a simple amalgam of the aforementioned; it's very much its own phono stage, with a lavish, expansive character that you can't fail

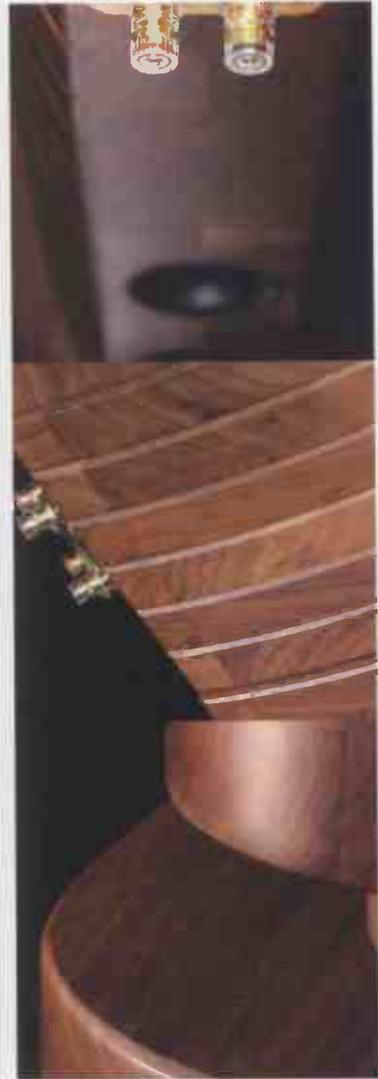
to like. It's also packed with facilities too; those who wish to run purist systems would find the onboard volume control a boon, since it allows you to dispense with the preamplifier and have just the phono stage and interconnects between the cartridge and the power amplification - and having tried this the results are particularly seductive, which is why it gains the extra 'pound sign'. All in all a fantastic way to play vinyl, and a worthy winner of this month's group test.



Icon Audio PS 1.2 Signature - puts a tiger in your system's tank!

ACOUSTIC PREFERENCE

to see is to want - to hear is to believe



Acoustic Preference
Almarro
Cain & Cain
Dr Feickert
Emillé

Marten
ModWright
Raysonic
Tri

specialists

These products are available exclusively through the specialist dealers below.



Bedfordshire
www.acousticarts.co.uk
01582 485 316



Hertfordshire
www.angelsoundaudio.co.uk
01923 352 479



Yorkshire
www.mayflowersounds.co.uk
01302 711 528



Northern Ireland
www.kronosav.com
02887 753 606



**TELLURIUM Q
BLUE £16/M; BLACK £40/M;
GREEN £148/M & ULTRA
BLACK £249/M**

Distortion has to be one of the most insidious aspects of sound interference currently infecting our hi-fi. It suffocates sound frequencies, choking them to such an extent that much of the available detail is masked from your ears. Distortion arrives in many flavours and is often only noticed once it is absent but, when that occurs, the difference can often be nothing short of sublime.

Tellurium Q, which only sprang into existence last year, decided to tackle distortion as a primary cause of sound inhibition, from the off, they tell me. In particular, they've concerned themselves with phase distortion which has the unfortunate effect of 'smearing' sound frequencies. The company launched its first low phase distortion speaker cable in January, as favourably reviewed by editor DP. Now expanded to a suite of four, stretching over an array of price points, this pasta pot of flat speaker cables was reviewed with my current reference, a pair of Chord Epic Twins, which retail for around £40/M.

Starting with the lowest priced Blue, a sort of *linguine*-sized, narrow, flat cable, the most noticeable aspect during playback, over a variety of musical genres and formats, was a welcome absence of muddle. When you have a low cost cable like this, you really have to get the very best out of it for the price point. Tellurium Q has done exactly that. Via the Epic Twins, vocals were slightly forward of neutral but, with the Blue cables

a more neutral, focused, precise aura settled on the music. In fact the Blue cables exhibited a tremendous sense of control; something that I've never heard from any other cable at this price point. Okay, they might suffer in the bass extension department while mids are not exactly adventurous but, for the price, I found them charming and more relaxing than the Epic Twins whose lively upper frequencies grated a touch.

Moving onto the Black cables - same size, different colour - and these cables showed a more incisive nature than the Blue and one that is aurally similar to the Epic Twin in its tone and personality. On some systems, the Black might even be a touch clinical, hence a careful demo is recommended. There is excellent focus though, which means that the overall output is comfortably superior to the already excellent Chord Epic Twin cables. Strings contain texture, bass has a real heft and vocals sound more relaxed and secure in their presentation.

I then moved onto the first of two, *tagliatelle*-sized, broad, flat cables. The Green cables could be described as 'sweet'. That doesn't mean that I see them as cloying or that they throw any sort of veil over detail, far from it. These warm, very friendly cables broaden the soundstage and provide, for the first time, an onion skin array of musical detail. That is, bass exhibited a multi-tonal depth and vocals displayed a complexity unheard of by both the Blue and Black cables. What the Green cables do, however, is roll over the frequency extremes which makes them ideal for any slightly bright system.

The flagship broad, flat Ultra Blacks are intriguing. I was initially expecting a clinical version of the Green cables but was rather surprised by the Ultra Black's maturity as purveyors of detail. Yes, the Ultra Blacks are not as sweet or as warm as the Green examples and I wouldn't describe the Ultra Blacks as perfectly neutral either but what they do give you is neutrality with a slice of texture. So, vocals have an extra expressive quality, bass bounces along with cheerful abandon and wind instruments seem, well, full of air! Clinical systems may have a slight problem with the Ultra Blacks so a considered demo should be in order. Nevertheless, what the Ultra Blacks will do for your record collection is to both extract the fine detail from within and reveal its personality. The Ultra Blacks will lay bare your music, getting under the skin of each recording.

The entire cable range is defined by its superior sense of focus at the price. This means that each frequency does not have to do battle with every other, allowing the music to display its finer qualities. More shades of colour are made available within each track and more subtly is present too while detail is no longer veiled, so you get to hear 'hidden' information that has been lurking there all along.

This is a fine array of speaker cables from Tellurium Q that will fit just about any system out there. All warrant five globe ratings at their respective price points, so are well worth investigating. **PR**

[Contact: +44(0)1458 251997,
www.telluriumq.com]

SOUNDBITES



Q Trip

Noel Keywood goes on a journey of discovery with Q Acoustics' affordable new 2050 floorstanding loudspeaker...

What's wrong with this loudspeaker? The price. It is an implausible £350 or thereabouts. But for this you get a full size floorstander, finished in a nice deep, piano black lacquer. Surely, there's some mistake? Perhaps it has crappy little paper drive units, made in some unlovely corner of the Far East?

Well, on the contrary, it is designed in Germany by a respected industry figure who knows the UK market and understands the UK sound; it has excellent drive units and is produced in some anonymous corner of the Far East (well, yes, that had to come into it!) for Armour Home Electronics, a UK company who also handle Goldring and Myryad. What's wrong is that it wrecks standard expectations; I know what it costs to produce a loudspeaker as I've been there and suffered that with World Audio Design, including entering into price negotiations in some anonymous corner of the Far East when the temperature was 38 degrees Celsius and even the mosquitoes had packed in flying for the day. Prices did not go this low. So the 2050s are a mystery to me!

The cabinet follows the usual pattern of being around 1m high (3ft) or, to be precise in this case, 6mm more than one metre. With a width of 270mm and depth of 321mm the cabinet is not visually overpowering. Its even tone of finish – all black! – doesn't draw attention either.

I don't know what material is used in the two 165mm bass/midrange cones, but tapping it, it sounded like a well damped plastic, producing that rather dead 'thunk' of such plastics, reminding me of our Spendor S8es. I was speaking to the designer of the 2050s, Karl Heinz Fink, at the Munich High End Show this year and was impressed at the level at which he works. Drive unit design is one of his specialities with dedicated computer design for the magnetics and Finite Element Analysis used to assess cone behaviour. Designs are validated by measurement using a Polytec laser interferometer (see www.polytec.com). Driver production is then passed out to a factory in Germany, China or wherever; there are plenty of them. This is how the 2050

was created, for Armour in the UK. It's quite a background and shows what lies behind this budget floorstander.

The disposition of bass/midrange units above and below a centrally placed treble unit is known as a D'Apolitto arrangement, after designer Joseph D'Apolitto you won't be surprised to learn! The main benefit is vertical symmetry that, with good basic phase matching, leads to a consistent sound over a wide vertical arc in front of the speaker, and in reflections off ceiling and floor, which 'see' a similar image. It works well. In effect there are two drive units handling bass and midrange and this spreads the image vertically, very obvious when you listen alongside a coaxial KEF Uni-Q for example, which offers much more focus. If the drivers are too far apart you hear two loudspeakers when sitting close. However, the 2050 is well laid out in this respect and I only noticed how consistent it sounded when I walked around the room.

As usual, bass loading is imposed by a rear mounted port. And this is all that is visible on the rear panel, for Q Acoustics have placed the 2050 on a low, steel plinth that allows the bi-wire connecting terminals to be placed on the cabinet's bottom face, making them invisible. Cables pass in through an aperture, which means they stay on the floor and cannot be seen snaking up the rear of the cabinet. Conventional terminals able to accept 4mm banana plugs, spades or bare wires are used. Small drive unit cloth grilles are supplied too, plus floor spikes.

Visually, the 2050s are a simple, elegant package that attempt nothing radical; they just look smart and well finished. Quite obviously, attention has been paid to detail. The website says remarkably little about them you will find, but one specification does stand out, a sensitivity of 92dB. That's very high, higher than most rivals and it means the 2050 needs little power to go loud. In fact we measured 91dB, but even this is a great figure. A 20 Watt amplifier would be enough to get high volume in an average sized room, so the 2050 will work with low output valve amps., should you be so interested. Ideally though, they will have a 4 Ohm output tap, as at low frequencies it is a 4 Ohm load.

SOUND QUALITY

Kicking off as always with the emphasised walking bass lines found on Angelique Kidjo's 'Fifa' album to get a handle on bass performance, as well as basic balance and soundstaging, showed the 2050s have

slightly inflated bass. Measurement suggested it would play well and this was the case but even with our tight dry control-freak of an amplifier, Musical Fidelity's superb AMS50, the Q2050s sounded undamped and a little fulsome. Bass guitar lines were conspicuous and single drum strikes large, but I could not, hand on heart, call the 2050s 'tight'. They are not sloppy, being too well engineered for that, but for those who want 'taut bass' the new 2050 isn't ideal. For those who want plenty of bass, and who want to hear bass guitar play across its musical scale, the 2050 does a good job.

There was less difference than usual between our AMS50 and our Icon Audio MB845 valve power

effect wasn't great. With their high sensitivity and even low frequency impedance the 2050s suit valve amps and can be used with them confidently. The MB845s were more forceful across the midband as usual but otherwise the AMS50 carried the day in this instance and I continued the review with it, as well as using a Leema Pulse.

But as the track 'Fifa' started, I began to realise where these loudspeakers are very strong. Angelique Kidjo's voice was a little further back than usual, behind the plane of the loudspeakers, surrounded by a gloriously deep, warm acoustic. Decays from studio reverberation could be heard tailing away and backing singers surrounded

“dynamic shifts and sudden changes in tempo came over beautifully clearly and explicitly...”

amplifiers; I expected bass to sound softer with the latter, and whilst it did, differences were small. Bass drum strikes rolled on a bit longer and seemed more strenuous, but the

her in what seemed a cavernous space. Kidjo's voice sounded rich, brimming with expression that came from a tapestry of fine detail accompanying her. Instead of the common forward and slightly strained presentation manufacturers are achieving by exploiting midrange peaking (oh the tricks they try!) the 2050s offer a more relaxing yet impressive alternative and here I could hear what their excellent drive units were doing. The D'Apolitto drive unit arrangement gave an absolutely stable image no matter what my head height, and this helps consistency of sound in the room generally. The sound stage was wide and well supported at extremes, going just a little beyond the loudspeakers.

But my interest and admiration returned continually to the smooth, even and rich tonality of the loudspeaker. The drivers are colour-free and do not lay their own sound on top of instruments and vocalists, as metal cones in particular do. The result is a broad palette of texture within instruments and a lovely dark chocolate feeling to the delivery, brimming with activity. An absence of ringing from the well damped cone material led to a very tight timing in the midband: suddenly strummed guitars vigorously appeared and then were gone. This made dynamic shifts and sudden changes in tempo beautifully clear and explicit; I loved it.

When I carried out a quick initial assessment to ensure both loudspeakers were in good



Introducing

Aura

n o t e
Premier



Aura note Premier all-in-one music centre

Hidden behind its simple yet elegant design, the Aura note Premier's size belies its audiophile credentials. As well as onboard CD and tuner, it features iPod and USB connectivity making it the complete high-end audio music system built for the 21st Century.

"It's a powerful yet discreet performer, one that never forces itself on you but still has a tiger in its tank, so to speak" - David Price, HiFi World, November '09

"The Aura brand returns with a fine sounding all-in-one." - What HiFi? Sound and Vision, May '10

Vivid Audio UK Ltd

Distributor of Audio Excellence

VIVID *audio*

Aura

stello

EXIMUS

For dealers and further information:

Vivid Audio UK Ltd

T: 01403 782221 / E: uk@vividspeakers.com

www.vividaudio.co.uk

working order, before run in and measurement, they sounded warm, and this is caused by the midrange dip our measurements picked up. But in spite of this the 2050s have sweet and quite strong treble and swathes of detail; so whilst the 2050s will on a quick listen sound a little warm and perhaps dull, on longer acquaintance this impression passes.

As you might expect Nigel Kennedy's violin had more body and its timbre was better resolved than usual; I won't say the tweeter was so good there wasn't a little sharpness to higher notes, but whilst his bow moved across strings further down the scale the 2050s were an easy listen, convincing and gently impressive. Listening to backing strings swell behind him in Max Bruch's gorgeous 'Violin Concerto No. 1', I was happy to enjoy the music, as well as the playing of course, in a simple way, without having the performance forced at me in a "look at me, I'm hi-fi" display that's so common (and sadly isn't hi-fi, as anyone who has heard an electrostatic will know). Raising tweeter output to add detail is a simple trick in the book of loudspeaker engineering; with the 2050 I was glad to hear a loudspeaker where the designer has felt no need to use such contrivance, egged on by a sales team who demand something able to produce more powerful bass and zingier treble in the showroom.

The Chicago Symphony orchestra stretched wide across our listening room, playing Rimsky Korsakov's 'Scheherazade'. Positioning of the strings was pin-sharp and the solo violin hung clearly in front of me, horns were fruity and tubas grumbled nicely.



The loudspeaker's dark tonality kept individual instruments nicely separated and clear, but as strings rose the tweeter did add a little edge.

Bass sounded nice and deep and gently rolled along behind Hugh Cornwell singing 'You Always Reap What You Sow' from the Stranglers 'Dreamtime' album. The guitar's gentle, lilting theme rang out beautifully and drums rolled across a generously wide sound stage, left to right. I was aware of some upper treble sharpness again, that gave a little edge to sibilance and put a bit of hiss into instruments. With cymbals the tweeter sounds sweet, yet there is a peak in there that often made itself known. But as Hugh Cornwell spoke the lyrics in 'Ghost Train' I was more taken again by the lovely sense of stage depth, insight

and vocal clarity that the 2050s possess. This gives them a big, wide open sound stage that layered Dave Greenfield's backing vocals nicely behind Hugh Cornwell; lovely stuff!

The big bass returned when I span Scissor Sisters 'Laura', so it is lurking there, waiting to step forward with an album containing strong lows. Sibilance spat at me a little; again the tweeter's sharp upper treble was letting itself be heard.

CONCLUSION

As budget floorstanders go the Q Acoustics 2050s are a very strong design. They are more characterful and distinctive than I remember the 1050s and also quite a lot different to the current norm., offering their own distinct take on a performance. I liked them a lot, finding they were insightful, atmospheric and convincing in the breadth of tonal palette they wielded. Okay, bass was just a tad over large and treble could be a little piercing at times, but their delicious midband and superb sound staging were thoroughly impressive. Couple this with excellent amplifier compatibility and you have a speaker for all situations. So a big thumbs up to Q Acoustics yet again, for bringing us another impressive loudspeaker at a great price. I don't know how they do it.



MEASURED PERFORMANCE

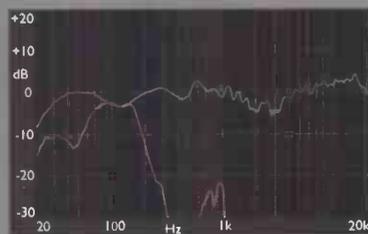
The 2050 has reasonable general balance across its frequency response, treble being slightly up above 7kHz, just enough to give some liveliness without sharpness. Tweeter output is smooth, so quality should be good. Prominent in the response trace is a wide midrange dip at 3kHz, where the bass midrange units do not meet the tweeter well. The D'Apolitto drive unit arrangement made this effect consistent across a wide vertical angle so the effect, which serves to soften and warm the sound of a loudspeaker, will be obvious to listeners wherever they sit, high or low, or however the cabinet is tilted.

Forward bass output from the drive units rolls down progressively below 200Hz, but port output is strong, measuring +6dB up at 80Hz, and the port is broadly tuned around 45Hz, so it has wide effect, even exciting our room strongly at 24Hz a third octave noise analysis (shot shown) revealed. It also damps the drive units effectively, the impedance trace shows, residual side peaks being small. However, the peak at 1.8kHz is both high and reactive, which isn't so good as amplifiers are concerned. If the midrange dip was removed, by drawing more current, this peak would be much smaller. Sensitivity was unusually high at 91dB, helped by the bass unit being 4.3 Ohms

DCR and impedance being low at low frequencies, even though the overall value measured with pink noise was 7 Ohms. So the 2050 will go loud from very little power and will have big bass, quite well damped.

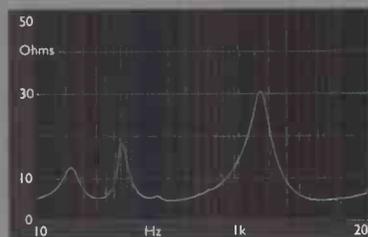
The 2050 will have quite a distinctive sound, due to its response balance, on the warm side and with strong bass. It also goes very loud from little power. NK

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



Green - drive unit. Red - port.

IMPEDANCE



VERDICT

A warm balance with big bass give the 2050 a great sound. The ability to work with just about any amplifier makes for a fine all round package.

Q ACOUSTICS 2050 £350.00

Q Acoustics
 ☎ +44 (0)1279 501111
 www.qacoustics.co.uk

FOR

- smart appearance
- warm sound
- little power needed

AGAINST

- awkward cable entry
- conservative styling

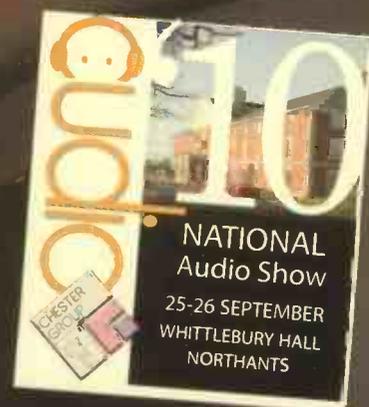
NATIONAL AUDIO SHOW '10

All roads lead to . . .

THE NATIONS CELEBRATION OF SOUND

25 - 26 SEPTEMBER '10

Some of the big things we are doing for you at 'WHITTLEBURY' this year!!



Shuttle buses now running every ½ hour without any breaks from 9.00 – 6.00 each day from Milton Keynes Mainline Station. Subsidised return fare

**Now over 75
Demonstration
Suites over 2
Floors**

Massively increased catering for all tastes, now including two Barbecue's

Plus another 30 mixed stands and Acoustic Suites in the Brooklands Trade Hall

Two EXCLUSIVE CONCERTS this year in the Grand Prix Suite; Friday the 24th and Sat the 25th, see our web site on the 1.7.10 for full details

**STOP PRESS. OVER 65% OF
ROOMS NOW CONFIRMED!**

Great access for our overseas visitors via Birmingham International; just two stops and then pick up our Shuttle Bus

More live (and discreet) music from up and coming artists

NATIONAL AUDIO SHOW '09

"Great show, blown away with the attendance! Our room looked great, with a fantastic aspect."
Laurence Armstrong - Henley Designs.

Plus a whole variety of local B&B's to suit all pockets

Every bedroom and Suite in the Hotel block-booked

"Great show and a really nice venue."
Chris Pike (Visitor)

Two exclusive entrances for visitors to ensure less queuing and less congestion

"It was just so enjoyable walking around and being part of something so positive after such a difficult year. Well done"
Daniel. HiFi News. Advertising Sales

On site parking increased to 1000 cars

Our latest list of exhibitors

Absolute Sounds	Aurousal	Deltac Precision-Audio	Hi-Fi Racks	Nordost	The Missing Link
Alternative Audio	Avid Hi-Fi	Audio	Hi-Fi World	Origin Live	The Right Note
Angel Sound	BADA	Diverse Vinyl	Icon Audio	Palmer Audio	Tom Tom Audio
Artisan Audio	Black Rhodium	E.A.R Yoshino	Ikon Audio-	Russ Andrews	Triangle
Astintrew	Burmester	Epos	Consultants	Sim2	Vertex AQ
Atacama Audio	Claro Precision Audio	Focal JM Lab	Inspire Hi-Fi	Stamford Audio	Zouch Audio
Audio Epilog	Coherent Systems	GT Audio	Jordan Acoustic	Sonos	
Audio Italia	Creek	H.G Rapkin	Kudos Audio	Sound Hi-Fi	
Audio Note	Cymbiosis	Henley Designs	Loricraft Audio	Supra Cables	
Audiofreaks	Cyrus	HiFi Plus	Music First	Symmetry	

.. Whittlebury

Whittlebury Hall

Shuttle Bus
 New Improved Show Shuttle now runs every 1/2 hour from Milton Keynes Station.

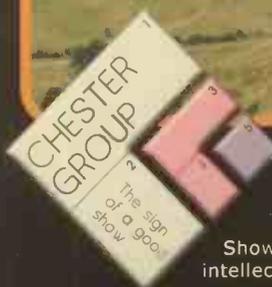
By Rail
 Milton Keynes Station & Northampton Station
 For information on train operators and times phone National Rail Enquiries on 0845 7484950.

By Air
 Birmingham International Airport (56 miles)
 Heathrow Airport (70 miles)
 Luton Airport (48 miles)
 East Midlands Airport (60 miles)

Whittlebury Hall Management, Training Centre, Hotel and Spa, Whittlebury
 Near Towcester, Northamptonshire, NN12 8QH | Tel: +44 (0)1327 857 857

The Whittlebury area abounds with things to do ...
 Golf (on the doorstep), outlet village, various sports activities, beautiful walks, Silverstone Race Circuit, Historic Towcester, National Trust properties so you really could make this a complete and most enjoyable weekend away.

NATIONAL Audio Show
 25-26 SEPTEMBER
 WHITTLEBURY HALL
 NORTHANTS



Show organisers.
 intellectual rights reserved.

T: +44(0)1244 559 033 | +44(0)1244 559 034
 justin@chestergroup.org | steve@chestergroup.org
 www.chestergroup.org



Swede Dreams

Adam Smith takes a listen to the new CD100 CD player from Sweden's XTZ...

It's interesting how ye olde Compact Disc is refusing to be kicked out of the way by digital downloads. Although the silver Frisbee was never the ultimate sonic wonder that was billed upon its arrival, it has undoubtedly made an impression. The lure of convenience, the lack of fuss, the compactness and the apparently high-tech aspect of the format have ensured that pretty much everyone across the listening world has a machine capable of playing these devices, be it on their computer, in their car or sat in their hi-fi rack.

On the face of it, the digital download would seem to be even more convenient – no media to scratch, no hard format to store, lug around and lose, and no need for a clunky transport, but the CD isn't going without a fight. Even more surprising is that, whilst the likes of dCS, Meridian and Naim sell huge CD-spinning behemoths that take the format as far as it can go, one might have expected that, at the bottom end of the market, 2010 would seem a pretty pointless time to introduce a budget CD spinner. Well, the likes of Cambridge Audio would undoubtedly

disagree and now XTZ have raised their voice and added it to the dissent...

A relatively new name to the UK, XTZ hail from Sweden and first made their mark with the Room Analyser package, but are gradually introducing a range of separates, such as the 99.25 loudspeakers that impressed editor DP back in the May issue. The company itself is a conglomeration of "engineers, technicians, manufacturers and producers" who collaborate with several companies across Europe and Asia for their design and manufacturing activities. They have



"with an easy rhythmicity and a weighty and well ordered low end it will find many friends...."

also taken the seemingly increasingly common concept of selling directly to the customer, the main advantage of which is that the prospective purchaser can take advantage of a home trial period to check out the equipment in their own system and surroundings, which is never a bad thing.

The CD100 is XTZ's first CD player and I have to say that the weight of the box and the sturdiness of the machine contained therein are quite at odds with the selling price of £365. Even better is the truly delicious remote control handset sat in the top of the box. I'm sure many of you out there are as sick of reading about me moaning about plastic remotes as I am of writing about them, so suffice to say that the XTZ's is a lovely thing and gets the Smith thumbs-up.

The player itself tips the scales at a healthy 9kg and some of the features found on it are, again, astonishing considering the price. Class A output stage based around

discrete components? Check. Balanced outputs via XLR sockets? Absolutely. Separate transformers for the digital and analogue sections? Certainly. All in all, the player is very well specified and a peek inside reveals a sprinkling of decent quality components plus three separate shielded chambers containing PSU, transport and output sections. Frankly, if you'd told me the price had an additional '1' on the front of it, I wouldn't have batted an eyelid...

So, first impressions good but second impressions when I powered it up were more reserved. Firstly, I have a pathological hatred of any piece of equipment that flashes "Hello" in the display when you

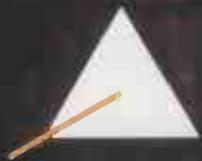
turn it on and the review sample CD100 compounded this by its drawer occasionally refusing to open properly; instead creeping out by an inch or two and then shooting straight back in again. Of course, the ultimate arbiter is, as always, sound quality and, as I was beginning to wonder if the word "Divine", which is bizarrely written on the front panel, was some strange subliminal message, it was time to start spinning some tunes...

SOUND QUALITY

With the XTZ thoroughly warmed up, the first thing that hit me as the music started was the bass, which did literally hit me – one of my first



www.triangle.fr



TRIANGLE
MANUFACTURE ELECTROACOUSTIQUE



GENÈSE
Nothing but the absolute



GENÈSE RANGE

CREATION & DESIGN . TRIANGLE . FRANCE

www.triangle-fr.com

You need tight, clean bass or your system will sound slow, heavy and disjointed – adding subwoofers is an answer.

I don't

really like bass

A lot of people say to us they don't need or even like deep bass, so why have a subwoofer?

"Why do I want a sub when the music I play has little bass in it?"

Or even worse: "All the subwoofers I've heard add more boom than bass! So what's the point!?"

CONTROLLING THE ROOM is the point. But like absolutely everything in audio, it depends how you do it.

Recordings contain frequencies – harmonics of the fundamental note – that extend above and below our normal hearing range. If you don't reproduce the **DEEP HARMONICS** cleanly, music in the audible range loses presence, ambience and pace.

If we demonstrate with subwoofers, even with big speakers, then turn them off the instant reaction is, "It's gone flat! It's lost interest and ambience."

Low frequencies below 30Hz easily excite rooms to boom, creating unreal bass that kills the rhythm and slows the pace. Now you use the sub to **CANCEL EXCESS BASS!**

That requires "smart" subs from Audio Physic or Velodyne that can be **MATCHED TO THE ROOM**. They have controls that roll off the deepest bass above your room's mode to give a seamless clean sound, top to bottom. No more boom.

Free, extended bass is revealed plus greater **RICHNESS** and **AMBIENCE** in the mid-range. Call us for advice.

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

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

JUST LISTEN AND YOU'LL KNOW

CD: ACCUSTIC ARTS, BEL CANTO, DCS, GAMUT, RESOLUTION AUDIO, STELLO, WADIA.
VINYL: AESTHETICS, CLEARAUDIO, DNM, GRAHAM, THE GROOVE, LEHMANN, SUMIKO BLUE POINT SPECIAL, TRANSGURATION. **TUNERS:** MAGNUM DYNALAB.
AMPLIFIERS: BEL CANTO, CAT, DNM, GAMUT, HALCRO, HOVLAND, SONNETER, STELLO. **LOUDSPEAKERS:** AUDIO PHYSIC, ETHOS, GAMUT, NEAT, TOTEM.
CABLES: ARGENTO, CHORD CO., DNM, KUBALA SOSNA, NORDOST, SILTECH, VERTEX AQ
MAINS: Vertex AQ. **SUPPORTS:** ARCICI, STANDS UNIQUE, VERTEX AQ

The Right Note

Music in the home



BATH

www.RightNote.co.uk

01225 874728

or lo-call

0845 230 7570

test tracks was the title track from Emiliana Torrini's 'Me and Armini' album and I had the volume control set higher than I realised. The upshot was that the opening drum strikes and heavy bass line nearly blew me off my listening seat until I adjusted the level appropriately. Bass was full, perfectly rounded and incredibly tight – I have heard players costing many times that of the XTZ make a ham fist of this track and, so considered this to be a good start.

The CD100 certainly majors on rhythms, I found as I listened further. That healthy bass is not all just grunt and hump, but there is plenty of detail to be found as well, so bass guitar notes were easily distinguishable and well separated from their neighbours, double basses had their customary woody thrum present and correct, and the XTZ was able to focus the performance well in low end terms. I was also impressed by its abilities when it came to imaging; it does not set up a hugely wide or deep soundstage, nor would it be expected to at the price, but it really does spotlight the central action vividly and, as a result, helps to focus the main aspect of the performance, be this a solo instrument within an orchestra, or the singer at the front of a band. As a result of this, the XTZ's overall presentation arranged performers well within their space, even if this space wasn't all that extensive.

At the top end, treble is clean but as I listened more closely, I became aware of a lack of impact and insight in this area. Cymbal action from a good drum kit, for example, had a pleasantly metallic sheen to it but the XTZ seemed to be glossing over the initial strike itself. On one jazz track I played, which is underpinned by a softly brushed cymbal, the CD100 had a tendency to blur this into a soft, continuous hiss rather than allowing the shape and form of each stroke to come through. An unfortunate side-effect was that this aspect seemed to carry over into the upper midrange as well, and the overall result was

to make such performances a little recessed and rather 'nasal'.

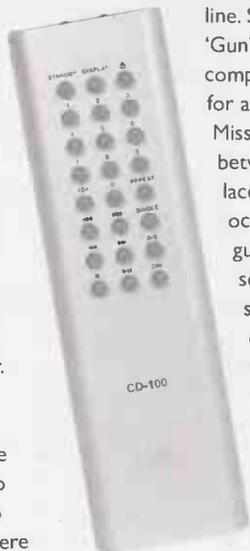
A perfect example was to be found back on the Emiliana Torrini CD with which I started the evaluation. The aforementioned title track came across very well indeed, being of a reggae-type nature and dominated by the impressive bass line. Skipping forward to the track 'Gun', however, changed things completely. This is a harsher track for a player to manage, featuring Miss Torrini's vocals alternating between fairly soft and quite lacerating, and underpinned by an occasionally scything solo electric guitar. Here the CD100 almost seemed unnerved; it certainly soldiered on valiantly but the casualties were the guitar play, which started to lose its sense of focus and stridency, and the backing percussive effects that appear later in the track which lacked their customary impact.

Ultimately I found that the XTZ was quite material-dependent and turning up the wick to something demanding seemed to make it a little uncomfortable on occasions. Although retaining its puppy-dog

eagerness to perform at all times, it did occasionally seem to trip over its feet every now and then. However, offer up something more languid and spacious in recording terms and you really can hear the strength of the machine in action and with this sort of material in mind it is an easy and enjoyable listen.

CONCLUSION

The CD100 is an impressive start to CD player manufacture for XTZ. Incredibly well built and specified and offering an astounding level of value for money, it has a great deal to recommend it, particularly at its eminently affordable price. With an easy rhythmicality and a weighty and well ordered low end it will find many friends. It is not quite up with the best at the price when it comes to sorting the minutiae from more densely layered recordings but, taking into account its very reasonable price, it deserves a warm recommendation.



REFERENCE SYSTEM
 Marantz CD94/CDA94 CD player
 Naim Supernait integrated amplifier
 Ferrograph S1 loudspeakers [modified]

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Frequency response of the CD-100, shown in our convolved impulse analysis, measured flat right out to the usual 21.2kHz limit, with just the slightest loss at high frequencies imposed by anti-alias filtering. As this amounts to -0.35dB at 20kHz it isn't enough to subjectively alter tonal balance but it should ensure the XTZ sounds neither hard nor sharp.

Distortion levels were low throughout the player's dynamic range, our analysis showing a low 0.18% at -60dB. Lack of quantisation noise hash helped toward a decent EIAJ Dynamic range value of 100dB, close to the best, but not significantly better, but then that is hard to achieve with the fixed performance of a digital system.

Jitter (random) on the digital output was high at around 300pS up to 500Hz, and 1nS below 100Hz. This is much higher than the 10-20pS achieved by good, modern players and is a mark against the XTZ.

The XTZ CD-100 measured well except for jitter on its digital output. If this also affects the internal data stream to the DACs, as is likely, then it will impact sound quality. NK

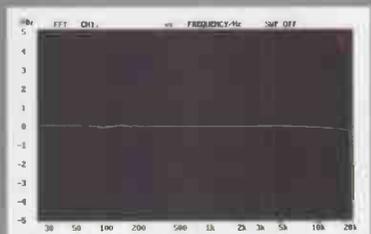
Frequency response (-1dB) 2Hz - 21.2kHz

Distortion (%) 0dB 0.004

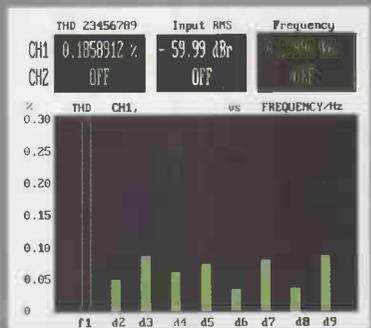
-6dB	0.002
-60dB	0.18
-80dB	4.3

Separation (1kHz)	130dB
Noise (IEC A)	-98dB
Dynamic range (EIAJ)	100dB
Output	2.16V

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



DISTORTION



VERDICT Superbly built and with an impressive sense of pace and weight, the CD100's performance belies its affordable price tag.

XTZ CD100 £365
 Audio Sanctum
 +44(0)7517 889 738
 www.audiosanctum.co.uk

- FOR**
- image focus
 - low end impact
 - remote control
 - build
 - value
- AGAINST**
- recessed upper mid/treble
 - "Hello!"

The Leveller

The Burson Audio Buffer AB-160 promises to help out hi-fis with impedance mismatch problems; Paul Rigby tries it for size...

One of the aspects of this hobby that never fails to amaze me is the sheer quantity of variables it kicks up, variables that all have to be addressed if you want to improve the sound of your hi-fi. Back when I used to act like a groupie around my local Laskys shop during my school dinner hour I thought that the be all and end all of hi-fi was a smooth door operation on a cassette deck. I didn't know the half of it!

Emerging from the darkness came questions on the shape of the listening room, choosing the right cables, selecting the right hi-fi shelving, mains electricity questions, distortion, record cleaning... and, of course, we haven't even begun to talk about the hi-fi itself yet! Yet, these associated variables are still very important. In fact, they can drastically affect the sound of your

such impedance mismatching not only exists between hi-fi components of different manufacturers but also components in different ranges from the same manufacturer. It gets worse if you factor in iPod docks or if you push computer-based audio through your hi-fi. The result? According to the company, you only get to hear a proportion of what your hi-fi is capable of – around 70% is the quoted figure. The other 30% is 'lost' because of impedance mismatching.

In practical terms, Burson says that untreated music will lack dynamics and detail as well as attack. They say that sound is thin and lifeless in comparison.

All this fighting talk demands that Burson put its money where its mouth is, which is where the AB-160 comes into play. The AB-160 attempts to remove all mismatching by acting as a physical, mechanical isolation platform between your sources and

listening, I gave the AB-160 a full thirty minutes to warm up. You need to do this every time you use it.

SOUND QUALITY

Listening to the AB-160 proved one of the most interesting and perplexing experiences I've ever had. It began with vinyl and Ella Fitzgerald's 'Sings The Cole Porter Song Book' (Speakers Corner/Verve), backed by the Buddy Bregman orchestra and 'I Love Paris'. Did the Burson change the sound at all? Yes it did – *totally*. In fact, my hi-fi experienced a complete personality transplant. The first, obvious, change was the increase in gain which meant that, during my A-B comparisons, the Burson required constant compensation. The next noticeable feature of the Burson was how much more prominent that orchestra now sounded. In fact, I now had the impression that Fitzgerald was singing in amongst the musicians.

The results can swing two ways. There will be those who immediately cry foul and complain that the Burson suffocates the music, restricting space and actually decreasing dynamics while others will love it, talking up the Burson's ability to put you right in amongst the action. Some will worry about the slight reduction in scale of the soundstage while others will love the way the Burson's increased musical sensitivity adds detailed touches to both midrange and treble. I quickly realised that I had a Marmite accessory on my hands.

Switching musical genres and Yes's 'Yours Is No Disgrace' from 'The Yes Album' (Atlantic) proved illuminating. The organised chaos that is rock music seemed to emphasise the lifted midrange frequencies proffered by the Burson that, once again, closed down those empty spaces. This meant that Jon Anderson's fragile vocals were sometimes swamped but, on the upside, you got to hear tremendous detail via Tony Kaye's Moog and organ plus Steve Howe's complex guitar work. Once again, I felt as if I was standing in the middle of the working group where, as any band member

this was music with punch and speed – it certainly took no prisoners...

system. Each and every one deserves close attention. Why? Because the difference between a basic 'excellent' hi-fi system and a fine-tuned 'excellent' hi-fi system can be enormous.

This is where the Burson Audio Buffer AB-160, developed in Australia, comes into play. It's another method of fine tuning your hi-fi. In Burson's case, it is targeting impedance as the bug-bear. Well, not impedance itself, but the mismatching that can occur between components in the same system. The company claims that

amplification. At the same time, it also proposes to enhance the electrical match between the components themselves.

Arriving in a compact box (210x145x60mm) and weighing just 5kg, the AB-160 is presented in a silver livery. Inside it's a dual mono design to keep the noise down, and sports short signal pathways and decent components such as Elna Audio capacitors plus hand-soldered DALE military grade resistors, power filtering and a short circuit protection network. The front of the box is very simple, offering a single, rotating input selector. The rear offers two inputs, an output, power cable socket and power switch. The inputs will receive your sources: phono amp, CD player and the like. I felt that offering only two sources was a bit mean and could be a problem in many systems out there. Connecting everything up was easily done but, before I began





recognises, you receive a slightly unbalanced overall sound. This was emphasised by spotlighted midrange information which, while welcome, was often prioritised to the detriment of bass clarity.

Switching to CD and Boxcutter's 'Oneiric' (Planet Mu) a techno feast with drum'n'bass layers which responded very well to 'the Burson effect'. An immense amount of energy spewed forth from this CD almost forcibly picking you up from your seat and onto the dance floor. What seemed to help the Burson, with this genre of music, is the fact that techno and electronica in general can be quite claustrophobic in nature in the first place. So what the Burson did was emphasise what was already there. Bass was almost enveloping, starting from somewhere deep inside your stomach and then moving outwards while midrange synth stabs were almost physical. What the Burson removed was the previously calm, relaxed soundstage that the music performed upon. What replaced it was a more upfront presentation bursting with extra life. This was music with punch and speed – it certainly took no prisoners.

My final CD spin was Maude Maggart – an odd name for a lady with a beautiful voice, a contemporary singer who seems to hark back to 'the roaring twenties', fragile and trilling. On her 2005 album, 'Sings Irving Berlin', 'You Keep Coming Back Like A Song' is performed with a piano and violin only. If the Burson enjoys the high energy, modern electronica arrangements it also takes a shine to the small group scenario because it lifted each instrument onto

individual pedestals and shouted at the listener, "here, this is what they do – here is the truth for each!" So, for both piano and violin, you can hear all of the detail, all of the time. Of course, Maggart's vocal performance was treated in exactly the same way – the Burson has no favourites – which means that this tiny trio performance had a real epic quality. Once more, you feel that you are sitting so close to each person that you could actually feel the fall of breath from Maggart's mouth as she reached a crescendo.

What you lose – and, with the Burson, it seems that every performance consists of giving with one hand and taking away with the other – is that intimate quality that many people enjoy with a small trio. The delicacy and subtlety is reduced along with elements that I can only describe as insinuation; things that musicians almost play or purposely don't play, leaving you to fill in the gaps. What you gain however, is every nuance of the complex piano as a stringed instrument while the multi-tonal violin is given all the time and space it needs to breath and pour out its heart. And that's what the Burson is all about. This is a box full of passion – it's just that passionate people can often act like bulls in china shops.

Further investigations on the small group theme lead to similarly successful listening tests with jazz

trios and chamber quartets. With all these small ensembles never a note was missed or a detail ignored while the Burson was in full flow.

CONCLUSION

The Burson is a Curate's Egg of an accessory. In some respects, it does its job too well. Everything – and I mean *everything* – is now on level terms. That includes every sonic element in every track that you play. Dynamics suffer, though. There is no light and shade, subtlety takes a back seat because, upon using the Burson, every detail can be heard equally and with full measure. Of course, there are good, even great things to come from this situation because previously hidden or low-key information is brought to the fore. With a large ensemble, this can be a cacophonous riot but, in a small group scenario, it can also be enlightening and informative. A niche product if ever I heard one but, for those occupying that niche, a demo is highly recommended.

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

This device is an impedance converter: it drives a line from a low output impedance and can be used, in theory, to lessen losses in long lines. That's the engineering view; some say such converters improve sound quality, for reasons not fully understood.

I was unable to open the case to look inside, but a 9V maximum output figure before overload suggests that inside lurks a high performance audio silicon chip; there are plenty available from Burr Brown, TI and National Semiconductor, etc. The circuit was all

but transparent with a bandwidth of d.c. to 77kHz, -1dB and minimal distortion (0.0009%). It passed a square wave perfectly and noise was minimal, but modern 'mic preamp' ICs and audio preamps are as good as this. Output impedance was on the high side at 1.2kOhms, however, not the 100 Ohms or thereabouts expected from a dedicated line driver chip, of which there are many, so the Burson isn't for really long lines and heavy capacitive loads and it doesn't use a dedicated line driver IC. Results are best judged by listening. NK

VERDICT

An interesting product that puts the listener right at the heart of the performance.

BURSON AUDIO BUFFER

AB-160 £325

Angelsound Audio

☎ +44 (0) 1923 352479

www.angelsoundaudio.co.uk

FOR

- enhanced detail
- energy
- passionate performance

AGAINST

- only two inputs
- reduced soundstage

mail



Visit our website at www.hi-fiworld.co.uk or send your emails to letters@hi-fiworld.co.uk. Letter of the month wins a pair of KEF iQ30 loudspeakers.

LETTER OF THE MONTH PRIZE



KEF iQ30 LOUDSPEAKERS

A pair of KEF iQ30 loudspeakers is on their way to **ROB NICHOLS**, Letter of the Month winner in our July 2010 issue.

Letter of the Month

MUSEUM PIECES

I did a search and found your 2002 review of the Nakamichi 600 cassette deck and found it impressive. I'm interested in getting a classic machine like that! My question is: your review says the deck offered 20Hz-20kHz in frequency response. I read a copy of the owners manual and it says the frequency response is 40Hz-18,000Hz. I guess it doesn't matter much if the deck impressed you so much, but I was just curious if it really makes a difference?

Brian Joyce

Such a small difference in frequency response makes no difference at all, even in an item as invariable as an amplifier. Frequency response of a cassette deck (when recording) varies quite substantially with the tape used, although Nakamichis can be tuned flat by altering bias. Replay response, relevant to prerecorded tapes, is also difficult to pin down to tight limits.

If you are going to buy an old cassette deck just be aware that if it has been heavily used then it may need quite a lot of service and if this includes new heads, the bill will be steep. B&W handle Nakamichi cassette deck service in the UK, as they have always done, and the bad news is that they say they have no spares left for the 600/600II. I suggest you check out B&W's Nakamichi site and perhaps even get some service and spares costs first, before buying an old Nakamichi. This advice applies to much old kit, which often use parts unavailable



The distinctive sloping fascia of a Nakamichi 600 cassette deck.

now. Consult relevant restoration specialists first or you may just end up with a non-working museum piece. **NK**

Noel is of course bang on about buying second-hand cassette decks, although it should be restated that it applies to any second-hand piece of hi-fi gear. We're 'classic hi-fi' lovers here at Hi-Fi World, and all use some such kit, but we have to point out that you can't expect equipment that's decades old to work like new. Sometimes it does, but you're lucky. Usually it doesn't, so always do your homework about whether parts are still available before you assault your local car boot sale or the mighty eBay! As for frequency responses, there are several ways of measuring it; the key point is the response until it drops to -3dB. A deck that's 20Hz to 18kHz (at -3dB) could easily be said to go up to 20kHz, although it's

likely to be -10dB or more down by then. Published specs aside, any tape deck that gets up to 18kHz (-3dB) is very good indeed; most people's hearing rarely exceeds 15kHz. In my view, as far as cassette decks are concerned the wow and flutter figures are more important in practice. **DP**

PICKY EARS

I really looked forward to the March issue, eager to see your review of the Q Acoustics 2020. As my own ears had picked these out, I'm pleased they were given such a good report by an expert too. These speakers had been due in since early November 09, and they either keep coming in and are sold only to pre-orders, or they never actually arrive in the country. Their in-at-the-dealer date of 'early Jan' changed to 'due Feb' as soon as 'early Jan' came. Great speakers, but how to buy them? As it happened I had several tax codes

arrive, which reminded me of how much I was going to be robbed. In an effort to spend my own money I did something I said I'd never do, i.e. buy some speakers without hearing them first. Thus I'm running in some Monitor Audio BR5s. Fifty hours going by the book.

But there was so much more in the magazine this time too. The Sony TC-WE475 cassette deck went onto my shopping list. This could solve my problem of how to transfer some cassettes I made onto CD – with my PC upstairs and the tape deck downstairs, supporting three other hi-fi units, so it means a lot of disturbance to get it out as it is. A second tape deck would sort that one nicely.

Not for the first time on seeing radio tuners reviewed, I compared their specs with my Sony JX2L. Some figures are hard to compare like for like, but the Sony has a frequency response of 40Hz–12.5kHz, a signal to noise ratio of 72dB, and separation of 45dB. These would suggest to me it's still able to hold its own with some of the current, much more expensive models. Listening to some stations via headphones at night, I can vouch for the fact that channel separation is excellent.

You reported on the Creek's imprecise rotary encoder, the main control, going backwards instead of forwards, not incrementing properly. Yep, I've been there. I have similar on my Ferguson DAB/FM kitchen radio. This is a case where technology makes things harder. Enter the Sony again. Turn the tuning dial and the pointer moves such that I can whip between stations at either end of the scale in no time at all, and searching for others in between is easier than trying to increment a digital scale too. On my Ferguson, to manually tune from one end of the FM scale to the other, say, takes hundreds of turns of the knob.

And while I'm at it, I prefer volume controls to be knobs, not buttons. Whoever thinks changing volume by holding down one of two buttons is a good idea needs their head examined (just my humble opinion, you understand). Furthermore, I don't have a telly, so I was surprised when I first saw someone alter the TV volume via a remote – and the line appeared on the screen. Why ruin a picture for everyone, surely no-one needs to see what the volume is? Just listen.

Martin Simpson's 'Prodigal Son' – you've got good taste in music too. I have the early Martin Simpson records signed, and a cassette, then I'm missing a few, but the only unsigned one I have bought is his CD, True Stories. I do think Martin dilutes his talent a bit on 'Prodigal Son' (and 'True Stories'), by having so many guest artists playing with him. With a mike and acoustic

guitar in concert he's an outstanding musician. I'd settle for him alone.

Liked the Prog Rock article too. I'm not sure whether you class Be Bop DeLuxe as Prog, but I do maintain you haven't lived till you've heard their 'Drastic Plastic' LP. Bill Nelson can write some witty lyrics too.

Melvyn Dover.

Thanks for writing with your thoughts, Melvyn. It's nice to hear someone else's views on what is said in the magazine. I've noticed that some electronic volume controls must be turned slowly and deliberately if their 'shaft encoders' are to work at all. I am not yet convinced these things are better than an Alps Blue or Panasonic potentiometer. **NK**

I'm a huge Be Bop Deluxe fan too, Melvyn. It amazes me that they were never huge, considering what talent they had. For me, it's got to be 'Modern Music'; I have about five pressings of this, so worried I am about never again finding one! **DP**

...AND AGAIN

With the Monitor Audio BR5s still just short of their running in period, I noticed a website (www.speakerpoint.co.uk) with Q Acoustic 2020s on it. No mention of pre-ordering or expected dates. In other words they seem to have them in stock. A choice of graphite or walnut. I phoned to order some in walnut (there's always a second room for a second pair of speakers) and spoke to a very helpful man who told me the walnut was out of stock. He apologised, but added they only had them in gloss white or black. Gloss white! Wasn't that what I was after way back when! So gloss whites were ordered and they arrived the next day (they even came with a pair of white gloves).

Then I decided I should have ordered gloss white 2000ST stands to match. I tried, but they're out of stock, expected mid-Feb. Doh!

The instruction book for the 2020s states, "In the EU it is against safety regulations to use 4mm loudspeaker plugs." Is this really the case?

Also I noted the sensitivity for the 2020s is 88dB and not 86dB, as your review stated.

These are great speakers, plonking them on top of the BR5s for temporary convenience, I was able to switch A/B and there seemed very little difference between them at practical volumes.



Drastic Plastic LP from Be-Bop Deluxe – "you haven't lived until you've heard it" says Melvyn Dover.

All this was the catalyst to me biwiring the Monitor Audio BR5s, as their instruction book recommends. What a difference! Immediately they sounded clearer, and there was no longer a squawking parrot in the background, and far less midrange mush from the radio. It really brought them to life.

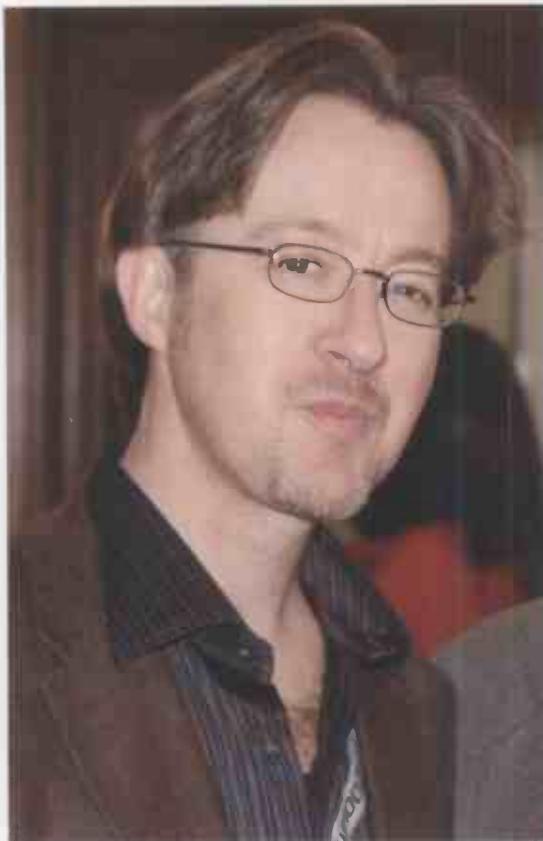
I've tried bi-wiring the 2020s too, but found I prefer them with standard. Perhaps that's because it's early days for them. In any event I'm now enjoying two pairs of speakers.

Melvyn Dover.

No difference between a BR5 and 2020? Oh dear Melvyn! Methinks the 2020 is a sight more neutral and even in tone, even perhaps too much so to be exciting for some. But it is a super smoothie. Monitor Audios are nearly as accurate in basic tonal balance, but have a speedier sound and a certain zing that comes from metal cones. They are both nice loudspeakers though. Monitor Audios take quite a lot of running in and they recommend you use their (somewhat weird sounding!) De-Tox disc. What you say about bi-wiring is interesting.

We understand one person in Europe managed to connect their loudspeakers to the mains through its 4mm socket inputs and their use has been discouraged ever since. It is common for them to come fitted with plastic stoppers that must be prised out to prevent this.

On sensitivity, our measured result is commonly lower than that of manufacturers by a few dB but since we use a calibrated Bruel & Kjaer microphone and a calibrated Clio microphone as backup, we are confident our result is accurate. Our measurement is made with pink



Editor David Price in 2010. No need for Grecian 2000 yet.

noise using an rms reading meter, however, and I suspect higher figures are obtained using a sine wave placed judiciously at a response peak. **NK**

AGELESS

David, I don't recall precisely how long ago it was that you took on the mantle of editor of 'Hi-Fi World'. But a superbly posed photograph showing your youthful features certainly graces the oldest copy of the magazine (October 1994) to have remained in my possession. However, as purported by the photograph in the current issue, your appearance has not changed one iota during the intervening years! Surely the cut and thrust of hi-fi journalism has taken its toll over time, causing your hitherto splendidly dark hair to grey ever so slightly at the temples? Why, that trendy designer stubble may even have evolved into a full beard!

Or is it simply the case that, like your favourite Yamaha NS1000 loudspeakers, you only improve with age! As a fully paid up subscriber, I demand to know!

Alan RJ Scott

Here's the rude truth Alan. My picture of David, taken at the Bristol Show February 2010, shows a remarkable lack of wear and tear for such a busy person. He obviously knows something the rest of us would like to know, how to hold old man time at bay!

NK

Oh my good gawd! There are a few grey hairs showing now, and my barnet's a tad floppier, so to satisfy your obvious interest Alan, I shall duly arrange to update my column picture... It's something I've been meaning to do for the last five years, but never seem to have time. So what better reason could there be for you to place your order for September's Hi-Fi World now? **DP**

LAGGING LINN

I hope you can advise. My setup is a Leak Troughline 3 + Onething stereo decoder, Linn LP12 turntable with Ittok

arm and Asaka moving coil cartridge, Cambridge Audio 640P MC phono stage, Cyrus DAD3 Q CD, stepped attenuator passive, Decware SE84C for low/medium volume, home built Tripath 2024 and 2020 amps for higher volume feeding Decware modified Fostex FE206e in large Lowther based horns.

The problem I have is noting sounds anywhere near as good as the Leak Troughline 3, especially the Linn – it sounds terrible. My i-pod playing FLACs sounds much better than the vinyl. The Troughline that I have tuned to BBC Radio 3 is not a modded one, not even fed with a very good aerial, but when I listen to it – the only source I think I have listened to that I consider high end – it simply blows everything else away. But I am at the mercy of the radio schedule and although this broadens my listening scope, it also limits me.

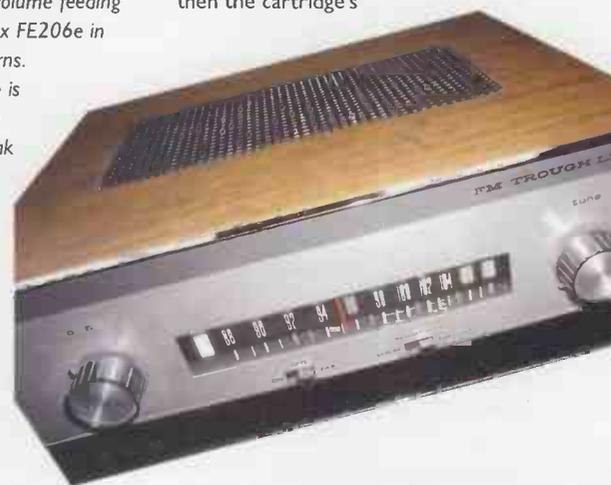
Could it be that my records are all worn out?

Christopher Bowen

It's more likely that your Asaka cartridge is worn out, and the Cambridge Audio 640P is not an appropriate match, either in quality terms or its own bright balance. I'd

recommend an Ortofon Cadenza Black moving coil cartridge, feeding an Icon Audio PS3 valve phono stage (with valve regulated power supply). This would provide a leap up in quality, whilst at the same time moving the presentation into that you are used to from the Troughline, spacious, atmospheric but easy going – and free of false emphases. Then your record deck will see into the recording on the LP, many of which are surprisingly engaging; you'll be aware of the tape hiss, the studio ambience, the physicality of the performers, and the way they are working together in a real environment. Modern processed recordings lack all this; they are slick, but heavily contrived and lacking the pull of old, live studio performances. It's one of those small but engaging wonders of listening to historic vinyl, a performance the Troughline matches with Radio 2 and 3 in particular I find, due to their high signal strength and good broadcast quality, especially when the programme content is live. **NK**

As Noel says, your Linn Asaka moving coil is surely well and truly cream-cracked by now - given that they were last made in the mid nineteen eighties! If the stylus hasn't worn out (which is about as great a certainty that you can get in the world of hi-fi!) then the cartridge's



Leak Troughline 3 "simply blows everything else away" says Christopher Bowen.

suspension has all but collapsed. So a swift change of pickup would work a treat; even an Audio Technica AT95E (£30) would be a good tester to see if the problem lies there or elsewhere. If a change of cartridge doesn't help, then the set-up of the Linn is the next issue; take it to your friendly local Linn dealer and get it freshly fettled. If the deck hasn't been done for a long time this will have a dramatic difference. Finally, the Cambridge Audio 640P is far below

the capabilities of your front end; as Noel says you should be looking for something at least the quality of the Icon Audio. **DP**

HARD DISC DECISION

I've been in the market for a reasonably priced hard-disk player for a while to replace all the physical storage my CDs and DVDs take up.

I'll probably aim for the ITB category, but my biggest fear has been buying a decent unit but then not being able to browse CDs and DVDs by either album / DVD title, artist, or track, but only being able to browse in order of uploads. Put another way, I want to make sure, once all my CDs and DVDs have been uploaded, I want to be able to sort by various headers, as well as not being stuck with albums and DVDs that weren't uploaded without content details (titles etc).

I've been thinking about the Lacie LaCinema, as an example of a complete media recorder. Then there's the Iomega media player range as well as Western Digital product. See my predicament? So many options out there, but no real way to see how they all work before buying. And then there's your very positive review of the Brennan JB7.

Any advice of how I should approach this? I appreciate any tips or views you could give. Thanking you in advance

kindest regards
Vincent Hibbert
Dublin,
Ireland

Sadly Vincent you're not very specific. What's your budget? Do you want a discrete player or a computer audio based system, or simply a Network Attached Storage hard disk drive? How many discs do you have to encode? Do you have a wireless home network? Do you require better than 16bit/44.1kHz quality? Do you download any music? It's such a big subject that you first need to answer these key questions before I can advise you; please reply and I'll do my best to help.

DP

ORACLE

I read your enthusiastic review of this CD player with great interest. The Oracle seems to be not quite analog sounding from your description, but not typically digital as well. Does this CDP require warm partnering equipment? I have a Moon i-7 integrated, Audio Note AN/E HE Lx speakers and LX AN (copper) cables.

Thanks in advance if you have time for any feedback!

Mike Ranfft
Canada

The Oracle CD 1500/II to which you refer, reviewed in the July 2009 issue of Hi-Fi World, isn't exactly on the warm and sweet side, but it's hardly particularly steely and hard either; overall it's just on the bright side of neutral. I remember it as being an extremely powerful, high energy listen, one that lacks that last degree of scale and smoothness (that you'd get from the likes of a dCS Paganini DAC, for example), and one that doesn't quite have such a fluid midband. But it does have massive dynamic articulation and incredible attack, making it a lovely listen. The Moon integrated and Audio Note speakers aren't over rich in their tonality, the latter especially being a touch on the dry side, so I wouldn't say it's a dream combination; I'd be thinking along the lines of a pair of Icon Audio MB845 valve amps doing

size? Another tricky question from someone who's not keen to reveal all! My own preference would be Yamaha's Soavo 1.1 (£3,000), which are tallish but slim floorstanders with an exquisite piano black lacquered finish; the same as that used in their concert grands. They're super fast, clean, powerful and dynamically articulate, love serious front ends and should sound larger still with a decent subwoofer, or two. Oh, and the wife will love the fact that they don't look like fridges. **DP**

DISAPPEARING RADIO

It now looks as though the BBC are trying to pretend FM radio doesn't exist. If you look at the R3 homepage on the internet it only mentions "online, on DAB digital radio & digital tv"!

best regards,
David Turner



How to listen to Radio 3.

the power supplying duties to really get this set up to sing. **DP**

FRIDGE FOLLY

I have used Linn Isobariks for some time, initially with a Naim system and more recently with a Krell 250A power amp. The overall sound with various sources and live recordings is faithful to the original.

However, I have had adverse reactions from my wife and most female visitors about a 'pair of fridges' in the lounge. Large speakers are never attractive in a domestic setting and I need to find some smaller speakers. Can you recommend a suitable replacement to partner a REL subwoofer (which doubles as a side table). Have considered ATC but reluctant to lose the Krell.

J Hodge

Hmmm... how much smaller? And what's your budget? Could you take taller speakers, but one's that are slimmer? Or does it have to be standmounters? Musical tastes? Room

The website had no mention of reception methods on the Homepage when we looked, but the site places emphasis on web listening via podcasts and what have you. The help section mentions VHF FM and provides a list of frequencies etc.

NK

I think it's daft that the BBC is still prattling on about DAB, when the cost of spreading it to 98% of the UK isn't far off a billion pounds, and it's already been superseded not just by DAB+ abroad but by the Beeb's very own, and very good, iPlayer in the UK. I'm not privy to all the internal politics and machinations at Auntie, but I would love to find out why its love for this format is so entrenched with the high ups at the Corporation. The irony is that most people prefer FM (for sonic reasons, and/or the fact that it's already in their car radios). If it's convenience and digital content, then the iPlayer and/or Freeview is excellent. All of which leaves DAB very much in limbo. **DP**



Unused and in the loft for 8 years – a Rega Planar 3. Dig it out and fit a Goldring cartridge, we say.

BAD DAYS

As an occasional purchaser of Hi-Fi World I note your penchant for all things vinyl. As someone with an interest stretching back to 1970 I started with vinyl and went through a few turntables before the revelation of a Rega Planar 2 made me realise what a difference a turntable could make. When all things are right vinyl has no equal and CD by comparison runs second.

However, I remember only too clearly the bad days of vinyl. For the entire cost of my Saturday employment at a well known chain of chemists I could purchase a single chart album or LP. Often it was noisy, crackly, warped and even the hole was sometimes off centre. Long were the battles I had with discount record retailer Downtown records in Romford Market. I got through four copies of the Beatles 'Sgt Peppers' album and still settled with a dud. True, I have a superb copy of Tango in the night and my original pressings of Emerson Lake and Palmer and Black Sabbath are excellent.

But such was my frustration at the quality and fragility of the product that on occasions I purchased music cassettes. To my ears CD when I first heard it was a revelation. The silences between tracks or on soft passages was a pleasure.

Of course the market has now polarised. Vinyl is a premium product probably played on expensive gear with a matching price tag. I look at the reviews and wonder what if? I then note that for the price of one new vinyl album I can often buy 3 - 4 back catalogue CDs. I rarely pay more than £5 for a CD and always have one on order.

True, it's not as good as vinyl but my Linn Classic, Sennheiser HD600 and AVI Neutrons keep me reasonably happy. In the meantime I can furnish my hobby of exploring new artists and revisiting old ones. Music for me has never been cheaper and at the end of the day it is all about music.

My vinyl collection of some 220 albums and 300 singles lies forlorn in the spare room. My Rega Planar 3 also lies there unused for at least 8 years.

Perhaps one day I will bring my Sugden down from the loft and get it all working again.

In the meantime it is CD for me. And neither format can hold a candle to live music.

yours sincerely

David Morris

One need not exclude the other David. Just relax and use both, without getting too worried about which is best. I have plenty of crappy LPs, but thankfully so many good ones. Put a decent cartridge, like a Goldring 1012GX, into the Rega and enjoy the music you once enjoyed and still own. Your interest might be sufficiently reawakened to realise that vinyl still has a lot to offer, from bargains you can find in Charity shops and car boot sales, to the super expensive re-issue stuff that seeks to better re-create historic recordings in their original format.

NK

There's something very nice and self-contained about CD. It's easy, cheap (now, although it was not always the way), and there's a real diversity of music available on it. Kit yourself out with a great, compact way of playing it (and Linn's Classic music system is precisely that) and I can see why you're reluctant to clutter up your life with vinyl paraphernalia. So many people feel this way. However, those who have dug their vinyl out of the loft are often the first to write to us here at the mag about the wonder and awe of their experience; it's sometimes akin to a religious rebirth (the born-again vinylistas are the worst!)...

So don't dismiss your black plastic; buy a basic phono stage (a Cambridge Audio 640P would suffice here) and get the Rega back on the road! **DP**

REMASTERED

With reference to Paul Rigby's column in the March issue, I recall that around 1980, EMI digitally remastered some

of their recent classical recordings (e.g. Rachmaninov orchestral works with Previn and the LSO), and the mid-price LPs and subsequent CDs were criticised for their degraded sound quality.

With the launch of CD, classic older recordings which had remained at full price on LP (e.g. Elgar Cello Concerto with Du Pre, Strauss Four Last Songs with Schwarzkopf) were given AAD transfers which, in some cases, still sound better than subsequent ADD reissues.

Perhaps most important is ensuring that the analogue replay machine is correctly set up.

yours faithfully,

**R. Mark Hodgson
London**

AND AGAIN...

Replying to a letter on the Beatles remasters, NK says he always prefers analogue recordings on LP. On my own modest equipment*, I find it hard to tell the difference, although CDs are more fatiguing over time.

However Pye, who pioneered the stereo LP in the UK, had dreadful pressings, noisy and cramped; the PRT and EMI CDs, mostly remastered by Mike Dutton, are much better. Mercury, who engineered some Pye recordings, and often used 35mm film, avoided compression until the cutting stage (unlike most rivals), so only their CDs have the original dynamic range.

kind regards,

R. Mark Hodgson

*Technics SL1100 with Isoplatmat, SME3009III, Grado Prestige Gold; Arcam CD62; Audiolab 8000P (rewired by Musical Fidelity - thanks for the tip!); Quad IIs, rebuilt by GT; Rogers Studio 7s.

Indeed so, and the same goes for vinyl too. The originals with all-analogue recording and mastering, are invariably better than any subsequent releases, to my ears. **DP**

SMOOTH OPERATOR

I have a suggestion and a query. It seems that a number of manufacturers are now selling loudspeakers directly by mail order. Whilst this seems something of a heresy given the usual advice of get a dealer demonstration before you buy, I am aware of the substantial contribution which room acoustics make to the sound of music as it is perceived. The ability to try a product in the room in question with the option of returning it (usually at your own expense it has to be said) might seem an attractive and sensible strategy. I do feel that magazines might help here to give an indication of the sort of sound produced at least to narrow a short-list to a couple of contenders. My



Tannoy DC8 – a finely honed loudspeaker with a warm sound.

suggestion is therefore a Hi-Fi World test of mail order standmounts. I am aware of two such from the Arcaydis factory in Worcestershire, the DM1 and EB Acoustics EB1 as well as WAD WD25a of course, and I believe there are others. Such a review would make a novel and illuminating comparison.

My query is related to this. My system is a Cyrus 7 CD and amp driving Monitor Audio GR10 speakers. This has a rather forward and up-front sound which was tempered in my 4m x 4.5m x 2.5m by heavy Chesterfields and a thick carpet, despite its thick stone (but plastered) walls. This room, my study, was our haven in an extended period of restoration of the rest of the cottage and much enjoyment was derived. Eventually the Chesterfields went to other, prime locations and a form of antique minimalism has taken over with stripped pine floor and lighter furnishings. A Q upgrade for the CD and PSX-R power supplies for the CD and amp tempered things a little, but the upper mid band sounds too prominent and hard. I have tired of this sound and my first thought is to replace the speakers. I would like something that preserves the speed and detail of the Cyrus electronics, but which has a warmer tone, sweet upper midband and treble and a firm bass. I am aware that this is not the current recipe for speakers, but am willing to consider anything from £500 – £1500 which might fit the bill - larger standmounters or small floorstanders.

Is this the best route or should I tackle the electronics (Naim seem to produce kit that is civilised and musical

in the best sense these days and seems to cope with upfront speakers very well). My musical tastes are very wide, early and Baroque, chamber and orchestral, jazz from Bop onwards, world music, rock, some pop and contemporary music of all genres (Nyman through Westbrook to Mr Scruff).

I would be very grateful for your comments and suggestions.

John Hurley

As you note John, "a warmer tone is not the current recipe for speakers", and rarely will be again, because it was usually caused by an engineering weakness, a dip in output between midrange and treble drive units. But having said that the new Q Acoustics 2050s

floorstanders sound warm and fit your needs almost perfectly, so fate has smiled on you.

The only other loudspeaker with a warm balance, along with great all round ability is the Tannoy DC-8 and this would suit your home quite well I suspect, as well as your musical tastes. It's a 'mature' sound from a mature company and impressive in its own way, as well as unique of course. The price isn't right, but who knows, perhaps you won the Lottery just after posting your e-mail to us!

NK

You're not exactly spoiled for choice looking for something to warm the somewhat dry and over-precise sound of your Cyrus 7-series components. My instinct would be to save up and spend £2,000 on a pair of Spendor S8e loudspeakers, which really do have a less 'up front' sound than most boxes, including your Monitor Audios, which are not an ideal sonic match. Also try Black Rhodium Tango speaker cable, which I've found to be a very smooth, soothing performer. **DP**

BIG BAMBOO

I have just seen Paul's letter detailing his turntable project. Congrats to him; it's a lovely piece of work. I too have just finished a similar project, a sand box for my turntable and a raiser and tot box for my computer screen.

When starting this job my wife suggested I use some left over bamboo flooring. This proved to be an inspired suggestion. I have attached some photos of the completed work for your perusal.

This material is great to work with as it does not chip or splinter and mitres can be cut very precisely. It comes in various shades and sizes. There is little finishing to do once the job is assembled. I chose to use bees wax, which can also be purchased in different shades.

A further advantage is that should you inadvertently dent it, all you need is some judicious use of damp blotting paper and a hot iron and the dents can be raised and then waxed again.

I can recommend this material to anyone, just Google bamboo products and get a wealth of info on uses and tech details. I hope this will be of use. regards

John Lancaster



The bamboo finished, sandbox turntable plinth built by John Lancaster.



My Michell Orbe SE with SME IV arm, needs a warm budget cartridge, says Alan.

SIMPLE TEST

I have discovered a simple test as to whether music, or more specifically hi-fi, has become an unhealthy obsession. It's when you struggle to remember the names of your old girl friends but, without hesitation or deviation, can rattle off the names of each bit of kit you've ever owned for the last thirty five years, including the model number identifying which version it was. I recall starting with a Garrard SP25 Mk III, Tripletone amp and Solavox speakers from Comet, somewhere round about 1974. At this point I should mention, for the sake of marital harmony, that I can usually remember my wife's name. I've even been known to be really nice to her just before discussing a hi-fi upgrade.

The likes of Linn were way out of my reach in those days, although my lust-after item at the time was an Armstrong 626 receiver. I meandered through a variety of stuff, including Pioneer PL12D and Dual CS505 turntables and various bits of stuff from Arcam, JVC, Monitor Audio and Heybrook. Finally I succumbed to the Linn disease and, after a brief flirtation with an Axis disc spinner, ended up with an LP12, which seemed like nirvana (sorry!) at the time. Like many others, I took the occasional wrong turn. In my case, it was a pair of Linn Tukan speakers which I came to dislike quite quickly.

Anyway, I suppose I had better come to my query before you lot fall into a deep coma reading this epistle. My beloved current turntable is a Michell Orbe SE with an SME IV arm, Dynavector DVI0x5 cartridge and a Graham Slee Era Gold V phonostage. The rest of the system is a WAD Kit 34 amplifier (built for me), Arcam CD37 and Comete Triangle ES speakers.

Stylus wear means a new cartridge is needed and funds are tight, so an MM type seems the best solution — a low output MC would involve

having to buy an Elevator for the Graham Slee (I accept that the turntable and arm would appreciate a high-end MC cartridge, but needs must at the moment). Although my Dynavector has been fine, I wonder whether a switch to an Ortofon 2M Black would be a good move, or do you have any other ideas? I like a warm sound without excessive treble and listen to a lot of acoustic jazz, where I like to be able to follow the double bass lines.

Also, in the medium term I might look to change amplifiers. I am firmly in the valve camp so perhaps the latest WAD integrated or something from Icon might fit the bill. Again, your opinions would be appreciated.

Finally, when is Adam going to open his Turntables 'R' Us superstore? I don't think he would have too much of a problem stocking it.

regards
Alan Smeaton
Newcastle upon Tyne

The 2M Black offers a cool, correct sound; it is technically accurate rather than warm, with treble that is fine and 'obvious', but not emphasised. I am not sure this is what you are after. The only cartridge I know of now that is 'warm' is the Shure M97xE, which is an old design — and sounds it. Resolution of detail isn't great by today's standards, but it tracks well and is warm sounding, due to classic 1970s generator droop. That makes it an easy listen and would suit your current absence of ready readies, as it were. **NK**

Hi Alan — well, mentioning no names, but there's one contributor to this august journal (not wishing to give the game away but he likes Sony Walkmans a lot) who once somewhat harshly observed to me that the majority of Adam's turntables are not, to borrow a

phrase from the Sale of Goods Act 1979, "of merchantable quality". He might think that, but I couldn't possibly comment... **DP**

BEOWHATSIITS

I've seen the odd sideswipe at B&O equipment in your Letters pages so I thought I'd share this story with you.

Around the mid-80s a new neighbour came over to borrow some tool or other. As we walked through the lounge, he noticed my B&O system and said: "That's crap". As a long time B&O owner I was used to such comments so I let it pass, though I found it somewhat un-neighbourly.

Shortly after, the new neighbours invited us to dinner and he took the opportunity to demonstrate his "real" hi-fi. Composed of various separates, it sounded fantastic. Then, a few months later, we hosted a party for around 30 people. As was the habit, after all had eaten the music was cranked up and we danced the night away. In the early hours, as people were starting to leave, I found my neighbour on the couch, listening. I joined him with a nightcap and he said: "I'm sorry, I'd never heard one of these before — the sound is incredible."

I suspect, like most dogma, the audiophile one is followed blindly. I no longer have a B&O system (my ex-spouse inherited the last one) so I can't comment on their latest kit. What I can say is, for over 30 years the music played on various Beowhatsits enriched my life.

Peter Keene
Cape Town



A B&O product that received Five Globes in Hi-Fi World, the Beolab 9 loudspeaker (see June 07 issue).

That reminds me of the expression "I always remember whatsit". Er, yes Peter! In truth we have a B&O nut at Hi-Fi World, a certain Adam Smith, who is always willing to speak up for B&O. Their products are well styled and decently engineered under the skin, especially the loudspeakers, which we have been very impressed by. There's no doubt that B&O are serious producers of high fidelity and I'm glad you find their whatsits work so well! **NK**

I'm afraid the sideswipes at B&O are an inevitable part of the hi-fi industry, Peter, and it also seems to me that more than a few are made by people who have never heard any of the equipment! Still, here at Hi-Fi World we have a fellow contributor in Tim Jarman who runs a vintage B&O website and has written books on the subject, as well as my good self who has one B&O system in the dining room, another in the lounge and...er..."one or two" more items under the bed in the loft room where my wife hasn't thought to check yet!

Add to this our esteemed Editor who is also gradually building up a small collection of Danish loveliness and you can see that we most definitely do take B&O seriously here, even if they have come out with a few duffers over the years.

My trip to their factory in Struer a few years back only reinforced my opinion that, love or loathe the results, the technological know how and sheer passion that goes into their designs is really quite something to behold. **AS**

COST ISSUES

I have to take exception to Adam's comment (Pro-ject Xperience 2, April 2010) that it "...makes a similarly priced CD player sound a little bit limp...".

I am committed to vinyl myself - Technics SP15, custom plinth, Roksan Tabriz Zi, AT OC9 MLII, WhestTwo - but don't like to see this statement made without an effective comparison.

Were you talking about similar to: £820 (turntable and arm) or similar to the total of £820 (turntable and arm) + £230 (cartridge) + £745 (phono stage) = £1795 (your test rig)

In terms of price - particularly in terms of CD players - that's a huge scale.

regards

Neil McKirdy

Well Neil, I am sorry to have offended your sensibilities but my comment was actually directed at the whole Pro-ject range in general! I have long been of the opinion that,

from the storming budget Genie right up to the mighty RPM10, there isn't a deck in the range that is a duffer and that comparing any of them to a CD player of similar price will show that, for sheer musical enjoyment, the Pro-ject will most likely come out on top.

More specifically for the deck I reviewed, I see where you are coming from, regarding the ancillaries with which I partnered it but my aim, as always, was to see just what the deck was capable of when stretched to the maximum. £230 worth of cartridge and £730 worth of phono stage are not exactly common bed fellows for an £820 turntable and arm combo, but these were items that I chose to see what the deck could really do. It performed admirably but I do take your point that it would have a tough time up against one or two £1,700 CD spinners.

However, as part of the review I also loaded the Xperience 2 up with an Audio Technica AT110E and spent a day or two listening to it through a Cambridge Audio Azur 640P phono stage, bringing the total package cost to around £920 and being far more representative of the items that might normally partner such a design. In this guise, it certainly wasn't quite as good as the fully loaded setup, but I'd still have taken it over a £1,000 CD player. **AS**

Throughout my reviewing career, I've always kept the Rega Planar 3 (now the P3-24) as something of a benchmark. The first one I bought back in the mid eighties cost £188 (plus £34 for a Rega R100), and it outperformed my Yamaha CDX2

convinced by those who say CD offers great sound per pound; actually it doesn't. For me, if sound is the absolute priority, there's always only been one option... **DP**

NJOE TJOEB

I see in February 2010 Hi-Fi World that you have a Njoe Tjoeb 4000. I have owned one of these fine CD players since October 2002, when I purchased it from Upscale Audio in California (at that time there was no agent in N.Z.). It was purchased in 16bit 44.1k form. Since then there have been four Upgrades by Herman.

One is a 24 bit 192k board. And there are three Clock upgrades using valves instead of the solid-state devices. I hope that you have got it in its final form as then it becomes a Giant Killer of CD players at its price.

I have long been surprised that more reviewers have not used this in their review systems, but maybe it would not match too many solid state systems (mine is an all-valve system.)

Keep up the good work there in UK best regards

Alan Smith
New Zealand

GYRO ADVICE

Try as I may I cannot get my Michell Gyrodec / Technoarm "A" / Audio Technica OC 9 MLII / Tri-Chord Diablo to perform anything near my Leema Antila CD player in terms of, well, anything really. The Gyrodec is about 10 years old so has the AC motor and twin belts (replaced 12 months ago). The arm, cartridge and phono stage are now also about 12 months old. It's a good performance, please don't get me wrong,



Dutch Njoe Tjoeb is a real tulip, says Alan Smith from New Zealand.

(£600) CD spinner by a clear margin when properly sited and set up. Throughout the years I've periodically put it up against many sub £1,000 CD spinners and I've never ever felt the Rega turntable to be comprehensively outperformed; quite the reverse in fact. That's why I was never

but in terms of soundstage width, depth and clarity the Antila is streets ahead and also outshines the Gyrodec on it's depth of bass. The Antila is just a lot more involving.

The Gyro combination is very clear and analytical, but there is just no presence or depth to the music - it's

almost as though it's giving a clinical and sterile performance.

The turntable stands on top of a spiked Partington Minim rack, nicely weighed down by a Musical Fidelity ASCR pre amp and power amp so this is a heavyweight support. The deck is levelled and set up meticulously, 30 second bounce etc and the OC 9 tracks at 1.5 grammes. The Diablo is set to the cartridge parameters. Having tried different interconnects over the years I admit to being a cable sceptic and would need convincing that this is where the issue lies. I've tried swapping but can hear no difference and it would take more than a cable change to enable it to catch up. I tried a PS Audio GCPH phono amp as a substitute but was really disappointed in the amount of

much time considering the original combination of arm, cartridge and phono stage. A properly set up and matched Gyro should romp ahead of any CD player, but I fear you've got for a relatively bright and forward arm, cartridge and phono stage, which gives a rather topky and mid-forward sound. Actually, the main culprit here is the Diablo, which is excellent in its way, but not famed for its deep, fulsome tonality. You either need to go for a fuller, bassier cartridge to partner it with or swap it for a richer more three dimensional phono stage. Here there is surely only one at the price; the Icon Audio PS3. Sumptuous is how I'd describe it, and it would suit your system a treat. **DP**



Icon Audio PS3 phono stage gives a sumptuous sound, says David.

noise it put into the system.

Speakers are Bowers and Wilkins CM7s and due for a change but that's another story.

Before I give up on vinyl is there anything I can do to improve things or do I accept that I've now reached a "natural state"? If I'm missing something what do I need to do to at least equal the Antila or hopefully surpass it? I have too many LPs to give up easily but am reluctant to have the Gyro just sitting there as a beautiful curiosity. I'm prepared to spend up to £1000 to fix this providing it moves me forward.

best regards
Bob Allen

Hi Bob. I would replace the Technoarm A (David will say more about this) and - especially - the phono stage. There are some top quality phono stages in this issue and one of them is likely for you. A valve phono stage will give you stage depth and imaging aplenty and I suspect the tweaked up Icon Audio PSI.2 would be worth auditioning. **NK**

The sad thing here is that you've obviously set the Gyro up meticulously but didn't spend quite as

MODS

Over the years having had access to big Pioneer 9000 series stuff and Teac reel-to-reel (the owner used to get me into free concerts at the Cornwall Coliseum - The Cure, New Order, Motorhead hitting the 100dB level - ouch!) and also Rogers A100 and big Nightingale triple enclosure things - well I was hooked!

Notable equipment has been a Nakamichi deck, Quad 34 (the controls more than the sound), Spondor speakers, John Michell Gyrodec/QC/Technoarm (which 18 month Lucy is showing unnerving interest in), Chutes Black, Sugden A21, Anatek phono (Adam's review) and lots of Tannoy, currently Glenair 15 - spot on about toe-in Noel!...

A question for David; Gyro SME IV v Orbe RB1000 variant. Priority - stage depth/tuneful bass.

A question for Noel. et al. Sorry about your loss of Tannoy Yorkminsters. Will heavily nodded WD Phono 3 (Black Gates etc;), give me worthwhile benefits of instruments having own timbre and space over otherwise good Anatek to support what the Chutes is good at.

Tannoy also don't advise Litz cable i.e. my Kimber 8tc?? I liked Townshend Isolda, and apparently Glenair 15 is

not a real Prestige for not being Alnico like the Yorkminster (couldn't they have put a 15 in that cabinet), a political hot potato, I know but thoughts all the same please.

Hi-Fi World high points have included David after taking over from the Popemeister in Aug 07; SME, Sugden, Anatek and your expansion of vinyl section. I am currently listening to Goldfrap's Seventh Tree, Heads Remain in light, Daniel Lanois, Dennis Wilson - Pacific Ocean Blue, Kraftwerk Min'Max, **David Anthony Howey Cornwall**

WD Phono 3, which uses valves, modded with special components like Black Gate capacitors, will sound quite substantially better than any commercially available phono stage. The company making Black Gates, Jelmax in Japan, ceased manufacture in 2007 though, so unless they have re-started, Black Gates will be getting rare by now, as stocks decline. Go down this path if you can, however.

I wouldn't worry too much about Alnico and such like. There are fad materials like Alnico in the Far East and the basis of their popularity is well founded, but nothing to get too worked up about. Tannoy Prestige loudspeakers are intended for the Japanese market where such boxes must be ticked. **NK**

Hi David - the SME Model 10 offers superior stage depth to the GyroDec, although to be fair the Gyro is more expansive left to right. The Linn LP12 has one of the most tuneful basses around, and fine stage depth, although again isn't as wide left-to-right as a Gyro. **DP**

GET ECSTATIC

I wonder if you can suggest one or two alternative 'speakers for my system. It consists of Naim Nat 03 tuner, Rega Saturn CD, Krell FPB 250 watt monoblocks, Audio Research Reference 3 pre-amp and - at present - Gamut L3 standmounts. Transparent Super cabling throughout.

I listen to classical music, especially piano and string quartets, and acoustic jazz - no rock or pop. The Gamuts are a well engineered design, but I feel I need speakers with perhaps greater finesse and delicacy and a more open, airy soundstage. They could well be floorstanders. Budget up to £6000.

Tony Mates

I would suggest you audition Martin Logan hybrid electrostatics, such as the Puritys I reviewed in our September 08 edition. They offer a beautiful sound with any music type but being so pure and crossover free



Martin Logan Purity hybrid electrostatic loudspeakers.

and are especially strong with strings and classical instruments. Of all the loudspeakers I review Martin Logans stand out in my mind (excepting Tannoy's vast Prestige loudspeakers), especially at their price, which under represents their relative quality I feel. The Martin Logan electrostatic panel really is a special experience and you will not hear a sound stage that comes close, from a cone 'speaker.

NK

Also consider the Eminent Technology LFT-8b. Substantially cheaper at around half your maximum budget, these planar magnetic hybrids are wonderfully seamless and expansive. **DP**

OLD GOLD

I came across, on the World Design Forum web site, an article about upgrading the KLS3 tweeter from the Audax Gold to the Seas 002 Millennium tweeter.

I built the original Mk II loudspeaker when it first came out. I have similar problems with the rippling on the surface of the tweeter but I didn't realise that the gas leaked from this tweeter. Does this rippling mean that the gas has leaked from my tweeter also?

Can you advise me on whether I can buy a similar Audax replacement? And can you give me details of the crossover mod to suit the Seas 002

Millennium tweeter and what companies would supply this tweeter?

Thanks for your time.

yours faithfully,

Patrick Smith

Hi Patrick. This is a recurring tale as the Audax HD-3P piezo Gold Dome tweeter did leak, losing its inert pressurising gas. We ran a complete article on replacing the Gold Dome of KLS3 with a Seas Millennium in our June 2008 issue (p80). I cannot reprint it here, but it is available as a back issue from our e-editions. Just go to the web site www.hi-fiworld.co.uk and press the big red button at top right to go through to our on-line delivery system to buy the back issue. You can get Seas drive units from Madisound in the USA or Solen in Canada. Seas are Norwegian but do not sell direct. **NK**

TRANSFORMER VOLTAGES

I am currently using an Eastern Electric M520 purchased about 3 years ago. Sadly, it has developed a nasty buzz in the transformer but my local valve expert in Exeter has just managed to

solve the problem when we thought a new transformer might be needed. The amplifier I bought is rated at 220 volts and the local repairer is sure that 240 volts is putting a strain on the amplifier, saying H.T. is rising beyond the safe limits of the capacitors and suggesting I have a separate transformer made up to reduce the mains to 220 volts.

He has regularly measured the local mains at 248 volts and is concerned for the safe future of the amplifier

As experts in this area, I wondered if you would advise on this and whether other readers have experienced similar problems with valve products sourced from abroad.

Thanks very much for any advice and insights as I have been missing the amp a while, though a friend lent me an old NAB. Speakers are sensitive Audionote ANEs, usually suited to valve equipment.

regards

**Mark Armitage
Exeter**

Hi Mark. If the mains is running at 248V and the product is designed for 220V then there is 13% over voltage. This is a little higher than the 10% or so a designer might envisage, although Eastern Electric are based in Hong Kong (220V) and would be aware that their products may well see 240V overseas, as many territories use 240V.



Seas Millennium 002 tweeter, a top quality design able to replace the Audax HD-3P Gold Dome.

You say the problem was 'solved' but do not say how. Do you mean the realisation that a voltage difference existed? If so, I think not. Mains transformers buzz because they have loose windings or because the local supply is 'dirty' and full of harmonics and I see you live in or close to Exeter, where agricultural or industrial machinery might be a problem. This is one possibility.

Sometimes the transformer

mountings need tightening or even the lamination clamp screws, as the lams. can buzz too. Transformers are varnish impregnated to prevent this but air pockets can result in dry areas. Over-voltage does not in itself cause buzzing; capacitors simply rupture if over run.

It is usual to use an auto-transformer for step down and you need to consult Farnell or RS Components for this. I suspect it will not provide a cure however. If the buzz disappears late at night, then its the mains supply I would guess. If it is constant, the transformer. Either way, it does not need replacing unless the buzz is driving you mad.

NK

SIMPLY NOT THE BEST

Whilst I agree that thinking in terms of "the best" is unhelpful and reductive, I thought it a bit ironic that, close by that statement, in the key defining your "verdicts", the top category was "simply the best". I think that, like Tina Turner, it

it matters that much. There are, in truth, lots of statements we make that should be qualified, but then you get into long, linguistically tortuous diversions that send our readers to sleep. And we do try not to do that!

*The Heresy's were nothing other than idiosyncratic, but imaginative and very good in many ways. Not the subtlest package perhaps but definitely entertaining. Putting the bass unit close to the floor brought bass up, part of the design, and putting them close to rear walls would also help. High sensitivity means they are great for low powered valve amps. **NK***

DAMPING FACTOR

I became acutely aware of your inclusion of damping factor as a measurement in your extensive amplifier tests in the April issue. I find damping factor can be a meaningful spec but not as it is usually presented.

Simply giving a value is mainly useful to compare amplifiers measured

across the bandwidth, particularly at high frequencies. This is rare but I find it useful in getting a sense of the basic linearity of the amplifier circuit before the application of corrective negative feedback. If the damping factor is basically the same at low frequencies, mid-frequencies and high frequencies, basically across the audible 20Hz to 20kHz bandwidth the amplifier circuit is probably quite linear and also quite stable and the amp is probably therefore quite good.

Your thoughts on this subject would interest me, given the experience shown in your reviews and particularly given the design experience of many of your writers.

Allen Edelstein
New Jersey, USA

Hi Allen. Thanks for writing and your interest. We measure damping factor by switching from 8 Ohms to 4 Ohm and noting the change in an amplifier's output voltage. Then D.F. is $(m-n)/mn-m$, where m is the factor by which the load changes (2 in our case) and n is the change in output voltage. You can find the derivation in Mannie Horowitz's book 'Measuring Hi-Fi Amplifiers', Library of Congress Catalogue No. 67-20987. We use 40Hz as the measuring frequency.

You could measure output impedance (inverse of damping factor) across the audio band to assess feedback, but we choose to measure the rise in distortion at high frequencies. This takes into account basic non-linearity as well as the amount of feedback used.

Our experience of using a wide variety of loudspeakers with an equally large number of amplifiers shows that damping factors above about 20 are sufficient to obviously apply control to under damped loudspeakers, whilst damping factors below about 5 have no affect. This, quite frankly, is in line with the general industry view. As Laurie Fincham of KEF pointed out to me long ago, loudspeakers are self damped acoustically and magnetically, as well as electrically by the amplifier. Highly damped loudspeakers do not much need a high D.F. amp. However, under damped loudspeakers like our in-house Spendor S8es boom and sound boxy with low D.F. valve amps, but are fine with high D.F. transistor amps. Our Spendors work wonderfully with Musical Fidelity's AMS50 but they sound obviously 'tubbier' with our Icon Audio MB845 valve (sorry - tube!) amps and do not suit zero feedback valve amps at all.

When taking a view on all this, it's always useful to bear in mind that every bass unit has a big coil of



Klipsch Heresy III, idiosyncratic but fun, says Noel.

is time that description was pensioned off. How about "pushed our buttons" or just "exciting quality".

Anyway, I bought the edition because it included the Heresy speakers. I use a 1990s Heresy II model with considerable satisfaction and wondered if there were any real changes and what you thought (I can remember what Ken Kessler thought of the Heresy II). It turns out that the Heresy III is different in a variety of ways and I have a sneaking suspicion I would not want to swap over to them. But the Heresy IIs are very bass-light, so not everything is different.

Graham Elliott

Perhaps we should say "amongst the best", but somehow I'm not sure

the same way but is not very meaningful for an individual amp without further information and usually a lot more of it.

Perhaps you have printed this and I just missed it, but damping factor needs a statement of the impedance used to measure it. I would normally assume 8 ohms for this but in this day of lower impedance speakers perhaps 4 ohms is used and I would appreciate knowing this. Another piece of data needed is at what frequency the value is derived. I've seen measurements over 100 Hz and since damping factor implies a degree of bass control this may not be a useful point to take it since at lower frequencies the damping factor can be quite different and is often lower implying lower control.

Finally, I have once in a great while seen damping factor measured

wire, the low pass inductor, between it and the amplifier, and this will measure 0.5 Ohms or so, according to the core material, wire thickness etc., increasing output impedance and lowering damping factor. This being so it is surprising we hear any differences at all. **NK**

WELL CONNECTED

I thought I would write to tell you about something that occurred after upgrading to a valve amplifier.

I just received my Icon Audio Stereo 40 III (KT88 Version) and after assembling it and connecting up all the interconnects I sat back to listen. I can tell you I am very impressed; whether its this amp or the fact that I am now using valves I can't tell you, but the sound is a magnitude better than my old transistor amp. All the instruments on my vinyl and CD now sound like instruments; its hard to explain but everything just sounds more real!

Anyway, the point. When installing the new amp I had to move a couple of components around (to allow the amp to sit in a more spacious area, to give better cooling). While doing this I happened to swap a couple of my interconnects to other components. Once I'd finished, I sat back to listen and started with my CD.

Now, although it sounded good, as always, I felt it was not quite as clear and vivid as before. After checking I realised I had used my original CD interconnect (VDH the 1st ultimate) to connect up the tuner. Before I removed anything I swapped to listen to the tuner and after a while thought that was not as good as before also. So I set about



Michell Alecto amplifier can be upgraded, Robin Cook points out.

thing! CD (an original MF X-Ray) just sounds much better with the VDH interconnect, yet that interconnect does not make my tuner sound better, it seems to sound best with its Chord interconnect.

Up until purchasing the new amp I was as sceptical as the next hi-fi listener about the difference interconnects and speaker cables can make (it's all in the head of the listener etc). But I think as valves let you hear more of the feeling within the source being used, the cable differences are more apparent.

I suppose this may start another cables debate within the Letters page, but I'm only writing down what I have observed. Anyway, it will make a change from the Denon 103 debates! thanks for listening

Andrew Burtchaeil

know (and it might be worth passing on to the readers) that Graham Fowler at Trichord Research can now supply the Mk2 Alecto boards, so existing owners of Mk1 Alectos can upgrade to new main boards, which can then be further upgraded to 250 watts per channel (I believe an extra transistor is added) and is said to transform the sound. It might be a cost effective upgrade for Mk1 owners such as Mr Rainey.

regards
Robin Cook

KEN DOD

Tonight I've been listening to 'Presenting Ken Dodd', his first album, a mono LP of romantic ballads from 1962. Once again I've enjoyed a lovely sounding mono recording and could hardly believe this one is 48 years old. I won't be around to see how my CDs fare in 48 years time but I do wonder.

The trip to the record shop in town was well worth it this week. First, I couldn't resist buying an LP featuring Kenny Ball, Chris Barber and Acker Bilk, the reason being the very same combination are due to appear at Yeovil's Octagon theatre soon - The Legendary 'Three B's'. It seemed a fitting buy.

Then I found the shop had some more 78s for sale. I picked up a few (couldn't manage to take more because of the weight) and they include three gems. Two Lonnie Donegans and wait for it - a Norman Wisdom recording. Being a fan of his I'm thrilled at owning a Norman Wisdom record on 78.

Well, sometimes you have to go backwards to move forwards... best wishes,

Melvyn Dover
Weymouth, Dorset

Hi Melvyn, I'll swop my Lady Gaga album for your Ken Dodd album if you want! **NK**



Musical Fidelity AMS50 keeps a tight grip on loudspeakers.

MICHELL ALECTO

I have just seen the letter from John Rainey in the Philippines regarding his Michell Alectos. Apologies if you were already aware of this, but just to let you

swapping all the interconnects back to their original components. Now my CD player sounds great again and my tuner is also back to how I like it.

It seems to be some sort of synergy

Accessing the Source, Unleashing the Performance

hiaudio

*True Audio Magic...
brought to you by Usher*

Dancer Mini-2 diamond DMD
 sensitivity: 90 dB @ 1 watt / 1m
 nominal impedance: 4 ohms
 frequency response (-3 dB): 28 Hz ~ 40 kHz
 power handling: 100 watts
 crossover frequencies: 2.7 kHz
 weight: 57.5 kgs (including base)
 dimensions: 32 cm x 50 cm x 123.7 cm



The Diamond Revolution The new Usher Mini-2 Diamond DMD available now UK SRP £3700.



Oppo BD83SE NuForce Edition



Graham Slee Novo



NuForce V3 Amplifiers



Analogue Nirvana



HIAudio - UK Distribution

For your nearest stockists visit www.hiaudio.co.uk or call direct on 0845 052522



TELLURIUM Q LOUDSPEAKERS WORTH UP TO £4,560 TO WIN IN THIS MONTH'S GREAT COMPETITION!

Here's your chance to win one of four pairs of superb Tellurium Q loudspeaker cables! There is one set of cables per winner, and four winners.

The first postcard to be drawn wins a set of Ultra Black, the second gets a set of Green, the third gets Black and the fourth gets Blue. The winners can specify a single monowire set of up to 10 metres (i.e. 5m maximum per stereo side); Tellurium Q will terminate any length pair from a 1m to a maximum of a 5m pair for each of the winners. The blue is available unterminated but they will terminate them with their Beryllium copper Z plugs, as normally fitted to their higher end

cable. The maximum first prize value is £2,500, the second prize maximum value is £1,480, the third is £400 and the fourth £180. All in all, the total prize value in this superb competition is £4,560! Here's what Paul Rigby said in his review:

"Tellurium Q have concerned themselves with phase distortion which has the effect of 'smearing' sound frequencies. The company launched its first low phase distortion speaker cable in January, and the range has now expanded to a suite of four. Starting with the lowest priced Blue, a narrow, flat cable, the most noticeable aspect was a welcome absence of muddle; there's a more neutral, focused, precise aura to the music.

In fact the Blue cables exhibited a tremendous sense of control. The Blacks showed a more incisive nature. The low distortion effects maintain the excellent focus. Strings contain texture, bass has a real heft and vocals sound more relaxed and secure in their presentation. The Green cables could be described as 'sweet' - these warm, friendly cables broaden the soundstage and provide, for the first time, an onion skin array of musical detail. Top of the range, the broad, flat Ultra Blacks give you neutrality with a slice of texture. So, vocals have an extra expressive quality, bass seems to bounce along with cheerful abandon and wind instruments seem full of air. The Ultra Blacks will lay bare your music, getting under the skin of each recording."

For a chance to win one of these four great prizes, just answer the following four easy questions. Send your entries on a postcard only by 31st July 2010 to: **August 2010 Competition, Hi-Fi World magazine, Unit G4, Argo House, The Park Business Centre, Kilburn Park Road, London NW6 5LF.**

RULES AND CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

- ONLY ONE ENTRY PER HOUSEHOLD
- MULTIPLE ENTRIES WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY DISQUALIFIED
- PURCHASE OF THE MAGAZINE IS NOT A PRE-CONDITION OF ENTRY
- NO CORRESPONDENCE WILL BE ENTERED INTO
- THE EDITOR'S DECISION IS FINAL
- NO EMPLOYEES OF AUDIO PUBLISHING LIMITED, OR OF ANY COMPANIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE PRODUCTION OR DISTRIBUTION OF THE PRIZES, MAY ENTER

QUESTIONS

[1] When was the first Tellurium Q cable launched?

- [a] last December
- [b] this May
- [c] last August
- [d] this January

[2] How many cables are in the range now?

- [a] 1
- [b] 2
- [c] 3
- [d] 4

[3] What is the lowest priced cable in the range?

- [a] the Orange
- [b] the Pink
- [c] the Vermillion
- [d] the Blue

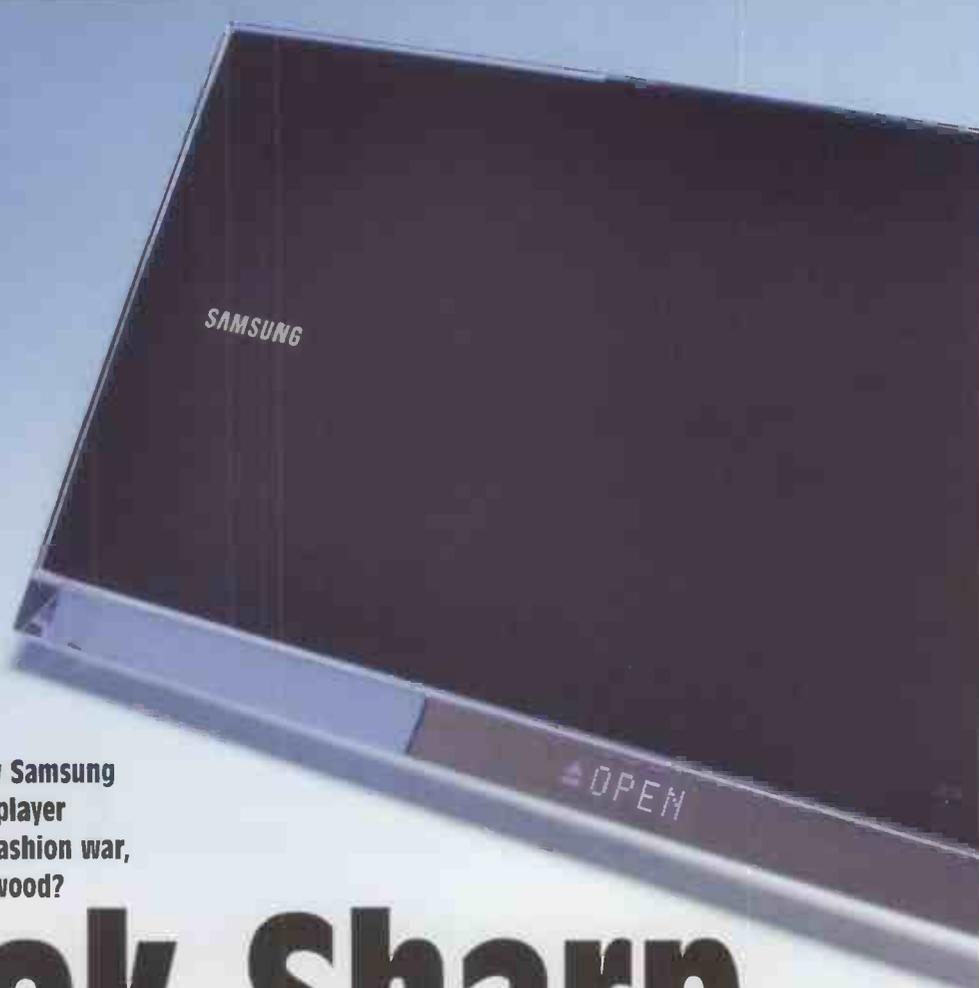
[4] What is the top cable in the range?

- [a] the Uber Black
- [b] the Big Black
- [c] the Grand Black
- [d] the Ultra Black

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

entries will be accepted on a postcard only

**MAY 2010 WINNER: ICON AUDIO STEREO 40 VALVE AMPLIFIER
Mr. Mike Brown of St. Sampson, Guernsey**



Can the smart new Samsung BD-C7500 Blu-ray player prevail in the AV fashion war, wonders Noel Keywood?

Look Sharp

Samsung's new BD-C7500 Blu-ray player certainly looks different; and can even be wall mounted alongside a flat panel TV. It's sassy in operation; touch its front panel and it slides sideways to reveal the disc tray. Having in my loft a BD-P1000 and 1400, and using a BD-P1600, I know Samsung Blu-ray players cost little and work well, even if they are not objects of beauty. So how would this natty new design stack up I wondered?

Cable entry is from the top of the machine when mounted vertically, because this is the rear when mounted horizontally, and this hardly suits wall mounting because routing and hiding top entry cables isn't the easiest task, as you have to chisel a groove in the wall or use a surface cable duct. So rear entry cable ducts mean precedence has been given to mounting horizontally, at least in this aspect of design. The displays, however, are positioned and visible for wall mounting, and difficult to see when surface mounting, so the precedence has changed here. Oh dear!

The cable compartment isn't very large but must cope with a slim power cable from an external

power supply, an HDMI cable and an ethernet cable for connection to the internet. This is a minimum. Also fitted is a combined analogue audio plus composite video miniature jack socket that uses a special 3mm diameter four-pole jack. A lead fitted with a matching jack plug, terminated in phono sockets for audio and video is supplied with the player. Composite video is low quality though, so this is fitted simply for functionality. There is an S/PDIF optical digital output and HDMI of course. However, only my slim HDMI cable was flexible enough to thread through the cramped compartment. Samsung don't fit Component, S-video or Scart video outputs, so the socket set available is limited and HDMI is the best choice.

Player controls are limited to the basic power on/off, tray open, start and stop. There is no track skip or fast search, which sit on the remote control only, and most surprisingly no track number display, only elapsed time. However, turning the player on also switched on my Samsung TV through the HDMI line and this brings up a track and time display for CD. Switching my Marantz SR8002 receiver to Pure Direct blanked the TV, and of course it can always be switched off.

It is featherlight at 1.5kgs so easy to put into place and connect up. Unlike larger players, it has an outboard power supply, so no mains connection is made direct to the player. A wall wart power supply delivers 12V (2A) to the player via a slender black cable. Once connected I simply had to touch a 'power' logo on the top plate and the top plate slid left to reveal the disc tray. There is no disc clamp, or puck or suchlike; instead the disc clicks onto the hub and is held by spring loaded fingers. It's a novel system and quite easy to use.

SET UP

Samsungs have no problem connecting to the 'net in my experience, unlike so many players and internet savvy (supposedly) devices. The BD-C7500 was no exception. It saw my Netgear router via an ethernet cable, ran through a handshake routine and declared itself connected. It can be set manually too. The player declares its hardware MAC address, so it can be identified on a server client list. It is also able to connect to a wireless network, using an optional Samsung receiver.

My player, possibly because it was an early review sample, would



not update its software, but it did download 18 internet services, including YouTube. Some were available, like History Channel, in text form only. Once video titles are stored into the player's library, recall is easy and fast. Unfortunately for me, turning the player over to remake connections caused all player settings and library-stored YouTube selections to be lost. I stored it all again then went through some brutal switch off and 'yank the power supply out of its socket' type routines, and found that the player does store data on-board (it has 1GB of memory), even when power is switched off. So what I did to erase everything I do not know, but it is possible, it seems!

The Samsung's set up menus even have an Audiophile setting, which I thought promising. Choosing this stops all onboard conversion of audio, effectively turning the player into a Blu-ray transport that sends data out raw, for processing in a modern receiver, meaning one that can handle Dolby TrueHD and DTS HD Master Audio. But the player does of course have onboard processing for this and will send out

PCM (basic digital) if set to do so. An interesting option was the recoding of Blu-ray high definition sound into compressed (i.e. lower quality) surround-sound for transmission through the digital S/PDIF connection, allowing older non-HDMI receivers to play surround sound of decent quality. This is made more necessary by the absence of analogue surround sound outputs of course.

Samsung say all audio discs will be played except the hi-def DSD layer of SACD, but they don't mention DVD-A. So I kicked off my use of the player with DVD-As and was pleased to find they were handled well, the player deftly omitting any mention of the high resolution 24/96 track, making only lower definition Dolby and DTS 5.1 Surround options available in the on-screen menus, at least with the discs I played. DTS surround sound offers good enough quality though, so I was happy enough, able to play Santana's 'Supernatural' album for example, which sounds so much better on my home DVD-A even with DTS audio than the office CD. Many players will not recognise DVD-A discs at all, but

the BD-C7500 had no such difficulty.

The CD layer of SACDs is played, but you only get stereo from this of course. Low resolution formats such MP3 and WMA are handled, from disc or USB memory stick, but not iTunes AAC.

On the video front, Blu-ray discs and DVDs are played, as well as AVCHD, a high definition camcorder format. I found the BD-C7500 had no trouble either with BDMV I have burnt to Verbatim BD-Rs and Panasonic BD-RE discs. So, much like other Samsungs I have used, this one was happily agnostic about the discs fed into it, playing them all, a nice result that allows it to be used without frustration.

Audio set up is fairly straightforward and on-screen guidance explains in short, simple terms what a setting is about.

SOUND QUALITY

Measurement suggested the analogue stereo output would provide a decent sound, and it did. Spinning Lady Gaga's 'The Fame Monster' CD



Each Avid product is born of a passion for real music. The visceral dynamic of a live Performance captured in a moment on vinyl is a special treasure. One which requires a superlative hi-fi system to convey realistically.

Turntables, amplifiers and accessories from Avid are dedicated to reproducing this realism.

To experience the truly sublime, please contact an Avid dealer to arrange your private audition.

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



Analogue Seduction.
4 Dragonfly Close,
Peterborough,
Tel: 01733 344768

Audio Workshop.
31 Prince of Wales
Road, Norwich,
Tel: 01603 61852

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

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



AVID HIFI Ltd, Unit 52, 137 North Gate, Alconbury Airfield, Huntingdon., Cambridgeshire, PE28 4WX, ENGLAND,
Tel: +44 (0)1480 457300 Fax: +44 (0)1480 457057 Website: www.avidhifi.co.uk, Email: info@avidhifi.co.uk

emillé

just for your musical bliss

AND THERE WAS CHA'AM



CONCEIVED AND PROUDLY HANDCRAFTED BY PASSIONATE AUDIOPHILES

Distributed in the UK by Angelsound Audio
www.angelsoundaudio.co.uk
Tel: 01923 352479

- Dealers

Midlands
Meyflower Sounds
Tel : 07931524266

Surrey/Hampshire
Blade Audio
Tel: 07843205374

West Sussex
Heatherdale Audio
Tel: 01903 872288

Northern Ireland
Kronos Audio Visual
Tel : 02887 753606

www.emillelabs.com info@emillelabs.com

had 'Bad Romance' pounding out strongly from my Marantz SR8002 receiver, fed first by HDMI. Switching to analogue audio introduced a small sense of softness and muddle, but this is hardly surprising considering the low quality audio output cabling. Bass remained surprisingly powerful, helping generate a good sense of dynamic scale.

I was a little concerned that video noise might be heard on the analogue output, because Composite Video is wide bandwidth and can generate a buzz when sharing a connector with audio, as it does on this player, caused by signal leakage across the plug. At normal and high listening levels I heard no noise at all, my ear against the loudspeaker. However, at maximum volume a slight buzz appeared. I played a lot of music through the analogue connection and it gives good quality all the same, even if it is not an audiophile player.

Switching to the player's optical digital S/PDIF output the video buzz disappeared, but so does the on-screen track display as there is no video via S/PDIF. Sound quality was super considering its lowly position in life, sparkingly clean and clear, and with the firm bass that low jitter seems to provide (as well as stable imaging and a good sense of general cleanliness). The Eagles 'Somebody' was handled beautifully, cymbals having a sweet quality, the central kick drum providing a slow, solid beat. Switching over to HDMI digital showed all but no difference between this and S/PDIF with CD, albeit with video switched off at the Marantz SR8002 by running it in Pure Direct mode. I should point out that this is only available in Marantz receivers. It produces blank screened "why isn't this shebang working?" moments that other receiver manufacturers prefer to avoid, I suspect. For music replay though it is important to remove video content, in both the analogue and digital domains, as it always degrades sound quality through one mechanism or another, the mechanism being video induced jitter via HDMI.

Spinning the 2L 'Divertimenti' Blu-ray from Trondheim Soloists of Norway showed the player was able to convert both 24/192 DTS HD Master Audio and Dolby TrueHD to PCM and provide good sound quality from both. As usual I found DTS HD Master Audio slightly richer and the preferable of the two encodings, but this may be due to original encode quality, rather than the player or compression scheme. There was little sign of the slight high frequency emphasis I have heard from some

players; the Samsung sounded reasonably full bodied and free from subliminal screech when decoding to PCM. It also output 24/192 PCM from the disc to the receiver via HDMI and down converted it for transmission via the optical digital output and the analogue outputs. This meant the Samsung will play 24/192 surround-sound (5.1) at vast data rate (27Mbps) and downconvert it to lowly CD quality (1.2Mbps) and analogue, for compatibility with older receivers.

Load times were decent, but at 28 seconds for John Meyer's 'Where the Light Is' concert, with its Java menu, nothing special. Movies like 'Master and Commander, Far Side of the World', took an average 30 seconds, whilst a simple menu structure loaded in 15 seconds including the draw sliding shut.

VIDEO QUALITY

The BD-C7500 was good in its video quality but not the best I have seen to date, an accolade that belongs to Philips players. The player passed all HQV Blu-ray video tests and was especially smooth in tests for jaggies. However, the highest horizontal resolution panel of vertical lines was greyed out and this did not surprise me as I had already noticed my own HD test videos, shot with a tripod mounted camera in a local park to show grass and trees, suggested the player was good in this area, but not exceptional. Watching a Tiger Moth idling at Duxford, the slow rotating prop was captured without breakup as sometimes occurs, but a slight softening of detail and loss of depth made the picture just a trifle bland. I don't think this would be generally very noticeable, as the picture looked nice enough, with no obvious flaws. DVDs are upscaled.

CONCLUSION

Like all Samsung players the BD-C7500 proved fine at both audio and video. The company hasn't quite managed to master 'style' like B&O and Apple, and come up with a convincing product, however. The



sliding top plate was anything but slick in operation, and the onboard displays and cabling solutions were 'challenged', as if Samsung were unhappy about even trying to make technology subservient to style.

The remote control was legible, with its big buttons, but my fingers often hit the wrong grey one of the many. There was no data rate information either.

Yet the BD-C7500 played all audio discs and video discs with ease, providing very decent sound quality, although of course this is receiver-dependent too. I was more enamoured by its ability to put YouTube on the TV, not the most difficult thing to do but something I haven't bothered with all the same. Call me fickle, but listening to Sharon den Adel of Within Temptation singing 'Angels' on YouTube with her extraordinary coloratura soprano style recommended this player to me!

VERDICT

Tidy little Blu-ray player that works nicely and provides good sound, but does not resolve style/function compromises especially well.

Samsung BD-C7500 £299

Samsung

+44 (0)845 7267864

www.samsung.com/uk

FOR

- neat appearance
- good sound
- plays all silver discs

AGAINST

- awkward cable exit
- poor displays
- noisy draw action

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Our analysis shows frequency response of the analogue output stretches from 5Hz up to 21.2kHz with little deviation from flatness, a result as good as any hi-fi CD player, so Samsung haven't scrimped here. The DAC used was linear over the player's entire dynamic range, returning a 0.22% distortion figure at -60dB, similar to that of dedicated CD players that nowadays get to 0.18% at best.

With normal output of 2V, low noise and very good EIAJ Dynamic Range the BD-C7500 works well as a CD player, via its stereo analogue output. Obviously, this output isn't purposed for high resolution audio and nor is the S/PDIF optical output. The HDMI output must be used.

Jitter from the optical digital output was low at around 10pS, except below 100Hz where jitter rose to around 300pS, a result worse than the BD-P1600, so here the BD-C7500 looked less impressive. However, with low jitter over most of the audio band the digital output should still work well with an external DAC, or via the optical input of a receiver.

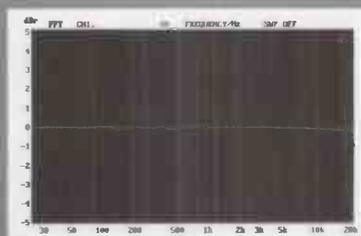
The Samsung measured well as a CD player, and will provide good results from its analogue and digital (S/PDIF) outputs. NK

Frequency response (-1dB)
CD 5Hz - 21.2kHz

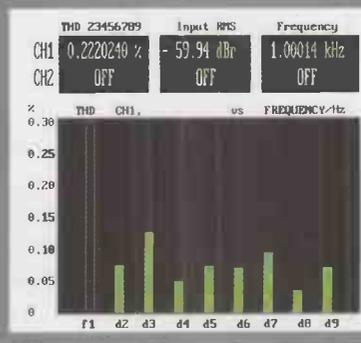
Distortion (%)	
0dB	0.001
-6dB	0.001
-60dB	0.22
-80dB	3.1

Separation (1kHz)	
Noise (IEC A)	-109dB
Dynamic range (EIAJ)	100dB
Output	2.05V

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



DISTORTION



Black Rhodium

"British Cables communicating more from your music, giving you greater appreciation"



TANGO Loudspeaker Cable

"One of the best that I have heard at the price".

Hi-Fi World July 06

"Plenty of insight into what's happening in those lower octaves."

HiFi Choice Sept.2006

"Attractive openness about the sound and high frequencies stay refined"

What HiFi? Feb 2008



CODA Stereo Interconnect

"There's a great deal of detail on offer, effortlessly presented"

"Bass is strong but immaculately controlled"

HiFi Choice Best Buy October 2007

Hifi Choice Silver Award 2007

Hifi Choice Silver Award 2008



FUSION Mains Cable

"It provided a noticeable improvement in both clarity and refinement over the whole audio spectrum with a wide range of music."

Hi-Fi World Aug 2007

Black Rhodium cables are designed and manufactured in England using advanced manufacturing techniques jointly developed by Black Rhodium and its suppliers to deliver much greater realism and pleasure to your music.

Contact our dealers to hear and buy your Black Rhodium cables

Zouch Audio
Ashby, Leicestershire
01530 414128
www.zouchaudio.co.uk

H. G. Rapkin
Northampton
01604 637515
www.hgrapkin.co.uk

Audio T
Swansea
01792 474608
www.audio-t.co.uk

Z Lensman
East Grinstead
01342 305103
www.zlensman.com

www.blackrhodium.co.uk
Tel: +44 (0) 1332 342233

HAVE YOU DOWNLOADED YOUR COPY OF THE NEW ATACAMA BROCHURE?

VISIT: WWW.ATACAMA-AUDIO.CO.UK/ TO DOWNLOAD.



You've found it!

Looking for (probably!) the best addition to your **Home Entertainment** system that also **offers real value for money?**

Then the **Atacama Equinox** range of English handmade Hi-Fi & AV Equipment supports **are for you!**



Prices start from as little as £169.99!



Atacama

Multi-Media Furniture : Where beauty and balance converge

For more information or to find your nearest retailer, please visit:
www.atacama-audio.co.uk
or call **01455 283 251**



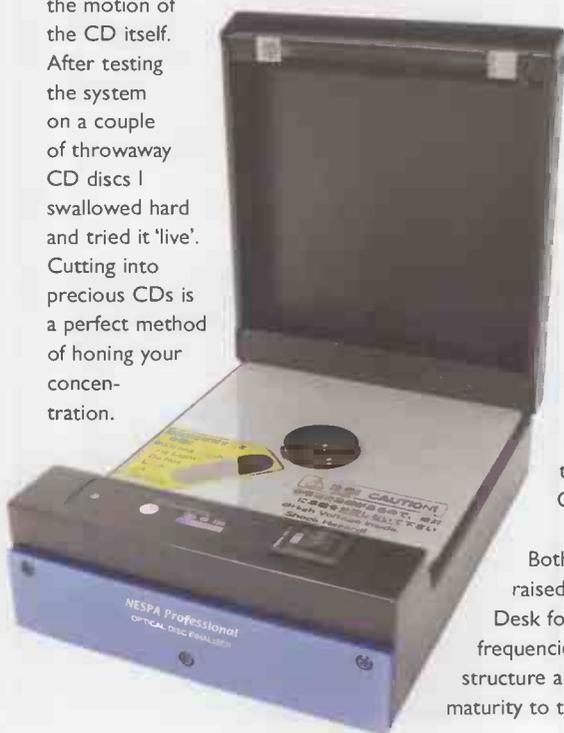
AUDIO DESK SYSTEME CD SOUND IMPROVER £380

NESPA PROFESSIONAL OPTICAL DISC FINALIZER £603

What is the point of fretting about the quality of your current CD player if the CDs themselves are not playing to their true potential? Shouldn't we be getting the software right first? If not, can we truly trust our ears when listening to any CD player? I'm not talking about the inherent 'glass ceiling' effect of the CD format *per se*, when compared to an analogue format such as vinyl, I'm talking about exploiting the currently unused sonic capabilities of the basic CD disc...

I managed to grab two pieces of gadget hardware which claim to get the most out of the common or garden CD. The first, the Audio Desk Systeme CD Improver, is a basic, manual lathe. Arriving in a shoe box-sized container, the CD Improver asks you to lift the hinged glass lid, remove the screw puck, lever up the protective metal disc and place your CD, label downwards, onto the mini-turntable. Once the plate, puck and glass lid are, once again, secured in place, you turn on the beast via a front fascia knob. This spins the platter at increasing speeds. You then carefully swing the spring-loaded blade, which is attached to a metal arm, towards the edge of the CD disc. A 30° bevelled edge is cut into the CD edge. Once completed, you take the supplied black marker pen and, rotating the platter by hand, coat the bevelled edge with the pen ink.

The point of the painted bevelled edge is to prevent light scatter across the CD as well as to stabilise the motion of the CD itself. After testing the system on a couple of throwaway CD discs I swallowed hard and tried it 'live'. Cutting into precious CDs is a perfect method of honing your concentration.



After a couple of dry runs, though, the method quickly became second nature.

Testing the completed discs on my reference Cyrus CD8SE, I couldn't help but raise an eyebrow. After treatment via the Audio Desk Systeme, my test discs exhibited a greater sense of focus over all frequencies. Before, on standard play, each frequency tended to bleed into each other producing a fuzzy presentation. Post treatment, everything was tighter, meaning that notes started and stopped with more speed and moved with superior precision. Bass was tighter and more punchy, mids were as clear as a bell and treble produced extra air. Each frequency now enjoyed additional space and each was now able to portray subtle nuances – before, those details were often masked by the intrusive bleed from adjacent frequencies.

Joining the CD Improver is Nespa's Optical Disc Finalizer – I reviewed the more powerful Professional variant. This gadget proclaims to properly finish the CD's manufacturing process, eliminating tiny elements of Argon gas that sit in between the CD layers, lowering the efficiency of the laser reflection. Similar in size to an external hard disk, the Nespa asks you to lift the metal lid, place the CD on the spindle, close the lid, switch on and

select one of three flash frequencies: thirty, sixty or 120 times. That is, the rotating CD is fired at by a 3 million lux flash bulb, for the stipulated number of occasions, which releases the gas, closing the gap between the layers and improving the efficiency of the CD playback. Once completed, you open the lid, take out the CD and play.

This time? Both eyebrows were raised. While the Audio Desk focuses the general frequencies, the Nespa brings structure and a real sense of maturity to the overall sound



making it more 'analogue' in tone. There's a real separation

between each and every instrument, allowing you to focus on that instrument and measure its performance. Even complex electronica arrangements exhibited order where each, previously chaotic, synth run was now individually recognisable. The Nespa induces a great sense of calm over the entire performance allowing you to focus on the music rather than being distracted by extraneous frequencies.

So which is best? Neither, and both! That is, to get the best out of your CD performance, I would recommend that you use both, almost as a team. Mainly because each box targets different elements of the CD performance. Losing one of the products would mean that a major element of the CD improvement would be missed.

As a combination, this pair of boxes are very impressive indeed. Of course, so they should be for the price. In fact, for the price, you'd expect an honest-to-goodness sound upgrade and, to be frank, that's what the Audio Desk/Nespa combo brings you. For the first time, I felt that my CD software was running at peak performance allowing my hardware to show me its capabilities. The price of both is formidable, but either would still provide good value to those with large Compact Disc collections and/or a group of like minded audiophile friends. **PR**

[Contact: www.russandrews.com, 0845 345 1550]

SOUNDBITES

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

audiosanctum

PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY



▶ 07517 889 738 ▶ www.audiosanctum.co.uk ▶ Info@audiosanctum.co.uk



If you want the best from your system, this is the affordable Room Analyzer that you should not be without... and it seems the reviewers agree too!

"Highly effective acoustic analysis tool that's simple to use and understand."

- Hi-Fi World



"For a lot less money than most loudspeaker upgrades, this brilliantly conceived product fills a real niche and is highly recommended."

- Hi-Fi Choice



Jimmy Hughes uncovered one of hi-fi's best kept secrets - XTZ. Here are just some of the comments from the exceptional Hi-Fi Choice (Issue 333) system review:

"This system offers great sound and terrific value. And for those unable to listen, prior to purchase, we'd simply say this - order with confidence. Trust us, we are the reviewers after all and it's our job to know these things."

- Hi-Fi Choice

"An amplifier and CD player with this sort of finish and build quality for just £600 and £365 respectively? Unbelievable!"

- Hi-Fi Choice

"Musically, the presentation is clear and unpretentious - a very nice system that's a pleasure to listen to."

- Hi-Fi Choice



The most technically advanced cables in the world.

Every meaningful cable technology patent in the industry belongs to MIT Cables.

Hear the technology difference at the following fine dealers:

Acoustica, Tel 01244-344227

Audio T, Tel 01242-583960

Blade Audio, (Generation 3 & Dot 2)

Tel 01252-737374

Heatherdale Audio, Tel 01903-872288

High End Cable, (Generation 3)

Tel 01775-761880

soundlocation, Tel 01304-221011

The Audio Consultants (MA Dealer),

Tel 0118-981-9891

The Audio Works (MA Dealer), Tel 0161-428-7887

MIT® Music Interface Technologies™



MIT CVT 2 balanced audio interconnect.



Oracle MA-X interconnect with Adjustable Articulation Response Module.

Distributed by:

P.O. Box 988, Cheltenham, Glos., GL50 9FJ

www.audiobility.co.uk www.mitcables.co.uk

Telephone: 01242-506-335



Head Teacher

Sennheiser's new HD800 sets the standards by which all other headphones should be judged, says the company.

David Price tests this new flagship design...

There's more than one way to make a high end headphone. Just like loudspeakers and moving coil cartridges, subtle variations on the same basic theme produce profoundly different sonic signatures. The basic dividing line is of course between dynamic headphones (as espoused by Sennheiser, Grado, Audio Technica, *et al.*) and electrostatics (the most famous exponent of which is Stax). But even within the dynamic field, there are differences...

While the supertest-winning Grado GS1000i we liked so much a couple of months ago are unarguably American, these HD800s are totally Teutonic; all Mercedes Benz silver, edgy lines, 'technical style' and firm, minimalist padding. And as to those quirky Japanese Stax electrostatic earspeakers, it's like comparing a 2010 Audi A8 to a 1978 Toyota Century limousine. So they're beautifully hewn, very much in their characteristically German way.

A lot of work has gone into the HD800's innards. A new 56mm 'ring radiator' driver is used, displayed behind a damped-steel mesh. It's mounted in an unusual way, with the diaphragm forward, firing back at the ears at an angle. The headband is laminated steel and plastic, the earcups a type of low resonance 'high tech' plastic and the earpad cushions are made from a very soft and smooth micro-fibre. Tap the HD800s in all the usual places and there's still some resonance, although it's nowhere near as bad as most headphones. The HD800 has braided, Kevlar-reinforced OFC copper wire, covered with a fabric sheath; it is refreshingly acoustically 'dead'.

This headphone is not an ideal partner for the low quality output from your average iPod; someone who invests in headphones of such high quality should use a decent headphone amplifier such as a Musical Fidelity X-Cans V8. Weight is 330g, and I must say it feels lighter; the HD800 feels less like putting your head in vice than any other Sennheiser headphone I know. I'd say

it's still not *quite* as accommodating as a Stax, but then again it's lighter and lacks the sweaty vinyl padding!

SOUND QUALITY

More so even than loudspeakers, each high end headphone has its own 'constituency' of audiophiles that swears it's the best thing ever. So it's important to remember how incredibly subjective headphone sound is. But anyone who hears the HD800 would have to say this; it is surely the most explicit, incisive dynamic headphone yet made. And yet it is certainly *not* the case that the HD800 is an ear-splitting, migraine inducing instrument of torture. Indeed as headphones of this type go, it's impressively smooth and svelte.

Imagine a vast, expansive, open soundstage with lots of sunlight shining in, with all the respective elements in the mix sparkling beautifully yet not blindingly, and that's the HD800. It's a truly large scale performer, locating everything with clinical precision and utter control. Bass stops and starts almost as swiftly as the best closed back design, and although it's not as prodigious, it's wonderfully tuneful. At the other frequency extreme, the Sennheiser is majestic, giving a supremely crisp yet delicate sound to a hi-hat cymbals.

Yet the big Sennheiser is not a cerebral listening experience; cue up The Ones' 'Flawless' and it displays immense speed and pace. There's something almost supernaturally propulsive about these headphones; doubtless down to very light and rigid drivers, they invest even sedate sounding songs such as Glen Campbell's 'Wichita Lineman' with brio. It's this mix of crystalline clarity, pin-point image location, a wide open soundstage and a constant sense of the music having a trajectory that makes them so special.

By contrast, Audio Technica's ATH-W5000 is a more clinical sounding device, although possibly fractionally smoother and more polished in the treble, whereas Grado's GS1000i is an even more



propulsive performer but lacks some of the HD800's low level resolving capabilities and atmosphere. In my experience, only when you get into the territory of something like Stax's SR-007/2 (with matching energiser) that the Sennheiser's limitations become apparent; the Stax has a more languid, relaxed sound but it's considerably more organic. A bit like Yamaha NS1000Ms versus Quad 2905s, they're both superb, but use different technology to do different things - and succeed.

CONCLUSION

Surely one of the best ever dynamic headphones, the Sennheiser HD800s are an engineering and sonic master work. The question then presents itself, are they right for you? Some I suspect will still prefer the rockier sound of the top Grados - even if it is, in absolute terms, a fraction less capable. Others will migrate to the natural warmth and musicality of pricier Staxes. Many I suspect will go for the skilful working compromise between the two that is the HD800. Whatever you decide, make sure you try before you buy, because headphones differ vastly.

VERDICT ●●●●●

State of the art dynamic headphones offering tremendous insight into the music and a captivating presentation.

SENNHEISER HD800 £1,000

Sennheiser UK

☎ +44 (0)1494 551551

www.sennheiser.com

FOR

- expansive midband
- immense detail and insight
- highly propulsive rhythms
- styling, build, comfort

AGAINST

- nothing



Black Reign

David Price gets a kick up the eighties with Onix's new Concerto 1 loudspeakers...

Once upon a time, there was a subculture in hi-fi that held 'pace, rhythm and timing' as the three gods to whom the audiophile should worship. It wasn't a mainstream movement, but it still made an indelible impact on the hi-fi scene of the nineteen eighties, and catapulted a number of select British brands to prominence.

Onix was just such a company; founded in 1979 in Brighton by Tony

Brady, it came to the enthusiast's attention around 1985 with its lovely little OA20, and later OA21 integrated amplifiers. Along with the likes of Naim, Exposure, Incatech and Myst, they championed stripped down minimalist 'black box' amplifiers that lacked power, weight, bulk and buttons compared to their Japanese competition, but packed passion and precision aplenty.

Trouble was, that in focusing on the start and stop of every

note, and the complex interrelation between them, you ended up with very nimble and sprightly sounding electronics which were often lacking in other respects. This breed of amplifiers wasn't famous for its lush tonal colouring; most were as dry as a schoolboy's flannel. Nor were they terribly three dimensional, or possessed of the last degree of smoothness; 'flat earth' (for that's the name they were given) hi-fi was certainly not for all.

In 2000, Onix was acquired by Rogers and its first speakers were born, which have gone on to sell well in the Asia Pacific region, although it wasn't until 2008 that the Onix name resurfaced in the UK. This time, two long term Onix fans resurrected some classic models, contacted some previous employees, and breathed



new life in the company as we here in the UK once new it.

The Concerto 1 loudspeakers are the result, voiced here but made in China by Shanling. Selling for £600 and sporting an excellent piano lacquer gloss finish, they're a two way ported design measuring 190x330x315mm, they have a claimed 90dB sensitivity [see MEASURED PERFORMANCE] courtesy of an innovative Vifa XT concentric ring radiator tweeter and an unusual 5.25 inch 'direct drive' magnet mid/bass driver. The quality of build and finish was generally good.

SOUND QUALITY

Back in the nineteen eighties, there was no small number of baby boxes designed to 'carry the tune, not the recording' as it were, (the Linn Kan springs to mind as an obvious

example), but it's rare to hear speakers voiced so single-mindedly now. The Onix Concerto 1 is one such example, and it's quite an ear opener, if your ears are attuned to the generic sound of a modern standmounter. By normal considerations, it has very limited bass, an over prominent midband and a somewhat bright treble, along with a surprisingly two dimensional soundstage.

There's another way to read them, however. These are distinctive sounding standmounting loudspeakers, with a lively midband which can accentuate the grain of vocalists, but the presentation is never less than seat of the pants. Whatever music you feed the Concertos they just go out to find the rhythm within; matters of timbral accuracy, bass extension and depth perspective are relegated down the pecking order, with everything depending on the interplay between the snare drum and the hi-hat. This, as 4hero's 'Give In' showed, is the point of the Concerto 1s; they're about driving the song's beat along relentlessly, as opposed to giving a complete, unredacted rendition of the mix. It's quite an ear-opening experience; you just don't get this sort of voicing anymore.

Switching to some classic rock in the shape of Cafe Jacques' 'Ain't No Love in The Heart', and again the Onix Concertos cut straight to the impactful drum kit opening, showing a crisp treble from its Vifa tweeter. When the vocals kicked in, again the accent was on the rhythmic phrasing rather than the timbre of the voice. Despite presenting a decently wide soundstage, these standmounters didn't quite capture the expanse of this lovely late nineteen seventies production. The lack of any useful low bass didn't help; I found pushing them back towards the rear wall, about 15cm away, helped but it's a tricky call because they can start to slow down if they're too close. This is doubtless helped by the bass; although the midband is fast and lucid, lower down things slow down slightly.

On classical music, whilst I could enjoy the zesty midband of the Onix speakers, and the engagingly explicit way that the violins were carried, the generally bass light tonal balance wasn't so much fun. The immaculately recorded Mozart Symphony No.29 in A major (Charles Mackerras, Scottish Chamber Orchestra) showed a slightly nasal tonality to acoustic instruments, a lack of low level detail and atmosphere, along with less than impressive image placement. For all their foibles however, the Concerto 1s did entertain, especially when aspirated by a World Audio Design K5881 power amplifier, which lent things much needed warmth.

CONCLUSION

An interesting loudspeaker this, and a charismatic one, but you could say it wears its character on its sleeve, where others try to hide theirs. The Onix Concerto 1 is nothing if not interesting, but won't be for everyone. The most impressive aspect of it for me is that in a risk-averse world, it certainly is *not* another 'me too' product.



VERDICT ●●●●●
Musically explicit but tonally dry and limited at the frequency extremes.

ONIX CONCERTO 1 £600
Real Hi-Fi
0870 9096777
www.onix-audio.co.uk

FOR

- rhythmically explicit
- musically engaging
- high quality finish

AGAINST

- mid-forward tone
- unconvincing bass
- depth perspective

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Concerto 1's performance is dominated by a steady roll off in output below 500Hz. Bass frequencies measure -10dB down and this is more than that used as compensation for wall placement, which usually amounts to -4dB or so. The port peaks sharply at 60Hz, and its output was +7dB above driver output at 80Hz - quite a lot - so the Concerto appears to rely on its rear port to make up any bass shortfall. That still leaves the lower midband looking deficient however, and only listening tests can sort out whether such dramatic departures from the norm in loudspeaker engineering have subjective merit. The ring dome tweeter, a Vifa/Scanspeak unit, offers smooth treble output to 20kHz, with output strong above 10kHz, so the Concerto 1 will have a little top end sting.

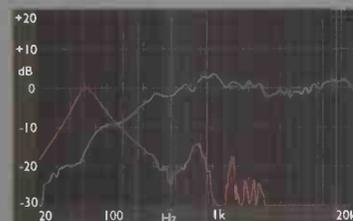
The port's narrow tuning is unusual, seen in the red response trace and also as a strong peak in the impedance curve. Both suggest the small bass unit is underdamped and resonant. That it works hard was made obvious by high bass distortion levels, 8% from the driver at 40Hz and 6% from the port, distortion rising steeply below this frequency.

Sensitivity was good at 87dB sound

pressure level from one nominal watt of input (2.8V), especially as overall impedance was high-ish at 7 Ohms. Onix don't trade sensitivity for bass in the Concerto 1.

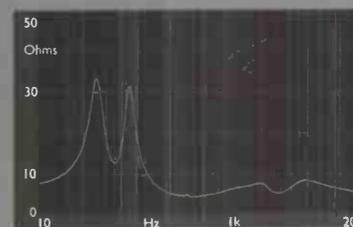
The Concerto 1 is an unusual design that doesn't follow convention. Low frequency performance looks poor. NK

FREQUENCY RESPONSE

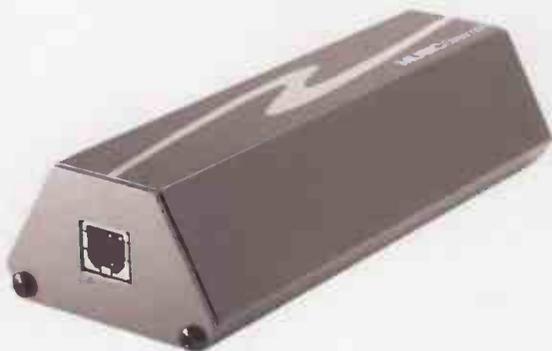


Green - driver output
Red - port output

IMPEDANCE



Streaming Out Loud!



Patrick Cleasby turns the volume up with the new HRT Technologies Streamer II+ USB DAC...

As time passes by, audiophiles the world over amass ever larger collections of 'digital music' on their hard drives, hopefully in the lossless compressed format that is FLAC, at the very least. Up to now, the general consensus seems to have been that this music is played out via a network device, such as a Squeezebox (or similar), but recently people have started to ask the obvious question, why bother to go wireless at all?

For example, if you've purchased a lovely new FLAC ripping box such as Illustrate's RipNAS, why don't you just play it straight out of that, without recourse to routers and ethernet cables and the like? The latter makes sense if you want music (wirelessly) all around the house, but could be regarded as technological overkill if it's just the one room you need to hear your tunes in...

Obviously you wouldn't want to use a PC soundcard, as they're generally spectacularly crummy, so surely a simple DAC would suffice, as it would for all those whose Mac Minis under the TV are not able to be hooked up digitally...

My previous practice for this purpose has been to use the very affordable E-Mu 0202 USB from the pro arm of Creative – a device intended for pro music use, but which did a nice job of getting up to 24/96 out of a Mac (24/192 out of a PC with fair luck and a following wind). The advantage it had over the Musical Fidelity V-DAC was that it

was bus-powered over USB, and the advantage over the Pro-ject USB Box was that it wasn't capped at 16bit audio, or quiet. Its only disadvantage was that on the Mac at least it required a somewhat flakey driver...

Now though, I have another solution before me, in the shape of this HRT Streamer II+ (£330); it's part of a range which includes the balanced output Streamer Pro version (at around £475) which is the current flagship of a very small range. It seems that as HRT have realised that the 24/96 resolution is very much where it's at for their potential clientele, as they have rapidly made obsolete its non-24/96-capable precursors! There's also the humble 'non-plus' version of the Streamer II at less than half the price.

The key point about all three is they all use audiophile-friendly Asynchronous USB protocols; and the fact that its creators include long-time hi-res Classic Records

But of course the nearest thing to hand was a MacBook Air, so I had to have a simple 'what's on my computer' test...

It is a commonplace for us to describe the unboxing of the product, but there is so little going on here it is silly. Almost all the money that you invest in your Streamer II+ goes into the little, sparsely-filled metal box itself. The cardboard box it comes in is plain white with an HRT sticker, contains the wrapped converter, some self-adhesive feet, PC and Mac postcard sized guides (basically 'don't fiddle with the levels on your computer' advice), and that's your lot. The little grey device is like a squat Toblerone with gold plated phonos at one end and B-type USB socket at the other.

It is down to you to source the requisite USB cable; in 99% of cases that will be the standard printer cable; USB A (flat blade) at one end, USB B (perversely D Shaped)

Simply select the Streamer - no other action necessary!



Defaults to Streamer after auto-driver install.



audio producer Michael Hobson. Now there's provenance! So does HRT's new delivery cut the mustard?

GETTING GOING

My first job on getting my hands on the Streamer II+ was to establish how nicely it played with a RipNAS.

at the other. The real joy is that no matter *what* you plug the A end into (Linux aside), the Streamer II+ is installed driverlessly and the key system panels also cleverly default to 24/96. (Remember the days when you had to faff about in the Mac MIDI settings? They're still there, have

grown a bit older, but crucially they know that the Streamer II+ is a hi-res piece of kit)...

Some will undoubtedly argue that very expensive USB cable is required, and they may be right - but the MacBook Air worked very well with the first thing that came to hand. The Air's single port is necessarily high powered as you can't boost drives with an additional power USB connection, so no problems there, but the lightly-powered computer can sometimes stutter when other system activity kicks in.

SOUND QUALITY

A quick test demonstrated that the Streamer II+ added a great kick to the likes of 'White Sister' from Toto's 'Hydra', and particularly the epic 'On the Loose' from Saga's classic 'World's Apart'. More subtle and tasteful analysis would follow once testing ended up on a powerful MacBook Pro...

But before then I felt obliged to attach the converter to a RipNAS and was surprised and overjoyed to see that even on the slightly esoteric Windows Home Server operating system, it just worked! You then simply install some player software; Logitech's Squeeze Player didn't seem to perturb the RipNAS and I could play music from other libraries on the network. UPnP users could doubtless use the PC renderer of their choice to connect to Asset UPnP or external Twonky servers too. VLC would also do it, although the other options offer their respective remote controllers, Squeeze and PlugPlayer, etc.

The Streamer II+ really comes into its own though for those who don't need all that network stuff, and I also felt duty bound to try it on a cooking PC. With my girlfriend's Sony VAIO laptop to hand, I found that setup, even on Windows Vista, was straightforward!

Here the real surprises kicked in. The only lossless available was a Kris Kristofferson tribute album, but the shared vocals of Lloyd Cole

and Jill Sobule on their track were conveyed with an awesome centre-stage positioning, rich and deep with every breath and mouth movement compellingly present. Even better, the assembled 128kbps AAC was rendered extremely listenable out of iTunes. There was full-range detail in Marianne Faithfull's 'Broken English' that I would just not have expected in such compressed fare (although the Streamer's timing is so acute that it is easy to spot the human errors in the rhythm section!), and nearly everything else in the library benefitted from the same lift.

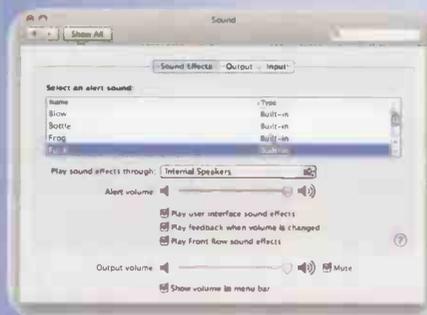
Yearning for some high-resolution material of my own I found the perennial RipNAS HDCD-ripped-as-24bit of Roxy Music's 'Manifesto' lurking on the VAIO drive, and 'Angel Eyes' proved a great tester with its thickly-chorused bass swoops. A luscious experience, the best I've ever heard it. The bass is the truly notable part of the Streamer's delivery, but everything from voice to percussion has a superb richness and clarity. The

itself well, the Streamer II+ edged it on better imaging and a more solid, thudding bass sound, a combination which just made the whole presentation seem more lifelike.

As ever Roger Waters' holophonic experiments provided excessive 'beyond the speakers' effects on the intro to 'Amused to Death', but the real joy was a near-vinyl experience with a 24/96 transfer of a 'Wish You Were Here' LP. From there it was a no-brainer to check that DVD-Audio rips such as R.E.M.



Although it might be good to prevent system sounds going through....



Here's how to make system sounds silent.



"the real joy was my near-vinyl experience with a 24/96 transfer of a 'Wish You Were Here' LP..."

further Roxy tester of 'Oh Yeah' from 'Flesh & Blood' ably demonstrated the Streamer's artful way with a convincing stereo picture, with its positioned single tom-tom fills.

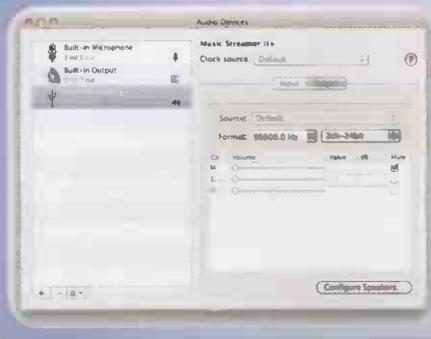
This track was also to be the downfall of the E-Mu 0202 USB, once I moved to lossless FLAC from VLC (Videolan Client) or the new Mozilla Songbird 1.7.3 on the MacBook Pro. I compared the two converters using equivalent Chord Chameleon cables (jack plug variety for the 0202) and while the cheaper machine acquitted

Talking Heads and the solo works of Donald Fagen are every bit the equal of disc-based DVD-Audio machine playback, maybe even superior - essential as a backup for when the obsolete machines die!

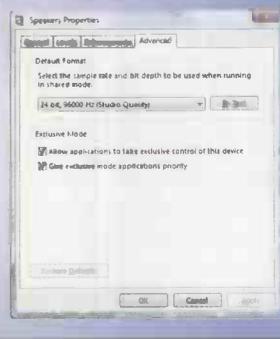
CONCLUSION

The new HRT Technologies Streamer II+ USB DAC is an extremely impressive device, and one that should find many friends amongst FLAC fans. If all you want is the best possible stereo output from a standard computer-based system (lossless 16/44.1 is a must) then this is an unabashedly expansive joy, and the only device you need. Even most high-res needle-droppers or DVD-A rippers are largely catered for. As for me personally, having a number of 24/192 DVD-As, including many of Mr. Hobson's HDADs, and keeping my aspiration towards vinyl ripping at that resolution or higher, I am tempted to wait for the rumoured 24/192-capable Streamer HD. If it's anywhere near as good as this, then I'll be smiling.

Just to check - defaulting to 24/96 in Utilities - MIDI settings.



Once again it defaults to 24/96.



VERDICT ●●●●●
 Superb sounding, glitch-free product that answers the prayers of countless computer audiophiles. The only reason not to buy one for some people is the forthcoming Streamer HD.

HRT TECHNOLOGIES
STREAMER II+ £330
 Audiofreaks
 +44 (0)208 9484153
 www.audiofreaks.co.uk

FOR
 - superlative sound quality
 - trouble-free plug'n'play
 - cross platform compatibility

AGAINST
 - understated looks
 - 24/192 to come?

Back In Black

Musical Fidelity returns to the affordable audiophile DAC market with a brand new box, entitled M1. David Price celebrates...



Musical Fidelity are on a roll at the moment. The company rarely puts out poor products, but the past year has seen it hit a purple patch. We've got an AMS50 stereo power amplifier ensconced in our reference system at *Hi-Fi World*, meanwhile at chez Price there's an AMS35i gleefully gobbling bucketloads of Watts from the National Grid every day and every night, acting as my jobbing hack reference integrated amplifier - something it does with rare distinction.

Now it's round two, as Mr Michaelson's M series hits the streets, and the equipment shelves of reviewers worldwide. The M1 DAC is one of the cheapest in the range, and judging by what I'm hearing as I write this, it seems Musical Fidelity haven't yet lost their knack. The princely sum of £399 buys you an extremely well finished and packaged digital to analogue convertor, claiming 'true 192kHz upsampling' at a maximum of 24bit depth. Unlike many of its rivals at this lowly end of the market, it sports four digital inputs, and very usefully (in my book at least) has LED indication of the input sampling frequency, plus a little light to indicate 192kHz upsampling (although this isn't defeatable). It works at 32kHz, 44.1kHz, 48kHz, 88kHz, 96kHz and

192kHz.

The company says it sports "state-of-the-art circuit design and PCB layout, with the use of top quality digital components", plus a "high quality power supply" with choke filtration on the mains input. "This, effectively, is a mains signal conditioner which increases the performance", it is said. The result is excellent measured performance, according to the company, which is borne out by our own measurements [see MEASURED PERFORMANCE]. Coaxial (accepting 32 to 192kHz sampling frequencies), optical (up to 96kHz), USB (up to 48kHz) and XLR digital inputs appear on the back panel, along with RCA phono and balanced XLR outputs. For the purposes of the review, I used the latter into a Musical Fidelity AMS35i amplifier. Vital statistics are 220x100x300mm and 3.4kg.

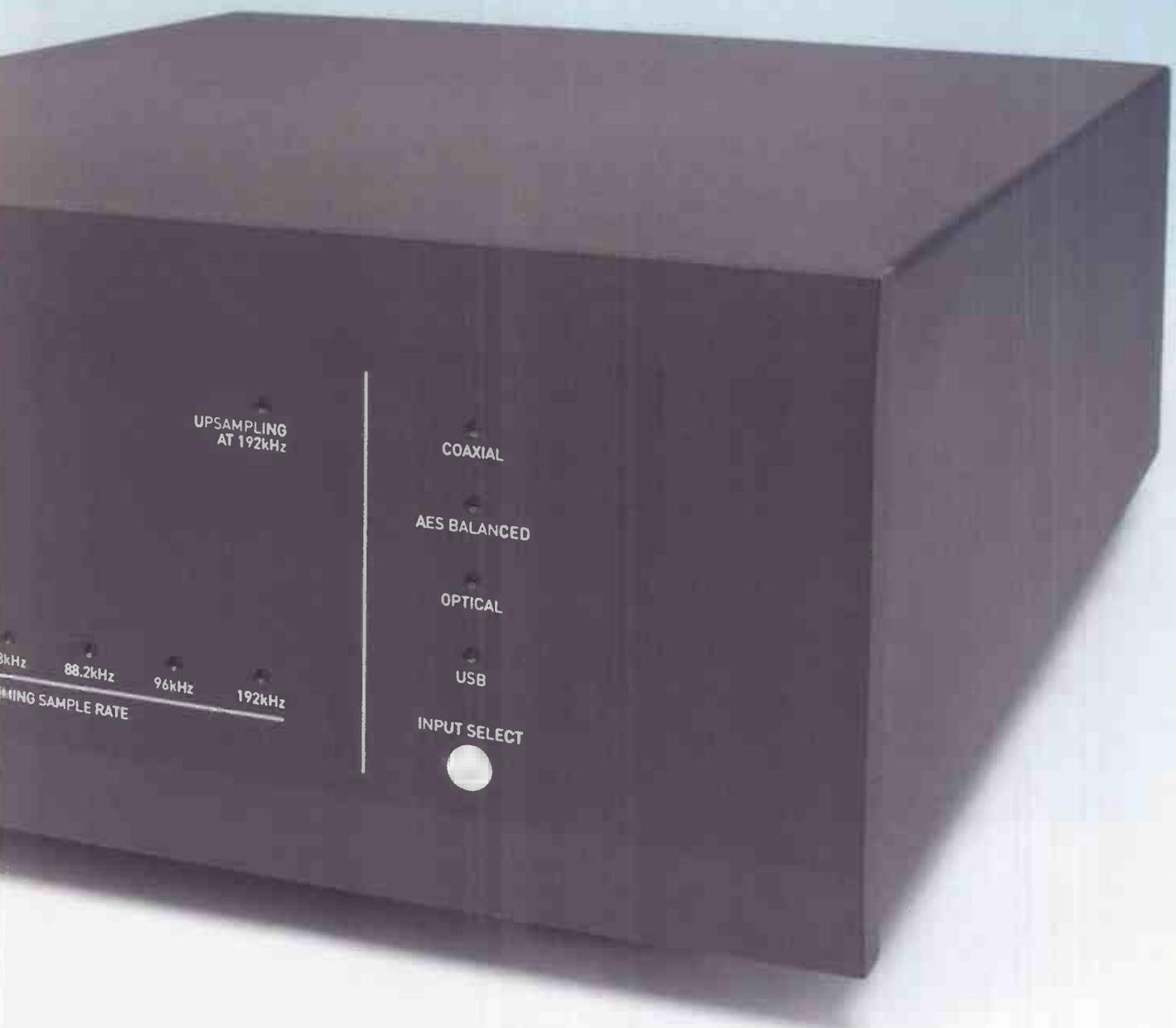
SOUND QUALITY

Regular readers will have noticed I've ceased my inane polemicising against CD of late, and this is no accident. dCS have - for the moment at least - forgotten to ask for their £10,000 Paganini DAC back and so I've dutifully decided to look after it for them. Knowing that under use can often be a form of abuse, I've solemnly found myself playing it more regularly than I normally use

any digital product (this is someone who has gone for long and happy spells without any CD player, you understand). So going to a DAC that (I imagine) costs less than the dCS packaging box and connecting cables (well, there are a lot!) could have been a digital disaster of epic proportions. So sweet and silky is the Paganini that it still surprises me that it doesn't have a pointy diamond bit with Koetsu inscribed on one part of it, or a revolving platform big enough to hold a Dominos pizza on another. How then could I handle a £400 black box in lieu of my new found paramour? Well, it was easier than I thought, as it happened...

The single most impressive thing about the Musical Fidelity M1 is that, switching from the dCS, it didn't feel like someone had completely pulled the rug from under my system. No, it wasn't anywhere near as good as the aforementioned DAC at twenty times the M1's price, but nor was it anywhere as bad as I'd expected. Indeed, it wasn't bad in any sense of the word; actually it was very good and easily comparable with a number of DACs I've heard at over £1,000. The entirety of my listening session was spent with the uneasy feeling at the back of my mind; why was the M1 doing what it was doing, considering what it is?

It needs good ancillaries. A very



decent transport, such as Cyrus CD XT SE, is a must. As is an excellent, full bodied sounding amplifier (valves are a particularly synergistic mix). Open, dimensional and subtle loudspeakers are also essential, preferably with a smooth top end, as if there's any distinguishing mark to this DAC, it's a well lit top end. I certainly heard the M1's brightly illuminated treble through my system (the dCS sounds a tad smoother and duller), although that's not to say the Musical Fidelity is harsh. It is not; this I would suggest is down to its exceptionally low distortion. The result is a very vivid, spry sounding device, but underneath that 'headline' brightness there's actually real smoothness and sophistication. And it's this latter characteristic, plus a wonderful midband focus that just ekes right into the bowels of the mix, stripping out the fog, hash and mush, that is the party piece of this new digital to analogue convertor. I've

"the M1 works through sheer grip and insight rather than trying to sugar the pill with an over exuberant bassline..."

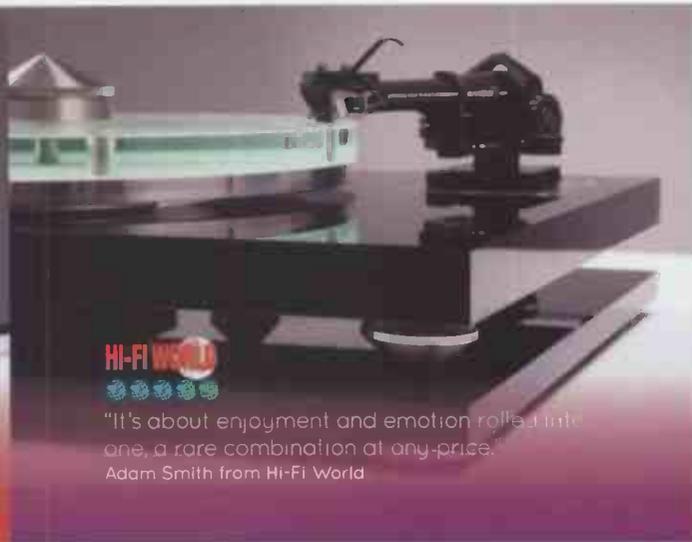
never heard anything at its price that comes close in this respect.

4hero's 'Our Own Place' was a case in point. A beautiful, bang up to date slice of urban soul alloyed with gentle jazz, this breezy ballad is recorded to the very highest standards, and showcases a to-die-for list of classic electronic instrumentation allied to an angelic vocal line from Carina Andersson. This DAC cut right to the centre of the song, throwing out those sumptuous Fender Rhodes keyboard pads, soaring violins, silky vocal harmonies and gentle drum kit work with delicious ease. Tonally, the M1 is superb at the price, giving every instrument a really natural timbre. Strings had 'wire' but didn't grate,

cymbals came across with a sonorous metallic 'zing' but lacked harshness, female vocals were direct and expressive but silky almost to the point of being ethereal.

Matt Monroe's 'On Days Like These' is a sublime rendering of a brilliant song, but not the last word in state-of-the-art recording techniques. My transcription, from 'The Italian Job' soundtrack, comes over as a tad thin and scratchy (it's 'digitally remastered, don't ya know!'), yet the Musical Fidelity didn't blink. Although its brightly lit high treble gave the maracas a slightly summary quality, and horns rasped with just a little too much sparkle, Mr Monroe's voice was caught in all its sultry, smokey beauty. As Paul Rigby points out in

 Inspire Hi-Fi



HI-FI WORLD


"It's about enjoyment and emotion rolled into one, a rare combination at any price."
Adam Smith from Hi-Fi World

the magic of the studio recording in
your listening room.

listen to vinyl playback as you've never heard it before...

Now introducing the brand new Apollo turntable. Same cutting edge British engineering, delivering outstanding sound at a price that will astound.

Apollo
TURN TABLE

eclipse^{ss}
TURN TABLE

 Inspire Hi-Fi

Tel: 01246 827272 / 01246 568770 Mobile: 07932 367555

www.inspirehifi.co.uk

Part exchange possible

Buy the most talked about turntable direct from the UK manufacturer with no retail mark up!

SUGDEN AUDIO

Masterclass Series Class A



Rescuing music from technology

Designed and manufactured in England. Exported the world over.

www.sugdenaudio.com T: 01924 404088



Classic Cuts (p130), his was a unique vocal talent, and the M1 shows why. Sublimely phrased, delicately expressive and dripping in nineteen sixties Mediterranean cool, his voice was captivating - and the Musical Fidelity did a great disappearing act, leaving the song to issue forth from the loudspeakers as if unsullied by 'high fidelity equipment' of any type. The song's instrumentation gently followed the vocal line, with a bouncy and supple yet understated nineteen sixties-style bass guitar pushing things along. Soundstaging was wide and deep, the M1 again seemingly imposing no limits on its scale.

By way of dramatic change, next in the disc tray was The Spice Girls' 'Wannabe'; anyone around in the nineties will know this to be a mind-numbingly compressed pop ditty designed to pour out of Vauxhall Astra vans tuned to Gold FM the world over. The M1 impressed again, in the way it scythed through a recording that wins no prize for audiophile best practice. I was impressed with the accuracy with which strands of the mix were located, the Musical Fidelity DAC showing an architectural rigour in the precise way it hung lead vocals in the room. Behind this however, bounced the full Stannard/Rowe composition in its entirety, with a pounding four-on-the-floor baseline and razor-sharp electronic snare and cymbal work, brilliantly syncopated. The M1 cannot be described as the world's greatest boogie machine, but it's still great fun to listen to; it works through sheer grip and insight rather than trying to sugar the pill with an over exuberant bassline.

Moving to the more cerebral guitar rock strains of REM's first album aproper, 'Murmur', and the Musical Fidelity DAC really sang. The lovely Rickenbacker refrain that permeates 'Talk About The Passion' was carried most skilfully by the M1, which again showed its finesse. Hear we had a wonderfully crisp, cutting sound to guitars, but they also sounded rich and fruity. The spirited playing was there in all its glory, the DAC bouncing along with zest, really enjoying the relatively rudimentary recording. Again, bass

wasn't exactly overpowering, but the glassy clarity of the midband made sure the rhythm section punched out of the mix, pushing the song along with zeal. I couldn't help but be taken with the sheer composure of this DAC, thanks to its rock solid grip on the music's timing and the placement of instruments within the recorded acoustic. It really is exceptional considering the retail price of the unit. The result was once again a direct, fluent and engaging listen but one that was never less than clean and well comported.

Given its dexterity with recordings of questionable quality, I felt the time was right to feed the Musical Fidelity with a superlative classical production, released by Esoteric no less, Mozart's 'Piano Concerto No. 20 in D minor' (English Chamber Orchestra/Clifford Curzon, Britten). The first movement of this breathtaking classic (1970) recording taxed the M1 not one jot. Presented with a massive, cowering soundstage of great depth and immense atmosphere, this DAC showed its mettle. Massed strings had vast body and breath-taking speed allied to incredible dynamics, while solo piano rang with a sonorous quality and a sublime rhythmic gait. This particular disc is an epic recording (and indeed a memorable performance), and the only thing that detracted was the M1's ability to spotlight the tape hiss; the sunshine that it casts upon source material can sometimes show its wrinkles. In this case, it didn't spoil things one jot (it was more obvious on the REM album, in fact), but potential purchasers

should remember that, brilliant as the M1 is, it's not a flatterer of recordings or ancillaries.

CONCLUSION

Given good partnering equipment, in a system that's not exactly bass light, the Musical Fidelity M1 will amaze, considering its very modest retail price. Its abilities are so high considering the market sector it inhabits that it puts an awful lot of pressure on old favourites such as the Stello DA-100 Signature at twice the price. Its combination of insight, clarity, precision and punch are formidable, and even at under £1,000 rarely seen. The only caveat is that for all its value, it's not a terribly good partner for budget hi-fi. Such is its incision that it could push already uncouth ancillaries into shrillness; so you've been warned. However, I suspect this will find favour with those already fairly well up the hi-fi tree, wanting an inexpensive way to convert their ones and noughts, so they can spend more money of their digital source, or save up for that amplifier they've always wanted. Think of this as a piece of budget esoterica and you've captured the essence of this black beauty.

REFERENCE SYSTEM

Musical Fidelity AMS35i integrated amplifier
 MF Audio Silver Passive Preamplifier
 World Audio K5881 power amplifier (modified)
 Yamaha NS1000M loudspeakers

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Frequency response of the M1 rises toward high frequencies, our measurements showed. This is an unusual characteristic and commonly results in obvious treble sheen. The anti-alias filtering used is very sudden and fast in its roll down and this filtering is responsible for the lift. As the M1 had low levels of aliasing products too under measurement, it may sound less hard and digital than is common. Only listening can sort this out.

Distortion levels were very low over the DAC's dynamic range and close to the noise floor. As a result EIAJ Dynamic Range was a little better than that of rivals, measuring 101dB. Fed a 24bit signal distortion dropped to 0.016% at -60dB and just 0.17% at -80dB, exceptional figures. Noise was 4dB lower in the right channel than the left, an unusual result, but at -115dB and -119dB still too low to be detectable.

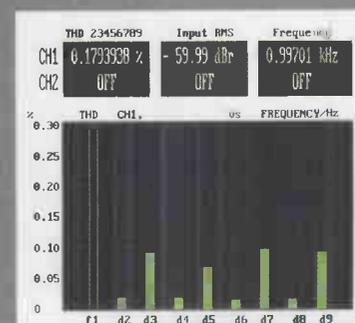
The unbalanced phono socket outputs gave 2V and the balanced XLRs 4V. Apart from this, they gave identical results.

The M1 DAC measured well in

every area and is very linear. Its tonal balance is likely to be brighter than that of others, though. NK

Frequency response (-1dB)	
0.7Hz - 20.1kHz	
Distortion (%)	
0dB	0.0017
-6dB	0.0017
-60dB	0.18
-80dB	4.7
Separation (1kHz)	113dB
Noise (IEC A)	-115dB
Dynamic range	101dB
Output	4V

DISTORTION



VERDICT A brilliant value budget audiophile digital converter, but must be matched to superior quality, smooth sounding systems.

MUSICAL FIDELITY M1 £399
 Musical Fidelity
 +44 (0)20 8900 2866
 www.musicalfidelity.com

- FOR**
- spacious, airy treble
 - massive midband insight
 - soundstage precision
 - wide range of inputs
 - build, finish, value
- AGAINST**
- well lit treble not ideal for budget systems

WORLD STANDARDS

These are the best products we've heard that are currently on sale in the UK, complete with the date they were originally launched and their current retail prices.

TURNTABLES

PRO-JECT GENIE 2 2008 £175
A masterpiece of minimalism, this is well made for the money and includes a decent Ortofon OM3 moving magnet cartridge. Great sound per pound.

REGA P2 2008 £220
Some say the cheapest real hi-fi turntable money can buy - excellent value for money engineering, easy set up and fine sound.

TECHNICS SL1200/II 1973 £395
Slick build makes it a respectable performer, although the cheapo arm limits it - fit a Rega RB250 and it's suddenly a brilliant mid-price machine.

REGA P3-24 2008 £400
Seminal affordable audiophile deck with fine bundled tonearm. Tweakable, and really sings with optional £150 outboard power supply.

MICHELL TECNODEC 2003 £579
Superb introduction to Michell turntables - on a budget. Top quality build and elegant design make it the class of the mid-price field.



ROKSAN RADIUS 5.2 2010 £1,399
Effective, if expensive, update on the original formula. Highly musical, yet detailed and dimensional mid price turntable with a naturally open and easy sound.

FUNK FIRM VECTOR II 2009 £860
Innovative engineering gives a nimble, pacy and musical sound that's one of the best at the price.



MARANTZ TT-15S1 2005 £999
Cracking deck/arm/cartridge combination, this must surely be the best sounding 'plug and play' package at this price point.

MICHELL GYRODEC SE2005 £1,005
Design icon with superlative build and finish. Sound is beautifully smooth, effortless and exceptionally expansive. No longer peerless at the price, but still a brilliant platform.

ACOUSTIC SOLID CLASSIC WOOD 2008 £1,350

Majoring on impact, punch and drive, this is an impactful mid-price turntable in sonic terms as well as physical size.

REVOLVER REPLAY 2007 £1,500
Revolver spring back into the vinyl market like they've never been away, with a stylish and solidly built LP spinner. Welcome back!

AVID DIVA II SP 2010 £2,000
New twin belt drive and power supply make this an even more commanding performer, although there's a substantial price hike. Its speed, dynamics and detail are hard to beat anywhere near the price.

MICHELL ORBE 1995 £2,500
The top Michell disc spinner remains a superbly capable all rounder with powerful, spacious sound that's delicate and beguiling.



LINN LPI25E 1973 £3,510
Surely hi-fi's most iconic turntable, the legendary Sondek goes from strength to strength. New Keel subchassis and Radikal DC motor add precision and grip to one of the world's most musical disc spinners.

SME MODEL 10A 1995 £4,556
Exquisitely engineered deck and SMEV tonearm combo that's an extremely accomplished performer with classical music.

ACOUSTIC SOLID ONE 2007 £4,000
Huge turntable, both in terms of sheer mass and sonic dynamics. Fit up to three arms and enjoy, just don't damage your back moving it...

BRINKMANN BARDO 2010 £4,495
Quartz locked Direct Drive makes for mastertape-like speed stability, plus wonderful clarity and pace. Upgradeability and excellent build complete a formidable package.

AVID VOLVERE SEQUEL 2007 £4,600
Stylish high end vinyl spinner with industrial strength build quality and a sound to match. Exceedingly neutral yet powerful sound is edge-of-the-seat stuff.

McINTOSH MT10 2008 £8,995
Big, expensive, controversially styled and glows more than some might consider necessary, but an astonishingly good performer.

EAT FORTE 2009 £12,500
Lavishly finished two box, two motor turntable with gorgeous Ikeda 407 tonearm bundled. Exceptionally stable and unfussy performer with a relaxed but highly enjoyable gait.

TO NEARMS

REGA RB251 2009 £136
Capable way past its price point, the new 3-point mount version of the classic RB250 serves up a taut and detailed sound. A little lean for some tastes, but responds very well to rewiring and counterweight modification.

MICHELL TECNOARM A2003 £442
The late John Michell's clever reworking of the Rega theme, using blasting, drilling and rewiring! Surely the best overall performer under £500.



ORIGIN LIVE SILVER 2006 £599
Expertly fettled Rega is still the 'affordable audiophile' choice, with an even, transparent and tuneful sound.

SME 309 1989 £767
Mid-range SME comes complete with cost-cut aluminium armtube and detachable headshell. Tight, neutral sound with good tonality, but lacks the IV's pace and precision.

SME SERIES IV 1988 £1,127
Offers nine tenths of the SME V's magic at just over half price. Exquisitely built and finished, and a design classic. Faces stiff competition these days, but lovely nevertheless.

AUDIO ORIGAMI PU7 2007 £1,300
The classic Syrix PU3 updated to spectacular effect. Hand made to order, with any mass, length and colour you care for. Fit, finish and sound truly impressive.

NAIM ARO 1987 £1,425
Charismatic unipivot is poor at frequency extremes but sublime in the midband; truly emotive and insightful.

HELIUS OMEGA 2008 £1,595
Stylish and solid lump of arm with fabulous build quality, that turns in a dynamic and weighty performance.

SME SERIES V 1987 £1,614
Vice-like bass with incredible weight, ultra clear midband and treble astound, although some don't like its matter of factness!

LINN EKOS 1987 £1,700

Subtle mods over the years, including revised bearings and the recent new wiring has kept it a serious contender in the superarm stakes. Lacks the SME's slam, the OL's clarity or the ARO's emotion, but has a feisty musicality all of its own.

SME 312S 2010 £1,750

Twelve inch magnesium alloy armtube plus SMEV bearings makes an impressive transcription tool with a highly insightful yet composed sound. Superlative build completes the package.

GRAHAM PHANTOM 2006 £2,495

Sonically stunning arm with magnificent bass dexterity and soundstaging. Build quality up to SME standards, which is saying something...

TRI-PLANAR PRECISION 2006 £3,600

Stunning build, exquisite design and surely the most naturally musical and lucid sound around makes this a remarkable pickup arm.

OL ENTERPRISE 3C 2010 £4,500

Few if any pivoted arms come close to this arm's combination of liquid musicality and forensic grip.

CARTRIDGES**AUDIO TECHNICA AT-95E****1984 £25**

Great starter cartridge that's detailed and musical beyond its price. Superglue the stylus in for better sound.

ORTOFON 2M RED/BLUE**2007 £60/£120**

Modern, high resolution budget moving magnets that are always an engaging listen.

**GOLDRING G1042 1994 £135**

One of the best MMs going, with sweet and extended treble and punchy, muscular bass.

DENON DL103R 2006 £200

Awkward to get working properly with a poor mounting arrangement, yet it rewards with a musical performance that makes similar priced cartridges sound cold.

DYNAVECTOR DV10X52003 £250

Distant descendent of the classic Ultimo 10X, this has warmth and sweetness in spades, allied to a punchy bass. Beats G1042 comfortably.

ORTOFON 2M BLACK 2007 £350

Staggeringly good high-end MM that uses a stylus from the MC Jubilee and easily rivals similarly-priced MMs

DYNAVECTOR DV20X-H2003 £395

Deliciously sweet sound with fantastic get-up-and-go makes this a great value budget MC. High output version works a treat with valve phono stages too.

**AUDIO TECHNICA AT-OC9MLIII****2010 £399**

New stylus and cantilever breathe life into this feisty, punchy and detailed performer.

LYRA DORIAN 2007 £595

Incisive and musical, this baby Lyra is one of the most powerful and revealing MCs at its price point. Beware the sharp treble, though!

ORTOFON RONDO**BRONZE 2005 £500**

Excellent mid-price moving coil with real rhythmic alacrity and a decent deal of finesse.

ZYX R-100H 2005 £625

Exceptionally tight sounding and detailed cartridge with the musical skills to match, this is up with the very best at the price, with a presentation all of its own.

BENZ MICRO GLIDER L2 2008 £650

Crisp, clean and detailed MC; particularly impressive at both ends of the frequency spectrum

TRANSFIGURATION AXIA**2007 £890**

Musically adept and highly resolute cartridge with impressive tracking abilities. Top end lift means careful matching required, however..

ORTOFON CADENZA BLUE**2009 £1,000**

Musical, out of the box sound, allied to real finesse, makes this a great do-it-all high end moving coil.

ORTOFON MC WINDFELD 2008 £1,799

Ortofon's new flagship MC is a sophisticated and alluring performer that takes the vinyl experience to a new level.

KOETSU RED K SIGNATURE**2007 £2,399**

The new K Signature adds a hefty dose of insight and finesse to the already impressive Red and the results are fabulous.

DIGITAL SOURCES**MUSICAL FIDELITY V-DAC £170**

Clear, concise, low distortion sound belies giveaway price. Superlative value for money.

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO**DACMAGIC £229**

An innovative and flexible new DAC, this is a svelte, rhythmic and impressive performer.

**STELLO DA100****SIGNATURE £675**

Superbly finessed sounding DAC at the price, with strong driving bass and plenty of air and space.

**CAMBRIDGE AZUR 840C 2006 £800**

Well built CD player with a silky, yet detailed sound and a whole host of useful facilities. Excellent value for money.

NAIM CD5i 2008 £895

Naim's new italic 'i' variant improves even further on the original mid-price classic, offering super tight, grippy and musical sound.

ROKSAN KANDY**K2 CD 2010 £900**

A charmingly musical performer at the price, this is a surprisingly sophisticated CD player for the money.

BENCHMARK DAC-1S 2009 £930

Power, precision and poise - allied to real seat-of-the-pants musicality, this DAC justifies its premium price.

CYRUS CD8 SE 2008 £1,200

Bespoke Servo Evolution mech makes this the most musically engaging machine at the price, with super smooth tonality to boot. Optional PSX-R adds bass and dimensionality.

SIMAUDIO MOON 3000**2010 £1,290**

Lovely fluid sounding DAC with a deep, dark, velvety tonality.

**NAIM DAC £1,995**

Painstaking design has yielded a brilliant 'affordable high end' performer that throws bright sunlight on the recording, yet remains unremittably smooth and musically engaging.

CHORD QBD64 2008 £3,000

Bespoke architecture gives a truly uniquely musical sound that's beguilingly musical in nature, with dizzying incision and grip.

ELECTROCOMPANIET EMC-IUP**2003 £3,450**

Quirky yet extremely capable high end upsampling CD spinner, with a musical fluency that beguiles more than it impresses.

**ACCUSTIC ARTS CDP1MK2****2007 £3,985**

Styling not to everyone's taste but build quality is impeccable and the performance is stunningly musical.

ESOTERIC X-05 2010 £4,495

Superlative 'affordable high end' CD/SACD spinner with excellent build, massive detail and great poise.

NAIM CDX2-XPS2 2003 £4,950

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

NAIM CDS3 2003 £7,050

The most polished Naim CD to date; tremendously capable and musical, but lacks the Rottweiler quality of the cheaper CDX2-XPS2.

ACCUSTIC ARTS DRIVE I MK2/TUBE DAC 2 2007 £7,980

Superbly built high end CD transport and DAC combo that shows just what the format can be capable of. Very tangible, musical sound with wonderful dynamics and glistening harmonics. Only curious styling and clunky build detract from its brilliance!

DCS PAGANINI DAC £9,599

Digital rarely sounds better; dCS's bespoke Ring DAC makes for power, punch and insight on an epic scale. Add clock and upsampler for an even more profound experience. Justifiably expensive.

**LINN KLIMAX DS** 2007 £9,600

Landmark network music player, offering brilliant sonics at up to 24/96 resolution from hard disk/NAS. Expensive, but you can hear why...

NAIM CD555/555PS 2006 £14,000

Very probably the best CD player yet made - certainly the most expensive; a digital *tour de force*.

**RECORDERS****NAIM HDX** 2009 £4,405

Interesting one-box network enabled hard disk music system gives superb sonics together with impressive ease of use.

SONY TC-WE475 2010 £130

Essential tackle for committed cassette users, this well calibrated double deck sounds way better than expected!

SONY RCD-W3 2002 £250

Usual superb Sony ergonomics make for no-nonsense budget buy. Fine direct digital copies, but analogue input poor. Middling sonics, but there's a digital output!

PHONO STAGES**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 640P** £99

Excellent entry level design that raises the bar for budget phono stages. Crisp, smooth yet brightly lit sound on both MM and MC that's a vast improvement on most budget inboard designs.

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.

ICON AUDIO PS1.2 2007 £599

Excellent value valve phono stage with good range of facilities and fine imaging abilities.

**ASTIN TREW AT8000** £880

Expansive, detailed, powerful and musical sound makes this a surprise entrant to the first class sub-£1,000 phono stage club.

ANATEK MC1 2007 £850

Excellent MC phono stage that offers serious insight underpinned by powerful and tuneful bass.

QUAD QC24P 2007 £995

Dynamic performer that can be used on its own as a complete phono-level preamp.

TRICHORD DIABLO + NCPSU 2006 £1,198

Highly musical performer, this is one of the best phono stages at or near the price, but lacks the polish of the rival Whest.

ICON AUDIO PS3 2008 £1,500

Super sounding valve phono preamplifier, with an expansive, engaging and organic nature that makes vinyl sheer joy!

EMILLE ALLURE 2010 £2,495

Just as the name suggests, this is a lovely way to play LP with an exceptionally open and lucid sound.

**A.N.T. AUDIO KORA 3T LTD** 2010 £995

Exceptionally musical and natural sounding all discrete transistor phono stage, with highly lucid, valve-like presentation.

AMPLIFIERS**SUGDEN MYSTRO** 2010 £1,225

Sugden's first Class AB integrated in a long time surprises; rollickingly good fun to listen to, it looses surprisingly little in smoothness to its Class AB siblings.

**ICON AUDIO STEREO 25** 2008 £500

Crackling entry-level valve integrated, with a warm and engaging sound. Limited power so needs careful partnering, though.

ROTEL RA-06 2008 £550

Vivacious sounding device that, whilst lacking the finer musical points, wears its heart on its sleeve and has plenty of power to match.

NAIM NAIT 5i 2007 £725

The italic 'i' version remains one of the most musically competent and dynamically engaging integrations at the price.

CAMBRIDGE 840A V2 2007 £750

Version 2 addresses version 1's weaknesses to turn in a mightily accomplished performance, offering power, finesse and detail.

JUNGSON JA-88D 2006 £899

Stunning value for money Class A monster integrated; extreme power and clarity at a puzzlingly low price.

**AUDIOLAB 8000S** 2006 £400

In other life, this sold for three times the price, making it a stand-out bargain now. Very clean, powerful and tidy sound but not the world's most beguiling.

SUGDEN A21A S2 2007 £1,299

More power and greater transparency improve even further on the already impressive A21a to give truly impressive results

NAIM NAIT XS 2009 £1,250

With much of the sound of the Supernait at half the price, this is powerful, articulate and smooth beyond class expectations.

ELECTROCOMPANET PI-2 2008 £1,430

Powerful integrated with seriously solid bass and impressive dynamic abilities. Superbly musical.

SUGDEN A21A S2 2008 £1,469

Crystalline clarity, dizzying speed and forensic detailing makes this seminal design the most musical at the price, but power limited so needs sensitive speakers.

ANATEK A50R 2007 £1,600

Simple integrated amplifier with super bass grip and effortless dynamics.

VINCENT SA-236MK 2010 £1,749

Big, powerful and expansive sounding hybrid transistor amplifier, with bright, spry and musical nature.

MOON i-3RS 2008 £1,890

Grippy and clean performer with fine soundstaging and build quality.

COPLAND CSA29 2006 £1,998

Unfailingly svelte, sophisticated and smooth - both to listen to and look at - this is a truly desirable high end integrated.

NAIM SUPERNAIT 2007 £2,475

Integrated *tour de force* from Naim that combines impressive functionality and connectivity with super sound.

LUXMAN L-550A 2007 £2,800

Monster Class A integrated with powerful and revealing sound and a whole host of useful features, including a highly competent MM/MC phono stage

AUDIO RESEARCH VSI60 2009 £3,298

Load of tube power allied to a strong bass and smooth open midband makes this a grin-inducing listen.

LEEMA TUCANA II 2010 £3,495

Polished high end integrated amp that combines power, detail and genuine musicality with a good range of facilities.

**SUGDEN IA4** 2007 £3,650

Goodly amount of Class A power, icy clarity and a breathtakingly fast, musical sound make this one of the very best super-integrations.

QUAD II CLASSIC 2010 £4,500

Beautiful retro styled integrated amplifier with a subtle, supple sound - although needs matching to speakers that are easy loads.

MUSICAL FIDELITY AMS35I 2010 £6,000

Gorgeous, liquid sounding solid-state full Class A integrated with a supernaturally sumptuous bass; surely one of the very best integrations ever made!

AV AMPLIFIERS**ARCAM AVR350** 2006 £1,500

Superbly accomplished do-it-all AV receiver package, with an uncommonly, warm, natural and musical sound. A winner goes from strength to strength.

HEADPHONE AMPLIFIERS**CHANNEL ISLANDS VHP-1 / VAC-1** £390

A truly exceptional headphone output stage; the best at the price and an essential audition.

MUSICAL FIDELITY X-CAN V8 2008 £350

Open and explicitly detailed sound plus serious bass wallop and the ability to drive anything to very high levels makes this a great partner for most mid-to-high end headphones.

SUGDEN HEADMASTER 2003 £600

Unusual combined preamplifier and headphone amplifier, this boasts a surprisingly smooth and open sound.

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** £1,500

Effective pre with switchable gain via a transformer, and balanced operation. Open and incisive sound, yet makes most active rivals sound edgy by comparison. Silver version at the twice the price adds transparency.

**MODWRIGHT SWL9.0SE** £2,000

Captivating sound quality that will transform your system. Build quality is equally impressive and value top-notch. Highly recommended

NUFORCE P-9 2007 £2,200

Impressive two box preamp with superb resolution and an engaging sound.

**DPA CA-1** 2010 £2,650

Excellent solid-state preamp with a meticulously detailed and propulsive sound, but a deep velvety tonality.

MELODY PURE BLACK 101D 2007 £3,295

One of the best preamplifiers we have ever heard. Takes the clarity and openness we expect from valves and adds a staggering level of grip and detail.

MODWRIGHT 36.5 PRE/PSU 2010 £5,995

Exceptionally open and expansive, yet musically expressive sounding high end preamplifier.

MUSICAL FIDELITY PRIMO 2009 £7,900

Staggeringly expensive, but one listen explains why. Wonderfully exuberant sound that can only come from a top quality tube design.

POWER AMPLIFIERS**ROKSAN KANDY LIII** 2008 £600

Fine budget power amp that punches well above its weight.

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.

NAIM NAP150 2002 £795

Driven 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.

SUGDEN MUSIC MASTER 2003 £1,300

Quintessential Class A Sugden sound is not warm as many expect, but extremely neutral and open with real tonal colour. Superb when partnered with efficient loudspeakers like Revolver R45s, but many will find it underpowered.

**NUFORCE REFERENCE 9SE V2** 2006 £1,750

Brilliant value for money monoblocks with massive power and super-clean, three dimensional sound.

**ROTEL RB1092** 2007 £1,595

Hugely powerful digital amp with neutral midrange and a wonderfully spacious treble

CHANNEL ISLANDS AUDIO D100 2005 £1,595

Clean and musical Class D monoblock power amplifiers in a neat, small package.

ICON AUDIO MB845 2009 £2,499

Creamy and seductive yet blisteringly fast and musically lucid, this pair of 845 tube monoblocks is staggering value for money.

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...

ELECTROCOMPANIET NEMO 2009 £4,450 (EACH)

The Norwegian power station is as cool as a glacier tonally, yet impresses with its sheer physicality and fleetness of foot. 600W per channel makes for a massive bang per buck.

**DPA SA-1** 2010 £2,850

Pacey, engaging and rhythmic almost to a fault, this solid-state power amplifier isn't the world's most powerful but is none the worse for it.

SILK GLOWMASTER KT88 2007 £1,699

KT88 based power amplifier offers dramatic clarity and excellent bass left.

**QUAD II-40** 2005 £3,230

Modern tube monoblock power amplifiers with plenty of power, liquid and open mid-band and spacious, airy treble. Explicit, engaging sound, but not as euphonic as some.

QUAD II-80 2005 £6,000

Quad's best ever power amplifier, this is a dramatic performer with a silky but dark tonality, blistering dynamics, serious power and a compellingly musical sound. They don't come much better than these...

MUSICAL FIDELITY AMS50 2010 £7,000

Wonderfully assured high end full Class A integrated proffering icy clarity allied to real musicality. Lacks the lucidity of the best tube amps but redeems with power and punch.

LOUDSPEAKERS**Q ACOUSTICS 2020** 2010 £140

Great little standmounters with a friendly, fun yet surprisingly refined gait. Excellent value starter speakers.

ACOUSTIC ENERGY NEO I 2007 £199

Tidy and well balanced standmounters with pleasing clarity and detail.

B&W 686 2007 £279

B&W's new baby standmounters offer a sophisticated and mature performance that belies both their dimensions and price tag.

KEF iQ30 2009 £330

Beautifully built, classily styled standmounters with exceptional image projection and a very clean, detailed sound.



USHER S-520 2006 £350

Astonishingly capable budget standmounters that offer detail and dynamics well beyond their price and dimensions

WHARFEDALE DIAMOND 10.3 2010 £299

Great small standmounters for audiophiles on a budget; dry punchy sound with impressive soundstaging at the price.

XTZ 99.25 2010 £640

Disarmingly open and refined at the price, these standmounters bring unexpected civility, refinement and insight to the price point. Exceptional value for money.

**ACOUSTIC ENERGY AE1 CLASSIC** £845

Brilliantly successful remake of an iconic design; not flawless, but surely one of the most musical loudspeakers ever made.

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.

RRR FS100 2007 £1,055

Mind-boggling amount of loudspeaker for the money. Big and sturdily built with serious bass and awesome soundstage scale. A real bargain.

MAD MY CLAPTON GRAND MM 2010 £3,400

Distinctive coaxial standmounters with wonderful soundstaging, bright lucid midband excellent musical insight.

**REVOLVER RW451** 2006 £1,199

Very musical floorstander that's clear, concise and truthful, whilst being exceptionally amplifier friendly - a dreamboat for valves.

ONE THING AUDIO ESL57 2007 £1,450

One Thing Audio's modifications keep the good old ESL57 at the very top of the game.

KIBRI NAIMA 2007 £1,550

Unusual-looking omnidirectional loudspeakers with an absolutely captivating performance. Huge soundstage and bags of clarity - brilliant!

GURU QM-10P 2007 £1,595

Quirky but adorable standmounters that are way off the pace in respect of detail and power, but amazingly capable at playing a tune and pulling you in to the music.

USHER BE-718 2007 £1,600

Beryllium tweeters work superbly, allied to a fast and punchy bass driver. The result is subtle, smooth and emotive.

MARTIN LOGAN SOURCE 2008 £1,599

Brilliant entry level electrostatics, giving a taste of loudspeaker esoterica for the price of most moving coil boxes. Tremendous clarity, evenness and delicacy, although not the world's most powerful sound.

MONITOR AUDIO GS60 2008 £2,000

Still a great rock loudspeaker after all these years, with a vivid, lithe and engaging sound.

SPENDOR S8E £1,895

Generously large, silky smooth delivery, this dynamic sounding floorstander is an excellent all rounder.

**ISOPHON GALILEO** 2007 £2,100

Big standmounters that really grip the music and offer quite startling dynamics and grip.

YAMAHA SOAVO 1.1 2009 £3,000

Musical, transparent large floorstanders with impressive dynamics and cohesion. Excellent build and finish.

**MONITOR AUDIO PL100** 2008 £2,300

The MA boys pull out all the stops for their flagship 'Platinum' series standmounter with stunning results.

PMC OB11 2008 £2,950

Cleverly updated floorstanders give scale and solidity in slim and well finished package.

EMMINENT TECHNOLOGY LFT8B 2010 £3,000

Brilliant ribbon/moving coil hybrid with seamless, delicate and expansive yet tremendously musical nature.

MOWGAN AUDIO MABON 2007 £3,995

Massively capable loudspeakers that offer dynamics, scale and clarity in an elegantly simple package. Wide range of finishes, too.

B&O BEOLAB 9 2007 £5000

Technically impressive and visually striking loudspeakers with sound quality that more than matches their looks.

ARS AURES MI 2006 £5,995

Sublime build and finish allied to an insightful, assured and even-handed musical performance makes these an essential high end audition.

QUAD ESL-2905 2006 £5,995

The old 989 with all the bugs taken out, this gives a brilliantly neutral and open sound like only a top electrostatic can; still not a natural rock loudspeaker, though.

SPENDOR ST 2010 £5,995

This classy sounding, superbly presented big floorstander will appeal to those seeking high end sonics with subtle looks.

REVOLVER CYGNIS 2006 £5,999

Revolver pull out all the stops and show what they can do with this magnificent flagship loudspeaker. A superb monitor that is like a mini B&W 801D in many ways.

USHER BE-10 2009 £10,500

Clever high end moving coil design with immense speed and dizzying clarity allied to epic punch. Needs the best ancillaries to fly, though...

B&W 801D 2006 £10,500

In many respects, the ultimate studio monitor; dazzling clarity and speed with commanding scale and dynamics.

**ISOPHON CASSIANO** 2007 £12,900

Drive units featuring exotic materials allied to superlative build quality result in an immensely capable loudspeaker. Not an easy load to drive, however.

REVOLVER CYGNIS GOLD 2010 £10,500

Big banger with enormous scale and vast power, although requires the right room and doesn't cohere as well as a panel.

ACCESSORIES

MONITOR AUDIO IDECK 2006 £200

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

ISOTEK AQUARIUS 2010 £795

Highly accomplished premium priced mains conditioner that delivers the sonic goods, unlike so many others.

TOWNSHEND MAXIMUM 2003 £800

Classy ribbon supertweeter with flexible level settings and cool styling - you'll be amazed at the difference it makes, especially with Quad electrostatics.

HEADPHONES

SENNHEISER MX-550 2005 £19

Our unqualified recommendation for those seeking a serious sounding pair of in-ear phones. Smooth, detailed and musical.

SENNHEISER PX-100 2002 £29

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.

**GOLDRING DR150 2006 £70**

Excellent build and fine sound makes these budget cans superlative value for money.

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.

SENNHEISER HD-650 2004 £250

A super all round reference design with crisp, detailed and even sound allied to superlative build and comfort. Cable upgrade yields great results.

SENNHEISER HD800 2010 £1,000

The ultimate expression of the Sennheiser philosophy offers massive speed, clarity and insight, although lacks some of the charm of the softer, more beguiling rival Staxes.

**STAX SR-007T OMEGA II/SRM-007T 2006 £2,890**

Simply the best headphones we've ever heard at any price, these sweetly translucent electrostatic earspeakers are like no other headphone, or loudspeaker for that matter...

INTERCONNECTS**TECHLINK WIRES XS 2007 £20**

Highly accomplished interconnects at an absurdly low price. Stunning value for money.

WIREWORLD OASIS 5 2003 £99/M

Excellent mid-price design with a very neutral, silky and self-effacing sound. Superb value for money.

CHORD COMPANY CHAMELEON 2 £90/M

One of our favourites, these are musical performers with a smooth yet open sound.

**DNM RESON 2002 £40/M**

Neutral and transparent - a steal!

VDH ULTIMATE THE FIRST 2004 £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.

**TCI CONSTRICTOR 13A-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.

MISSING LINK CRYO REFERENCE 2008 £375

Currently our favourite 'affordable high end' interconnects, with a deliciously smooth, open and subtle sound without a hint of edge or grain. Superb value, inasuch as it's as good as some designs at three times the price.

TUNERS**DENON TU-1500AE 2006 £120**

Excellent entry level analogue tuner; slick sonics and fine feature count makes it a bargain.

**CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 640T 2005 £250**

Sweet sounding digital/analogue hybrid with fine build and finish at the price.

ARCAM FMJ T32 2009 £550

Excellent hybrid FM/DAB+ tuner with a smooth, engaging sound. Factor in its fine build and it's a super value package.

CREEK CLASSIC TUNER 2006 £550

No tuner offers better sound per pound; wonderfully three dimensional and smooth from bottom to top.

MYRYAD MXT-2000 2005 £800

Truly sumptuous sound and excellent build is all most will ever need in a tuner; superb.

MAGNUM DYNALAB MD-100T 2006 £1,895

One of the best ways to hear FM that we know; superbly open and musical sound in a quirky but characterful package.

**SYSTEMS****YAMAHA CRX-M170 2007 £200**

One heck of a lot of quality performance on DAB, CD and FM for £200! Optional matching £120 NX-E300 loudspeakers aren't too shabby either.

TEAC DR-H300DAB 2008 £329

Nicely built and styled mini with fine performance on all sources that even plays DVDs!

NAD C-715DAB 2008 £429

Small, neat looks cover a truly capable system that shows just what a compact design can achieve.

ARCAM SOLO MINI 2008 £650

Half the size and two-thirds the price of a full-sized Solo, the Mini gives very little away in terms of performance to its bigger brother.

ARCAM SOLO 2005 £1,249

Excellent all-in-one system, with a warm, smooth and balanced sound to match the features and style.

LINN CLASSIK MUSIC 2008 £1,250

Neat update of the original and best one-box stereo system; superbly musical sound beats equivalently priced separates.

MERIDIAN F80 2007 £1,500

Fantastically built and versatile DVD/CD/DAB/FM/AM unit, designed in conjunction with Ferrar! Ignore nay-sayers who sneer that it isn't a 'proper' hi-fi product; most see sense, when they listen to it...

**AURA NOTE MUSIC CENTRE 2007 £1,500**

Lovely shiny CD/tuner/amplifier with fine sound quality and dynamic abilities.

SHANLING MC-30 2007 £650

Quite possibly the cutest all-in-one around with fine performance from the CD player, tuner and MP3 player input. Very low power, though.

**NAIM UNITI 2009 £1,995**

Uniquely versatile one box music system with excellent ergonomics and sonics to match. A landmark product for Naim.

LINN CLASSIK MOVIE 2007 £2,250

Superbly built all-in-one that offers excellent sound across all formats and is surprisingly easy to use.

MERIDIAN SOOLOOS 2.1 2010 £6,990

Thanks to its crisp styling and bright, colourful touchscreen, plus excellent search facilities this is one hard disk music system with a difference. Best partnered to Meridian active loudspeakers.

MARANTZ 'LEGEND' 2007 £22,000

The combination of SA-7S1 disc player, SC-7S2 preamp and MA-9S2 monoblocks delivers a truly jaw-dropping performance. Start saving now....





Slimline Tonic

David Price finds Micromega's diminutive CD30 CD player a most refreshing alternative to other mid-price machines...

Micromega's an old French name to seasoned hi-fi fans, although of late has undergone something of a rebirth. In 2007 it was acquired by motorsport ace Didier Hamdi, leaving the company's founder Daniel Schar to engineering duties. The new eleven-strong range has been making its way through our pages over the past year, and has consistently impressed. The £1,599 CD30 is the top CD player in the range, which starts at £799 for the CD10.

It's fair to say that the slimline (430x265x69mm, 4.5kg) CD30 isn't exactly from the Japanese battleship school as far as build is concerned. It's nicely and neatly finished with its aluminium wrap case and metal chassis. Looking behind, there's simply an IEC input and RCA phono outs, plus a single coaxial digital socket. The back panel is pressed steel, and

the casework doesn't quite seal, leaving panel gaps the like of which I've not seen since the Citroen 2CV. Doubtless in Japan people would be expected to commit *seppuku* for such, but perhaps in France there's merely a Gallic shrug?

The fascia is an altogether happier story; again it's hardly in the £1,500 Denon league, but looks crisp and original. The bright blue ten character dot matrix display is easy to read from a distance, and the buttons have a positive if clunky action. It's pleasingly simple and unfussy to use, but case tapping hi-fi hacks such as *moi* won't be giving Micromega any points for its resonant quality; a damping panel or two wouldn't go amiss. Nor will punters be impressed by a rather agricultural draw loader which hardly swishes in and out with effortless ease. This would be another sacking offence were this a Japanese engineering issue...

Inside, there's an R-core transformer taking care of digital duties, which is encouraging as they're well suited to low current applications, more so than a toroid. This feeds the drive mechanics, the servo and decoding circuits and user interface section, and gets linear regulators with high power noise rejection. The mech is either a Sony KHM313 or Sanyo SFH850 DVD-ROM unit, via a Philips SAA78247 and Micromega proprietary software running error correction optimised for sound quality rather than mobile use; the code drives the mech for optimum data retrieval in real time. Interestingly, upsampling is done to 132.3kHz (three times that of CD's 44.1kHz); the data word length is also upscaled to 24bit. This then goes to the Analogue Devices AD1853 DAC, an eight times oversampling multibit Delta Sigma design. Micromega also say special attention has been paid to the analogue output stage.



"a pleasant looking modern silver disc spinner that sings like Caruso in a romantic frame of mind..."

SOUND QUALITY

Nicely styled as the Micromega is, I must say its lightweight build didn't exactly fill me with great expectations for its sonic prowess. So it was with some surprise to find it serving up a sound that was altogether more robust. Indeed, musically the CD30 is actually rather authoritative; it has an extremely assured gait that you'd normally only expect from players approaching the £3,000 price point. Indeed, you could almost call it commanding, such was the power and poise it showed with Appaloosa's 'Travelling', a lovely slice of late-nineties jazz infused drum'n'bass from LTJ Bukem's 'Earth Volume One' compilation.

The Micromega's not a particularly warm or euphonic tool, although neither would you call it cool. Tonally it's pretty neutral, but errs ever so slightly on the side of making CD palatable thanks to a very smooth and subtle treble that goes the extra mile. Whereas the top £1,200 machines of last month's group test have just the slightest hint of grain (or perhaps it's fairer to say they're smooth but lack real finesse), the Micromega is an altogether more sophisticated proposition, as the looped hi-hats of this track showed. It snapped these electronic cymbals

into amazing focus, carried their super-subtle inflections and set them precisely into the wider sea of sound, like jewels in a crown.

Moving down the frequency spectrum the CD30 displayed similarly superb insight; it doesn't dramatise things too much, preferring to give a studied and exhaustive view of what's going on, rather than falling over itself to make things rollocking good fun. Yet this sort of intricacy and authority are just what's needed for this sort of music; it doesn't respond either to the emotionally overblown or the stripped down and

deconstructed.

The Micromega is a thorough performer in the low frequencies, although not a remarkable one. There's not the sensation you get from the tweaked Astin Trew AT3500, at similar money, of being dipped in a writhing sea of bass. There's no gratuitous booming, banging and crashing going on, and yet it's very nicely articulated; it's tuneful and drives along the song in such a way as to make the excellent (but admittedly a bit cheaper) Cyrus CD8 SE sound a tad wooden. The acoustic bass work on Corduroy's



MUSICAL FIDELITY

PRIMO Pure Class A Tube Preamplifier

New from Musical Fidelity. 14 tubes. Triode. Class A.
Fully balanced. Zero feedback. Mega technical performance.





'10:28 from Shibuya' romped along in a most expressive fashion, the band's superlative syncopations sounding eerily realistic (I've seen them live a good few times). A fine recording such as this also showcased the player's rather excellent sense of space; the midband was deep and wide and tall, the Micromega able to hang the soundstage back a bit, rather than laser-etching it on my forehead. It caught the loose, laid back, groovy mood of the music brilliantly.

'Up on the Hill' from The Fun Lovin' Criminals showcased the Micromega's rhythmic skills, setting up the song's big backbeat as surely as something you're very certain about. On top, it overlaid some big, spacey keyboards and that thick and gruff but adeptly delivered nasal drawl (sorry, I should say 'vocal') from lead Criminal Huey Morgan. Although the CD30 can sound quite sugary when called upon so to do, it doesn't upsample itself out of the real world; it is able deliver grit when needed, And so this song got its rightful bite and edge back compared to the likes of the Astin Trew, which (especially when switched to 96kHz upsampling) had a propensity to sugar the pill. The best bit was surely the CD30's swagger; it sounded so assured it just didn't need to try, as the song was delivered with great poise and purposefulness. Given that many more expensive CD players sound less sure of themselves, this is a fine result.

The meticulously delivered jazz funk strains of Fourplay's 'Elixir' were a delight to behold. This 1995 recording relies just a touch too much on Yamaha's DX7, a very early digital synthesiser that many feel does a better impersonation of a doorbell than it does a piano, but the CD30 didn't make things worse. Some CD spinners can make this chiming keyboard sound even more implausible than it already is, but the Micromega's finely rendered soundstage had it sounding believable. Also impressive was guitar impresario Lee Ritenour's fretwork; the biting attack transients of struck guitar strings were skillfully caught by this CD player; it's mighty fast when it needs to be. The song's recorded acoustic was beautifully carried, once again extremely capacious and tonally full and bristling with atmosphere.

A recent Linn recording of Mozart's 'Symphony 29 in A major (Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Sir Charles Mackerras) showed the Micromega in its element. We had a CD player that's not a million miles away from the budget brat pack sounding distinctly expensive in the way it projected a spacious, enveloping live acoustic, with wonderful atmosphere to the concert hall. Linn's superlative recording quality allowed the CD30 to shine, displaying a beautiful tonality and grace; massed strings were full bodied, dizzyingly fast and yet had a lovely tactile texture. The music bounded along with a sense of immutable flow; there was never a moment when attention was lost and you were left thinking about tomorrow's breakfast or Saturday's shopping. The Micromega seized the helm of the ship, so to speak, and spelled out in no uncertain terms what the vessel's trajectory would be. The result was a first movement (Allegro moderato) of exceptional poignancy and yet delicacy too; the CD30 doesn't use brute force for effect, rather it gets its musical insight from sheer efficacy.

CONCLUSION

An interesting one, this. Micromega's CD30 reminds me, if you'll pardon another automotive analogy, of the classic late seventies Renault 5 Gordini Turbo. Take a fine but inexpensive chassis, with a few rough edges here and there in terms of panel fit and detail finish, drop in an exceptionally able (at the price) motor and you have a recipe for inexpensive fun - or cheap thrills, call it what you will. The recipe worked for Renault, as it later returned as the Clio Williams, and so it should work for this French hi-fi manufacturer too. The result is a pleasant looking modern silver disc spinner that's

slightly rough around the edges in terms of build and use, but that sings like Caruso in a romantic frame of mind...

The result is a confident and commanding performer, with an excellent rhythmic flow and superior dynamic articulation, as well as a wonderfully open and expressive midband. This is sealed with a treble performance that's truly exceptional at the price, I feel. There's a delicacy to high frequencies which you just can't buy from any of the slightly cheaper machines, and is rare with more expensive ones; I'd say this is the CD30's standout feature.

At the other end of the scale, bass is strong and articulate, but the Micromega has to defer here to the Astin Trew which seems to plough its own unique furrow in this respect. Overall then, this charming Gallic silver disc spinner proves itself worthy of serious auditioning, should you be in the market for a sub-£2,000 CD player.

REFERENCE SYSTEM

- MF Audio Silver Passive Preamplifier
- World Audio K5881 power amplifier (modified)
- Yamaha NS1000M loudspeakers

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

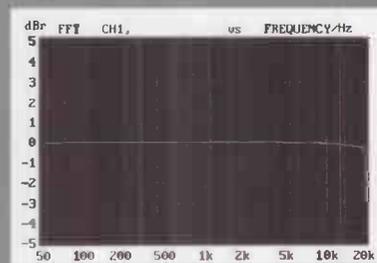
Frequency response shows a gentle roll off at high frequencies, measuring -0.3dB at 20kHz. This sort of roll down, although slight, is enough to ensure the player will not sound sharp or glassy.

Distortion levels were low throughout the player's dynamic range, measuring just 0.0003% at 0dB down to 0.24% at -60dB. Although not quite class leading, this is a good result and largely accounts for a good, if not exceptional, EIAJ dynamic range value of 98dB. Output was a normal at 2.1V and noise low too.

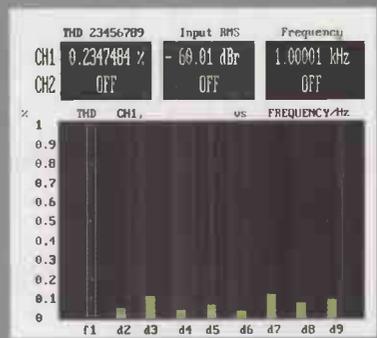
The CD 30 measures well all round. It has no weaknesses or peculiarities and should give good sound quality. NK

Frequency response (-1dB)	2Hz - 21.3kHz
Distortion (%)	
0dB	0.0003
-6dB	0.0005
-60dB	0.24
-80dB	2.4
Separation (1kHz)	112dB
Noise (IEC A)	-112dB
Dynamic range	98dB
Output	2.1V

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



DISTORTION



VERDICT ●●●●●
Musically lucid and engaging performer with an exceptionally refined treble performance at the price, although construction quality isn't this machine's forte.

MICROMEGA CD30 £1,599
Absolute Sounds
+44 (0)208 971 3909
www.absolutesounds.com

- FOR**
- sweet, delicate, airy treble
 - midband detail and subtlety
 - engaging rhythms
 - lucid bass
- AGAINST**
- uninspiring metalwork
 - noisy disc transport

PUT A SPRING INTO YOUR

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.hi-fiworld.co.uk

UK SUBSCRIPTION SAVE UP TO



12.5%

SAVE UP TO 12.5% off the cover price when you subscribe to Hi-Fi World. That's an amazing £3.41 per issue, including postage.



FOR BACK ISSUES ENQUIRIES PLEASE CALL

01442 879097

OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTIONS IF YOU LIVE OUTSIDE THE UK,
PLEASE CALL FOR OUR LATEST PRICES

+44 (0) 1442 879097

SO WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? CALL NOW!!!

SUBSCRIPTION HOTLINE 01442 879097

Lines open Mon-Fri 9.00-5.00 or (weekend answering service available)

FOR OUR
ON-LINE MAGAZINE
SEE P126

email:
hifiworld@webscribe.co.uk

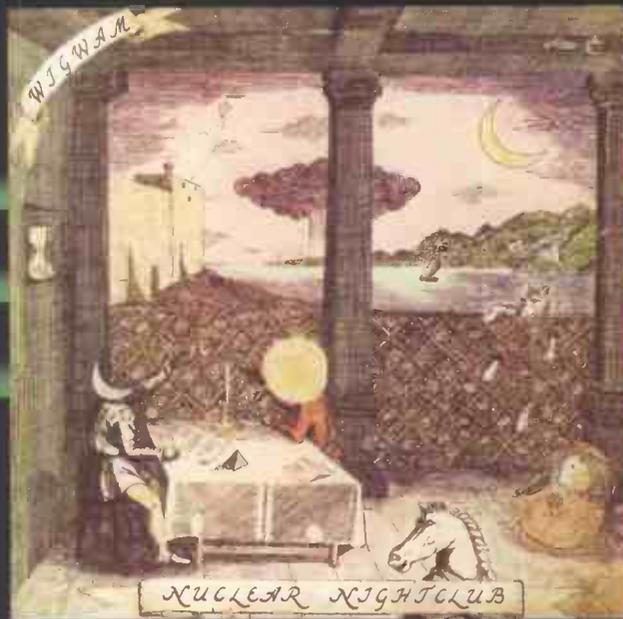
Fax No:
01442 872279

Elkie Brooks

Rich Man's Woman
& Two Days Away

ELKIE BROOKS

Two Days Away



ELKIE BROOKS *Rich Man's Woman & Two Days Away* A&M

Whenever I think of Elkie Brooks I immediately think of her performances on TV as the singer spot in the middle of some top TV show like The Two Ronnies or similar, often warbling 'Pearl's A Singer'. As such, it is - and was - very easy to dismiss Brooks as a serious artist. In fact, she is one of the most underrated female singers in the music business and produced a range of excellent albums during the seventies in particular. This value for money release is a good example featuring, as it does, two albums on one CD.

'Rich Man's Woman' was her debut. Released in 1975, it came soon after she left the group Vinegar Joe, co-fronted by Robert Palmer. Brooks herself wasn't very happy with her debut album because she felt that her basic soul-inflected style had been watered down. The front cover, showing a semi-naked Brooks, also caused undiluted indignation, incidentally. However, it's fascinating to hear how she coped as a solo artist after enjoying the dynamic of a group.

It's also interesting to see how she quickly matured to produce her follow-up, 'Two Days Away', in

1977. Incredibly, this release, apart from a very limited German reissue, is the first time that the album has appeared on CD. It also includes that hit single, her first of thirteen in total, 'Pearl's A Singer' and allowed her to voice her inner soul singer style.

Staying in the UK charts for twenty weeks, it also triggered her first major UK tour and the inclusion, on that tour for the first time, of her future hit 'Lilac Wine' - quite a year. Also look out for another 2-on-1 CD release 'Shooting Star'/'Live And Learn'. Each CD includes an additional bonus track.

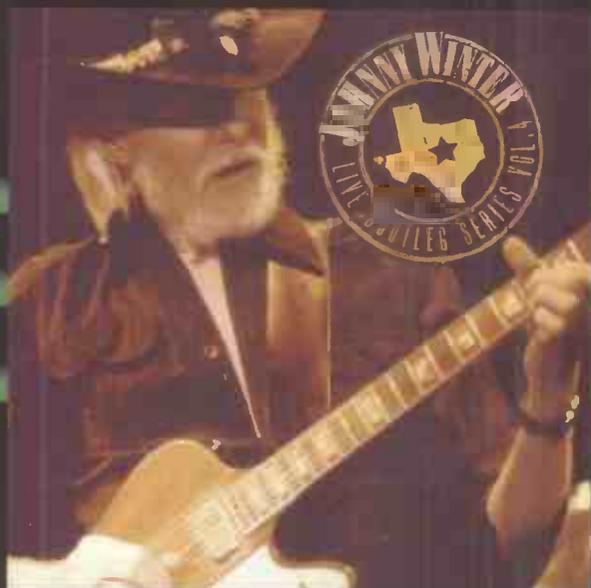
WIGWAM *Nuclear Nightclub* Esoteric Recordings

There are a selection of bands out there who undergo seismic shifts over the period of their existence resulting in multiple bands, in effect. Take The Beatles which, in their early days was a live beat group and, later on, a psychedelic studio band. More within Wigwam's context, take the Peter Gabriel prog rock version of the band Genesis, and compare that with the prog/pop band lead by Phil Collins. Wigwam, a prog outfit from Finland, underwent a similar transformation. It was initially formed with one English chap, Jim Pembroke, and a bunch of blokes from Finland;

drummer Ronnie Österberg, guitarist Nikke Nikamo, bassist Mats Hulden and keyboardist Jukka Gustavson, with Pekka Pohjola joining later as the new bass player.

Wigwam started life as a pioneering prog rock outfit from their 1969 inception until 1974. From 1975 to around 1977 the outfit underwent a few personnel changes, like Genesis. But instead of losing Peter Gabriel and then Steve Hackett, Wigwam lost Pekka Pohjola and Gustavson and the outfit, lead effectively by the Brit Pembroke, went all Phil Collins and merged their prog sensibilities with their new-found commercial pop flavours. This album is the first venture into that pop world and was supposed to break them as a mainstream act, which is what happened to Genesis, of course.

However, Wigwam never found the same luck - despite 'Nuclear Nightclub' being an excellent album in its own right. Don't get me wrong, the album might not have that prog complexity but its pop-like nature is never shallow or irrelevant and there are plenty of worthy moments in the piece. Prog fans should still check it out as part of the wider Wigwam cannon. Also look out for two more Wigwam-related Esoteric releases: Pekka Pohjola's 'The Mathematician's Air Display' and 'B The Magpie'.



JOHNNY WINTER *Live Bootleg Series* Friday Music

Here's a little known series of discs that definitely deserve wider awareness. Basically, Johnny Winter has delved into his own personal selection of "bootleg" tracks and, with the help of the label, placed his favourites on a series of limited edition CDs. There are currently six volumes – six single CD, jewelled cased, releases – on the roster with a promise of more to follow.

The concept of an artist undertaking this sort of project is an excellent one and a direct 'thank you' to the true fans who will always be the main customers for this sort of fare and will buy every single disc on offer, I'm sure. The quality is excellent for a live release taken from a soundboard feed, by the sound of it, but also well balanced and excellently mastered.

The only problem I have with this series is the lack of supporting information. Yes, you get a track listing, supporting musician info, songwriter information and the like but there is no indication as to when and where the tracks were played. These are live excursions, after all. I would have liked to have seen a venue and a date so that we could, at least, put these works into context.

Nevertheless, fans of the great blues/rock guitarist will be chuffed to hear these works. Especially as quite a few of them include rare gems such as the acoustic version of 'Rollin' And Tumblin' (Volume 4), a rare live take of Robert Johnson's 'Stones In My Pass Way' (Volume 3) performed in front of a small audience with a steel guitar plus another rarity, the B.B. King track 'It's My Own Fault', from the latest release, Volume 6, which has been extended to around fifteen minutes. Breathless stuff.

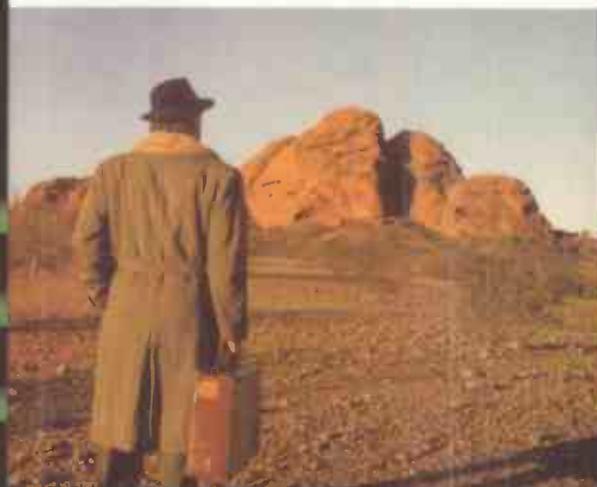
CLIVE GREGSON AND CHRISTINE COLLISTER *A Change In The Weather* BGO

I'll bet that many of you reading this won't have heard of this pair of British folk musicians but, if you haven't and have any interest in folk, then you really ought to get acquainted. Actually, for a pair of folkies, it might surprise you to learn that Clive Gregson's first label deal was with Stiff Records as the founder of Any Trouble, a new wave outfit. It wasn't until he heard Collister singing at a folk gig that he had his epiphany. "I actually met Chris just after the last Any Trouble album came out. I had a night off and went to Poynton Folk Club and saw Chris sing."

Collister had spent time backing

A CHANGE IN THE WEATHER

Clive Gregson & Christine Collister



Richard Thompson on his albums and tours but it wasn't until Gregson asked Collister to back him on a new solo album that he was planning that Gregson began to be known as a folk artist. "We figured out that we actually sounded pretty good singing together... We kind of started doing it as a bit of a laugh... We started off doing little folk clubs and then it started to snowball and people wanted a record", said Gregson. "We hadn't set out to do that at all, it had just crept up on us." The two continued to perform as a duo on the folk circuit thereafter releasing their first album, 'Mischief', in 1987 (also available via BGO).

This album, 'A Change In The Weather', was the pair's follow-up and was released in 1989. Stretching their talents, this album pushed the boundaries compared to their debut and, with complex harmonies, also increased the complexity and quality of their songwriting reaching into sensitive subjects such as wife abuse, mortality and the shallowness of celebrity culture.

xrcd
extended resolution cd
IS BACK
www.hiqrecords.com

Chunky Music

Tim Jarman remembers that late great nineteen seventies integrated amplifier behemoth, the Pioneer SA-9500...

If, when you first set eyes on the Pioneer SA-9500 integrated amplifier, it was in its natural home, a huge and glittering stack of nineteen seventies hi-fi gear, you may not think much of it. It shows a conventional face to the world; big shiny knobs, lots of levers and switches and a big slab of brushed alloy, nothing out of the ordinary for the golden years of Japanese electronics. Take it out however and it's a beauty; could you really buy something like this in 1975?

The SA-9500 looks amazing but it wasn't even the top of the range. For those with serious wedge to invest the Exclusive C3 preamp and Exclusive M3 power amp would be the models to be sniffing around when visiting the Pioneer dealer. Next down was the SA-9900 integrated amplifier and only then came the SA-9500, visually almost identical to the SA-9900 but costing about two thirds of the price. This did not make the SA-9500 a poor man's 'all show and no go' special, it made it a real bargain as all the really important bits were still there.

What you got was a genuine chunk of oriental exoticia. The sculpted cabinet looked amazing but there were good reasons for laying things out the way they were. The various inputs along the right hand side were all connected directly into the printed circuit of the preamplifier; there was no need for trailing wires that could pick up hum and noise.

Equally, holding the loudspeaker cables are quite the nicest push button bare wire grips I've ever used, grouped together on the left hand side close to the output of the protection circuit. This kept internal interconnections as short as possible.

Placing the sockets at the side also meant that it was not necessary to lift the unit up or peer down the back to make the connections, all one had to do was to feed the wires through the guides at the back (don't mistake them for handles!) and plug them in, nice and easy. Of course horizontal RCA-type sockets

frequencies for treble and bass, the whole setup being precise and repeatable, more akin to a piece of laboratory equipment than a hi-fi component.

All of the preamp circuit was powered from regulated positive and negative supplies of an unusually high voltage; this gave the transistors a wide linear operating region and made the extensive use of DC coupling a practical proposition. It also gave the surprisingly good phono stage plenty of headroom, an important factor for reducing the subjective annoyance of groove

"the big Pioneer is a stable constant over which the characteristics of the source and loudspeakers are superim-

perfections. are a natural dust trap so each one was originally supplied with a rubber cover to protect it, if it was not to be used – nice.

Most of the low signal level circuits were housed in the full width section at the front, the cover for this went right down inside and effectively screened these sensitive parts from heat and stray magnetic fields from the power sections. Component choices in the preamplifier were extravagant, a top quality Alps attenuator, with guaranteed tolerances for attenuation per step and channel balance, was used for the volume control, its range being extendable by a three position switch offering a further -15 or -30dB of attenuation.

Another high point in the preamplifier was the tone control. Of course the whole circuit could be defeated at the flick of a polished aluminium switch but this would have been a waste. Instead of using conventional variable resistors, the SA-9500 used high quality rotary switches that selected different values of precision fixed resistor into the filter circuit. Additional switches selected from three different corner

imperfections.

The power amplifier was of a more conservative design, this is where the SA-9900 buyer got their advantage. In the SA-9500 things were still far from shabby, the eight big metal cased NEC bipolar transistors (four per channel in parallel pairs, all DC coupled of course) could punch out over 100W (DIN) into 4 ohms with a high degree of reliability. Pioneer's power claims changed with the season, in 1975 the figure was 110W, by 1976 this had become 130W with no obvious other changes but around 100W seems a sensible figure for practical purposes. A power amplifier is only as good as its power supply and here again Pioneer hadn't scrimped, a massive mains transformer and two towering 18,000uF Elna capacitors (22,000uF in the SA-9900) took centre stage in the beautifully presented and completely matt black interior of the cabinet, so perfectly laid out that it seems a shame to put the lid back on.

An effective protection circuit prevented the destruction of one's loudspeakers in the unlikely event





that something went wrong; this used a four pole relay with two poles in parallel per channel to quickly disconnect the loudspeakers should an excessive DC level appear at the output. If you buy a used SA-9500 make sure this still works, the sound should be muted for the first second or so, appearing following a soft click from the insides. Investigate if this doesn't happen!

In 1977 the SA-9500 Mk II appeared alongside an unchanged SA-9900. This offered more knobs and marginally improved measured performance but to pay for this the overall component quality had begun to decline and the beautiful casework was gone, instead the regulation three-sided metal wrap was pressed into service, making the new model look like just any other big Japanese integrated amplifier. By 1979 the SA-9900 was gone too, replaced by the inferior SA-9800 with its bright blue fluorescent power meters. This new model produced 100W into 8 ohms, reflecting a trend for higher impedance loudspeakers that required more voltage and less current to produce their full output.

SOUND QUALITY

It was traditional to dismiss Japanese muscle-amps as large and soulless blocks of mathematically perfect gain and this is a fair description of the SA-9500. Owners of esoteric British gear may have sneered at what can sometimes be a rather black and white presentation but then the Pioneer had the advantage of a potential useful lifetime that could be measured in decades, not sides of an LP.

The first thing that stuck me

in my listening tests is that the treble isn't particularly extended or fast but I have no doubt that this made perfect sense when the amp was partnered with a pair of big Japanese loudspeakers with tizzy drivers, something that would have been highly likely when it was new. This then is what the SA-9500 is all about; it is stable constant over which the characteristics of the source and loudspeakers are superimposed. Imaging is super-solid and bass is tight, with so much current on tap things never get anywhere in the region of wayward.

In this age of dainty valve amplification with single-figure damping factors and Class-D MOSFET designs whose output impedance can be just about anything, the sound of a big chunk of solid-state linear grunt is becoming a less common experience but in the same way that everyone should drive a V8-powered car at least once it is something that must be sampled, even if you at first think it will not be to your taste!

CONCLUSION

If you like your hi-fi big and beautifully built then these nineteen seventies Pioneer amplifiers are something that you will really enjoy. They are not the last word in subtlety but once brought back up to scratch they should be a reliable friend for long term musical enjoyment. Unfortunately for the budget conscious they are becoming fashionable again and are certainly not as cheap as they once were but even so still represent good value.

FETTLING

As should be clear, these are strong and well made products but with the earliest now thirty five years old one has to expect to do a little bit of work to restore the original performance. As ever, dirty switch contacts and dried up electrolytic capacitors are the main enemies; give all the switches a good dose of cleaner (not forgetting the pre-power amp switch at the side) but leave the two attenuators alone unless they are obviously malfunctioning (unlikely), they are precision components of the very highest quality.

The power supply regulator is in a perforated metal box on the right hand side; cast a sceptical eye over all the electrolytic capacitors inside. A meter will show which ones need replacing but often failed components will also be betrayed by crusty brown deposits around the pins that become visible once they are removed. The power amplifier circuit is difficult to work on but it all folds out in a reasonably logical manner; once you get the hang of it you'll discover that you don't even need to disconnect any of the wiring to effect simple repairs. There aren't many electrolytic capacitors here so check them all.

A recent experience with a faulty example that produced ear splitting noises from the loudspeakers at random intervals and caused the protection circuit to operate showed that the small transistors in the power amplifier can also be a source of bother, you won't get the original 2SA and 2SC types any more without a struggle but modern European alternatives which are still widely distributed make good replacements. Finally set the bias and offset controls up carefully using the procedure described in the service manual. This is critical if top quality is to be obtained and is also a good health check on the power stages as a whole.

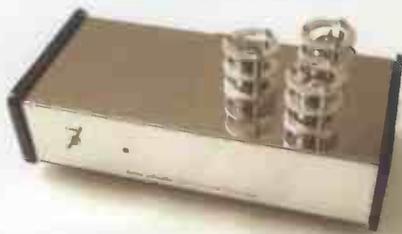
Unbeatable Hi Fi from **icon Audio** of Leicester

New Phono Pre-Amp

PS2 "One Box" Pure Valve MM

Same circuit as our award winning PS1 High output, Very musical, Sublime performance. Icon solid stainless steel alloy chassis 3kg. Footprint 13x27x11.5H

Only £449.95

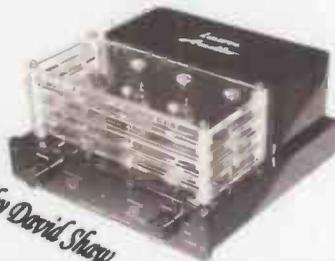


New 15+15W EL84 Amp

ST20PP Integrated Amplifier

Small, and very very cute! Back by customer demand. 15+15w Pure Valve. Now with headphone socket, Only 26w, 25d, 16h cm 9kg. Drives most speakers. **Only £449.95**

all designed by David Shaw



Improved Design, All Triode, 6SN7

This fantastic valve makes heavenly music! Will match L M or High imp headphones. Very very quiet 14w, 25d, 16h cm 5kg Built the same way as a small SE amplifier with 3 transformers, hard wired point to point ECC83 and two fabulous 6NS7 output valves. That's why it weighs 5KG!

Only £449.95



New Electrostatics **KingSound**

Outstanding Value!
Compact, Efficient, Beautiful The Queen II is a compact efficient 3 way Design, Less conspicuous Than a full range panel Needing only 40 Watts to fill the average room with sublime sounds. Stunningly transparent. Excellent deep bass from hybrid ABR
Only 121Hx28Wx31D (cm)
Only £1999.95



Coming Soon The Icon CDX1 Player

Your CD player uninteresting & clinical? Our new valve CD player will make your CDs sound like you hoped they Would, warm musical and transparent. We would never make mediocre! Not just a "Me too" with a couple valves thrown in, but an independent pure valve rectified, valve and choke regulated, hard wired analogue output stage. With a top quality 192kHz 24bit player. Usable as a stand alone DAC. Upgradeable. Very solidly built at 11kg Limited production. Reserve yours now! Expected price **£999.95**



New LA4 mkII Line Preamp

Improved version of award winning MK I. New adjustable gain to match any power amplifier. New super 274B rectifier valve, and 6SN7, the definitive hi fi valve. **only £799.00**



NEW 150w Mono Blocks

150+150w of pure UL valve power (or 100 + 100w of pure triode), Using 4 KT90s or KT88s. Based on our award winning MB90s. Unlike transistors, these giants retain the Icon warmth and texture at low volumes, giving massive headroom and very low distortion. Various upgrades available.

Only £2799.00 Pair



Our Best Ever Mid Range Amplifier!

Stereo 40 MK III our best ever value amplifier. It has everything, 40+40 watts, Triode mode, Valve rectifier. Remote control. Tape loop. Standby switch. KT66/Kt88 EL34/6550 compatible. Two rave reviews in HFW and HFN.
from Only £1199.95 (EL34 version)



£250 PX* For Your Old Speakers!

MFV3 floor standing speakers!

These efficient easy load speakers were designed to give a "big" sound with 9 to 100w lower powered amplifiers in a medium to large room. In matched Walnut or Cherry real wood veneer, they are ideal for valve and "Class A" solid state amplifiers. Custom made drivers, Simple crossover. Audio quality HD MDF. Bi-wireable. Complete with Base and "Floor friendly" Spikes
W 21cm. H 109cm. D 35cm

You pay only £750.00

(*Limited offer for a pair of working speakers)



Icon Audio MB845 Mono Blocks

"Amongst the best amplifiers I have ever heard. Awesome dynamics and power! Super Value" N Keywood H F W 90+90 watts of pure triode magic Designed to go into sonic territory inaccessible by 300Bs. Their pure valve simplicity gives openness impossible by transistors! The 1931 RCA huge power triode is still without equal. Only 3 stages. They are the answer to anyone jaded to their present system.

From **Only £2699 pair** Upgrades available



KingSound Prince II ELS speakers

£1000 PX* For Your Old Speakers!

These full sized panels 5ft9 H 22in W. Will reproduce the deepest bass. Ideal for the larger room. Incredible detail with transparency not available from "box" speakers. Winning 5 Globes In Hi Fi World there is simply nothing else at this price that comes close for performance and quality at this price. Take advantage of our crazy part exchange price while stocks last!

You Pay Only £2500.00

Limited offer PX for a pair of working speakers)



PS 3 All Valve Phono Stage

"Our Fave Affordable High End Phono Stage" N.K. Hi Fi World Awarded 5 "Globes" Only a pure valve design can get the best from vinyl. All triode. No feedback. Passive RIAA. Custom British MC TX option. A supercharged PS1 with the best possible Power supply. Valve rectified & regulated for definition and smoothness, 14kg. Upgrades available
From only £1499.00 complete (inc MC TX)



Common Features: Icon Designs by David Shaw. Hand built "Point to Point" wiring. Designed and finished in Leicester UK. No printed circuit board. ALPS Volume control. Gold plated terminals. Audiophile components. Silver Teflon audio cable. Steel & alloy plate construction. Soft start. and HT delay. Comprehensive manual inc DIY valve change info. "Proper" valve amplifiers are heavy because good transformers need lots of iron!

...Buy direct from us, or through your dealer. Export no problem! Want to know more? See www.iconaudio.com or ask for a leaflet.

.....Or ring us on +44 (0)116 2440593 email sales@iconaudio.com **icon Audio** 351 Aylestone Road Leicester LE2 8TA (U.K.)

*Whilst stocks last, Conditions apply ask for details

Prices correct with 17.5% UK VAT at time of going to press but subject to change. E & O E

Visa, MasterCard and debit cards accepted

"what a shame that we've moved to fiddly, inferior sounding formats. That's progress!"



david price

If there was ever an anthem for the consumer electronics industry, it is "things can only get better". You couldn't have it any other way. Can you imagine the leading players - Sony, Philips, Matsushita - going on record to say in a doleful tone that things aren't as good as they used to be?

No, that's not going to happen. Instead we're treated to a constant narrative, in every public utterance, every press release and every television and magazine commercial, that their latest products are 'great new' devices designed to make your stressful modern life ever easier and more fulfilled. They're hardly going to say 'don't buy our latest product, because it's not a patch on our previous one'.

Of course, many things *do* get better. I don't think Noel or I would take a late seventies moving coil cartridge if you paid us (well, maybe a classic Koetsu, but that's the exception to the rule). Ditto most turntables and tonearms, transistor amplifiers and loudspeakers. So whilst it's generally true that the great march of technological progress brings benefits, it's not a *fait accompli*, and sometimes things happen to make you realise why...

In my case, planning for a summer holiday trip to China, I spent an evening filling a Sony NW-A845 digital portable full of my favourite music, dragging and dropping it from my iTunes compressed music folder on my Mac. I managed to stuff its 16GB memory with a large amount of 320kbps AAC rips of my personal faves, only to find out the next day that, eerm, Sony wanted it back. Doh!

As holidays are for me an excuse to play my most beloved music, I was crestfallen. This most treasured of moments was in danger of being denied to me...

Well, no it wasn't. Because after a quick think to see if I had any other

digital portables knocking around, I suddenly remembered the very first time I went to China in 1988 (well, Hong Kong). Then, my automatic choice for a summer's worth of sounds on the beach at Repulse Bay was my Sony Walkman Professional cassette portable.

Actually, I've recently rediscovered my Walkie Pro, as I'm a fan of classic Jaguars. The ones I can afford (i.e. not *that* classic; we're talking seventies and eighties here) all came with very nice Jaguar-badged Clarion tape decks, specially moulded to fit the dashboard. The option wasn't there, for a stickler for originality like me, to rip 'em out and fit a modern CD player. So it was back to tape whether I liked it or not.

It took just a few minutes to get back into the swing of WM-D6C life; a new set of batteries, a quick blast of isopropyl alcohol on the heads and capstan, and the deck was ready. I bought some TDK SA90s from Richer Sounds for a pound a pop, cued up my record deck, set the levels and I was back in the all-analogue age! All this brought me pleasures unknown to a Capital Gold listener; this was my very own 'Radio DP' I was listening to driving along the M4, in good old eighties-style stereo...

So it was a simple and logical progression to take my Walkie Pro with me to China. For the first time in over twenty years, I was travelling analogue. Although no iPod nano, the Sony was less bulky than feared, although my media storage arrangements left a bit to be desired. Lacking a suitable cassette carrier (my Hong Kong *sojourn* involved a very natty black vinyl storage case, now long gone) I bunged a load of my tapes in an old Jiffy bag. Hmmm, not quite *de rigueur* on the fashionable boulevards of Shanghai, but it did the job.

And so followed ten days of constant 'cassette-ing'. I received a number of strange looks from passengers on the Air China flight out; packed with young trendies touting iPhones and Oppo MP3 players, they must have thought me some English peasant who couldn't afford a modern music machine. Before this, eyebrows were raised as my analogue tape equipment passed through the X-ray at Heathrow airport. The young lady whose job it was to look inside hand luggage might have momentarily thought it to be secret spying kit, or a strange device liable to self destruct, as per the beginning of the original Mission Impossible...

The trip went brilliantly, with only the need for two sets of AA batteries. I didn't need a charger, or have to buy a USB cable, or configure my network settings at all. My only sadness was the Walkie Pro's lack of podcast playback. It would have been too much for me to ask *Hi-Fi World's* resident tape head Tim Jarman to record 'The Week in Westminster' on Radio 4, Saturdays at 11am, on his immaculately set up Bang and Olufsen Beocord 9000 and then post me the tape by express air mail, I concede! Still, I did manage to listen to many of my old early eighties LP recordings, at a level of fidelity never possible from a modern iPod playing Apple Lossless. Listening all holiday long in magnificent fidelity was a joy.

As Tim says in our 'Globies' feature on p112, imagine a format that makes incredibly easy and fine recordings, and that you can take anywhere and play at home, in your car and on the train, as well as buy prerecorded for pennies. Someone should invent one. Oh hang on, we already did! What a shame then, that we've forgotten about it, and moved on to fiddlier, less universal and far inferior sounding systems. Well, I guess that's progress! ●

MUSICAL FIDELITY

M6PRE

Fully balanced preamp. Inputs: Phono. USB. Balanced. 4 line.
Outstanding technical performance.

M6PRX

260wpc. Dual mono. High current. Choke regulated.
Outstanding technical performance.



"I know major record labels exist to make money, but if only someone had looked at this approach..."



paul rigby

Have you ever watched the TV programme 'Through The Keyhole'? You know the one, a watery-eyed David Frost infringes upon people's personal liberties by sending in his very own human CCTV camera, the pasta-sauce toting, rubber-band vocal chorded Loyd Grossman? The very same programme which ran out of recognisable celebrities after a few series resulting in the bewildered studio panel's continued puzzlement on the identity of the 'celebrity' even after they had been revealed?

Well, it got me wondering. What would happen if they took a gander in Satan's abode? "Who lives in a house liiiikkke thiiiiiss," the time distorted speech of Grossman would imbue. The camera would pan over Satan's personal effects and favourite items of torture and persecution; here a disembowelling instrument, there a rack: here a copy of Windows Vista, there the new edition of *The Sun*... but look, just there, on a pedestal of pure crystal and rising like a colossus, a light shining blackness from within, as if exploding with an inner soul of deceit and malevolence sits...sits... a CD jewel case!

I hate CD jewel cases. I really do. No, honestly. The front cover scuffs and scratches after a few seconds making the CD look decidedly 'second hand', the hinges snap off at a moment's notice, the bit that holds the CD either breaks off too easily or clings on so hard it threatens to snap the CD in two, the postage-stamp artwork is further hidden and distorted by the case, the tabs that hold the paper cover sometimes snag, bend or even tear the cover... oh, I could go on. But I won't because I want to tell you about a new series of CDs that shine a calming light

upon this aged physical format. One that, not only shows off CD in a more positive light, is attractive and jam-packed with information but actually encourages you to collect the entire set – twelve, in this case. Oh, and the series features great music.

Owned and now brought back to life by the UK outfit Snapper, International Artists Records (see www.internationalartistsrecords.com for more information on the reissue project) was born in Texas during the late-sixties under the guidance of singer Kenny Rogers' brother, Lelan Rogers. The first release was a 13th Floor Elevators single in 1966. The group became the flagship act during the label's life, issuing four albums and a host of singles. Other acts included Red Krayola and the Golden Dawn.

Paul Drummond compiled, researched and produced the 13th Floor Elevators releases in this series (look out for his book, 'Eye Mind', on the group), "The label was taken over by a bunch of freaks who didn't know what they were doing but it produced some of the best and freakiest, psychedelic and punk music. It's a really strange but interesting label."

Despite the original masters disappearing, for the singles, remarkably, all of the original album masters have survived. Strangely, the entire batch was discovered in a warehouse in Rotterdam, Holland. "It was a bit like 'Raiders of the Lost Ark', where you walk into this huge room, ambling up ladders and so on. They weren't the multi-tracks but the mix-down, two-track tapes. And that after many people had believed them long lost."

In effect therefore, this series of CDs will be presenting each of these records for the first time because previous reissues were either dubbed

from original vinyl or cack-handedly mastered without any understanding of the content. For example, the Elevators' LPs featured lots of echo/reverb which many contemporary engineers reduced or 'cleaned up', believing that the effect was a sign of the times. Not so, the overflowing echo/reverb was part of the band's philosophical psychedelic beliefs.

"It stems from the Perfect Fifth, the divine chord used by the Gregorian Monks based on Pythagoras' theory of music and scales," said Drummond. "The band were heavily into that... and acid, incidentally. The echo/reverb was integral to that, as their original producer advised us. The idea was to produce a 'third voice', via the distortion, which would appear in your mind - which was the psychedelic sound."

But it's the beautiful production values that hit you first. Each CD sits within a thick, book-like cover which maximises the CD-sized artwork, produces a thick spine and allows the inclusion of a fifteen-page record label booklet plus a fourteen-page book on the CD itself including rare photos and label images. "These packages have a desirable aspect to them, there's lots of information with them and there's lots of obvious work that's gone into them."

I know major record labels exist to make money but if only someone had looked at this sort of production approach as the standard, looking at the business, not as a short-term profit sprint but as a marathon, seeing the long-term, long game approach then maybe, just maybe, the CD and the digital physical format would have had a longer life. That said, as the CD format turns itself into a niche format like vinyl, maybe that very day has now arrived. ●

Definition

Stereo Sound
Grand Prix
Award 2009

Definiton DC10T

EDITOR'S CHOICE
HI-FI CHOICE
magazine

Definiton DC10T

Image Hi-Fi
Award 2010
Best Loudspeaker

Definiton DC8

MEDIA
TOTAAL
AWARD
2009

BESTE VAN
Definiton DC8T



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

Defining the art of sound

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

tannoy.com

TANNOY

"the BBC should deliver the BBC HD channel at higher quality on satellite than on Freeview..."



steven green

Some news has emerged recently about the BBC HD channel's picture quality on satellite, which I wrote about in February's issue. To briefly recap: the BBC slashed the bitrate of the BBC HD channel on satellite from 14Mbps down to just 9.7Mbps in August 2009 after it had installed new MPEG-4 H.264 video encoders. This incensed viewers who flooded BBC blogs with comments complaining that the quality was far worse than it had been before the change, and that the picture quality could no longer be described as being 'high-definition'. In response, the BBC claimed that its "internal tests" had shown that the quality of the channel was no worse than it was before the bit rates were reduced.

Viewers were having none of the BBC's spin though, and they carried on complaining; so the BBC graciously decided to invite a group of people – who'd made a formal complaint to the BBC about the HD picture quality – to visit the BBC, and the group were also invited to write about their visit in a series of three articles that were published on the BBC Internet blog (the blogs can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/377gkn8>).

On their visit, BBC executives told the group that they had to take "platform neutrality" into consideration when deciding upon what bit rate/ quality levels to use for the BBC HD channel on satellite. This is about as blatant an admission that the BBC did choose to degrade the quality of BBC HD on satellite as you could ever hope to come across. What the BBC will have been referring to here is that there's a severe shortage of capacity for HD channels to use on

Freeview, which means that Freeview HD channels will have to use relatively low bit rate levels, and the quality won't be very good by HD standards. So the BBC has basically admitted here that it has chosen to reduce the quality of BBC HD on satellite so that it doesn't outclass the quality delivered via Freeview.

In my opinion, the term "platform neutrality" as it applies to the BBC simply means that the BBC should not show bias towards one platform over another. But in no way would the BBC be showing bias towards satellite if it delivered the BBC HD channel at higher quality on satellite than it does via Freeview. The two platforms are characterised by the fact that there is an enormous amount of bandwidth available on satellite whereas bandwidth is in very scarce supply on Freeview, and transmission costs on Freeview are about ten times higher than they are on satellite.

The characteristics of the two platforms dictate that the BBC should deliver the BBC HD channel at higher quality on satellite than on Freeview. And not to do so is simply treating people who watch TV via satellite unfairly. People should have a right to expect the BBC to deliver its channels at as high a level of quality as possible (within reason), and the BBC certainly should not deliberately degrade the quality on satellite just because it favours the Freeview platform.

BBC executives also told the group that they have a duty to use satellite capacity as efficiently as possible. However, they obviously don't practice what they preach, because the satellite transponder that carries the BBC HD channel has been half empty ever since the BBC

reduced the bitrate of the BBC HD channel last August, so it was clearly dishonest of them to try and use this as a justification for reducing the bit rates...

The BBC also told the group that if they increased the bitrate of BBC HD now it would only lead to disappointment further down the line when bitrate levels would have to be reduced when new HD channels are launched, such as BBC1 HD. However, as the group noted in its blogs, this contradicted the BBC's central (ridiculous) claim that bitrate only has a "minimal impact" on picture quality.

One interesting thing to note on this subject from the group's visit was that the BBC chose not to allow the group to compare the picture quality of the old and new video encoders at the original, higher 14Mbps bit rate level – they were only allowed to compare the old encoders at 14Mbps with the new encoders at 9.7Mbps. So, the BBC clearly has no faith in its own main claim that bitrate only has a minimal impact on quality.

Furthermore, the claim that bitrates would have to be reduced to allow new HD services to launch doesn't stand up to scrutiny either. The BBC has 231Mbps of satellite capacity available, including room to allow three HD channels to be broadcast on the half-empty satellite transponder that the BBC HD channel is currently broadcast from. Basically, the BBC is swimming in capacity on satellite.

I look forward to reading the BBC Trust's response to the group's complaint. As you can probably guess by now, I don't think the BBC has got a leg to stand on, but whether the BBC Trust will do the right thing or not is another matter entirely. ●

KNIGHT series

Knight Series is the embodiment of Castle's legacy of delivering real-wood veneers and sumptuous sound quality – the essence of class and refinement. With all its component parts manufactured, assembled, and hand-crafted in-house, the Knight series combines traditional cabinet making with the finest in British engineering design.

Incorporating Castle's proprietary TPT (Twin Pipe Technology) bass loading system, the Knight series is able to deliver deep bass without the 'boomy sound' that can result from most reflex-port loading loudspeaker designs.

The Knight series comes in a choice of eight real-wood veneers.



IAG House, Sovereign Court, Ermine Business Park, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 6XU, UK
Tel: 01480 447700 Fax: 01480 431767 www.castle.uk.com

Available at

audio•T
Sound & Vision Solutions
www.audio-t.co.uk

"a good product needs no handbook; operation should be self evident..."



noel keyword

Well, who *wouldn't* want to ride a motorbike called a Road Rocket? Of all the many great names thought up for bikes and cars this must be the best. It's a wonderful 1950s invocation of power and speed, when rockets and rocketry seemed to represent the future. Cadillac tail fins were styled after rockets and BSA used it for one of their motorbikes. Having once ridden an A10, as I knew it, uncoupled from its sidecar(!) I know the truth is a little more prosaic than the name might suggest, but peering longingly at bike ads recently I was taken aback to see that this old sidecar lugger, spruced up, now commands a £15k price tag. What? That's two Japanese super bikes, plus some.

The revival in interest of items from yesteryear still takes me by surprise. And in spite of the jibes, it isn't about old gits reliving their youth (I think most of us were glad to have survived riding such dangerous machinery and won't be going back). The Royal Enfield that regularly passes me is ridden by a young man, as are the many classic scooters pattering arthritically around my neighbourhood.

Of all people I should hardly be surprised. I'm sure any biker thinking he may like to buy an old turntable to play his LPs, say a Garrard 401, might be surprised to find out how much it will cost. Even I am. I have always used the 401 because it gives an exciting sound, is easy to use and is a great platform for arms. Like an old motorbike it needed fettling before use, even though mine had seen little action until I decided to revive it. The 401 is a little bit more capable at its task than an old motorbike I feel, but perhaps popular for the same reasons. But what is that reason?

I asked a salesman at Metropolis Motorcycles, sitting in the shadow

of the sinister M15 building, Vauxhall, London, why people were buying rickety old bikes and scooters when his showroom was full of gleaming new wonders. His one word of explanation; accessibility.

It's an interesting idea. The Garrard, once fettled and put into place, is very easy to use. I hardly need to consult a handbook to use it, operation is self evident. Its simple utility is reflected in equally straightforward styling, like early Land Rovers.

Using this as a criterion for acceptance and likely popularity produces some interesting results. Apple's iPod, in conjunction with iTunes is a fabulously easy way to buy and listen to music, on a tune-by-tune basis, or as an album download. It's addictively simple and provides great pleasure too; there are almost no barriers to enjoyment and it doesn't surprise me that it has become an icon of our times. Let's not talk about sound quality; perhaps people are just happy to have something they know how to use...

I still have great reservations about storing music this way. At the end of all such music chains lies either a disc drive or a volatile memory. And as I have said before in this column, some time or other it is going to fail and you are going to lose everything. I took to iTunes many moons ago, spent a small fortune very quickly then lost the lot when my computer disc drive failed. Okay, nowadays there are solutions for this. Apple retain details of the music their customers buy and will restore it all. Also, it was once difficult to back up the iTunes folder, but now it has been made easier.

But whilst my pile of dud computer drives continues to build, along with my dread of drive failure, and whilst I continue to pop failing drives out of computers and

into caddies, I still have no faith in storing anything valuable on a drive, in perpetuity. I know iTunes fanatics who also see this potential problem but choose to ignore it. Accessibility is all with iTunes and it's a system that works wonderfully. It doesn't frighten anyone, and nor does it need a handbook of Biblical thickness to understand. You roll up, stand on the kick start and putter off. It's been made to seem that simple and unintimidating.

Ideally then, a good product needs no handbook; operation should be self evident. If it isn't then the manufacturer has a problem on their hands. Enter AV!

Yes, AV products, especially receivers, are all but dead in the water, if we use accessibility and handbook thickness as yardsticks by which success may be judged. I admit that as an engineer AV has become a perverse challenge to me and I have actually learnt to enjoy the chore of getting it to work. One reason is that there is reward to be had at the end; many surround-sound recordings really are very good and not easily heard elsewhere. Not only is there better instrument separation but sound quality can be pretty darn impressive too, albeit in a digital way. The Samsung BD-C7500 Blu-ray player I review this month sounded great, but only after I had spent fascinating hours curled up on the settee reading the Korean equivalent of 'War & Peace', just to turn it on!

It is beginning to look like the days of giant consumer electronics technologies are over. Apple are masters of ease of delivery and use; there's nothing especially clever about a device that plays AAC, but the world loves the iPod's simplicity and accessibility. If they'd called it Pocket Rocket then perhaps it could end up selling for double today's prices in future? ●

whest audio

Until we come up with another radical set of electronics...
vinyl replay doesn't get better than this.

- 2 mono channels
- 8 master craftsmen
- 40 discrete regulators
- 48 hand matched transistors
- 80 high spec capacitors

1 whest audio



whestTWO

whestTWO/4



PS.30R



PS.30RDT



email: post@whestaudio.co.uk
web: www.whestaudio.co.uk
tel: +44 (0) 20 3176 0376



Find our **TOP 20** Hi-Fi dealers

To find the best dealer in your area
click onto this great new info website.

www.top20uk.info



**CLAIM UP TO £1000 WORTH
OF SYSTEM ACCESSORIES**
For further information and to
obtain your voucher visit
www.top20uk.info
and enter code
HW14

10 PAGE VINYL SECTION SEE PAGE 98

HI-FI WORLD

AUGUST 2010 UK £3.90 www.hi-fiworld.co.uk

FREE READER CLASSIFIED ADS IN THIS ISSUE!

**To advertise in this space
please call
020 7372 6018
or email:
advertising@hi-fiworld.co.uk**

MUSICAL FIDELITY M digital converter £4,560 (UK ONLY)
CABLES TO FEEL WORN (UK ONLY)

10 ACCESSORIES TO 50%
LOUDSPEAKERS

- PHONO STAGE SUPERTEST
- SAMSUNG BD-C7900 BLU RAY
- LIRIN UPDORIK PHONO STAGE
- SENNHEISER HD800 'PHONES
- INSPIRE APOLLO TURNTABLE
- MICROMEGA CD30 CD PLAYER
- OLDF WORLD: PIONEER SA0500
- XTZ CD100 CD PLAYER

12 PAGES OF LETTERS - THE BEST WINS A PAIR OF KEF IQ30 LOUDSPEAKERS! (UK ONLY)

"we're being bribed into accepting this crappy technology under the guise of progress..."



adam smith

Most people will no doubt recall the Government's recent car scrappage scheme, the idea being to take the older, more polluting and less reliable cars off the road, by giving their owners a fiscal incentive to trade up to a new one. The side issue was that it would also give a much needed shot in the arm to the British car industry. Now this was all well and good, and I have no problem with assisting people to upgrade their cars. It can be none too difficult to get into a stalemate with an older car where it is not worth anything unless it is working, but the cost of repairs needed to get it working take up the funds that could otherwise have been allocated to replace it!

There were downsides to this marvellous idea, however. Firstly the British car industry was pretty much unaffected, as no-one used the scrappage scheme to buy a Bristol, Aston Martin, Lotus, Morgan, Caterham or Westfield, to the best of my knowledge. Okay, so a few budget Toyotas, Hondas and Nissans came from factories in the UK, so at least this boosted our manufacturing industry, but the chief recipient of the scheme was Korea as far as I can see, as cheap Hyundais, Kias and Chevrol-aewoos seemed to be the vehicles of choice...

My main beef with the scheme, however, was the fate of vehicles that were traded in. Yes, there were many dull family runabouts barely clinging to their MOTs but there were also some much more exotic items consigned to the bin – I have heard of classic Jaguars, MGBs, Morris Minors, Mercedes and Porsches being taken in! The problem is that the dealers who give this discount have to recoup the money on the cars taken in from the government, and this was conditional on them being scrapped. Period.

And now, the wonderful scheme is back, but this time it's those dreadful old fashioned FM radio things that the BBC and commercial radio stations are targeting. And I have to say, I'm a bit confused. Yes, keeping an old banger going costs money [yes, especially your Range Rover! Ed.]; running an FM radio does not. Old cars can pollute more if not properly serviced, FM radios do not. In fact, FM radios are 'greener' than their DAB counterparts as they use far less power, so that seems to be completely going against the other bandwagon that the government have jumped on, namely energy efficiency and 'carbon footprint' reduction! Trading in my old radio for something that uses more power, offers poorer reception most of the time and sounds worse, isn't really high on my priority list. Maybe I'm the only person in the country who's postcode still brings up, "We're sorry, there are no digital radio stations available in your area at the moment" on the Digital Radio website, but somehow I doubt it.

My favourite part of the scheme however, is the way in which it is described as an 'Analogue Radio Amnesty'. If you recall, other 'Amnesties' in the past have included guns and knives; both of which are offensive weapons used to injure and kill people, so it now appears that the poor old FM radio is considered to be in the same category! I know of a few people who could do with some sense being knocked into them and, frankly, a nice chunky 1970s tuner would do the job perfectly but unplugging the power, signal and aerial leads and lugging the thing down from my listening room is just too much hassle to be honest, particularly when my golf clubs are in the shed.

And what of the fate of the traded-in radios? Apparently, these are going to be reconditioned and then sent to Africa and other similar

places, to give people access to radio programmes which is, of course, an admirable sentiment but I remain resolutely cynical as to whether this will happen. Consider for a moment, the time and cost needed to strip down an old Roberts radio, clean and service it and then check its setup and alignment to make it fully ready for use. Now consider the cost of a bulk buy of modern portable FM radios made by our friends in the Far East; I don't think it takes a genius to work out which will be more cost-effective. Sorry, but I think we're being bribed into accepting this crappy technology under the guise of progress once again and I, for one, am not happy about it...

Finally, I hope no one minds if I just take a final few column inches to pay tribute to my uncle, Terry Clements, who sadly passed away recently. I have mentioned him on these pages before as, not only was he a very talented engineer who built most of his hi-fi himself, but he also had music piped into every room in his house years before anyone else thought of the concept – again, all self designed and built. Most importantly however, he was the gentleman who entrusted his Garrard 301 turntable to my care when he no longer used it. This is the very 301 that is still my pride and joy to this day and I am proud to say that, thanks to this, I rediscovered its brilliance even before *Hi-Fi World* did!

Whilst it was certainly my father who sowed the seeds of my love for music, audio and hi-fi, it was Terry who helped them blossom into the full-blown obsession that I have today and I'm sure he's largely responsible for the forty-six vinyl spinners currently residing at Smith Towers! So, Terry, if you're reading this in a heavenly branch of WH Smith's, I'd just like to say thank you for everything and make sure you keep those celestial turntables spinning! ●

vinyl section

contents

AUGUST 2010

www.hi-fiworld.co.uk

INSPIRE APOLLO 100

Adam Smith auditions a smart new mid-price turntable.

SOUNDBITES 105

Paul Rigby tries the Furutech DF-2 and Walker Audio Prelude Deluxe.

LINN UPHORIK 106

David Price hears Linn's brand new flagship phono stage.

AUDIO TECHNICA AT-F7 110

Tony Bolton tries this lively £300 moving coil cartridge.

VINILLISSIMO

Two new 180gm albums from a company new to these pages. Vinillissimo, based in Spain, has released Los Brincos' 'Contrabando' (1968), the third album by the sixties pop band, a sort of Spanish version of The Who or Yardbirds, which was partly recorded in London at the Pye studios. Also watch out for Las Grecas' 'Gypsy Rock': a mixture of flamenco and rock. In fact, the album name was an attempt to describe this splintered genre. www.vinillissimo.com.



news

NEW KICKS

A host of new contemporary LPs have been released covering a variety of genres...

The Liars' 'Sisterworld' (Mute) takes the band's brand of danceable punk and injects a dose of fear and paranoia into the mix. This deluxe version includes the LP, a double CD, two booklets and a remix disc of the eleven tracks via luminaries such as Thom Yorke and Alan Vega (www.mute.com).

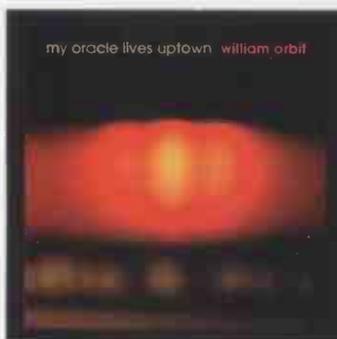
Solo project from Finnish symphonic metal outfit Nightwish, Tarja's 'The Seer' (Spinefarm) is described as an EP but features 13 tracks of live outings and remixes. Amazing vocals and noise from the lady herself (www.spinefarm.fi).

Electronica man Lindstrom's been busy. The LP/CD package, 'II' (Eskimo, www.eskimorecordings.com), which includes the CD version too, with Prins Thomas reveals an electronic disco beat with electro overtones while his collaboration with Christabelle ('Real Life Is No Cool') via Smalltown Supersound (www.smalltownsupersound.com) plugs into a downtempo indie vibe.

Direct from the Leaf label is the Polar Bears' 'Peepers' via a 24bit DMM cut plus a download code for a digital version of the album, plus a bonus track. Blending jazz with rock and electronica elements, this is a fresh look at jazz-rock with added turns, twists and filigree which keeps the ear interested (www.theleaflabel.com).

The latest Holly Golightly And The Brokeoffs album from Damaged Goods, 'Medicine County' mixes American blues, country and rockabilly with English overtones creating an attractive amalgam (www.damagedgoods.co.uk).

Electronica legend William Orbit's 'My Oracle Lives Uptown' (Linn) is his first solo project in four years – his eighth in total. It swings between nineties retro-dance and more considered, meaty fare (www.linnrecords.com).





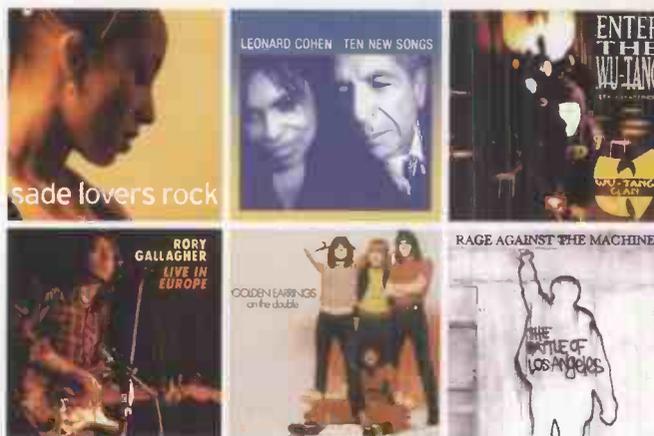
MUSIC ON VINYL

Recently arrived, this batch of Music On Vinyl releases covers a wide spectrum and starts with the Charles Mingus album, 'Mingus Ah Um', his top quality Columbia debut from 1959. Both the original and unedited version are included and were mixed from the three-track masters via an original Presto valve tape recorder.

Onto Sade and 'Lovers Rock' (Sony) from 2000 which included more rock oriented moments into the normal soul/funk smoothness. Originally released a year later, Leonard Cohen's 'Ten New Songs' features co-written works from via former backing singer, Sharon Robinson. Typically poetic in style, the LP retains Cohen's musings and reflections.

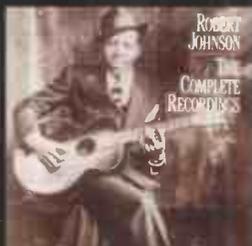
'Enter The Wu-Tang: 36 Chambers' is rather less reflective: more like stripped and rather scary. A collaborative project via nine MCs, who later moved to solo fame and fortune, this album completely changed hip-hop forever.

Also look out for blues/rock guitarist Rory Gallagher's classic 'Live! In Europe' from 1972, Golden Earring's 1969 multi-genre rock release 'On The Double' and Rage Against The Machine's 1999 politico-attack on contemporary society 'The Battle Of Los Angeles'. www.musiconvinyl.com



AT THE CROSSROADS

Of course, the legend is that Robert Johnson took his guitar to a crossroads near Dockery's plantation, in rural Mississippi, USA, one midnight. Meeting a large black man, who turned out to be the devil, Johnson traded his soul to be the king of the Delta blues. And since that time, his music has been played and continually reissued. However, not like this. Doxy has produced a superb 3LP box set called 'Robert Johnson - King Of The Delta Blues: the Complete Recordings'. Featuring a large poster and a six-page lyric book, this is Johnson at his most luxurious.



CURED

A new pressing of the Cure album 'Disintegration' has been announced via Universal, which will be spread over two LPs. The idea is to enhance the sound quality of the package and, judging by listening tests with an early test pressing, the company has successfully given each track room to breathe. Dynamics are increased and distortion reduced by maximising each side to only three tracks.

...AND MORE BLUES



The blues reissues continue but, this time, via Monk with lesser stars than Johnson but no lesser talents. Ex-work gang leader, Sleepy John Estes's 'I Ain't Gonna Be Worried No More' is a double album featuring works spanning 1929-1937. His expressive voice can be heard on twenty-four included

tracks. 'That's No Way To Get Along' by Robert Wilkins takes old Victor recordings from 1928-1935. Any Rolling Stones fans out there need to hear this because Jagger and Richards were directly influenced by Wilkins.

Ishman Bracey's career was short - he later turned to the church and rejected his blues affiliations. 'Suitcase Full Of Blues: 1928-1929' contains his entire work.

Furry Lewis recorded many 78s in the twenties and found fame based upon

them during the sixties. His guitar blues can be heard on 'I Will Turn Your Money Green' via recordings in Memphis and Chicago. Also look out for Tommy Johnson's 'Cool Drink of Water Blues' from 1928-1929 and The Beale Street Sheiks' 'Chicken You Can Roost Behind The Moon' from 1927-1929.



Vinyl LP reissues and new releases

High-grade pressings for audiophiles and collectors

Classic rock • 1960s/70s • folk • blues • jazz • soul
reggae • punk • indie • dance • breaks & beats • films
limited editions • box sets • rarities & bargains!

Classic LPs

E-mail or call us for a free catalogue:
info@classiclps.co.uk 01684 899 457
www.classiclps.co.uk

Space Race

Adam Smith checks out the earthly delights of Inspire's new Apollo turntable...

Everyone who was around at the time will be aware of the 'space race', and even those, like myself, who were born many years later, have read all about the shenanigans that occupied the greatest minds of those across the world to launch satellites, explore space and, ultimately, land a man on the moon. Of course, die-hard Trekkies like myself know that Captain Kirk and colleagues were out doing this much further afield at the time, but whenever I try to point out that 'Star Trek' was actually a documentary and not a work of fiction, I get funny looks, so I'd better not dwell on it...

Funnily enough, years later, it almost seems to me that the modern day is bringing a space race of its own, but with the frontier this time being 'vinyl' rather than 'final', as new turntables just keep cropping up and bringing a few jolly odd ideas along with them too. In the past year I have seen loudspeaker suspensions for motor supports, a monstrous acrylic beast involving water troughs and even a violin bow for an arm. Frankly, the normality and sense of reason shown by the like of Inspire

Hi-Fi brings one back down to earth with a very pleasant bump...

Following the stormingly good Eclipse turntable that I reviewed last year, I was intrigued to see where Robert Isherwood and Inspire Hi-Fi would go next. After the pleasant budget surprise that was the i2, Inspire have now bridged the gap in between with the Apollo, and a rather funky thing it is too. Robert himself states that the idea behind the Apollo was to "produce an affordable turntable which was inspiring in sound and exhibit looks befitting any listening room; much like the philosophy surrounding the Eclipse" and to this end, the Apollo incorporates a number of features taken from its bigger brother. These include the use of a good quality synchronous AC motor and the layer of Sorbothane between the finely machined acrylic feet and the plinth. The small subplatter is topped by a clear acrylic main platter, superbly machined and immaculately finished.

Arm-wise, Inspire have once again thrown caution to the wind, and the Apollo comes complete with

no less than a Rega RB700 for its all-in price of £899, which really is very impressive given that the RB700 retails

for around £450 on its own. Needless to say the RB700 can be substituted for any Rega-type arm up to and including the RB1000 if desired. As standard the motor is aspirated directly from the mains and the two speeds are selected by the time-honoured tradition of lifting off the platter and moving the belt. However, the Inspire Quartz Electronic PSU is available as an option and this offers 33 and 45rpm at the touch of a button. Normally this unit retails for £350 but is offered for the reduced price of £270 to Apollo purchasers. Handily, the PSU requires no rewiring; it simply plugs directly into the IEC mains





socket
on the
turntable.

Other options available for the deck include the Inspire Isolation platform which sits on four thick Sorbothane feet and has depressions on its top surface to allow the Apollo's feet to locate directly onto it. This normally retails for £65 but is being offered free to the first forty buyers of an Apollo, so don't hang about if you fancy one! If this weren't incentive enough, those same forty people will also receive the Inspire 'Puka' record weight; the name of which I am assured is pronounced like Jamie Oliver's favourite expression of delight, rather than the less savoury alternative...

SOUND QUALITY

Starting off with the standard deck, complete with Ortofon 2M Black cartridge in the arm, but sans PSU and isolation platform, I cued up

one of my favourite tracks of the last few years; the title track from The Eagles' 'Long Road Out of Eden' LP. This starts off with some gentle synthesiser action and the Apollo made these gently warbling notes shimmer across the front of my listening room beautifully. However, I was not prepared for the sheer dynamism and confidence with which it took on the guitar strum that heralds the arrival of the rest of the band in the track. This is one seriously poised, confident and discriminating turntable that made those guitar strings really stand out. It wasn't just someone waving his hand in the general direction of them; the guitarist was actually picking each one individually, and the Apollo separated them out beautifully.

What was even more impressive was the way in which the Apollo filled the listening space in front of me and pinpointed every performer with impeccable precision. Since my recent change of rack and the upgrades to my loudspeakers I have noticed a much stronger central imagery to my system in general, and moving to

a supposedly 'lesser' turntable often takes a step backwards, but the inspire was truly adept at focusing Don Henley's vocal smack bang in the centre of the action. Moving to the Divine Comedy's latest release, 'Bang Goes the Knighthood' and the track 'Down in the Street Below', Neil Hannon's voice was beautifully etched as he softly sang the opening lines but when the action picked up into a typical level of Divine Comedy daftness, the Apollo positively skipped along with things. Although not the best recorded album I have heard, the Inspire never once gave any hint of muddle or confusion, and made sure every part of the action was nicely etched within the soundstage.

Taking the tone of things down a little with the help of Mazzy Star and





Heatherdale
audio limited



Tel. 01903 261213 or (after hours) 07860 660001
e-mail: heatherdale@hifi-stereo.com Web: www.hifi-stereo.com

SPEAKERS

Aurum Cantus Leisure 5 speakers, boxed/superb cond. £395
Acoustic Energy AE-3 speakers, light birch, mint/boxed £395
Tannoy Stirlings Ex demo AS NEW (£2800) offered for only £2250
B&W M-1 speakers black Mint/boxed £195
B&W M-1 speakers silver Mint/boxed £195
B&W VM1 speakers with stands black Mint/boxed £295
B&W AS2 active sub-woofer Mint/boxed £195
Ruark Crusader speakers as new FULL WARRANTY £2055

AMPLIFIERS

Audio Note P-Zero mono blocks, new £495
Esoteric A1-10 int' amp new factory sealed (£2500) only £1395
NAT SE-1 mono blocks (211 valves) cost new £7000 only £3500
Wavac MD-805M monos (£16,500) as new £7995

Almaro 318B (new) £2250
TRI TRV-M300SE amplifier new £4495
Raysonic SP100 Mk2 int. valve amp (£2000) new £1500

PRE-AMPS

Audio Note M1 Line pre amp £350
Audio Note Zero R pre amp, new £395
Audio Note Zero pre amp, new £295
Audio Note Zero ONE-R pre amp, new £495
Proceed PAV pre-amp £295
Wavac PR-Z1 two box pre amp, absolutely as new (15,000) only £9995

CD PLAYERS & TRANSPORTS

Audio Note CD 2.1X CD player, mint, £595
Mark Levinson ML 31.5 Reference CD transport £4495
Audio Note Zero DAC, new £399
CEC TLOX belt drive transport as new only £8995

CEC TL-1N transport with DA-1N DAC as new only £8500
Tri CD player new £1895
Raysonic CD228, two chassis CD player, balanced, (£3700) new £2775

TURNTABLES, CARTRIDGES & TONEARMS

Kuzma Airline tone arm as new (£7200) offered for only £4995

MISCELLANEOUS

Various equipment stands from £50 please call
Selection OYAIDE plugs and power strips POA
Winds ALM-01 Stylus Gage new £425
2 metre Madrigal CZ gel bal' interconnect (£695) £295

Main dealer for Esoteric

ALL USED CARTRIDGES ARE CHECKED UNDER A MICROSCOPE BEFORE BEING OFFERED FOR SALE.

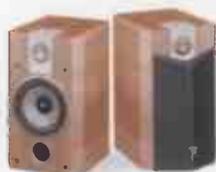
VISA - SWITCH - MASTER CARD - AMEX - DINERS CLUB WELCOME.
WE TAKE PART EXCHANGE ON NEW & USED STOCK and buy in for cash

Sound Hi Fi

marantz

PREMIUM
SOUND

because music matters



Focal 705TE



Jelco SA-750D



SME, Technics & other turntables



SME - Shelter, AT/OC9 & Denon cartridges - Clearaudio - Jelco - Hadcock - SL-1200 mods
Cassette & reel to reel tape - Marantz - Focal - Whest Audio - A.N.T - Puresound - 78rpm - Iso pods

All demonstrated in a relaxing setting with river views! Very high part exchanges & mail order.

Sound Hi Fi Dartmouth Devon 01803 833366 web www.SoundHiFi.com

plug 'n' play 'n' smile



kudos
www.kudosaudio.com

0845 4586698 for details...



One Decent Wallshelf

Thoroughly Recommended - David Price, Hi-Fi World Jan 06

featuring:
steel frame with multipoint fixing
upto 25mm thick 1/2 metre acrylic isolation platform
tuning pack for system matching
available:
hdw - £129
odw (pictured) - £249
odwt (2 shelf) - £349
all in either silver or black



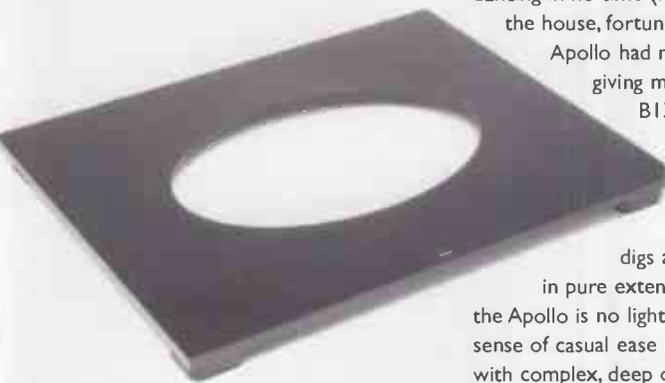
The Decentscale 2

SIMPLY THE BEST SUB £100 SCALE THERE IS ...



Wallshelves, Isolation Platforms, Digital Tracking Force Scales, Cables

Decent Audio 0845 6019390



dancing in no time (I was alone in the house, fortunately...) and the Apollo had no problems in giving my Ferrographs' B139s a workout. In ultimate terms I would say that the Avid Diva II digs a *fraction* deeper in pure extension terms, but the Apollo is no lightweight, and the sense of casual ease in which it deals with complex, deep or downright thunderous basslines had me grinning from ear to ear. Once again, it took everything in its stride and produced

"this is one seriously poised, confident and discriminating turntable..."



Celebration LE rack for auditioning, the platform seemed to make little difference. However transferring the deck to a cheapie table and observing the loss of low end focus, the isolation brought it back with gusto, so unless you have a particularly high end support available, I would recommend considering this item as well.

CONCLUSION

In case you hadn't realised by now, I was impressed by the Inspire Apollo. It is a detailed, focused and capable vinyl spinner that seems to favour no particular kind of music over another. Rather, it seems to have an innate enthusiasm for everything and takes whatever you pass under the stylus in its stride both effortlessly and spiritedly. As standard I would say it pretty much leads the turntable pack at its price level and adding in the optional power supply and isolation base make it good enough to worry decks at higher prices; All in all, a stellar performer.

REFERENCE SYSTEM

Ortofon 2M Black cartridge
Whest Two phono stage
Naim Supernait amplifier
Ferrograph S1 loudspeakers [modified]

Highly capable, well designed and super value, the Apollo is another very fine record player from Inspire.

INSPIRE APOLLO £899
Inspire Hi-Fi
☎ +44(0)1246 568770
www.inspirehifi.co.uk

FOR

- midrange poise
- capacious soundstage
- effortless musicality
- ease of setup

AGAINST

- nothing at the price

their 'Among my Swan' LP revealed that the Apollo is most capable across the mid and upper registers. It maintains a sweet sense of clarity and a liquid, organic midrange at all times, the result being that Hope Sandoval's voice came through with intimacy and feeling. The Apollo's top end is an inviting and engaging one, never displaying a hint of harshness or spit, even when provoked with some fairly nasty recordings, but never giving the feeling that it was masking any action. All in all, the deck seemed able to strike the perfect balance of smoothness and insight, no matter what I threw at it; even a very grubby car boot sale 7" single of Richard Harris singing 'MacArthur Park' came through unscathed!

At the low end, a blast of King Teddy presents 'The Roots of Dub' proved that the Apollo was not going to be caught out here either. This truly fantastical album had me up and

the sort of low end detail, pace and snappy timing that usually bears a larger price tag.

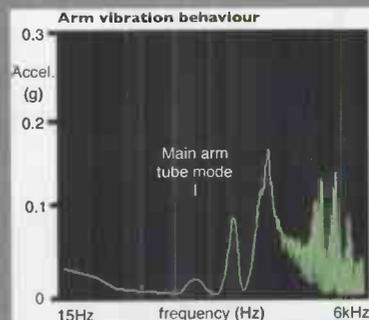
With things going so well, it was time to pimp the deck up a bit and first up was the Quartz PSU. This turned out to be a worthwhile change, adding a greater sense of focus to the midrange and buffing the final last hint of polish onto the treble, whilst pushing the soundstage a little wider still. Equally, the push button speed change is always welcome! The isolation base proved a little more mixed; with the deck originally sat atop an Atacama Equinox

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

The Apollo came fitted with a Rega RB700 arm that measured much like earlier RB301s on which it is based. Excited by an Ortofon 2M Black cartridge, the main arm tube mode lies at a high 337Hz, suggesting a stiff / light structure, and it is very well damped our analysis shows, measuring just 0.2g, likely because of the tube's taper. Unusually, the arm has a related second order peak at 675Hz but it is narrow and of little consequence. As always the Rega headshell appears a little lively, contributing to the wider peak around 1350Hz and this does add a little 'flavour'. There are also plenty of higher order ringing modes down the arm and headshell.

The turntable ran at exactly the right speed and was very speed stable, exhibiting just 0.09% unweighted wow and flutter, and a miniscule 0.051% IEC weighted - a very good result. So it measures very well. NK

ARM VIBRATION



WOW & FLUTTER



RETRO

REPRODUCTION
QUALITY HIGH FIDELITY & VINTAGE

AMPLIFIERS		
Ainer Hamblin SA400 Tripath digital power amp balanced and single ended 300watt per channel fantastic reviews		£595
from Hi-Fi News		£2295
Audio Research M300 MKII monoblocks boxed		£595
Audion single ended sterling 6550 tube fitted		£1995
AMR 77 Titanium finish flightcased x dem		£795
Anatek monoblocks £2400 new		£795
Bel Canto valve pre amp remote control SEP2		£795
upgraded to SEP3		£795
Copeand CTA 401 integrated valve amp with phono stage		£245
Bez Q4B valve rectified pre amp		£1495
Conrad Johnson Premier Eleven 6550 valves (re-valved with 6550 valves boxed)		£495
Conrad Johnson PF 1 pre amp with superb phono stage boxed mint		£345
Cyrus II integrated amp		£295
Cyrus PSXR boxed		£95
Cambridge Audio P50 mint condition		£2495
A.R. 850 power amp		£395
Electrocompaniet Class A power amp great for driving Quads 57s		£495
Golden Tube SEP2 valve pre amplifier		£695
Howard pre amp with phono stage & EL34 power amp		£695
Krell KAV 503 integrated amp		£695
Leema Pulse integrated amp		£195
Leak TL60 power amp mint condition		£195
Leak TL12 rare hampered paint finish 1961		£495
Leak Stereo 20 mint condition		£95
Leak Stereo 70 integrated amp		£95
Linn Aktive amp module		£195
Marantz PM510 10 power amp		£95
Meridian 100 series pre amp		£95
Meridian 100 Series power amps 2PSU (needs attention)		£795
Mission pre power logo styled case serviced		£245
Musical Fidelity A1 MKII excellent condition		£395
Musical Fidelity A100 50watt Class A amp with superb phono stage		£1795
M20 valve mono block 200watt per channel designed by Tim De Paravicini under Mentmore a bleak padworth		£295
Naim 51 power amp boxed		£195
Naim Flatlag mint boxed		£245
Naim 62 pre amp		£145
Naim 250 power various		£125
Naim Snaps PSU		£195
Naim NAC 145		£195
Pioneer SX590 receiver with power meters		£195
PS Audio IV pre amp with separate PSU		£295
Quad 2 mono blocks mint original valves		£225
Quad 303 power amp last version with IEC sockets		£345
Quad 50E mono block excellent condition (pair)		£1195
Radford ST25 MKII power amp		£895
Renaissance music re-performance moving coil phono stage with external PSU (new £1795)		£350
Rega Mira integrated amp remote boxed mint		£245
Roksan Kandy 3 integrated amp black boxed as new		£295
Sugar Audio P-10 power amp		£1195
Sugden Optima 140 integrated amp		£275
Sugden A21 SE remote Class A integrated amp mint boxed		£195
Sony Svelty adjustable MM/MC phono stage		£350
Technics A800 MKII integrated amp		£275
Technics SU9600 top of the range stereo control centre & also SE9600 stereo power amplifier. E595a		£195
Thorens TTA 2000 class A power amp		£395
World Audio Design KEL34 integrated amp		£275
SPEAKERS		
Aurum Cantus black orchid speakers piano black		£495
Acoustic Energy AE1 stands		£195
Alphason Arentis 100		£295
AVI Active Pro 9 speakers Rosewood finish x dem		£795
Apogee Centaurus Signi 6 ribbon		£895
hybrid speaker new £3000 boxed		£395
Audio Physic Spark boxed (new £2000)		£495
Castle Howard 2 Oak finish		£95
Celestion DL4		£2995
Beauhomm Virtuoso reference lowther		£195
Cyrus CLSSD		£195
Goodmans Axium 201 12" 150hms speakers (pair)		£195
JBL century 100s		£195
JBL 2500 bookshelf speakers USA built		£125
JM Lab Electro 3K30 walnut mounted speakers		£295
JM Lab Chorus speakers		£195
Kenwood KL-888X speakers 15" drive unit		£195
KEF Celesti 1		£145
KEF Cresta floorstanding speakers		£895
Leema floorstanding speakers rosewood finish £2000 new		£795
Leema Zen speakers ex-dem		£795
Linn Kan with stands Mk1		£345
Martin Logan Aeries		£295
Mission 755 boxed large floorstander with Aerogel drive units		£495
Mono Pulse 32A 8 months old ex dem.		£645
Mono Pulse 32S ex dem.		£495
Monitor Audio Silver 5 ash finish		£495
Musical Stones Italian Solid Marble floorstanding speaker with Dynaudio drive units		£495
Musical Fidelity Reference 2 excellent condition		£195
Napoka Swan high efficiency speaker cult item		£195
Neat Petite SX		£295
ProAc Tablett 2		£495
ProAc Tablett 50s mint condition light oak finish		£495
Quad ESL 98E Electrostatic speakers		£195
(2 pairs in stock)		from £1795
Revolver R33		£345
Ruarik Equinox last edition		£95
Sentorian early 60s corner speaker pair		£375
Single ATC SCM 10 active speaker was used as garage speaker		£295
SF1 FF 1 open baffle speaker with Fuji mid range unit		£895
Tannoy Eclipse		£75
Tannoy Autograph Mini		£845
Technics SB-F1 MKII honey comb disc speakers		£95
Wharfedale W3 omni directional speakers		£195
Yamaha NS100 bookshelf speakers		£195
TURNTABLES		
Aniston RDT1 turntable with Audio Technica tonearm		£195
Audio Synthesis moving coil phono stage with 2 box PSU		£995
Clearaudio Victory cartridge £1000 new		£445
Clearaudio Master Reference with parallel tracking tonearm		£245
Dynavector XX2		£495
EAR 834P mm/mmc with volume		£495
EAR 324 phono stage		£295
Garrard 301		£895
Linn Lingo power supply		£445
Linn LP12 black mint condition		£495
Linn Ittok tonearm mint condition		£495
Leema Agena Hi-End phono stage with USB & DAC various cartridge setup option as new £3000 Smiths old		£2250
Michell Gyrodec SE special black finish with Rega mount 4 wks old		£1095
Michell Mycro		£295
Michell Hydraulic Transcriptor		from £295
Michell Focus 1		£125
Musical Fidelity XLP		£95
Naim Arvo Audio side		£495
Nottingham analogue honed with Origin Live motor and speed control fitted with latest Model Project 9.1 boxed as new		£895
Rega planer 2 no tone arm		from £245
Rega Lullabies various		£295
Revox B790 direct drive turntable with linear tracking tonearm excellent condition various from		£3295
SL10 with tonearm with V		£225
SME 3009 tonearm series II improved with phono plugs boxed		from £175
SME series 3 tonearms various		£245
System Deck electronic		£150
Technics SL150 direct drive SME cut-out		£95
Thorens TD161 MKII		£195
Thorens 125 MKII Turntable		£295
Trinchard Dino phono stage 6mths old		£295
ZYX R50 bloom moving coil cartridge little use boxed		£295
CD PLAYERS, DACs		
AMR CD 77 Titanium finish flightcased x dem		£695
AKAI 93 Hi-End old school 16bit CD player		£375
Benchmark DAC 1 boxed as new		£375
CEC 3300R CD player		£195
Chord DAC 64		£995
Cyrus DAC		£995
DCS Purcell upsampler factory serviced		£295
Hi-Fi World 24bit 96 khz valve dac as featured in the Hi-Fi World Supplement Apr. & Jun. 1998		£695
Leema Stream CD player		£495
Linn Kark III		£295
Linn Numeric DAC		£195
Marantz 55 MKII K1 Signature		£495
Marantz CD10 heavy weight player mint boxed		£125
MicroMega T DAC		£195
MicroMega Drive transport		£195
MicroMega Drive DAC 1 balanced outputs AES input		£195
Moon CD player Equinox RS boxed as new £2000		£275
Naim CD3 boxed as new with new laser fitted		£895
Naim CDX mint boxed		£295
Naim CDX CD player 2		£495
Quad 77 bus CD player		£195
Quad 99 CDP CD player		£495
Rolei RA965 BX classic old school cd player boxed mint condition		£345
Roksan Kandy 3 CD player boxed as new		£495
Rega Planet CD player new style		£195
Sony CDP-RB20E		£225
Sony XE680 SACD player		£195
Sony XE680 SACD player		£225
MISCELLANEOUS		
Leak Stereoletic FM Tuner		£55
Magnum Dynalab E-tude tuner with aerial		£795
Magnum Dynalab MD106 T silver finish boxed mint £4900 new		£2195
Sansui 551 receiver		£95
PS Audio statement biwire speaker cable boxed as new		£695
PS Audio power plant 300 with multiwave		£295
PS Audio quintet power centre boxed as new		£195
Russ Andrews Signature power chord 1mtr		£795
Russ Andrews Reference power chord 1mtr MKII upgrade		£195
Nakamich receiver 2		£195
Nordost cable various		phone for details
MAD My sweeter silver interconnect		£345
DUE IN...		
MicroMega T DAC		£195
MicroMega Drive Transport and DAC		£195
Leak Variospice/point 1 stereo pre amp various		£195
Russ Andrews Quad 3S 303 upgrade		£195
Quad 2 pre valve & radio various		£195
Transparent Reference 3 metre integrated		£195
Transparent Ultra bi-cable 25 ft. length		£195
Transparent Ultra interconnect 1 metre		£195

WE NOW HAVE ON DEMONSTRATION THE SUPERB LEEMA PULSE + STREAM WITH XERO SPEAKER + AGENA HI-END PHONO STAGE WITH USB

GENEROUS PART-EX. ON ALL EQUIPMENT, NEW OR USED. WILL BUY GOOD QUALITY EQUIPMENT AS ABOVE. NEXT DAY MAIL ORDER & UPLIFT FACILITIES



Opening times: 10.30 - 5.30 Tues. to Sat.
28a Haddington Place, Edinburgh EH7 4AF
Tel/Fax: 0131 558 9989
Email: retro.reproduction@virgin.net
Website: www.retroreproduction.co.uk

Analogue seduction where music is our passion



Analogue Seduction are dedicated towards two channel Hi-Fi, specialising in vinyl replay.

As well as our on-line shop we have dedicated demonstration retail facilities based in Peterborough, Cambridgeshire and we can offer our customers home demonstrations.

We stock the finest in amplification, analogue, digital replay and speakers. We also specialise in a cable termination and cable burn in service.

Please visit our website www.analogue Seduction.net to browse or purchase products that are not easily available elsewhere.

New vinyl records now stocked

Tel: +44 (0)1733 344768

Cymbiosis

Linn Products

Sondek LP12 specialist
setup, upgrades, rebuilds
25+ years experience with international reputation

Naim Audio

500 series stockist
always available for demonstration
including DBL Loudspeakers

Arcam • Atacama

Chord Company • Denon

Dynavector • KEF

Kudos • Neat Acoustics

Quadraspire • Rega Research

Spendor & more...

We are hi-fi specialists, so please call us for advice, recommendations and demonstrations

We always carry a selection of quality used hi-fi
check our website for more details

6 Hotel Street, Leicester, LE1 5AW

Tel: 0116 262 3754

e-mail: shop@cymbiosis.com

www.cymbiosis.com



FURUTECH DF-2 £1,695

Warped vinyl has to be one of the most frustrating problems to beset the blessed wax. It's the ultimate tease; the music is so near, yet so far. There have been attempts to tackle this problem in a scientific manner. Both Clearaudio and Furutech released gadgets to tackle warps within a controlled environment some time ago. However, only Furutech has attempted to hone

that early work with the release of an improved model, the DF-2. It resembles a well built, heavy duty, sandwich toaster.

When processing a warped LP, it acts in a similar fashion. In use, you position the DF-2 on a flat surface and lift the lid, which locks into place. You then position the vinyl onto the central spindle inside, close the lid, locking it into place with the external clips and press the button to start the process.

This is not a five minute job, however. Traditionally, warping tends to occur over a period of time – fixing it is tackled in the same manner. It takes one and a half hours to heat the vinyl (which can be increased to two and a half hours for severely warped discs). You then have to wait through a two hour cooling process. Once complete, you open the lid and take out the disc which,

in tests, was stone cold again and, above all, as flat as a pancake, playing perfectly. This is the Mk.2 version of the Flattener so 180gm audiophile discs can now be processed as well as discs without a groove guard (the normally thick lip on the outer rim of the record). On the downside, the Flattener can no longer be used in the vertical position – but I didn't see this as a big problem.

Beware, however, that the DF-2 does not like flexi-discs, or very thin 1973-1974 oil crisis-era LPs, which weigh in at around 100-115g, or non-vinyl materials. It won't totally cure heat damaged vinyl, either (i.e. if you decide to cook your vinyl in the oven), although tests proved that it had a darned good try, bringing an oven-cooked write-off to 90% of its former glory! I highly recommend the DF-2, but the big problem is price. You can justify it if you have major warping issues within a large collection, or alternatively if you can split the cost as part of a group. **PR**

[Contact: www.soundfoundations.co.uk]

soundbites



WALKER AUDIO PRELUDE DELUXE/QUARTET £129.95/£174.95

Vinyl cleaning products come in all shapes and sizes, but those shapes and sizes don't often arrive in a single box. Walker Audio has released a complex, new liquid-based product that arrives in either the three-step Prelude Deluxe system (£129.95) or the four-step Quartet system (£174.95). Opening the box for the first time shows an array of goodies;

five separate bottles of liquid (for the Quartet, four for the Prelude), a jar of enzyme powder, four individual brushes (three for the Prelude) and a small ruler to act as a straight edge to clean off future brush fluff. Before you even think about buying this cleaning system, make sure you have a record cleaning machine, any will do, from the high-end Loricraft to the 'budget' models from the likes of Moth...

In use, the Walker system demands a series of repetitive steps. Firstly, you add a supplied scoop of enzyme powder to the supplied Ultra Pure Water, wet the record with it and apply Brush One (which has to be oriented in the correct direction). Your RCM then sucks up the liquid. Then add a pre-mixed cleaning solution to the same record, applying Brush Two to the surface to then vacuum. Step Three is a rinse cycle, with more liquid using Brush Three, while Step Four is a high resolution rinse with yet another brush. Future,

less intensive, cleaning to maintain the cleansed condition requires only the reapplication of Step Four. CDs and DVDs can also be cleaned with this system. My conclusions are mixed. My issue is the complicated nature of the system and the cost. Going through this process for every vinyl side is a chore while the whole process is very fussy. Also, like a wet-shave razor or printer manufacturer, has Walker developed the system with a view to making a steady income on the replacement parts? Liquids will run out as will the enzyme powder, brush pads will wear out...

So does it work? Most definitely. In fact, I have tried many different non-alcoholic product in my time and this system beats everything out there while challenging my reference; L'Art du Son. Sound improved over all frequencies and the sheen of the original music was restored. The soundstage was also enhanced and extended which meant that additional information was subsequently revealed. **PR**

[Contact: www.soundfoundations.co.uk]



High Times

From one of vinyl's foremost proponents comes a rare new analogue product. David Price takes off with Linn's brand new Uphorik phono stage...

Phono stages are in vogue, and have been for the best part of twenty years now. Funny I suppose, considering they're a mere addendum to a format that's supposedly been moribund for most of this time, but there you go. What you can't accuse Linn Products of though, is jumping on someone else's train, belatedly following the fashion started elsewhere...

Indeed, there's a good case to be made that Linn made the very first phono stage - certainly the first specialist single box British one - in the shape of the long lost Linn Linnk. Remember that? Trivia fans might know it as an accessory for the original Naim Nait back in about 1981, which didn't have an internal moving coil stage. In truth it was made a few furlongs south of Castlemilk, but Linn should surely get credit for the concept.

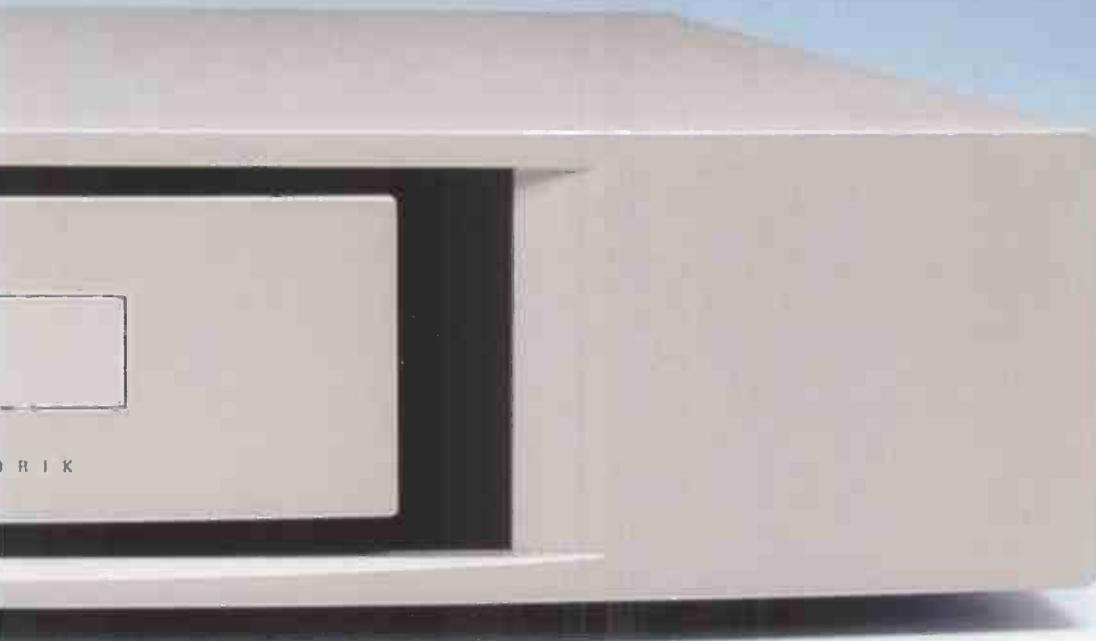
This is its distant descendent. The new Uphorik is a product with a slightly wider intended audience however, being a boxed and lightly

revised version of their statement Urika which was designed to sit *in situ*, as it were, inside the LP12's plinth. The Uphorik however comes as a standard mid-level Linn box, painted metal with a high quality finish, although nothing exceptional. It weighs in at 4.4kg and measures 80x381x355mm, and comes in a choice of black or silver spray jobs.

Although the front fascia is an essay in eighties-style minimalism (there's nothing bar a blue power LED), the rear panel is decidedly busier, offering as it does connections for both MM and MC via different sockets, so you can of course plug two decks into it at the same time (providing they're running alternative types of cartridges). Also fitted are RCA phono outputs, and interestingly XLR inputs which *aren't* actually balanced internally; Linn has simply offered the option because they claim XLR plug connection sounds better; something which tallied with my own listening. Linn also offer a new XLR T-Kable with "superior shielding properties" as an option.

Underneath the Uphorik, things get more scintillating still. If ever there was a phono stage for anoraks with nothing better to do than to endlessly twiddle around with their loading options, this is it. A profusion of DIP switches are to be found, offering variously different gain, capacitance and resistance settings for both MM and MC pickups (sadly no ceramic option, but there are so many switches that you'd be forgiven for thinking there were!). Anyone wishing to get a better idea of all the possible tweakery should click on <http://news.linn.co.uk/help/Uphorik/Uphorik-Online-Manual.htm>. Suffice to say there are enough options to keep even the likes of our very own Tony Bolton happy, providing he's in a microgroove mood of course!

Those not wishing to fiddle with their undersides, as it were, can ask their Linn dealer to hard-solder these switches in place to bypass the contacts for optimal performance; obviously though there's no going back. Inside, Linn say the switches are positioned as close to the input stage



"It has a brilliantly solid soundstage, with instruments located as if hewn from granite, standing as firm and proud as the Highlands themselves..."

as possible to shorten the signal path and minimise noise pickup. Dual mono construction is in evidence, with internal shielding to minimise potential crosstalk. Uphorik also features Linn's latest Switch Mode Power Supply (SMPS) technology.

SOUND QUALITY

By way of homage to the Linnk, the first disc I spun was The Police's 'Ghost in the Machine' LP, with the single 'Spirits in the Material World', released about the same time back in autumn 1981. Even on the album's lead-in groove, I was struck immediately by the Uphorik's low noise. This is an exceptionally quiet phono stage even by serious solid-state standards, giving a vanishingly low noise floor to my ears. This particular pressing was Japanese, famed for quietness, and even at very high volumes, between tracks, it might as well have been CD I was listening to. It's so quiet that it makes even my fave tube phono stages sound like I'm trying to listen right in front of Niagara Falls...

Next ear opener was the Uphorik's dynamic prowess; cranked up to swingeing levels, the Linn belted out the staccato snare of drummer Stewart Copeland (surely one of the

very best of his generation?) like a machine gun dispensing high velocity rounds. And this was accurate ordinance too, as this phono stage proved extremely focused on the job in hand, throwing out enormous amounts of detail and shining a deep, penetrating light on this sometime dark, broody recording. Interesting - to yours truly at least - was the Uphorik's tonal neutrality; earlier Linn phono stages have erred towards the slightly 'light and bright' but this has real neutrality to it, adding very little (if any) patina to the sound. The saxophones on 'Hungry For You' had an amazingly natural and accurate tone, with not the slightest chromium tinged edge to them; instead they sounded reedy and sonorous, their harmonics glistening gently out of the dark mix.

As I write this, World Cup fever is in full flow, and with only the first sub-par performance from England delivered, there's still the faint sense that a footballing miracle could take place, with England progressing beyond the group stages. By way of a tribute, I cued up the greatest ever Sassenach soccer anthem, courtesy of New Order. 'World in Motion' was delivered by this Caledonian component in a

far more exuberant way than many rivals made south of the border. The Linn positively bounced along, showing the marque's trademark alacrity with rhythms; wonderfully surefooted, the Uphorik pummelled out this classic track's programmed snare drum patterns, despatched the flickering hi-hats with great dexterity and syncopated everything together with consummate skill. Even the infamous 'John Barnes rap', not quite the highlight of the song, didn't grate as it usually does. If Gerrard and Co. manage to play the tournament as powerfully and fluently as the Uphorik's rendition of this song, the boys in Glasgow will be crying into their Irn Bru.

Moving to the more sedate, dulcet strains of Steely Dan, and 'Rikki Don't Lose That Number' showed the Linn phono stage's unerring accuracy; it has a brilliantly solid soundstage, with instruments located as if they'd been hewn from granite, standing as firm and proud as the Highlands themselves. Far from the slightly 'shrunk in the wash' recorded acoustic you so often get from solid-state, the Linn served up a soundstage as wide as the glens and deep as the North Sea. Inside this, elements of the mix were placed

HEATHCOTE AUDIO

TEL: 07860 511111 WEB SITE www.heathcoteaudio.co.uk

MAJORITY OF EQUIPMENT STOCKED IS ONE OWNER/BOXED

WE STILL VERY! URGENTLY!! REQUIRE EQUIPMENT PHONE GEORGE

LOUDSPEAKERS

BOLZANO VILLETTRI BV3003 & BV SUBWOOFER FANTASTICI
 AURUM CANTUS VOLLA
 AURUM CANTUS LEISURE 3SE
 THEIL GS 1.5 (SUPERB COMPACT SPEAKERS)
 THEIL GS 2.2
 TANNY BERKELYS
 HYPERION HPS 936W GORGEOUS BIRDS EYE MAPLE
 CELESTION A-3
 REFERENCE 3A VEENA (£3000)
 AVANTEGAR DUO 2.0s (RARELY AVAILABLE)
 PODIUM 1s EXCELLENT PANEL SPEAKERS (£6000? NEW)
 MIRAGE M1s BIPOLAR GIANTS (R6500)
 MIRAGE BPS 210 SUBWOOFERS 2 OFF
 EGGLESTONWORKS ROSA
 MARTIN LOGAN CLARITY
 MARTEN MILES II CHERRY (8k+ NEW)
 CUBA CA-30 FLOORSTANDERS (MAPLE)
 HARPER QUARTETO (£4000)
 AURUM CANTUS V3M GLOSS BLACK (£1700)
 AURUM CANTUS MUSIC GODDESS (£2500)
 AURUM CANTUS 2SE MAPLE (£995) LAST PAIR
 AURUM CANTUS M-102 FLOORSTANDERS (2500?)
 AUDIO NOTE ANE-D SILVER BINDING POSTS
 CASTLE HARLECH
 TRINITY AUDIO TRIDENT TRI WIRE
 TANNY REVOLUTION-2
 PROAC STUDIO 150
 REGA EXEL ROSEWOOD
 LINN KANS AND DEDICATED STANDS
 B&W DM602 MKIII
 STANDS FOR DM-602
 MORDANT SHORT 314 FLOORSTANDERS
 SONY CARBOCON/SS 5050 LOUDSPEAKERS
 RUARK TALISMAN MKII WITH OFFBOARD X-OVERS
 T&A TMR-100 TRANSMISSION LINE LOUDSPEAKERS

VINYL

REGA PLANNER-3/ARM/CART RIDGE
 MICHELL TECHNOWEIGHT
 MUSICAL FIDELITY XLPS
 ORACLE DEL PHI MKV SPEC TURBO PSU
 NOTTS ANALOGUE MENTOR/EMINENT TECHNOLOGY
 MKII AIR BEARING TONE ARM/SUMIKO BPS CART.
 SME 20/2A SERIES V ARM/WIRE UPGRADE (UNDER 3 YEARS OLD)
 ANTIQUE SOUNDLABS MINI PHONO (2 BOX WITH NOS MULLARD VALVES)
 AUDIO NEMESIS PHONO STAGE (£1000 +)
 PROJECT PHONO BOX

VALVE AMPS

PAPWORTH 200M SPECIAL ORDER KT-90 AMPS WITH VOL.CONTROL
 ANTIQUE SOUNDLABS AQ-10090T 845 MONOBLOCKS
 TUBE TECHNOLOGY SYNERGY FANTASTIC REMOTE INTEGRATED 150 WATTS
 BALANCED AUDIO TECH. BAT VK-60 POWER AMP (£6K?)
 AUDIO RESEARCH CLASSIC 60 SERVICED VALVED
 DK DESIGN VS.1 SIGNATURE MKIII INTEGRATED (HYBRID)
 VTL ULTRA LINEAR 75/75 STEREO POWER AMP (KT90)
 UNISON RESEARCH FEATHER PRE/35 POWER (REMOTE)
 ROGUE AUDIO 88 POWER AMP
 ROGUE AUDIO 66 MAGNUM REMOTE PREAMP
 ANTIQUE SOUND LABS L101 PRE AMP/HEADPHONE AMP
 ANTIQUE SOUNDLABS MINI PHONO (2 BOX WITH NOS MULLARD VALVES)
 MUSIC FIRST SILVER PRE AMP (£3K?)
 MUSIC FIRST SILVER PRE SPECIAL ORDER TWIN VOL.POTS
 3 RCA/2 BALANCED INS.1 RCA/ 2 BALANCED OUTS

SOLID STATE

JEFF ROWLAND COHERENCE-1 2 BOX PRE C/W PHONO STAGE
 JEFF ROWLAND MODEL3 MONOBLOCKS
 DPA 50S PRE (C/W PHONO STAGE) AND POWER AMP INC.CABLES
 PASS LABS ALEPH P PRE AMP
 KRELL KAV 30DR RARE TUNER AMP (£3950)
 XTC PRE-1/POWER-1 COMBO (200 WATTS)
 MAGNUM DYNALAB MD-208 TUNER AMP (£4K)
 ALCHEMIST APD-15 INTEGRATED
 ALCHEMIST FORSETTI 2 HDX PRE RCA/XLR
 MCCORMACK DNA-125 POWER AMP
 LYNX STRATOS PRE AND 2 MONOBLOCKS (TIMWARP STUFF)
 EXPOSURE 18 STEREO POWER AMP
 ARCAM SOLO
 YAMAHA CX2 PRE/MX2 POWER AMP (200 WATTS X 2) & CDX993 CD
 NAKAMICHI AMPLIFIER-2 REMOTE INTEGRATED
 MUSIC FIRST SILVER PRE AMP (£3K?)
 H-CAT 12-B PRE WITH WTC CONTROL (£2600)
 H-CAT P-12A PRE AMP (£2500?)

MINT/BOXED DUE
 BRAND NEW/BOXED £1895
 MINT/BOXED £695
 MINT/BOXED £1250
 DUE IN TBA
 VGC 1195
 MINT/BOXED £3250
 EXCLT/BOXED £1150
 DIS/BOXED £1995
 EXCLT £4650
 MINT/BOXED £2795
 EXCLT £2195
 EACH £795
 EXCLT £2750
 EXCLT £1695
 EXCLT £3750
 MINT £995
 DEM £2250
 EXCLT £1350
 NEW £1795
 NEW/BOXED £595
 NEW/BOXED £1495
 GC £895
 TO CLEAR £395
 TO CLEAR £395
 TO CLEAR £249
 TO CLEAR £649
 TO CLEAR £375
 TO CLEAR £299
 TO CLEAR £175
 TO CLEAR £49
 TO CLEAR £149
 TO CLEAR £275
 TO CLEAR £325
 TO CLEAR £395

MINT/BOXED £275
 BOXED £48
 EXCLT £175
 BOXED £2250
 VGC £2750
 EXCLT £4495
 EXCLT £350
 GC/BOXED £475
 EXCLT £49

AS NEW/BOXED £3750
 SUPERB £2795
 EXCLT £3450
 EXCLT/BOXED 32450
 EXCLT/BOXED £1295
 DEM/BOXED £2450
 VGC £875
 EXCLT/BOXED £1295
 EXCLT £795
 MINT/BOXED £795
 MINT/BOXED £295
 EX DEM £295
 EX DEM £2250

UNIQUE £2495
 VGC £995
 VGC £795
 EXCLT £1195
 EXCLT £1195
 MINT/BOXED £1395
 MINT/BOXED £1395
 EXCLT/BOXED £1595
 EXCLT £599
 MINT/BOXED £595
 MINT/BOXED £1250
 MINT/BOXED £995
 MINT/BOXED £995
 MINT/BOXED £649
 EXCLT £995
 EXCLT £199
 DEM £2150
 DEM £1750
 DEM £995

DENON AVC A11 SR AV AMP (CHAMPAYNE GOLD)
 MUSIC FIRST SILVER PRE SPECIAL TWIN VOL.POTS
 3 RCA/2 BALANCED INS.1 RCA/ 2 BALANCED OUTS
 NAKAMICHI 620 WEDGE POWER AMP
 REVOX H-5 INTEGRATED & OPTIONAL REMOTE

DIGITAL

KRELL KAV 250 CD PLAYER
 PIONEER CLD 925 LASER DISC PLAYER
 NAIM CDSX
 DENON 3910 UNIVERSAL PLAYER
 KRELL KPS 30i CD PLAYER/DAC
 AUDIO ALCHEMIST DDE V3 & PSU HDDC ETC (LAST ONE £900)
 VACUUM TUBE LOGIC JLTi SACD/CD PLAYER (£1300)
 MERIDIAN 200 TRANSPORT
 CHORD 1500E DAC/DIGITAL PRE AMP (£6800)
 THETA DATA UNIVERSAL CO/LD PLAYER (RARE)
 THETA PRO GEN III DAC GLASS & BALANCED OPTIONS
 MOWHRIGHT P3A DAC SIGNATURE-2 (SUPERB)
 THETA CARMEN CD/DVD TRANSPORT
 THETA DATA II TRANSPORT (SILVER) AES/RCA ETC
 ACCUPHASE DP-90 TRANSPORT (£3000?)
 MERIDIAN 602 TRANSPORT 606 DAC
 MICROMEGA CLASSIC SOLO XLR/RCA (NEW MECH)
 TRICHORD DIGITAL TURNTABLE

TUNER/TAPE/MISC.

KRELL KAV 300R RARE TUNER AMP (£3950)
 MAGNUM DYNALAB MD-208 TUNER AMP (£4K)
 MUSICAL FIDELITY X100 (ROUND ONE)
 MUSICAL FIDELITY XLPS
 ARCAM SOLO
 TECHNICS GT-550 RDS TUNER
 TECHNICS BX RS501 TAPE DECK
 DENON TU 1800 DAB TUNER
 AVI REF-7 BAND TUNER

INTERCONNECT CABLE

CHORD CO.CHORUS 2 1METRE RCA
 CHORD CO.CHAMELEON SILVER PLUS RCA TO XLR
 TRANSPARENT MUSIC LINK PLUS 1 METRE RCA
 BLACK RHODIUM SYMPHONY 1 METRE RCA
 BLACK RHODIUM ORATORIO 1 METRE XLR
 LFD SPIROLINK 4 FOOT PAIR
 VERTEX AQ SILVER SOLFON BALANCED
 AUDIOQUEST RUBY 0.8 METRE RCA
 CHORD CO.CHAMELEON 1 METRE RCA
 INCA DESIGN 1 METRE
 STRATOS 1 METRE
 QUANTUM 'REFERENCE' 1 METRE RCA
 QUANTUM 'CD' 1 METRE RCA
 QUANTUM DIGITAL REFERENCE 1 METRE RCA
 ATLAS ELECTRA 2 METRE BALANCED
 LPO 1 METRE 1/0 AND 0.5 M ETRE RCA (SIX OFF)

LOUDSPEAKER CABLE

ECOSSE MS2.3 REFERENCE 5 METRE PAIR
 TRANSPARENT MUSIC WAVE ULTRA 8FT PAIR WBT PLUGS
 NORDOST RED DAWN 4 METRE BI WIRE REV2
 KIMBER APR 2.5 METRE TERMINATED PAIR
 NIRVANA SL-3.2.3 METRE PAIR
 MIT MH-750 2.5 METRE PAIR BI-WIRE
 RAPPORT (USHER) 5 METRE PAIR FACTORY TERMINATED
 DPA 5 METRE PAIR TERMINATED FOR 50S AMP
 XLO SIGNATURE 2 TYPE 5.2 4FT PAIR
 QED GENESIS SILVER SPIRAL 3 METRE PAIR
 XLO REF.2.5 METRE PAIR
 MIT MH-750 BI WIRE 3 METRE PAIR
 PS AUDIO X-STREAM 3 METRE PAIR (VERY HEAVY)
 DIAMOND HI SILVER 3 METRE PAIR (LOCKING WBT'S)
 BLACK RHODIUM S-300 BI WIRE 7 METRE BI WIRE PAIR (£560)
 BLACK RHODIUM S-300 BI WIRE 5 METRE BI WIRE PAIR (£400)
 BLACK RHODIUM S-300 BI WIRE 4 METRE PAIR (£240)

STANDS

SOUNDSTYLE XS105 LAST ONE
 SOUNDSTYLE XS 100 LAST ONE
 PIRATE STANDS FOR SNEEL K ETC
 HUGENS STANDS FOR SNELL X ETIC
 PARTINGTON ROUND STANDS
 5 SHELF GLASS STAND CABLE TIDY ETC

MAINS CABLES/BLOCKS/CONDITIONERS ETC

TARA LABS RSC AIR-2 6FT POWER CORDS (SHUKO)
 BLACK RHODIUM SUPER MAINS POWER CORDS (BRAIDED)

EXCLT/BOXED £895
 UNIQUE £2495
 EXCLT/BOXED £575
 EXCLT £595

MINT/BOXED £995
 MINT/BOXED £249
 MINT/BOXED £299
 MINT/BOXED £395
 MINT/BOXED TBC
 NEW OLD STOCK £375
 BRAND NEW £795
 MINT/BOXED £375
 MINT/BOXED £2750
 EXCLT/BOXED £395
 EXCLT/BOXED £795
 BRAND NEW £795
 MINT/BOXED £1250
 MINT/BOXED £750
 EXCLT £2450
 EXCLT £995
 BOXED £795
 EXCLT £395

MINT/BOXED £1395
 EXCLT/BOXED £1595
 EXCLT £125
 EXCLT £175
 MINT/BOXED £649
 EXCLT £99
 EXCLT £149
 EXCLT £149
 EXCLT £375

AS NEW £169
 EXCLT £69
 MINT BOXED £225
 NEW/BOXED £50
 DEM £295
 AS NEW £149
 MINT £49
 £65
 £49
 £49
 TBA

EXLT £175
 EXCLT £125
 EXCLT £99
 EXCLT £375
 BOXED/AS NEW £5/85
 EACH

EXCLT £199
 EXCLT £995
 BOXED £450
 EXCLT £75
 DEM/BOXED £450
 VGC £595
 EX DEM £289
 EXCLT £250
 DEM £495
 MINT/BOXED £199
 EXCLT £325
 EXCLT £695
 EXCLT £500
 EX DEM £649
 NEW £300
 NEW £170
 NEW £140

N.O.S. £199
 N.O.S. £199
 EXCLT £225
 EXCLT £225
 EXCLT £149
 EXCLT £199

BRAND NEW £225
 BRAND NEW £65

ALL MAJOR CREDIT DEBIT CARDS ACCEPTED

Billy Vee
 SOUND SYSTEMS

MULTI SOURCE STREAMING SPECIALIST

CALL SALES:(020) 8318 5755 or 8852 1321 - 248 Lee High Road, London, SE13 5PL

0% APR Credit options are available for purchases of new products exceeding £900, please call for details. E&OE

New Naim - UnitiQute DAC & HDX HD Player



UnitiQute Compact streamer

The New Naim DAC - NaimUniti and the HDX have marked a turning point in Naim history and delivered a stunning product line-up for the future of quality music. You now have multi source delivery options of up to 24bit studio quality even with the new baby UnitiQute. Splendid! Visit billyvee.co.uk for more info or come and listen.

A selection of Pre-owned & Ex-Dem available at www.billyvee.co.uk

Linn Unidisk SC Universal CD Player E/D (1Yr G/tee)	(3145.00)	£1495.00
Linn Akurate CD CD Player Silver E/D (2Yr G/tee)	(3749.00)	£2249.00
Linn Linto Phono preamp Silver S/H (1Yr G/tee)	(1180.00)	£549.00
Naim CD 5 CD Player S/H (6Mth G/tee)	(1195.00)	£499.00
Nakamichi DR3 Cass Deck Exc Cond S/H (6Mth G/tee)	(499.00)	£199.00
Linn Akurate 2200 Power Amp Sil. E/D (2Yr G/tee)	(3000.00)	£1950.00
Linn Klimax Chakra Twin PowerAmp Sil E/D (2Yr G/tee)	(6950.00)	£4590.00
Naim NAP300 Power Amplifier E/D (2Yr G/tee)	(6030.00)	£4395.00
Linn Klimax 350 Loudspeakers Dk Cherry E/D (2Yr G/tee) (19500.00)		£9950.00
ProAc Studio 130 Speakers Maple E/D (2Yr G/tee)	(1190.00)	£749.00



with such easy confidence it was uncanny; its combination of detail, depth, dynamics and demeanour is a rare one, even at its price.

All of which made some plaintive mid-nineties electronic pop a joy. The Linn turned Dubstar's 'Not So Manic Now' on 12" single - a fairly average, compressed recording - into an epic, towering kitchen sink drama of a tune, with the Uphorik going for the rhythmic jugular and squeezing all the song's pathos right out at me through my loudspeakers. The result was about as intoxicating a listen as I've experienced from anything out of the Britpop era. And the clever thing is not just that this phono stage can distill down all the good things from the song and deliver them straight to you, but that it does so with such finesse. There's no sense of the Uphorik getting its emotional purchase from a soaringly forward upper midband that pins you to your seat; rather it does it through unalloyed transparency and grip.

CONCLUSION

Don't buy the new Linn Uphorik if you want your phono stage to embellish the music for you. While there are some brilliant valve phono stages, not least the Emille Allure reviewed last month, around at this price, there's always a sense that they make things just a little larger than life, and a tad sweeter too. Conversely, there are umpteen solid-state designs around that harden the original sound, adding artificial edge disguised as pace and punch; these may impress your friends but won't win your heart. The Uphorik is neither of the above; rather it's a very open, even, smooth and transparent design that simply opens a wide window on to the music. These days, as I venture ever further into the thermionic camp, I wasn't expecting a solid-state design such as this to come along and do what it did, which is to offer an astutely judged mix of both worlds. Indeed, you might even call it the missing Linn!

COMPATIBILITY

MM Gain

+44 dB/+48 dB @ 1kHz (measured using 20Ω source into 47kΩ)

MM Resistance

51kΩ, 49kΩ, 47kΩ, 45kΩ

MM Capacitance

68 pF, 105 pF, 135 pF, 175 pF, 215 pF, 255 pF, 285 pF, 325 pF

MC Gain

+54 dB/+64 dB @ 1kHz (measured using 20Ω source into 1kΩ)

MC Resistance (low)

31Ω, 37Ω, 42Ω, 53Ω, 70Ω, 100Ω, 170Ω

MC Resistance (high)

580Ω, 670Ω, 810Ω, 1kΩ

MC Capacitance

470 pF, 1 nF, 1.5 nF, 2 nF

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Frequency response of the Uphorik measured 12Hz-32kHz (-1dB) on both MM and MC and was consistent between unbalanced (RCA phono sockets) and balanced inputs (XLR), and unbalanced and balanced outputs. Equalisation was very accurate, so there wasn't the slight treble lift seen in many stages due to error in the 75μS time constant. Surprisingly, Linn include a fixed warp filter with a fast rate of roll off below 12Hz to produce -16dB attenuation at 5Hz, without affecting gain above 12Hz. This filter should suppress cone flap, whilst not affecting bass strength, and it has obviously been carefully engineered.

Gain was the same when using unbalanced or balanced inputs and shorting plugs showed the two are connected internally, meaning the balanced line is terminated internally to the unbalanced input, so the noise cancellation mechanism of balancing is lost and this is *not* a true balanced input, it just uses a balanced connector and a different screening/earthing arrangement!

The balanced output via XLR is truly balanced, and double output from the phono sockets. The gain settings as quoted were all correct for phono outputs, except MC 60dB, which measured 54dB (x500), a printing mistake Linn said. The other gain setting, 64dB, was correct. The range of gains available is wide, x154 and x250 with MM for example, both of which double if balanced output is used. Output overload was low, however, at 5V from the phono outputs (10V from XLR), where 10V is a more common figure. This resulted in low-

ish input overload figures (output volts divided by voltage gain), so MM 44dB had 32mV input overload, which is enough, but only just. The lowest gain possible should be used.

Input noise was very low on MC, measuring just 0.05μV (IEC A wtd.) with either phono or XLR shorted. This is very low as solid-state input devices go. Linn phono stages have traditionally excelled here, partly out of necessity because Linn MC cartridges deliver very low output. So the Uphorik suits low output MCs, as it has plenty of gain and low input noise. The XLR connects into the unbalanced input, and it is equally quiet.

The Uphorik offers much; it's very accurate. Used fully balanced in and out it should give exceptional results, although the lack of true common-mode noise cancellation on the balanced input is disappointing. NK

Disc MM / MC

Frequency response (MM & MC)

12Hz-32kHz

Separation

68dB

Noise (e.i.n.)

0.05 / 0.3μV

Distortion

0.001%

Gain (MM / MC) 44 / 48dB, 54dB / 64dB

Overload

5V out

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



VERDICT

Very powerful, fluent, transparent phono stage with surprising subtlety and smoothness too. Excellent, even at its premium price.

LINN UPHORIK £1,950

Linn Products Ltd.

+44 (0) 141 307 7777

www.linn.co.uk

FOR

- transparency
- soundstaging
- textural accuracy
- musical fluency
- super low noise

AGAINST

- non balanced XLR inputs

Mild Seven?

Audio Technica has a new flagship for its entry level 'F' range of moving coil cartridges, the AT-F7. Tony Bolton wonders if it's a more sophisticated performer than its high spirited siblings...

Since its foundation in 1962 Audio Technica have built for themselves a reputation for making fine quality microphones and headphones, as well as a distinguished line in moving magnet and moving coil pick-up cartridges. At the top of the UK range sits the AT-OC9 ML3, and now a new model, the AT-F7 has been launched based on the established but newly updated F3/III model. Think of the F series as the company's entry-level moving coil range; they lack some of the whizz-bang technology of the OC series, but are still very conscientiously engineered pick-ups. Whilst the original AT-F3 (and hitherto the AT-F5) have been around since the late eighties, the 7 is a brand new model.

Its looks are unmistakably Audio Technica, with the body sharing the same high rigidity VC mould, which is combined with potassium titanate. The body structure is described as a 'hard resin' which is chosen for its resonance control properties. Inside there are dual moving coils around neodymium magnets with pure iron yokes. The cantilever is an aluminium tube, tipped with an elliptical stylus which measures 0.7 x 1.7 mil. The suspension is 0.07mm stainless steel wire. All of this weighs in at a reasonable 5g so most arms should have no problems in balancing out at the recommended 2g tracking weight. Recommended cartridge loading on the phono stage is 100 ohms, which seems to be a fairly standard figure these days, so should make for easy equipment matching.

The body had well defined edges, and the cantilever was clearly on view so alignment was a very



straight-forward affair.

I initially used the 'visitors' Hadcock 242 Cryo arm on the Sondek for running in and a lot of the listening. It is a unipivot design that simply unplugs from the base and lifts off, allowing another to take its place, so I have one arm set up with the resident MusicMaker MkIII, and another equipped with my 78 rpm modified Denon DL103. Afterward, the cartridge found itself attached to the Clearaudio Carbon Satisfy arm on the Master Solution turntable.

The bass had got going and was beginning to stretch its legs a bit. After a couple of hours things had started to balance out and the tightness began to ease somewhat, to reveal a very crisp, spry and open performer.

Over the next week the F7 found itself plugged in to all of the phono stages discussed this month as well as the resident GSP Audio Revelation (Sondek) and the Leema

"there's no denying that the AT-F7 is a real fan of rhythms..."

It visited at the same time as I was doing the phono stage group test elsewhere in this issue, so ended up as part of the procession of turntabular items that have been wandering around my house for the last few weeks!

SOUND QUALITY

After setting the F7 up I cued up the first disc and was unsurprised to find a very tight, rather hard and edgy sound. I went and made a cuppa and came back in time to change the record. A couple of sides later and things has noticeably improved.

Agena (Clearaudio deck). After, I would estimate, about forty hours use, the sound seemed to be stable enough, although I've found Audio Technica phono cartridges, rather like Honda motorcycle engines, can never have too much running in!

With such a variety of equipment around it became very easy to pinpoint its key characteristics that will not alter with time. One was the detailed and good sized image that the cartridge produced with both stereo and mono records. The two channel image was very precisely framed by the speakers, but seemed

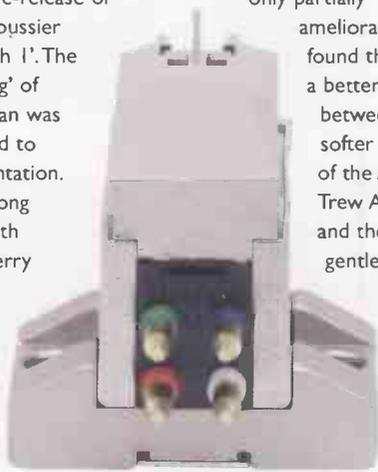
to extend quite well forward into the room. Lead vocalists and instruments were positioned ready for my inspection, each occupying a well defined area.

Mono records were well treated in this respect, with the perception of a layering of the performers, so although they were grouped within the centre two thirds of the soundstage, each still felt as though they were individuals, not the amorphous mass that sometimes occurs when playing older records.

Fine midrange separation allowed a lot of insight into the nuances of a piece, be it the subtleties of Moira Lympany's touch on the keyboards playing Chopin's Twenty-four Preludes, or the delicate thoughtfulness of the Halle and Barbirolli playing Delius's 'In A Summer Garden'. Having said that I did find that the cartridge began to get a little crowded when playing heavier orchestral pieces. To be honest I didn't really feel that there was enough passion in the F7's rendition of classical music. Less complex passages were, as I have said, beautifully detailed, but just a little detached at the same time. As per many Audio Technica moving coils, there's always something of the cerebral about the sound.

Keeping the classical theme going I updated things to a Speaker's Corner 180g re-release of

The Jacques Loussier Trio's 'Play Bach I'. The gentle 'swinging' of Johann Sebastian was far more suited to the F7's presentation. Bass flowed along with good depth and a quite merry tunefulness. I found myself focusing more on the detailing of the frequency range than



I normally do. This was partially because of the definition given to sounds, and partly because I felt that there was a spotlighting effect on certain aspects of the tonal spectrum. Small sounds such as brush strokes on a snare, or the usage of the bells on a tambourine were picked out quite clearly. Pierre Michelot's bass line was described with a gentle sway that was beguiling.

The fluid roll to the bassline came across during Massive Attack's 'Karmakoma' on the 'Protection' LP. It just ebbed easily, with a rolling gate that was very relaxing. Since the F7

seemed happier with rhythmic music I went for a wander through the pop collection and it found itself tracking various fifties and sixties singles and long players. The timing of the sound causing me to get into the 'just one more track before I go to bed' headspace, which I am sure all music lovers have experienced some time in their lives! There's no denying that the AT-F7 is a real fan of rhythms.

Tonally, this new cartridge is vintage Audio Technica moving coil, inasmuch as it has a 'well lit' upper midband and treble. Obviously this suits some systems more than others; I felt that my attention was being drawn away from the mass of midrange information flowing towards me and being focused always to the upper frequencies. The spotlight effect could be quite interesting with some records, but it was a double edged sword, providing a bit too much detail about non musical sounds, such as the condition of the groove wall. Even the Loussier LP, which is a mint condition record, bought new only about three years ago, displayed the odd bit of crackle which it certainly didn't do when played with either the Ortofon or the Musicmaker III. Both are quite honest transducers, but neither have the same detail in the top end that the Audio Technica possessed.

Trying different phono stages only partially

ameliorated this. I found there was a better synergy between the softer sounds of the Astin Trew AT8000 and the gentlemanly nature of the ANT Audio Kora 3T, than with

the less forgiving Icon Audio PS 1.2 Signature or the Microgroove Plus. Trying different impedance settings on those stages so equipped, altered the tonality slightly, but not enough to win me over completely.

Such a detailed display of the groove contents will delight some and have others backing away, describing it as too bright. It's

certainly ideal for those who feel that their vinyl front end is a little lacking in detail and projection, or tonally warm like a classic Linn Sondek. Others though may prefer the softer all round nature of Ortofon's Rondo Red, for example, which is ultimately less capable in terms of information retrieval and tracking ability, but an altogether more relaxing listen.

CONCLUSION

At its price point, this cartridge offers good performance, although I have little doubt that the more expensive OC9 ML3 offers a more sophisticated take on things, and would be worth the extra money if you regularly play Beethoven or Wagner. If your tastes are more towards guitar driven sounds then have a listen, but be a bit wary if your records are past the first flush of youth.

The sound of Audio Technica's new AT-F7 is a bit like Marmite. Those who like it will probably have an ongoing love affair with it, those who don't will find it a touch too spicy to take. In its own way, this is an exceptional cartridge at the price, but it's not for everyone all the same.

Thanks to Sound Hi-Fi for providing the review sample. See panel for contact details.

VERDICT

Pacey, punchy, crisp and detailed performer but some may find it too explicit for their tastes.

AUDIO TECHNICA

AT-F7 £299

Sound Hi-Fi

+44(0) 1803 833366

www.soundhifi.com

FOR

- detail retrieval
- imaging precision
- tuneful bass
- secure tracking

AGAINST

- well lit upper midband

MEASURED PERFORMANCE

Our frequency response graph clearly shows the AT-F7 measures flat within tight 1dB limits from 24Hz to 9kHz, making it very accurate in its basic tonal balance. There is the usual rise in output at high frequencies due to tip mass resonance, resulting in +2dB plateau lift from 10kHz to 18kHz, just enough to give the sound a little extra high frequency zest. Compared to many rivals though this is a restrained increase and subjectively is likely to be obvious but not intrusive. Inner groove losses (red trace) were acceptably low, amounting to 1dB loss at 10kHz, resulting in a net flat response to 16kHz, a nicely balanced result.

Tracking ability was exceptional, the cartridge staying confidently in the groove even at a torturously high 25cms/sec at 1kHz, a rare result. At lower frequencies the cartridge cleared a high 90µm peak amplitude, the most difficult test available. So the AT-F7 is a top tracker, able to clear the most difficult test tracks. In a likely trade off to get these results, coil turns have been reduced to minimise effective tip mass, resulting in low output of 0.4mV at 5cms/sec rms; Ortofon's manage almost double this. So the AT-F7 needs a quiet preamp with plenty of gain.

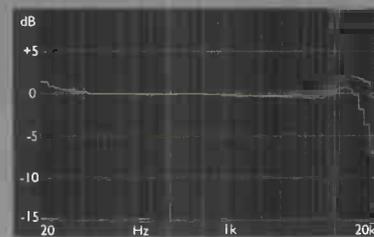
Distortion was low both laterally and vertically, the latter due to correct

measured vertical tracking angle of 23degrees; most cartridges measure out too high here at 30 degrees or more.

The AT-F7 measures very well all round, but it has low output. It will however, give a smooth, confident sound, possibly bright. NK

Tracking force	1.8-2.2gms
Weight	5gms
Vertical tracking angle	23degrees
Frequency response	20Hz - 20kHz
Channel separation	27dB
Tracking ability (300Hz)	
lateral	90µm
vertical	45µm
lateral (1kHz)	25cms/sec.
Distortion (45µm)	
lateral	0.5%
vertical	1.2%
Output (5cms/sec rms)	0.4mV

FREQUENCY RESPONSE



The Globbies

In which David Price, Adam Smith and Tim Jarman take a slightly askance look at the wonderful world of hi-fi separates in the past year, and hand out the industry's most coveted awards. Well, sort of...



They just don't get it, do they? The whole idea of a turntable is, aside from the endless hours of listening pleasure it brings, to vex and perplex and frustrate the poor sod who's got to set it up in the first place. That Brinkmann could deliberately engineer a high end direct drive that requires almost no serious spanner work before it's up and running is unforgivable. Literally minutes after I'd prized its few component parts out of its box, the Bardo was spinning silently, making sweet music. No fiddly belts to hang around motor pulleys, no offboard motors to painstakingly site, no bouncy-wouncy suspension to spend hours fettling (adjusting for pitch, yaw, compression, rebound, etc.). Rather, the Brinkmann just, errr, worked out of the box. This will never catch on, I tell you! DP

March 2010's issue saw an amazing machine from Sony, the TC-WE475. It would seem that technology has now advanced to the point that sound recordings can be made at home without the use of digital encoding or compression; i.e. in their original analogue form! The Sony uses something called a 'Compact Cassette', apparently developed in secret by Philips, which contains about 130 metres of thin plastic tape coated with cobalt modified ferric oxide. In another brave move, the media has been made separate from the machine, raising fears that owners could swap music between one another completely out of the view of the internet police. Obviously, such a format could potentially cause problems for the recording industry and we did notice that if one attempted to make a copy of a copy using the 'high speed dubbing' function that the sound quality deteriorated slightly, doubtless due to some sophisticated ARM (Analogue Rights Management) system built into the machine. Rumour has it that if the TC-WE475 is a success other versions may follow, in particular an intriguing pocket-sized playback-only model... In all seriousness, the TC-WE475 was a great sounding recorder that made up for its basic construction with an immaculate factory setup. Outstanding value for money at £130. TJ



THE WOBBLEST SOURCE AWARD



We all know how it goes when setting up turntables. Arms need to match well with turntables and cartridge synergy with said arms is even more vital. Get all of this right, though, and you're laughing. Aren't you? Well, if my experience is anything to go by, not necessarily. You see, it was back in our November 2009 issue that I reviewed the Consonance T988 unipivot tonearm and I initially did not have to hand a suitable adaptor to fit it to the SME mount on my Garrard 301. No problem, thought I, as I had recently acquired a rather nice Ariston RD80 and was keen to try it out. What's more, the Consonance dropped straight in to the RD80's armboard and, with my ATOC9MLII bolted in, I was ready to go... Result? Fabulous sound – the three gelled together really well and I was ready to enjoy a good listening session, but then I made the mistake of letting out a sigh of satisfaction for a job well done, and the swirl of air made the stylus jump. Then a wasp flew past and the arm jumped at least three grooves. I jumped up in concern and the arm bounced its way right into the centre of the label. Moral of the story? Unipivots, suspended subchassis turntables and wobbly floors don't mix, no matter how good they sound! AS

Of all the world's great high end speakers, there's none that can compare with the mighty Revolver Cygnis Golds. Forget your little pea shooter packing, six inch wide floorstanders, their multiple miniature drive units shimmying all over the place in tandem with one another as they hopelessly try to shake the room – here's the real deal! With a thumping fifteen inches per side to emit rumbling sounds, the standmounter destroying sub-bass of LFO's 'LFO' is but a mere trifle. Even at massive volumes, the Revolvers sound like the loudspeaker equivalent of a Jaguar V12 breezing down the outside lane of the M4 at 100mph, barely off idle in top gear. Proof positive that more is more, and that less is less, ultimately in high-end super-speaker land, cubic capacity counts more than any number of 8 inch bass units in a 'three and a half way' configuration. Boom, shake the room! **DP**

THE BIG BANGER AWARD



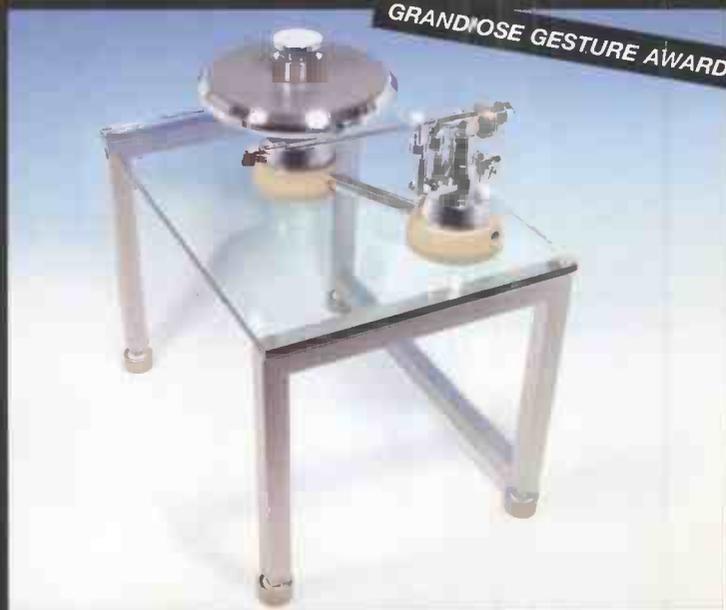
THE ADAM ACCEPTANCE FACTOR AWARD



Whilst there are some who have wholeheartedly embraced both the world of digital downloads and the good old fashioned lure of vinyl, it has to be said that there is still something of a gulf between the two. With one of those computer thingies there is no need to worry about tracking force, anti-skating, wobbly floors and the like; you just click in the right place and sit back to enjoy your music for as long as the hard drive will run, rather than to the end of the side. Trouble is, I'm firmly on the vinyl side. I like a physical medium to hold and I love examining each latest piece of LP-related paraphernalia that arrives on the market. I find the whole digital thing soulless and rather lacking in grandeur and pomp. Or rather I did, until I set eyes upon Meridian's Sooloos. I want one desperately and have done so ever since I first clapped eyes on it. As it is the only piece of digital technology ever to have had this effect on me, I can only surmise that the dark lords of Huntingdon have cast some sort of foul hex in my direction. **AS**

High-end hi-fi is fun. It's fun because, frankly, it's a bit silly. Most people asked to pay tens of thousands of pounds for anything that's a component part in an audio system would merely laugh, shrug or hurrumph. So to actually splash such cash you've got to be one Mars bar short of a picnic, or close to it. What then of those who manufacture such equipment? Well we think Klimo is the worthy winner of the most grandiose audiophile gesture we've seen this year, because its Tafelrunde turntable is surely one of the most over the top ways of dragging a piece of coal through a groove cut into carbonised plastic. It's magnificent, gorgeous, enormous and quite ridiculous. Who would live in a house with this in it? Those with lots of cash, even more space and a taste for epic aesthetic gestures. Klimo, we commend you for your vision! **DP**

GRANDIOSE GESTURE AWARD



BEST HIDDEN FEATURE AWARD



Naim's newest NAT05 XS tuner includes a hidden AM receiver section (a first for the company) that we only discovered by a very careful internal inspection! Indeed, no mention is made of what is clearly a fully developed circuit anywhere in the accompanying paperwork or in any of Naim's press releases, and would-be users would even have to drill a hole in the back of the tuner's cabinet to reach the extra aerial socket! Unfortunately we were unable to report on the sound quality of Naim's first AM tuner as the means of accessing it through the front panel controls were so well hidden that we were unable to work out how to get to it in time. It almost was if they were not there... **TJ**

CARTRIDGE SELECTION		STYLUS	HEADPHONE SELECTION	
Goldring			Grado	Prestige SR-60i £90
Elektra	£41	£28		Prestige SR-80i £108
1012 GX	£160	£88		Prestige SR-325i £315
1042	£195	£140	Goldring	DR 50 £40
2100	£83	£52		DR 100 £50
2400	£165	£135		DR 150 £75
2500	£195	£155		
Eroica LX	£217	£176 EX		
Eroica H	£239	£195 EX		
Elite	£325	£279 EX		
Audio Technica				
AT 95 E	£34	£20		
AT 440 MLA	£129	£94		
AT OC9/III	£425	£400 EX		
Denon				
DL 103	£117	N/A		
DL 103R	£261	N/A		
DL 110	£135	N/A		
DL 160	£153	N/A		
DL 304	£342	N/A		
Grado				
Prestige Black 1	£52	£36		
Prestige Gold 1	£130	£93		
Lyra				
Dorian	£595	£476 EX	N/A	
Delos	£895	£795 EX	N/A	
Shure				
M 97 XE	£98	£58		
Sumiko				
Blue Point Special	£239	£205 EX		

HI FI ACCESSORIES

ARTcessories USB Phono Plus PreAmp	£85
analogue-digital computer interface	
Milty Pro Super Exstatic Brush	£16
Shure SFG2 Stylus Force Gauge	£28

REPLACEMENT STYLI

Swiss Quality Diamond Styli		
ADC	XLM Mk III	£18
Akal	AN 5, AN 60	£14
	AN2, AN 70	£16
Aiwa	AN11	£14
Dual	DN 145 E, DN 165 E	£18
JVC	DT 55, DT 60	£14
National	EPS 24 CS, P 30 D, P 33 D	£14
Ortofon	FF15/VMS20 EII, OM5/10/20	£18
Pioneer	PN 210/220/240	£14
Shure	N75C, N75-6, SC35C	£14
	N75ED/EJ T2 N75-3, N95ED/EJ	£18
	N 97 HE, VN 35 HE	£28
Sony	ND 142/155 G, CN234	£14
	ND 143/150/200 G	£16
Stanton	D 681 EEE	£22

Over 500 Styli Types Stocked
EOE prices may vary without notice

EX - Exchange price same make moving coil cartridge

Order direct online or Tel/Fax (01757) 288652

MANTRA AUDIO (HFW), Town End House, Skipwith, Selby, North Yorkshire YO8 5SQ

ISOKINETIK



ISOkinetik Audio Enhancement

Rega special. Take your Rega turntable to a higher level of perfection - transform your standard Rega to a deck which will compete with decks priced over £2,000.

Rega upgrades as reviewed in HI FI World

ISOsub Rega sub platter and bearing kit £99.99

ISOdrive Rega, Linn PSU £329.99

ISOTone Cardas rewire kit £99.99

ISOplatter 25mm acrylic platter £119.99

ISOweight Rega tonearm counterbalance £49.99



Dealer and distributor enquiries welcome. For a full range of upgrades and accessories, interconnects or speaker cables please email info@isokinetik.co.uk or call 0208 241 8890 www.isokinetik.co.uk

Music First Audio Moving Coil Step up



- ◆ Features the legendary Stevens & Billington TX103
- ◆ 14dB, 20dB or 26dB of transformer gain
- ◆ Flexible cartridge loading options
- ◆ Three way ground selection switch
- ◆ Available in Copper or Silver versions
- ◆ Handmade in Hastings, UK



www.mfaudio.co.uk :: info@mfaudio.co.uk :: +44 (0)1424 858260

Audio Components

The No. 1 choice for Speaker Building & speaker upgrade / refurbishment projects



See our NEW Website www.audio-components.co.uk

Save money by building your own dream loudspeakers - you will obtain better performance for a fraction of the cost compared to buying commercial off-the-shelf speakers.

- Loudspeaker Repair, Upgrade or complete Restoration
- Loudspeaker Design to fit your requirements
- Loudspeaker Drivers and Components
- Loudspeaker Measurement service
- Crossover design and build



Leading brands, Help & advice, Wide product range, Phone or buy on-line **FREE DELIVERY!**

Tel: 0118 989 0151

Email: enquiries@audio-components.co.uk

- Scanspeak, Peerless, Vifa,
- SEAS, Morel, Jantzen Audio, Volt,
- Aurum Cantus, B&C, Monacor,
- QED, WBT, HYPEX

Along with the much vaunted "perfect sound forever" moniker, the great thing about CD was that it was supposed to be compact (as indeed its name suggested)! Can someone please explain then why it's possible to buy a vast four box Compact Disc player that's the size of a supercomputer, in 2010? The concept was silly enough in 1985 (as the late Cambridge CD1, complete with its error correction module) proved, but aren't things supposed to be getting smaller? Here we are marvelling at dCS's Paganini Transport, DAC, Upsampler and Master Clock, plus more cables than you'd see in Patrick Cleasby's bedroom, needed to connect them all - this in the second decade of the twenty first century! Still, the dCS may be huge, but we here at Hi-Fi World love it, even if our other halves do not. **AS**



THE SIZE MATTERS AWARD

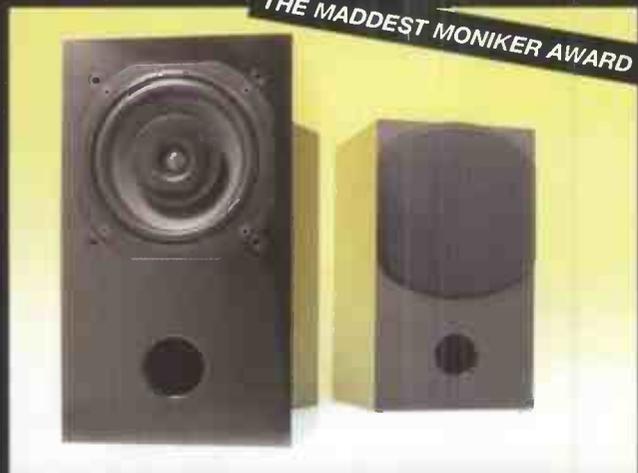
TRICKIEST REVIEW AWARD



When we reviewed Sony's latest iPod challenger, the X Series Walkman, in the September 2009 issue, it seemed a fun idea to pit what the manufacturers had claimed as "the best sounding Walkman ever" against a group of its mighty forerunners. And when it came to choosing the best of the Discman models only one could really be considered; the amazing D-Z555. Trouble was, our example was down on one channel because one of the dual Burr-Brown DAC chips had failed. As these are now difficult (if not impossible) to obtain, a plan was hatched to fit the single DAC chip that was used in Sony's next high-end design, the D-350. DAC transplants are difficult enough in full-sized machines where there is plenty of room and a good choice of power rails that can be drawn upon but inside the already small and well packed D-Z555 things soon took on a new level of awkwardness... As our picture shows though, everything was crammed into a relatively unused part of the Sony's circuit board and listening tests confirmed that the operation had been a success. Good as the X Series Walkman was, it couldn't match some of the older machines, not least the "HFW Signature" D-Z555! **TJ**

My Audio Design are frankly in a gang of one when it comes to bonkers names. The acronym of the company's own handle (MAD) rather gives the game away, but further investigation of their product portfolio reveals such titular gems as My Queen, My Sweetie, My Cat, My Ox, My Fly High and My HRH. Yes, really. But my favourite appellation of all is the My Clapton Grand MM. As if naming (an admittedly highly capable) loudspeaker after an ex-Yardbird wasn't enough, adding the mysterious 'Grand MM' to its appellation is just plain, err, mad. What could this 'Grand MM' be - an unfeasibly large candy coated chocolate sweet in a rainbow colour? Well, who can say? Answers on a postcard please... **DP**

THE MADDEST MONIKER AWARD



COMEBACK OF THE YEAR AWARD



The hi-fi industry is famously difficult for an unknown manufacturer to break into, because there are so many established names already. We here at Hi-Fi World love to stumble upon something new, but the excitement can be dampened rapidly when the item in question fails to garner any interest from the buying public and the manufacturer either sinks without trace or heads back home. We were very worried that this was going to be the case with Vincent. They arrived on our shores a few years back, wowed us with their very capable hybrid equipment and then promptly disappeared. Well, thanks to Mark Viveash at MV Audio they're back once more. We're going to exchange mobile numbers this time, so we don't lose touch again! **AS**

High End Cable
www.highendcable.co.uk
Call Dave on 01775 761880

NORDOST
Revelation AUDIO LAB
CHORD COMPANY
MIT
FURUTECH
FURUTECH
FURUTECH
Acoustic System
TELOS
STAX
Quantum

IAN HARRISON HI-FI TEL: 01283 702875
HIFI AT DISCOUNT PRICES. FREE NATIONWIDE DELIVERY
SALE!

TRADE IN YOUR OLD MOVING COIL CARTRIDGE & SAVE UP TO 60% OFF THE RRP.

DENON DLS1 CARTRIDGE	£POA	MICHELL ENGINEERING	£POA
DENON DL103 SA	£260	MOTH GROUP	£POA
DENON DL304	£290	GRADO CARTRIDGES	£POA
DENON DL103 R	£235	AUDIO TECHNICA HEADPHONES	£POA
DENON DL160	£139	HARBETH SPEAKERS	£POA
DENON DL110	£125	ORTOFON CARTRIDGES	£POA
DENON DL103	£99	TRANSFIGURATION AXIA	£850
DENON AHD7000	£700	TRANSFIGURATION PHOENIX	£1300
DENON AHD5000	£460	TRANSFIGURATION ORPHEUS	£2350
TRICHORD DIABLO	£599	WHEST AUDIO	£POA
TRICHORD DINO MK2	£279	CLEARAUDIO SYMPHONY	£650
GRADO PS1000	£1500	CLEARAUDIO CONCERTO	£1100
GRADO GS1000i	£935	EAR/YOSHINO	£POA
GOLDRING LEGACY MC	£500	LEHMANN AUDIO	£POA
AUDIO TECHNICA AT150MLX	£325	BENZ MICRO	£POA
AUDIO TECHNICA AT-OC9 ML3	£390	TOM EVANS	£POA
AUDIO TECHNICA ATF7	£269	ROKSAN CARTRIDGES	£POA
AUDIO TECHNICA ATF3 III	£169	ROKSAN TONEARMS	£POA
SUMIKO BPS EVO III	£205	CREEK/EPOS	£POA
STAX HEADPHONES	£POA	THORENS	£POA

I ALSO SUPPLY:
VAN DEN HUL, ZYX, CARTRIDGE MAN, SUMIKO, SME, GRAHAM, MOTH, HADCOCK, EAR/YOSHINO, ACOUSTIC SOLID, HEED, GRAHAM SLEE, PURE SOUND, AESTHETIX, ACCUSTIC ARTS, NAD, SONY, NU FORCE, SUGDEN, HALCRO, C.A.T. GAMUT, MONRIE, PATHOS ACOUSTICS, UNISON RESEARCH, OPERA, HARBETH, USHER AUDIO, DIAPASON, AUROUSAL, ERGO, STAX, AKG, BLACK RHODIUM, TRANSPARENT, QED, IXOS, HI DIAMOND, SUPRA, WIREWORLD, KEMP ELEKTRONICS, JUAL, B.C.D, CUSTOM DESIGN, OPTIMUM, ASH DESIGN, APOLLO, ALPHASON, B.D.I., ICON AUDIO, PRO-JECT, PSB, TIVOLI AUDIO, ROBSON ACOUSTICS, KOETSU, LONDON (DECCA), REGA.

PLEASE PHONE TO CONFIRM PRICE & AVAILABILITY PRIOR TO ORDERING. ALL GOODS ARE BRAND NEW & BOXED WITH FULL U.K. GUARANTEES. NO EX. DEM OR EX DISPLAY GOODS. NO GREY IMPORTS. GOODS ARE NOT SUPPLIED ON APPROVAL. SORRY, NO GENERAL CATALOGUES. PLEASE PHONE OR WRITE FOR SPECIFIC REVIEWS, BROCHURES OR PRICES. SUPPLIER OF HIFI PRODUCTS & ACCESSORIES SINCE 1986 MAIL ORDER ONLY FROM: IAN HARRISON, 7 MILL HILL, REPTON, DERBY, DE65 6GQ.
TEL: 01283 702875. 9am - 9pm INCLUDING SUNDAYS.

Web *classiquesounds.co.uk*
Classique Sounds
Specialist Supplier of Vintage Audio
61 Aylestone Drive
Aylestone,
Leicester, Le2 8qe
Tel 0116 2835821
Local rate 0845 1235137
Mobil 07815 188040

Leak Stereo 20 full rebuild using Paper in oil caps £299.00
Conversion of Leak valve pre to passive including Silver wired/soldered/rhodium plugs £299.00

wanted classic and modern hifi eqpt.
FOR SALE. PRE/POWER AMPLIFIERS

New: Translucent passive pre amp. 3 inputs. 2 outputs. 2 X stepped volume controls using 1% resistors. Awesome	£ 199	Rotel RB-970BX MK2 power amp. Bxd bridgeable	£ 119
Krell PAM-1 Pre amplifier. Dual mono design with twin off-board PSU. Silver finish. MM & MC input. G/cond.	£ 899	Rogers cader III integrated amplifier. Ex condition.	£ 249
Chapman valve power amplifier, valve pre amplifier and FM valve tuner. Very unusual and rare.		Rotel RC-970BX pre amplifier. Good condition.	£ 99
Quad 34 pre amplifier. Early brown model. 5 pin din	£ 189	Leak Stereo 50. Excellent condition & rare. Gold.	£ 999
Tripletone valve monoblock X 2. Single ended. 3.5W	£ 199	Leak pre amplifier for Leak TL10.1. Ex condition.	£ 99
Croft OTL series 3 valve power amplifier. Ex cond.	£ 999	Adcom GFA-5351I power amplifier. 60W, boxed.	£ 149
Rotel RB-970BX power amplifier. Bridgeable.	£ 109	Leak Stereo 20 rebuild with quality paper in oil.	£ 799
Nad 3020. The original. Chip in top LH corner. Bxd	£ 59	Naim Nap-160 power amplifier. Good condition.	£ 249
Rogers stereo valve pre amplifier. Very rare.	£ 149	Musical Fidelity X-P100 pre amp with PSU. Silver.	£ 399
Pair Leak TL10.1 amplifiers. Rebuilt with PIO caps	£ 995	Quad 34 pre amplifier. Boxed. Nice condition.	£ 199
Quad 303 power amp. Nice condition.	£ 159	Rotel RC850 pre amplifier. Good condition.	£ 99
Mission Cyrus 2. Nice condition. Grey finish.	£ 149	Croft series V1 valve power amplifier. Good cond.	£ 699
Naim Nac-12. Boxed. Naim First.	£ 99	Arcam Alpha 10 int amp. Bxd. remote & mini. £799	£ 449
Exposure 20105 integrated amplifier. Silver front.	£ 399	Musical Fidelity A3.2Cr pre amplifier. Silver finish.	£ 429
Quad II's. Various condition.	£ POA	Adcom GFA-5351I power amplifier. 60W, boxed.	£ 199
Rotel RB850 power amplifier. Bridgeable. G/cond.	£ 129	6C33C-B tubes. 12 watts class A. Boxed & bias mtr	£ 1099
Rotel RA-840 BX int amplifier with MM & MC	£ 99	Pair Musical Fidelity MA65 class A monoblocks.	£ 595
Classe CP35 pre amplifier with remote and book.	£ 399	Quad 33 pre amplifiers. From...	£ 75
Quad 33 pre amplifier. Boxed. Ex condition.	£ 129	Pioneer SA-608 integrated amplifier. A classic.	£ 99
Adcom GTP-400 pre-amp/tuner. Ex condition. Bxd.	£ 129	CR Developments Romulus int valve amp. Superb.	£ 999
CR Developments Amphion single ended monoblocks using	£ 129	Leak TL12+. 100% Bronze finish. Mullard tubes.	£ 349
Pioneer A300X integrated amplifier. Nice condition.	£ 129	Sugden A48 & T48 tuner in wooden sleeve.	£ 299
Akai AM-UB33 int amplifier. Silver. Mint & boxed.	£ 69	Leak Varislope pre amplifier. Ex condition.	£ 149
Iconate Claymore integrated amplifier. Very rare.	£ 179	Wilmslow Audio Mercury B power amp. Ltd edition	£ 295
Musical Fidelity A100 pure class A integrated 50W	£ 299	Scott stereomaster 260 American integrated amp.	£ 169
Van der Heem. single ended int valve amp. C1964.	£ 199	Leak Varislope point 1 pre amp. Converted to Passive. Pure silver wire/silver solder/Silver plate phonos/alps pot.	£ 465
Beautiful condition 100% original Quad 22 pre amp	£ 299		
Quad 303 power amplifier. Nice condition.	£ 149		
Pair Marantz MA5's. Class A. 110V. Awesome.	£ 999		
Nakamichi CA5 pre-amplifier. Ex cond. Cost £750	£ 375		
Leak Varislope point 1 pre amp. Converted to Passive. Pure silver wire/silver solder/Silver plate phonos/alps pot.	£ 465		

TURNTABLES/CD PLAYERS

Technics SL-1210 Mk2 record deck. Mint & boxed.	£ 295	Rotel RB-965BX (Discrete) CD player.	£ 149
Thorens TD126 MK2 electronic & Sme series 3 arm.	£ 449	Ortofon MICA-76 phono pre amplifier. Rare.	£ 149
Micell Syncro with Rega RB250. Excellent	£ 399	Thorens TD160 MK2. Black. Boxed. SME cut out.	£ 169
SME series 3 tonearm. Nice condition.	£ 249	SME headshell. Good condition.	£ 30
Garrard 4HP headshell. Boxed.	£ 39	Cambridge Audio CD5. Black finish. Boxed/remote	£ 59
Mod quad passive pre amplifier.	£ 199	Ariston RD80 turntable with lid. Good condition.	£ 149
Pro-ject MM-MC phono pre amplifier. As new. Bxd	£ 40	Cambridge Audio CDS CD player with remote.	£ 129
Loricraft mini for Garrard 301. SME 3009 cut out	£ 299	Adcom GCD-575 class A CD disc player. Boxed.	£ 249
Marantz CD63 CD player and remote.	£ 30	Arcam DV78 DVD player. Manual/remote. Silver.	£ 129
Mission 7755 turntable. Cut out for 774 SME. Boxed	£ 349	Rotel RCD-970BX CD Exe condition/remote.	£ 99
Sony CDP-911E CD player/remote/book. Cost £300	£ 119	Arcam Diva CD92 CD player. Silver. G/condition	£ 399
Pioneer PD-M550 CD player. 5 disc player. Mint/bxd	£ 79	Sony MDS-JE520 CD Mini disc player/recorder.	£ 69
Nad DCD-620 CD player. Good condition.	£ 29	Arcam Alpha 7SE CD player. Award winner.	£ 159
Sony MDS/SB920 mini disc player/rec. Mint & Bxd.	£ 129	Sony 3009 series II improved/not improved from...	£ 199
STD 3055 with SME mount. Black finish.	£ 129	Thorens TD160. Teak finish. No lid. Nice condition	£ 99
Nad 504 CD player. Ex condition. No display	£ 49	SME 3009 Series II arm. Early split weight version.	£ 349
Rotel RCD 965 BX CD player. Tweakers dream.	£ 149	Rotel RCD 865 BX CD player. Superb condition.	£ 299

SPEAKERS

B&W DM4 speakers. Boxed and in excellent cond.	£ 199	Decca Londons using Decca ribbon horn tweeters.	£ 99
Kef Coda 7. Black finish. Boxed & mint.	£ 69	Miller & Kreisel M&K VX-4 active subwoofer. Bk	£ 229
ATC SCM20 Rosewood/ATC stands. Ser no 1403/4	£ 899	Spendor LS2/3E loudspeakers. Mint. Bxd. Black ash	£ 149
BK XLS200 MK2 subwoofer. Well reviewed. Black	£ 189	DS/Peaker anti-mode 8033 room eq for subwoofer.	£ 649
Swallow RM200 loudspeakers. Rare, similar to BC1	£ 199	Wharfedale Diamond 9.1 Ex condition & boxed	£ 129
Apogee Centaurus mini monitors. Bookshelf. Bk.	£ 499	Apogee Centaurus. Tall ribbon speakers. Awesome.	£ 699
Kef 101/2 Mini Monitors loudspeakers. Walnut.	£ 239	Monitor Audio Studio 5's. Bookshelf. Cost £599.	£ 299
Celestion DL12 floor standing speakers	£ 129	Phonon 3 piece speaker set. Brand new. Cost £200	£ 99
Klipsch Tangent 300 speakers. Bk. 96db efficient.	£ 175	PMC FB1 upgraded to FB1+ with receipt. Oak. Bxd	£ 999
Aeon Acoustics Linear speakers. Ribbon tweeters.	£ 399	Bose Acoustimass - 5. 2. 1. speaker & sub/manual.	£ 199
HQ balanced phone pre head amp. Awesome.	£ 249	Parlington Super Dreamnight speakers stands. Black.	£ 89
Nakamichi 600 cassette deck. Very rare. Nice cond.	£ 299	Russian EL84 tubes. Superb quality. Price each.	£ 6.50
Akai AT-K33L FM/AM stereo tuner. Mint & boxed	£ 39	Quad FM3 tuner in excellent condition. From...	£ 99
Yamaha YSP 800 S.1 speakers with digital amps.	£ 299	Pro-tone 0.1uf paper in oil capacitors. 500V. 10%	£ 79.99
Pro-tone 0.1uf paper in oil capacitors. 500V. 10%	£ 79.99	Marshall ECC83/12AX7 specially selected valves.	£ 99.99
Top quality PIO capacitors. 0.1 and 0.22uf	£ 5.99	Quad EL5L7 rebuilds and they sound amazing. 0.1 & 0.22uf	£ 89.99
Paper in oil capacitors. Metal bodies. I use these on all	£ 5.99	George stands for EL563 speakers	£ 239
Rupert stands for Quad ESL57	£ 239	Meridian remote for 206 series. Rare & good cond	£ 99
Meridian remote for 206 series. Rare & good cond	£ 99	Musical Fidelity TL1 FM tuner. Award winner. £300	£ 95

OTHER ITEMS

Quad FM4 FM tuner. Nice condition. 5 pin din.	£ 149	Linn Basic plus tonearm. Excellent condition.	£ 129
SME FD200 fluid damper kit. Completed. Boxed.	£ 79	Linn LP12 armboard for Linn arm. Ex condition.	£ 20
Origin Live "Advanced" DC motor & controller.	£ 249	Quad FM1 Valve tuners. Various prices from only	£ 60
Kef B110 drive units X 2. Excellent condition.	£ 999	Lentek MC head amplifier. Boxed. Uses 9V battery	£ 149
PS Audio PS111 MM&MC phono pre amp. Rare	£ 199	Quad FM2 valve tuner. Sound amazing.	£ 59
Rotel 850 stereo tuner.	£ 29	Rotel RB-950BX tuner. Boxed.	£ 49
Russian equivalent 6L6, KT66 valves. Each...	£ 99	Mission Cyrus AM/FM tuner. Grey finish.	£ 79
HQ balanced phone pre head amp. Awesome.	£ 249	Trichord Dino phono pre amp. Mk1. Exe condition.	£ 189
Nakamichi 600 cassette deck. Very rare. Nice cond.	£ 299	Parlington Super Dreamnight speakers stands. Black.	£ 89
Akai AT-K33L FM/AM stereo tuner. Mint & boxed	£ 39	Russian EL84 tubes. Superb quality. Price each.	£ 6.50
Yamaha YSP 800 S.1 speakers with digital amps.	£ 299	Quad FM3 tuner in excellent condition. From...	£ 99
Pro-tone 0.1uf paper in oil capacitors. 500V. 10%	£ 79.99	Pro-tone 0.22uf paper in oil capacitors. 500V. 10%	£ 79.99
Top quality PIO capacitors. 0.1 and 0.22uf	£ 5.99	Marshall ECC83/12AX7 specially selected valves.	£ 99.99
Paper in oil capacitors. Metal bodies. I use these on all	£ 5.99	Quad EL5L7 rebuilds and they sound amazing. 0.1 & 0.22uf	£ 89.99
Rupert stands for Quad ESL57	£ 239	George stands for EL563 speakers	£ 239
Meridian remote for 206 series. Rare & good cond	£ 99	Rotel RB840 tuner. Missing button	£ 299
Musical Fidelity TL1 FM tuner. Award winner. £300	£ 95	1000Pi paper in oil capacitors. Used in Leak amps.	£ 3.99

QUAD ESL57 & EL563 PANELS/SERVICING ETC

New. One Thing Audio "Widget". All round improvement for 57's & a kinder load for amp £79 pr
Full rebuild of 57's including latest Otec treble panels for only £1190.00
We sell serviced Quad ESL57 speakers from only £1200.00pr. Why spend £4000+?
ESL57 SPEAKERS STANDARD SERVICE £680. PR
Price includes 2 completely rebuilt treble panels etc. Ring for further info.
"Classique Sounds servicing restores the Quads to a position where they can hold their head high". Jon Marks. HIFI WORLD. April 1999 Full servicing facilities available.

HI-FI & HOME CINEMA

REAL STORES

REAL PEOPLE

REAL PRODUCTS

REAL VALUE

HI-FI SEPARATES

CYRUS



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

The XP amplifiers are based on the circuitry of the top of the range DAC XP+. The entry-level 6XP includes 6 line level inputs along with a

zone 2 feature while the 8XP d combines the XP series pre-amplifier with a newly revised power amp, and contains an onboard DAC for digital sources.



- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| CDX t SE+ | DAC X+ | 8XPd |
| CD8 SE | DAC XP+ | PRE XP |
| CD6 SE | 6XP / 8XP | X POWER |

PROJECT

ESSENTIAL

Following the success of it's Genie MKII, Project has introduced a new entry-level turntable - the Essential. This 2 speed model comes complete with Ortofon OMB 3E cartridge, dust cover, is easy to set-up and sounds great.



MICHELL

GYRO SE

Based entirely on the GyroDec, but without the costly acrylic plinth and dustcover, the Gyro SE brings the same qualities in a more affordable and compact package. A Gyro SE can always be converted into a GyroDec by purchasing a plinth and dustcover.



ARCAM

FMJ

Combining sleek design, flexible connectivity and a level of reproduction far beyond that of budget separates.



- | | |
|------|-----|
| CD17 | A28 |
| CD37 | A38 |
| A18 | P38 |

ROKSAN

KANDY K2

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



CASPIAN M SERIES
K2 SPEAKERS

ROTEL

06 SE SERIES

Rotel's 06 Series includes four new components and updated versions of the classic CD player and three stereo amplifiers.



- | |
|----------|
| RCD-06SE |
| RA-04SE |
| RA-06SE |

LEEMA

ANTILA II TUCANA II

With stunning sound quality the new Antila II CD player features unique MD2 active differential multi-DAC converter technology to provide breathtaking realism.

The dual mono designed Tucana II amplifier uses three heavy-duty toroidal transformers and is capable of swinging over forty five amps of current, ensuring a vice like grip and precise control of the speakers.



- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| STREAM III | PULSE III |
|------------|-----------|

MARANTZ

CD6003 PM6003

The PM6003 amplifier and CD6003 CD player, come housed in Marantz's stylish 'M1' casing. The CD player features a front mounted USB socket allowing improved performance from devices

such as an iPod or MP3 player while the amplifier has five line-level inputs along with a MM phono stage and two sets of speaker terminals for ease of bi-wiring.



- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| SA-KI PEARL | PM-KI PEARL |
|-------------|-------------|

HI-FI SPEAKERS

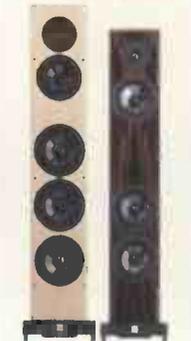
MONITOR AUDIO PLATINUM

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



VIENNA ACOUSTICS CONCERT GRAND

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



KEF REFERENCE

The first Reference speaker was launched in 1973 to worldwide acclaim. Several generations later the range remains for many the benchmark for high-end audio and is legendary for its clarity and precision.



B&W CM SERIES

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



SPENDOR A-LINE

Introducing the A5 and A6 speakers. These compact, high performance, floor standing speakers utilize driver units, tweeters and other design innovations developed for Spendor's flagship ST & SA1 speakers.



MONITOR AUDIO SILVER RX

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



WHARFEDALE DIAMOND 10.1



This 10th generation version combines insight, precision and control along with fine build and finish.



B&W 685

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

NEW STORES

Due to exciting plans for expansion, we are now recruiting for three new stores in London and the Home Counties.

To download an application form visit www.SSAV.com

PRICE POLICY

Because of the competitive nature of consumer electronics our offers are reviewed on a weekly basis.

For latest prices please visit www.SSAV.com

BUY ONLINE

Can't get to a store? Then visit the new online shop at www.SSAV.com You'll find a range of great products along with great prices.

A click-and-collect option is also available.

CUSTOM INSTALLATION

Stores with Cedia qualified staff also provide a bespoke design and installation service. They have unrivalled expertise in all areas of home automation and can demonstrate a wide range of installation options.

FOR LATEST PRICES AND OFFERS VISIT

WWW.SSAV.COM

THE EXPERTS IN HOME ENTERTAINMENT

SEVENOAKS
SOUND & VISION

HI-FI SYSTEMS AND MUSIC SERVERS

ARCAM SOLO NEO

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



B&W ZEPPELIN

B&W's Zeppelin and Zeppelin Mini docking systems combine beautiful looks with amazing sound.



XIVA

This advanced, dedicated entertainment server is a great way to store your precious music collection, photo memories, movie clips and more. Use Music8 with your favourite music streaming product to play music wherever and whenever you want it, then browse your photo and video collection effortlessly via your web browser.

It's all so easy

MUSICm8



SONOS

BU250 BUNDLE

55 BR100

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



OLIVE

Access all your digitized music from one centralized library. Everything from 24-bit HD files to 16-bit converted CDs will be at your fingertips. Convenient storage, easy touchscreen access and the ability to play it all in any room of your home. Now you'll enjoy your music collection more than ever.



BLU-RAY PLAYERS

PANASONIC

This new range includes the Full HD 3D capable DMP-BDT300 and three conventional 2D players.

DMP-BD45 DMP-BD65 DMP-BD85 DMP-BDT300



SONY

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



BDP-S370 BDP-S570

DENON

Denon's new range of 3D ready, universal disc players, deliver high-end picture and sound quality.



DBP-1611UD DBP-2011UD

PIONEER

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



BDP-330 BDP-LX53

HOME CINEMA AMPLIFIERS AND RECEIVERS

DENON

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



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

ONKYO

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



TX-SR608 TX-NR708

YAMAHA

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



RX-V567 RX-V1065
RX-V765 SP-27

HOME CINEMA SPEAKER PACKAGES

B&W

MINI THEATRE

These award-winning packages combine style with excellent sound.



MT-25 MT-30

Q ACOUSTICS

2000 CINEMA PACK

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



KEF

KHT3005SE

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



KHT1005.2 KHT2005.3

PURCHASE ANY A/V OR HI-FI AMPLIFIER/RECEIVER AT RRP AND CLAIM UP TO

30% OFF
THE RRP OF THE SPEAKERS OF YOUR CHOICE*

*MAX RRP OF SPEAKERS £1000

MOST, BUT NOT ALL, BRANDS INCLUDED. NICWAOO. E&OE. ASK IN-STORE FOR DETAILS

SPECIAL OFFERS

AMPLIFIERS		
ARCAM	FMJ A18	£ SSAV.COM
CYRUS	PRE XP / 8 POWER (Introductory Offer)	£1,500
LEEMA	PULSE	£849
MARANTZ	PM6003	£ SSAV.COM
NAD	C326BEE	£295
ROKSAN	CASPIAN M1 Pre/Stereo Power	£1,499
ROKSAN	CASPIAN M1 Pre/Mono Power	HALF PRICE £2,349
CD PLAYERS		
ARCAM	FMJ CD17	£ SSAV.COM
LEEMA	STREAM II	£849
MARANTZ	CD6003	£ SSAV.COM
NAD	C545BEE	£315
HI-FI SPEAKERS		
DALI	LEKTOR 1	£229
DALI	LEKTOR 2	£249
LEEMA	XERO (Light Oak / Walnut Only)	£499
MONITOR AUDIO	BRONZE BR1	£139
MONITOR AUDIO	BRONZE BR5	£349
SPENDOR	A5 CLAIM HMV Vouchers Worth £150	£1,495
SCREENS		
PANASONIC	TX-L32G20	£ SSAV.COM
PANASONIC	TX-L37D25	£ SSAV.COM
PANASONIC	TX-P42G20	£ SSAV.COM
PANASONIC	TX-P50S10	£ SSAV.COM
PANASONIC	TX-P50VT20	£ SSAV.COM
PHILIPS	46PFL8605	£ SSAV.COM
PHILIPS	52PFL8605	£ SSAV.COM
SAMSUNG	UE40C7000	£ SSAV.COM
SAMSUNG	UE46C8000	£ SSAV.COM
SAMSUNG	UE46C9000	£ SSAV.COM
B.L.U-RAY & DVD		
DENON	DBP-1611UD	£399
DENON	DBP-2011UD	£599
PANASONIC	DMP-BD65	£159
PANASONIC	DMP-BD85	£269
PANASONIC	DMP-BDT300	£ SSAV.COM
PIONEER	BDP-320	£199
PIONEER	BDP-LX52	£379
SAMSUNG	BD-C6900	£ SSAV.COM
AV RECEIVERS		
ARCAM	FMJ AVR500	£ SSAV.COM
DENON	AVR-1911	£ SSAV.COM
DENON	AVR-2311	£ SSAV.COM
ONKYO	TX-SR608	£449
PIONEER	VSX-920	£499
PIONEER	5C-LX82	£ SSAV.COM
YAMAHA	RX-V567	£399
AV SPEAKERS		
KEF	KHT2005.3	£ SSAV.COM
Q ACOUSTICS	2000 CINEMA PACK (Graphite)	£499
YAMAHA	YSP-4100	£ SSAV.COM
YAMAHA	YHT-5400	£ SSAV.COM
AV & HI-FI SYSTEMS		
ARCAM	SOLO MINI CLAIM £200 Off Speakers RRP	£749
ARCAM	SOLO MUSIC FM (FM Only - No DAB)	£699
DENON	D-M38DAB	£ SSAV.COM
MARANTZ	M-CR502	£349
MARANTZ	CD6003/PM6003 CLAIM £200 Off Speakers RRP	£598
MARANTZ	BD5004/NR1501 CLAIM £300 Off Spks RRP	£ SSAV.COM
SONOS	BU250 BUNDLE	£ SSAV.COM
TEAC	CR-H2581 DAB	£199
TEAC	REFERENCE 600 CLAIM £200 Off Speakers RRP	£999

STORES NATIONWIDE

ABERDEEN 01224 252797
BRISTOL 0117 974 3727
BEDFORD 01234 272779
BRIGHTON HOVE 01273 733338

CHELSEA 020 7352 9466
CHELTENHAM 01242 241171
EPSOM 01372 720720
EXETER 01392 218895

GLASGOW 0141 332 9655
GUILDFORD 01483 536666
HOLBORN 020 7837 7540
KINGSTON 020 8547 0717

LEEDS WETHERBY 01937 586886
LINCOLN 01522 527397
LOUGHTON 020 8532 0770
MAIDSTONE 01622 686366

NORWICH 01603 767605
NOTTINGHAM 0115 911 2121
OXFORD 01865 241773
PLYMOUTH 01752 226011

POOLE 01202 671677
READING 0118 959 7768
SEVENOAKS 01732 459555
SHEFFIELD 0114 255 5861

SOUTHAMPTON 023 8033 7770
TUNBRIDGE WELLS 01892 531543
WATFORD 01923 213533
WITHAM ESSEX 01376 501733

YEovil 01935 700078
IRELAND DUBLIN 01 275 1100

3 NEW STORES COMING SOON

PLEASE NOTE: PRICING IN IRELAND MAY VARY FROM THE UK

ADVERT VALID UNTIL 27/07/2010, E&OE

DIAL A DEALER

This is a comprehensive directory of Hi-Fi Dealers throughout the UK and Ireland.

BERKSHIRE

LORICRAFT AUDIO

Loricraft Audio is now open for visitors but please call to arrange for a visit. You can buy all our products directly from us or through your local dealer. Our internet shop site can take direct orders for our turntables and accessories! Loricraft Audio, The Piggery, Mile End Farm, Wantage Road Lambourn, Berkshire, RG17 8UE Office Phone/Fax : +44 (0)1488-72267 Email: terry@garrard501.com website: <http://garrard501.com>

STUDIOAV LTD

44 High Street, Eton, Berkshire SL4 6BL
Tel: 01753 631000
sales@studioav.co.uk
www.studioav.co.uk

We are Berkshire's premier Linn dealer (complete range) and LP12 specialists. Naim, Focal, Totem, The Chord Company, Lyra, Dynavector, Benz Micro, with more to follow.

BRISTOL & BATH

THE RIGHT NOTE

Tel: 01225 874728.
Happy with your system? Wonder why there's so much for sale secondhand? Avoid the frustration and expense of "upgrade-itis", never quite "there". With infinite patience we'll help you plan longer term. Brands selection : Accustic Arts, Audio Physic, Aesthetix, Bel Canto, CAT, Chord Co, Clearaudio, Esoteric, Gamut, Graham, Halcro, Magnum Dynalab, Sumiko, VertexAQ, Wadia.

V'AUDIO HI FI CONSULTANTS

36 Druid Hill, Stoke Bishop, Bristol. BS9 1EJ.
Tel: 0117 968 6005.
ATC, AVI, Nola, ALR Jordan, Audio Analogue, Avid, Black Rhodium, Electrocompanlet, Edge amps/cd, Harman Kardon, Infinity, Jamo, Lyra, Origin Live, Opera, Ortofon, PS Audio, Michelle, REL, SME, Sugden, Townshend. Specialist in Video Projects by SIM2, Infocus, Sanyo, Power Plan. Screens by Stewart, smx and da-lite. Demos by appointment only. Home trial facilities.

CHESHIRE

ACOUSTICA

17 Hoole Rd, Chester CH2 3NH.
www.acoustica.co.uk.
Tel: 01244 344227.
HiFi & Home Cinema from Amphion, Arcam, ART, Ayre, B&W Nautilus, Classe, Focal.JM Lab, Monitor Audio, Naim Audio, Primare, Rega, REL, Rotel, Spondor, Sugden, Thiel, Wadia. We offer full demonstration facilities, interest free credit, delivery & install systems throughout Cheshire, Merseyside & North Wales. Tuesday to Saturday 10.00 to 5.30.

ACTION GATE AUDIO

www.action-gate-audio.co.uk
4 Ruabon Road, Wrexham, LL13 7PB.
Tel: (01978) 364500
Arcam, Atlas, Audiolab, Croft, Denon, Grado, JM Labs, KEF, Michell, Monitor Audio, Musical Fidelity, NAD, Ortofon, Opera, Onkyo, Pro-ject, QED, Quad, Rel, Roksan, Sugden, Sennheiser, Unison, van-den-Hul, Wharfedale, Yamaha.
Tuesday - Saturday 9.00 - 17.00
email: info@action-gate.com

DOUG BRADY HI FI KINGSWAY

Studios, Kingsway North, Warrington, WA1 3NU
Tel: 01925828009
Fax: 01925 825773.
Visa Mastercard, 2 dem rooms, home trial, Agencies include: Arcam, AV1, Chord, Copland, Exposure, Krell, Lyra, Michell, Meridian, Musical Fidelity, Monitor Audio, Naim, ProAc, Roksan, SME, Stax, Isotek, Kudos, Sonus Faber, Spondor, Ortofon, Prima Luna, Quad, Avid, Moon, Nordost, Wilson Benesch, and many more.

CORNWALL

BIGEARS AUDIO

To find a system that will allow you to hear the music instead of the equipment phone Bigears Audio, here you will find an interesting array of new and good quality used equipment! my intention is to have satisfied customers whatever their audio preferences. Naim dealer for the South West.
chrisbirchley@btinternet.com.
Tel: 01736-740421

ESSEX

ROCOCO SYSTEMS & DESIGN

Essex/London Linn Specialist
Tel: 01371856407 – 02074541234
www.rococosystems.com
We have over 30 years in entertainment solutions, We can give you expert advice on your Linn Hi-Fi, Multi-room AV and Home Cinema systems. P/EX, ex-demo and used Linn available, Demos by appointment. Home Demos welcome. Authorised dealers for Arcam, AMX, Artcooustic, Chord, Infocus Linn, Loewe, Lutron, Kaleidescape, Marantz, Nevo, Opus, Phillips Pronto, Runko, Systemline, Speakercraft Sonos Sim2

LANCASHIRE

HOUSE OF LINN MANCHESTER

Telephone: 0161 766 4837
Email: Info@houseoflinn.com
www.houseoflinn.com
The Linn specialists. Independently owned by former Linn staff. Straightforward, professional expertise with demonstration, sales, installation and support for the Linn range of components and systems. The listening experience is so good that demonstrations can last for hours. Discover how we make music sound real in your home! Appointments only.

LEICESTERSHIRE

ZOUCH AUDIO

The Old Coach House, Off South St, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire, LE65 1BQ.
Tel : 01530 414128
Email : mike@zouchaudio.co.uk
Specialist Audio Equipment from Audia, Audica, Apollo, Ayon, Black Rhodium, Boulder, Chord Electronics, DALI, Edgar, Fatman, Graham Slee, Isotek, LSA, Marantz, Mission, Monopulse, Musical Fidelity, NAD, Nordost, Ortofon, Project, Q Acoustics, QED, Quad, Roksan, Spectral, System Fidelity, Tom Evans, Usher, Vitus. Over 30 years experience and 4 demonstration rooms.

LONDON

THE CARTRIDGE MAN LTD

88 Southbridge road, Croydon
CR0 1AF Telephone: 020 8688 6565
Website: www.thecartridgeman.com

DIAL A DEALER

This is a comprehensive directory of Hi-Fi Dealers throughout the UK and Ireland.

email address: thecartridgeman@talktalk.net. UK Distributor: Hiaudio Distribution Makers of the prize-winning range of MusicMaker cartridges and other desirable audio accessories. We also have a cartridge refurbishing service and rebuild classic valve equipment to the highest standards. "It doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg - but there is no such thing as a free lunch, either."

MONMOUTHSHIRE & GLOUCESTERSHIRE

CERITECH AUDIO

Wyastone Business Park, Wyastone Leys, Monmouth. Tel: 0844 736 5719.
Email: info@ceritech.co.uk.
www.ceritech-audio.com.

We provide bespoke Hi-Fi and AV services to customers throughout Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire, Herefordshire and surrounding areas. We offer honest and expert advice, and professional demonstrations of top brand products. BADA Member & Authorised Agents for Arcam, Clearaudio, DALI, Focal, Leema, Moon, Naim, Neat, Primare, ProAc, Rega, Vienna Acoustics and others.

MY AUDIO DESIGN

35 Whitehall, London, SW1A 2BX
Tel: 020 7839 8880 / 07782 137 868
E-mail: sales@madengland.com
Website: www.madengland.com
E-Shop: www.shop.madengland.com
We offer MAD, Benchmark Media, SONOS, WBT, Trichord Research, ATC, FatmanTube, Project, Lehmann, Ortofon, VandenHul, QED, NAD, Goldring, Grado, Focal, Musical Fidelity, Ex-demo & second hand gears. Custom Installation, Servicing, Custom Design. Appointment Only. Short walk from Embankment, Charing-X & Westminster Tube.

MANCHESTER

AUDIO COUNSEL

26 High St Cheadle SK8 1AL
www.audio-counsel.co.uk
Tel: 0161-491-6090
e mail: dave@audiocounsel.co.uk
Hi Fi and Home Cinema from , B&W Densen, Dynavec Cartridges Emm Labs, Hutter, Isobue, In Focus, Naim, Neat Acoustics Pioneer, Piega, Quadraspire, Rega, Revolver, Rotel, Shahinlan, Totem, Well Tempered Turntables, Zu

Loudspeakers. Quality Hi Fi is not plug and play. We deliver and install all systems. 0% Finance available. Tuesday to Saturday 10.00am to 5.30pm Thursday till 8pm

MIDLANDS (WEST)

SOUND CINERGY

37 high street, Aldridge, WS9 8NL
Tel: 01922 457926
www.soundcinergy.co.uk
clive@soundcinergy.co.uk
Quality hifi and home cinema from black rhodium, chord co, exposure, focal, linn, marantz, michell, monitor audio, mordaunt short, nad, okki nokki, ortofon, project, rel, roksan, themescene, trichord, vdH. Check our website for ex dem and secondhand bargains. free car parking. tues - sat 10 - 5.30

NORFOLK

BASICALLY SOUND & VISION

Calveley Court, Southburgh Road, Reymerton, Norfolk NR9 4QD
Tel : 01362 820800
Email: enquiries@basicallysound.co.uk
Web: www.basicallysound.co.uk
We offer Naim, Rega, PMC, Bryston, PS Audio, Arcam, Wilson Benesch, Isobue, Dynavec and others. Turntable Workshop & Multi-Room Solutions. Relaxing out of town location, 2 demonstration rooms & free parking. Home demos welcome. Opening Hours Mon - Sat 9:30 - 7:30 but please call in advance on Mon, Tues & Weds.

SOMERSET

ALTERNATIVE AUDIO,

Taunton, Somerset,
Tel: 01984 624242
Email: peter@alternativeaudio.co.uk
www.alternativeaudio.co.uk
We specialise in valve amplification and vinyl replay with the accent on high quality musical enjoyment, demonstration by appointment. Ex-Dem and used equipment for sale. Almarro, Border Patrol, Brinkman, EAR/Yoshino, Graham Engineering, Experience Filtration, Lector, LFD Audio, Lyra, Music First Audio, NAT Audio, Nottingham Analogue Studio, Quadraspire, Shun Mook, SME, Vandersteen Audio, Wave Mechanic.

YORKSHIRE

THE AUDIO ROOM

2 George Street, Hedon, Hull, HU12 8JH
01482 891375.
www.theaudiroom.co.uk
Authorised agents for Audio Research, Bowers & Wilkins inc 800 series, Bryston, Classe, Denon, Dynavec, Koetsu, Krell, Linn inc Klimax Range, Micromega, Naim, Prima Luna, PMC, ProAc, Quad, Rega, Rotel, Sonus Faber, Stax, Wilson Audio and others. Free & easy car parking, 4 demonstration suites, part exchange welcome, quality & friendly staff, mail order available. The North's most complete hifi dealer!

AUDIO REPUBLIC

78 Otley Road, Leeds
Tel: 0113 2177294
www.audio-republic.co.uk
For the best in quality hifi in West Yorkshire, representing Naim Audio, Rega, Sugden, Audio Research, VPI, Krell, Copland, Sonus Faber, Arcam, Nottingham Analogue, Roksan, Hutter, Martin Logan, Proac, PMC, M&K, Finite Elements, SME, Cardas, Kudos Loudspeakers and others. Open Tuesday-Saturday 9.30am to 5.30pm

FANTHORPES HI-FI, TV & CUSTOM INSTALLATION SPECIALISTS

HEPWORTH ARCADE, SILVER STREET, HULL, HU1 1JU
Established over 60 years
Tel: 01482 223096
Web: www.fanthorpes.co.uk
Email: shop@fanthorpes.co.uk
Part exchange welcome. High-end Second Hand Equipment. Multi-room installations. Demonstration by appointment. Home trials welcome. Interest free credit available. Experienced staff. We stock Arcam, Cyrus, Dali, Denon, Dynaudio, Exposure, Kef, Loewe, Onkyo, Primare, Roksan, Spondor, Sugden and much more.

IRELAND

TONE-PEARLS RECORDS "REVOLUTIONARY OLD"

Tel: 353-87-942-7618
Email: info@tonepearls.com
www.tonepearls.com
New audiophile LP/vinyl records using the revolutionary new Tone-Pearls and pure analogue techniques. Live recording, unedited, unprocessed, pure analogue recording and cutting, 180g virgin vinyl pressing. New LP released: Piano Music in a Church of West Ireland, Classics of Chopin and Debussy and more...

FREE READER CLASSIFIEDS

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: Only one advert per reader. No Trade adverts. This section is strictly for readers selling secondhand hi-fi equipment only. Maximum length per advert is 30 words, Adverts over 30 words will not be accepted. Telephone numbers and E-mail addresses are treated as one word. Model numbers are treated as one word i.e. Quad 303 = two words. Email your advert to; classifieds@hi-fiworld.co.uk or fill in the form on page 129 and post it to Hi-Fi World Free Readers Ads, Suite G4, Argo House, Kilburn Park Road, London NW6 5LF. Sorry, we cannot accept adverts over the telephone. The Publisher reserves the right to judge submissions.

WANTED: MISSION 767 loudspeakers. Condition relatively unimportant (within reason!) but must be in good working order and preferably complete with original LFAU amplifier. Email: audiolaurel@yahoo.com Telephone: 07906 336176

CYRUS VS2 pre amplifier, boxed with instructions £350. Cyrus CD 8x, boxed, little use, £450. Tel: 01798 865 699 (West Sussex)

CROFT SUPERMICRO A valve preamp, excellent MM phono input, Elite El gold pin ECC83's in excellent condition. Will happily demonstrate. £300 including tube dampers. Tel: 01905 29196 (Worcester)

MARTIN LOGAN Odyssey electrostatic loudspeakers, £5400 new. Extraordinary performance, oak side panels, as new, bargain at £2150. Excellent condition. 170.2H, 33cm W, 68.6D, 48kg each. One owner. Tel: 07970 220 519 (Milton Keynes)

TACT/LYNGDORF SDA2175 power amplifier, 200 watts pc, excellent condition, boxed (£1300) £575. Monitor Audio RSW 12 sub-woofer, black ash, boxed (£750) £350. Tel: 07776 143 890 (Southampton)

QUAD 405 power amp. Just been serviced by Quad. Quad 44 preamp. Kef Codar 7s on spiked stands. Can be demonstrated. £340 ono. Tel: 01254 51295

ARCAM ALPHA 6 CD player. Remote. Owned by me from new. Manuals, original packaging, mint condition. Demonstration. (£600) £150. Marantz CD 40 player, mint, remote (£200) £50 + carriage. Tel: 01455 220 214 (Coventry)

INCA DESIGN Talon amplifier, 85 wpc, stepped volume, balanced input, remote, superb aluminium casework, excellent sound and condition. Cost £800. £225 ono. Tel: 0116 284 9087 (Leicestershire area)

GRAHAM SLEE Novo headphone amp. Mint condition. 6 months old, includes PSU-24 power supply. Very little use, only one owner. £250 ono. Tel: 07790 717 820

TECHNICS RSBX501 cassette deck. Good condition with box, basic leads. Can demonstrate. Open to offers. Wharfedale Loudpanel speaker system. Can demonstrate. £35 the set. Tel: Jim 01563 538 727 evenings (Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland)

DEMANDING PURCHASERS Wanted. Magnificent seven valve S.E. integrated amplifier, vibrant £12,000+ sound for under £1000! Sold as heard. Immaculate Graaf valve preamp, great phono stage. See previous ad. £650. Tel: Megavolt Stan 07951 553 091

REVOX PR99 MkII two track full panel version. All new headblock components. Rare chance to obtain in as new condition. Tel: Julian 01246 275 479 evenings

VINYL CLASSICAL LP's. Serious collector selling large collection. Many unplayed. Will post abroad. Send me your 'Wants List'. LPs from 1950s to mid 1980s. Tel: 01794 513 003

BANG & OLUFSEN Beosound 9000 System 6 CD, FM with aluminium floor stand. Pair of Bang & Olufsen Beolab 3 speakers with aluminium floor stands. £3500. Very good condition. Tel: Michael 01905 352 600 (Worcester)

SEPARATES SYSTEM Marantz amplifier PM6002. Marantz CD CD6002. Monitor Audio RSI speakers. Speaker stands & cables. Cost £1100. Will accept £550. Tel: 01943 467 859 (West Yorkshire)

PIXALL ROLLER with spare re-fill plus Cecil Watts Dust Bug plus Nagaoka MP11 Boron cartridge. All in good condition. £40 The lot. Tel: 01277 219 639 (Essex)

TANNOY 15" Monitor Gold loudspeakers, LSU-HF-15-8. Rare opportunity, four pairs available, units mint - to slightly marked, all in distressed 'Lancaster' cabinets. Inviting offers, one pair, or lot. Tel: 01253 875 194 (Blackpool, Lancashire)

WANTED: EARLY Audiolab 8000A 1983, 5 pin model or 1984/85 brown/grey case. Any condition. Tel: Toni 07971 953 628

ROKSAN KANDY Mk3 integrated amplifier. Roksan Kandy Mk3 CD player. Both unused. Original packing. £260 each. Marantz PM8200 integrated amplifier, silver, excellent sound, as new, £175. Tel: 020 7386 9177

MUSICAL FIDELITY P170 power amplifier, 100w, excellent condition. £100. 2x 4.5 metres Q.E.D. flat bi-wire cable, £30. Buyer collects. Tel: 01277 841 493 evenings only (Essex)

KUDOS CARDEA C2 floor standing loudspeaker. Cherry, newly run-in, mint condition. Cost £1950. Accept £1500 ono. Tel: 01555 860 466 (Lanarkshire)

REVOX PR99 MkIII HS full panel version. All new head block components. Rare chance to obtain in as new condition. £1700. Tel: 01246 275 479 evenings

MERIDIAN F80 DVD, CD, DAB, FM/AM. New Jan 2009, perfect condition, black, boxed. £925. Tel: 01733 742 674 (Peterborough)

METAL CASSETTES preferably C-60's Maxell MX, MX-S or Metal Vertex TDK metal. Preferably unused but good used accepted. Please telephone Mr Sproson on 01902 744 952

WANTED: JOHN Blue JB4 Mk2. Tel: 020 7263 5702 after 7pm

BRAND NEW Naim AD10 mains lead £250. Kimber Silver Streak attenuated interconnect DIN connections 0.5metre for Naim equipment (enables user to use more volume without hardening up). Cabassa Polaris 1,000 100 wts mono power amplifiers, black, shoe box size. Sugden phono stage MC/MM. Please phone for fair prices. A very fine sounding Onix tuner with separate power supply. Classic tuner £350. Tel: 020 8524 2181

FOR SALE: MULLARD Brimar Osram valves ECC81, 82, 83, EL34, 5U4G, U, 52 etc. Tel: 0113 240 3496

MUSIC FIRST passive pre-amp (copper version) very good condition, £1000 ono. For details call 07717 752 288 or captain_b99@yahoo.co.uk (Bristol)

SME IV tonearm. 2 months old. Boxed, tools, instructions. £1050. Meridian 500 transport. Meridian 566 24bit DAC. Meridian Systems remote £525. Mint, boxed, instructions. Tel: Mike 01246 209578 daytime 07780888686

NAIM NAC 82+ NAPSC Serial 165---, £950. Hi-Cap 185---, £500. CDX CD 156---, £700. All boxed, unmarked. Non smoking environment. Shahinian Obelisk original crossover. Beautiful cherry finish (£4000) £1100. Tel: 07872 955 698 (West Midlands) Email: pavz_01@msn.com

TECHNICS SL1210 upgraded mains lead fitted. Moth type Rega RB301 Incognito RS-wires with CIT25 cables. Michells counterweight and stub. U.T.A. adjustable. £300 ono. Tel: 01252 323 334 or 07811 521 814

SENNHEISSER HD650 headphones, Feb 2010, Russ Andrews 4 metre upgrade cables and Creek OBH-21SE headphone amp. All mint condition and boxed. RRP £770. Sell as a system only £400. Tel: Dave 07729 600 847 (Littlehampton, West Sussex)

WANTED: SONY Stereo electret condenser microphone ECM 939 LT or similar for professional Sony Walkman. Also metal type cassette tapes. Tel: Roger 0784 757 3031

ACCUSTIC ARTS Drive I CD transport. Top quality transport with optical, coax and balanced digital outputs. Mint condition. Boxed. £1350. John. Woodward13@btinternet.com; 01453 840422.

MY NAME is Waldie Volschenk and I live in Rustenburg, just some 90 km from Johannesburg South Africa. I am urgently looking for a Linn Ittok LV11/LV111 tonearm in good to excellent condition. Contact Waldie Volschenk, at waldie@rustenburgherald.co.za. The postal address is W Volschenk, POBox 3351, Rustenburg, 0300

A PAIR of SEAS 25F-EWRX H274 8 ohms 10inch speakers. In good condition apart from one tag being short/broken off. £99. Evenings and weekends on 0207 499 8729.

- MUSICAL FIDELITY
- FOCAL
- SPENDOR
- MOON
- AYON
- CODA
- EMILLE
- TRIANGLE
- SRM
- BLADELIUS
- PURE SOUND
- LEEMA
- ATLAS
- ELECTROCOMPANIET
- FURUTECH
- plus much more



TRIANGLE DUETTO £3200
12 MONTHS INTEREST FREE CREDIT
10% DEPOSIT £320
12 PAYMENTS OF £240
TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE £3200



BLADELIUS EMBLA £5600
24 MONTHS INTEREST FREE CREDIT
10% DEPOSIT £560
24 PAYMENTS OF £210
TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE £5600



MUSICAL FIDELITY 35i £6000
36 MONTHS INTEREST FREE CREDIT
10% DEPOSIT £600
36 PAYMENTS OF £150
TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE £6000

WRITTEN DETAILS ON REQUEST

www.kronosav.com



SOUNDS
SIMPLY
SENSATIONAL

This is the best turntable mat I've yet heard. At well under £100, it's a bargain.

Own Price, Best World

For superior sound quality, you should try the Isoplatmat. Made from SDS Aluminium, the Isoplatmat isolates your vinyl and needle from vibrations and feedback giving an exceptionally high quality audio. Just place the Isoplatmat on your turntable and to further enhance your music, you can also use Isofeet placed under the components, subwoofers and speakers. You will be amazed at the sonic improvement to your system.

Isoplatmat £87.50 + p&p
Isofeet x 4 £30.00 + p&p

order by phone on 0191 250 0900
order online www.sounddeadsteel.com



- atc
- arcam
- dynavector
- epos
- epson
- focal
- grado
- isoblu
- kudos



- lyra
- nalm audio
- neat acoustics
- nottingham
- ortofon
- sim2
- stax
- sumiko
- trichord
- well tempered



hi-fi for grown-ups

ipswich (01473) 655171
www.signals.uk.com

OPPO DV-980H universal player, unused, boxed. Scart-free version. £80. Contact Paul on 01603 440405; needsp@ntlworld.com

KARAN ACOUSTICS KAS 180 power amplifier. Purchased new May 2008. As new condition. One of the best solid state amplifiers in the world. £2800. Demonstration available. Dorset. 01929 421377. ali.goldsmith@btinternet.com.

ARCAM ALPHA 5 Amp. Rotel CD Player RCD865 Kef Calinda 3Way freestanding speakers Rega Planar 2. £185. Tel. 01803 863889 (Devon).

AUDIONOTE M-ZERO remote valve line preamplifier (black) in excellent condition, boxed, £425 + Audionote P-Zero monoblock valve power amplifiers (black) excellent condition, boxed. £525 Call 01483 271669 (Surrey)

WANTED: CYRUS Phono X phono stage. Must be (Black) & in VGC. E-mail: iain.flockhart@mac.com

AH! NJOET Tjoeb 4000 super CD, with valve output; AH! Tjoeb 66 amp, with valve preamp. Both in excellent condition, boxed with leads. Any offers. Contact Andrew on 07791529128

PROAC STUDIO 125 Spkrs. £375 Sansui AU-X501 Amp. £85 Arcam Alpha '8' CD player + R/C £55 Tel: 020 8950 0658 (S. Herts). E-mail - michael.stewart5@ntlworld.com

PURESOUND A30 Amplifier with Border Patrol Power Supply Unit. Eight months old in Pristine condition with receipts for warranty & wooden crates. £1400 (New £2700) morganmadden@hotmail.com for photos

CROFT 50/50 valve power amp, piano black, excellent condition, superb sound, kt 88s, very heavy, 50 wpc, will sell for £925 ono. tele- 07806455032.

FINAL 400i electrostatic speakers, only six weeks old from new, mint condition with all boxes and manuals, proof of purchase, new rrp £2300 will sell for £850 ono. tele- 07806455032.

RESTEK FANTASY dual mono intergrated amplifier, 130 wpc, remote, chrome and black, excellent condition, first class sound from this german amp, price when new £2200, will accept £625 ono. tele- 07806455032.

RESTEK EXTRACT mono-bloc power amplifiers, 180 wpc into 8 ohms and 300 wpc into 4 ohms, excellent condition, black with blue vu meters, excellent reviews, approx seven yrs old, price when new £3200, can email photos if interested. will sell for £1250ono. tele- 07806455032.

ROTEL RA-06 amp / RCD-06 cd / Epos M5 speakers £600 (£1200). All boxed as new. Email for pics. Lee West Midlands 01384 412234 leet2009@hotmail.co.uk

6922 JAN PHILLIPS Valves x 21 unused (cost £320) £160 or £9 each plus postage. Call Brian after 6pm 01903 261931

MARTIN LOGAN SL3. Good Condition. New panels fitted April 2009. Boxed. Oak side Panels. Power leads. LEDs work. Spade or bare wire terminals. £1200 ono; LSA Signature integrated amp. Excellent condition. Boxed. Manual. 150wpc 8ohm. 1 x XLR 3x RCA inputs. 1 x RCA output. MM phono stage. £2250 (£5600) Tel Mike 01278 793886/growler.harris@btinternet.com Somerset.

AUDIOZONE AMP 1 for sale. £895 ono. tel frank 02920 419226 or email frank8ush@ntlworld.com

50 NEW/SEALED vinyl lp's of various genres at 50% of new cost. 25 second hand albums available cheaply. Will separate. No time-wasters please. Ring Roy for a list on 01453 519700.

TRANSPARENT AUDIO: MusicWave Plus speaker cables (8' set boxed) MusicLink interconnect cables. (all can be used in upgrade scheme) SME 4 Tonearm cable (internal & external) VDH 501 interconnects All as new condition StuartT: 07870 912 963 e: stuardtdarshan67@gmail.com (Bedfordshire)

LIVING VOICE OBX-R2 Santos rosewood finish, new in Feb 06 boxed £2600 (£5200). Nordost Heimdall 2m biwire speaker cables, boxed, excellent £650 (£1136). Pete 0775 7174120.

LARGE 4 way transmission line speakers Cambridge Atkinson or similar £100.00 ono collection only East Sussex tel 07976 439105 garypa@orange.net

FOR SALE, Linn Klimax 350 speakers in high gloss piano black. Brand new complete with Linn covers. £13000 + delivery costs. To discuss sale and delivery options please email Martin, braceposition@hotmail.co.uk

CLASSIC NAIM IBLs, black ash, sn57728, excellent for age, pics available, £275, buyer collects. 2x3.5m NacA5 white Naim plugs both ends, 2 years old vgc £75. Chris 023 8071 0853 cmoorhouse14@btinternet.com (Southampton)

QUAD 444/405 Power amp and Control Unit. Boxed with Original Manuals. Very Good Condition. Additional CD Card £195 ovno Contact: safairclough@btinternet.com or 07873 275187

RESOLUTION AUDIO Opus 21 with legendary GNRC Reference Level Mods. Awesome two box CD/DAC/Preamp in black. Perfect condition, £1900. Contact 07930401351 / catswinger@gmail.com"

EXPOSURE MONO VIII, [One only] wanted, fair price paid. North East England area preferred. 01430 873243. or kulfi@kulfi.karoo.co.uk Paul

LEAK 2075 speakers immaculate teak £595 JBE Slate Mk3 direct-drive turntable £395. 01798 813133 or reconcile@bdlrs.freeserve.co.uk

WANTED SUGDEN A21 amp. working or not 01772 632082

SANSUI G9000 rare classic receiver. Fabulous tuner, 160wpc amp, pre-power separator, just serviced, vgc. Original packaging, owners and service manuals. £750ono. 01798 813133 or reconcile@bdlrs.freeserve.co.uk

VARIOUS AUDIO valves (e.g. EL34, KT66, KT88, U52), capacitors (typically TCC Visconol & Dubilier Nitrogol), and other similar components for sale from http://sites.google.com/site/squirrelsanonymous/

AUDIOLAB 8000P power amplifier excellent condition, unmarked £250 01689608925 (Orpington Kent)

WANTED A faulty or non working Quad 33 preamp, Quad 405 power amplifier. Contact Mike with reasonable offers 01758 613790.

APPROS 100 magazines, mainly Hi-fi World £50. buyer to collect. 01772 632082

NAIM HIFI for sale 555PS £3500, CDX2 £1750, NAP250 £1650, NAC82 £1500, HICAP olive £500, Burndy cable £250, Hiline cable £375 all boxed and immaculate offers considered Hastings 07850351714.

MICROMEGA STAGE 5 (£200), AVI S2000 MC Reference (£200), Cyrus 7, PSX-R and FM 7.5 (£600, but can split) all boxed, and in mint condition. Also, Linn Kan stands (£50). Contact 0779 5551142 or tahallam4@hotmail.com

CYRUS CDX-T CD Transport (Quartz-silver) mint condition, little use, boxed, £350 (N.B. Transport only requires DAC) Also Cyrus PSX-R power supply (Quartz silver) as new, boxed, £325. call 01483 271669 (Surrey)

SPENDOR BC1 speakers for sale, serial nos 15003 and 15004, fully working. Rosewood outside, good condition plus original stands. £350 ono. Private seller N.London. Tel 0776 5253365

COPLAND CDA822 CD player with remote control. VGC. Very analogue sound, low digital noise. XLR and RCA outputs. Rarely available. A classy machine. £800 or near offer. 020 84433950. brilliant. sub@gmail.com.

VINTAGE KEF C60 Speakers black ash as new condition, in original box with manual and receipt. Hardly used, superb sound. £100 o.n.o. Pick up only Cwmbran South Wales. Tel. Frank 01633 874478 email cillsto@aol.com

22 MOBILE Fidelity Sound Labs Original Master Recording LPs. Mint, mostly unused. also 15 Linn Records LPs mint, unused. Tel. 02392 453382.

ARCAM! PLAYER CD17, Tuner T32, Amp A18. Rejected within one week so as new. £450 each or £1300 for all three. Add postage. Tel 01305 766427 (pm eves) Weymouth.

NAIM CD5, NAC 112, Flat Cap 2x, Stageline S + Aura TU 50 Tuner, £1200, SE London, tel: 07786422912

COLLECTION OF 4 old radios. HMV valve table radio C.1960, Bush transistor radio C.1962, Bush transistor radio C.1967, Roberts transistor radio C.1969. All working and excellent. £75, collect only. (01492) 878107

GOODSELL/GARRARD commercial mono record player with quality mono amplifier and speaker inbuilt, rare. plus 170, 78rpm records, most sleeved and mint, record cases and leads. £150, collect only. (01492) 878107.

MORDAUNT-SHORT centre speaker mint condition, £60.00. Bose-Interaudio 2000XL speakers vgc, £120.00. Revolver RW16 speakers mint condition with original packaging, grills still in plastic cover Technics SLP 900 CD player gc £60.00 Tel 0121 246 9252 (evenings after 5.00pm) Mob: 07772 107883 email: n.mogul@yahoo.com

AKAI AM-U03 amplifier vgc £60. Nakamichi DVD10s dvd player vgc with manual and remote control, £120.00. Hitachi Turntable HT405 vgc, £30. Sansui XP-99 Direct-Drive Turntable vgc, £120. Teac MD-H500i Mini Disc recorder vgc with original box, manual, remote control, £125. Sony SCD-X680 cd player mint condition with original remote, manual, remote control, £150. Tel 0121 246 9252 (evenings after 5.00pm) Mob: 07772 107883 email: n.mogul@yahoo.com

SONY ST920 Tuner vgc with original box and manual, £60. Technics RS615 Cassette Deck mint condition, £35. Pioneer SA506 amplifier gc, £60. Teac 5.1 speaker package vgc £200. Pioneer classic 3way speakers fair condition £20. Sony SS3030 classic 3way speakers fair condition, £20. Tel 0121 246 9252 (evenings after 5.00pm) Mob: 07772 107883 email: n.mogul@yahoo.com

POWER SUPPLY for Class A amplifiers. Built for the JLH 1996 amps, will also power the 1969 version or any other low power Class A amp. £200. 0207 499 8729 evenings and weekends.

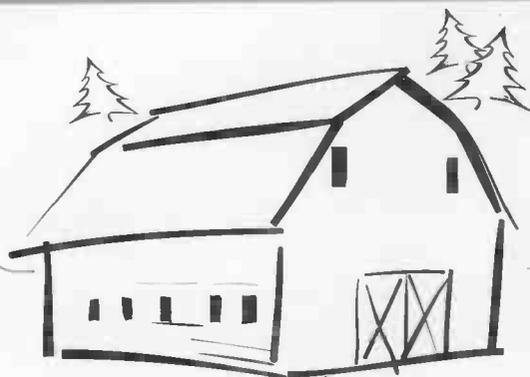
SME Series V tonearm, with box and manual £1,150. Tube Technology M.A.C. valve phono amplifier for MM and MC cartridges £650. Both in excellent condition Phone 07767 712116 or e-mail mikel1304@hotmail.co.uk

REGA RB300 complete with tungsten counterweight, Michell locknut, two spacers, Neutrik Profi phonos. £85 or exchange for VDH The First cables. Contact Robin on 0208 670 6828.

ARCAM ALPHA 9 power amplifier. Full working order. Very good condition cosmetically. £270. Call at eyes and w/ends. Tel 0207 499 8729.

CYRUS VS2 pre amplifier, boxed with instructions £350. Cyrus CD 8x, boxed, little use, £450. Tel: 01798 865 699 (West Sussex)

TECHNICS SL1210 upgraded mains lead fitted. Moth type Rega RB301 Incognito RS-wires with CIT25 cables. Michells counterweight and stub. U.T.A. adjustable. £300 ono. Tel: 01252 323 334 or 07811 521 814



VIVID AUDIO
ELECTROCOMPANET
AUDIO PHYSIC
CABASSE
AYON
CODA
MUSIC TOOLS
NEOTECH

ASTINTREW
LUMLEY
AUDIOSTONE
BELLES
ORACLE
AURA
STELLO
HI FI RACKS



Rock Solid Sound
Systems

The Old Barn, Rosier Business Park, Coneyhurst Road, Billingshurst
West Sussex, RH14 9DE. tel. 01403 782221 or 07950 274224
info@rocksolidsounds.co.uk - www.rocksolidsounds.co.uk

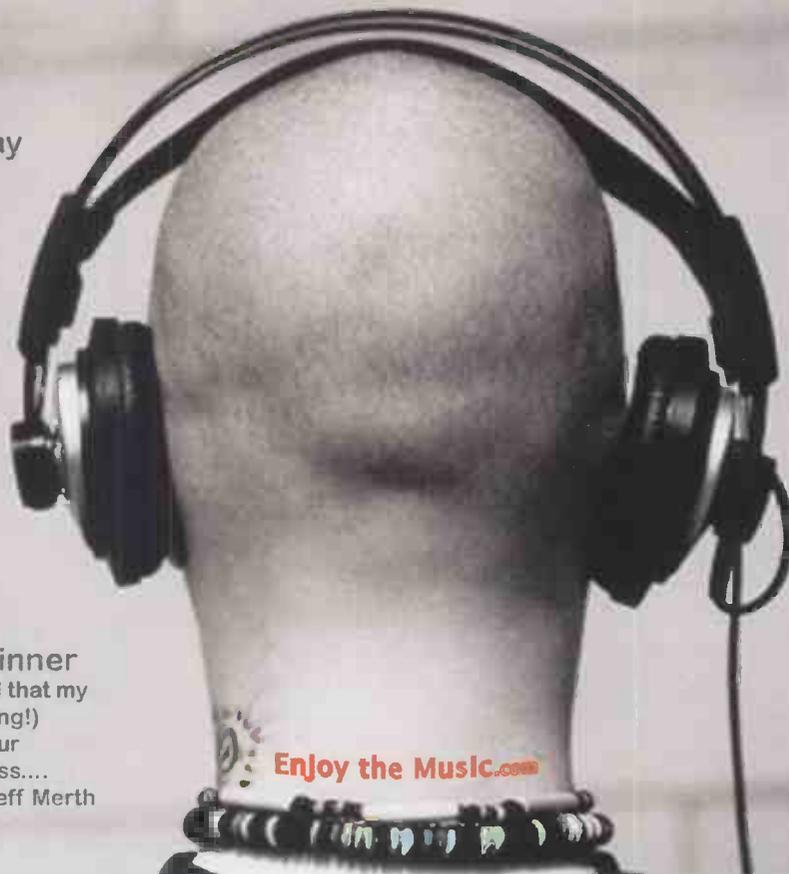
- Please telephone for an appointment -

Enjoy the Music.com Readers Say
I really enjoy your website and find it very
informative (and read it every day).
— Richard Holbrook

I have never replied to online audio reviews
but wanted you to know that I have
enjoyed several articles.
— Craig Mattice

What a great review! — Paul Kittinger

Enjoy the Music.com Contest Winner
In fact, the Axiom Audio EP500 works so well that my
wife and I both stood mouths open (not kidding!)
as it shook the rafters and window glass in our
house. Amazing! Love that palpable, tight bass....
Thank you again for the awesome prize! — Jeff Merth



CLASSIC CONTACTS

When a classic goes 'poof' 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 these companies who specialise in getting a classic up and running again after its deposited a small ring of soot on your ceiling!

GT AUDIO

(Graham Tricker, Bucks)
Leak Troughline specialists. Also
Quad and most classic tuners,
radios and amplifiers restored,
repaired.
Tel: 01895 833099
Mob: 07960 962579
www.gtaudio.com

TECHNICAL AND GENERAL

(East Sussex)
Turntable parts - wide range
of spares and accessories, plus
arms and cartridges.
Tel: 01892 654534

CARTRIDGE MAN

(Len Gregory, London)
Specialist cartridge re-tipping
service and repairs. High
quality special cartridges.
Tel: 020 8688 6565
Email: thecartrldgeman
@talktalk.net
www.thecartrldgeman.com

AUDIO LABORATORIES

(LEEDS)
(Phil Pimblott, Leeds)
Renovation, repair and
restoration. Specialist in valve
hi-fi, radio transmitters, cinema
amps, kit building.
Tel: 0113 244 0378
www.audiolabs.co.uk

QUAD ELECTROACOUSTICS

(Cams) Quad's service
department, able to repair
almost all Quad products, from
the very first. (Also Audiolab,
Mission & Wharfedale).
Tel: 0845 4580011
www.quad-hifi.co.uk

Dr MARTIN BASTIN

(Shropshire) Garrard 301/401
restoration, renovation and
service. Special plinths; rumble
cures, etc.
Tel: 01584 823446

ARKLESS ELECTRONICS

(Northumberland)
Specialist in repairs, restoration
and modifications to all
amplifiers, valve or solid state,
ancient and modern.
Tel: 01670 829891
Email: arklesselectronics@btin
ternet.com

SOWTER TRANSFORMERS

(Brian Sowter, Ipswich)
Large range of audio
transformers for valve amps,
cartridges, line drive, interstage
plus all associated services.
Tel: 020 8 743 25794
www.sowter.co.uk

WEMBLEY LOUDSPEAKER

(Paul MacCallam, 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 profiling for 78s
Tel: 01372 276604
Email: w.hodgson
@btclck.com

ONE THING

(Coventry) Specialist in
electrostatic panel manufacture
and repair. Can refurbish ESL
57s and 63s as well as Leak
Troughlines and Quad IIs.
Email: one.thing
@ntworld.com
www.onethingaudio.com

LORICRAFT AUDIO

(Terry O'Sullivan, Bucks)
Garrard 301/401 and their own
501 repair, spares and service.:
Tel: 01488 72267
www.garrard501.com

HADEN BOARDMAN

Repair, service & modifications;
classic & modern. Collection
available. Redundant / faulty
equipment purchased, selected
new equipment available.
Tel: 01942 790600
www.audioclassics.co.uk

LOCKWOOD AUDIO

(London)
Tannoy loudspeaker parts,
restoration and repair. Also
Epos and TDL loudspeakers.
Tel: 020 8 864 8008
www.lockwoodaudio.co.uk

CLASSIC NAKAMICHI

(Paul Wilkins, Worthing, West
Sussex). Restore, Repair &
Service Nakamichi Cassette
Decks.
Tel: 01903 695695
Email: paul
@bowersandwilkins.co.uk
www.bowersandwilkins.co.uk

OCTAVE AUDIO WOODWORKING

(Bristol)
Unit 2, 16 Midland Street, St
Phillips, Bristol.
Tel: 0117 925 6015
www.octave-aw.co.uk

REVOX

(Brian Reeves, Cheshire)
Revox tape recorder spares,
service and repair. Accessories
also available.
Tel: 0161 499 2349
Email:
brian@revoxservice.co.uk
www.revovx.freeuk.com

CLASSIQUE SOUNDS

(Paul Greenfield, Leicester)
ESL-57s restored, rebuilt, fully
renovated or improved. Leak,
Quad valves amps etc.
Tel: 0845 123 5137/
Mob: 0116 2835821
Email: classique_
sounds@yahoo.co.uk
www.flashbacksales.co.uk/
classique

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER!!!!

HI-FI WORLD ELECTRONIC EDITION

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.hi-fiworld.co.uk

Queries to - esubs@hi-fiworld.co.uk

**Subscribe to our
eco-friendly e-edition of
Hi-Fi World and receive a
50% discount!!!**

- **Receive your issue a week before on-sale dates.**
- **Be the first to grab a bargain in our Free Reader Classified Ads.**
- **In-house lab. tests to AES and IEC standards**
- **Run by dedicated hi-fi engineers & enthusiasts.**
- **No missed issues, or postal delays.**
- **Access your issues from anywhere in the World.**
- **PC and Mac friendly.**
- **Eco-friendly.**

**Subscribe today and receive 12 issues for
£20 – that's an amazing £1.90 per issue!**

check out our free trial issue

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
www.hi-fiworld.co.uk and select
"ELECTRONIC EDITION"**

To purchase your e-edition click here

Pay in Sterling, US Dollars or Euros. Non-sterling prices vary according to exchange rate.
Cards accepted: Visa, Maestro (Switch), Mastercard, Solo and Delta.



NEXT MONTH

Summertime and the living is easy... Well, get down to your friendly local newsagent and it will be better still, should you happen upon the September issue of *Hi-Fi World* magazine! We've our usual wide range of sizzling products for your delectation, as you sip your PG Tips and huddle under the brolly on Weston Super Mare beach. Vinylists will love the new EAT Forte S turntable, and digiphiles should enjoy Vincent's hybrid tube touting HDCD spinning C-60. Amplifier aficionados on a budget may be seduced by the lovely little Cambridge Audio 350A, and loudspeaker lovers will want to read about Waterfall's Victoria Evos [pictured]. Here's just some of what we hope to bring you:

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO 350A INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER
ACOUSTIC ENERGY NEO v2 ONE LOUDSPEAKERS
MUSICAL FIDELITY M3 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER
MARANTZ NA-7004 NETWORK MUSIC PLAYER
WATERFALL VICTORIA EVO LOUDSPEAKERS
CHORD CHORDETTE DUAL PHONO STAGE
AMPHION HELIUM 520 LOUDSPEAKERS
MAGNEPLANAR MG12 LOUDSPEAKERS
AUDIO TECHNICA AT-F3/II CARTRIDGE
XTZ A100 D3 INTEGRATED AMPLIFIER
TEAC CR-H500 DNT-B MINI SYSTEM
SUPERTTEST: BLU-RAY PLAYERS
HISOUND STUDIO MP3 PLAYER
GURU QM60 LOUDSPEAKERS
AVID PULSUS PHONO STAGE
OLDE WORLDE: SONY FH-7
VINCENT C-60 CD PLAYER
EAT FORTE S TURNTABLE



**PICK UP THE SEPTEMBER 2009 ISSUE OF *HI-FI WORLD* ON SALE JULY 30TH,
OR SUBSCRIBE AND GET IT DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR: p82**

ADVERTISERS INDEX

2nd Hand Hi-Fi	117
Absolute Sounds	1FC
Analogue Seduction	104
Angel Sound	28
Atacama	60
Audio Components	114
Audio Emotions	24
Audio Sanctum	62
Audio T	10
Avid Hi-Fi	58
B&W	6
Billy Vee	108
Black Rhodium	60
Chestergroup	34,35
Classic Contacts	126
Classic LPs	99
Classique Sounds	116
Cymbiosis	104
Decent Audio	102
Electrocompaniet	OBC
Emille Labs	62
Enjoy The Music.Com	126
Heathcote Audio	108
Heatherdale Audio	102
Hi-Fi Sounds	117
HiAudio	54
High End Cable	116
HiQ Records	85
IAG	94
Ian Harrison	116
Icon Audio	88
Inspire Hi-Fi	70
IsoKinetik	114
KEF	16
Kronos Audio Visual	124
Kudos	102
Mantra Audio	114
Midland Audio Exchange	112
MIT Cables	58
Music First	114
Musical Fidelity	80,90
Rayleigh Hi-Fi	96
Retro Reproduction	104
Rock Solid Sound	126
Sevenoaks	118,119
Signals	124
Sound Dead Steel	124
Sound Hi-Fi	102
Sugden	70
Tannoy	92
The Chord Company	26
The Right Note	38
Triangle	38
Turntable World	117
Usher	IBC
Vivid Audio	32
Whest Audio	96

FREE READER CLASSIFIED ADS ORDER FORM

STOP PRESS

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: Only one advert per reader. Maximum length per advert is 30 words, Adverts over 30 words will not be accepted. No Trade Adverts. This section is strictly for readers selling secondhand hi-fi equipment only. Telephone numbers and E-mail addresses are treated as one word. Model numbers are treated as one word i.e. Quad 303 = two words. Sorry, we cannot accept adverts over the telephone. The Publisher reserves the right to judge submissions.

You can email your advert to us at: classifieds@hi-fiworld.co.uk
or write or type your advertisement copy in block capitals with one word per box and post it to us at:

Hi-Fi World Free Readers Ads,
Unit G4, Argo House, Kilburn Park Road,
London, NW6 5LF.

WE WILL ACCEPT PHOTOCOPIES OF THIS FORM

1	2
3	4
5	6
7	8
9	10
11	12
13	14
15	16
17	18
19	20
21	22
23	24
25	26
27	28
29	30

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Daytime Tel: _____

FREE READER CLASSIFIED ADVERTS COPY DEADLINES

SEPTEMBER 2010 - 7TH JULY 2010

OCTOBER 2010 - 5TH AUGUST



MATT MONRO

THE COMPLETE SINGLES COLLECTION

2010

"Monro never stood in the way of a song, he merely provided a platform for it..."

Matt Monro; 'the singing busman', 'the British Sinatra'; call him what you will, but also recognise his ability to coat any song with a sense of style and ease. The latter is most important for, if anyone could justify the term 'easy listening', Matt Monro would. His interpretations were notable for being unforced, that much he had in common with Bing Crosby. Monro never stood in the way of a song, he merely provided a platform for it which is the job of any good vocalist. There were no tricks with Monro, no Whitney Houston-type vocal calisthenics that, once completed, makes you wonder if she's singing a song or gurgling mouthwash before going to bed. Instead, Monro stood to one side and let the song have the spotlight. Fortunately, for struggling songwriters who sometimes presented Monro with inferior material, his delivery also lifted the tune to be shown in its best possible light.

A master of the ballad, Monro could swing, if necessary. Okay, he didn't quite have the sexual danger of a Sinatra, the jazz chops of a Tormé or the ethereal vocal space produced by Nat 'King' Cole but, then, no sane prospective vocal singer would want to for fear of being dismissed as a copyist. Instead, Monro went for 'smooth'. An approach that enabled the song to speak for itself. In fact, he had a unique place in UK and European popular music. Here was a man who focused more on European culture, rather than the safe option of plundering, as too many vocalists

do, the American Songbook. So, with Monro, we see Lionel Bart instead of Irving Berlin and John Barry instead of Harry Warren. This gave Monro an edge. Something the majority of his contemporaries lacked.

The best way to get to know Monro is via this superbly produced five CD box set, via EMI, that includes all of Monro's A-sides and B-sides on Fontana, Decca, EMI, Parlophone and Capitol, including 22 tracks that appear on CD for the first time plus Spanish and French language singles.

According to Richard Moore, who remastered this collection, collating the masters, via multiple sources, proved arduous yet rewarding. "The US-recorded Capitol material came from the original US mix-down tapes rather than UK dubs, allowing a number of tracks to be released in stereo for the first time. In one case 'The Impossible Dream' has been taken from a master tape for the first time since the sixties. In 1973, a dub from a vinyl copy of the song was used for a compilation — and has been used ever since until this set."

Spanning 130 tracks, the box set tracks Monro's development from 1956 to 1984. All the hits are here: 'Portrait Of My Love' (1960), 'From Russia With Love' (1963) and 'Born Free' (1966). There are however, valuable enhancements to Monro's currently available catalogue. "Some of the mixes were made in the sixties but never released," said Moore. "'How Do You Do', for instance, was mixed at the same time as the

single in 1966 and edited from two takes. The problem was that the stereo version was only pulled from the vaults for use in 1972 and then, according to the tape box, 'edited as per common sense'. But this was not correct compared to the single. The multitrack has long since gone but, thankfully, whoever edited the original stereo mix left the offcuts of the other takes on the reel so I was able to reconstruct the single edit."

During the remastering, microphone pops and bad edits have been digitally repaired. External processing has been kept to a bare minimum, however, which means that audiophiles will be pleased to hear that, apart from thirty seconds on one song, no noise reduction or hiss removal was utilised during the transfer or mastering process and no compression or limiting was used.

Anyone interested in this collection should also look out for the enhanced edition of the recently released biography penned by his daughter, Michele Monro, entitled 'The Singer's Singer'. This Special Reserve edition is a slipcased version complete with an additional, soft back, volume co-written by Michele Monro and Richard Moore. It details Monro's complete record, TV and radio sessions, a worldwide discography and a key studio album overview. This volume also includes an additional CD featuring twenty-two, previously unreleased, rare tracks that are only available via the 'Special Reserve' edition. Search Amazon for a copy. **PR**

USHER

**Not all diamonds are forever.
This one is.**

USHER Dancer Diamond Series. Featuring world's first Amorphous DLC (diamond-like carbon) diaphragm tweeter, which makes all current diamond tweeters on the market obsolete. To find out more, visit www.usheraudio.com, or your nearest USHER dealer.



Distributed in the UK by
HI Audio Distribution
www.hiaudio.co.uk; tel: 08450 525259

Audio Affair, Birmingham, Tel: 0121 2247300
Audiologica, Sussex, Tel: 07901 833128
Bigears Hi Fi, Cornwall, Tel: 01736 740421
Classic Hi Fi, London Tel: 0208 374 3958

Hazelmere Audio, Buckinghamshire, Tel: 01494 865 398
Hi Fi Sound, Stockton On Tees, Tel: 01642 267012
Hi Fi Corner, Edinburgh, Tel: 0131 556 7901
Infidelity, Surrey, Tel: 02089 433530

Jordan Acoustics, Fife, Tel: 0800 121 4771/4772
L.W.Audio, Bury St Edmunds, Tel: 01284 716415
Progressive Audio, Gillingham, Kent, Tel: 01634 389004
Tavistock Audio, Devon, Tel: 01822 618940



ELECTROCOMPANIET

If music *really* matters™

SOUND OF NORWAY



The New Integrated Amplifier ECI-5 MK II

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

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

Made in Norway

www.electrocompaniet.no