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1997 HI-FI AWARDS

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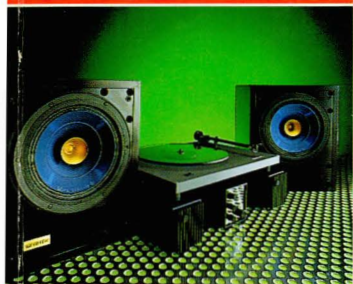
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STUNNING! THIS £15,000 PREAMP WILL BLOW YOUR MIND



Buyer's Guide

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TEAC

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The Mini was always synonymous with performance, whether it was the car or the fashion. And now there's another Mini which delivers unbelievable performance. The Reference 500 System from Teac. The sound quality of separates combined with the convenience of a Mini System. No other Mini comes even close!

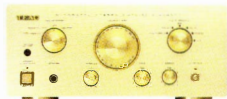
T-H500 TUNER



AV-H500 PRO-LOGIC AMP



A-H500 AMP



MD-H500 MINI DISC



R-H500 CASSETTE DECK



PD-H500 CD PLAYER



VRDS-9 CD PLAYER



"TEAC mini sets standards"

WHAT HI-FI, Jan 97

"All three sources sound big and confident, with an accuracy and delicacy more akin to separates than minis"

WHAT HI-FI, May 97

"In terms of its good looks, the system's asking price could just about be doubled"

Gramophone, Jan 97

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500

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DUE TO TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES BEYOND THEIR CONTROL, OTHER MINI SYSTEMS WILL NOT BE DELIVERING THIS LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE
Chief Musical Officers' Warning

TEAC

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Accepted by letter only to the fax number, e-mail or postal addresses given. We deeply regret we are unable to speak with readers or answer queries on the telephone.

● **BACK ISSUES — SEE PAGE 145 FOR DETAILS.**

A number of selected back issues are available at £4.00 each (£6.95 overseas) including p.p. Call (01789) 490215 to order — all major credit cards accepted.

● **SUBSCRIPTIONS — SEE PAGE 34 FOR DETAILS**

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Editor's Notebook



PHOTO BY SEAN BLOOMWORTH

It was a wet night. Stan Vincent was the man on the spot with the fedora and rain-coat. The city never sleeps. Dateline: hi-fi. . .

This month is your last chance to vote for the *Hi-Fi Choice* Hi-Fi Dealer of the Year 1997 in association with Marantz & Tannoy. You could win a holiday in New York or one of four Marantz CD players! Turn to page 29 for full details and an entry form.

For the record

I've had a letter from Steven Carr of Vivante London ☎ (0181) 891 4195, who has noted some inaccuracies in our article *The Record Makers*, published last month. We would like to make it clear that Vivante London is the exclusive UK importer and distributor of King Super Analogue and Testament vinyl records. King SAD records cost £21.95, not £25 as indicated. King does not reissue Philips records; the latter were pressed in Germany for Polygram in Japan and are distributed in the UK by Vivante. King SAD appear with the London imprint, not Decca. Decca SXL records retail for £19.95 not £25.00. The Fone label is distributed by UK Distribution of Iver, Bucks; while Impulse is distributed by New Note, part of the Pinnacle/Zomba group. Finally, Steve reckons the original *Giaconda de Vito* LP (ASD 429) is worth more than £1,000, not £300 as we indicated. Our apologies for any inconvenience caused.

Lifestyle decisions

Are you an enthusiast — or a consumer? Do you enjoy finding out all about a product before buying it, or do you just look for the lowest price? If your answer's the latter, change your religion. Being an enthusiast — whether of hi-fi, beer, cars or whatever — is the only path to true happiness.

I'm not negating the concept of value for money. But sometimes the true nature of value takes a little understanding. Quantity and quality are different things. But the fact remains that most people don't understand what they're buying.

Recently one of my friends asked me what kind of new audio system to invest in. "How much do you want to spend?" I enquired of him. "Oh, no more than £150," came the reply. Of course, you can buy a packaged audio system for £150. It'll work for a year if you're lucky, then pack

up a week outside the guarantee period. And it'll sound like a 1971 Morris Marina doing 90mph in reverse gear.

Another thing people don't understand is inflation. Roughly every seven years, the value of money halves, according to our Consultant Editor, Paul Messenger's rule of thumb. A product that cost £500 in 1990 would have to cost £1,000 now. Turn it around and today's £150 mini system would have been a £75 boombox in 1990.

To be sure, 'enthusiast' products require a little more investment in money, time and patience than 'consumer' products hoisted off the shelves. But in the long-term they promise so much more pleasure.

Many audiophiles find rewards to be gained from building their own equipment; others revel in the high standards of build available from the best of today's kit; some get blown away by the sound. There are many degrees to which one can be an enthusiast, but any is better than ending up at the hands of marketeers. Don't be seduced by low prices. Enthusiasm's the only path to true happiness!



Tickets worth £140 must be won! Plus car stickers for 50 runners-up!

The Car Audio, Tuning & Styling Show hits Wembley Conference & Exhibition Centre on September 20th and 21st. And we have ten pairs of adult tickets (worth £7 each) to give away, plus 50 car stickers for runners-up. To enter, just answer this simple question: what is the name of Wembley's big open-air venue? Send your answer, including your name, address, and daytime phone number, to: Car Audio Competition, *Hi-Fi Choice*, Dennis Publishing Ltd, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ. We must receive your entry by first post on Wednesday September 10 to allow time for the tickets to be dispatched. Our usual competition rules apply.

Tickets are priced at £7 for adults, £5 for children; ☎ (0990) 232 055. You save £3 by booking ahead and you get a free car sticker. Further information is available on ☎ (0891) 232 055 (calls cost 50p per minute at all times).

This month's main test features 14 of the latest and greatest budget loudspeakers; which ones will blow you away and take the sound quality crown? Find out from **p70!**



The latest preamp from conrad-johnson is a limited-edition beauty! **p24**

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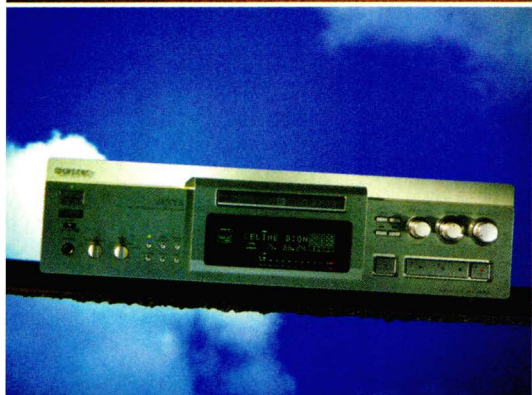
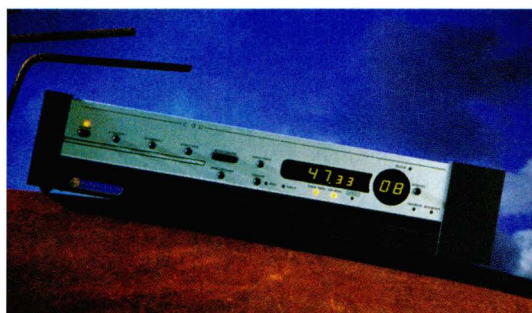
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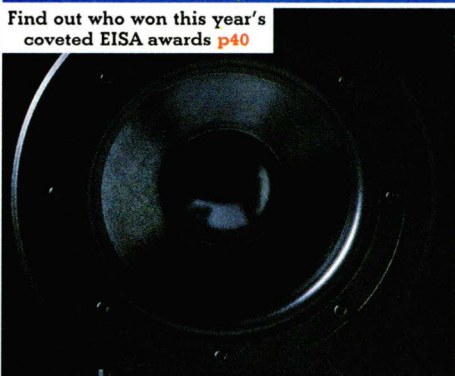
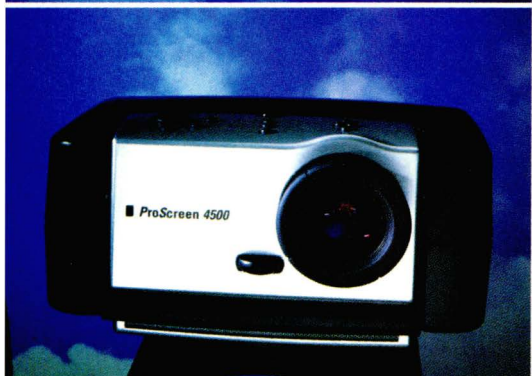
Bring us your (hi-fi) trouble and strife, and we'll put you back on the path to high fidelity.

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WIN! WIN! WIN!
Superb GLL AV
speaker systems
worth nearly £3,000



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Update

JUST IN THIS MONTH... NEW HIGH-END MARK LEVINSON KIT... ARCAM'S LATEST CD PLAYER... AND MUCH MORE...

In brief

Jo Jo (UK) Ltd has introduced extension sockets that claim to iron out mains gremlins. The aptly-named Surge & Spike range includes four models: Twin, Heavy Duty, Slimline and Unwired. Prices start at £12.00. Jo Jo ☎ (01933) 675333.

Castle Sound & Vision, a new hi-fi and home theatre retailer, has just opened in Nottingham. The retailer has three demo rooms and sells most major brands. Castle Sound & Vision ☎ (0115) 958 4404

Superfi has opened a branch in Stockport. The retailer will stock many brands including Technics, B&W, Arcam, KEF, Audiolab, AMC and Mission. Superfi ☎ (0161) 429 9080



It's the real thing: Akura's new Coca Cola radios.

Akura has launched a novel Coca-Cola radio, aimed at the youth market. Priced at £9.99, the can holds a battery-operated AM-FM tuner with speaker. Akura ☎ (01236) 780680

Richer Sounds has been appointed sole UK retailer of the new Musical Fidelity E1 amp. This 30 Watts per channel design retails at £199.95. Richer Sounds ☎ (0171) 940 2240

Unison Research has launched a new integrated amplifier, the Simply 845. The amp is a

Three for the top from Madrigal



Mark Levinson's new No. 380S preamplifier.

Madrigal Audio Laboratories has introduced two new preamplifiers under the Mark Levinson banner, and a digital surround decoder under the Proceed marque. The new No. 380 line preamplifier (£3,995.00) is an extensively modified version of Mark Levinson's No. 38 preamplifier. The company claims that since the No. 38 was introduced, component technology has advanced to the extent that the No. 380 sports 20 new active devices and 64 new passive parts — in the power supply, input and output buffers, volume control and user interface.

The same applies to the No. 380S (£6,495.00), itself a refinement of the No. 38S. The component count here is 28 new active devices and 86 new passive parts, once again spread throughout the whole preamplifier. These modifications have also allowed significant improvements in control software to be implemented in both preamplifiers. Naturally, existing owners of the No. 38 and 38S

can upgrade their preamplifiers to 380/380S class, even to the extent of changing the faceplate.

Proceed's new £4,595.00 PDS (Proceed Digital Surround Decoder) is designed to be a flexible and future-proofed six-channel digital decoder, to be used with the company's PAV home cinema preamplifier. It uses a modular, card-cage-based chassis to cope with future digital systems, but comes bundled with 96kHz, 24-bit processing for DVD's future. A free DTS upgrade is offered for later in the year. In standard guise the PDS has 11 digital inputs, two blank card slots, six RCA/XLR-equipped outputs and six pass-through channels for the PAV. Path Premier ☎ (01494) 441736



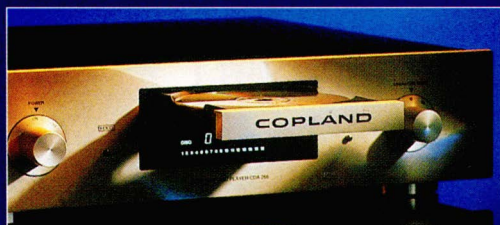
Proceed's PDS digital decoder, atop the PAV.

Three's company for Copland

Swedish high-end manufacturer Copland has introduced a third CD player to its range of HDCD-equipped digitalita. The £1,199.00 CDA 266 shares with its more expensive siblings the CDA 277 and CDA 288 dual 20-bit Burr-Brown digital converters, and Pacific Microsonics' PMD100 eight-times oversampling digital filter. Copland's designers consider the latter to be the finest sounding digital combination around.

The CDA 266 has a very similar footprint and ergonomic layout to the £1,799 CDA 277. All the major functions are controlled by two typically Coplandesque knobs, and the sprung Sony mechanism is centrally mounted. The display can be dimmed and switched off entirely from the 20-function remote. Under the hood the CDA 266 uses a custom-designed clock and high-quality components throughout.

Absolute Sounds ☎ (0181) 947 5047



More HDCD: Copland's new £1,199 CDA 266.

Ruark's Holy Grail

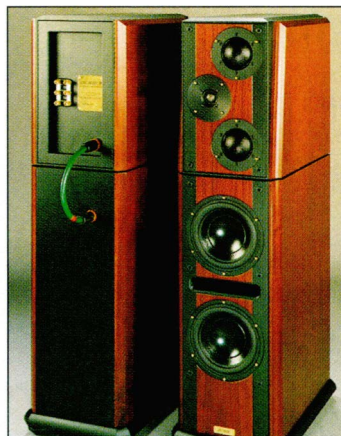
The legend of Arthur Pendragon is alive and well in Southend-on-Sea, thanks to Ruark. The Essex-based company's new champion is the £6,995.00 Excalibur, a massive three-way, five-driver floorstanding design. It joins the well-respected Equinox two-way, to become the second member of Ruark's Stirling range.

With a claimed sensitivity of 90dB and four-Ohm imped-

ance, this bass-reflex design is said to be compatible with any decent amplifier.

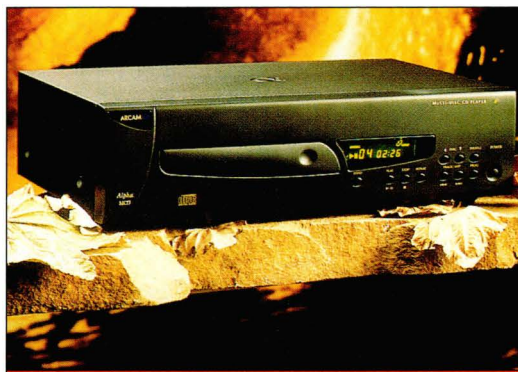
Each 80kg enclosure has a driver complement of one 28mm silk-dome tweeter, allied to a pair of 75mm fabric-dome midrange units in the top enclosure, and two 225mm treated-paper-cone units in the bass cabinet.

Ruark ☎ (01702) 601410



Ruark Excalibur: cut above the rest?

Arcam's quick change



The all-British Alpha MCD, the new CD from Arcam.

Arcam's latest CD player is a wholly new departure for the Cambridgeshire company. The new £449.90 Alpha MCD is the first-ever British-designed, British-built multi-CD player. It's based on a Sony transport mechanism that allows storage of six discs together with instant access to a single CD tray. Alpha MCD also sports a custom-designed backlit LCD display, and has plenty of track-handling features available on the remote control — which also speaks to Arcam's Alpha 8 and 9 amplifiers. For multi-room applications, the Alpha MCD's control codes can be accessed through a rear-panel jack plug.

Meanwhile, Arcam's long-promised Alpha 9 flagship CD player is still taking shape while its already-revolutionary DAC circuits undergo further refinement. Sources are indicating a likely launch at Winter CES in Las Vegas, early next year. Watch this space.

Arcam ☎ (01223) 203203

In brief



Unison's new Simply 845 integrated triode amp.

single-ended pure triode design and output is 24 Watts per channel. Priced at £2,950, the Simply 845 will be available at the end of September. Unison Research ☎ (01753) 654531

The company behind Soundbites and Bassbites, KLH Europe Ltd, has moved. The company's new address is: York House, 2-4 York Road, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 7QG. ☎ (01394) 672255



All set for DVD: the Technics SH-AC300 DD decoder.

Technics has launched the DVD-ready SH-AC300 Dolby Digital decoder. The AC300 has dynamic control and switchable dynamic range compression. See *Oasis of Sanity* (page 19) for more about Dolby Digital Technics ☎ (0990) 357357

A new version of the award-winning Freeplay wind-up radio is now available to UK retailers. Manufactured in South Africa by BayGen Power, the radio won the 1996 BBC Design Awards. RRP has been set at £59.95. BayGen Power Europe Ltd ☎ (01285) 659559



No batteries required: just wind up the Freeplay!

Audioclub's sales team has relocated to Buckinghamshire. The UK distributor of NAD, Onkyo and Dali's new address is: Unit 15, Faraday Road Industrial Estate, Aylesbury, Bucks HP19 3RY. ☎ (01296) 82017

A new audiophile retailer has opened in Kent. Audible Elegance is located at Ashcroft, Bishopstone Lane, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 6RP. ☎ (01227) 742928

Kickin' Gerwin-Vega!

Cerwin-Vega!, international doyen of everything big and loud, has introduced its most epic model to date. Called the AL-1000, this £1,100 speaker stands over a metre tall and weighs in at a healthy 42kg. With a claimed efficiency of 95dB, this cab looks capable of pumping out peak sound-pressure levels in the region of 123dB (a jumbo-jet taking off would be quieter), and can handle 1,000 Watts of "pure testosterone" — as it says in the brochure. We suspect this baby will be playing more techno than Tchaikovsky.

The three drive units alone weigh 11kg, despite being made from aluminium alloy. There's a 380mm high-efficiency bass-driver, allied to a 200mm midrange driver and a 25mm Suproneyl soft dome tweeter with aluminium flange. Warn the neighbours...

CSE Marketing ☎ (01423) 359054



The bone-shakin' AL-1000s — new from Cerwin-Vega!

MMC price shaker

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has issued proposals to stop electrical goods suppliers from restricting dealers and setting recommended prices. At this early stage it appears hi-fi separates will be exempt from the provisions of these proposals — the British Federation of Audio and the MMC met in January 1996 to agree a number of exclusions. However representatives from Sony UK and Sanyo UK are said to be "disappointed" with the MMC's "flawed" ruling. *Domestic Electrical Goods I: a report on the supply in the UK of televisions, video cassette recorders, hi-fi systems and camcorders*, £67.70, from HMSO bookshops. DTI ☎ (0171) 215 5000

Mini mayhem from JVC



New JVC systems offer 3D-Phonic two-speaker surround.

JVC has announced two new Lifestyle hi-fi systems and two new Adagio mini systems in its burgeoning range. The Lifestyle duet comprises the £649.99 EX-TD77R and the £549.99 EX-TD5. The EX-TD77R features JVC's popular 3D-Phonic, "Dolby-Pro-Logic-from-two-speakers" system, with three settings. It also offers digital equalisation and acoustic processor modes, plus a three-disc CD changer. Each speaker incorporates a 120mm active subwoofer working with JVC's 'labyrinth port' technology. This subwoofer is also featured in the EX-TD5, which in essence is the same system with JVC's Signal Adaptive Bass System (or S.A. BASS) in place of the 3D-Phonic package.

S.A. BASS also features strongly in both Adagio mini systems. The £449.99 D701T is a five-speaker Dolby Pro-Logic package with three-disc CD, twin tape, tuner and clever multi control stick remote control. The top of the line D851TR adds RDS to the tuner section and carries a price-tag of £499.99.

JVC ☎ (0181) 450 3282

Further up the Creek

The 4240SE is dead. Long live the 5250! Creek's new £450 amp claims to be a 60 Watts design with four line inputs and two tape loops (a plug-in MM/MC phono board is an optional extra). It uses a Creek-designed custom-cascoded differential input stage, with MOSFET driver and output stages in the power amp. It is a DC coupled design.

There are two variations on the basic theme. There's a £575 remote-controlled version, featuring a motorised volume pot and input selector, and a relay-controlled speaker mute. There is also the £665 Creek 5250SE, which features increased power output (upped to a claimed 70 Watts) and higher output current (25 amps, allegedly).

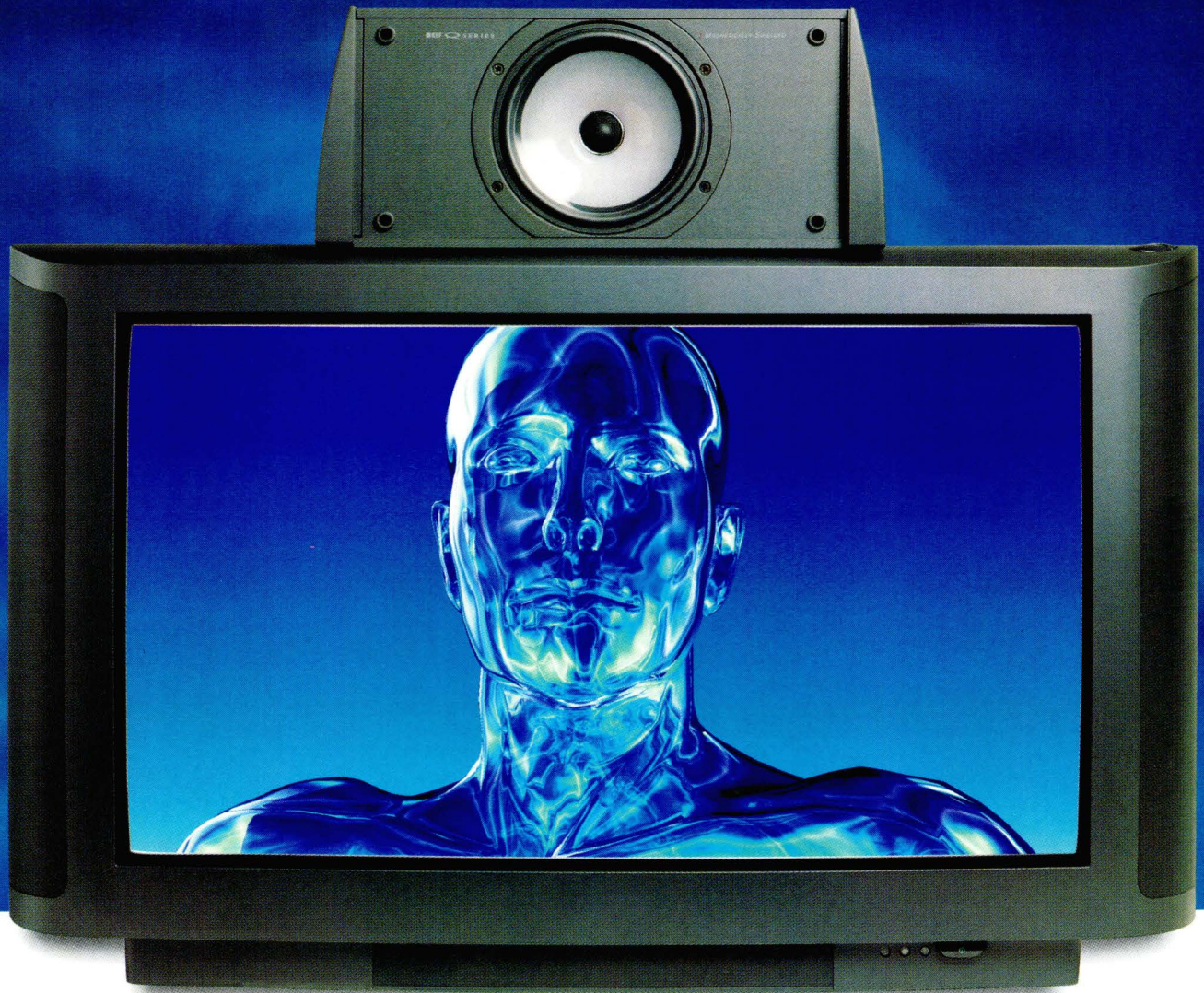
A new power amp is available to enhance the 5250 integrated. The new A52 (£499) can deliver 70 Watts into eight Ohms and may be bridged for monoblok operation. There is also a £599 SE version of the power amp, with a claimed output of 100 Watts.

Creek ☎ (0181) 361 4133

Creek's new 5250 integrated amp: yours for £450.



Clearly superior
home theatre.



A bold claim - until you know the reason.

KEF's patented Uni-Q is intrinsically better suited to home theatre than any other loudspeaker technology. For a start, it creates a far larger listening

area. And its characteristic point source effect greatly enhances clarity and definition.

With clear cone Uni-Q drivers throughout, our new Q Series sounds breathtakingly real - and the Q95C centre speaker brings vocals and dialogue to life as never before.

No wonder the Q35 floorstander so convincingly trounced all-comers in What Hi-Fi's Supertest. Awarding the ultimate five gold star rating, the review praised its "three dimensional, almost tactile effect" with "hi-fi resolution that's second to none."

Q Series home theatre from KEF. The difference is clear.



Q
SERIES



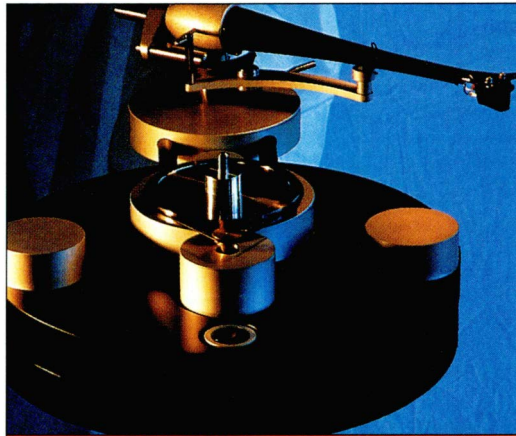
Wilson-benesch keeps on turning

Staunch brethren of the analogue creed rejoice! Sheffield-based Wilson-benesch has introduced a wholly new turntable and stripped-to-the bone version of its well-received A.C.T. tonearm.

Called The Circle, the concept behind W-b's new £795.00 turntable is to make operation as simple as possible without sacrificing sound or build quality. It uses a whole host of materials in combination, but by doing so obviates the need for a suspension, and as a consequence W-b claims users may set up the deck in less than five minutes after opening the box. It also allows the turntable to take on a distinctive style. The Circle is available with a Rega RB300 arm for £975.00.

The A.C.T. 0.5 tonearm holds onto the rigid tolerances found in the more upmarket A.C.T. One and Two arms, but cuts cost by using simpler wiring with captive leads and a less-expensively finished exterior. Its price is £795.00, though it may be purchased with The Circle turntable at a package price of £1,499.00.

Wilson-benesch ☎ (0114) 285 2657



The Circle and ACT: W-b's new turntable and tonearm.

New Linn multiroom direktion



Linn's Direktor adds multi-room to an existing system.

Linn Products has expanded its multi-room commitment with three new products and a software upgrade for the AV5103 System Controller. The new £795 Linn Direktor combines a Knekt Line Receiver with a 20 Watts stereo power amp and built-in Room Control Unit (RCU) control pad, for those wanting to link a second room to a one-room Linn system, without undertaking building work. The Direktor offers conventional line and tape-level inputs for up to three local sources.

For use in buildings where Knekt pre-wiring and RCU systems are installed, the Knekt Roomamp couples a Knekt Line Receiver with a 20 Watts stereo power amplifier. Like the Direktor, the Knekt Roomamp also includes regular line inputs for local inputs if needed.

Also in its multi-room range, Linn has introduced a circuit switch, which allows control over mains power through the Linn Knekt system. Knekt control software also now appears on the flagship £4,850 AV5103 System Controller, which allows video sources to be handled as flexibly as audio. This software upgrade will be available retrospectively for all System Controllers made before April 1997.

Meanwhile, Linn's popular moving-coil cartridges of yesteryear will receive a new lease of life from the Glasgow-based company's 'New For Old' Rebuild Cartridge Exchange Scheme. Customers with Asaka, Klyde, Karma, Troika and Arkiv cartridges should contact their Linn turntable retailer, whereupon their cartridge will be comprehensively reconditioned with a new cantilever and nude diamond stylus. The entire motor assembly will be rebuilt using new parts as required. It's not just a re-tip job, which is why the cost is approximately 70 per cent of a replacement cartridge. Linn ☎ (0500) 888909



Linn's Knekt Roomamp — for cost-effective multi-room.

Kenwood speaks out

"CD on. Load disc. Set volume to eleven. Select *You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet*. Let's rock..." It would be Smashy and Nicey's ultimate dream, but now it's a reality (almost) in five new Series 21 systems from Kenwood. Simply mention a key word and the system will spring to life. The Giugiaro-designed systems range from the £499.95 SE-A150S right up to £1,499.95 SE-A950S. Optional accessories include a turntable, equaliser, LaserDisc player and a menu-driven LCD remote.

The cheapest system is audio only, with a five-disc CD player, 50 Watts receiver, tape deck and front speakers. The SE-A350S is the next model in the range, and swaps the audio receiver for a home cinema model, and adds a centre and rear speaker to the specification for £200 more. After this the range splits into pre/power home cinema combinations; the most expensive two feature the GRC-150 menu-driven remote. The top of the range preamp even features Dolby Digital multi-channel sound!

Kenwood ☎ (01923) 816444



Kenwood's listening hi-fi. Whatever next?

Fab DAB's transmitter grab

Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB) is here — it's official! Since July 14 transmitters across the UK have been broadcasting continuous DAB transmissions, with the prospect of 27 transmitters being on-line Spring 1998, according to the BBC. This would provide BBC-network DAB to 60 per cent of the UK population.

Licences for independent radio stations will be tendered until February next year. The first digital independents will appear in the UK around Autumn 1998.

More information has become available about the text-based data that is carried alongside the radio signal. The BBC is said to adopt two kinds of data signal. The first will be known as PAD (Programme Associated Data). This provides the listener with details about the programme, DJ, disc in play and so on. There will also be public-sector broadcasting data, giving sport and weather reports, exchange rates and much of the information currently found on Ceefax.

When the independents appear, the odds are on broader, more commercial text-based information, such as stock-market information, as well as advertising. Pay-per-listen and smart-card special-offer coupons have also been suggested.

A number of major manufacturers are due to launch DAB products at the IFA show in Berlin, late August. BBC DAB ☎ (0171) 765 4427

In brief

◀ Replay Audio Consultants is to move premises in early September to Chattels, 2 Steam Mill Street, Chester CH3 5AN. Replay stocks many brands including: AVI, Heybrook, LFD, Pink Triangle and Roksan. Replay Audio Consultants ☎ (01244) 401290

TDL has upgraded its floorstanding transmission line speaker, the RTL3. The new RTL3 SE is available in cherry wood, and comes with 'Gold' Allen caps and spikes. It retails at £449.95. TDL ☎ (01628) 850130



TDL's new RTL3 SE: a hot-rod among transmission lines!

Acoustic Energy has launched its first subwoofer, completing the 100 Series range. The AE108S can handle 150 Watts with a clean bass response extending to 25Hz, has a 12-inch pulp cone bass unit, and retails at £299.95. It is claimed to handle both music and movie sources. The company is also launching a new range of real-wood veneers for the entry-level AE1 and AE2 speakers: light oak, dark mahogany and black ash. Acoustic Energy ☎ (01285) 654432

ALBUMS PLAYED IN THE HI-FI CHOICE OFFICE THIS MONTH

Paul Simon
Gracelands

Primal Scream
Vanishing Point

Ron Carter
New York Slick

Bill Withers
Greatest Hits

Mad Professor
Anti-Racist Dub Broadcast

The Verve
Bittersweet Symphony

James Taylor Quartet
Wait A Minute

Vince Guaraldi Trio
A Boy Named Charlie Brown

Ron Carter
Pastels

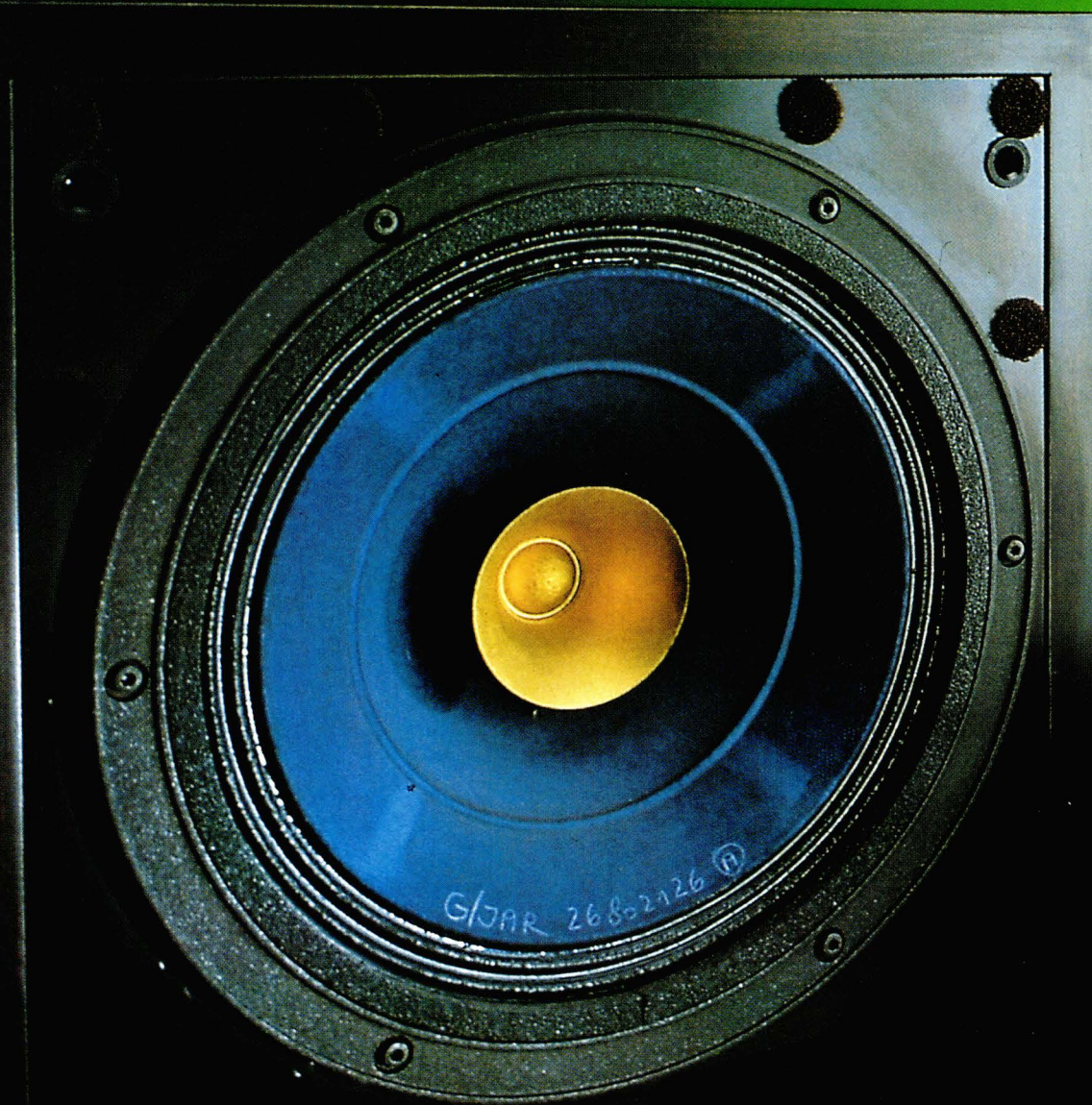
Strange brew

Alan Sircom encounters an eclectic turntable based system making an extreme statement about the merits of midband.

Of all the systems we have tested recently, this turntable-based system (from Essex-based distributor Virtual Reality) is one of the most unusual. It comprises the £675 Reson RS1A turntable (Best Buy, *HFC* 159), a £1,700 pair of Rehdeko RK115A speakers (Recommended, *HFC* 167), and the recently reintroduced Crimson CS610C preamplifier (£450) and a pair of CS630 monoblok power amplifiers (£800). A set of DNM solid-core pre/power interconnect and speaker cables is included in the system cost of £3,600, but naturally you'd need to budget also for supports.

This is a classic example of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. With this rig Virtual Reality is pushing a philosophy as much as a bunch of kit. Everything about the system is geared towards reproducing the most accurate mid-band.

The unorthodox Rehdeko RK115A speakers exemplify this characteristic. Offering high measured sensitivity of 97.3dB, and comprising a single 190mm paper-coned full-range driver embellished by an old-fashioned high-frequency 'whizzer', this speaker's frequency response is tailored to emphasise the informative middle frequencies of music, almost mirroring



the Fletcher-Munson loudness curves that describe the human ear's response to sound of different frequencies and intensities.

The Reson turntable is subtly modified by Karlev Audio in Switzerland, to align it with the Virtual Reality sound philosophy. It's basically a Systemdek I with a Rega RB250 arm and Goldring moving-coil cartridge. An on-off switch is the only control.

The Crimson pre-power combination is equally minimal; new production can't hide that it's a veteran design. Latest versions of the preamp will have one more input than the phono, line and tape circuits available on the review sample. Despite being essentially a design from the early '80s, it still has an up-to-date sound.

There's no CD player in this package, but Virtual Reality recommends Micromega products because of their alleged synergy with this kit's sonic philosophy.

This system has a very unique and unusual sound, acclimatisation to which takes a while. On first hearing it appeared fast and tight, but there was no bass to

speak of, and the presentation of high frequencies swung between extremes: almost painful at one moment; almost inaudible the next. One of my notes was: "sounds like it is playing down a long tube".

Two or three days' listening proves that this first impression is conditioned by hi-fi preconceptions. Once you've adjusted to the alternative reality of this system, audio normality seem distinctly anodyne. Recordings come to life with a naturalness that is vibrant, occasionally unnerving, often breathtakingly close to the sound of real instruments. Stereo imagery does not depend on you sitting in a tightly-defined hot spot; normally, only real instruments and omni-directional speakers give this effect.

There's no point attempting to make comparisons with more mainstream components. This rig doesn't complement every piece of music, but with those it flatters, it trounces almost any other system for reality and naturalness. Its success is not dependent on musical genre, but on the music itself; later-period Bob Dylan doesn't sound

as good as early Prodigy.

A REL Q100e subwoofer helps if you perceive excessive leanness. (Virtual Reality suggests novices use one to ease the pain of transition from 'normal' hi-fi.) In time, listeners will probably prefer the speed of the Rehdekos *au naturelle* to the extra body but inevitably sluggishness imparted by a sub.

If there's a weak link in the chain, it's the Crimson amps. They're fast, tidy and clean, but could create a greater sense of three-dimensionality. And they serve only to emphasise the trademark Rehdeko quack. More expensive DNM amplification would provide a more spacious sound, and Virtual Reality offers a trade-in scheme for just such an upgrade.

This system is not just another variation on the stereotypical hi-fi theme. It is an extreme statement of one company's eclectic opinion about what matters in hi-fi music reproduction. When you hear this system, either you'll love it or hate it. But you'll never think about music the same way again. ▲

Virtual Reality ☎ (01277) 227355



THE SYSTEM

Reson RS1A turntable	£675.00
Rehdeko RK115A speakers	£1,700.00
Crimson CS610C preamplifier, two Crimson CS630 power amplifiers	£1,225.00
TOTAL (inc interconnects and speaker wires) . . .	£3,600.00

WIN!

COMPETITION

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One pair of Arena centre speaker	£99.99
One pair of Arena speakers	£89.95
One pair of wall brackets for above	£14.95
Each system total value	£974.83



COMPETITION

GLL is one of Britain's leading speaker manufacturers, tracing its history back seven decades. Nowadays you'll find GLL drive-units in cars from Ford, and TVs from Sony – and of course in speaker enclosures from the company itself!

This month's prize includes products embodying GLL's latest and greatest invention, ICT (Inductive Coupling Technology). This enables a skirted high-frequency drive-unit to be mounted within the voice coil of bass/mid driver without need for a cross-over network. The tweeter responds to high frequency signals by the principle of electromagnetic induction.

On offer are three complete AV speaker systems, each worth over £970.

Doubling up on hi-fi and home cinema duties we've got the Imagio IC120 floor-standing speakers, each one incorporating two mid/bass units and an ICT tweeter within their ported enclosures. Up to 130 Watts may be harnessed via bi-wirable input sockets.

To ensure crystal-clear dialogue from films and TV there's the matt-black Arena Centre speaker, whose 120mm toughened polymer bass/mid driver, 25mm ICT tweeter and 80 Watt

power handling promise plain speech at all times.

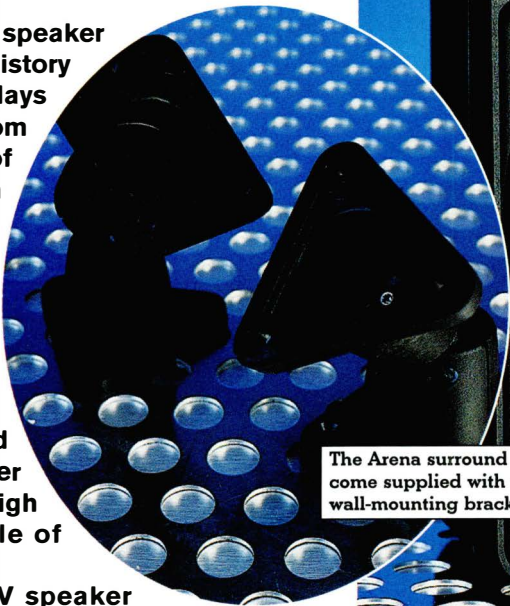
GLL's Le Bass subwoofer offers a crossover frequency adjustable from 20Hz to 120Hz to enhance both music and movie blockbusters. It has a built-in 50 Watts amp and 250mm long-throw drive-unit, and may be connected at line or speaker level.

The matt-black Arena surround speakers ably bring up the rear, quite literally, of this system. Supplied complete with wall-mounting brackets, they incorporate a 120mm mid/bass drive unit and the 25mm ICT tweeter, and handle amplifier power of up to 70 Watts each.

Enter our competition today, and you could be one of the three lucky winners. All it costs is a stamp!



The versatile IC120 can be used as a music or movie speaker.



The Arena surround speakers come supplied with matching wall-mounting brackets.



Le Bass will add depth to music and movies. C'est magnifique!

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING WINNERS OF OUR JULY/AUGUST TEAC COMPETITION!

The correct answer for this competition was: d) VRDS stands for Vibration-free Rigid Disc-clamping System

1st Prize of one Reference 500 VRDS System package goes to:
W Keegan of Lancs

2nd Prize of one Reference 500 A/V System package goes to:
J Villani of London

3rd Prize of one Reference 500 System Package goes to:
P Symcox of Leicester

HOW TO ENTER

Answer the question below by circling the correct answer, then fill in your name, address and day-time telephone number in the spaces given below. Please remember to tell us whether you are over 18 years of age.

POST THIS ENTRY FORM TO:

Hi-Fi Choice Competition (CHFC710A)
Bradley Pavilions,
Bradley Stoke North,
Bristol BS12 0BQ

All entries must arrive by first post, Thursday October 9th, 1997.

THE QUESTION

What does ICT stand for?

- Inductive Coupling Technology
- Independent Council for Technology
- Internet Companion Times
- Inductive Coupling Terminals

YOUR DETAILS

Name _____
Job Title _____
Company Name _____
Address (inc. postcode) _____
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- Please tick here if you are under 18
- Please tick here if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies.
- Are you a current subscriber? **OR**
- Are you a regular reader? **OR**
- Are you an occasional reader?

COMPETITION RULES

- The Closing Date for this competition is Thursday October 9th, 1997.
- Winners of the GLL competition will be judged from all correct entries submitted, and drawn at random after the Closing Date.
- Winners will be notified by post.
- The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.
- The GLL competition is not open to employees of Dennis Publishing Ltd, GLL, nor their suppliers, agents or associates.
- We regret this competition is open to UK residents only.
- No cash alternatives will be offered.
- We reserve the right to substitute alternative prizes with equal value to those shown, in the unlikely event of stock being temporarily unavailable.
- By entering the competition you agree to be bound by the rules.
- All entries must be on this official entry coupon. If you do not wish to cut your magazine, you may send a photocopy of the page instead. Please note: only one entry form per household.

CHFC 710A

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Ear Waxings

DVD audio: so near and yet so far! **Jason Kennedy** has high hopes for a new era of hi-fi sound, if only manufacturers will look further than the end of their balance sheets...

A new audio format on the horizon will one day make CDs seem as antiquated as LPs appear today. DVD audio discs promise to make CDs sound like gramophone records. DVD discs can store a dramatically greater quantity of digitised sound information — potentially with better signal to noise than the modern microphone.

But all depends on the record and hi-fi industry bigwigs coming to a decision on the sampling rate and word length of the new format. We have heard a lot of talk about 96kHz oversampling combined with 24-bit resolution, but as yet no-one has made a bitstream converter chip that can cope with the second half of this equation. There are expensive multi-bit systems on the professional market that are allowing studios to record at this resolution, but DVD players launched so far include 20-bit DACs. The 44.1kHz/16-bit CD format has sufficed for 15 years, but remember how soon we realised its fundamental limitations!

CD redefined sound quality, especially at the bottom end of the market, but it had only to improve upon cheesy record players. To be a worthy and sonically effective successor to the CD, DVD will need take just as big a leap in quality. We should be aiming as high as possible at this stage; if a 192kHz sampling rate is feasible, albeit currently expensive, then it should define the standard. Imagine bandwidth that extends to 96kHz! That's on a par with the best pro tape recorders, and would bring to the domestic environment the theoretical potential for master-grade recordings. The best analogue tape systems would have difficulty competing with such dynamic range and freedom from noise. Even people with limited-range hearing can ascertain technically inaudible bandwidth changes in a recording. This is why the CD's 20kHz frequency limit can prevent the format sounding relaxed and open like a good turntable. Anyone who's



dCS Elgar DAC

This 96kHz/24-bit consumer DAC points the way forward for high-resolution hi-fi sound.

heard 96kHz DAT, let alone 96kHz/24-bit DVD dems, will know how much of an improvement is possible.

Alan Sircom went up to a recording session in Cambridge last month (*Editor's Notebook*, HFC 169) and sat in the studio listening to 192kHz/24-bit A/D and D/A converters from British company Data Conversion Systems, dCS (01799) 531999. Using the live feed as a reference, it was easy to hear the benefit of 192kHz over 96kHz sampling. Stratospheric rates may seem esoteric today, but chip speed is increasing at a vast rate. Fast silicon in a £500 DVD machine next year could be in a £250 unit the year after. Just look at the vertiginous pace of spec improvements in desktop PCs!

Somehow we must persuade the purse-holders of development to aim for the sonic stars. The business mentality won't consider sound quality unless it translates into profit. But, is the best-sounding hi-fi always made by the most profitable companies? August bodies must come to realise that CD succeeded because of sound quality, not just for its lack of pops and clicks and its immunity to smeared-on jam. It reproduced music better than formats it replaced. DVD audio won't take off unless it sounds better than CD on the most prosaic audio equipment.

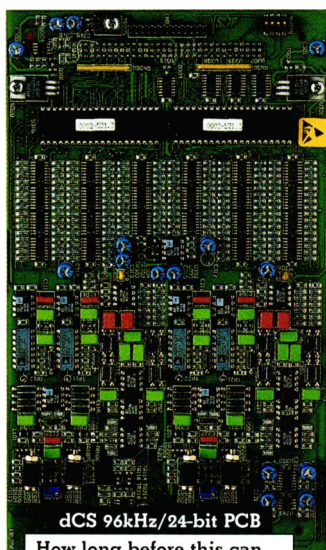
Hi-fi's coming home...

From another angle, if it was genuinely good enough, DVD could save the hi-fi industry by bringing people back to the pure pursuit of musical enjoyment in the home. It takes a pretty decent CD system to captivate me with music — I would go so far as to argue that a decent early '80s vinyl system was more compelling than an early '90s CD one.

We've done a lot with CD since it arrived, and today's best machines are a match for their turntabular counterparts. But out in the real mini-system-world, people have been distracted by games, movies and even home accounting (does anybody actually do this?) on the 'family PC'. If these families had a music system that gave them full-on Oasis or The Best Swingbeat Album in the World, Ever, might they stop indulging in low quality screen-based entertainment and get into the virtual reality that high resolution audio could give them? Not for £399.99, perhaps, but if you could persuade them that a decent sound system is worth as much (if not more) than a home PC, then for £1,299 they'd be approaching the mark.

I guess you'd have to get a screen in there somewhere, and some surround channels would add some novelty value, but the potential exists for decent-quality music equipment to regain its rightful place in the home.

One last reason why DVD audio needs to be spectacular. It's the small matter of DVD being copy protected in full. Because it is also a video medium, the movie industry is keen that we should not use it to make perfect copies from rented discs. Now we have affordable CD recorders. But will there be ever a DVD recorder to follow suit? ▲



dCS 96kHz/24-bit PCB

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The Jimmy Hughes Experience

Jimmy Hughes addresses the vexing question of whether software quality determines the sound of hi-fi equipment – or vice-versa!

A pleasure reserved for hi-fi fans is discovering that an album of excellent music is also superbly recorded. Immediately, this justifies investment in quality reproducing apparatus. But what about albums that sound disappointing? Do you get rid of them or suffer in silence?

With classical music it's likely that the same work will be available as several performances on a variety of labels. So you could choose another version. But if it's rock or jazz, the album in question may be unique in terms of musical content, and thus irreplaceable. There's always a chance the record company may remaster the disc one day, and improve its sound. Otherwise you've just got to accept it as it is, for better or worse.

As a serial hoarder, I rarely get rid of anything. So when I buy an LP or CD that disappoints sonically, I stash it away and get it out a few months later — perhaps after having made some changes and improvements to my system.

I'm almost ashamed of how many times it's happened, but if I do listen to my 'problem' album again at a later date, it often sounds fine — sometimes to the point where I wonder how I could ever have thought otherwise. The explanation? It was my system at fault, not the recording.

So instead of talking in terms of good and bad recording quality, I prefer to use less judgemental words like 'easy' and 'difficult'. A recording that's easy to reproduce sounds good on virtually any system. A 'difficult' recording needs careful handling, and may only sound okay when everything's right.

A 'difficult' recording may be very good technically, yet sound poor because it creates problems for the equipment attempting to reproduce it. For example, music with a wide dynamic range and extended frequency bandwidth may strain small speakers and amplifiers with limited power.

Tonal balance is important too; many systems are over-dependent on treble frequencies for clarity. A natural, unexagger-

ated, smoothly-balanced recording can easily sound dull and muddy played through such a system, because it highlights the latter's lack of midrange clarity and articulation.

Speakers that lack articulation and clarity at middle frequencies are often highly critical of recording quality, especially if the tweeter output has been raised slightly to compensate. Such speakers constantly sound dull or over-bright according to the recording. Only rarely, when everything falls exactly right, will the sound seem okay.

Even with the worst systems, it's usually possible to find at least one album that sounds good.

As a result, you may feel justified saying: "if only all recordings were as well-made as this, my system would always sound great". But the acid test of a good system is how many recordings it turns to gold, not how many it wrecks.

I remember buying David Bowie's *Aladdin Sane* LP back in 1974 and thinking it was one of the worst sounding pop records I'd ever heard — thin, edgy, congested, compressed. In terms of absolute hi-fidelity, it's neither a great bit of technical engineering, nor a well-pressed/well-cut LP. But I was very gratified when I played a track to a friend the other day, and he thought it sounded good!

There's no question that LP pressing standards and sound quality worsened during the

'70s, but it's surprising just how many albums of this period can sound excellent when played on a system that shows what's right with them rather than what's wrong.

Idealising sound

And then there's the question of what constitutes a good sound. Most of us think we know how a piano sounds. But are we thinking of some idealised piano sound in our heads, or faithfully capturing the timbre of the specific instrument?

I believe many record producers take the former approach, aiming for a 'good' piano tone (crisp, bright, clean), rather than the actual sound the instrument made at the time — which may not be all that special.

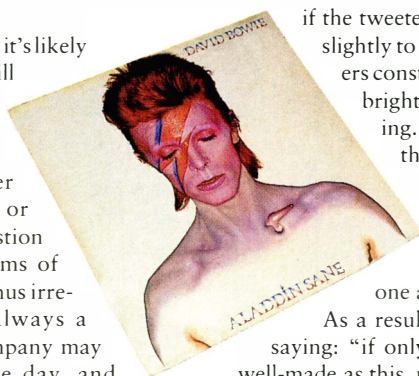
One of the truest, most natural piano recordings in my collection is Andre Watts playing Liszt on two EMI CDs, issued in 1986. I'm sure these discs faithfully recreate the individual timbre of Watts' piano with absolute fidelity. Yet when I first listened, just over 10 years ago, I was very disappointed.

The system I had then appeared to make the piano tone sound woolly, lacking bite and brilliance. Only now do I appreciate just how true and unexaggerated the recording is. Tonally the instrument sounds dark and full, and the treble is not over brilliant. Glamorous it isn't, but the better my system gets, the more 'real' this recording becomes.

It's like viewing a photo of a pretty face minus makeup in natural light, alongside another that's been heavily manipulated. The 'perfection' of the latter is achieved by cosmetics and special lighting. But it drains the subtle individuality from the face. The result may be attractive, but it tells you nothing about the person, because the photo no longer represents what they really look like.

That's the difference. Listening to Andre Watts' Liszt CDs, I feel I can tell precisely how he plays because the sound faithfully captures his individual tone. Contrast that with (say) Andrei Gavrilov's technically stunning (but faceless) 1987 EMI recording of Chopin's *Études*, where the perfection is so absolute it's coldly mechanical.

My point is this: a really good system humanises music, allowing you to get in touch with performer and composer. That, for me, is what it's all about. ▲



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Words alone cannot do the Concert 8 justice. The Concert 8 must simply be heard to be believed.

For information about your nearest dealer, please call Jamo UK on tel. 01327 301300, fax 01327 300511.



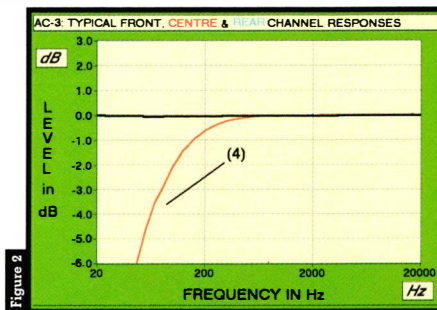
THE SOUND OF EXCELLENCE

Paul Miller's Oasis of Sanity

Paul Miller explains the differences between Dolby Pro-Logic and its new digital surround format.

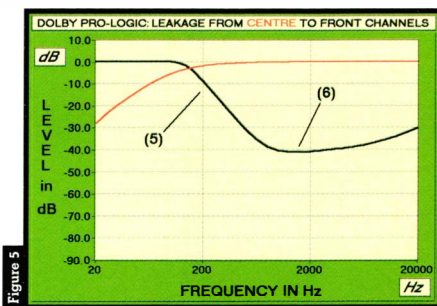
With the arrival of a new 'Dolby Digital' test disc on my doormat, I thought this an opportune time to explore some of the fundamental differences between Dolby Pro-Logic (DPL) surround and its digital rival, known at its introduction as AC-3.

AC-3 provides five entirely separate, full-range channels together with an extra Low Frequency Effects channel to deliver true, multi-channel digital surround sound into the home. Yet AC-3 is neither a linear or rigidly defined format. Rather like the ATRAC system behind Sony's two-channel (stereo) MiniDisc, AC-3 is Dolby's solution to packing six channels of digital surround sound into a smaller data-storage area than just one channel of CD audio. With luck, AC-3 soundtracks will be accessible from future digital satellite broadcasts, cable TV, NTSC Laserdiscs and the forthcoming DVD format.



AC-3 is shorthand for 'Audio Code number 3', a form of processing developed by Dolby Labs to squeeze as much audio information as possible into a limited space. A mix of compression and reduction is used to support five separate digital audio channels (front L/R, centre and surround L/R), plus an extra Low Frequency Effects channel at just 384Kbits/sec. This compares favourably with the 1.41Mbits/sec required by the non-compressed 2-channel digital audio of CD and LD. These 5 + 1 channels suggested the title '5.1 channel Dolby Surround AC-3' but the name of 'Dolby Digital' is now being promoted instead.

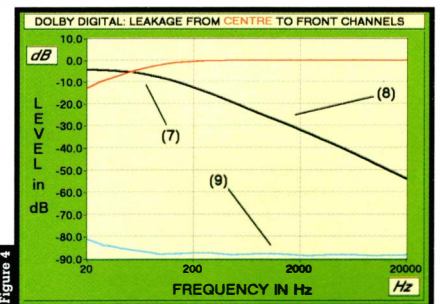
Nevertheless, despite data compression, it's important to realise that all five main channels stretch from the deepest sub-20Hz bass to the limit of our hearing at 20kHz. This upper limit is set by the digital sampling rate, typically 48kHz. Dolby Digital decoders offer a variety of set-up modes; here we see the centre channel set to 'small speaker' mode (4). Set to 'large speaker', all front, centre and surround channels would be superimposed under the flat black line!



Dolby Digital's 5+1 channel format also provides the filmmaker with extra panning options when the soundtrack is finally mixed down. Pro-Logic's matrixed format, however, is limited to pans from side-to-side at the front and back-and-forth from the

front to the mono surrounds. This leads to a 'steering' of effects in Pro-Logic, a limited panning possible, say, from left-to-right or front-to-back with the potential for leakage of one channel's action into another. In this plot we can see the degree to which important centre-channel information is spilling out across the left and right speakers.

At low (bass) frequencies, the declining output of the centre channel is deliberately mixed with the front channels (5). Through the midband (6), the isolation between centre and front speakers amounts to 40dB, but a figure of 20dB is often deemed sufficient with poorer quality decoders. Good centre-channel isolation is vital to maintain crisp, clear dialogue that anchors your attention.

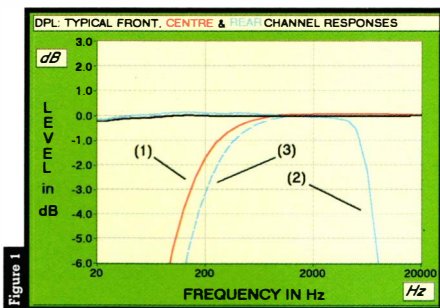


Back to Dolby Digital, where not only are all five channels full-bandwidth, they are also entirely discrete and separate. This allows the recording engineer to steer effects from any one channel to another — a total of 20 different combinations for the special effects guys to justify their existence.

Watch how you set up your Dolby Digital decoder. Here, with the centre channel set to 'small speaker', we can see that as its low bass rolls off, the detail is blended back into the front channels (7), not unlike DPL. However, unlike DPL, the strict 20dB/decade filtering yields a potentially poorer isolation of dialogue through the midrange (8).

To hear Dolby Digital at its best, the centre channel should be switched to 'large speaker' whereupon the isolation from centre-to-front channels (and with any other combination of channels) exceeds the inherent noise floor of the decoder (9)! It's no surprise, then, that even in comparison with a modest AC-3 system, the most accomplished Pro-Logic set-up is severely handicapped by the format it is forced to work with. ▲

'Do you have a subject matter for the Oasis? Please contact P. Miller via E-mail on 100576.3021@compuserve.com'



The more established Dolby Pro-Logic format, on the other hand, is not compressed and only contains two separate channels (i.e. stereo information) into which the four feeds (front L/R, centre and mono surround) are matrixed. There's no separate subwoofer channel but low frequency detail from the centre and front channels is often carved off for the purpose. Theoretically, the responses of both centre (red trace) and front (black trace) channels can cover the entire 20Hz-20kHz audio band, though in its 'normal' mode the centre channel features an early roll-off (1) to prevent any deep bass from disturbing the dialogue from a small, centre speaker. The surround channel (blue trace) is also restricted to a reduced 7kHz bandwidth (2) and though some DPL decoders appear to extend into the deepest bass (prompting enthusiasts to deploy rear-channel subwoofers), in practice there's little real information to be had (3).

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Personal

Paul Messenger gets to grips with some QED Airloc plugs and has a fight with a soldering iron.

Messages

I don't often mess around with different types of interconnect and speaker cables. Call me a wimp, but I use a lot of Naim equipment, which bristles with all manner of DIN and other obscure multi-pin connectors. This makes cable substitution very awkward and time-consuming, with decidedly hazardous end results if your soldering is anything like mine!

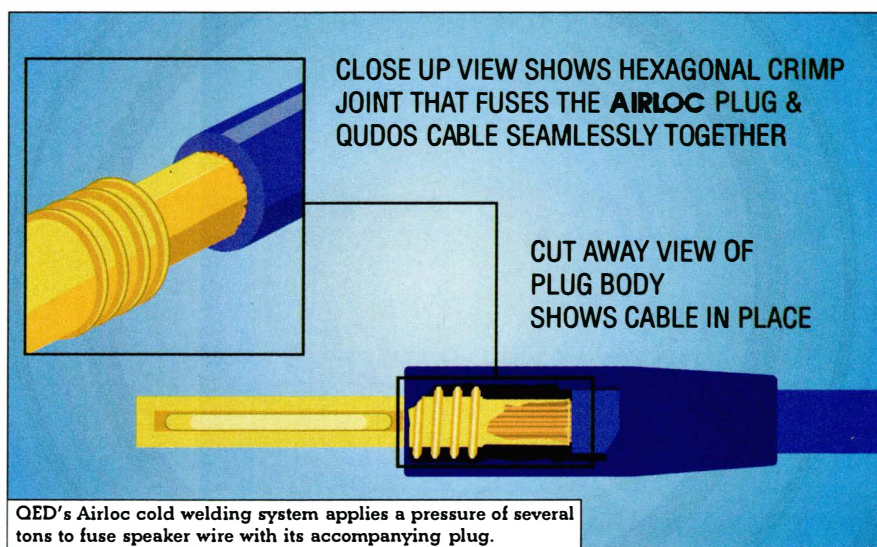
Dealers who sell all sorts of interesting phono-terminated interconnects to interconnect other manufacturers' kit, tend to revert to Naim cable for Naim systems. It's not exactly what you'd call audiophile oriented, but it is realistically priced and seems to do the business well enough in a system context. Mess around and you'll get changes right enough, but whether they're genuine improvements is often more debatable.

The same plug/socket lock-out doesn't apply to speaker cable, of course, but Naim's NACA5 has served me well for many years. I'm used to its foibles, I respect its consistency, and I prefer not to chop and change my system too much anyway (I get confused enough as it is!). All cables seem to introduce some sort of compromise, and I wouldn't argue with those who find NACA5 a touch lumpy in the bass, and a bit unruly at the top end too. Single- or separated-strand cables do tend to sound sweeter, but I like NACA5's do-or-die bandwidth and dynamic range, warts and all.

Despite this, Danny Haikin from London retailer Grahams came down for one of my listening panels a few months back, and called me a couple of weeks later offering to let me try something new Grahams was doing with NACA5, namely the fitting of QED Airloc plugs in place of the normal soldered variety. He sent down a pair of cables made up for my system; being me I put them in my bay window and forgot about them for a couple of months.

I was preparing for a recent speaker group test when I noticed my normal speaker plugs were looking a bit worn-out. They get very heavy usage, so I try to replace them regularly. But it's a tedious and time consuming job which I'm not very good at, so I seized the opportunity to put off the inevitable, and connected up the Grahams-terminated cable instead.

What a pleasant surprise! It still seemed to retain the expected slam, grunt and tautness, which is probably the reason I use the



Graphic courtesy of QED Audio Products

cable anyway, but the top end seemed altogether sweeter and cleaner, and the familiar NACA5 top-end 'hash' was conspicuously reduced. Even one of my panellists queried what had been changed to make the system sound sweeter. Since the cable is the same stuff, this is presumably down to the different plugs — which previous messing around indicates is probably just as important as the cable itself.

The Airloc plug system is an initiative from accessory/multi-room specialist QED, and first appeared a couple of years ago. I first came across it on the ends of the company's Qudos cable in a *Sessions* feature which ran in *HFC 145*. The simple and logical idea behind it is to use crimping (or 'cold-welding' as it's sometimes called) to bond together the cable and plug without need for solder, and in such a way as to exclude any oxygen from the vicinity of the bond.

It's done by placing the cable and plug in a carefully-shaped die, and then applying a pressure of several tons in order to drive the surfaces of the two metals into intimate contact. This has the twin benefits of eliminating both oxidation and the addition of an extra conducting metal at the contact surfaces, both of which should be good for preserving delicate signals and avoiding noise.

Suspicious minds

Impressed as I was by the Airloc alternative, I was still suspicious of the gilt-plated finish, and thought I ought to do a double check by re-tipping my regular cable with new Naim

plugs. I set off in search of the soldering iron, whereupon the plumbing decided to lend a hand, springing a leak and flooding the household electrics. Reprieved again, I sat down and gave Naim Audio a ring instead.

When I described the improvement with the crimped plugs, I was asked who'd soldered the standard Naim plugs on the other cables. Admitting responsibility and saying that it hadn't been easy, I heard a heavy sigh from the other end. Would I like to pop down for a day's training to learn how to solder properly? Apparently, once properly fitted the Naim plug is itself designed to promote direct contact between the two conductors, the solder serving to hold everything together.

I then remembered I had a couple of lengths of factory-plugged NACA5 which hadn't been worn out by repeated use, since it was connected to the rear/surround channels. I put these into the equation, and this immediately brought home the full inadequacy of my soldering skills. These cables were still brighter than the Airloc-tipped examples, but it was mostly extra coherent information, not hash, that was coming through. It's still not what you'd call a 'polite' sound, and I can understand why some will opt for the more easy-going Airloc experience. I guess it's likely to give more consistent results too, as the die is likely to be more repeatable than the soldering iron. But I think I'll settle for the warts'n'all, and maybe take time out to get some soldering lessons to boot. ▲

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WHAT HI-FI, FEB 1997



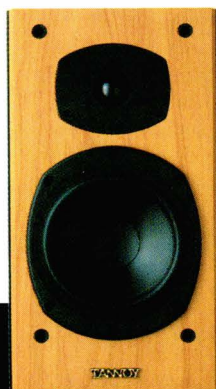
“Star buy

Tannoy Mercury M2”

WHAT HI-FI, APRIL 1997

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HI-FI NEWS, APRIL 1997



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HI-FI CHOICE, APRIL 1997

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HI-FI CHOICE, APRIL 1997

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

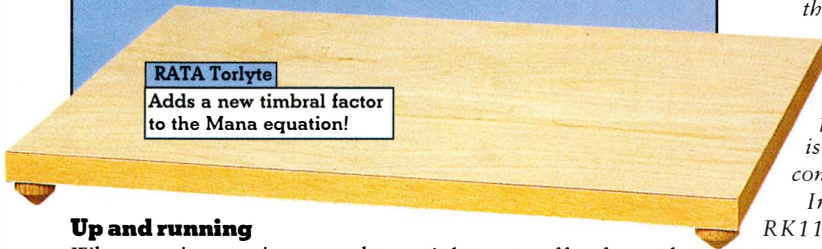
Speed vs timbre

I am a big fan of Mana stands, and I use three tiers under each piece of my system. After extensive listening I've noticed a Mana foible — it is not very good at portraying timbre, and is tonally lean. I changed cables which improved timbre quite a bit but reduced perceived speed as well. Then I got a RATA Torlyte platform and the improvement in timbre was phenomenal, although speed again slowed down and soundstaging was very flat compared to the Mana.

I have deduced from this that Mana stands can strip the music bare, removing noise and coloration. But as the Torlyte shows, some of this low-level detail or noise can be hall ambience or the breathing of vocalists, and is essentially timbre. The increased perception of speed is due to the fact that notes are being curtailed and frequency extremes rolled off — I've noticed deeper bass with Torlyte.

I now use the Torlyte on top of the Mana. Clearly the Mana doesn't tell the whole sonic truth but it makes music involving, and that's what counts.

M Ling, Hounslow, London



Up and running

When testing equipment, do you have a policy of using 'run in' review samples? I inquire because, having been delighted with my new Marantz CD-63 KI, I decided to add a PM-66 KI amplifier to my set-up. Initially I was disappointed with the results; however, I was advised to wait at least a few days before judging it. After a week it had improved dramatically; after two weeks it sounded amazing and I am now extremely pleased with my purchase. I believe that this need for 'running in' is not uncommon and also applies to other equipment such as Naim.

I would suggest that a fully 'run in' sample of this amp

might not suffer from the mystifying lack of slam you described (HFC issue 168). Using Epos ES14 speakers I found that I had to change my cables to avoid damaging the foundations of my house!

Jon Parry, Chesterfield, Derby

It would seem that most equipment requires a decent run in and warm up before it gives of its best. We always warm up kit, but pressure of time forces us to rely on manufacturers to ensure samples are run in.

Blind listening

I have always believed your rhetoric that the use of blind lis-

tening and measurement provides unbiased objective reviews. However, your latest high-end speaker tests have proved me wrong. Despite the panel rejecting the Rehdeko RK115A on listening tests and the measured performance being highly suspect, Paul Messenger still gave it a Recommendation, based on the fact that he owns a pair, and other people should like it because he does.

As a result of this I will in future be paying more attention to other publications, which are at least honest about the way they test equipment.

T Huffinley via the Internet

The reason we use experienced reviewers like Paul is that blind listening panels can never give the whole picture. A reviewer has to experiment with a product in order to elicit its full potential, something that is impossible to do in the context of blind listening.

In the case of the RK115A, the lab tests are unusual perhaps, but not necessarily suspect, as you'll note that the distortion figure is the best in the group, for instance. The speaker's unusual tonal balance works against it in blind listening, but with extended use the speaker's strengths show through and it becomes clear why the UK's number one speaker guru uses them out of choice.

Cyber belting

It must be 10 years ago that I first read a Jimmy Hughes article outlining sound improvements. Rather than the usual advice, he extolled the virtues of placing a piece of

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paper under every fourth foot on four-footed components and a number of other radical suggestions including the removal of the damping wool from loudspeakers. He had picked up all of these ideas from Peter Belt, and they inspired me to the extent that I have been using his products ever since.

Peter's devices have long been regarded as tweaks, but in my opinion they deal with fundamental problems that have to be considered if we are ever to perceive good sound. But don't take my word for it, another committed user is Dr Richard Graham who produces an internet newsletter for Belt enthusiasts. For anyone who has internet access, this can be found at <http://www.belt.demon.co.uk/>

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L O U D S P E A K E R S

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Take Art

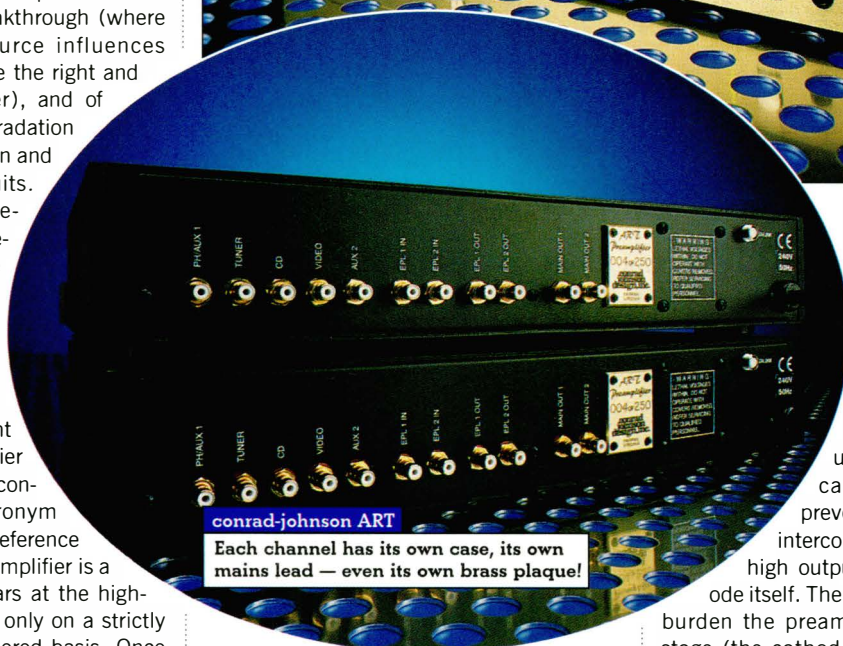
Alan Sircom auditions conrad-johnson's Anniversary Reference Triode (ART) preamp. Is £15,000 enough to buy freedom of musical expression?

It's a sad fact of hi-fi, but among components in a hi-fi system, the preamplifier is more inherently flawed than any other link in the entire audio chain. It is often overlooked in favour of exotic sources, hefty power amplifiers or large speakers, but the preamplifier's role of switching signals, and increasing or decreasing volume to suit, is a key role fraught with potential problems.

The latter include breakthrough (where the signal from one source influences another), cross-talk (where the right and left channel mix together), and of course massive sonic degradation caused by channel selection and volume attenuation circuits. Even expensive, single-source passive potentiometers and digital volume switches are not immune from the problems inherent to preamplifiers. In short, a preamp is usually at best a necessary evil.

Fortunately, there is light at the end of the preamplifier tunnel, in the guise of the conrad-johnson ART, an acronym standing for Anniversary Reference Triode. This £14,995 preamplifier is a celebration of c-j's 20 years at the high-end tiller, and is available only on a strictly limited, individually-numbered basis. Once 250 ARTs have been built, there will be no more; already the order books are filling up.

This all-new, line-level-only design replaces the long-standing Premier 7B as c-j's flagship preamplifier. It is a true dual-mono device, with only a microprocessor connection cable linking the two chassis. The microprocessor is the only circuit shared between both channels: all other components, even the mains leads, are duplicated on left and right.



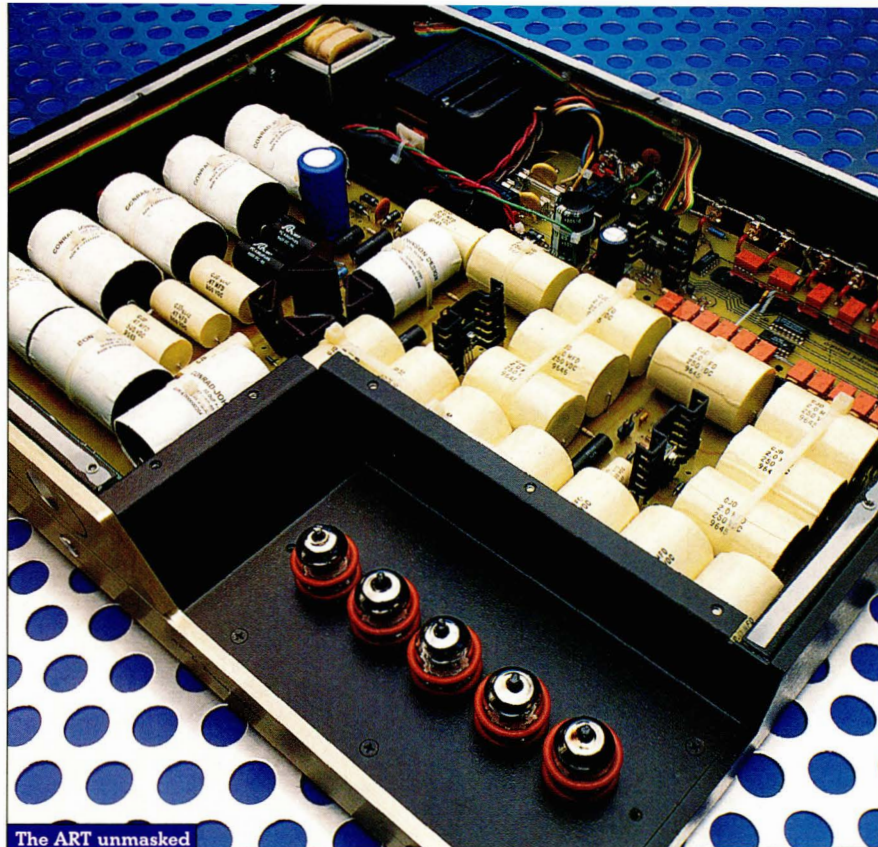
conrad-johnson ART

Each channel has its own case, its own mains lead — even its own brass plaque!

The microprocessor uses a bank of processor-driven relays to effect input selection and volume adjustment, without affecting sound quality. In the case of the latter, signal gain levels are controlled in a most sophisticated manner. The microprocessor selects the necessary combination of Vishay resistor values for any desired volume level, offering 100 steps of level and balance adjustments, each step having an approximate increment of 0.66dB.

Throughout the ART c-j has attempted to keep circuits as simple as possible. There is only a single gain stage, the preamp is a single-ended design, and it incorporates triode valves. In theory, using a triode without a cathode follower should prevent it from driving long interconnect cables, due to the high output impedance of the triode itself. The company did not want to burden the preamp with an extra buffer stage (the cathode follower), but instead designed a unique 'composite triode' circuit using five 6922 dual-triode tubes in parallel. This, it is claimed, effectively lowers the output impedance of the preamplifier to one-tenth that of the conventional circuit. Furthermore, the parallel configuration acts to cancel out noise from these tubes. It is suggested this circuit layout makes the ART's signal-to-noise ratio some 6dB better than any other tube c-j preamp.

Naturally, the ART preamplifier uses only



The ART unmasked

The 'ultimate high-end preamp' positively bristles with custom-made polypropylene capacitors and Vishay bulk-foil resistors.

the finest components throughout: top-quality Vishay bulk-foil resistors and c-j's own polystyrene capacitors in the main circuit; the finest gold-plated silver contacts, sealed for longevity, in the switching relays. Also, all the connectors are made from the finest gold-plated oxygen-free copper. The champagne front panel is in common with other c-j electronics, but the overall styling smacks of Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture — even though it was designed by c-j's Lou Johnson.

Sound is where the Art is

On first hearing the ART, the brain takes a while to compensate for the lack of coloration and blurring normally associated with preamplifiers. About 10 minutes is sufficient to progress through the learning curve, however. All of a sudden, it seems like a new reference point has been established, and all previous convictions about the sonic character of speakers, for example, come into question. Although when sold the ART will be partnered with transducers of a calibre immune to public disgrace, during my listening tests it highlighted no bloom in the bass, no brashness in the treble and none of the oddities normally associated with speaker designs. I doubt whether any of the ART's potential 250 owners will install it in a system with low-priced speakers, but if they did, they'd be surprised.

Unlike every other preamp I've heard before, the ART inspires in me only silence: quite simply, it transmits musical signals, unsullied, in a manner that many rivals claim to do — and fail to do. It's little wonder that those who've heard the true nature of the ART need little persuasion to buy it.

It's like a time machine. It can make a

three-minute pop song stretch to six or seven minutes. Not in a dull, ponderous way, but by cramming so much information into the head that ears have to buffer it lest one's brain overloads. This often happens with live

music, where time seems to move more slowly than when one is listening to a record. Play a compressed pop song to find out just how fast this preamplifier can be — bands like Rage Against The Machine will sound as fast and as tight as you have ever heard them play, but will also have much of their compression intact too. Yet it makes more sense of Jimi Hendrix than ever before.

With the ART, disc after disc from my collection revealed hidden secrets, from Glenn Gould's *Goldberg Variations* and a variety of Mozartian monologues and Delian dirges, via sublime '50s jazz recordings of Lee Morgan and Gene Ammons, right through to the very latest in techno from The Prodigy and Bomb The Bass. It rendered each and every one with uncolored accuracy to the original sound.

There is no matching ART phono stage, but c-j aficionados will find the £3,995 Premier Fifteen phono stage more than equal to the task. The matching £3,995 Premier Fourteen line preamp also works along ARTy lines, but it's not hard to discern why the ART's £11,000 premium is money well spent. I know of no better preamplifier, so if you want the very best, start saving now. They won't be around forever...

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HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS... ALAN SIRCOM INTERVIEWS LOU JOHNSON, C-J'S TECHNICAL DIRECTOR.

AS: Before ART, at what point did you feel that it was time to retire the Premier Seven B preamplifier?

LJ: Six or seven years ago, we decided to develop several aspects of a line-stage preamplifier that could be an improvement on the Premier Seven B, at that time simply for our own reference use.

We had no plans to release this product at the time as it was very expensive. But as the company's 20th anniversary approached, we decided to do something special to celebrate.

AS: Did you have Frank Lloyd Wright in mind when you designed the ART?

LJ: No, I had nothing specific in mind, other than adding some three-dimensional interest to a fundamentally two-dimensional product. I suspect that my interest in old radios and products from the Art Deco age had some influence on what I ended up doing, though.

AS: There will be only 250 ARTs manufactured. What happens then?

LJ: I don't think the ARTs will be sold out just yet, but it is possible that they will be finished by the end of 1998. There's always a possibility that there will be a

new product, but I don't anticipate a direct replacement for the ART.

AS: Finally, what is conrad-johnson's philosophy of sound?

LJ: We attempt to recreate the experience of enjoying live music. This objective is not entirely a technical one. It's as much an emotional response. Technical considerations are important, but ultimately they do not define the end result. We achieve this aim with relatively simple circuits, to try to minimise the amount of processing the signal experiences along the way. This has the side benefit of typically producing more reliable circuits.

We are also trying to reproduce as precisely as possible the timing information in recordings. Temporal relationships communicate information to you about the physical location of instruments, and if that information gets blurred, you'll tend to lose focus.

All of this is a reflection of our own likes and dislikes. So to some extent, the customer who is buying into conrad-johnson is buying into our tastes. But I hope this is more or less true of most high-end companies!





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The American dream

In his never-ending quest for the right musical note, Alan Sircom tries out the Avatar, a classy high-end speaker from US manufacturer Avalon.

Avalon is not yet a household name in the UK, but in the US it is has long been one of the great high-end companies. Its products range from up-market (but almost affordable) stand-mounted monitors, to huge £75,000 reference-class speakers.

The first floorstander in the range is the £5,495 Avatar (£4,495 in black). It has the distinctive swept-back design common to the Avalon breed, making it look like an elegant and angular '90s version of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The speakers are finished in a rich, hand-sanded, book-matched cherry or walnut veneer, which extends right around the cabinet. The line isn't broken by a set of speaker cables, since the spade-lug terminals are fitted to the base of the speaker.

It's not a huge speaker, but still it summons up an air of quality. It stands little more than a metre tall, and is proportioned to look elegant and svelte; yet in truth it is a fairly massive enclosure weighing 30kg. The driver complement of the sealed-box Avatar is simple: just a 2.5mm titanium dome tweeter and a 200mm Nomex/Kevlar composite-cone woofer. It has a claimed sensitivity of 85dB, a suggested six Ohm nominal impedance, and a claimed in-room frequency response of 45Hz-24kHz.

The efficiency and sensitivity of the speaker do not paint the full picture, however. There is the touchy subject of compatibility to take into account. While I would not expect someone other than a reviewer to partner a five grand speaker with a £300 amplifier, there are some ground rules that are best followed. First, this speaker needs as many decent-quality Watts as you can throw at it. At least 100 Watts will bring the speaker to life, but more is better. Second, of course, is quality of amplification — I used the Meridian 557 to good effect, but this speaker will really sing when teamed up with Krell, Levinson or Muse power.

The beauty of the Avalon Avatar is its sheer musicality — if you use it with the right sources and amplification. There is a silky-smooth sheen to its sound, but this does not cover the music in a cloying blanket of high-end glitz. Nor is there some magic

music beautification filter, but the Avalon speakers do make the very most of any of music that they reproduce.

The ultimate test

I put the Avalons through high-end hell in my listening sessions. Not one Windham Hill or Chesky disc came even close to being played; instead, I fed the speakers a diet of cheesy listening, techno, blunted beats, thrash (and trash) metal, '70s rock, '50s jazz and the sort of classical music that would make Mozart wince. There is a scale of component pain attached to my torture discs: the average 'audiophile' disc registers a one or two at most, while Albert Ayer, Big Black, Mahler, Panufnik and Zappa score the big 10. Few speakers get further than six or seven without screaming in pain; even high-end speakers normally turn up their spikes at about eight. But along with the Quad Electrostatic and the Rehdeko RK115a, the Avalon stayed the course. This speaker has an added advantage over the others above-mentioned: it is a truly full-range design and looks much more elegant.

The Avatars possess a unique ability to disappear sonically, which is a hard task for

any speaker to perform. Install them carefully and they will be apparent only by their lack of intrusion. I heard no box coloration or false warmth; there was no lack of image space and depth, and definitely no brightness or tweeter sizzle. Integration between the drivers was not an issue, as the speaker sounded effectively like one driver: treble, mid and bass blended seamlessly. They evoke electrostatics, but occupy nowhere near as much real estate.

The Avalon Avatar has that wonderful sense of naturalness that typifies the very best music. Note that I say music and not just hi-fi, for the really good stuff begins to sound more natural than electronic and makes you hungry for more. This naturalness takes a little getting used to, especially if you are used to the sort of enhanced hi-fi sound found lower down the audio evolutionary scale.

I find the combination of elegant design, solid build and decent sound to be an all-round winner. It would need to be, since the speaker is little taller than a Linn Keilidh but costs at least six times as much. However, if you measure your hi-fi by size alone, you aren't ready for the Avalon Avatar! ▲

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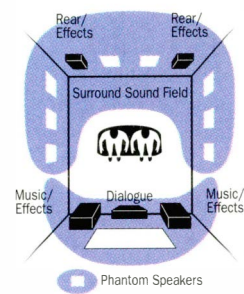
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To: Yamaha Electronics (UK) Ltd. 200 Rickmansworth Road, Watford, Herts. WD1 7JS. Tel: (01923) 233166

Please send me full information on Yamaha Hi-Fi Components and A/V Range.

Name Address

Tel.

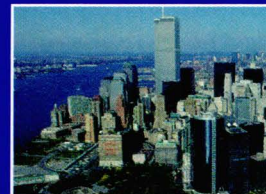
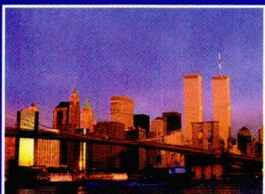
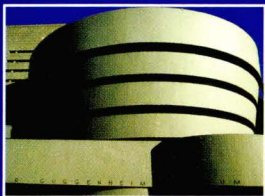
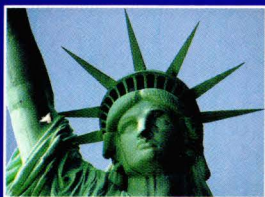
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HI-FI CHOICE

HI-FI DEALER OF THE YEAR 1997

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

marantz® TANNØY



**WIN A HOLIDAY!
VOTE TODAY!**

VOTE FOR YOUR FAVOURITE HI-FI DEALER AND WIN A HOLIDAY IN NEW YORK!

PLUS: four Marantz CD players, worth £1,240, must be won in our fabulous Prize Draw!

Marantz CD-67



Marantz CD-67SE

Here's a fantastic chance for hi-fi fans to win a £1,000 holiday for two in New York. The First Prize winner plus friend will fly to the Big Apple on any date of their choosing*, to spend three nights in a Four Star hotel just 10 minutes from NYC's famous Fifth Avenue. Four runners-up will win one of two Marantz CD-67SE CD players worth £350 each, or two Marantz CD-67 CD players worth £270 each. There are five prizes in total.

So why are we doing this? To reward the shops that sell hi-fi the best. On the Prize Draw Voting Form below, we're asking hi-fi enthusiasts to tell us which UK hi-fi dealer gives the best service. The retailer with most votes will be awarded **Hi-Fi Choice Hi-Fi Dealer of the Year 1997 in association with Marantz & Tannoy**. The winning dealer will also receive a £1,000 New York holiday for two.

*Please see the Terms & Conditions below for full details of the holiday prize.

IT'S EASY TO ENTER!

Using the form below, fill in your name, address and daytime 'phone number. Then tell us which hi-fi shop you think should be voted **Hi-Fi Dealer of the Year 1997**, and why. Don't just write down the shop with the lowest prices — the best hi-fi dealers offer **integrity, customer service, product knowledge, friendly staff**, and the ability to **understand customers' needs**. Think of a hi-fi shop you visit again and again. That's the dealer you should nominate at point (1). Tell us why at point (1A). When you've decided on your favourite store, think whether there's a member of staff there who should receive special praise. If so, write down their name at point (2). Tell us why at point (2A). When you've filled in the form, just post it off — there's no need for a stamp as we pay the postage. Your name will be entered in the Prize Draw automatically.

Note: we must receive your form by First Post on Friday October 3 1997.

For details of your nearest Marantz dealer, ☎ (01753) 680868.

TERMS & CONDITIONS FOR PRIZE DRAWS

(Rules apply to the Hi-Fi Choice/Marantz/Tannoy prize draw)

- 1) All entries must be on the entry form provided. Photocopies will be accepted, but not multiple entries.
- 2) To be eligible for the draw, the entry form must be completed in full.
- 3) There is no cash alternative to the prizes, nor an alternative prize. Should a prize be unavailable for whatever reason, an alternative prize of equivalent value will be provided in its place.
- 3) The three-night holiday prizes each include a return flight to New York from London Heathrow airport, taxi transfers between airport and hotel in the US only, and accommodation in a Four Star hotel in the US. Winners are liable for all other costs, including travel to and from their home in the UK to London Heathrow airport.
- 4) The holiday prizes may commence on any date chosen by the winners between January 1, 1998 and June 30, 1998.
- 5) Employees of Dennis Publishing Ltd, its agents and associates, the manufacturers and suppliers of the prizes, their agents and associates, are not eligible to enter the prize draws.
- 6) We regret that the competition is only open to UK residents.
- 7) Entries must be received by October 3, 1997. Proof of posting will not be deemed as proof of delivery.
- 8) Prizes for this draw will be awarded to the first entries chosen at random by the Editor-in-Chief of *Hi-Fi Choice* magazine after the closing date of Friday October 3, 1997. No correspondence will be entered into, and the Editor-in-Chief's decision is final.
- 9) Winners will be notified by post.
- 10) For a full list of winners, write, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope, to: Hi-Fi Choice Dealer Competition Winners, Dept 169/Z, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ, within six weeks of the draw date.
- 11) Winners names will be announced in the Best Buys 97 edition of *Hi-Fi Choice*, on-sale Thursday November 20, 1997.
- 11) Please tick here if you are under 18 years of age.
- 12) Should you not wish to be informed of other offers and promotions, please tick the box.

PRIZE DRAW VOTING FORM

(1) My vote for the Hi-Fi Dealer of the Year 1997 (shop) goes to _____

(1A) Why? (in no more than 15 words) _____

(2) My vote for the Hi-Fi Dealer of the Year 1997 (salesperson) goes to _____

(2A) Why? (in no more than 15 words) _____

Name _____

Address _____

Post code _____

Daytime Telephone Number _____

CHFC710Z

**SEND YOUR ENTRY IN AN ENVELOPE TO:
HI-FI CHOICE DEALER OF THE YEAR 1997**
Freepost WD7, Patchway Bristol, BS12 OBR
There's no need for a stamp — we pay the postage!

Help!

Alan Sircom is here to answer your hi-fi queries this month.

Send your hi-fi queries to 'Help!' at Hi-Fi Choice, 19 Bolsover Street, London W1P 7HJ • fax on 0171-917 5512 • e-mail on 100433.1130@compuserve.com

Query of the month

Transatlantic teething troubles

When I lived in Cork, I was very satisfied with the system in my bedroom, despite its low cost compared to my main system. But since I moved to Houston, Texas, the same system is a lot less convincing. The system comprises Yamaha tuner, Denon amplifier and old B&W speakers.

Aside from the obvious voltage change, the differences between the two rooms is that the walls in Cork were made of concrete, but in Houston are made from plaster over a light wood structure. I used short, thick and expensive cables in Ireland, but 11m and 9m runs of cable in the US, and the speakers are now about 4cm lower. Naturally, the broadcast station is different, but it sounds OK with my main system. Compared to before, my system now seems to lack low frequencies and the rest of the frequency range appears less clear. Could you tell me what to do to get back the wonderful sonority I miss?

Yves Simon, Houston, Texas, USA

The three stumbling blocks to a good sound in your bedroom are the construction of the walls, the cabling and the tuner. Taking the easiest part to fix first, the Yamaha tuner you use is designed to work with European tuner alignment. The tuner needs to be re-aligned, but this is not a major problem.

Next comes the cable. Cables need to be of equal length and preferably shorter than they are at the moment, as they will help compress the dynamic range and flatten both the perspective and frequency. If you can get the amplifier a few metres closer to the speakers, all the better.

Last, the room. Most American speakers are designed for American rooms. Unfortunately, your speakers are designed for rooms of European proportions and materials. You may need to consider getting a pair of US speakers to suit your system. Some of the anomalies can be ironed out with a Mana table which will help considerably to restore your system to its original sonority.

Converting to DAC

Do today's outboard DACs override the CD player's internal clock mechanism by having it run according to its own clocking, thus creating a kind of sync-lock operation? From what price would a DAC considerably improve my system's sound?

Ed Craig, Aberdeen

There are some D/A converters that have a separate link to slave the CD transport mechanism to the clock of the D/A converter. The trouble is, this slave link is not a part of the standard CD spec, so it either means that the converter needs to be made by the same

Upgrading Regas

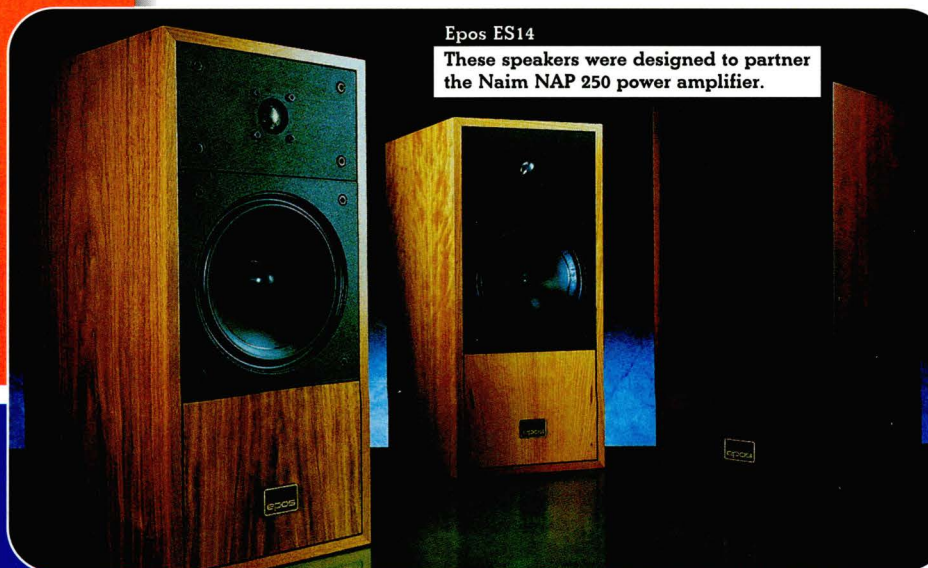
I recently upgraded my amplifier to an Orelle SA-100 and CD player to a Marantz CD-63 mkII KI Signature. My speakers are Rega Kytes which are excellent miniatures. However, I am looking for speakers with a bigger all-round performance.

I've auditioned Epos ES14s and was impressed by their control and bass extension but found the treble a bit restrained. Could you comment on matching the Epos ES14 to my system and recommend any alternatives, either larger standmounts or floorstanders? Could you also suggest any suitable cables and interconnects? My budget is about £800.

B McKoy, Bedford

Compared to the free-sounding of the Rega Kytes, many speakers will seem restrained. You may find the only speakers that suit your tastes are the bigger Rega ELA mk II floorstanders, which have a lot of the character of the Kytes. The ELA's only stumbling block is the bass, which is considered to be less controlled than that of the ES14. The ES14 was designed to partner the Naim NAP 250, which has a more forward treble than the Orelle SA-100, and it is not surprising that the ES14/SA-100 combo sounds a little treble shy. Other speaker systems that may match include the B&W CDM1, the Heybrook Quartet and the Mission 752.

When it comes to cables, using a combination of Ortofon SPK300 speaker cables and Linn Analogue interconnect cable will give good bass with a high degree of definition. This should balance out the sound well.



company as the transport (as in the Linn Karik/Numerik combination), or you have to submit your CD transport for surgery by the DAC manufacturer. Either way, you limit your options.

An inexpensive off-board DAC can upgrade a number of cheap systems. DACs like the QED Digit and Musical Fidelity's X-DAC are designed to get the best out of almost any transport. But to really improve a converter it needs a decent transport.

Gradual metamorphosis

My system comprises a Pioneer PD-S904 CD player, Musical Fidelity X-DAC D/A converter, Rotel RC995 preamplifier and RB990BX power amplifier, TDL RTL3 speakers, Cable Talk interconnect cables and AudioQuest speaker and digital cables.

I am now looking to upgrade the CD player and speakers. My shortlist for the CD player includes the Marantz CD-17 KI Signature, Meridian 506.2, Teac T1 and TD1 DAC, Rotel RDP-980 transport and RDD DAC. I intend to keep the X-DAC as I am an HDCD follower, so I need a player that can switch between outputs.

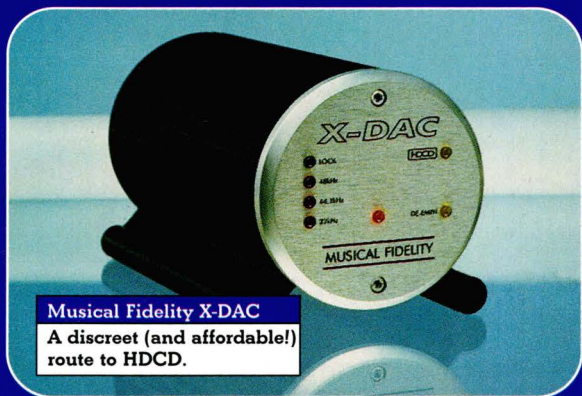
The speaker shortlist is either the TDL Studio 1m or Castle Harlech, whichever gives better bass control. My room is 5m x 3m with the speakers firing across the room. I listen to a jazz and classical diet with a light sprinkling of pop.

What do you think of my intended upgrade? Imaging, detail and fast, deep bass are my priorities.

Mr Banda, Dartford, Kent

That's a big list; you could spend a year listening to that lot and still not make a decision! The trouble is, you are casting your net too wide. Upgrading CD and speakers at the same time is never to be recommended, unless you are thinking of chucking the entire system in a skip and starting again. If you try to do both at the same time, you will end up making a compromised sound that will more than likely get worse when it comes to upgrading the amplifier at a later date.

I recommend upgrading just the CD player at the moment and when you've settled into the sound of the CD, think about a new pair of speakers (and even a new amplifier). If you intend to keep the X-DAC, I would suggest using an integrated CD player like the Marantz CD-17 KI Sig for the majority of listening and kick in the X-DAC for those HDCD moments. Live with this for six months or more before you think about replacing amps or speakers.



Musical Fidelity X-DAC
A discreet (and affordable!)
route to HDCD.

Off on a Tangent

My system comprises a Marantz CD-46 CD player, Kenwood KA-3020SE amplifier, Marantz SD-40 cassette deck and Pioneer S-PS20 speakers. I want to upgrade the speakers to enclosures that will better complement the rest of my system.

My shortlist includes the Tannoy Mercury M2s, B&W DM601 and Mordaunt-Short MS10i Pearls. Which would you suggest? Also, would speaker cables such as Cable Talk be suitable for my system? I listen to reggae, soul and jazz-funk.
NM Dexter, Kings Norton, Birmingham

Our shortlist would include these speakers, too. We would also recommend the B&W DM302, the JPW ML510, the Mission 731 Pro and the Tangent Monitor 9. Given your tastes in music, the floorstanding Tangent Monitor 9 would be the option to beat. And yes, Cable Talk 3.1 cable would work well in this system.

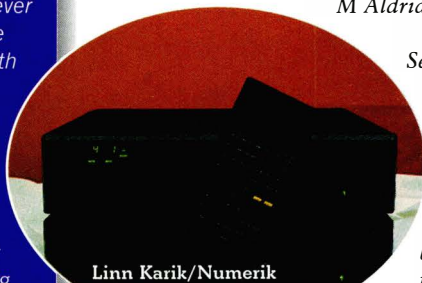
Tracking down a DAC

My current system consists of a Linn Karik CD player, Linn Kairn Pro preamp, three Linn LK100 power amps tri-wired into Linn Kaber loudspeakers, with an 11 year old Denon tape deck and tuner. I intend to have Aktiv boards installed for the speakers in the near future. All of the components were auditioned individually and purchased over six years because they sounded the best to me at the time. I obviously like the Linn sound and my listening tastes are broad, including Mary Black, Pink Floyd and Santana, classical opera and orchestral music and jazz of the Gerry Mulligan/Dave Brubeck variety.

My enquiry is concerning the selection of a DAC. I do not know where I could hear my complete shortlist of DACs in one shop or obtain a home demonstration of them. I am very aware that to audition various DACs at different shops with other makes of amps and speakers is not at all satisfactory and could lead to a very expensive mistake being made. My nearest shop only has Linn and Audiolab DACs on demo.

With a budget of about £2,000, which of the following do you suggest: Linn Numerik, DPA, Pink Triangle, Audiolab and Audio Synthesis? Do you know of a single shop where I can audition these in a system similar to mine?

M Aldridge, Northants



Linn Karik/Numerik

Linn's Numerik DAC is the logical choice for a Karik transport.

Seeing how Linn-oriented your system is, I think that the Numerik is calling you. If I had such a Linn-based system, it would be calling me. But full marks for attempting to resist that Glasgow tractor beam. Sadly, I know of no shop that stocks all the products you name, due to petty politics. So you have to eliminate your

choices slowly. Your local dealer can demonstrate the difference between Linn's Numerik and Audiolab's 8000DAC. Regardless of whether Linn or Audiolab wins out, find shops that will pit Linn equipment against the DPA, Pink and Audio Synthesis converters. Eventually, you will discover a pecking order.

One thing to consider, though. If you have to travel 100 miles for a converter that is only fractionally better than one stocked locally, remember that if anything goes wrong with the converter there is at least one 200-mile round trip involved to get it fixed. This may sway your opinion.

Selling short

My existing stereo equipment is some years old and consists of Sony products, including a CDP-101 CD player which is beyond repair and needs replacing. I have recently heard good sounds from a Denon D-F10 system with Musical Technology Raven loudspeakers.

Can you please recommend a £150-£200 CD player to fit in with the rest of my Sony equipment? I plan to purchase the Raven speakers later.

C Burgess, West Midlands

On a historical point, your old CD player is not just old, it was the first commercially-available CD player. Checking back in our files, the player cost well over £450 in 1984. Products of that time that are still available today (Linn and Michell turntables, Naim amplifiers and a handful of others) have trebled their price tags, so you can understand if we say that you are selling yourself short.

If, however, you must stay within that £150-£200 budget, the Kenwood DP-3080, Teac CDP-3450SE and Cambridge Audio CD4SE will all prove suitable in your system. I see no problems with your existing system with Musical Technology speakers as long as the amp is not proving problematic.

HELP!

Second-hand stars

Due to financial constraints, I often purchase second-hand hi-fi and therefore buy good-quality, older models at a reasonable price. My system as it stands is a Linn Axis/Akito/K9 turntable with Arcam Alpha CD player, Cyrus Two/PSX amplifier and — here's the problem — Acoustic Energy AE1 speakers on sand-filled Atacama SE24 stands. I tried these out two years ago and loved them, but since moving into a 3x4m listening room, the AE1 sounds closed-in, two dimensional and woolly, lacking in any real loudness compared to a friend's Heybrook HB3s.

I wish to obtain a full, weighty sound with good imagery, but not as bright as my friends HB3s or lacking in detail. The dilemma is this: should I spend money on an amp which will drive the AE1 easily, or do I sell up and look for speakers such as the Linn Keilidh or Rega XEL? My musical tastes cover most things except dance/techno and classical.

Tim Moore
Draycott, Staffs.

Careful positioning can bring out the best in the AE1s, but I feel that you will never be able to get the best from them in a bigger room without upgrading all your equipment, including the sources. You would be far more likely to get better results with a larger, fuller-sounding and less demanding pair of speakers.

The Linn Keilidh would be worth using with your current system, as long as the speakers are supplied with the optional plinth to help the speakers along. Add to this runs of Cable Talk 3.1 bi-wired speaker cables and the sound quality will shine through.



Acoustic Energy AE1
Demands top-quality partners to give its best performance.

Amplifier limitations

My system consists of an Arcam Delta 270 CD and a pair of Bang & Olufsen Beovox CX100 speakers, powered by an entry-level Yamaha integrated amp. Although I'm charmed with the sound, I'm convinced that the amplifier is limiting the CD's full potential, and as a result must go. My indecision lies in choosing a replacement.
Jon Reinharz, Ireland, via the Internet

You are correct, the amplifier needs to go, but I'd also suggest that you upgrade the speakers as well. We would recommend an Arcam Alpha 9, Orelle SA-100 or Pioneer A-300R Precision integrated amplifier, with a pair of Heybrook Heylios, Musical Technology Harrier or Professional Monitor Company TB1.



Krell KAV 300i

This EISA award-winning product is an ideal upgrade.

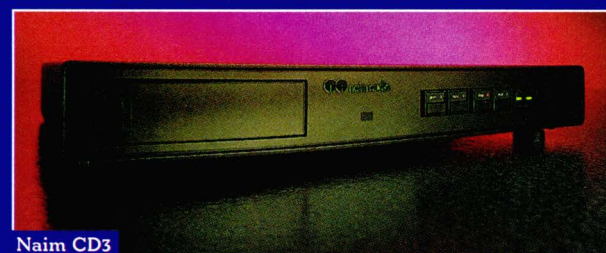
Krell does it well

I currently have a rather old system comprising a pair of IMF ALS30 speakers, a Luxman L30 amplifier and a Sony CDP-502ES CD player. I plan to upgrade slowly to start with by buying a pair of Monitor Audio Studio 20SEs, followed by the Krell KAV 300i and possibly the KAV 300cd. But would it be more sensible to keep the Sony and add a DAC? My listening room is large but unfortunately the locals are not deaf!

Neale Watson, via the Internet

Stick with the Krell kit. The Sony/DAC combo is not as likely to match a Krell amp as a matching Krell CD will. Also, upgrading in the way you suggest is not ideal, but as long as the amp isn't on its last legs, why worry?

Assuming that you have auditioned the combination first to see if it is for you, this trio should blend together well, especially when used with lengths of Transparent Audio cable when you buy the amplifier.



Naim CD3

Built to last and last — just don't ask it to make toast.

A Naim of quality

I currently have the following gear: Arcam Alpha One CD player, Pioneer A-400 amplifier, Mission 760i speakers, Chord Company Cobra Cable interconnects and Linn L20 speaker cables. This is a reasonable budget system, but now I wish to upgrade my system to the next level. As money is tight I would like to do this one step at a time.

I have about NZ\$2,000 to spend now, so do I update the CD player, and if so, what to? My friend suggests that I save up and buy a Naim system, but I'm not convinced that Naim manufactures everything well. Can you make any suggestions?
Adam Young, Wellington, New Zealand

You are right — the CD player should be the first upgrade in your system. Swapping the Alpha One for a more up-market player will make a lot of sense. NZ\$2,000 equates to about £800 in pounds Sterling, but I don't know what is available in the New Zealand market. I would suggest looking at the Orelle CD-100e and the Pioneer PD-S505 Precision CD player. You could also look at the latest Naim CD3.5 upgradable CD player. If the CD3 was anything to go by, it is well worth seeking out.

On that subject, contrary to your feelings, Naim's manufacturing standards are exemplary and the company's reputation is second only to Quad for build and after-sales service. You can argue about subjective things like sound quality and ease of use, but the kit is built to last. And last.



Tannoy D100
These make ideal speakers for smaller listening rooms.

Enclosed space

I am planning to buy a hi-fi system that would mainly be used for listening to classical music. After carefully going through a number of hi-fi magazines I came up with two systems: Marantz CD-63II-KI Signature and PM-66 KI Signature or Roksan Caspian CD Player and amplifier.

Since I have a relatively small listening room I would prefer stand-mountable speakers. Which speakers would be appropriate for those systems (up to £1,000); either stand-mountable or floor-standing?

Which of those two systems is more suitable for classical music (symphonies, delicate piano pieces, opera, vocal)? I know in the end it is my choice but I do need a shortlist.

Dario Srbic, Austria, via the Internet

Your choice of electronics is very valid. Both CD/amp combos are incredibly clean and musical for the price; they sound similar, too. We at HFC would also include the Pioneer Precision CD and amplifier, but that may muddy the waters still further.

When it comes to loudspeakers for a small room, check out some of the following bookshelves: Professional Monitor Co TB1, Tannoy D100, Rogers Studio 5 and Royd's The Sorcerer. For floorstanding speakers, try the Mission 753 Freedom, Tannoy D300 or the Monitor Audio MA703PMC.

Registering the bass

I have a CD-based system comprising the Sony CDP-715, Pioneer A-400 amp and Mordaunt-Short MS20 speakers. My problem is that I am not happy with the bass after moving to a 6x6m room.

I am thinking of adding a subwoofer, but the highly recommended REL is not available here in Manila. I am considering the Polk PSW 100 instead. Do you think this would be a good partner for my system? Or would it be better if I bought floorstanders? If so can you recommend a particular model which would retain or improve my present speaker quality and produce better bass register?

You could add the PSW 100 subwoofer if you want, but we would suggest getting a floorstanding speaker with more oomph. Try the Acoustic Energy AE109 or even its new bigger brother, the AE120 (reviewed on p93). If that doesn't fill a room with decent bass, few things will.



Stax Lambda Nova Basic
These electrostatic ear-pieces don't 'lateralise' the in-ear sound.

Digital imaging

I am looking for a headphone amplifier to drive my Sony MDR CD 3000 amplifier. I am especially interested in image processors that create a more visual soundstage between the ears.

The source is a Pioneer D-05 DAT player, with tapes digitally recorded from my Philips CD 950 and Monster Datalink 100 interconnect. I may add an outboard DAC later.

Anthony Giakanikhs, Athens, Greece

We would exercise some caution when it comes to using processors for headphones. Most headphones 'lateralise' the sound, creating an in-head orchestra thanks to having speakers less than a centimetre from the ear. To get away from this either

takes digital signal processing or electrostatic ear-pieces such as the £450 Stax Lambda Nova Basic, which is a fine example of the breed.

DSP by contrast, often detracts as much as it adds. Unless you want to add Dolby Pro-Logic home cinema sound with the Sennheiser Lucas, don't bother.

Under starter's orders

I am about to buy a separates system for the first time and would like to stick to a budget of £500 excluding interconnects/cables/stands. I am considering buying a Marantz CD-63SE CD player, Harman Kardon HK1400 amplifier and Mordaunt Short MS25i speakers.

I have a wide taste in music but particularly like listening to acoustic guitar (especially Richard Thompson) and the system would be in a room about 5m x 4m. Would this be a suitable starter kit? It would cost £480 from Richer Sounds this month.

If not, I'd really welcome your suggestions (especially since my wife would prefer shelf speakers and not floorstanders). Hope you can help me!

Brian Jewitt, via the Internet

Yes, this would be a fine starter system, although perhaps you should think about using a smaller set of speakers than the MS25is. Perhaps if you opt for the smaller MS10i loudspeakers, you will trim the budget still further.

But, just because the MS10i speakers are called bookshelf speakers, don't use them on the average bookshelf. Instead, treat yourself to a set of high-quality speaker wall-brackets from Sound Organisation and set them at sofa-eye-level; have them about 2-3m apart on the same load-bearing wall.

From there, hook up the system with Gale XL315 speaker cable and Cambridge Audio Studio Reference interconnect cables and the complete Richer outfit will sound superb.



Mordaunt-Short MS10i
Bookshelf speakers need proper stands to sit on, rather than shelves!



Acoustic Energy AE120
See p93 for our review.

Resolving power

I have a Denon AVR3600 surround integrated amp and a Denon DCD2800AL CD player, paired with Castle's Howard S2 speakers. I am using Nordost Blue Angel interconnect and Nordost flat cable for the speakers. How would you rate these components?

I find that some music sounds better, and of course the CD recording has a direct effect. I am considering buying a DAC; what is your recommendation? Also if I were to buy a pre and power amplifier to add to this system, what would be the ideal components?

Jay Sanaknaki, Singapore

We cannot get hold of either of these Denon products in the UK, but both should be good examples. The Castle Howard S2 has a rich and laid back balance and the Nordost cables are bright and detailed.

The fact that some recordings sound better serves to suggest that your system has good resolving power. Don't try to find a system that is so intrusive that it papers over the intrinsic sound quality of the recording.

If you are using an AV amplifier, your system would perform better with a dedicated stereo pre/power combination — the Arcam Alpha 9 and 9P or the ECA Vista and Lectern would make a lot of sense.

Finally, most DACs fall into one of two categories: either designed to match top-flight CD transports, or to wake and shake up a cheap and cheerful transport. Try the Cambridge DACMagic 2 or Musical Fidelity X-DAC.



ECA Vista/Lectern
An ideal complement to a pre-existing AV amp.

HINTS & TIPS

TESTING TESTING...

Jimmy Hughes tries out the new XLO Reference Recording test CD

Using a well-produced test disc can tell you a lot about how your system is performing, and whether or not there are any weak areas that need attending to. Naturally it's vital your system sounds satisfying when playing music, not just test tones. Yet certain non-musical tests may prove more useful when trying to home in on critical areas.

Certainly, I found the XLO/Reference Recordings Test & Burn-In CD educational. Listening first to the left, right, and centre-channel identification tracks, I felt my system could have located the speaking voice more solidly at left/right extremes. Since I can't move my loudspeakers any further apart, I tried moving some screens I'd placed near the speakers (see *HFC* 167, p39) to increase their locational accuracy.

It worked; the result was a firmer, wider stereo soundstage,



Test & Burn-In CD (front)
Will reveal hidden depths in your system!

with more solid left/right placement of voices and instruments. Centre images were nicely defined, but then I'd expect as much given that I use a small centre speaker to help bolster middle placement.

But what came as a surprise was the out-of-phase test, which really did sound disembodied and hollow, as it should. Why the surprise? Well, because left and right placement of images had not been pin-point sharp, I only expected a subtle difference between the centre mono in-phase and out-of-phase tracks.

In my experience, only systems that image very sharply make out-of-phase errors show up positively. As my reverse speaker arrangement produces a blended, more homogenous sound, I thought differences between in and out-of-phase probably wouldn't show up as obviously as they might.

But they did! I scratched my head for an explanation, then it dawned; the two Rel subs I use in a 'stereo' configuration would highlight such phase errors.

This is because phase differences grow more audible as reproduced wavelengths grow longer. It's far easier to tell when two bass units are out of phase with each other, than two tweeters. Indeed, with the latter it can sometimes be very hard to tell at all — even for those who know exactly what to listen for.

One piece of advice given on the XLO disc is to position the loudspeakers to achieve the maximum 'disembodied' effect on the out-of-phase test. The reasoning is: you'll achieve better imaging and stereo separation when listening with the speakers back in phase again.

In other words, the worse it is when it's out of phase, the better it'll be when it's back in phase. However, taken to extremes, you may find very widely-spaced speakers give the most disembodied result played out-of-phase, but that they create a 'hole in the middle' effect (weak centre image) on normal in-phase stereo.

Also included are some burn-in and demagnetization tracks which help to improve the sound of your system. I left the burn-in track on Repeat overnight at a moderate volume, and felt the sound improved in terms of overall tightness and control when I next listened.

The XLO Reference Recordings CD is HDCD compatible and pressed on a 24k gold disc. It is available from Wollaton Audio (0115) 928 4147 and costs £25.

The finest hi-fi magazine

HI-FI CHOICE



THE MAG

CONTENTS

MAY 1997 ISSUE 166

REGULARS

Update
Election? Schmelection! We've been to Bristol and we got the news. All the latest from the show as well as locations further afield.

Instant Systems
Alan Sircom gets to grips with a pair of £300 separates systems. The question is, can you get real hi-fi for the price of a telly?



REVIEWS

[Acurus ACD11](#)

[Aeon Acoustics Linear](#)

[AMC 3025a](#)

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Have you ever wondered...

- 1 Which is the most expensive amplifier in the World?
- 2 How many drive units in the Mission 753 Freedom?
- 3 What is the name of Benz-Micro's most expensive cartridge?
- 4 What is the best CD player for £350 or under?

Find answers NOW* at Hi-Fi Choice Online, the fact-packed NEW web-site from the makers of the Finest Hi-Fi Magazine In The World.

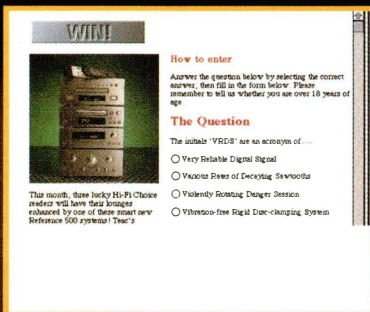
*Answers at the bottom of the page for those without web access.

1 The Audio Note Caku-On, at a basic price of £159,500, is probably the most expensive commercially manufactured amplifier package in the world. And it's only a power amp. 2 Five drive units in total, four 130mm plasterboard paper, long-throw mid-bass units, and a 27mm silk-dome tweeter. 3 Benz-Micro's most expensive cartridge is the Ruby Clear Air moving-coil, priced at £1,600 and available from AudioTracks in the UK. 4 One of the best-value CD players, priced below £350 is the Cambridge Audio CD4SE, which received an IFC First Buy in issue 163. We'll assess the latest crop budget CDs in our December 1997 issue.

Answers:

in the world hits the web!

Our brand-new, professionally designed web-site is the perfect complement to Hi-Fi Choice's printed edition. Just look at what we're offering!



WIN!

How to enter
Answer the question below by selecting the correct answer, then fill in the form below. Please remember to fill us whether you are over 18 years of age.

The Question
The subtle 'VRDS' are an acronym of...

- Very Reliable Digital Signal
- Vicious Power of Destroying Stereoviews
- Violently Rotating Danger: Sesson
- Vibration-free Right Dac-clamping System

This month, five lucky Hi-Fi Choice readers will have their prizes enhanced by one of these smart new Reference 500 systems! Treat!

► **Interactive Hi-Fi Buying Guide** The ultimate hi-fi buying resource, including latest reviews and information from our magazine's Price Guide and Directory sections. Our easily-searched but powerful database is truly the ultimate hi-fi buying guide anywhere in the world!



REVIEWS ◀◀SEARCH▶▶

Click on the hot links to check out the latest products, the table below to browse by category or hit the search button for something more specific.

- Amplifiers
- Cassettes Decks
- Loudspeakers
- Turntables
- Cables
- CD Players
- Tuners
- Cartridges
- Headphones
- Stands & Supports

LATEST PRODUCT REVIEWS

- Acoustic ACD11
- Aeon Acoustic Linear
- AMS 3025a
- AMS C06
- AMS T1
- Acorn Akasha?
- BoW Hauling

► **Latest Hi-Fi News**
Regularly updated stories about hi-fi technology and the hottest new products.



NEWS

MD shrinks again
While announcing a plethora of widescreen and digital TV products, Sony celebrated MiniDisc's 10th birthday by launching the world's smallest MD Walkman, the £280 MD-E30. This 7g-gram player claims to be the thinnest and lightest md player on the market, and features a mini LCD display on player and earphone remote.

JBL Speakers out
JBL has a pair of a new 5.1-channel speaker systems. The £499.99 Control 42 system uses five CM42 satellites and a 6.5 inch active Sub 6 for the bass. The £699.99 Control 52 goes the extra with a 10 inch active sub, Sub 10, and CM52 sats with higher 100 Watt power handling.

► **Subscriptions & Mail Order** Subscribe to Hi-Fi Choice on-line, and access special offers on hi-fi gear and accessories, available exclusively to Web-site visitors.



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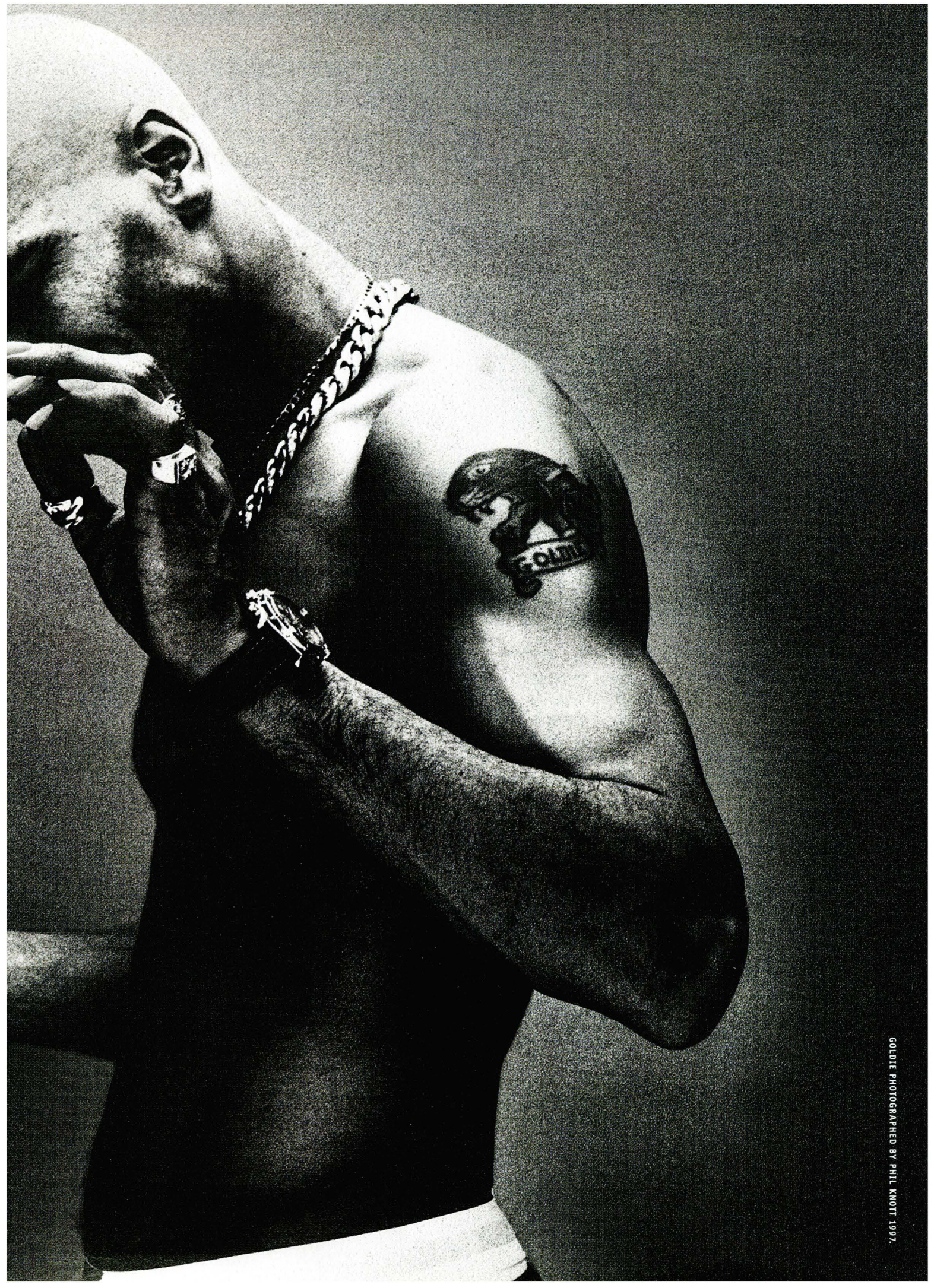
"How to subscribe to Hi-Fi Choice and claim your **FREE** Vivanco headphones!"

When you subscribe to Hi-Fi Choice today you'll receive these FREE Vivanco SP50 headphones, worth £24.99. And as they've been voted a Hi-Fi Choice Best Buy you're guaranteed quality listening with your FREE gift!

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Technics THE CLOSEST YOU'LL GET TO THE SOUND IN HIS HEAD.



GOLDIE PHOTOGRAPHED BY PHIL KNOTT 1997.

Europe's Hi-Fi Awards



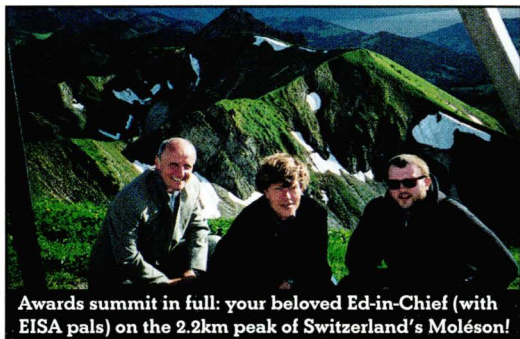
Your essential guide to this year's best kit!

Dear Reader,

Magazine awards are ten-a-penny these days — but which ones can you trust? All too many 'winning products' are decided by politically-minded cabals in smoke-filled rooms, behind locked doors. But all of EISA's Awards are decided by a democratic process of nomination and voting, ensuring that the winners are truly the favourites of European consumers, not business interests! *Hi-Fi Choice* has exclusive rights to be the UK's hi-fi magazine in EISA, and to report the Awards every year.

EISA is now the biggest European Awards organisation for the consumers it serves. It is often imitated, but never equalled, and this year's Awards presentation ceremony (to be held during the Funkausstellung show in Berlin) will be bigger than ever. A new highlight will be an auction of winning products, kindly donated by manufacturers, in aid of the children's charity UNICEF.

So welcome once again to the hi-fi and home cinema awards you can trust. Our



Awards summit in full: your beloved Ed-in-Chief (with EISA pals) on the 2.2km peak of Switzerland's Moléson!

congratulations to all the well-deserving winners — and I hope you have the opportunity to hear (or see) some of them in action. Maybe in your own system one day!

Stan Vincent

ATW "Stan" Vincent
Editor-in-Chief

MAGAZINES IN EISA'S AUDIO AWARDS PANEL

Alta Fidelidad	Spain
Audio	Portugal
Audio	Poland
Audio Prestige	France
Audio Review	Italy
Audio Video	Norway
Hi-Fi & Elektronik	Denmark
Hi-Fi Choice	UK
Hi-Fi Video	France
Home Entertainment	UK
Home Theatre	Italy
Media Expert	Switzerland
Media Totaal	Netherlands
Multimedia & Elektronik	Austria
Sound & Hi-Fi	Greece
Stereo	Germany
Stereo Video	Czech Republic
Stereo Video Russia	Russia
Sztereo	Hungary



Awards photos:
Photostudio De Boer & Geesink, Thesi Geesink, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.



WHAT IS EISA?

EISA, the European Imaging & Sound Association, exists to promote photography, video, hi-fi and home cinema equipment throughout Europe. Its members are specialist consumer magazines serving those industries — in total, there are 35 magazines, from 18 countries spread across Europe from Portugal to Russia.

The origins of EISA date back to 1982, when five European photo magazines came together to select a Camera of the Year. This award was received extremely well by both consumers and manufacturers, so much so that the learned panel started to bestow favours on other items of photographic equipment, and slowly added more magazines to the quorum. In 1989 EISA (as it is known today) was born, to recognise excellence in photography, hi-fi and video equipment.

Nowadays there are three European Awards Panels (one for each product category), and on the European Audio Panel, *Hi-Fi Choice* (together with its sister title *Home Entertainment*) is one of 19 magazines from 17 European countries.

We are the sole UK representatives, and have been since 1993. And this year, in addition to its role on the Audio panel, *Home Entertainment* has become the UK representative on EISA's Video Awards panel, following the resignation of *Video Camera* magazine.

WHICH PRODUCTS ARE ELIGIBLE TO BE NOMINATED FOR AN AWARD?

All products nominated must be in production, and must have been available for evaluation to the majority of panel members. They must be available for sale to the general public in most European countries by 15 August in the year of the Awards. Each award is valid from 15 June one year to 14 June the next.

HOW DO THE JUDGES DECIDE ON THE WINNERS?

In late Spring, each member magazine of the European Audio Panel (EAP) proposes its own favoured products to be shortlisted for an Award. In June, the Editors-in-Chief of those member magazines come together in Geneva to debate the selections proposed, then they vote on the short-list, and select the winners in each category.

HOW DO I USE THE EISA AWARDS TO BUY EQUIPMENT?

While every winning product embodies excellence and quality in equal measure, it will not automatically combine with another harmoniously to make up a great system. The secret of successful hi-fi system building is to use these Awards as the starting point for your choices. Then you should rely on the skills of your local specialist dealer, who will be able to establish your tastes and build you a great-sounding rig! To find your nearest specialist hi-fi dealer, just turn to our Dealer Directory on page 139. Enjoy!

EISA AWARDS IN OTHER CATEGORIES

PHOTO AWARDS

Camera	Nikon F5
Compact Camera	Olympus Mju II
APS Camera	Canon EOS IX
Colour Film	Kodak Royal Gold 100, 200, 400
Lens	Tamron SP 90mm f2.8 Macro
B&W Product	Ilford Multigrade FB Warmtone
Digital Camera	Fujix DS-300
Digital Printer	Epson Stylus Photo
Scanner	Olympus ES-10

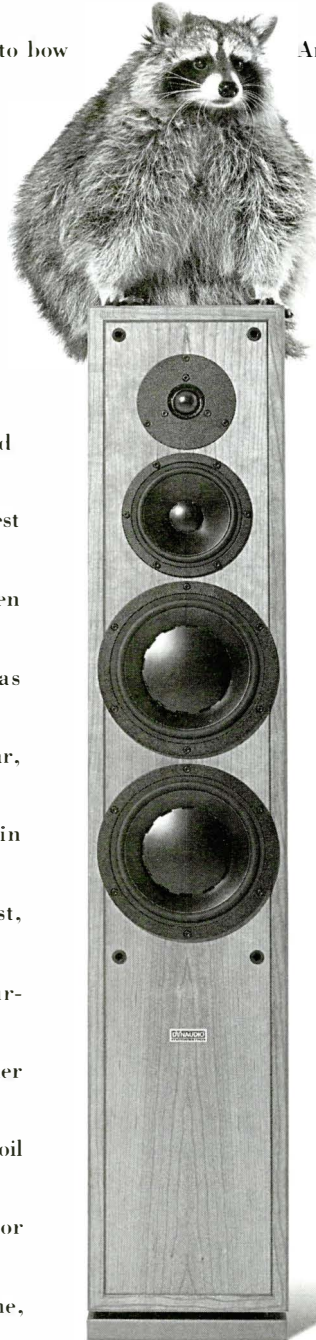
VIDEO AWARDS*

Television	JVC AV-32WP2
Digital Camcorder	JVC GR-DVX
Family Camcorder	Canon UC-X15Hi
Video Recorder	Philips VR 969
Satellite Receiver	Nokia MediaMaster 9500S
Multimedia Product	Hitachi MPEG Camera
Video Innovation	Sony FD Trinitron Wide

* (reported in September/October issue of *Home Entertainment* magazine)

HTTP://WWW.DYNAUDIO.COM

As you may have noticed, our ads tend to have answers for just about everything. Like where to bow your head to at sunset (Skanderborg, Denmark, the one and only home of our famous speakers, which lies exactly east of Aanoraaq, Greenland), whom to worship on hazy, lazy, music-filled Sunday afternoons (may we humbly suggest our chief tester Erik 'The Ear' Nielsen whose fame in audiophile circles has reached that of any given dead pop star, although he hasn't been sighted in supermarkets lately) or, last but not least, how to build the penultimate, unsurmountable, unbelievably true loudspeaker (by lovingly crafting it around a voice coil three times bigger than the competition, or twice the size of Josef Stalin). This time, we're just telling you what to do tonight. Switch off your



beloved amps! Turn on the bloody computer again. And visit us at our new and extremely knowledgeable internet site on the WorldWideWait (it's at <http://www.dynaudio.com>, just in case you're the type who doesn't read headlines). Where, besides having tremendous amounts of fun, you will find some very good reasons why our speakers sound so open, airy and natural. How we manage to get such a well-defined and powerful bass. And, of course, some hints on why our speakers are - quote - "imaging like a bastard!" Should you happen to not have an internet access, you may contact us directly for your free personal snail-mail copy of our "Book of Truth" at (0171) 378 975 0. And don't forget to have a close look at our Contour 3 (pictured here with the world's first famous works raccoon, Knudsen) which is so brand new you won't find it even on the net. :)

DYNAUDIO
AUTHENTIC FIDELITY

DANES DON'T LIE.™



EUROPEAN AMPLIFIER OF THE YEAR '97-'98

Marantz PM-66 K I-Sig

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"The Marantz PM-66 K I-Signature enhances the dual-mono circuitry of the PM-66SE, with a toroidal transformer, increased power-supply reservoir capacity, and a copper-plated chassis. Power output has increased to almost 80 Watts (eight Ohms), and this is underpinned by robust current delivery to satisfy the most demanding loudspeakers. The PM-66 K I-Signature is blessed with a precise, articulate sound, good musical timing and convincing soundstaging. It also offers the convenience of remote control, but remains affordably priced."

WHAT WE SAY

Marantz's PM-66SE made big waves when it acquired K I-Signature status and hit the big time with a *Hi-Fi Choice* Best Buy in issue 168. The conjoined K and I are the initials of Marantz design guru Ken Ishiwata, who uses selected components to give the K I-Signature range an unfair advantage over its competitors.

The PM-66 K I-Sig is an integrated design with remote control and lashings of copper plating on its inside to keep eddy currents at bay. The resulting sound-quality is in a different league to much of the competition, the amp majoring on articulation and timing, giving music a secure sense of pitch and integrity.

Only the light bass hints that you're listening to an affordable amp – and this is only because the timing and soundstaging are so strong.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Marantz PM-66 K I-Sig

Price £399.90

Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice*
July/August 1997 (issue 168)

Distribution Marantz Hi-Fi
UK Ltd ☎ (01753) 680868

Krell's Angels prize possessions

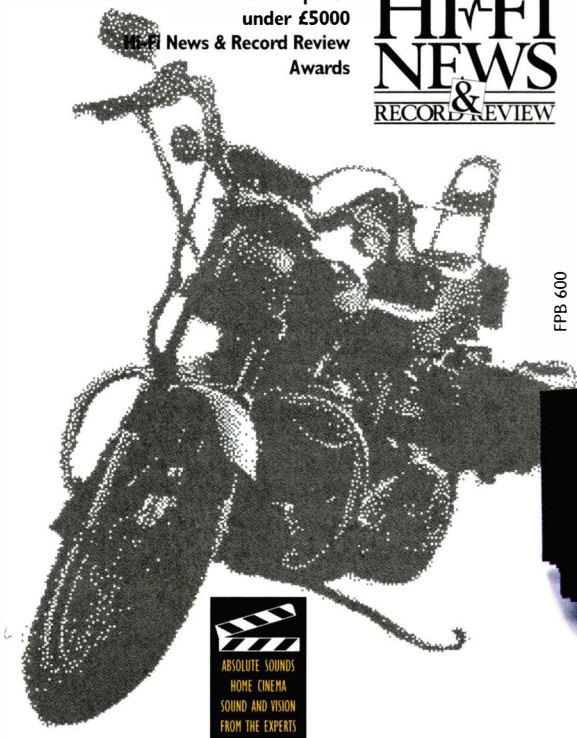
AAHEA Golden Note Awards '96
Krell Reference 64 — Best digital
converter design
Krell KPS 20iI — Best digital
source design



Krell KAV-300i — Winner EISA
European High-End
Audio '96-'97



Krell KAV-300i — Best amplifier
under £5000
Hi-Fi News & Record Review
Awards



The **Krell Playback System KPS 20i** sets a totally new standard in digital playback. The KPS 20i is the reference standard integrated transport/digital processor that beats the performance of separates. With balanced DACs, fully discrete output stages and a true high-end line level stage, the 20i brings the highest degree of musical integrity to CD playback.

The Krell Playback System is also available in transport only (**KPS 20t**) and full remote control integrated transport/processor versions (**KPS 20i/I**). Requiring no preamplifier,



KPS 20i

the KPS 20i/I can be partnered with just a Krell power amplifier for the ultimate in high-end performance. The **KPS 30i** high-quality integrated CD transport and convertor is the latest addition to the Playback System. Krell amplifiers are known the world over as the very finest solid-state designs.

The new range of **Full Power Balanced** designs looks set to re-write history. First implemented in the KRC-3 preamp, current mode gain design has led to the Full Power Balanced amplifiers. Unique in the audio industry, current mode gain is a faster, more linear method of amplification achieved by designing gain stages that operate in the current and not the voltage domain. With fully regulated outputs, pure Class A operation, true balanced configuration for a cleaner, more secure relationship between the loudspeaker and the amplifier's driving force, Sustained Plateau Bias II, direct coupled signal paths and full complementary circuits the FPB amplifiers stand at the very edge of musical technology. Available in 600, 300 and 200-watt outputs each power amplifier (**FPB-600**, **FPB-300** and **FPB-200**) uses output devices manufactured exclusively for Krell by Motorola. The result is an unprecedented level of speed, current drive and musical accuracy, in other words the FPB amps are musical, fast and incredibly strong. Martin Colloms, reviewing the FPB-300 in **Hi-Fi News** (Dec 1996) said it 'must be regarded as a reference, regardless of considerations of price and power'. He concluded that Krell's zero feedback design carries with it 'greater neutrality and musicality' yet making no concessions to the 'traditional amplifier virtues of blockbuster bass, huge power and adverse load driving muscle'.

The natural partner for the FPB range is the Krell **KRC-HR** High Resolution Remote Controlled Preamplifier which offers uncompromised audiophile sound with ease of operation. Digital logic circuits operate gold-contact relays for positive switching with absolute signal integrity. Power supply and gain stages are refinements of classic Krell Class A complimentary circuits with extraordinary levels of transparency and resolution.

Supporting Krell's outstanding **AV Cinema System Controller** (Dolby Pro-Logic, THX, AC-3) are Krell AV amplifiers — a range of 100 watt per channel multi-channel amplifiers (the **KAV-500/3**, **14** and **15**), the 2, 3 and 4-channel amplifiers can be extended with an optional add-on channel (the **KAV-500 Rail**).

The **KAV-300i** an integrated two-channel 150 watt amplifier — Krell's first integrated — was launched alongside the AV power amps and has been wildly received, cleaning up awards around the world. This fully discrete, wide-bandwidth, low-feedback design features full Class A dual mono output stage. Its supplied remote control give access to the basic functions of Krell CD players. In fact, a matching CD player is shortly to be launched. The **KAV-300cd** (hoped to retail at £3499) features a Teac CMK-4 drawer loading mechanism, HDCD, 2 x 20 bit Burr-Browns DACs, with Class A direct coupled output stages feeding balanced and single ended outputs.

A stand alone power amplifier the **KAV-250a** will be available April/May '97 offering 250 watt with at a projected price of £3290. A matching preamplifier, designated **KAV-250p**, will be available at the same time at the fantastic price of £1990. The KAV 250p features one balanced input, three single ended inputs and one tape loop.

One single ended input can be configured as a theatre throughput for use in surround sound applications. Single ended and balanced outputs are offered.

To discover where Krell components can work for you—contact Absolute Sounds.

FPB 600



Absolute Sounds
58 Durham Road
London SW20 0DE
Tel 0181-947 5047
Fax 0181-879 7962

Email 73064,1710@compuserve.com



EUROPEAN AUDIO INNOVATION OF THE YEAR '97-'98

Meridian 518

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"This incredibly versatile unit performs unique and highly configurable signal processing in the digital domain. It defies description in traditional hi-fi terms, since it has numerous rôles, of which recording processor and digital preamplifier are just two.

"Another key feature is its ability to digitally enhance the playback of pre-recorded material from digital sources. The Meridian 518 offers audiophiles the first chance to benefit from technology until now restricted to professional recording studios."

WHAT WE SAY

The Meridian 518 is the kind of product that leaves reviewers speechless and their wallets light of the asking price. When *Choice* reviewer Jimmy Hughes was commissioned to write about it, he was smitten to the extent of buying the review sample. A similar fate befell John Atkinson, Editor of the redoubtable *Stereophile* magazine in the US.

Paul Miller's April 1997 test of the 518 concluded that its ability to act as mastering processor, resolution enhancer, digital preamplifier and all-round multi-media workstation was something rather special. Employing myriad noise-shaping algorithms, dither modes and recording-studio-class digital signal processing, the Meridian 518 takes digital audio to new heights.

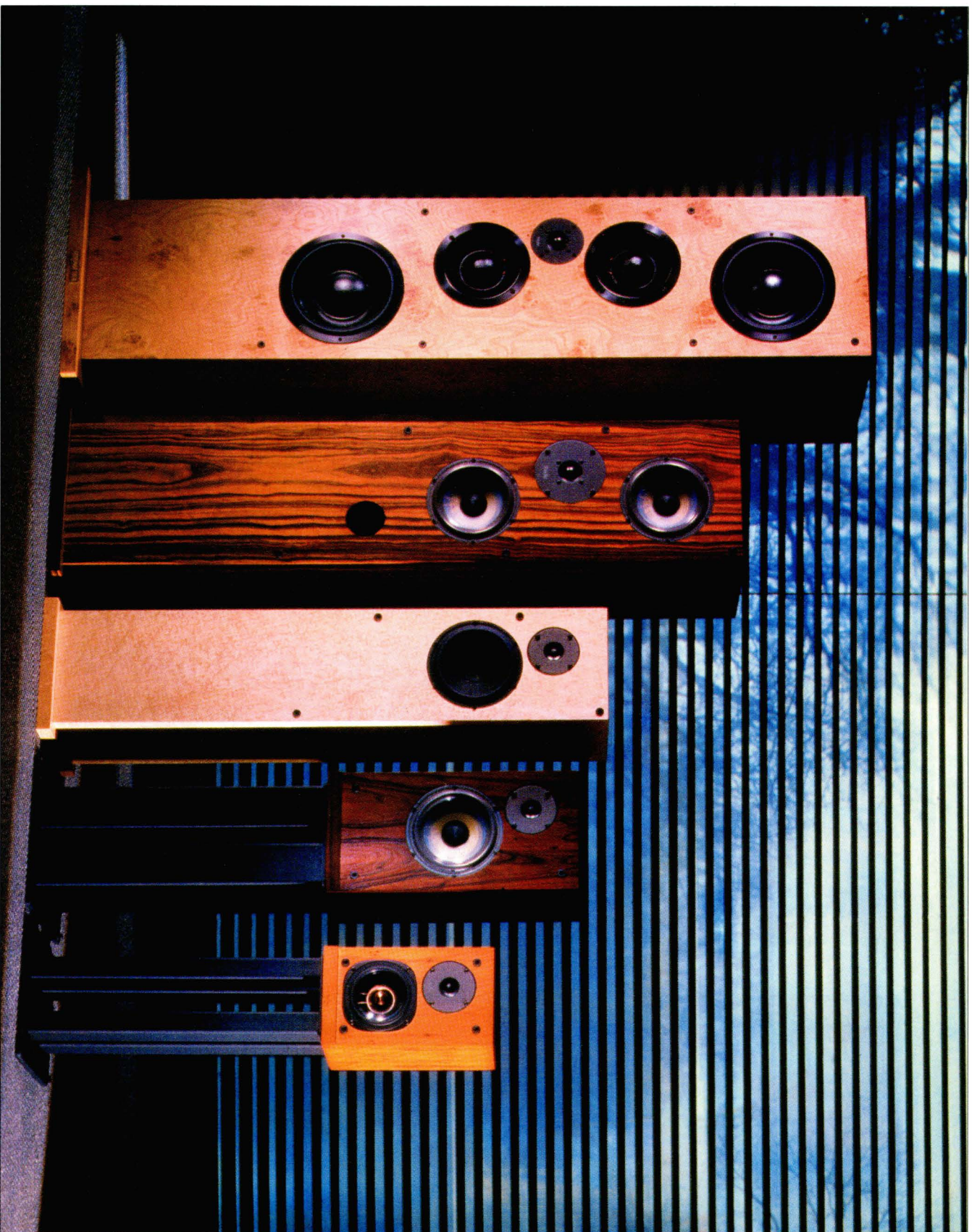
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Meridian 518

Price £925.00

Reviewed *Hi-Fi Choice* April 1997 (issue 165)

Distribution Meridian Audio Ltd ☎ (01480) 434334



THE RESPONSE RANGE

 **ProAc**
Perfectly Natural



EUROPEAN AUDIO RECORDER OF THE YEAR '97-'98

Sony MDS-JA50ES

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"With this component, MiniDisc-recorded sound quality is finally beginning to catch up with CD. This is due to the latest version of the MiniDisc recording system, ATRAC 4.5, whose performance here is greatly improved.

"In common with Sony's latest CD players, the MDS-JA50ES incorporates variable-coefficient digital filters that can tailor sound to a listener's preference. Users may record from 16-bit or 20-bit digital sources, and will welcome the unit's extensive editing and track-management features."

WHAT WE SAY

Sony's MDS-JA50ES is the premium MD recorder in Sony's extensive range. Originally it was not intended for the UK; but at the eleventh hour Sony had a change of heart and the unit will be available in the UK to order only.

We've yet to review the JA50ES, but our EISA colleagues on the German magazine Stereo have checked it out, and they say: "It's the best-sounding MD recorder we've ever tested! In both dynamics and space it was better than the DAT recorder we compared it with." The MDS-JA50ES features a variable coefficient filter like the latest Sony CD players. Its 20-bit D/A and A/D circuits can handle either 16 or 20-bit data and time/curve adjustable fading allows you to make very slick compilations.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Sony MDS-JA50ES

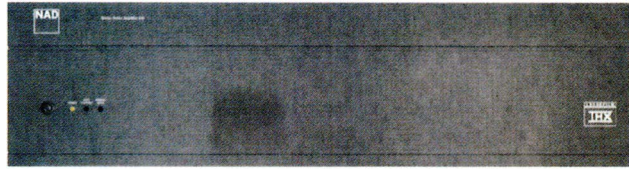
Price ≤£1,500 (based on German price)

Reviewed Forthcoming Issue

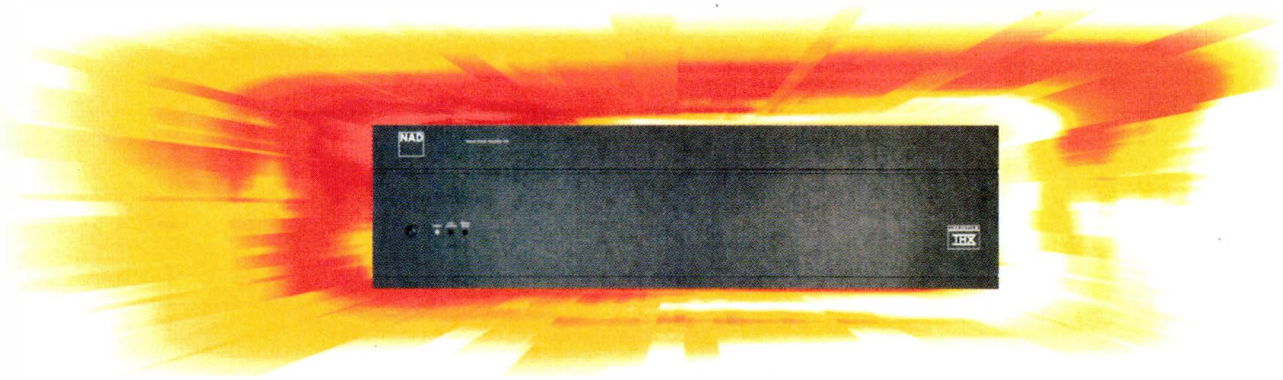
Distribution Sony UK Ltd

☎ (0990) 111 999

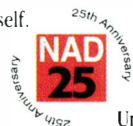
Looks can be deceiving...



...don't trust them.



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audioclub



EUROPEAN CAR AUDIO SYSTEM OF THE YEAR '97-'98

Clarion VRX 8370R

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"The Clarion VRX 8370R is an exciting new product that proves In-Car Entertainment is no longer confined to audio playback alone. Its unique feature is a miniature LCD television screen, which is concealed within the unit's DIN-size fascia until required. With just one touch of a button the screen extends automatically. There are inputs for both audio and video resources, as well as an RDS radio tuner and the facility to control a CD or MiniDisc autochanger. A credit-card-sized remote control adds a touch of luxury, while a detachable front panel aims to foil thieves."

WHAT WE SAY

Clarion's current flagship is not so much an in-car hi-fi system as a complete audio/video system for the car. The new VRX 8370R has a hideaway 130mm LCD colour screen that flips into place at the touch of a button. This screen can be used to replay TV pictures, radio text, video recordings, computer games, and soon it will display route maps and directions in conjunction with a forthcoming navigation system being designed in association with Bosch.

Naturally, it comes complete with an RDS/EON-equipped AM/FM tuner and CD changer control. It can be used with a rear-view camera and, best of all, this technology fits discreetly into a standard DIN slot. The face-off front panel aims to minimise the likelihood of theft – don't leave it in the glove compartment!

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Clarion VRX 8370R

Price £1,199.00

Reviewed Forthcoming Issue

Distribution Clarion (GB) Ltd

☎ (01793) 870400

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT TECHNOLOGY IS TRANSFORMING HI-FI ON A DAILY BASIS



THERE IS NO BAD NEWS.

You've thought long and hard about choosing the right sound system. You think you've found what you're looking for. It looks great. It sounds even better. And it's within your budget. So how come you still have that niggling doubt in the back of your mind? Simple. Before you make your final decision, you want to be sure that a few years down the line, you're not going to regret it. Unlike most hi-fi manufacturers, we understand completely. We've already set the standard by offering legendary sound

quality in every price category. Now we've completely rewritten the rules. Because practically every piece of Arcam equipment now comes with something that will radically change the way you buy hi-fi. A set of pre-defined upgrade paths that allow you to upgrade your sound system just as soon as technology (or your wallet) allows. If you'd like to hear more about Arcam's revolutionary upgradeable components, call now on **(01223) 203203**.

ARCAM

Please send me the name of my nearest authorised dealer and information on:

Arcam amplifiers **Arcam CD players & DACs** **Arcam tuners** **Arcam home theatre** **all Arcam products**

Title First Name(s)

Surname

Address

Postcode

In Australia: Stolmack Audio Pty. Ltd., P.O. Box 162, Lindfield, N.S.W., 2070. Tel: (612) 9416 4799.

In Canada: Emerald Audio Resources, R.R.1, Palgrave, Ontario, LON 1P0. Tel: (905) 880 7170.

In New Zealand: Avalon Audio, 587 Mount Eden Rd., Auckland. Tel: (09) 369 9000.

In South Africa: Hi-Fi Specialists, Durban Road 155, Bellville. 7535. Tel: (021) 946 1441.

In USA: Audiophile Systems Ltd., 8709 Castle Park Drive, Indianapolis, Indiana 46256. Tel:(317) 849 7103.

BadBY(HFC 10/97)

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EUROPEAN CD PLAYER OF THE YEAR '97-'98

Sony CDP-XA50ES

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"In the CDP-XA50ES Sony has created a CD player that is convincing in every respect. It is immaculately crafted and luxuriously equipped; and, thanks to variable-coefficient digital filters, offers sound quality that has been previously unavailable in players of this class.

"It combines mechanical integrity and audiophile refinement in perfect proportions."

WHAT WE SAY

The CDP-XA50ES is Sony's range-topping CD player in Europe for 1997-1998. Like the MDS-JA50ES (page 47), it was not scheduled for UK distribution, but Sony has decided that it will be available here by order. More readily available is a specially-tuned version of Sony's CDP-XA20ES CD player, whose £450 price-ticket will probably be half that of the Sony 'XA50ES.

For obvious reasons we haven't reviewed this unit, but the German magazine *Stereo* said this:

"The variable digital filters have tremendous influence on the sound quality. Audiophile listeners will prefer filters One and Two; number One offers very realistic portrayal of acoustics, excellent tone colours and dynamics; while number Two offers a less accurate but very dynamic sound that complements jazz and pop music." Note that the variable coefficient filter has nine settings instead of the four offered on Sony's 'X3000ES, tested (and Best Buys) in *HFC* 169.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Sony CDP-XA50ES

Price ≤£1,000 (based on German price)

Reviewed Forthcoming Issue

Distribution Sony UK Ltd ☎ (0990) 111 999

AT NAIM NOTHING HAS BEEN
ALLOWED TO STAND IN THE WAY OF
MUSICAL PERFORMANCE.

When it comes to musical performance Naim always hits the right note. We design and manufacture what we believe to be the finest sounding range of audio equipment available anywhere. And this requires a unique approach to research, design and construction, to achieve the standards that our customers expect. A standard where every product has no equal in its respective class. A standard that we can only achieve by allowing nothing to stand in our way.



naim

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WEB SITE: <http://www.naim-audio.com>



EUROPEAN COMPACT SYSTEM OF THE YEAR '97-'98

Pioneer FX-Series

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"They say less is more, but in the case of the Pioneer FX-Series more can be less – at least when it comes to size!

"The FX combines stylish, classic design with numerous high-tech touches, such as a completely digital link between the separate components, a CD player incorporating Pioneer's acclaimed Legato-Link technology, small but effective 'Power Bass' loudspeakers, and the opportunity to add a matching MiniDisc recorder or auto-reverse tape deck to the standard complement."

WHAT WE SAY

There are three basic FX-Series packages. The FX-1 (£499.95) includes the SX-F21 RDS receiver with built in Legato Link DACs, and the PD-F21 CD transport. An extra £150 adds the T-F21 horizontal loading cassette recorder, making up the FX-1T package; while for a premium of £400 you can have the MJ-F21 MD recorder, making up the FX-1MD package.

Matching two-way speakers are the S-F21 (£100 per pair), and a matching equipment rack is the B-F21 (£99.95).

The unique feature of the FX-Series is without doubt its optical digital interconnection system that links all FX-Series components – and promises future upgradability.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Pioneer FX Series

Price £499.95 (FX-1, excl. spkrs)

Reviewed Forthcoming Issue

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A-100 Integrated Amplifier

- 100 WPC into 8 Ohms
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- Integrated/ Pre/ Power Amp/ AV mode
- R.R.P. £650



P-150 Power Amplifier

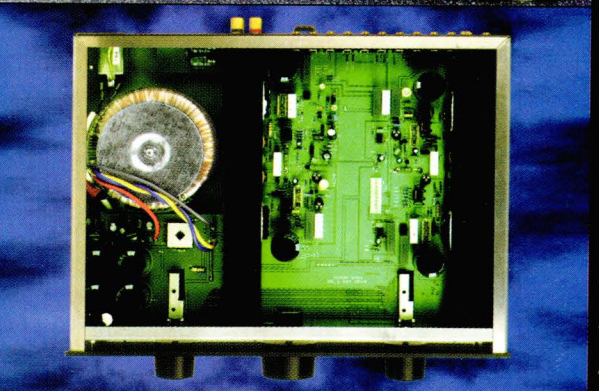
- 150 WPC into 8 Ohms
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- 450 WPC Bridged into 8 ohms
- R.R.P. £650



- Stereo Power
- Bi-Ampable
- Bridgeable as monoblocks
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- Ultra Low Distortion

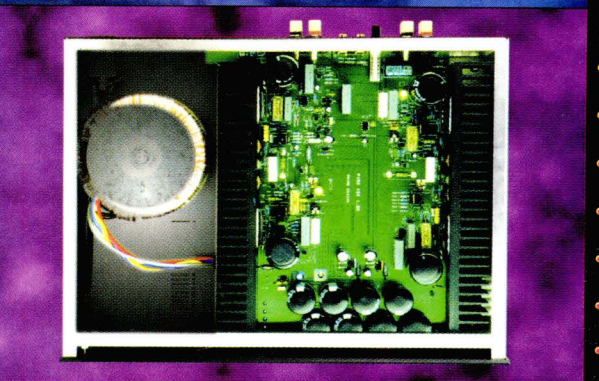


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- Audiophile Grade Components
- Suitable for Bi/ Tri/ Quad Amping
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EUROPEAN HIGH END AUDIO OF THE YEAR '97-'98

Proceed CDP

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"The Proceed brand offers an affordable taste of audiophile sophistication. The new CDP CD player blends technologies from Proceed's CDD transport and DAP digital processor, with those from Mark Levinson's No. 39 integrated player. Custom-engineered digital filters complement Analog Devices' 18-bit DACs, leading to very low jitter and expansive, neutral, always musical sound. Build quality is first class, making the CDP a top-value high-end performer."

WHAT WE SAY

The Proceed CDP is made by Madrigal Audio Laboratories, the company behind ultra-high-end brand Mark Levinson. The CDP, thus, has the blood-line to deserve description as a thoroughbred CD player. Indeed, this fact becomes apparent when you inspect the superb casework and prod tentatively at the slimline disc drawer – let alone try to lift this most substantial component.

The CDP uses dual 18-bit converters and a combination of proprietary and HDCD digital filters to produce a technically and sonically impressive result. It has a more organic sound than many big American CD players, allowing it to create musically satisfying and engaging results without recourse to showmanship. Indeed, this is perhaps the ideal player for audiophiles who value neutrality above all.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Proceed CDP

Price £3,395.00

Reviewed Hi-Fi Choice June 1997 (issue 167)

Distribution Path Premier
☎ (01494) 441736

The Caspian System by Roksan



ROKSAN

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fax: 01480 431767
email: info@roksan.co.uk



EUROPEAN LOUDSPEAKER OF THE YEAR '97-'98

Jamo Concert 8

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"Jamo's Concert 8 employs some of the most sophisticated loudspeaker drive-unit technology available, and encases it within a sturdily-constructed and beautifully-crafted cabinet. This advanced engineering leads to a fast, dynamic sound for which one would normally expect to pay more. It is a true audiophile component that will bring out the best in high-quality partnering components."

WHAT WE SAY

Jamo's Concert 8 is a very saucy speaker. Wrapped in glorious cherry or mahogany veneer, this compact design is technologically advanced and aesthetically sweet.

One reason for its success is a 25mm-thick cabinet supporting a quartz-sand-filled front baffle, a composite material that's designed to be as acoustically inert as possible. Drive units are both custom made SEAS units: the partially-horn-loaded tweeter is made of silk, while the copper-phase-plugged mid/bass unit is fabricated in die-cast magnesium. The optional stand is an elegant self-assembly design with a cast base and cable-entrapping tubular upright.

This speaker is bi-wirable; we recommend configuring it thus to hear an almost electrostatic midband, which is the Jamo's real strength. The lack of boxiness, and detail in this frequency region, are qualities to captivate listeners.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Jamo Concert 8

Price £1,300.00

Reviewed Hi-Fi Choice
December 1996 (issue 160)

Distribution Jamo UK Ltd ☎
(01327) 301300

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EUROPEAN HOME THEATRE DECODER OF THE YEAR '97-'98

Denon AVP-A1

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"The Denon AVP-A1 has it all: excellent looks, formidable engineering, huge connection flexibility, extraordinary sound quality and a unique combination of THX approval, Dolby Pro-Logic and Dolby Digital modes. It is expensive but extremely well equipped, and in cost effectiveness terms alone it's unquestionably the Number One reference A/V processor."

WHAT WE SAY

The elegant, golden Denon AVP-A1 is the first AV preamplifier to successfully satisfy LucasFilm's demanding standards for THX certification; and to combine this with the provision of Dolby Digital discrete multi-channel surround. This synthesis has an acronym: THX 5.1, to reflect the five separate channels (and subwoofer channel) of AC-3. The AVP-A1 is also compatible with Dolby Pro-Logic. It's been designed to match Denon power amps the POA-T2 (two-channel) and POA-T3 (three-channel) at the heart of a top-class AV system. Ease of use is a key criterion in home-cinema set-up, and with graphical on-screen menus the Denon does not disappoint. There are ten line inputs, an AC-3 RF input, three digital inputs and one optical in/output; as well as a full selection of AV-ready outputs. The AVP-A1 also works exceptionally well as a stereo preamplifier, making it an ideal choice for dual-purpose music and AV systems.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Denon AVP-A1
Price £2,999.99
Reviewed Home Entertainment
September 1996 (issue 39)
Distribution Hayden
Laboratories Ltd ☎ (01753)
888447



EUROPEAN HOME THEATRE LOUDSPEAKER OF THE YEAR '97-'98

Solid Solutions

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"Smart industrial design is the foundation of this speaker system's success. Created specifically for home theatre applications, the Solid Solutions outfit offers both excellent sound quality and a discreet appearance in the home. Its satellite speaker enclosures are designed for optional room-corner positioning, and incorporate a fourth-order reflex port whose bass output may be trimmed with a special bung. The active subwoofer offers a range of connection options for easy integration with any system."

WHAT WE SAY

The Solid Solutions modular AV speaker package can be configured in all manner of ways, and aims both to look good and sound good. A complete home cinema outfit would normally begin with two pairs (£129.95 each) of the 88dB-sensitive, 258mm-high S100 satellite speakers, doing the duties for both front left and right channels, and providing the surround dimension. The 90dB-sensitive C100 centre speaker (£129.95) provides freedom of speech, while the £349.95 PB100 active subwoofer brings up the bass with a built-in 70 Watts power amplifier and 250mm drive-unit. The C100 and distinctive 'flow ported' sub are available in black only, while the S100 satellites are available in black and white and have the option of black, white, blue or red grilles.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Solid Solutions

Price £739.80 (package)

Reviewed Forthcoming Issue

Distribution B&W

Loudspeakers Ltd

☎ (01903) 750750



EUROPEAN HOME THEATRE PROJECTOR OF THE YEAR '97-'98

Philips ProScreen 4500

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"The ProScreen 4500 is a three-LCD projector that combines the qualities of flexibility, portability and ease of use. Intended for both home theatre applications and MultiMedia presentations, it incorporates a new, long-lasting high-efficiency lamp. There are three signal inputs – one for video and two for data – from which the unit senses automatically the type of signal being applied. An infrared handset doubles as a wireless mouse pointer, and there is an on-screen menu system to fine-tune important parameters such as colour temperature."

WHAT WE SAY

Philips ProScreen LCD projectors are designed to be fully compatible with both video and data-grade computer signals. They are also highly portable – the 4500 weighs in at only 8kg. Moreover, this plug-and-play design features high brightness and contrast control, to allow the projector to be used in all kinds of conditions with ease. Our sister title Home Entertainment evaluated the the ProScreen 2700, smaller brother of the award winner, in its January 1997 edition (issue 43). Its reviewers were particularly impressed by the unit's sheer brightness and high pixel count. One major criticism was the 2700's lack of keystone correction, used when adjusting for the angle of the projector's lens relative to the projection screen. This gripe has been addressed in the 4500.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Philips ProScreen 4500

Price £5,516.63

Reviewed Forthcoming Issue

Distribution Philips ☎

(0181) 689 2166



EUROPEAN HOME THEATRE SYSTEM OF THE YEAR '97-'98

JBL Simply Cinema ESC-300

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

"This amazingly compact system conceals a Dolby Pro-Logic processor and 200 Watts of amplification, all within a bass-reflex subwoofer cabinet just 38 cm high. In addition, there are five ultra-discreet, 11-cm high satellite speakers, each including titanium tweeters and neodymium magnets. A full-function credit-card remote control operates the system, which is easy to install and ready to use straight out of the box."

WHAT WE SAY

JBL's new Simply Cinema systems have been introduced to fill a perceived gap in the market, for a home cinema amp and speaker solution that is easy to buy, install and use, with none of the intricacies that bedevil the installation of separate components. There is a combined subwoofer and Dolby Pro-Logic processor unit, and five small satellite speakers. Ease-of-use touches are typified by the speaker cables, which are supplied with coded connectors to prevent accidental wiring out of phase; and by the powerful but slim remote control that doesn't need to be pointed directly at the subwoofer enclosure and its incorporated electronics.

The ESC-300's performance is modest compared with that of fully-fledged home cinema kit, but still it sounds much better than you'd expect.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

JBL Simply Cinema ESC-300

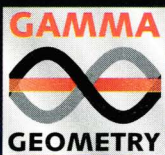
Price £599.99

Reviewed

Home Entertainment
September 1997 (issue 49)

Distribution Gamepath Ltd

☎ (01908) 317707



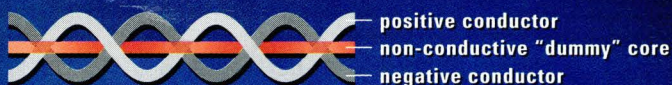
A new dimension in cable technology

IXOS introduces the 1002 Gamma Geometry® Interconnect, an entirely new development in cable design. Gamma Geometry® is a breakthrough that changes the boundaries of conventional parallel pair and twisted pair configurations.

Parallel pairs, used mostly in speaker cable designs, offer low resistance but are subject to poor noise rejection properties. Twisted pairs on the other hand offer increased noise rejection but create greater resistance and signal attenuation.

Good noise rejection with low resistance would seem to be unobtainable ... that is until now.

IXOS Gamma Geometry® departs from convention by using three cores, instead of two, in a new and unique asymmetric weave design. The positive and negative conductors run parallel in a non-aligned waveform and are held in position by a third "dummy" core of pure dielectric.



As a result the conductors cross repeatedly but do not twist. And therefore there is significant noise rejection without increased resistance and signal attenuation.

Gamma Technology® also allows more accurate signal time phasing because less dielectric material is used in a more controlled way. It all adds up to a new dimension in cable technology.

The IXOS 1002 Gamma Geometry® Interconnect gives a dynamic musical performance with highly controlled focus and natural soundstaging.

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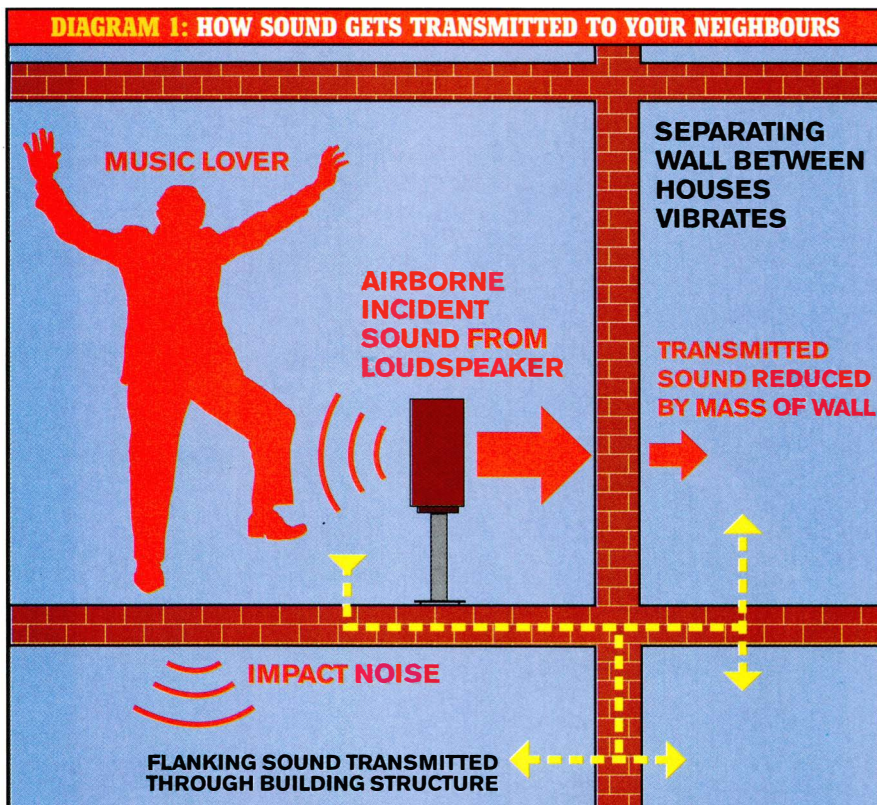
IXOS 1002 features silver plated PC-OFC signal conductors extruded in Teflon, Polyethylene "dummy" core and PVC outer jacket. Terminated with IXOS enamel hard gold plated RCA's.

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- Cheshire**
Peters Hi Fi, Chester 01244 319 392
Chester AV Centre, Chester 01244 320 414
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Hi Fi Attic, Plymouth 01752 669 511
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Movement Audio, Poole 01202 730 865
Weymouth Hi Fi, Weymouth 01305 785 729
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Rayleigh Hi Fi, Rayleigh 01268 779 762
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Beaver Hi Fi, Liverpool 0151 706 9898
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Sevenoaks, Leicester 0116 255 7518
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Hi Fi Care, W1 0171 637 8911
Kamla, W1 0171 323 2747
Nicholls Hi Fi, SE12 0181 852 5780
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Mike Manning, Yeovil 01935 479 361
- Suffolk**
Bennetts Retail, Ipswich 01473 610 801
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Sevenoaks, Kingston 0181 547 0717
Tru Fi, Redhill 01737 766 128
- Sussex**
Churchers, Hove 01273 324 616
Jefferies Hi Fi, Eastbourne 01323 731 336
- Tyne and Wear**
Linton Audio, Newcastle 0191 460 0999
Bill Hutchinson, Newcastle 0191 230 3600
- Warwickshire**
Frank Harvey Hi Fi,
Coventry 01203 525 200
Leamington Spa Hi Fi Company,
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Colorama Hi Fi, Redditch 01527 597 260
- Yorkshire**
Clearstone Hi Fi, Bradford 01274 309 266
Bill Hutchinson, Leeds 0113 242 7777

Love thy neighbour

How far must one go to avoid that annoying racket from next door? Audiophile architect **David Lewis** offers some practical tips in sound-proofing your home.



At some point in our lives, many of us will experience a maniacal knocking on the front door, and on opening it will be confronted by an irate neighbour demanding that we turn the music down.

It happened to me once when I occupied a flat in North London. One particularly loathsome neighbour tried to take out an injunction to prevent me ironing on a squeaky board, then laid into me about my record player. At other times, while desperately trying to sleep, I have been driven to near insanity and homicidal thoughts by all-night parties across the street.

Whether we like it or not, noise from rowdy neighbours is one of the most consistent and widespread pollutants of modern

life, and I doubt that it will go away.

Complaints about noise have increased five-fold since 1978. In an attempt to control this growing problem, the Government has introduced two Acts in recent years: the Environmental Protection Act of 1990 and the Noise Act of 1996. Given proof of statutory nuisance, this legislation (in the final resort) includes draconian provisions empowering authorities to seize 'noise making equipment' (i.e. your cherished record player). So watch out!

It's certainly true that as time goes by, the average home contains more and more sound reproduction equipment. A system in the lounge, portable equipment in the kitchen, TV in the bedroom... and goodness knows what in Junior's bedroom.

Marketing wars between the Japanese giants have resulted in packaged audio systems in which RMS power ratings of 50 to 100 Watts are unexceptional.

So, can anything be done to control the noise that either we generate ourselves or suffer at the hands of others? There is, but be prepared to remodel your home and accept a good deal of disruption!

Noise and its basic remedies

In essence there are three ways in which sound is transmitted. Any of these may cause you to declare war on your neighbours, or vice versa. Number one, the most obvious, is Impact, for example when you hit the wall with a hammer or drop something heavy on the floor. Number two is Airborne, where sound waves from your speakers impinge on the walls, exciting them to produce vibrations that are then transmitted to the other side of the wall. Number three is Flanking Transmissions that carry through the building structure. All three are illustrated in Diagram 1.

Each type of sound transmission has a different characteristic and each requires a different remedy. As a general rule, though, the best sound isolating constructions are heavy, limp and airtight. The problem of noise transfer through walls tends to be

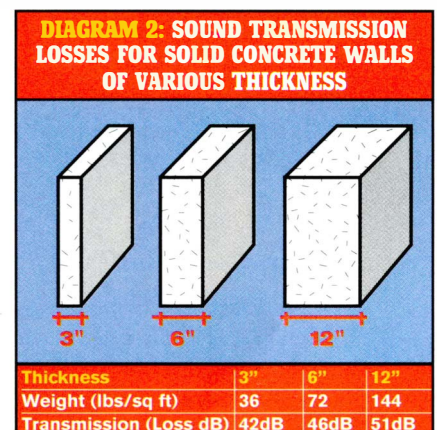




Illustration by Willie Ryan

more acute at lower frequencies, since the same construction will give better sound resistance as frequency increases. The current fad for subwoofers in both hi-fi and home cinema systems can only make this problem worse. By far the best way to control low-frequency sound transmission is to provide as much mass as possible in the separating structure. Stiffness of the structure is another less critical but nevertheless important factor.

So the thicker the wall the better, eh? Not exactly. The mass law governing sound transmission losses, ie sound reductions, is one of diminishing returns. Even if the mass of the wall were to be doubled, there would only be around 5db reduction in transmitted sound. Diagram 2 shows typical results for a solid concrete wall of various thicknesses.

Absorption from carpets and curtains within the room can help reduce the reverberant sound in the room and consequent energy transfer to the walls. But if you read my previous article (*HFC 167*), you will

know that too much absorption has the effect of sucking all the mid and treble energy out of the sound. The sound reduction created by absorption is small, so even doubling the amount will only produce a reduction in sound level of around 3dB.

Nationally applied Building Regulations set standards to be achieved for construction of all types of building. One section of the Regulations (Part E — Resistance to the Passage of Sound), includes guidance for minimising airborne sound transmission in walls, floors and stairs, and impact noise in floors and stairs. It includes coverage of the minimum mass for different constructions, notes on how things should be built, and practical measures to avoid flanking sound transmissions. Each section of the Regulations is available from H.M.S.O. Bookshops, priced £6.75.

The secret's in the mortar

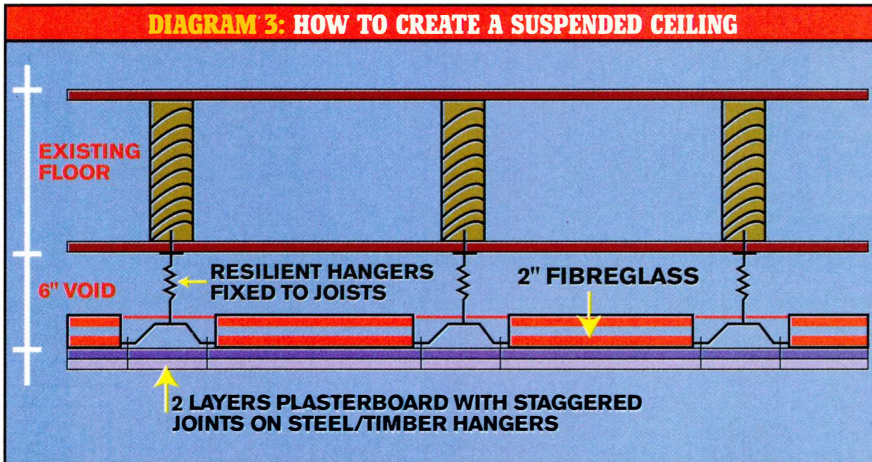
Most terraced houses or flats are now separated by either a solid concrete block or brick

wall around nine inches thick, or more usually with a double-skin cavity wall of around 11-12 inches thickness. Building Regulations specify the minimum mass for the materials and the way in which they must be assembled, but often acoustically-weak air paths through the wall result from the way in which walls are actually constructed on site, with bricklayers sacrificing standards for speed, using the minimum amount of mortar in the vertical brick or block joints.

Even residents in Victorian or Edwardian houses built in the good old days are not immune to poor construction. When their dwellings were erected it was quite common for one gang of bricklayers to build the separating wall between the houses and another gang to build the outside wall — rarely did they bother to connect them together. For different reasons, the same result: an acoustically weak passage via which sound can pass to your neighbours.

The only benefit of an older house is that ►►

DIAGRAM 3: HOW TO CREATE A SUSPENDED CEILING



its walls will have been built using lime mortar, covered with lime and hair plaster, which gives more flexibility than modern cement mortars, allowing the wall to dampen and absorb more of the energy created when sound waves hit it.

Sound leaks are rather like water leaks. For example, even a small hole of around one square inch in a 100 sq ft partition can destroy the acoustic integrity of the partition. While there is little that you can do to change the way in which the wall was built, you can fill any obvious gaps with a flexible sealant, like the ones used around baths and sinks. Also watch out for electrical outlets, particularly when mounted back to back, as these can also create an acoustically weak path through the wall.

Joys of communal living

Flats bring even more acute problems, as they have both separating floors and walls. In converted houses, floors are often timber joists and boards which can provide an easy transfer of sound, both airborne and impact, to your neighbours. Whereas a cavity brick separating wall can, if properly built, give a transmission loss of around 50dB; a basic timber-joisted and boarded floor with a plasterboard ceiling will provide only around 30dB and hardly any resistance to impact noise.

There are solutions to this problem but mostly they involve disruptive and/or expensive measures, such as filling the floors with sand or insulating quilts to reduce airborne transmission, or putting a second, 'floating' floor on a resilient layer above the existing floor, to improve impact sound resistance. A number of companies such as Junckers (01376) 517512 (timber) and Wicanders (01403) 710001 (cork and timber) produce systems suitable for domestic use, though they tend to be relatively expensive.

Another option worth considering, if you are in a flat below noisy neighbours, is to fix a new suspended ceiling below your existing one. Don't forget to check with a structural engineer first to make sure the floor above will take the additional load.

To work properly, the ceiling will need to be suspended from the existing timber floor joists by isolation hangers, and should incor-

porate around two inches of fibrous insulation (such as fibreglass) within a minimum of six inches of deep ceiling void, assuming you can afford the space. Ideally, the ceiling should be finished with two layers of plasterboard fixed so that the joints are staggered. Diagram 3 shows a typical example

of how this might be done.

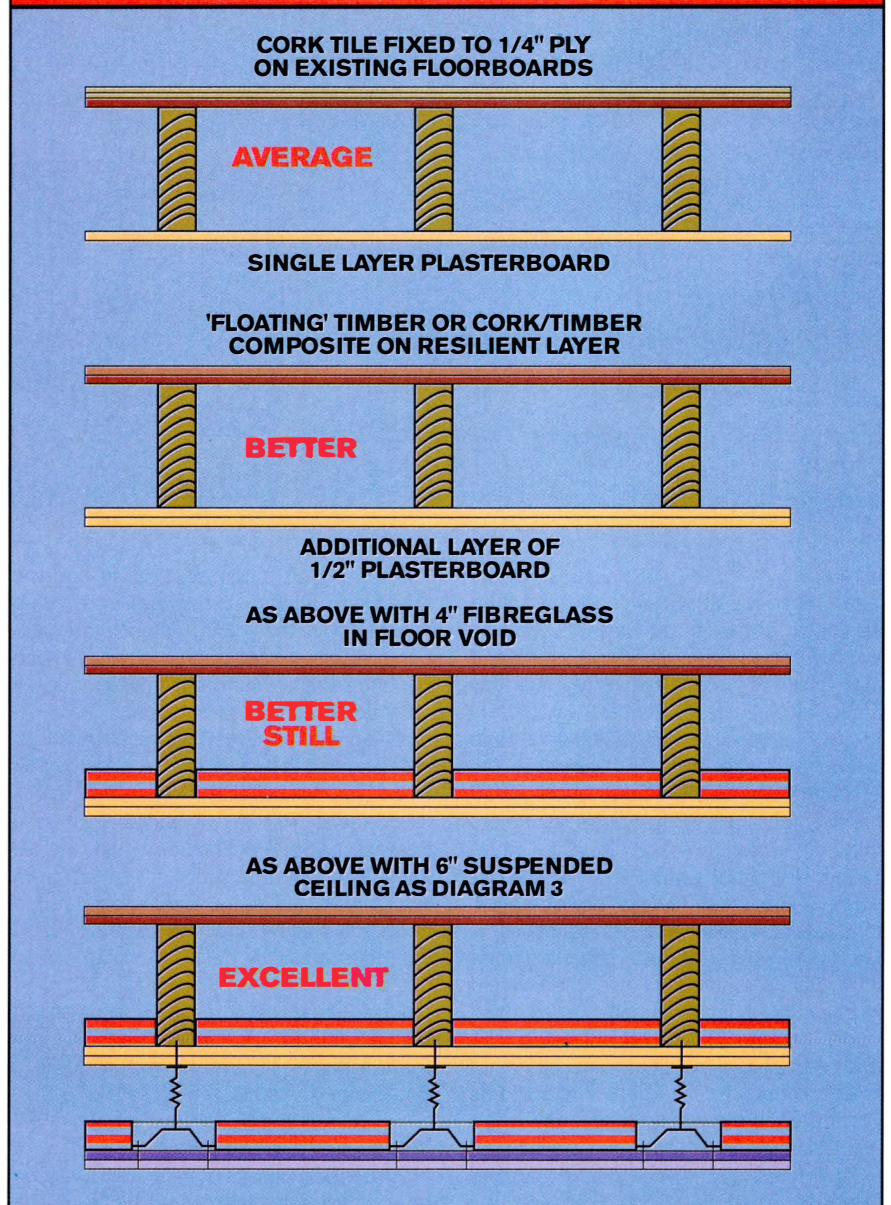
Sound energy hitting the ceiling is transmitted to the void above and absorbed by the fibreglass, while the resilient hangers stop noise transferring to the structure above. Noise from above is absorbed by the same process operating in reverse.

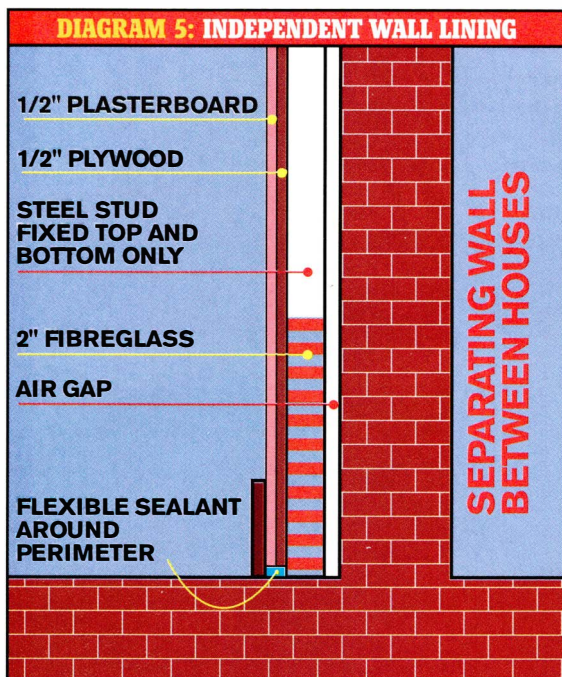
British Gypsum (01159) 456123 and Knauf (01795) 424499 both make plasterboard and other plaster products, and can give technical guidance on sound-resistant constructions, so anyone wishing to pursue such items should contact them.

Diagram 4 shows a variety of possible solutions including floating floors and/or suspended ceilings, whose isolation properties range from average to excellent.

Needless to say, if you decide to pursue the additional-layer floor option, remember to screw down the floorboards to prevent future squeaks, and make sure you seal all the cracks and joints in and around the boarded floor with flexible sealant. This will prevent acoustic leaks before the new floor

DIAGRAM 4: SOUND ISOLATION IMPROVEMENTS FOR TIMBER FLOORS





is installed. Fixing quarter-inch plywood to the existing boarding helps provide a level base for the floating floor and marginally improves the acoustic performance.

Don't forget that when speaker stands are spiked to a wooden floor, they effectively turn the whole floor into one huge sounding board, which won't amuse the neighbours below you. I managed to cure this (during my ironing board fiasco) with the cheap and easy solution of spiking the speaker stands onto two paving slabs, sandwiching a resilient layer of bubble wrap between them.

This not only reduced the amount of sound transferred by vibration (though not airborne noise) but, as a real bonus, it produced a remarkable increase in clarity and definition from the speakers, so you might like to try this in any case. (Tip for skinflints: bubblewrap often comes free in packaging and makes a good isolation platform for equipment when sandwiched between layers of MDF.)

Facing the expense and disruption of doing any of these things may not be your cup of tea; ultimately, the lengths you may have to go to will depend on how dire your circumstances are.

More soundproofing materials

I mentioned earlier that the ideal material for sound isolation should be heavy, limp and airtight. One of the best materials in this

respect is lead, though apart from being hazardous to your health, it is not the most appropriate material for lining walls. On the other hand, it does make a good shield against radiation if you are still concerned about the possibility of a nuclear threat.

A much safer and more practical substitute for lead is plywood, which has good damping qualities because of its multiple layers of glue, especially the birch-faced, multi-layered Finnish or Latvian type. One of the things I have done in my house, to good effect, is to build an independent lining of plywood and plasterboard on the inside face of the walls that separate me from my neighbour.

Independent is the most important word in the last paragraph as the idea behind this construction is to break the

transmission path in the same way as the suspended ceiling described earlier. Any contact or fixings to the brick wall (unless designed specifically for isolation) would transfer energy to it and thence to my neighbour. Diagram 5 shows how this can be done. Remember to avoid having electrical socket outlets in the lining, if you can. Once again, don't forget the flexible sealant around the perimeter.

In the near future, an alternative solution to soundproofing may come in the form of a relatively new steel composite called Sontech, a sound-deadening steel currently being tested by British Steel's Product Development arm.

The material is made up of two thin sheets of steel, separated by and bonded to a very thin viscoelastic polymer layer, whose main task is to damp out impact noise and panel resonances. From what I have gleaned, Sontech appears to have the damping properties of lead.

The polymer core works by absorbing sound energy and dissipating it as a small amount of heat. British Steel hints that a reduction of 30dB may be possible, depending on a number of variables, though early tests suggest that panels will work best at frequencies below 100Hz and above 400Hz. Still, it is conceivable that once fully developed, it could be one sound proofing solution that takes up little space.

As an aside, it struck me that Sontech might also have potential for other audiophile purposes, including isolation platforms, loudspeaker cabinets and so on. If anyone conceives a serious use for the material, call British Steel ☎ (01254) 55161.

Windows '97

Ameliorating the potential acoustic weaknesses of walls and floors is a breeze compared to the same task performed for windows. If you have single glazing and regular opening windows, you will be lucky to achieve much more than around 20dB sound reduction when they are closed. If you have the misfortune to live next to a busy road where typical sound levels of 70dB-plus might be encountered, the chances of hearing all the subtleties of your latest system upgrade are likely to be zero.

One answer is to have your windows replaced by high-performance double-glazed units; usually these have neoprene seals around the perimeter of the opening windows to improve sound insulation. It is simpler, cheaper and in some ways better to use secondary internal glazing that can be fitted without affecting the existing windows.

There are real benefits to be had from the increased air gap, typically around eight inches, achieved by fixing the secondary units flush with the inside face of an external wall, particularly if a sound insulant such as perforated fibreboard is used to line around the inside of the window between the two lots of glazing. This can increase the performance to around 35dB.

New housing design also has a part to play; unfortunately it is all too common to see opening windows in adjacent houses facing and mirroring each as shown in Diagram 6. I'll leave it to you to imagine what effect the sound coming from one house will have on the other!

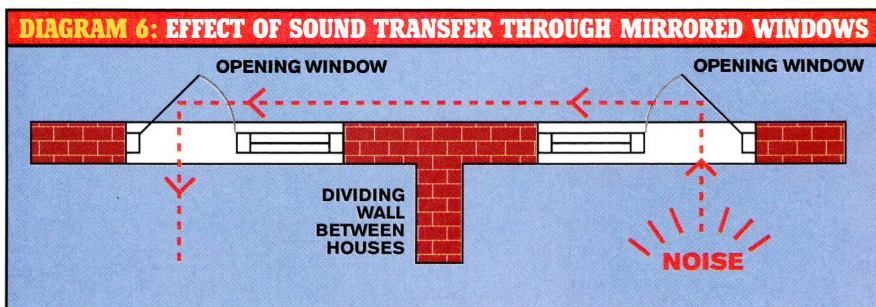
Silence — the final frontier

If scientists at Southampton University's Institute of Sound and Vibration Control have their way, there will be a technological alternative to pulling your house apart in the name of silencing a noisy neighbour: active sound control.

This system is already being incorporated in aircraft and cars as a way to combat excessive noise. By using microprocessors, microphones and speakers, sound breaking into your house can be monitored and processed to send out of phase, mirror images of the sound back from speakers to neutralise the effect of the incoming sound.

Whether this system will ever be able to deal with the whole spectrum of noises produced in houses — from screaming children to home video — remains to be seen, but it could produce an instant solution to shoddy standards of building.

David Lewis has worked as an architect for 27 years, has had experience of buildings for the arts, music and broadcasting and is currently involved in the design of a rehearsal space for a major London orchestra. ▲



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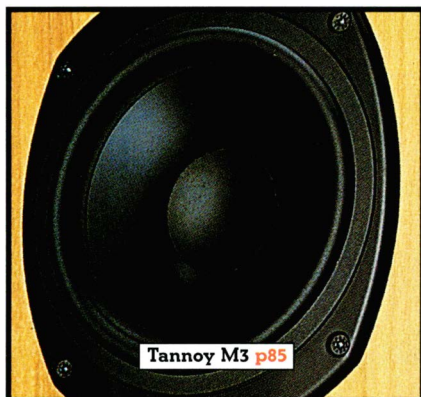
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King cones

Paul Messenger (listening tests) and Paul Miller (lab tests) pick the best loudspeakers on the market between £140 and £500.

Following last month's mini-test of speakers priced below £150, this month witnesses a full-size group test covering the next price-band up the ladder, in three easily digestible chunks. There's a little overlap with last month, however, in the guise of the £140 Gale 2i, included to assess how a true budget model compares with slightly more exalted colleagues.

Six of our 14 candidates cluster in the narrow band between £229 and £250; elsewhere the prices tend to spread out. However, in contrast to the cost-value relationship that applies to hi-fi electronics, for example, price is by no means the only crucial factor in speaker-land. Size is equally significant, and big is by no means necessarily better — not when the issue of domestic harmony is given due consideration. Then there's the issue of floorstander versus stand-mount to consider; deciding on the allowance for the cost of stands is a real reviewer's dilemma.

While we have elected to go for a straight price subdivision, alternative criteria can offer different perspectives. The group is split 50/50 between stand-mounts and floorstanders, for example, which was a bit of a surprise given recent history and the strength of the trend towards floorstanders. Not surprisingly the floorstanders tend to be more expensive. The stand-mounts' average ticket lies just below £250, while the floorstanders clock up an average price of just over £370. The difference would pay for a pretty decent pair of stands.

Traditionally, Britain is a net exporter of hi-fi speakers, and no fewer than 11 of our 14 carry UK brands, reflecting the difficulties faced by overseas marques in becoming established on Blighty's shores. Whether UK-branded products are actually made in the UK is another story. Drivers, boxes and smaller components have been travelling across international boundaries for decades, so the decision to assemble overseas is logical enough. Malaysia makes a lot of sense for

THE CAST LIST

MODEL	PRICE	PAGE
Acoustic Energy AE120	£499.95	p93
B&W DM603	£499.95	p95
Castle Isis	£229.90	p73
Chario Syntar 100	£250.00	p75
Gale 2i	£139.95	p77
Heybrook Heylette	£269.90	p87
JBL LX2	£249.99	p79
JPW ML1010	£400.00	p96
Mission 733i	£329.90	p89
Monitor Audio Monitor 3	£399.99	p97
NHT Super One	£338.00	p91
Revolver 250	£249.95	p81
Rogers db101	£249.95	p83
Tannoy M3	£229.90	p85

Acoustic Energy, for example, because of its volume of sales to Far Eastern markets, and especially when it brings such competitively-priced products to the UK consumer.

Looking at the group as a whole, one might be tempted to mourn the passing of the larger stand-mount speakers. There's

only one example (JBL) of this 'classic' hi-fi format in our group of 14, whereas five of the seven stand-mounts are near-miniatures of less than 10 litres. In a very real sense the new generation of budget floorstanders might be seen as replacements for the 'large bookshelf' models of yore. This essentially logical evolution was on the cards once 'bookshelf' speakers moved down from the walls into the middle of the room on bits of ironmongery. Even fans of wrought-iron tracery frown on chunks of speediframe littered around the place.

Consequent performance advantages took small speakers off the bookshelf and onto stands, but cosmetic advantage (and fashion) is driving the floorstanding sector. Nevertheless, the stand-mount is likely to retain the superior performer, so I for one will be worried by any sign of the genre's further decline. But I shan't lose sleep just yet, at least not if recent sales figures are to be believed. B&W's similar-format DM601 and DM602 are still sitting very pretty up in the top half-dozen. With an extra helping hand from JBL, it'll be a while before the decent-size stand-mount dies out.

HOW THE TESTS WERE DONE

Prior to the listening tests, all speakers were measured in the listening room, to ensure optimum siting for each one with respect to room boundaries. The speaker stands used with the stand-mount models were Kudos S100 and Atacama SE60s (and Chario's own).

The main reference system used for the blind and hands-on work consisted of the usual collection of Mana-supported Naim and Linn components, viz: Linn LP12 turntable, Naim ARO tonearm, Linn Arkiv cartridge, Naim CDS CD player, NATO1 tuner, NAC52 pre-amp and NAP135 power amps. Speaker cables were NACA5 with Airloc plugs.

For a second series of hands-on tests we used the Teac CD-P3450SE CD player and Cambridge Audio A3i integrated amplifier, again with Naim NACA5 speaker cable.

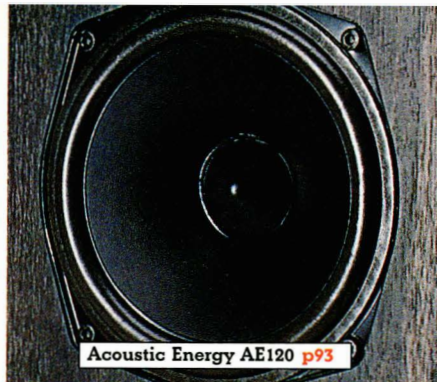
WHAT MUSIC DID WE USE?

Music used during the testing included excerpts from the albums listed below. BBC Radios 3 & 4 were also used extensively during the hands-on work

- Christy Moore: *Live at the Point* on GRACD 203
- Sibelius/Maazel/VPO: *Symphony No2* on Decca Stereo D7D4
- The Chemical Brothers: *Dig Your Own Hole* on XDUSTLP2
- The Prodigy: *The Prodigy Experience* on XLLP 110
- Joni Mitchell: *Mingus* on Asylum AS 53 091
- Massive Attack: *Protection* on Wild Bunch WBRLP-2
- Rutter/Cambridge Singers: *There Is Sweet Music* on COLCD 104
- Help (Bosnia charity compilation): on War Child 828 682-2

THE LISTENING PANEL

Thanks are due to panellists David Inman (Castle), Robin Marshall (V-Labs), Russell Kauffman (Morel, Densen), Keith Haddock (JBL/Gamepath), Guy Sergeant (JPW), plus Choice operators Jason Kennedy and Alan Sircom.



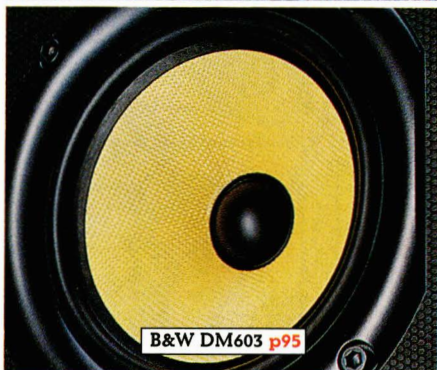
Acoustic Energy AE120 p93



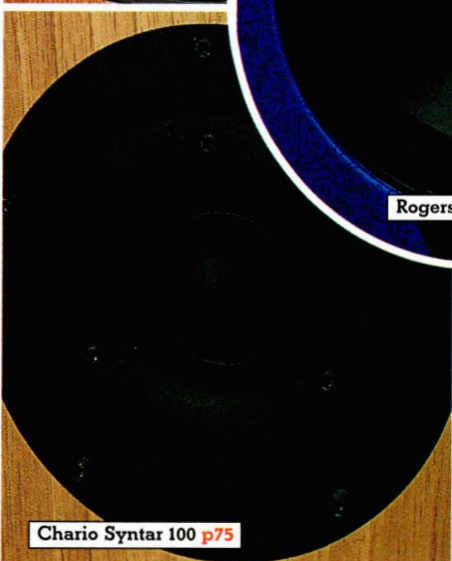
Castle Isis p73



Gale 2i p77



B&W DM603 p95



Rogers dB 101 p83

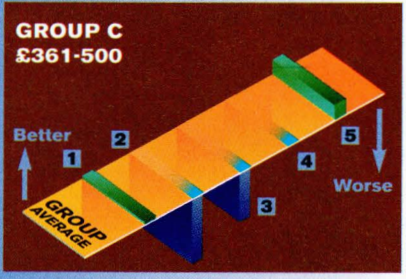
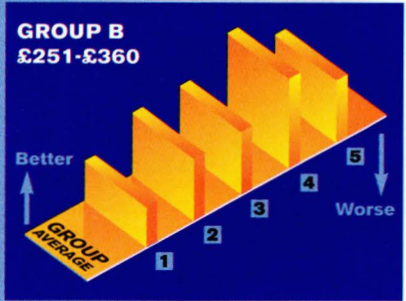
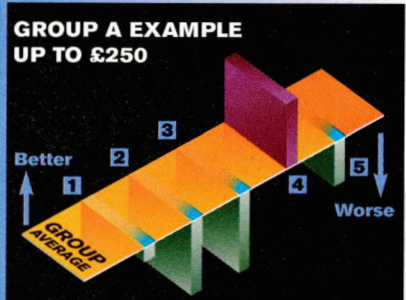


Heybrook Heylette p87

UNDERSTANDING OUR BAR-GRAPHS AND GROUP AVERAGES

There will be significant differences between the cheapest product in our test and the most expensive. For this reason we always segregate our test candidates into two or more categories based on price. Our aim is to assess every product's performance in the context of its closest rivals.

Each lab-report panel is colour-coded according to the key given below:



UNDERSTANDING OUR BAR-GRAPH MEASUREMENTS

The measurements behind *Hi-Fi Choice's* unique bar-graphs are provided by our Technical Editor, Paul Miller, using both GPIB-controlled measurement hardware and his own, award-winning, PC-based Virtual Instrument software. Each bar-graph value is derived from a weighted statistic of several key measurements and is displayed relative to a notional zero per cent which represents the group average for that particular category.

1 Ease of drive

This statistic is derived from the reactive and resistive components of the speaker load, indicating how tricky it is for the amplifier to drive.

2 Relative loudness

The sensitivity of the speaker is measured at 1m with a 2.83V input across third-octave bands 17-29, then weighted according to the human loudness contour to indicate how 'loud' one speaker will sound relative to another.

3 Maximum loudness

This takes into account the speaker's sensitivity, distortion, the maximum useable amplifier power and the effects of placement in an 'average room' to gauge the maximum practical Sound Pressure Level obtainable from a given pair of loudspeakers.

4 Audible distortion

This valuable test momentarily raises the output to 96dBA with dynamic signals through bass, midrange and treble. This allows us to assess distortion under realistic, transient conditions.

5 Off-axis uniformity

This provides an indication of how the speaker's axial response deteriorates, or otherwise, as the listening position moves to the left or right.



JBL LX2 p79



Monitor Audio Monitor 3 p97



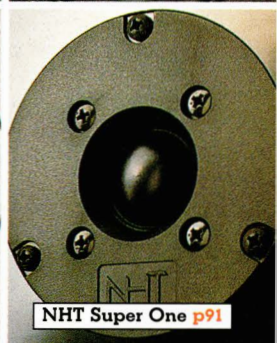
JPW ML1010 p96



Mission 733i p89



Revolver 250 p81



NHT Super One p91

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Castle Isis

Castle is one of the fastest growing speaker brands in the UK right now, and its success has been mainly due to a series of cleverly designed and beautiful real-wood finished floorstanders, such as the £850 Harlech — a *Choice Best Buy* from issue 160. The company makes smaller bookshelf-type speakers too — a succession of Durhams and Trents spring to mind — which again feature exceptional real-wood finishing at realistic prices, albeit necessarily somewhat upmarket from the budget best sellers.

This new Isis is just such an animal. In 'standard' form it's available in a choice of several veneers at £230, for a speaker which is just a little larger than a miniature, and elegantly slim with it. Our samples came in a particularly tasty yew veneer, which carries an extra price premium of £40. But of course, you might have to find some more money for a stand — it's enough to drive a bloke towards a floorstander!

Whatever the temptations of the latter, there's still a potent argument for the small stand-mount. Not simply because it's smaller to look at, but also because it's a tried and tested formula which seems to work pretty well in British rooms, assuming you're not trying to provoke uncivil action

from those on the other side of the party wall.

A small main driver is essential to keep the box's slim dimensions. The plus side is that it should operate effectively at the top end of its working range; the down side is that a 100mm diameter clear plastic cone is never going to move a whole lot of air, even with some assistance from a modest 35mm diameter port, so bass output and/or extension is bound to be limited. Also noteworthy is the main driver's cast metal frame, another luxury touch that is unusual at this sort of price. The tweeter has the Castle logo moulded into its faceplate, and uses a 25mm fabric-dome diaphragm. Gold-plated bi-wire/amp terminals are fitted to the terminal block in the back.

Room measurements confirmed the anticipated bass limitations, and showed that close-to-wall mounting is the best option, giving essentially even bass delivery down to 50Hz in-room, albeit alongside a distinct upper-mid peak.

Sound quality

Considering its small size and relatively modest price, the Isis did rather well in the listening tests, though the panellists for Day

One were clearly much more enthusiastic than the Day Two participants!

The lack of serious bass extension and authority is one limiting factor, and the Isis isn't the last word in dynamic expressiveness and grip either. But the bass it does have is exceptionally even and well integrated, and the overall bass-to-mid balance is smoother, flatter and more coherent than most.

It responded well to our 'budget' components, delivering voices with fine clarity and expression, though the bottom end was a little boxy. Complex material played at highish levels also caused a little stress.

Conclusion

A good-looking and fine-sounding little performer. Its small size imposes inevitable bass and dynamic handicaps, but within those constraints this speaker does a particularly good job, with a fine overall balance and a lively, open coherence. Use a good quality stand, and experiment with placement to achieve the right trade-off between midbass output and midband smoothness. *PMc*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE FROM £229.90

☐ A great-looking real wood miniature at a very competitive price. The sound is lightweight but very coherent, with a fine overall balance.

✉ Castle Acoustics Ltd, Park Mill, Shortbank Road, Skipton, N. Yorks BD23 2TT.
☎ (01756) 795333

THE LAB REPORT

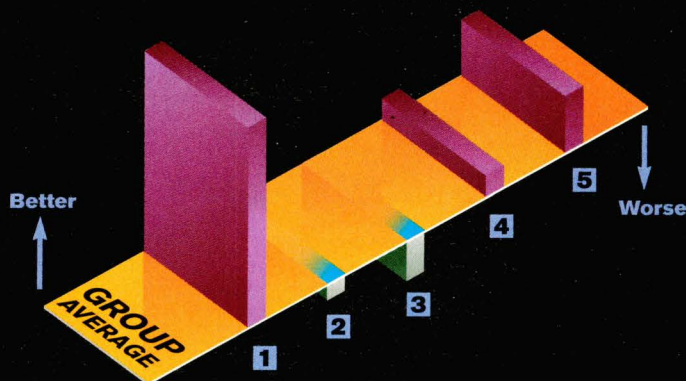
Judging by the nearfield analysis, Castle has opted for maximal flatness rather than a 'peaky' bass alignment, deciding not to try and fool the ear that this small speaker offers more bass than it really does. In the event, Castle's engineering is spot-on with the -3dB points of both port and driver coinciding at 105Hz, the former providing maximum reinforcement at 67Hz, a little adrift from the predicted 54Hz Helmholtz resonance, but sufficient to extend the Isis's response to around 40Hz.

The treble dome peaks at 13kHz and there's a suggestion of trouble around 5kHz (two sharp, but likely as not, inaudible peaks), but otherwise the response is remarkably flat and even. Its 88.5dB sensitivity is actually rather more generous than Castle's figure of 87dB would suggest, enabling the Isis to sustain not inconsiderable maximum SPL's of 103-104dBA under ideal conditions. THD remains low at 0.6 per cent through mid and treble but the very small bass driver does struggle to keep distortion below 2 per cent or so above 96dBA.

The Isis also provides a safe amplifier load with acceptable phase angles, only dipping below 80ohms from 160Hz-400Hz to an absolute minimum of 6.50ohms at 245Hz. *PMc*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	85%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-7%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-18%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	9%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	22%



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Chario Syntar 100

A new name to me, and I'm still uncertain of how to pronounce it — does it follow chariot, or chameleon? No matter, the company is Italian in origin, has been in the speaker business since way back in 1975, and active on the international stage for more than a decade. A brochure emphasises its considerable strength in depth, with a couple of dozen different models spread over at least three separate ranges. UK distribution is via The Musical Design Company (MDC), best known for handling Micromega Electronics, which is doubtless finding the strength of the pound sterling a source of some satisfaction right now.

The Syntars are the least expensive Chario range, and the little 100 is the smallest and cheapest Syntar. Mind you, at £250 this is not exactly a budget miniature, but it doesn't look like one either. As you'd expect from the country of origin, it's very prettily presented, and ultimately clothed in a very nice real-wood veneer. It's quite deep too, giving a chunkily purposeful impression and enclosing a volume of around 11 litres — half as big again as the 'standard' miniature.

The main driver is a tiny affair, with just a 90mm doped-paper cone, operating within an injection-moulded frame, but it receives some extra help from a quite generous (55mm diameter) port. Unusually — not to

say controversially — this is fitted into the base of the speaker, firing downwards, which brings the surface on which the speaker sits into the equation. The port must be spaced from the support surface if it's to work at all of course, and spaced by the right distance to work properly. Chario has elected to fit four rubber cones as feet, providing a 20mm gap, while the speaker's quite large footprint needs to be used on a stand with a similarly large top-plate. MDC supplied Chario's attractive but pricey (£160) real-wood-plus-fill affair, but is also arranging with Target for a less costly metal stand. My biggest worry in all this is the use of rubber feet between speaker and stand. Orthodoxy dictates rigid spike coupling, while this arrangement introduces a measure of decoupling which is bound to affect the end result.

The small main driver might suggest close-to-wall mounting, but it appears that the enthusiasm of the 60Hz-tuned port more than compensates. Room measurements show that the broad bass region (50-200Hz) remains a little strong even when sited well clear of walls.

Sound quality

Pleasant but not particularly incisive, the Syntar 100 ended up rather below average overall, scoring well enough at the beginning of the day while the panel was finding its ears, but attracting much stronger criticism when repeated later on in the proceedings. Even our sighted operator was forced to admit that his initially positive assessment had been optimistic!

The smooth, even-handed, slightly warm and gently laid-back balance represents a pretty good starting point, but after that



things go downhill. One listener complained of a "softness and lack of involvement"; another of a "rubbery, cardboard-carton sort of bass quality", and while the treble level seemed pretty well-judged, it was also considered a little splashy and opaque. Dynamics aren't great, and there's also some lack of top-to-bottom coherence. To be fair, the less demanding requirements of our budget electronics gave much less cause for complaint, but still didn't generate any great enthusiasm.

Conclusion

A very pretty loudspeaker at a thoroughly respectable price, but apart from a pleasantly easy-going balance, the sound doesn't really distinguish itself, and certainly isn't the most communicative around. *PMc*

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £249.99

☐ This pretty and sensibly priced speaker has a pleasantly easygoing balance, but is not the most communicative or exciting sound around.

✉ Musical Design Company, PO Box 13, London E18 1EG.
 ☎ (01992) 573030

THE LAB REPORT

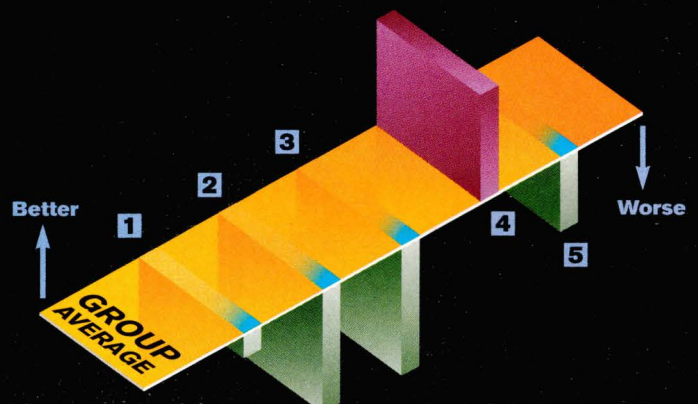
At just 0.55 per cent at 96dB, the Syntar 100's distortion exhibits the most consistent level of any speaker in this test, right across the audioband. However, its complement errs in favour of a 3rd harmonic through the bass and lower midrange and a 2nd harmonic through upper mid and treble. Moreover a strong port coloration is also present at 650Hz, appearing as a misterrmination on the impedance plot and a 'glitch' in the overall response.

Otherwise, box losses are kept to a minimum with its downward-firing port tuned to 60Hz, proffering an impedance trend that swings from a maximum of 330ohms to a minimum of 3.60ohms at 184Hz. Nevertheless, the Syntar still warrants an overall rating of 80ohms, staying above this impedance from 430Hz-20kHz.

The 87dB sensitivity is adequate but the Syntar is saddled with what looks like an aggressively bright and potentially boomy axial response, suffering notches at and above the crossover point at 2kHz and 3kHz, respectively, before rising to a +7dB peak at 13kHz. Ouch. The latter may be tamed by angling the speakers in by 20-30 degrees but the bass driver's response, which peaks early at 150Hz, may still tower over the midband in some environments. *PMc*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-10%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-52%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-55%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	45%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-31%



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Gale 2i

Gale has fallen far from its original style-meister status of the '70s. The brand has changed hands more than once since Ira Gales slapped chrome end-cheeks on a large sealed box and turned it sideways on a very high stand. Now it's owned by the Richer Sounds group, and is very much a house brand for that budget-oriented chain, with one model that costs as little as £70 per pair. There's even a floor-standing 4i model which costs no more than the £140 stand-mount 2i which is the subject of this review. By Gale standards, this 2i is relatively upmarket.

That said, I've only just reviewed a batch of speakers that look remarkably like this Gale, and carry a similar £140 pricetag (see last issue, 169). It appears that the 2i simply missed the bus, and so decided to come along and try its luck with this next group instead. In this company it is certainly the ugly duckling, with little prospect of metamorphosing into a swan. But that's pretty well inevitable, given that the next model up our price ladder costs £90 more and features real wood veneer.

As befits its status, the 2i comes dressed in regulation black-vinyl simulated wood-print. A typical enough example of the British OEM speaker makers' art (Gale is a brand, not a manufacturer), it's not a particularly

pretty sight but is at least commendably discreet, helped by the chamfered edge around the front panel. It looks purposeful enough in a chunky sort of way.

There aren't many obvious luxury touches. The drivers are simply bolted to the surface of the baffle, but the moulded frame grilles keep everything looking tidy, and you do get two pairs of gold-plated terminals on the rear, permitting bi-wiring (or even bi-amping, but that does seem a little unlikely).

Room measurements showed a slight preference for close-to-wall siting, though the 2i didn't seem particularly critical in this regard, and as usual there's no substitute for a little on-site experimentation. Bass-to-mid integration looks well handled, though the treble starts to roll off rather early.

Sound quality

One shouldn't expect the least expensive speaker in the test group to turn in anything but the least capable performance, and that's precisely what happened here. That it didn't fall too far short of more expensive designs is itself positive news, and at least half the panel had some good things to say

about the bass, which has a measure of power and drive often lacking in these small boxes. It holds together pretty well here, and shows decent rhythmic capabilities.

However, the midband did let the side down, sounding shut in, compressed and muddled. The end result was considered rather dull and lifeless, with a lack of dynamic expression. The treble is soft and rather too restrained, so leading edges proved very elusive (if not illusory). The

hands-on work only served to reinforce the rather negative impressions gathered during the blind tests.

Conclusion

Given that the Gale 2i is cheaper than any of the other models assembled here, it's not a disgrace that it didn't perform that well comparatively speaking. It was, in short, rather out of its depth in the company, and would probably have been better served by comparison with its more immediate peers in last month's test. As a budget miniature it's competent enough, but lacks the spark (and the midband transparency) to stand out from the crowd. *PMc*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £139.95

Decent all round performance but unspectacular sound and appearance fail to help this solid little miniature stand out from the crowd.

Hi-Fi Direct, 20-30 Wilds Rents, London SE1 4QG
 (0500) 333500

THE LAB REPORT

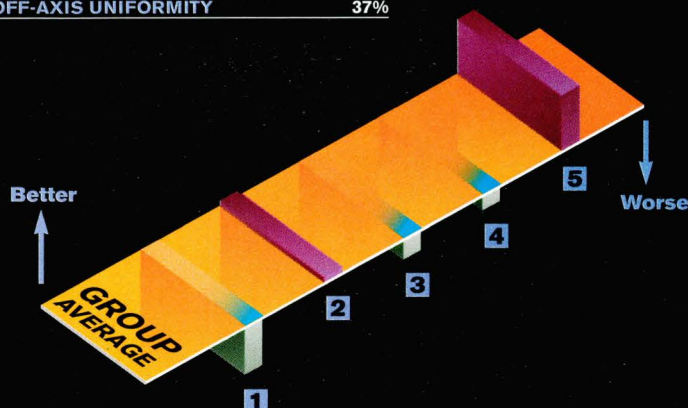
The Gale 2i justifies its very honest 60hm rating, for though the minimum is a mild 4.20hms at 228Hz, the average impedance from 20Hz-20kHz is just 9.20hms — sufficient to give the flimsiest of amplifiers pause for thought. By way of recompense, the 2i enjoys a useful 88.8dB sensitivity and a maximum output of some 104.5dBA in a room environment, even though the bass/mid unit struggles to keep distortion below 2-3 per cent near the top of its 3kHz range (re. 96dBA).

Gale has got its sums right in the bass department where the impedance minimum, the null in the bass driver's LF response and the peak output of the rear-mounted port all coincide at 57Hz, allowing the port and driver to crossover at precisely 100Hz and push the overall bass output down to a respectable 39Hz. For once, the port is also free of spurious resonances.

The response remains even enough through the upper bass and midband but there's a sudden loss in output at 6.8kHz, a step function by the looks of things, before the tweeter rises to a peak at 14kHz. Toeing the speakers in by 10-20 degrees will tend to ameliorate any treble spike. *PMi*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-20%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	2%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-9%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-6%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	37%



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JBL LX2

Born on the West Coast of the USA, JBL is one of the oldest names in the speaker business, and arguably the only one to have evolved into a genuine multi-national. Head office might still be in LA, but this speaker — like several that have come this way before — was actually designed and built in Denmark. Huge numbers are scheduled to be shipped into China over the next 12 months, but hopefully there'll be some left over for the UK too.

That depends, however, whether the British fashion victim mentality allows itself to consider a product that looks rather dated against the modern slimline floorstanders that everyone is buying — allegedly. Up until a year or two back, the larger species of bookshelf-style stand-mount speaker had looked like an endangered species. Then the B&W 601 and 602 became huge sellers, and we rediscovered the potential of these chunky, slightly awkward-looking boxes with their relatively large main drivers. Is it any coincidence that JBL's £250 LX2 fits almost exactly halfway between the two B&Ws in both size and price?

Pure coincidence of course. JBL has been making speakers of this size and shape for longer than I can remember. It's just that this seems a pretty good time to launch a new

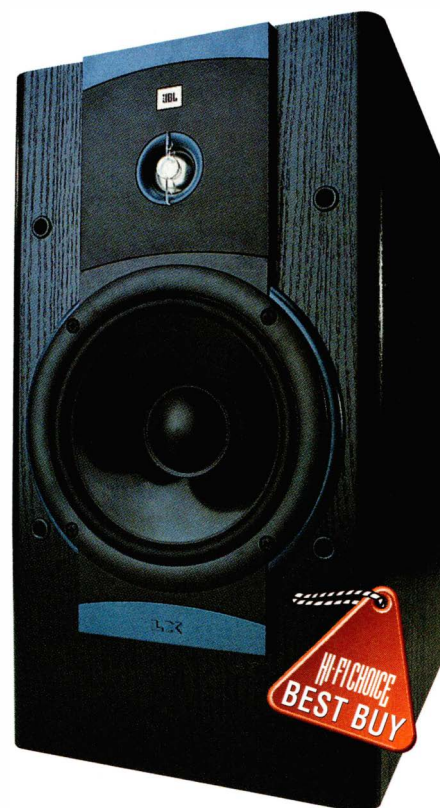
one — there's nothing else like it in our selection of 14, and maybe it's time B&W had some competition!

In the JBL hierarchy, the LX-series is the mid-price range, which slots in between the cheaper TLXs and the more expensive Ls. Among the LXs, this is the not-so-small baby, and the only stand-mount. I calculate the internal volume at around 17 litres, while the combination of a 125mm plastic cone main driver and large 60mm rear port promises plenty of bass oomph. Treble is handled by one of JBL's traditional 25mm titanium domes, but just a single terminal pair is fitted, precluding bi-wire or bi-amp possibilities. Build seems solid and substantial, and the baffle is enhanced by post-formed edges and restrained turquoise trim. Room measurements made it quite clear that this speaker should be mounted on 60cm stands well clear of walls.

Sound quality

This was my personal favourite in the blind listening tests, although others were not quite so convinced. There was, however, general agreement about the strengths and weaknesses. The big plus here is a degree of dynamic capability which is unusual at this end of the market. The LX2 kicks (when the music so requires of course), and manages to serve up a vivid and colourful portrayal of what's going on, with tight timing, plenty of verve, and genuine grip and authority.

This is certainly not the smoothest sound around, and may prove too colourful for some tastes. While the overall balance is good, there's just a touch of boom'n'tizz character, sufficient perhaps to attract the naïve, but also to irritate our experienced panellists slightly, who complained of a mild



lispiness on sibilants.

Extended hands-on listening not only revealed a fine match with our 'budget' components, but also confirmed my first impression that this JBL brings some rather special qualities to the art of music making.

Conclusion

Although the sonic presentation might be a little coarse for some tastes, this speaker offers much more convincing dynamic performance than most at the price. As a fine communicator with a high inherent fun factor, especially with music biased more towards rhythmic than tonal qualities, a Best Buy rating seems appropriate. *PM*

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £249.99

Lively, bouncy and invigorating, if a touch crude at times, this good-hearted speaker reproduces music with considerable zest and enthusiasm.

Gamepath Ltd, 25 Heathfields, Stacey Bushes, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK12 6HR.
 (01908) 317707

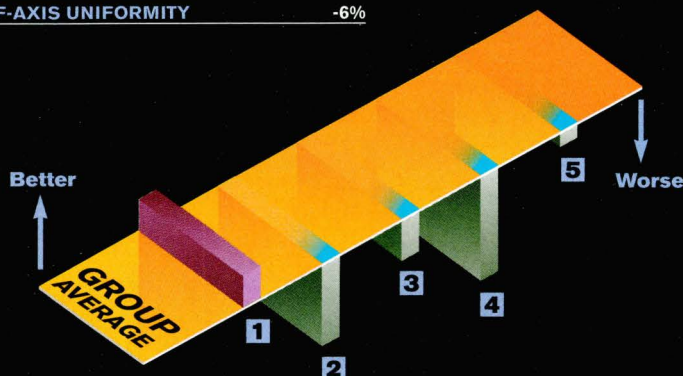
THE LAB REPORT

There is a weak link in either JBL's low-pass network or its polymer-coned bass/mid unit as a strong 2nd harmonic pushes bass distortion up to 2.2 per cent at 96dBA, increasing still further to 3.1 per cent through the midrange only to drop right back to 0.4 per cent once the titanium treble dome takes over. This, to an extent, is confirmed by the declining output of the driver, peaking momentarily around 2kHz but generally sagging — particularly through the presence band — before the dome rallies to produce a hot-spot above 6-7kHz.

JBL's reflex-loading is accurately aligned, however, promising good bass extension down to some 35Hz. Unfortunately, the port also lets loose two troublesome resonances at 900Hz and 1.8kHz respectively which, along with a cone misterrmination at 605Hz, can only add to the loss of neutrality suffered through upper bass and midrange. Still, the LX2 offers an average sensitivity of 87.5dB (500Hz-8kHz) and, following the great swings in impedance (6.2 to 450hms) through the high-Q bass section, the LX2 shows some evidence of compensation through the upper octaves. Here the load hovers between a maximum of 11.80hms and 'safe' minima of 5.90hms at 185Hz and 6.20hms at 7.4kHz. *PM*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	12%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-35%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-18%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-45%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-6%



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Revolver 250

Recently taken over by an American parent, the Revolver brand first appeared on an '80s turntable, which is a logical enough connection. When the name was revived a few years ago as a range of loudspeakers, the connection became rather nebulous, and the initial models were named after famous guns — a clever enough strategem at the time perhaps, but one which seemed rather less appropriate after subsequent events had unfolded in Dunblane.

The newer Revolvers therefore carry type numbers rather than names. As the middle one of three, this 250 is a compact two-way, two-driver floorstander which, appropriately enough, sells for £250. Presentation follows the standard British OEM formula pretty closely (note the similarities to JPW and Gale models), and is consequently neat but rather anonymous.

It's a chunky, squat little box, standing only 85cm off the deck and needing to be wide enough to accommodate a surface-mounted main driver with 120mm doped paper cone. This is mounted above the 25mm fabric dome tweeter, leaving the latter standing only 60cm off the floor. An adequate spike kit is supplied for floor coupling, but the fore-and-aft stability footprint is very modest, providing at least one good reason

for adding ballast to the partitioned section at the bottom of the enclosure. Provision is made for this, but mass-loading materials are neither fitted nor supplied.

Running the usual in-room averaged pen charts to ascertain optimum siting in advance of the listening tests showed that

the 250 preferred to be kept well clear of walls, and also went impressively deep into the bass. But it also rang alarm bells about the (high) relative output of the tweeter with respect to the midrange, which was subsequently confirmed in the listening sessions and lab report.

Sound quality

Over-brightness was predicted in the measurements, and over-brightness proved the 250's nemesis during the listening test sessions too. The quality of the treble is quite good, and at the fairly modest levels used for the blind test the severity of the problem varied from one track and one listener to another. But all commented on the brightness and the lispy quality of exaggerated sibilants, though some expressed it more as a lack of midrange body.

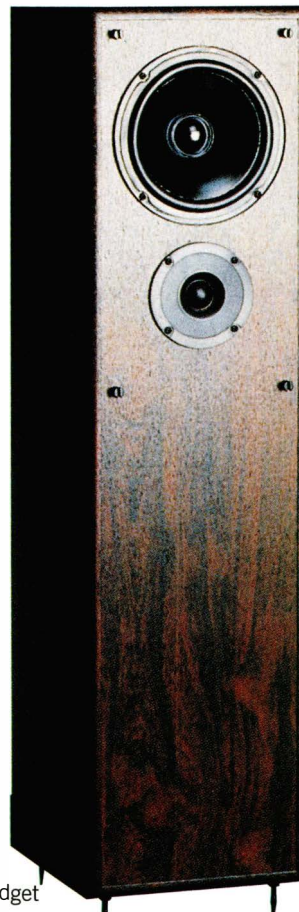
Moving over to the hands-on sessions with budget

components only served to compound the difficulties, especially when exploring the upper reaches of the dynamic range. With the Teac CD player and Cambridge Audio amp hooked up a "dreadfully top heavy, harsh, in-ye-face, rasping top end dominates everything", according to my notes, which also acknowledged that the bass at least had some extension and expression.

Adding some mass loading might further improve the decent bottom end, while careful selection of ancillaries and particularly speaker cabling could produce more satisfactory results. The boosted treble actually proved rather effective when playing music quietly late at night, but every time I reached for the volume control in anger, my ears and brain soon persuaded my hand to back off.

Conclusion

Too much treble (or not enough midrange) proved the unequivocal downfall of this budget floorstander. Fine bass extension remains a plus point, and to some extent the treble sting might be ameliorated by the careful choice of cabling and ancillary components. The end result is not unappealing at low levels, but in truth the 250's tonal balance is out on a limb, and not the stuff of which Recommendations are made. *PMc*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £249.95

⊞ A nice price for a floorstander, but over-bright sound balance has potentially fatiguing consequences when listening at normal or high levels.

✉ Revolver, 77 Dane Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 7BP.
 ☎ (0161) 973 0505

THE LAB REPORT

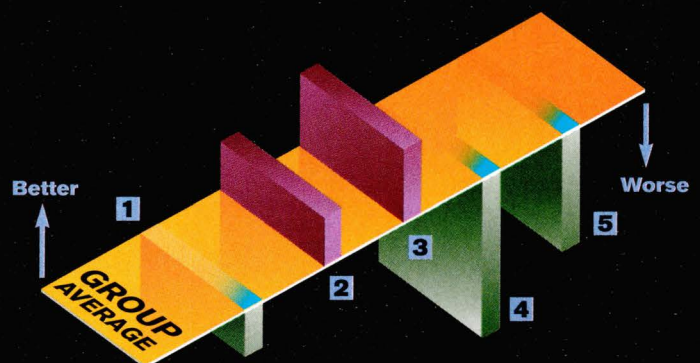
For once, here's a speaker that, at 89.5dB/1m/1W, is *more* sensitive than its manufacturers are claiming. Maximum levels of around 106dB SPL will be possible though the Revolver does suffer from uniformly high levels of distortion (typically 4.5 per cent, re. 96dBA) through both bass and midrange. In fact, it's only when the treble unit really takes over above 3.5kHz that THD falls to 0.4 per cent.

The rear-firing port, meanwhile, offers a very broad, low-Q reinforcement with -3dB points extending from 25-93Hz, drawing out the bass extension of the speaker as a whole to some 33Hz (-6dB, in-room). A couple of spurious resonances escape at 212Hz and 830Hz (typ. -8dB) via the port, and coincide precisely with very obvious cancellations in the speaker's axial response as well as glitches in an otherwise predictable and reasonably innocuous 60hm impedance trend.

But if the bass alignment is far from peaky, Revolver's treble dome provides a veritable Ben Nevis with its dominant +6dB 'sting' at 12-13kHz. Do bear in mind that toeing the speakers in by 20 degrees or so has a great impact in 'smoothing out' the overall response of the Revolver 250. *PMi*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-20%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	20%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	30%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-79%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-50%



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 **AUDIOLAB**

Rogers dB101

Launched in a blaze of publicity at the Ramada show last Autumn, the dB101 is a long way from anything Rogers has produced before. It might be seen as a one-shot roll of the dice to transform the company's rather stuffy image. Or it might be an attempt to grab a slice of the very successful sales action enjoyed by other cute 'designer' speakers like the Solid by B&W, and JBL's Control models, in the semi-pro installation as well as the domestic sector.

Many were very impressed by what's undoubtedly one of the prettiest speakers on the market. Designed by Peter Stevens, the guy behind the McLaren F1 sports racing car, it is available in a bewildering kaleidoscope of finishes. It makes a curvaceous virtue out of the plastic dies from which it sprung, and is the speaker every teenage girl would die for. Had I not noticed the Rogers sign, I might have suspected Swatch was getting into hi-fi.

The original trouble was the £399 price-tag — significantly higher than originally envisaged. Cutest new kid on the block or not, a hard-bitten trade wasn't convinced it could achieve sales at that sort of price. Faced with a classic eggs-and-basket scenario, the Chinese owners re-shuffled the management pack, and the new team has

boldly cut the price dramatically, to a much more realistic £249. It's still far from cheap for a lightweight sub-miniature two-way, but now looks a much more attractive prospect.

The moulded cabinet (from ABS plastic) is strong and light, minimising energy storage, and avoids parallel sides (helping to spread the internal standing waves). The concave back has facilities for attaching a flexible and effective mounting bracket system, and also accommodates a pair of reasonable spring-clip terminals (not ideal, but not as bad as some audiophiles might suppose).

The main driver is a classy affair with a small 95mm aerogel cone and protruding polepiece. This is used over a wider range than usual, crossing over to an altogether less exotic tweeter at a high 5kHz. The way the tweeter is mounted across the port opening is a clever design touch. Due to limited bass output, close-to-wall mounting is essential.



comes with superb mid coherence, delivering female voices complete with shivers up the spine. Perhaps because of the limited bandwidth, it also suited our budget components pretty well.

Conclusion

Rogers' candy-coloured, tangerine-flake streamline baby is a very entertaining, if somewhat infuriating loudspeaker. It scores high marks as a communicator, especially of voice-band information, where it's exceptionally coherent. But high sensitivity has only been achieved alongside a sacrifice of bass weight, which is barely adequate, even though it's refreshingly agile. I reckon it would be well worth exploring its potential alongside a subwoofer. Idiosyncratic, with a balance and projection that won't be to every taste — but its drop-dead looks and great voice reproduction at a now realistic price, imply warm Recommendation. *PMc*

Sound quality

Although a rather mixed bag sonically — the idiosyncracies of the dB101 drew a fair amount of flak from the listening panel — its underlying charm somehow kept it from serious censure and gave it a decent all-round ranking.

There are two key problem areas. First there's not really enough bass, and second the midband (and especially the upper 'presence' section) is decidedly strong. Put those two characteristics together and the combination is both lightweight and decidedly edge-of-seat, with sufficient coloration to alienate some listeners. But the payoff

VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £249.95

Style par excellence, this curvy sub-miniature is fast and agile but lightweight and forward; great voices, not enough bass.

Rogers International (UK) Ltd, 310 Commonside East, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 1HX
 (0181) 640 2172

THE LAB REPORT

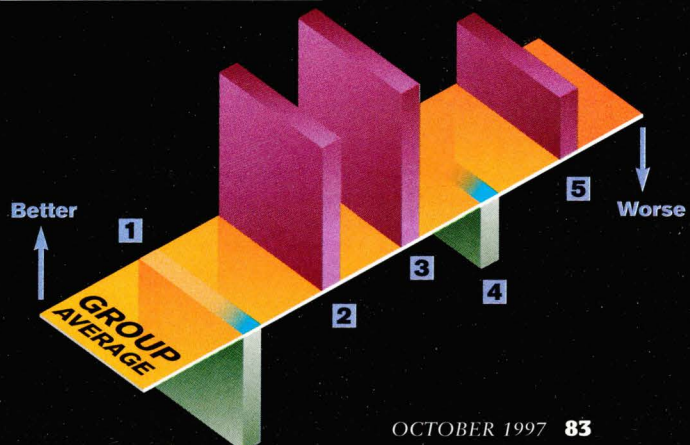
In this case, appearances are not deceptive: the dB101 really is as unusual as it looks. It's the smallest box in our test and yet, at 91.1dB/1W/1m, it's the most sensitive. With a 150W amplifier in tow, you could achieve SPLs as high as 107-108dBA, should you really wish to damage your hearing. Meanwhile, impedance compensation holds the load to a maximum of 12.60hms and a minimum of 4.40hms (at 293Hz), amounting to an average of 7.70hms that suggests Roger's 40hm spec. is unnecessarily cautious. A milder 60hm rating seems justified in practice.

So what are the dB101's foibles? Firstly, the 110mm polymer-coned bass/mid unit is pushed right up to 5kHz before crossing over to the treble dome, allowing distortion to climb from 0.5 to 2.5 per cent. The far treble response is remarkably extended (though droops off-axis) but the bass/mid output climbs by about 4dB from 2-5kHz, encouraging a 'loud-sounding' presence/treble.

Space is at a premium, so the tweeter is actually mounted *inside* the speaker's reflex port. The latter is clean but slightly de-tuned, providing a limited reinforcement at 75Hz even though the system appears to be tuned to 64Hz and the bass driver nulled at 57Hz. *PMc*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-50%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	60%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	65%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-27%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	26%



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Tannoy M3

This is the second new budget Tannoy to come *Choice's* way in as many months. The £140 stand-mount M2 scored a Best Buy in last month's under-£150 roundup, which must bode well for this floorstanding M3, which is priced at an equally keen £230.

This is unquestionably fine perceived value for money against any of the competition. There aren't many cheaper floorstanders out there, and none at the price as large, as elegant, or with such a reputable brand name. Offshore assembly seems to be the key to competitiveness, but the crucial design work is tightly specified from base camp in Scotland.

The similarity between the M2 and M3 runs more than just skin deep. Indeed, there's relatively little difference between the two, apart from the size of box — even the prices could come out very similar, with the cost of putting stands under the M2. The M3's main driver shares the same 120mm doped paper cone and injection moulded plastic frame, though its voice coil certainly extracts more current from the driving amplifier, and the low frequency alignment and port tuning naturally differ too.

Only part of the enclosure is acoustically active here, the bottom section permitting

the addition of ballast (which is neither fitted nor supplied). A single terminal pair limits the wiring options here, but the cosmetics work well, thanks to an attractive 'cherry' vinyl front.

In fact the M3s arrived with foam bungs already inserted in the ports, and therefore went through the first part of the programme effectively operating in sealed-box mode. (Incidentally, there's nothing in the instructions about bungs, which should be rectified.) In this mode the bass alignment was not ideal, and some wall reinforcement was found to be beneficial. However, room measurement indicates that port-open and-clear-of-walls is likely to be the better option.

Sound quality

Although it wasn't one of my personal favourites, the listening panels are democratic affairs, and comprehensively gave the M3 the thumbs-up, voting it into second place on each of the two days — a very impressive result indeed for a model well below the group average price.

The very well ordered balance has much to do with it. The M3 sounds just a little bright, so the overall impression is both neutral and attractively open, especially at modest listening levels, though a couple of listeners found it a little too busy-sounding

for complete comfort. The midband is particularly well judged, with impressive detail, a generous soudstage and fine stereo perspectives — the choral excerpt, with surrounding church ambience, was particularly well handled.

On the debit side, there's some lack of substance and solidity. Dynamics are rather flat, and the bottom end could do with more drive and authority. Leaving the ports open improved the bass weight and evenness, allowing the speaker to be moved further out into the room and benefiting the midband, but the bass still lacked the grip and power to do justice to the more demanding techno tracks. The balance wasn't perhaps ideal for our budget electronics either: the combination sounded just a little thin, though its essential neutrality remained a strength.

Conclusion

A pretty obvious Best Buy, this compact floorstander looks better than many, costs less than most, and turns in a thoroughly impressive all-round performance for the price. It favours the midband over the bass, and could do with more grip, drive and dynamic excitement, but you're never going to get everything for £230. *PMc*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★★
PRICE £229.90

Good looking, fine value floorstander which is very neutral and evenhanded, with fine midband but weak dynamics and drive.

Marantz Hi-Fi UK Ltd, Kingsbridge House, Padbury Oaks, 581 Bath Road, Longford, Middlesex, UB7 0EH
 (01753) 680868

THE LAB REPORT

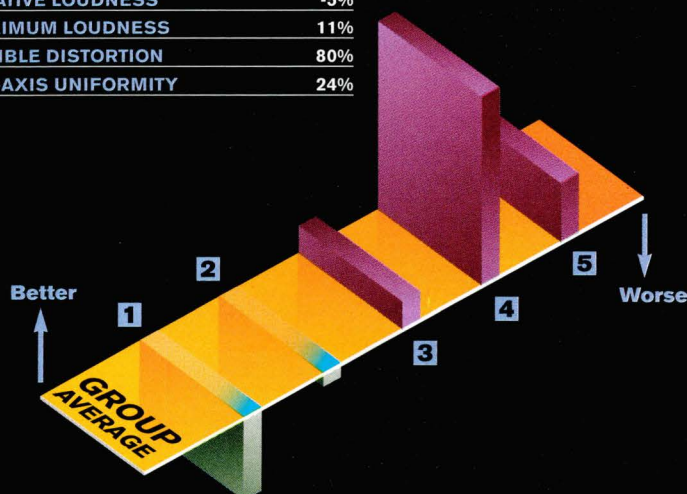
This is a solidly-engineered speaker that comes close to meeting its 89dB specification at 88.6dB/1W/1m while offering a minimum load of 40hms (at 195Hz) and an average impedance of 8.70hms from 20Hz-20kHz. Distortion remains very low at better than 0.5 per cent right across the audioband (re. 96dBA) and while levels of 105dBA should be possible, they are not necessarily recommended!

Tannoy's bass alignment is particularly impressive, adopting what appears to be a maximally-flat QB3 response with a -3dB point of 70Hz, tying-in seamlessly with the broad, low-Q reinforcement of the port from 23-96Hz. The port itself is tuned to a very low 33Hz and I would recommend removing Tannoy's resistive foam plug if the M3 is to be deployed clear of room boundaries.

On the debit side, a very high-Q resonance at 630Hz also escapes the port some +4dB above its mean bass output level — tut, tut Tannoy. Furthermore, while Tannoy's two drivers seem well integrated through the 2.4kHz crossover region there is, however, a notch at 1.3kHz and a 3-4dB 'gap' in the axial response between 4-5kHz, potentially isolating the mid and presence bands from the upper treble. *PMi*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-25%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-5%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	11%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	80%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	24%



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Heybrook Heylette

West Country speaker specialist Heybrook obviously takes some pleasure in naming its products. Eighteen months ago we had the Heylo (issue 152); six months back the delightful Heylios made its Best Buy debut (issue 164). Now it's the Heylette's turn to strut its stuff on the *Choice* stage. How long before the Heynonnyno, I wonder!

First impressions were that the Heylette represents a logical down-sizing from the Heylios. It costs £269 (compared to £339), has a similar shape and rather smaller dimensions, similar 'budget' real-wood finish and conservative styling, and a slightly smaller main driver and enclosure.

It is, in short, a very neat little two-way stand-mount. Internal volume is around eight litres, so it's just a bit larger than true miniatures. It's also very nicely presented, with sober reddish veneerwork and baffle-edge beading providing just the right styling cues to blend in with the 'traditional' furniture generally available.

It seems to be a very well-built box too, and while the small dimensions are bound to place some limitations on the performance envelope, especially at the bass end of the spectrum, the small well-damped cabinet panels should make only a modest contribution. Twin rear terminals permit bi-wiring (or bi-amping), and the speaker is

supplied with these linked by Heywire solid-core cable.

The main driver has a chunky cast frame and a small main driver with 100mm cone. Some extra bass oomph will be supplied by the rear-panel port, but air-moving capabilities are necessarily limited. The room measurements show the Heylette is quite tolerant of room positioning, but also reveal a rather startling lack of treble output. I went back to my Heylios data for comparison, to discover that this newcomer is not only fuller in the upper bass, but has some 3dB less treble output above 3kHz.

Sound quality

The Heylette didn't by any means disgrace itself in the listening tests, indeed it was good in parts, but ultimately fatally flawed by its obvious lack of treble. It didn't manage to get the panel excited either, ending up somewhere on the wrong side of the average line.

The bottom end is actually rather good. Even though the driver and box size dictate there'll be no serious sub-50Hz extension, above that ultimate roll-off the Heylette sounds quite punchy and impressively even, with a degree of authority and momentum which is rare for something so small. Bass-to-mid coherence is particularly good, bringing fine projection and focus to the rather shut-in voices, so the general consensus seemed to be that the Heylette was a bit of an inconsistent mixed bag.

Even the hands-on work with budget electronics failed to reveal a silver lining, and once again the thick and shut-in balance was a source of censure.



Conclusion

A baby down-scaled version of the exquisite Heylios? Not on your numchuck. By the end of the review I disliked the Heylette almost as strongly as I'd liked the Heylios, simply because its sounds dull, shut-in and is therefore not much fun. Why it should be so different from Heylios in this regard remains a mystery, unless Heybrook has decided to aim this Heylette specifically at the radiogram set. There might be some systems out there which could derive benefit from such a balance, but I'm not offering odds. *PM*

VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £269.90

Attractive traditional-style near-miniature has fine bass-to-mid integrity, but dull and shut-in top end.
 Heybrook Hi-Fi Ltd, Clemo Road, Liskeard, Cornwall PL14 3NH
 (01579) 342866

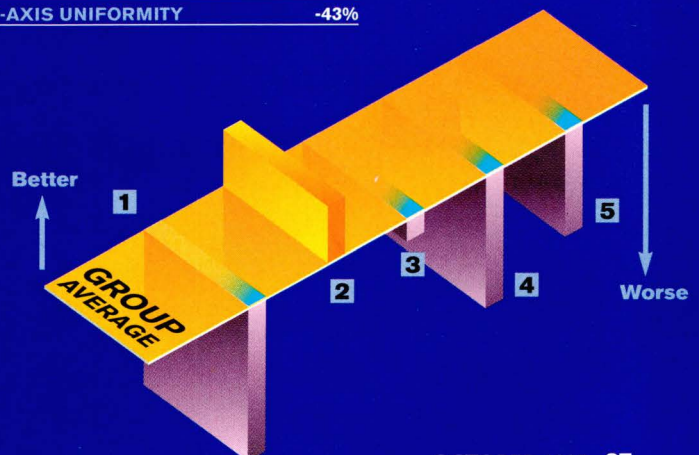
THE LAB REPORT

Heybrook rates the Heylette as a 60hm nominal load, with dips no less than 4.50hms. The former is accurate, nevertheless the Heylette does experience momentary minima of 3.90hms at 260Hz and 4.20hms at the Helmholtz (port) frequency of 60Hz which, incidentally, is also slightly higher than the 50-53Hz anticipated by Heybrook. In the event, 60Hz is the more sensible figure anyway, as this ties-in almost perfectly with the quasi-4th order roll-off of the bass driver at 95Hz (-4dB). No spurious output was detected from the port which seems ideally aligned, extending the -6dB point of the Heylette to 55Hz, in-room.

Heybrook's bass/mid unit looks identical to those employed in MA's Monitor 3, though it employs a different magnet assembly and suspension. Unfortunately, the speaker's axial response shows a broad depression in output from about 2-5kHz, suggesting both this and the 19mm soft-dome tweeter could be better integrated around the 3.5kHz crossover region. The upper treble still fails to achieve the same level as the upper bass/lower midrange, its reduced output being exacerbated off-axis. This also forces THD from 0.6 per cent (bass) to 2 per cent (mid/treble) as the speaker works harder to achieve dynamic levels of 96dBA. *PM*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-65%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	24%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-9%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-65%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-43%



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Mission 733i

The 733 is noted as a style-setter par excellence, as well as being one of the strongest brands in the marketplace. It has been one of the most influential speakers over the past couple of years, very much setting the agenda which started the trend towards budget-price compact floorstanders as an alternative to stand-mount speakers.

Our original review (*HFC* 139) awarded a Best Buy ticket, partly because the 733 was somewhat ahead of the game by offering a large and good-looking box with very competent sonics for £300. When we revisited the 733 as part of our Best Buy speaker roundup in *HFC* 156, it didn't fare as well, partly perhaps because the competition had started to wake up to the possibilities, but more specifically because the review samples sounded (and measured) significantly less bright than our originals, shifting the perspectives sufficiently to turn off our listeners.

Now the time has come for the 733 to enter a mk2 phase, adding an 'i' suffix to imply the injection of improvement into the mix. The main change in the new recipe is a new-style silk-dome tweeter, which is now fitted to several Mission models, and which proved its worth in last month's 731i review.

In other respects the 733i is as mixed as

before. For a big yet inexpensive woodprint vinyl-clad box, it's very good looking, thanks to the clever way the edges have been rounded off. A very large port has a built-in vane designed to minimise turbulence. The box shape ensures a decent stability footprint and keeps the drivers well off the floor.

The main driver has a 125mm clear plastic cone and pressed steel frame. Acoustically the enclosure is not as big as it looks, as the lower 30cm or so is blanked off (allowing ballast to be added). Rough calculation suggests an actual enclosure volume of around 25litres, which is the classic large bookshelf size. In a very real sense this can be seen as a repackaging of that traditional configuration, albeit one which comes complete with built-in support furniture. The box itself feels pretty solid, and the terminal block allows bi-wiring or bi-amping.

Sound quality

The 733i was not every listener's cup of tea, but it did sway the majority in its favour and record a good

overall mark — with specific praise for the tweeter quality from one perspicacious panellist!

The lack of genuinely deep bass is perhaps a little disappointing in view of the size of the box, and the midbass-tuned port did seem a trifle too enthusiastic on some material. But these are minor criticisms of what is essentially a good-hearted, even-handed and very well-balanced speaker, which worked consistently well in both systems, at most levels and with the vast majority of material tried. As with previous Mission models, it did a fine job on the end of our budget system, cleverly complementing and disguising its limitations, and allowing plenty of volume without audible distress.

Conclusion

A good all-rounder that covers its tracks rather well, the 733i is brighter, sweeter and more open than its predecessor, yet retains fine compatibility with a broad range of hi-fi equipment. The competition is considerably tougher than when the original 733 was launched, but this 'i' upgrade convincingly returns it to the Recommended ranks. *PMc*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £329.90

A new tweeter gives this attractive budget floorstander a more open sound; it's a good all-rounder that doesn't sound as big as it looks.

Mission Electronics, Stonehill, Huntingdon, Cambs PE18 6ED.
 (01480) 451777

THE LAB REPORT

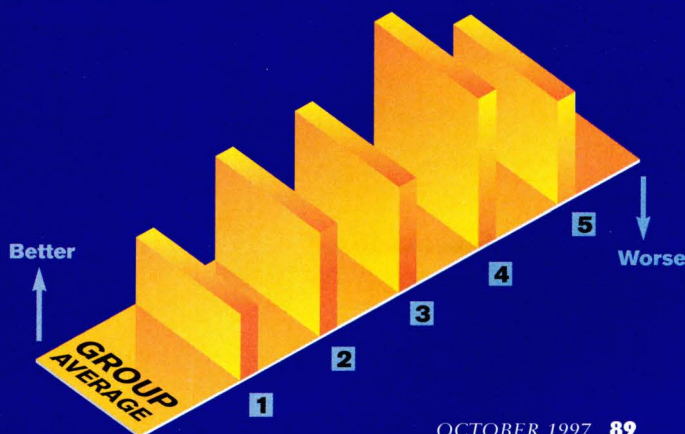
If this 'i' version of the 733 has much to recommend it, then a flat response does not come high on the list of plaudits. A 3rd-octave analysis shows a slight 2-3dB suckout in the presence region, which is encouraged by off-axis listening, and a pronounced +3-4dB 'sting' in the upper treble.

On the other hand, its healthy 88.8dB/1W/1m sensitivity is close enough to Mission's 89dB spec, and distortion is low, particularly so through the all-important midband where a fabulous 0.2 per cent was recorded under dynamic conditions up to 96dBA. Unusually, this increases to 0.6 per cent or so as the soft, composite tweeter takes over above 2.8kHz and an innocuous 2nd harmonic starts to dominate the spectrum.

The 733i's bass is very slightly misaligned with the front-mounted port providing maximum reinforcement at 57Hz while the impedance minima occurs at 52Hz. This is a high-Q system with a rapid 3rd/4th-order roll-off, though still good to around 42Hz in-room. The impedance curve shows some evidence of misterrmination at 290Hz and 1.08kHz from the bass/mid driver, its trend showing a reasonably safe 5.80hms throughout the lower midband, with the 4.30hms minimum occurring at 9.35kHz. *PMi*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	29%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	45%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	45%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	70%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	50%

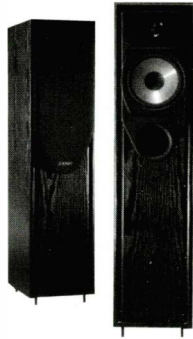


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NHT SuperOne

A new brand on the UK hi-fi speaker scene, NHT turns out to be a Californian acronym for Now Here This! Impressed? Neither was I, but any firm that not only survives its first decade but also grows into a significant player on the US scene deserves due respect for such an achievement.

More than a dozen different models cater for the full spectrum of hi-fi and home cinema applications. The SuperOne that is the subject of this review has its own particular niche in the hi-fi stereo camp, representing a step up in size and power from the company's highly successful SuperZero, an award-winning speaker from five years ago. Where the SuperZero is expected to be used with subwoofer reinforcement, with SuperOne a sub is considered an option rather than a necessity.

It's just a little larger than the 'typical' miniature (I estimate the internal volume is around nine litres), and differs from the stereotype in quite a number of ways. There's a £338 pricetag for starters, which is going to take a bit of justifying. Then there's a main driver with a 120mm (paper) cone — significantly larger than the 90-100mm used by most miniatures. However, there's no port to give the low frequencies a helping hand here. SuperOne operates in

sealed-box mode, something which is relatively unusual these days (there's only one other example in our group of 14), and has several implications. The short version is that the sealed box will be less efficient, probably with lower power handling too, but does offer rather greater ultimate in-room extension as well as lower phase distortion.

The box is certainly a tough little thing, mitre-jointed according to the blurb, and made from a shiny black (or white!) laminate — not quite in the genuine hand-polished lacquer class perhaps, but smartly effective nonetheless. Room measurements show that the SuperOne benefits from a little, but not too much, wall reinforcement; leave a gap of about a foot behind it as a starting point.

Sound quality

Considering its small size, this speaker did well in the blind listening tests, tending to imply some justification for its high-ish price. It wasn't anyone's favourite, but then nobody took a particular dislike, and results proved quite consistent through two separate presentations. This overall evenhandedness seems to be the most obvious strength: "Warm, easy, unforced and involving. Works

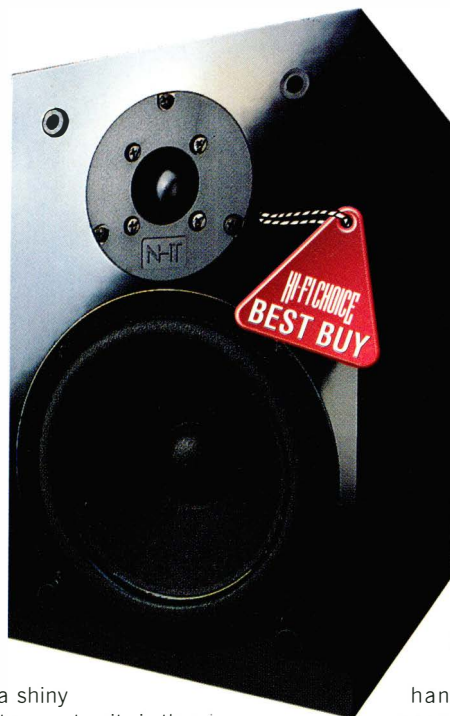
well on all types of music". It is, in short, a good all-rounder — but an unusually small example!

Although it tries hard to sound like a bigger speaker, it only half succeeds. However, it does manage to pack significantly more punch and deliver a greater sense of scale than competitors of a similar size, and that itself is an achievement.

Throughout the hands-on work, my respect for this speaker grew. It never managed to sound genuinely big or dynamic, but it worked well with the budget electronics, and handled complex material from the main system without serious clogging.

Conclusion

The low sensitivity might be a disincentive if you like your music loud, but it's the inevitable price that must be paid to get good bass extension out of a very compact box. If (lack of) size is important to you, NHT's SuperOne is worth checking out. There are compromises involved, but I haven't been able to come up with anything smaller and less expensive that can match this model's all round capability. Best Buy. *PMc*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★☆
VALUE ★★★★★★
PRICE £338.00

A fine compromise between size and performance, though sensitivity is modest so a powerful amp may be an advantage.

TSD Ltd, 19 Blacklands Way, Abingdon Business Pk, Abingdon, Oxford OX14 1DY
 (01235) 555622

THE LAB REPORT

At 84.7dB/1W/1m, the SuperOne is the least sensitive speaker in this 14-way test, slightly more sensitive than the Tangent Monitor 5 reviewed last month but not quite achieving the modest 86dB claimed by NHT itself.

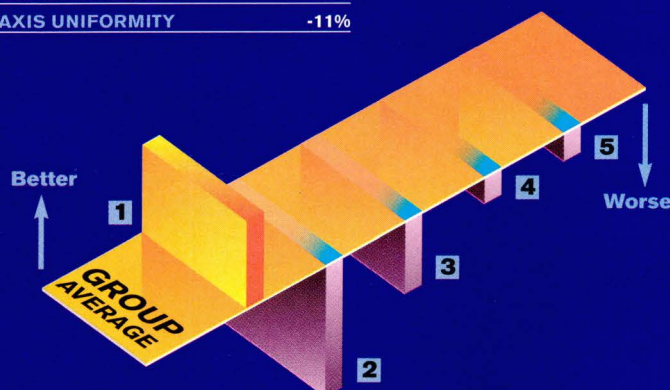
Nevertheless, this speaker held up pretty well at the 96dBA used for the dynamic distortion tests, hovering at around 1.3 per cent THD through bass and midrange and falling to 0.4 per cent across the treble. A 100W amplifier would be useful.

Naturally, its cause is not aided by the choice of sealed-box bass-loading in such a small 7.4 litre enclosure, though NHT has optimised what little bass is available, peaking the system at 100Hz (-3dB point at 73Hz) with a 2nd/3rd-order roll-off, providing a projected in-room extension of 54Hz. The axial response is a little bumpy, generally declining towards the 2.2kHz crossover frequency but only really picking up beyond 7.6kHz where the 1in soft dome tweeter gets into its stride.

Finally, NHT does accurately specify the SuperOne as a nominal 80hm load with an amplifier-friendly minimum of 5.90hms at 145Hz. The subsonic impedance also tends to 5.90hms. Nevertheless, the SuperOne is still probably out-gunned by larger speakers in this price band. *PMc*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	38%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-55%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-30%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-10%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-11%



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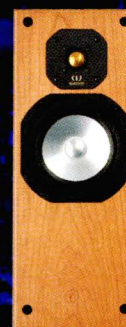
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Acoustic Energy AE120

Acoustic Energy has built an impressive international reputation, largely on the basis of the ultra-expensive, ultra-solid and ultra-miniature AE1, which, in the late '80s had much to do with the resurgence of interest in metal-diaphragm drive units.

In 1996 the company began a new initiative at the budget end of the market, and the floorstanding AE109 (Recommended in issue 164) became one of the major commercial successes of the Autumn season, thanks to great styling (cunningly based on AE1 cues), and high perceived value (two main drivers and a mass-loaded, plinth-supported cabinet for £330). The latter was assisted by offshore manufacture in Malaysia.

That extended introduction brings us to the £500 AE120, a significant step up from the '109 in price, size and number of drive units, but in other respects showing a close resemblance. Like its little brother, the 120 combines an impressive list of credentials.

Despite the four-driver line-up, the whole thing looks very compact, the more so because the twin bass and single mid drivers all have 100mm cones, so the front panel is very slim. The speaker comes fitted with mass loading, and the 25kg total weight feels solid, especially because a neat little plinth extends the spike footprint.

This is a three-way design, and I'm pleased to say that it's fitted with a three-way terminal block, allowing any combination of bi-/tri-wiring/amping to be explored, now or in the future. The bass end is handled by the lower two drivers operating in tandem, giving a combined moving area equivalent to a single 140mm diameter cone, while a 50mm port through the back panel makes an additional contribution.

Room measurements confirmed that the AE120 should not be sited too close to walls, but also revealed a rather lumpy and uneven character, not only in the bass region but also further up the band — and much less smooth than the AE109's room trace.

Sound quality

Though it avoided the ignominy of last place by a tiny fraction, the AE120 was not popular with any of the listening panel, mainly because of its rather dark and heavy presentation. The bass tends to dominate the proceedings, and isn't particularly smooth either, even though the dynamic range and weight are both quite impressive.

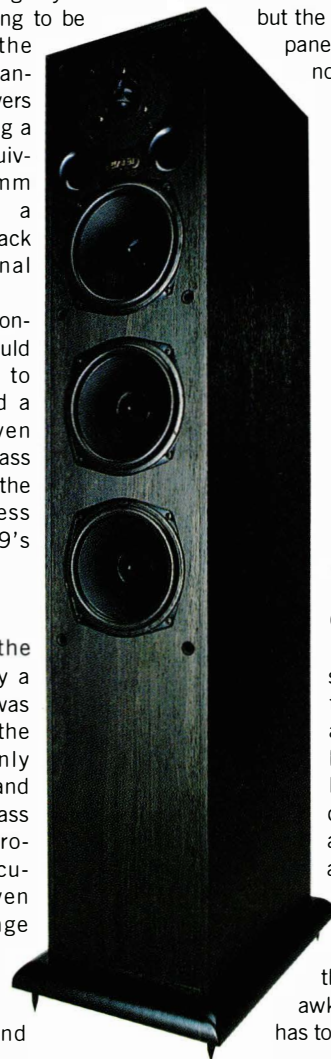
By comparison the midrange lacks snap and

energy, and the top end loses transparency. Focus is good, and there's a lack of strain and an impression of good headroom, but the net result, in the words of one panellist, is "nice and civilised but not very incisive". It's a sound which seems to be trying a little too hard not to cause offence, and ends up being rather bland and boring in consequence.

This presentation did suit our budget electronics rather better, at any rate up to a point, though there was still a rather heavy quality to the proceedings. Best results were obtained when I carried out some high power tests on my main system using some heavyweight techno material, whereupon the '120 really started to generate some authority.

Conclusion

Despite its very elegant presentation, in a group context the AE120 proved rather disappointing, hampered by a heavy and somewhat lumpy balance. Indeed, all the evidence suggests it's not actually as good as its cheaper, simpler and slightly smaller '109 stablemate. The '120's one advantage is greater power handling potential, but even that is undermined by the very awkward load which the amplifier has to drive. *PMe*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★☆☆☆
VALUE ★★☆☆☆
PRICE £499.95

Attractive presentation and good sonic headroom, but a heavy, uneven overall balance, and a difficult amp load too.

Acoustic Energy Ltd, 16 Bridge Road, Cirencester, Gloucester GL7 1NJ
 (01285) 654432

THE LAB REPORT

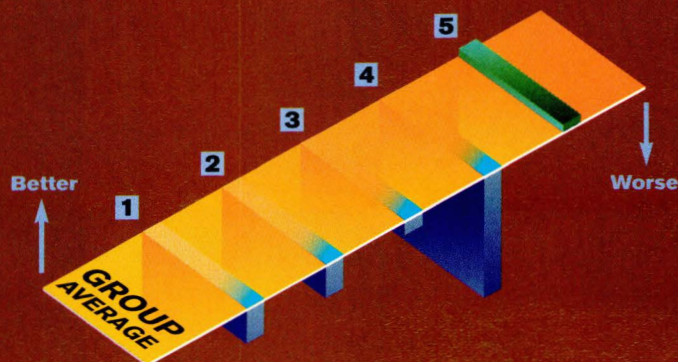
This is a complex speaker whose axial response sags around the 3.2kHz crossover region, suggesting the 90mm polymer-pulp midrange and 25mm fabric dome tweeter might be better integrated. A strong 3rd harmonic brings THD to 2 per cent at this point, even though it drops back to less than 0.3 per cent once the tweeter takes over.

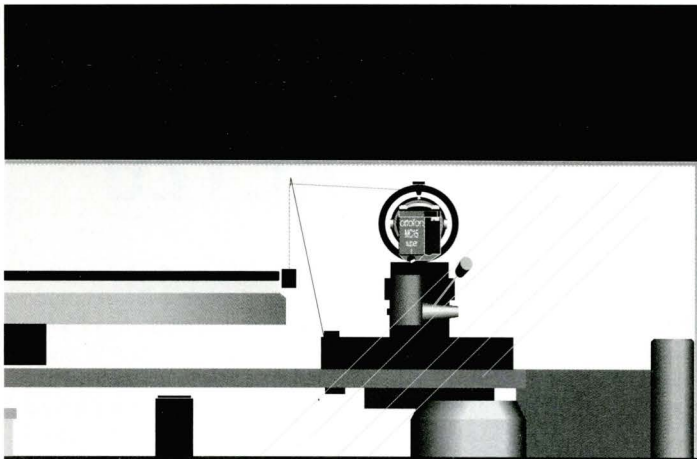
Additional coloration comes from 1kHz and 2kHz resonances that escape the two front-firing ports, the former +3dB in excess of the port's 78Hz peak. The treble dome, meanwhile, responds with a broad rise in output from 7.5-13kHz that is successfully ameliorated by toeing-in the speakers by 20 degrees or so.

Bass distortion is impressively low at typically 0.3 per cent, the two drivers peaking at 120Hz before dropping away some 26dB to meet the tuned frequency of the rear port at 38Hz. The sphere of reinforcement extends from 28-112Hz, encouraging a -6dB point, in-room, close to 21Hz. Yet this and the high 89.2dB sensitivity are won at the expense of an adverse load which imposes extra phase angles up to 200Hz and a tricky 2.70hm minima at 125Hz. Room and amplifier matching will prove crucial. *PMe*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-13%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-12%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-5%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-50%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	3%





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B&W 603

Worthing-based B&W is just about the most successful speaker company around right now, and while a newish 300-series has recently come in to tackle the budget end of the marketplace, the 600-series remains the company's 'mainstream' range.

This £500 603 sits on the third rung of the ladder, above the two bookshelf-type 601 and 602 models, both of which have been warmly Recommended by *Choice*, and have gone on to establish themselves as best sellers. The 603 owes much to the 602, adding a passive bass radiator and extending the additionally-ported enclosure down to a floorstanding configuration, in which the whole box volume is acoustically active.

The company has a number of alternative models which are roughly the same size as this chunky but quite compact floorstander — the new £1,000 CDM-7, or the recently reviewed £1,600 Matrix 805, for example. The 603 may therefore be seen as the budget version of a basic configuration which is repeated at various price points up the range. You don't get the luxuries with this model: vinyl woodprint finish is inevitable, along with conventional front-panel mounted tweeters. You don't even get a proper bass unit here, just something that

looks like one but operates as a 'slave', analogous to a reflex port. But you do get a taste of the higher-end, through features like a cast-frame main driver with a generous 135mm Kevlar cone. The style conscious might quibble at the 603's rather dumpy shape, but there's no alternative if you're using a main drive unit that's significantly larger than the competition.

Besides the ABR 'drone cone', the bass receives further assistance from a conventional reflex port, and B&W supplies two pairs of bungs of different density foam, allowing three alternative levels of bass reinforcement. (In our situation the sound was best with the thicker bung effectively blocking the port completely.)

Sound quality

It's hard to argue with a speaker that tops the lists on both 'blind' listening days, and while it didn't head every individual's score-chart, it came pretty close. There's always room to criticise speakers, especially in the budget sector where price inevitably

constrains quality, but the fact that no-one marked down the 603 in any respect is a testament to the fine balance of qualities the engineers have achieved, and is at least as important as the general enthusiasm.

Despite a slightly 'thrummy' quality and some lack of weight and scale, the bass actually works rather well, with good tonal and dynamic discrimination, impressive speed and timing, plus the sort of headroom, drive and authority that's able to kick when necessary.

The mid-to-treble balance might be a little too restrained and shut in by absolute standards, but that in turn paid dividends when using our budget price electronics, taming their slightly aggressive tendencies and making the most of a smoothly coherent midband.

Conclusion

The only question mark hanging over this B&W is whether it's worth a £200 premium over the 602. I've a suspicion that 602s mounted on high-quality stands might have the edge, while the 603's limited low-bass extension is also something of a paradox. Such cavills apart, this is still a most impressive loudspeaker, which topped the charts on both listening days, and continued to give an even-handed and entertaining account of itself across a wide range of sources and material thereafter. Best Buy. *PMc*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £499.95

☑ A squat floorstander with decent dynamics and a very well-judged, if rather restrained balance; bass is informative but could go deeper.

✉ B&W Loudspeakers, Marlborough Road, Lancing, W. Sussex BN15 8TR.
 ☎ (01903) 750750

THE LAB REPORT

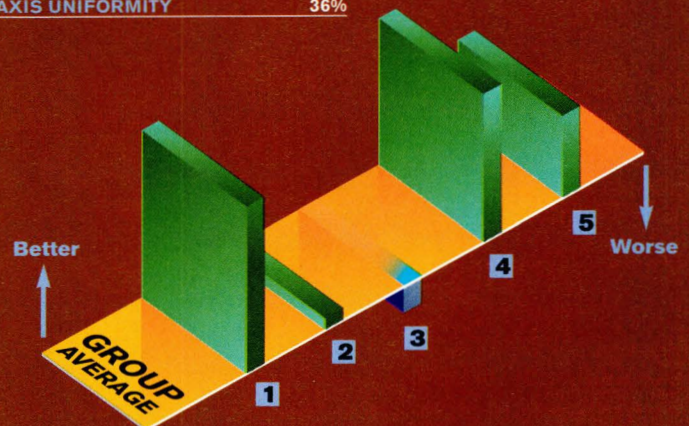
As if to demonstrate that appearances can be deceptive, the lower of B&W's two bass units is actually an ABR (Auxiliary Bass Radiator) — a motorless cone that combines the attributes of a reflex port with the mass of a conventional driver. ABR's are relatively uncommon these days, but to combine an ABR with a reflex port is extremely unusual.

In practice both port and ABR offer a uniform bass reinforcement centred at 48Hz. The ABR's output is actually cleaner and benefits from a milder 2nd/3rd-order roll-off while the port betrays further resonances at 170Hz and 580Hz which coincide with notches in the Kevlar bass/mid unit's axial response. These misterrinations are also visible on the DM603's impedance curve which drops below 80hms above 4.5kHz, reaching a minimum of 40hms at 12kHz.

The response remains a little untidy through the 3kHz crossover region where its impedance falls away quite rapidly, passing through a 45 degree phase angle. Here, its output increases 3dB before falling back at 6kHz only to rise as an elevated treble from 9kHz onwards. Otherwise, the DM603 is very sensitive at 89.7dB and offers a very low 0.16-0.6 per cent distortion under dynamic conditions at 96dBa. *PMJ*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	72%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	6%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-10%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	64%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	36%



JPW ML1010

JPW is a major force in British hi-fi speaker manufacture, and active in many markets worldwide. UK distribution is handled by the large and influential Richer Sounds chain. While this automatically ensures a healthy UK market share, it makes the brand less widely available elsewhere in the retail trade.

JPW doesn't change its models very often, but 1997 has brought a whole new range of nine models. Dubbed the Millennium Series, the bookshelf size/shape MS510 was reviewed last month, and its Best Buy rating must bode well for this top-of-the-line MS1010 floorstander.

Top-of-the-line it might be, but the Millennium Series is very much a budget range, and the 1010's £400 pricetag is remarkably modest when you consider the sheer size and weight of this behemoth. Its 115cm towers over the rest of the group, and turns the scales round to a substantial 23kg without any assistance from mass loading. My rough calculation indicates it has at least twice the enclosure volume of any of the other speakers assembled for this report, and the line-up of drivers and port represent plenty of moving piston area too.

It's a true three-way design, in which two bass drivers with moulded frames and 120mm doped paper cones operate in tan-

dem, keeping the front view fashionably slim. Additional bass assistance comes from a large (70mm) rear port. The midband is handled by a 75mm paper cone, and the treble by a small 19mm fabric dome.

JPW deliberately stays with wood-based enclosure materials, a double-thickness front panel aiding structural integrity and allowing subtle shaping and decoration. The 'cherry' wood-print vinyl wrap is prettier than most, and an optional £40 plinth was supplied, ensuring fine stability. Unfortunately the large bi-wirable crossover was damaged in transit. A shame, too, that the terminal block is so high off the ground, from the point of view of dangly cables.

Sound quality

A bit of a mixed bag. The 1010 packs quite a thump in the bass, which initially surprised our panellists. But it knows how to carry a tune, as well as supplying decent weight and scale, even if the box does add some of its own contribution. The overall rating was high up the lists.

The balance is open and essentially neutral, if tending towards the bright, brash and forward, a factor which was all the more obvious in our hands-on listening with budget components. Its best attribute was perhaps the fine impression of headroom and a general lack of strain that was evident at normal listening levels. Dynamic range and expression are both better than average. The down side is that it could have been smoother and 'kinder' overall.

Conclusion

While there remain some question marks over the crossover reliability (which will presumably be ironed out as production gets up to speed), there's no denying the fact that you get a considerable amount of speaker for your money. Only you can decide whether you want such a large box, but it does offer an impressive performance envelope, combining high sensitivity and loudness capability with decent bass extension (though to some extent the demanding load will negate the sensitivity advantage). The sound quality is pretty good too, if slightly forward and abrasive — a factor which might prove irritating with budget electronics.

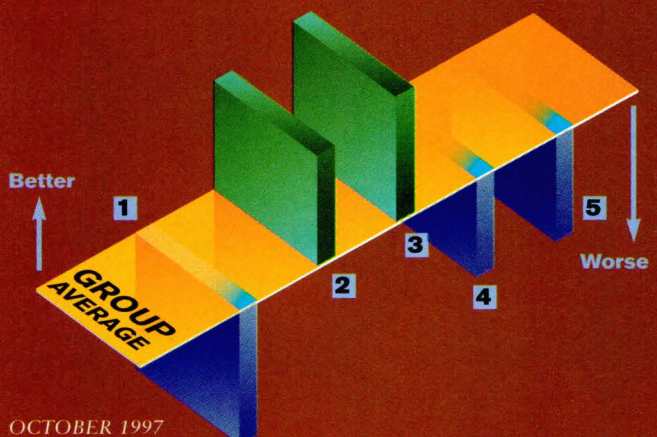
Recommended. *PMe*



VERDICT	
SOUND	★★★★☆
VALUE	★★★★★
PRICE	£400 (plus £40 plinth)
<p>☑ A seriously substantial speaker for the price, and an obvious choice for those who like their music loud.</p> <p>✉ JPW Loudspeakers Ltd, Ocean Quay, Richmond Walk, Plymouth PL1 4LL</p> <p>☎ (01752) 607000</p>	

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	-56%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	48%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	54%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	-40%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	-43%



THE LAB REPORT

Very high SPLs (around 108dBA) are possible from this large and sensitive (90.9dB) loudspeaker. However, while the ML1010's compensated network minimises any nasty phase angles it does flatten the load to a pretty consistent sub-50ohms from 85Hz-18kHz, including a 3.30hm minimum at 125Hz. Faint-hearted amplifiers need not apply.

The ML1010's axial response also betrays a modest 2-3dB trough from 2-3.5kHz, just prior to the mid/treble crossover at 3.8kHz. Similarly, residual levels of distortion increase from a very low 0.35 per cent (re. 96dBA) through bass and treble to some 1.3 per cent once the mid-driver takes over.

JPW's two, series-connected bass drivers not only offer lower distortion but also, in tandem with its huge rear-facing port, provide a -6dB bass extension of some 28Hz in the average room. In common with the ML510 reviewed last month, however, a nearfield analysis of the ML1010's port also revealed a substantial spurious output, in this case at 193Hz, just 4dB below the port's peak output at 45Hz. Interesting stuff, nonetheless. *PMi*

Monitor Audio Monitor 3

Monitor Audio is not only one of the longest established hi-fi speaker specialists, it might well be the oldest to operate under the same continuous management. The brand has never competed fiercely at the budget end of the market, but instead has concentrated on luxury real-wood finishes, and advanced metal diaphragm driver technology, with a broad range of speakers noted for their lounge-friendliness.

The £400 Monitor 3 is a case in point. It's different from the rest of the models assembled here in a number of important respects, and several of those go towards making this just about the prettiest as well as the most discreet transducer in our group. It's a floorstander, but a very tiny one, unusually slim and quite shallow, standing only 91cm off the ground. Work out the internal volume, taking account of the fact that the bottom section of the enclosure is blanked off (allowing the user to add ballast to taste), and it's acoustically no larger than the typical bookshelf speaker. Add in the fact that the bass output is best served by placing the speaker quite close to the wall, and it all adds up to a very self-effacing speaker indeed.

And a very pretty one too, thanks to a

nice line in real wood veneer, delicate baffle-edge radiusing, plus an optional (but supplied) £60 plinth. The latter is certainly a worthwhile option, given the modest footprint of the enclosure proper, so it's a shame the spike fixing arrangements aren't better implemented.

One reason why this speaker has a small enclosure and works well near to a wall is that it's a sealed box (rather than a reflex-ported) design, a distinction shared with just one other in this test group. The sealed box may lack the sensitivity and power handling of the ported system, but it does offer improved phase linearity and ultimate extension.

To keep the speaker slim, MA uses twin main drivers, each with small 95mm cones and moulded plastic frames, mounted above and below a small 19mm metal-dome, gilt-anodised tweeter. Twin bi-wire/-amp terminals are fitted quite high up on the rear panel.

Sound quality

Two panellists put the Monitor 3 near the bottom of their lists, while a

third put it at the top, which only serves to emphasise the fact that speaker sound has much to do with personal taste. To quote an overall result that comes out around average would only serve to disguise the fact that some like what it does, while others find its particular character much less appealing.

It's a dichotomy that found its way into the hands-on listening too. When I plugged it into the budget amp and CD player, it responded with enthusiasm, the speaker and electronics working sympathetically together to give a fine blend of delicacy and expressiveness. When I gave it a good hammering with some heavyweight techno from my main Linn/Naim system, it was altogether less happy and capable of holding things together, and the colorations seemed much more obvious.

Conclusion

Not the most neutral or capable speaker around, the Monitor 3 still has considerable charm, both physically and sonically. Ultimately it may be a bit lacking in sheer grunt and drama for some tastes, but it can give very rewarding results in a sympathetic system, provided your requirements aren't too demanding, and it is unquestionably one of the prettiest and most discreet floorstanders around. *PM*



VERDICT

SOUND ★★★★★
VALUE ★★★★★
PRICE £399.99 (plus £59.99 plinth)

☐ An exceptionally pretty and discreet floorstander; sonically uneven, but capable of fine results if used in a sympathetic system.

✉ Monitor Audio Ltd, Unit 34, Clifton Road, Cambridge CB1 4ZU.

☎ (01223) 242898

THE LAB REPORT

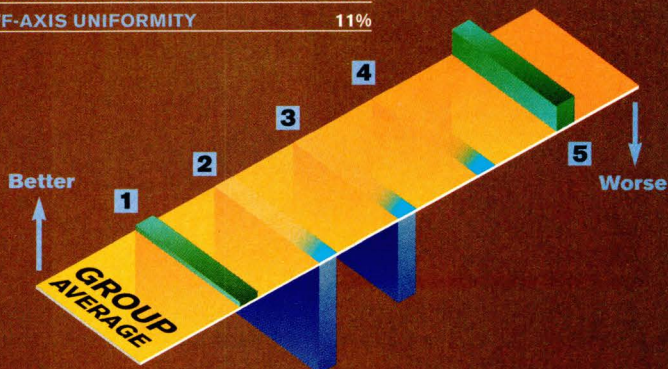
Though not quite a 'full-sized' floorstander, the Monitor 3 is still the largest speaker in this survey *not* to employ some sort of reflex-loading. Instead, MA's two bass/mid units are loaded into a sealed box with a slightly 'peaky' alignment, offering a -3dB point of 80Hz and a 2nd-order roll-off that extends its bass to around 65Hz in-room.

There is a suggestion of 'bass heaviness' in the 100-300Hz region that could be problematic in some rooms, while its generally dull balance is broken-up by some mild lumps through the upper-midband/treble (3.5-7.2kHz and 10-15kHz) beyond which the treble falls off quite rapidly. And a good thing too, because this metal dome tweeter suffers a severe break-up mode at 32.6kHz, just 5-6dB below the mean midband output level.

At 88.3dB/1m, neither is the Monitor 3 quite as sensitive as MA would have us believe (90dB/1m). Nevertheless, the speaker possesses a sufficient dynamic range to produce clean musical peaks through bass, mid and treble at <0.6 per cent distortion, re. 96dBA. Neither should it be rated at 80ohms, with its *average* impedance of 100ohms and broad minima of just 3.30ohms at 190Hz (remaining sub-60ohms from 115Hz-540Hz). *PM*

HOW IT COMPARES

1	EASE OF DRIVE	2%
2	RELATIVE LOUDNESS	-45%
3	MAXIMUM LOUDNESS	-33%
4	AUDIBLE DISTORTION	0%
5	OFF-AXIS UNIFORMITY	11%



Conclusions

This collection of loudspeakers epitomises the disparity of shape, size and sound between different brands and price levels. The five examples of 'luxury-super-mini' designs in group A (the majority clustered around £230-£250) make up the biggest sub-group.

Factors like drive unit and box dimensions mean that in theory these speakers won't offer a lot more than the sub-£150 models we covered last month (at least in terms of bandwidth and loudness potential). In practice the extra money not only buys a much prettier cabinet, but also a worthwhile step up in sound quality.

Classier drivers, a tougher box, better crossover components and so on: all contribute to better resolution and dynamic range than you'd expect from standard budget-price alternatives. Despite its inherent strengths, however, a small main driver seems to be a limiting factor in the ability of the speaker to express dynamics with any real conviction.

If you choose to go for a larger main driver, normally it involves moving up to a larger box at the same time. (There are exceptions, see the NHT review on p91.) The bigger the box, the larger the surface area to radiate unwanted colorations, and

the more flexible the panels become. Cabinet resonances are a big problem, and potentially expensive to solve.

Our £500 ceiling encompasses the vast majority of speaker sales by volume, but it would be a mistake to assume that it represents anything like optimum performance. There's still plenty of compromise involved in these speakers, especially with larger enclosures. Compare B&W's £500 603 with the £1,700 Matrix 804 tested a few months ago. The size isn't all that different, but it's very easy to hear the improvements offered by more expensive speakers, even with relatively modest sources and electronics.

GROUP A (£140-£250)

Castle Isis	£229.90
Chario Syntar 100	£250.00
Gale 2i	£139.95
JBL LX2	£249.99
Revolver 250	£249.95
Rogers db101	£249.95
Tannoy M3	£229.90

This price-band covers half of our complete test group, and includes five stand-mounts and two floorstanders. The **Gale 2i** is rather out on a limb at a price of £140, and seemed sonically outclassed too, failing to pull off the sort of giant-killing act some of its contemporaries from last month might have managed.

The rest cram into the top £20 of our price band, so are more comparable. Some worked;

others didn't do so well. Working up the price ladder, at £230 the **Castle Isis** is a real cutie of a 'super-mini', beautifully veneered and nicely balanced, with a lightweight, coherent and slightly over-projected up-front sound. **Tannoy's** £230 **Mercury M3** looks good for a low-cost floorstander; although slightly lazy-sounding, it delivers deep bass with a neutral if bright balance.

Up at £250 the **Revolver 250** is another budget floorstander with impressive bass extension. The ultra-bright balance could be actually be an advantage for if one



wanted to secrete them behind a sofa or curtains.

JBL's generous stand-mount **LX2** isn't the smoothest sound around, but it offers grip and drive that's rare at this £250 price. Though it's a beautifully-finished 'super-mini', the **Chario Syntar 100** lacked poise and discrimination. Then there's the £250 **Rogers db101**, which has stunning style, reproduces voices beautifully, but needs a subwoofer for big bass.

GROUP B (£251-£360)

Heybrook Heylette	£269.90
Mission 733i	£329.90
NHT Super One	£338.00

This mid-price spread encompasses a much smaller group, and a pretty disparate threesome they are. After reviewing **Heybrook's** **Heylios** I expected great things from this 'scaled down' £269 **Heylette** variation on a similar theme. Disappointment followed; while the

bass is very good by 'super-mini' standards, the top-end's insufficiency lets it down.

The same problem afflicted the earlier **Mission 733**, but has now been rectified in the new £330 **733i**, restoring this very successful budget floorstander to the revered ranks of the Recommended.

I'm actually listening to the £338 **NHT Super Ones** as I write this, simply because they've become one of my personal favourites. Their

subtler qualities of neutrality and evenhandedness steadily grew on me as the test work progressed. The **NHT** is pricier and arguably less pretty than some 'super-mini' rivals, but the pay-off comes in sheer sonic superiority, as it should.



Heybrook Heylette

GROUP B (£361-£500)

Acoustic Energy AE120	£499.95
B&W DM603	£499.95
JPW ML1010	£400.00
Monitor Audio Monitor 3	£399.99

Four floorstanders fill the top price bracket, but there's no stereotyping here. Each model embodies a unique approach to the problems and solutions of loudspeaker design.

I'm tempted to say the £400 **JPW ML1010** is too big, because I reckon that's going to be the typical reaction. To have got a box this big and inexpensive to work as well as this is quite an achievement, and there's no disputing its fine material value or exceptional loudness



Monitor Audio Monitor 3

potential, though it could sound more gracious when played loud.

Despite being the same price, the **Monitor Audio Monitor 3** is at the opposite extreme in terms of size: a bijou real-wood floorstander that likes to stand quite close to the wall; a model of discretion. It sounds pretty good too, though it could be more neutral.



Acoustic Energy AE120

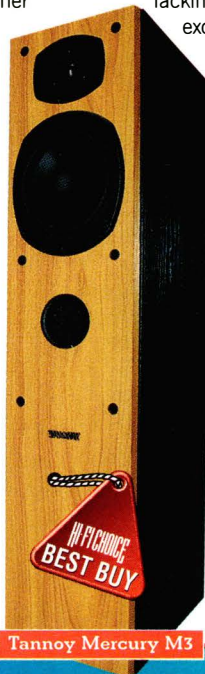
With four drivers and 25kg of mass-loaded weight, **Acoustic Energy's** elegant, slimline **AE120** looks and feels like a lot of loudspeaker for £500. Fun at louder party levels, it's only downside is being less even than the cheaper **AE109**.

Chunky presentation allows the **B&W DM603** to use a larger main driver than most of the competition, with consequent benefits in dynamics and headroom. Bass extension might have been a bit greater, but balance seems well-matched to modest components.

BEST BUYS

Four Best Buys out of 14 is a higher hit rate than we were used to a couple of years ago, but we picked out the same number of champs in our last mid-price speaker group test (issue 164). Each Best Buy occupies its own quite distinct price/size/format niche, so our Fantastic Four represent the diversity of the market.

Tannoy's £230 Mercury M3 not only looks very good for a low-cost floorstander, it also delivers respectably deep bass alongside an impressively neutral, if slightly bright balance, but the sound is rather lazy and



Tannoy Mercury M3

lacking in dynamic grip and excitement.

JBL's largish stand-mount **LX2** (£250) isn't the smoothest or most open sound around. There's maybe a touch too much boom'n'tizz for purists too, but it's a balance that's likely to widen its commercial appeal, and the good-hearted sound includes a worthwhile dollop of dynamic grip and drive.



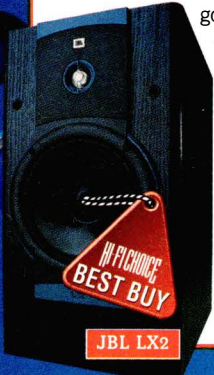
B&W DM603

If small size is important, check out the delightful £338 **NHT SuperOnes**. The sound will never compete in the big'n'loud stakes, but their subtle neutrality and evenhandedness becomes better and better with familiarity. They're not as cheap as some 'super-mini' rivals, but the payoff comes in sheer sonic superiority.

Chunky presentation allows the £500 **B&W DM603** to use a larger main driver than most of the competition, with consequent benefits in dynamics and headroom. Bass extension might have been greater, but the balance seems close to ideal for matching a wide range of components.



NHT SuperOne



JBL LX2

RECOMMENDED

A further four models carry Recommended flags. The bijou **Castle Isis** (£230) will sell on looks alone. This beautifully veneered and nicely-balanced 'super-mini' has a lightweight, coherent and slightly over-projected up-front sound.

If you fancy making a break from the dead-tree school of interior decor, the **Rogers db101** offers stunning style at a now very realistic £250. The sound is all front and no grunt, and really needs subwoofer accompaniment, but voices are beautifully handled.



Mission 733i



Rogers db101



Castle Isis

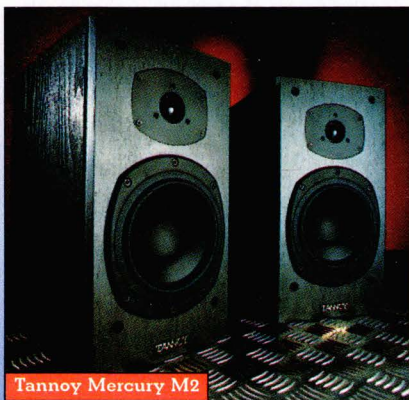
The latest version of an established big seller, **Mission's £330 733i** now comes with extra-improved treble. The result is clearer and more open, while the bottom end packs an enthusiastic thump.

An enormous speaker for £400... there's no disputing the **JPW ML1010's** fine material value or exceptional loudness potential — though it could sound more gracious when going loud.



JPW ML1010

BEST OF THE REST



Tannoy Mercury M2

- Mission 731 Pro (£140)
- Tannoy Mercury M2 (£140)
- B&W DM302 (£150)
- Rega Kyte (£198)
- B&W DM601 (£200)
- Royd Minstrel (£269)
- B&W DM602 (£300)
- Keswick Audio Aria (£329)
- Acoustic Energy AE109 (£330)
- Heybrook Heylios (£339)
- B&W DM305 (£350)
- Wharfedale MFM-3 (£350)
- Dali 104B (£370)
- Musical Technology Harrier (£400)
- QLN Qubic 222 (£400)

- PMC TB-1 (£410)
- Royd Doublet (£450)
- Rega ELA II (£498)



Heybrook Heylios

Five Stars

Does the best price always mean the best deal?

“I thought I had this buying hi-fi business sorted out. I bought all the hi-fi magazines and read them thoroughly, because I reckoned their experts knew exactly what they were talking about - at least a lot more than I did! It was reassuring to see the same product names cropping up regularly and I figured the writers’ experience and guidance would steer me straight to the system of my dreams. The trouble is I’ve ended up more confused than when I started.

Plan B — I’m going for a deal

“So, I’ve decided to adopt plan B. I’m sure there can’t be any really dramatic differences between all this gear and it’s all bound to work together properly, so I’m going to check the price lists and the adverts and shop around for the best deal. I know getting the right hi-fi is important — hey, I’m as mad about music as anyone — but if I can get close to the mark and save a few quid, I’m sure I’ll end up with a good system and be happy. I know there are specialist shops out there that do demonstrations and reckon they’ve got all the solutions but, to be honest, I’m a bit scared of going to one. I’d really welcome some advice and guidance but I don’t know all the technical jargon and I’d feel daft sitting there trying to “hear the differences” if I couldn’t. Anyway, a friend told me that these shops only sell the really expensive gear and that they’re not interested if you don’t have loads of money to spend.”

And so another hi-fi buyer starts his journey down the road to dissatisfaction, endless upgrades and a permanent overdraft.

There is only one way to buy a hi-fi system that will prove satisfying, reliable and deliver true value for money, and that’s through a specialist hi-fi dealer. Let’s face it, you wouldn’t think about buying a car if you couldn’t take it for a test drive. You wouldn’t buy a house solely on the strength of seeing the estate agent’s details and a photograph. Even if you’re spending far less, say buying a jacket or a pair of shoes, you want to try them on to make sure they fit you.

Buying a hi-fi system is no different. It doesn’t matter what the specifications say or what the “experts” think: if it doesn’t measure up to what you want from a system, then it’s not the right choice. Knowing that you’ve bought a room full of five-star favourites or best-buys is no consolation when you can’t bear to listen to them for more than five minutes. Even that ten per cent discount on the price won’t make them sound any better.

Buying or being sold to?

Mind you, most of us are easily suckered when it comes to buying hi-fi. Given the choice of venturing into the unknown territory of a specialist dealer’s shop and exerting some influence over what we buy, or taking what looks like the easy route — having adverts and magazine reviews push us along a path sweetened with discounts and special offers — we opt for the latter. We don’t buy a system, we allow ourselves to be sold one. We side-line our own ideas about quality and personal satisfaction and buy someone else’s opinion of what’s good for us and good value for our money.

Take control!

Now there’s a group of long-established, independent specialist dealers who are totally committed to putting the customer back in the driving seat. They’re encouraging the buyer to take control ... with a little help and guidance provided where required. They know how difficult it can be to establish the true quality and



One reviewer said a product I fancied was absolutely brilliant but another said it was nothing special at all. How can that be? Surely one CD player is pretty much the same as another? And how can a loudspeaker that’s one magazine’s top recommendation not get so much as a mention in any of the others? I don’t mind admitting it, I’m completely lost.”

For Value

Ask the UK's top twenty specialist hi-fi dealers.



worth of hi-fi and home cinema systems. They know that without experiencing the performance of the systems they offer, you can't possibly assess the value of them. That's why their idea of "selling" is to play the systems for you and allow you to be the judge.

Listening to your choice of music in a peaceful, well organised demonstration room, you may be surprised and, almost certainly, relieved to discover how easy it is to hear the differences between components and between systems. With the dealer's help and advice you will be able to make a clear and informed decision about what to buy. It comes down to trusting your own judgement rather than the opinion of a reviewer you've never met ... and who won't refund your money if you're not satisfied or be at the end of a phone to sort out any problems you might encounter.

The story doesn't end there. These shops won't abandon you once you've put your hand into your pocket. They won't

leave you to set up the system you've selected as best you can. They'll install it in your home, make sure it sounds great, and make sure that you're entirely happy with the way it works.

Why bother?

There is, of course, one question that hasn't been answered: why should you and these dealers go to all this trouble? Well, from your point of view maybe it's because a good deal is about a great deal more than just price. Unless you've got money to burn, you'll be living with your new system for years — years during which most of those five star products will probably stop shining quite so brightly.

As far as the dealers are concerned, maybe they believe that taking care of their customers properly is a nicer way of doing business than just handing over boxes.



Listed on the right of this page are the best hi-fi shops in the country. They all have lots of stars. You'll find them on the shop floor: they're the people waiting to guide customers towards hi-fi that will give them years of musical enjoyment and total satisfaction.

STAR QUALITIES

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service
facilities
verdict



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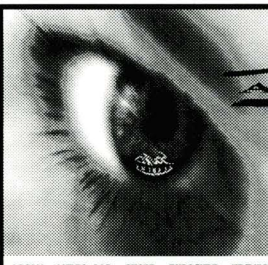
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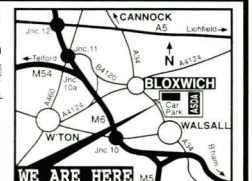


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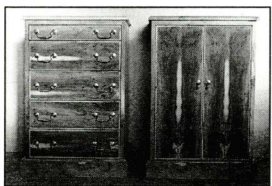
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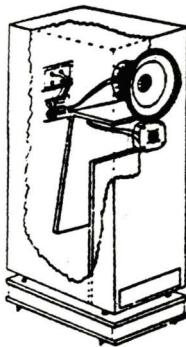


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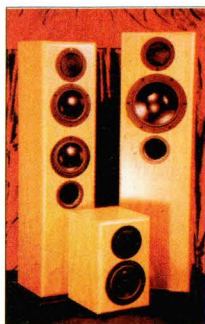
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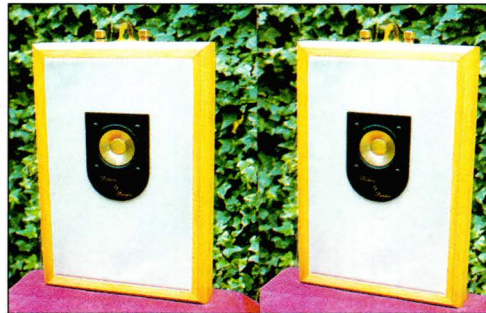
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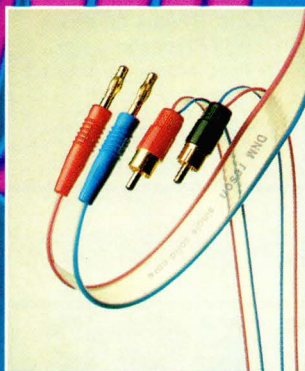
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- Mission 733s, black, mint £165. Mission 731is, new £85. Systemdek 2x900, RB250, G900IGC, black £180. HK610 amp, £85. (01706) 345418.
- Mission 754 Freedom speakers, 6 mnths old, boxed, cost £1,300, £725 for quick

- sale, poss p/ex for 752 Freedoms. Audiolab C/P Pre/Power amps £600. Marantz CD72 £190. Norfolk (01493) 651287.
- Mission Cyrus III amp £320. Arcam Alpha 7 CD £225. Mission 752S speakers £395. All guaranteed. (01582) 724414.
- Mordaunt-Short MS55Ti loudspeakers, walnut, immaculate condition, £199 ono. Herts (01462) 485738/(0468) 646591.
- Musical Fidelity A1 integrated amplifier £110. Arcam Two speakers plus Atacama stands £120. Antique pine storage unit, capacity 900 CDs, £350. (01264) 810361.
- Musical Fidelity F22 pre-amp, hardly used, as new, 4 yr guarantee. I own one I use. £650, bargain. E Sussex (01424) 431536.
- Musical Fidelity pre 3a, 2 x P150 power amps and dedicated PSU in VGC, £600 ono. Nakamichi cassette deck 2 ex cond £200. 3 pairs Audioquest Ruby cables £35ea. 2 pairs Audioquest Indigo £80pair. 1 Deltac cable £40. 2 Target tables £90 or £50ea. Oxford (01865) 511133.
- Naim 42 Snaps 110. Linn Saras. Leak Troughline, recent service. Nytech receiver, full working order. Move forces sale. Andrew (01438) 714656, eves.
- Naim Naxo 2-4 old-style £200. Naim Hi-Cap, old style £250. Good condition. Suffolk (01473) 785659.

- Naim SBL speakers, walnut finish, mint condition, boxed £1,250 ono. Linn Sara 9 speakers & stands, walnut finish, £450 ono. Hants (01256) 355808/(0378) 168031.
- Nakamichi cassette deck CD2, manual, mint, demo, little used £185. (01582) 478992.
- Quad 405 amp, 33 control unit £300. FM stereo tuner £100. Arcam Alpha 5 CD player £225. Pair Rega ELA speakers £250. Berks (01344) 59587.
- Rotel 60W amp, £150. NAD CD (5320) £50. NAD cassette (6325) £30. NAD tuner (4225) new, £100. Wilts (01380) 830226.
- Ruark Accolade speakers £1,500. MOD Squad line drive £250. Kent (01322) 220202.
- Ruark Talisman Mk II, dark walnut, one careful owner £400. (0161) 437 5819 after 6pm.
- SU-A900 mk II amp, boxed, guaranteed 9/98 £250 ono. Brighton (01273) 305176.
- Systemdek 2x900, black, RB250, G900TGC £195. Mission 733 black, mint £150. Harman Kardon HK610 amp, £85. (01706) 345418.
- Tandberg TCD320 cassette, just serviced £125. Neal 302 studio cassette deck, boxed, regularly serviced £500. JBL L20T bookshelf monitors, walnut finish. VGC (£420) £200. Rotel RA820BX2 amplifier, £55. N Kent (01474) 704382.
- Tannoy Cheviot, monitor floorstanders, £275. Radford STA25, SC22, ex cond £575. Dynaco ST 120 £275. Other classic hi-fi available, please call (01484) 530107.
- TDL RTL3 rosewood loudspeakers £320. Thorens TD160 turntable £55. Midlands (01543) 683494.
- Technics SUA900mk2. 4 mnths, perfect, boxed £220. Marantz ST55 tuner, perfect, boxed £55. Sony SSA1L Mini monitors. Perfect, boxed £200 (£450). Tel (01948) 667521.

WANTED

- Audio Innovations P2 phonostage. Sheffield (0114) 243 1542.
- Audio Innovations P2, Micro Seiki AP-M1 turntable, Stax or Koss ESP-950 headphones. London (0181) 672 4319.
- Ruark Crusaders Mk II loudspeakers. (01904) 708382.

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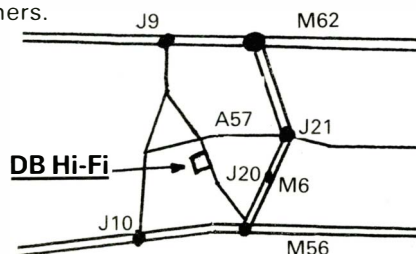
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THE DIRECTORY

Our Three Step Guide to Buying Hi-Fi

The legendary *Hi-Fi Choice* Directory is now simpler to use than ever before, but contains all the information you need to select and buy the perfect hi-fi system.

STEP 1

Discover which products fall within your budget by using our Price Guide (starts on the next page). This listing is updated bi-monthly and includes all hi-fi products currently available in the UK. It is organised by product type, then by price band, and is sorted alphabetically. Products whose names are printed in red are those that we have reviewed. Which leads us to...

STEP 2

Read about the hi-fi equipment that we have reviewed in the Directory (starts after the Price Guide). Here you will learn which items have been singled out for our famous Best Buy and Recommended awards that denote products of exceptional quality and value. The Directory is sorted by product type and listed alphabetically, and the beginning of each section provides essential information about each kind of hi-fi component.

STEP 3

Find your nearest hi-fi store in our Dealer Directory (starts on page 139) to book a demonstration of the products you are interested in.

Best Buys and Recommendations

If you see a Best Buy (red) or Recommended (blue) flag at the beginning of an entry in our Directory of reviewed products, the item concerned is particularly deserving of your attention.

B Red signifies the Best Buy swing-tag, which indicates products of the best quality and superb value for money in their price category.

R Blue Recommended products offer excellent quality and value, but not the same cost-effectiveness as a Best Buy.

Please note that an expensive Recommended product will nearly always perform better than an inexpensive Best Buy.

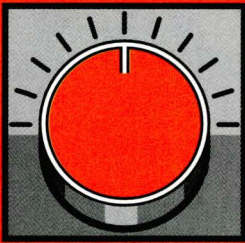
Using Best Buys and Recommendations to buy hi-fi.

Do not commit the cardinal sin of dashing into your local dealer, magazine in hand, demanding to purchase Best Buy CD player A, Best Buy amplifier B and Best Buy speakers C. This is unlikely to result in your long-term satisfaction. Our belief at *Hi-Fi Choice* is that you must consider the hi-fi system as a complete entity, not as a collection of components. While a superb system might well contain Best Buy and Recommended components, one cannot lump together Best Buys and Recommendations in the hope that they will automatically perform superbly. These ratings make a useful guideline for short-listing components worth trying, but only by hearing them for yourself can you draw meaningful conclusions about what suits your taste. Furthermore, don't panic if the dealer offers you equipment that we have not tested. At the end of the day, what matters most is that your hi-fi system fits your tastes like a glove, and it is the dealer's challenge to ensure your satisfaction by any means – and components – necessary!



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AMPLIFIERS
Integrated Amps

KEY

Ⓜ - number of line-level inputs.
'20W' - output power per channel
into nominal load of 8 Ohms.

Up to £250

Aiwa XA-003		40W	140
AMC 3020	Ⓜ	20W	100
AMC 3025A	Ⓜ	25W	130
AMC 3050A	Ⓜ	45W	170
Arcam Alpha 7	Ⓜ	40W	250
Cambridge A1	Ⓜ	35W	80
Cambridge A1 Mk III	Ⓜ	40W	120
Cambridge A3i	Ⓜ	60W	200
Denon PMA-250SE	Ⓜ	30W	160
Denon PMA-3050SE	Ⓜ	45W	200
Denon PMA-425R	Ⓜ	50W	230
Denon PMA-100M	Ⓜ	80W	240
Goodmans Delta 801			140
Grundig V11	Ⓜ	55W	160
H/K HK610	Ⓜ	30W	180
H/K HK620	Ⓜ	40W	250
JVC AX-V4BK		30W	200
JVC AX-R5BK	Ⓜ	45W	200
Kenwood KA-1080	Ⓜ	60W	140
Kenwood KA-3080R	Ⓜ	70W	170
Kenwood KA-3020SE	Ⓜ	50W	200
Marantz PM-47	Ⓜ	40W	150
Marantz PM-57	Ⓜ	50W	200
Marantz PM-66SE	Ⓜ	50W	230
Marantz SR-47	Ⓜ	40W	250
NAD 310	Ⓜ		100
NAD 312	Ⓜ	25W	200
Pioneer A-105	Ⓜ	30W	130
Pioneer A-204R	Ⓜ	35W	160
Pioneer A-300R	Ⓜ	45W	200
Pioneer A-405R	Ⓜ	60W	250
Rega Brio	Ⓜ	30W	229
Rotel RA970BX	Ⓜ	60W	250
Sherwood AX-7030R	Ⓜ	95W	250
Sony TA-FE210	Ⓜ	45W	130
Sony TA-FE310	Ⓜ	45W	150
Sony TA-F246E	Ⓜ	40W	200
Sony TA-F448E	Ⓜ	55W	250
TEAC A-R300	Ⓜ	45W	200
TEAC A-R500	Ⓜ	90W	250
Technics SU-V300	Ⓜ	25W	170
Technics SU-A600 Mk3	Ⓜ	60W	200
Technics SU-V500	Ⓜ	30W	200
Technics SU-V620	Ⓜ	70W	230
Technics SU-A700 Mk3	Ⓜ	45W	250
Yamaha AX-390	Ⓜ	60W	170
Yamaha AX-492	Ⓜ	85W	220

£251 to £500

Alchemist Axiom	Ⓜ	30W	289
Alchemist Maxim	Ⓜ	30W	319
AMC CVT 3030A	Ⓜ	30W	400
Arcam Alpha 8	Ⓜ	50W	350
Arcam Alpha 9	Ⓜ	70W	500
Audio Analogue Puccini	Ⓜ	40W	450
Audiolinn Alto	Ⓜ	35W	300
Audiogram MB1	Ⓜ	35W	493
Audiolab 8000A	Ⓜ	60W	500
Aura VA-100 II	Ⓜ	70W	350
CR Dev CR324	Ⓜ	100W	499
Creek 4330	Ⓜ	35W	279
Creek 4330R	Ⓜ	35W	335
Creek 5250	Ⓜ	50W	450
Denon PMA-725R	Ⓜ	65W	350
EMF Audio Sequel	Ⓜ	50W	450
H/K HK640	Ⓜ	55W	400
JVC AX-V8BK	Ⓜ	70W	350
Kenwood KA-5090R	Ⓜ	75W	300
Kenwood KA-7090R	Ⓜ	85W	400
Magnum IA120	Ⓜ	60W	265
Magnum IA170	Ⓜ	90W	330
Magnum IA170SE	Ⓜ	90W	430
Marantz PM-68	Ⓜ	90W	300
Marantz PM-66 Ki.Sig.	Ⓜ	50W	400
Micromega Minium	Ⓜ	40W	350
Mission Cyrus SL	Ⓜ	50W	398
Monrio Asty	Ⓜ	40W	495

Musical Fidelity E11	Ⓜ	60W	300
Musical Fidelity A2	Ⓜ	25W	500
NAD 314	Ⓜ	35W	260
NAD 317	Ⓜ	80W	470
Onkyo AS210	Ⓜ	40W	260
Onkyo AS21	Ⓜ	50W	350
Onkyo AS22	Ⓜ	70W	400
Orelle SA-100	Ⓜ	50W	499
Pioneer A-400X	Ⓜ	50W	300
Pioneer A-605R	Ⓜ	80W	400
Pioneer A-300R Precision	Ⓜ	35W	400
Pro-Ject Model 7	Ⓜ	40W	300
Rega Elex	Ⓜ	50W	398
Shearpe 2.5	Ⓜ	35W	489
Sony TA-FA3ES	Ⓜ	70W	400
Sony TA-F3000ES	Ⓜ	60W	500
Talk Electronics Storm 1	Ⓜ	50W	500
TEAC A-H500	Ⓜ	50W	280
Technics SU-A800D	Ⓜ	55W	400
Technics SU-A900 Mk2	Ⓜ	90W	450
Technics SU-A900D	Ⓜ	70W	500
Yamaha AX-592	Ⓜ	100W	280

£501 to £700

Alchemist Kraken Integrated	Ⓜ	55W	579
Alchemist Nemesis	Ⓜ	80W	700
Audio Analogue Puccini SE	Ⓜ	50W	595
Audio Note Kanji Line SE		9W	699
Audio Note First integrated		40W	699
Audiogram MB2	Ⓜ	60W	599
Audiolab 8000S	Ⓜ	60W	700
CR Dev Kalypso	Ⓜ	15W	599
CR Dev CR325	Ⓜ	175W	699
Creek 5250SE	Ⓜ	60W	540
Creek 5250R	Ⓜ	50W	575
Creek 5250SER	Ⓜ	60W	665
Densen Beat B-100	Ⓜ	60W	600
DPA Renaissance int.	Ⓜ	40W	595
Exposure XX Super	Ⓜ	55W	700
Fase Evoluzione Performance 2.0	Ⓜ	40W	570
Gamma Gemini	Ⓜ	12W	699
H/K HK660	Ⓜ	65W	700
JoLida 202	Ⓜ	40W	695
LFD Integrated 0	Ⓜ	50W	549
Linn Majik (Line)	Ⓜ	33W	650
Lynwood Opal		80W	685
Magnum IA200	Ⓜ	100W	599
Magnum Class A	Ⓜ	85W	690
Mission Cyrus Illi	Ⓜ	50W	598
Musical Fidelity A220	Ⓜ	50W	700
Myryad MI 120	Ⓜ	60W	530
Naim Nait 3	Ⓜ	30W	575
Orelle SA-100RX	Ⓜ	75W	649
Prime Design A-100	Ⓜ	100W	650
Quad 77 Integrated	Ⓜ	85W	700
Roksan Caspian	Ⓜ	70W	695
Rose Scion	Ⓜ	65W	615
Shearpe Phase 2	Ⓜ	50W	649
Stemfoort SF60	Ⓜ	60W	549
Talk Electronics Storm 2	Ⓜ	65W	650
TEAC A-BXR	Ⓜ	50W	700

£701 to £1000

Alchemist Forseti Integrated	Ⓜ	100W	949
Audio Note Oto Line PP		12W	950
AVI S2000MI	Ⓜ	100W	999
Copland CSA8	Ⓜ	60W	945
Credo IMP702	Ⓜ	70W	938
Credo IMP703	Ⓜ	70W	1,000
Electrocompaniet ECI-2	Ⓜ	50W	995
Exposure XV Super	Ⓜ	55W	800
Fase Evoluzione Performance 1.1	Ⓜ	70W	790
Fase Evoluzione Performance 1.0	Ⓜ	60W	790
Golden Tube Audio SI-50	Ⓜ	50W	995
H/K HK680	Ⓜ	85W	1,000
LFD 0 LE Integrated	Ⓜ	60W	799
Linn Majik (Phono)	Ⓜ	33W	800
Magnum Class A SE	Ⓜ	85W	815
Marantz PM-17	Ⓜ	60W	900
Meridian 551	Ⓜ	55W	795
Micromega Tempo 1	Ⓜ	50W	750
Micromega Tempo 2	Ⓜ	75W	950
Minstrel Ultra Linear	Ⓜ	26W	900
Monrio MC-200S	Ⓜ	60W	895
Naim Nait 3 R	Ⓜ	30W	760
Pioneer A-07	Ⓜ	80W	1,000
Rega Elicit	Ⓜ	70W	730
Shearpe Phase 2 Reference	Ⓜ	50W	799
Stemfoort SF100	Ⓜ	100W	849
TEAC AB-X10	Ⓜ	100W	1,000
Thule IA100	Ⓜ	100W	949
Unison Simply Two	Ⓜ	12W	995

£1001 to £2000

Art Audio Integra		30W	1,499
Audiolinn Classic 25		25W	1,099
Audiolinn S500		25W	1,199
Audio Note Soro Line PP		20W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Line SE	Ⓜ	12W	1,200
Audio Note Oto Phono SE	Ⓜ	12W	1,500
Audio Note Soro Line SE	Ⓜ	18W	1,699
Beam-Echo SA-50	Ⓜ	50W	1,950
Bryston B-60	Ⓜ	75W	1,280
Bryston B-60R	Ⓜ	75W	1,468
Copland CSA14	Ⓜ	70W	1,199

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Alan Sircorn, Hi-Fi Choice, November 1994

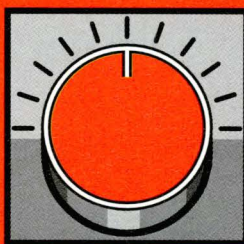
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Copland CSA28	Ⓜ	1,299
Copland CTL401	Ⓜ	25W 1,699
CR Dev Romulus V3	Ⓜ	35W 1,198
CR Dev Remus V3	Ⓜ	60W 1,989
Credo LIM 702		1,191
Credo LIM 703		1,249
EAR 834	Ⓜ	40W 1,999
Graaf Venticinque	Ⓜ	20W 1,995
Heybrook Signature II	Ⓜ	120W 1,600
LFD Integrated 1	Ⓜ	65W 1,099
Marantz PM-16	Ⓜ	90W 1,700
Meracur Intrare	Ⓜ	60W 1,095
Minstrel Partridge	Ⓜ	26W 1,499
Monrio MC-205	Ⓜ	80W 1,545
Musical Fidelity A1000	Ⓜ	50W 1,500
Primare 301	Ⓜ	80W 1,800
Rogers E-20a	Ⓜ	17W 1,090
Rogers E-40a	Ⓜ	42W 1,900
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Integrated	Ⓜ	25W 1,295
Unison Simply Four P	Ⓜ	24W 1,555
Unison Simply Four T	Ⓜ	11W 1,595
Woodside ISA230 Line	Ⓜ	30W 1,099
Woodside ISA230 Disc	Ⓜ	30W 1,249

Over £2000

Adyton Opera	Ⓜ	50W 2,595
Audio Note Meishu Line		9W 2,750
Audio Note Ongaku	Ⓜ	26W 56,000
Audio Research CA50	Ⓜ	3,990
Cary CAD-300SEI	Ⓜ	11W 3,495
EAR 859	Ⓜ	13W 2,499
Electrocompaniet ECI-1	Ⓜ	100W 2,195
Gamma Rhythm	Ⓜ	18W 2,499
Jadis DA30		30W 3,490
Jadis DA60	Ⓜ	60W 5,750
Krell KAV300i	Ⓜ	150W 2,550
Meracur Onesta	Ⓜ	75W 2,595
Pioneer A-09	Ⓜ	45W 4,000
Tube Tech Unisig Sig. Int.	Ⓜ	30W 2,300
Tube Tech Synergy PPS	Ⓜ	150W 6,900
Unison Performance One	Ⓜ	25W 4,500
Unison Absolute 845	Ⓜ	40W 11,995



PREAMPS

KEY
Ⓜ - (etc) number of line-level inputs.
Ph - phono input fitted as standard
(may be an option on some other models).

Up to £500

AMC CVT 1030A	Ⓜ	Ph	400
Art Audio Minuet	Ⓜ		499
Audio Alchemy Vac-in-the-box	Ⓜ	Ph	250
Audio Analogue Bellini	Ⓜ	Ph	475
Audiolinn P1	Ⓜ	Ph	369
Audiolinn L1	Ⓜ	Ph	369

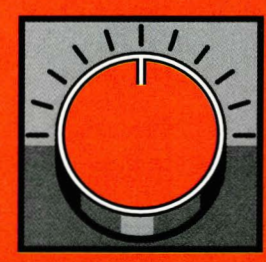
Audio Note The M			350
Beam-Echo PP-21	Ⓜ	Ph	499
Bryston BP1	Ⓜ	Ph	438
Carver CT-24	Ⓜ	Ph	499
CR Dev Themis	Ⓜ	Ph	349
Creek P43	Ⓜ		399
Creek PS2	Ⓜ		499
Crimson CS610C	Ⓜ	Ph	450
EAR 834P	Ⓜ	Ph	349
EAR 834L	Ⓜ		449
Electrocompaniet ECP-1	Ⓜ	Ph	495
Fase Evoluzione Phonodrive 1.0	Ⓜ	Ph	445
Henley HMC50			200
Henley HMC100			450
LFD Mistral Linestage	Ⓜ		449
LFD LSD Linestage	Ⓜ		499
Lumley PP70	Ⓜ		345
Lumley PP1	Ⓜ		345
Magnum MP120	Ⓜ		330
Magnum MP660	Ⓜ		500
Magnum MP330	Ⓜ		500
Moth 30 Passive	Ⓜ		149
Moth 30 RIIA	Ⓜ	Ph	249
Moth 30 Active	Ⓜ		349
Musical Fidelity X10-D	Ⓜ		120
Musical Fidelity X-LP	Ⓜ	Ph	130
Musical Fidelity X-PRE	Ⓜ		200
Musical Fidelity E20	Ⓜ	Ph	400
Musical Fidelity F2	Ⓜ	Ph	500
NAD 114	Ⓜ	Ph	270
NAD 116	Ⓜ	Ph	430
Naim Prefix	Ⓜ		350
Naim NAC92	Ⓜ		470
Rega EOS	Ⓜ	Ph	398
Roksan Artaxerxes 10	Ⓜ	Ph	395
Rose RV-23	Ⓜ	Ph	450
Rotel RC970BX MkII	Ⓜ	Ph	175
Talk Electronics Hurricane 1	Ⓜ		500
Technics SU-C1000	Ⓜ	Ph	350
Trilogy 905	Ⓜ		375
Trilogy 904	Ⓜ	Ph	375
Trilogy 900	Ⓜ	Ph	499
Unison Simply Phono	Ⓜ	Ph	500

£501 to £2000

Adyton Chorus			1,995
Alchemist Kraken Pre	Ⓜ		519
Alchemist Forseti Pre	Ⓜ		919
Art Audio Headline	Ⓜ		700
Art Audio VPL	Ⓜ		741
Art Audio Conductor Phono			750
Art Audio VP1	Ⓜ		952
Art Audio Conductor	Ⓜ		1,250
Art Audio Conductor Export	Ⓜ		2,000
Audio Note M1 Line			550
Audio Note M1 RIIA	Ⓜ	Ph	550
Audio Note M2 Line			999
Audio Note Discovery			999
Audio Note M2RIIA	Ⓜ	Ph	1,099
Audio Research LS7	Ⓜ		1,750
Audio Research LS3	Ⓜ		

Bryston BP5	Ph	889
Bryston BP20		1,126
Bryston BP-25		1,326
Bryston 4B-ST PRO		1,756
Cary SLP-74		1,495
Cary PH-301	Ph	1,795
Chord CPA 1800		1,730
Chord CPA 4000 phono	Ph	1,790
Concordant Exhilarant		900
Concordant Exquisite		1,950
Conrad-Johnson PV-10AL		995
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	Ph	1,295
Conrad-Johnson PV-12AL		1,990
Conrad-Johnson EF-1	Ph	1,990
Conrad-Johnson PF-2	Ph	1,990
Copland CSA303	Ph	1,199
Copland CTA301 MkII	Ph	1,399
CR Dev Carmenta		659
CR Dev Argento	Ph	699
Creedo CMP004		1,246
Creedo CMP005		1,876
Densen DM-20		1,200
DNM 3 Start		1,000
DNM 3A Start		1,650
DPA Enlightenment pre		695
DPA DSP500S		2,000
Dynavector L200		1,195
Dynavector P100	Ph	1,495
Dynavector L100		1,995
Earmax Earmax Pre		1,895
ECA Vista S		760
ECA Vista HD		880
ECA Prisma	Ph	880
Electrocompaniet EC-4.5		1,200
Electrocompaniet EC-4R		1,495
Exposure XIX		800
Exposure XVII	Ph	850
Fase Evoluzione Controlsource 2.0	Ph	625
Fase Evoluzione Controlsource 1.0		1,395
Golden Tube Audio SEP-1		890
Graaf WFB Two	Ph	1,195
Graaf WFB One	Ph	1,895
Henley HMC200		750
Jadis DPL2		1,790
LFD MC1 Phonostage	Ph	949
LFD LS1 Linestage		999
LFD MC2 Phonostage	Ph	1,499
LFD LS2 Linestage		1,599
LFD LSB Linestage		1,999
Linn Wakonda		750
Linn Kairn		1,400
Lumley LVL.5		895
Lumley LV1		1,150
Lumley PVL.5	Ph	1,700
Lumley PV1	Ph	1,700
Marantz AC-500	Ph	700
Marantz EC-500		900
Matisse Atom		1,000
Meracur Ingredi		925
Meridian 501	Ph	695
Meridian 562		765
Meridian 562V		995
Meridian 502		1,295
Michell Argo		730
Michi RHC-10		795
Michi RHQ-10	Ph	1,150
Michi RHA-10		1,150
Micromega Tempo P		1,250
Mission Cyrus Pre	Ph	648
Monrio ADN	Ph	625
Monrio PLUR1-L		960
Muse Model 3		1,990
Musical Fidelity F25	Ph	1,500
NAD 118		1,000
Naim NAC92R		630
Naim NAC72		725
Naim NAC102		1,050
Quad 77 Pre	Ph	850
Rega Hal	Ph	998
Roksan ROK-L2.5		1,250
Rose RV-23S	Ph	525
Shearpe Phase 6 Pre		899
Shearpe Phase 1 Pre Ref		1,399
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1	Ph	1,095
Sonic Frontiers SFP-1 Sig	Ph	1,495
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Pre 1	Ph	1,495
Sonic Frontiers Line 1		1,995
Sonographe SC26		995
Sumo Athena II Line		767
Sumo Athena IIB/II LS		987
Sumo Athena III		987
Sumo Artemis uP		1,595
Talk Electronics Hurricane 2		650
Talk Electronics Hurricane 3		900
Talk Electronics Hurricane 4		1,100
Technics SU-C2000	Ph	700
Tesserac TAADA		1,500
Tesserac TALA		1,500
Tesserac TAHA		1,800
Thorens TTP-2000F	Ph	699
Thule PR200		699
Trilogy 901		750

Trilogy 906	Ph	995
Trilogy 902		1,595
Tron Retro		1,000
Tron Nucleus Phono	Ph	2,000
Tron Nucleus		2,000
Tube Tech Seer Line		935
Tube Tech Mac Phono	Ph	1,150
Tube Tech Prophet		1,970
Unison Mystery One		1,750
Unison Phono One	Ph	1,995
Wilson Benesch Stage One	Ph	995
Woodside SC27 Line		949
Woodside SC26 Line		1,557
XTC PRE-1		1,250
Yamaha CX-2	Ph	650
Over £2000		
Adyton Temper		2,495
Adyton Modus		2,695
Alchemist The Alchemist pre		4,995
ATC SCA2		2,499
Audio Note M3Line		2,650
Audio Research LS15		3,399
Audio Research LS22		4,391
Audio Research LS5 MkII		6,435
Audio Research REF 1		9,900
Boulder L3AE	Ph	2,100
Boulder L5AE		3,400
Boulder L5M		3,800
Boulder 2010		25,000
Cary SLP-94L		2,095
Cary SLP-98L		2,295
Chord CPA 2200		2,298
Chord CPA 2800	Ph	3,090
Chord CPA 3200		3,352
Chord CPA 4000		6,025
Conrad-Johnson PF-R		2,490
Conrad-Johnson PV-12A	Ph	2,590
Conrad-Johnson Premier 15	Ph	3,995
Conrad-Johnson Premier 14		3,995
Conrad-Johnson Art		14,995
CAT SL1 Sig. Mk2	Ph	6,500
CR Dev Kastor		2,995
Creedo LPR 001		2,815
DNM 3C Primus		2,550
DNM 3C Twin		3,800
DNM 3C Six		5,050
EAR 802MC	Ph	2,599
EAR G88	Ph	9,999
EAR P52		15,999
Gamma Era Phono	Ph	2,499
Gamma Era Ref		2,499
Gamma Era Sig	Ph	19,999
Graaf GM13.5B		3,950
Jadis DP60L		2,800
Jadis DPL	Ph	3,190
Jadis DPMC		3,190
Jadis JPL		4,720
Jadis JPP200		4,998
Jadis JP30MC	Ph	5,978
Jadis JPS2		7,900
Jadis JP80MC	Ph	11,989
Krell KRC3		3,250
Krell KRC-HR		6,949
LFD Disc Preamp	Ph	4,499
Marantz Model 7	Ph	3,500
Mark Levinson 25S	Ph	2,950
Mark Levinson 38	Ph	3,995
Matisse Fantasy		2,500
Matisse Reference	Ph	3,500
Meracur Pretare	Ph	2,195
Naim NAC82		2,160
Naim NAC52		3,350
Roksan ROK-L1.5	Ph	2,250
Sonic Frontiers Line 2		2,995
Sonic Frontiers Line 3		4,995
Tesserac TAP-A		5,300
Trilogy 918		2,775
Unison Dream	Ph	11,995
Woodside SC26 Line & Phono	Ph	2,233



POWER AMPS

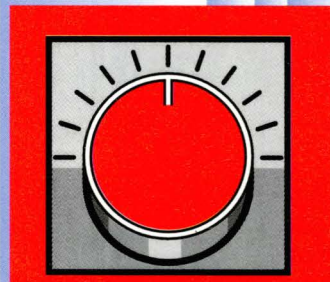
KEY
 '20W' - output power per channel
 into nominal load of 8 Ohms.
 Up to £500

Arcam Alpha 8P		50W	250
Arcam Alpha 9P		70W	400
Arcam Delta 290P		75W	400
Carver TFM-6CB		65W	399
Creek A43		50W	399
Creek A52		70W	499
Crimson CS620C		50W	450
Earmax Earmax Headphone		0.1W	375
LFD Mistral Power		60W	449
LFD PA0 Powerstage		50W	499
Magnum MF120		85W	365
Marantz MA-500		125W	250
Marantz MA-700		200W	400
Mission Cyrus XPA		50W	298
Mission Cyrus Power		50W	498
Moth 30 Series Power		30W	249
Moth 30 Mono/40		40W	469
Musical Fidelity X-CANS		0.1W	130
Musical Fidelity E30		100W	500
Musical Fidelity X-A50		50W	500
Myrrad MA 120		60W	450
NAD 912		30W	200
NAD 214		80 W	370
NAD 216THX		125W	470
Naim NAP90/3		30W	450
Rotel RB9708X MkII		60W	225
Rotel RB9808X		120W	425
Shearpe 3.5		35W	469
Talk Electronics Tornado 1		50W	450
Technics SE-A1000		70W	400
£501 to £2000			
Alchemist Kraken pwr		55W	529
Alchemist Forseti Pwr		150W	1,309
AMC CVT 2100A		80W	600
Art Audio Quintet		15W	1,393
Art Audio Quintet SE MB		-W	1,500
Art Audio Concerto		50W	1,669
Audio Analogue Donizetti		60W	575
AudioInnov Series 800		25W	999
AudioInnov First Audio		7.5W	1,749
AudioInnov Series 1000		50W	1,799
Audio Note The P		40W	550
Audio Note P0		9W	599
Audio Note P1		12W	750
Audio Note P1SE		12W	999
Audio Note P2		20W	1,000
Audio Note P2SE		18W	1,499
Audio Note Conqueror		8W	1,599
Audio Synthesis Desire		100W	1,695
Audiolab 8000P		100W	750
Audiolab 8000M		125W	800
Aura PA-100		100W	700
Aura PA-200		110W	1,200
Aura PA-200 C		100W	1,250
AVI S2000MM		150W	1,399
Bryston 2B-LP		75W	750
Bryston 3B-ST PRO		150W	1,160
Bryston 3B-ST		150W	1,160
Bryston THX3B		150W	1,262
Bryston 7B-ST PRO		500W	1,545
Bryston 4B-ST		300W	1,756
Bryston 7B-ST		500W	1,815
Bryston THX4B		300W	1,850
Bryston THX7B		500W	1,886
Carver TFM-15CB		100W	599
Carver A-500X		250W	949
Carver A-760X		380W	1,299
Cary SLA-70 II		30W	1,495
Chord SPM 400		100W	1,325
Chord SPM 600		130W	1,720
Conrad-Johnson MV-55		50W	1,995
Copland CTA501		30W	1,750
CR Dev Amphion		12W	1,949
Creedo PMP 804		1,876	
Creek A52SE		80W	599
Crimson CS630C		100W	800
Densen DM-30		100W	1,200
DNM PA Start		45W	1,000
DNM PA1 Start		45W	1,650
DPA Enl ghtenment pwr		100W	995
Earmax Earmax Power		25W	1,895
ECA Lectern S		50W	880
ECA Lectern HD		50W	1,480
Electrocompaniet AW60FTT		60W	1,095
Exposure XVIII Super		70W	850
Fase Evoluzione Powersource 2.0		65W	860
Fase Evoluzione Powersource 1.0		100W	1,670
Golden Tube Audio SE-40		40W	1,000
Golden Tube Audio SE-300B MkII		8W	1,490
Golden Tube Audio SE-100		100W	1,995
Jadis DA5		40W	1,997
Lexicon 212		120W	1,850
LFD PA1 Powerstage		60W	999
LFD PA2 Powerstage		75W	1,599
LFD PA2M Powerstage		90W	1,999
Linn LK100		50W	650
Linn LK240		120W	750
Linn AV5105		100W	1,200
Lynwood Ruby		120W	985
Magnum MFF330		150W	685
Magnum MFF660		125W	825
Magnum A500SE		200W	1,485

Magnum A50SE		200W	1,595
Meracur Ciere		60W	1,095
Meridian 555		60W	750
Meridian 557		200W	1,400
Michell Alecto Stereo		50W	1,150
Michell Alecto Mono		100W	1,989
Michi RHB-05		100W	1,100
Michi RHB-10		200W	2,000
Micromega Amp		100W	1,250
Monrio Cento		135W	1,495
Monrio HP1		135W	1,995
Moth 60 Stereo		60W	599
Moth 30 Mono/100		100W	879
Muse Model 100		100W	1,490
Musical Fidelity FX2		100W	800
NAD 218THX		200W	850
NAD 208THX		250W	1,100
Naim NAP140		45W	750
Naim NAP180		60W	1,060
Naim NAP135		75W	1,655
Naim NAP250		70W	1,655
Papworth TVA50		50W	1,425
Prime Design P-150		150W	650
Quad 77 Power		85W	600
Quad 707		140W	800
Rega EXS		70W	598
Rega Exon		125W	1,196
Roksan ROK-S1.5		70W	1,495
Rose RP-190 (Dual Mode)		75W	550
Rotel RB9908X		200W	625
Shearpe Phase 3		50W	619
Shearpe Phase 3 Reference		50W	729
Shearpe Phase 5 Mono		100W	1,500
Sonic Frontiers Anthem Amp 1		40W	1,195
Sonographe SA250		125W	995
Sonographe SA400		220W	1,395
Sumo Ulysses III		60W	629
Sumo Polaris III		120W	950
Sumo Model Five		60W	1,975
Sumo Andromeda III		240W	1,975
Talk Electronics Tornado 2		65W	700
Talk Electronics Tornado 3		100W	750
Talk Electronics Tornado 4		110W	1,100
Technics SE-A2000		100W	1,100
Thorens TTA-2000		30W	599
Thule PA200		200W	1,798
Trilogy 948		50W	1,895
Tube Tech Unisis Sig. Pwr		30W	1,900
Woodside SA240		40W	1,199
Woodside MA100		100W	1,733
Woodside STA50		50W	1,880
XTC POW-1		200W	2,000
Yamaha MX-2		150W	750
Over £2000			
Ayton Cordis 1.6		120W	3,495
Ayton Cordis 3B		280W	12,995
Alchemist The Alchemist pwr		220W	3,995
Alchemist The Alchemist mono		55W	8,995
Art Audio Tempo		30W	2,499
Art Audio Quintet SE		-W	2,500
Art Audio Maestro		100W	3,524
ATC SPA2-150		200W	2,500
AudioInnov Ser 1000SE		50W	2,499
AudioInnov Second Audio		15W	3,299
Audio Note P3		9W	2,150
Audio Note Quest		9W	2,750
Audio Note Yubi		18W	3,850
Audio Note Conquest		18W	4,450
Audio Note Tomei		30W	8,500
Audio Note Neiro		7W	11,360
Audio Note Ankoru		60W	14,500
Audio Research D130		130W	2,299
Audio Research VT60		60W	2,395
Audio Research D300		300W	4,678
Audio Research VT100		100W	

DNM PA3	50W	2,500
DNM PA3S	23W	3,750
DPA DAP500S	25W	3,000
Dynavector HX75	75W	2,195
Dynavector HXL1.2	130W	3,995
EAR 861	32W	3,299
EAR 509 Mk II	100W	3,699
EAR 519	100W	4,699
EAR 549	200W	6,499
Electrocompaniet AW100DMB	100W	2,095
Electrocompaniet AW250DMB	250W	3,995
Electrocompaniet AW180MB	180W	4,595
Exposure IV	80W	2,199
Exposure XVI	125W	4,000
Gamma Rhythm Ref	35W	3,999
Gamma Aeon	20W	4,999
Gamma Space Ref	18W	7,999
Gamma Aeon Sig	90W	78,600
Graaf 5050	50W	2,150
Graaf GM100	100W	4,490
Graaf GM200	200W	8,000
Jadis DA8	80W	3,333
Jadis DA7	100W	5,290
Jadis JA30	30W	5,980
Jadis JA300B	10W	9,000
Jadis JA80	60W	9,912
Jadis JA200	160W	15,518
Jadis JA500	400W	21,500
Krell KAV500/2	100W	3,485
Krell FPB200	200W	6,490
Krell FPB300	300W	9,500
Krell FPB600	600W	12,900
Krell KAS2	200W	20,000
Lexicon 225	250W	2,500
Lexicon 501	500W	5,000
Linn Klout	80W	2,400
Lumley S170	70W	2,225
Lumley M125	120W	3,750
Lumley M250	250W	7,500
Magnum Class A mono	180W	2,450
Magnum A200SE	275W	3,750
Marantz Model 8	35W	3,500
Marantz Model 9	70W	4,000
Mark Levinson 331	100W	4,495
Mark Levinson 332	200W	6,495
Mark Levinson 333	300W	8,495
Mark Levinson 33H	150W	19,395
Matisse Ref Monoblocks	180W	8,000
Meracur Tentare	75W	2,245
Meracur Cantare	-W	8,995
Muse Model 160 Ser. II	160W	2,290
Muse Model 150	125W	2,690
Muse Model 175 Ser. II	175W	3,490
Muse Model 300 Ser. II	300W	3,990
Musical Fidelity F16	200W	2,500
Musical Fidelity F19	300W	4,000
Papworth M100	100W	2,645
Papworth M200	200W	3,825
Roksan ROK-M1.5	160W	2,250
Shearpe Phase 1 Pwr Ref	100W	2,199
Sonic Frontiers Power 1	55W	2,495
Sonic Frontiers Power 2	110W	4,995
Sonic Frontiers Power 3	220W	9,995
Sumo Model Ten/M	240W	4,200
Sunfire Sunfire	300W	2,500
Tesseract TAMP-60	60W	7,350
Trilogy 958	100W	3,395
Tube Tech Genesis Sig.	100W	4,700
Tube Tech Synergy DMA	150W	6,400
Unison Smart 845	24W	3,250
Unison Palladio	32W	11,995

Bryston 8B-ST	150W	2,195
Bryston THX8B	150W	2,385
Carver AV-505	80W	899
Carver AV-705X	125W	1,299
Carver AV-753X	250W	1,549
Chord SPM 1600	250W	4,700
Chord SPM 1800	250W	4,700
Chord SPM 2000	200W	4,890
Chord SPM 3000B	315W	7,960
Denon AVC-1800	70W	550
Denon POA-T2	120W	800
Denon POA-T3	120W	800
Denon AVC-3800	90W	1,700
Denon AVP-A1	-W	3,000
H/K AV1100	30W	250
H/K AV1150	55W	350
H/K AV1200 II	65W	400
H/K AV1250	100W	1,250
H/K Citation 7.1	130W	2,500
JVC AX-V4	60W	200
JVC AX-V6BK	50W	230
JVC AX-V8BK	75W	350
Krell KAV500/3	100W	3,985
Krell KAV500/4	100W	4,485
Krell KAV500/5	100W	4,985
Lexicon 312	120W	2,750
Lexicon 412	120W	3,250
Magnum MF500	125W	1,445
Marantz MM-500	55W	400
Marantz PM-711AV	65W	450
Mission AV-Master	65W	650
NAD 316	50W	450
NAD 916	30W	500
Onkyo ASV 620	120W	700
Parasound 806	80W	1,495
Parasound 1206	135W	2,195
Pioneer VSA 805S	80W	450
Rotel RB956AX	30W	350
Rotel RSP960AX	30W	400
Sansui AV-7100	75W	250
Sony TA-VE700	90W	350
Sony TA VE 800G	100W	400
Sony TA VA 8ES	120W	700
Sunfire Cinema Grand	200W	2,600
TEAC AV-H500	80W	380
Yamaha DSP-A492	65W	250
Yamaha DSP-A592	70W	330
Yamaha DSP-A1092	80W	850
Yamaha DSP-A990	60W	900
Yamaha DSP-A2070	80W	1,100
Yamaha DSP-A3090	80W	1,500



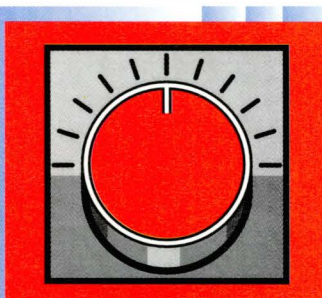
SURROUND SOUND PROCESSORS

KEY

Ⓢ - number of inputs.

AC-3 - includes AC-3 decoding for compatibility with Dolby's digital home cinema format.

AMC Pro7	Ⓢ	200
Arcam Xeta 2	Ⓢ	650
Audio Research SDPI	Ⓢ	3,293
H/K ADP303	Ⓢ	600
H/K Citation 7.0	Ⓢ	3,500
Lexicon DC-1 Pro-Logic	Ⓢ	2,000
Lexicon DC-1 THX	Ⓢ	3,000
Lexicon DC-1 AC-3	Ⓢ	4,000
Marantz AV-1030	Ⓢ	330
Marantz AV-1040	Ⓢ	400
Marantz DP-870	Ⓢ	600
Meridian 565 AC-3	Ⓢ	2,700
NAD 117	Ⓢ	470
Naim AV1	Ⓢ	1,680
Onkyo SR 211PRO	Ⓢ	340
Onkyo ED 901	Ⓢ	700
Parasound PSP 1500	Ⓢ	1,569
Pioneer SP-D07	Ⓢ	800
Sanyo HT D47	Ⓢ	200
Sony SDP E300	Ⓢ	230
Sony SDP-EP9ES	Ⓢ	600
Technics SH-AV500	Ⓢ	280
Yamaha DSP-E492	Ⓢ	250
Yamaha DDP-2	Ⓢ	349
Yamaha DSP-E580	Ⓢ	450
Yamaha DSP-E1000	Ⓢ	700

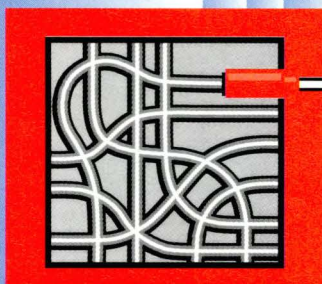


SURROUND SOUND RECEIVERS

KEY

'20W' - output power per front channel into nominal load of 8 Ohms.

Aiwa AV-X100	60W	400
Carver CT-26V		699
Carver HTR-880	85W	849
Carver HR-895	100W	1,099
Denon AVR-600RD	50W	300
Goodmans Delta 801	30W	200
Grundig R14DPL	40W	230
H/K AVR10	30W	300
H/K AVR25	65W	600
H/K AVR70	75W	1,000
H/K AVR80	95W	1,500
JVC RX320VBK	30W	250
JVC RX-416VBK	50W	270
JVC RX-616RBK	60W	350
Kenwood KR-V5090	50W	230
Kenwood KR-V6090	100W	280
Kenwood KR-V8090	110W	400
Kenwood KR-V9090	120W	500
Kenwood KR-V888D	120W	1,000
Kenwood KR-V990D	120W	1,300
Marantz SR-370	80W	300
Marantz SR-770	80W	700
Marantz SR-96	110W	1,300
Mission M Time	100W	2,000
NAD 713	60W	400
NAD 917		550
NAD 716	80W	600
Onkyo TXSV 434	65W	400
Onkyo TXSV 424	50W	450
Onkyo TXSV 525R	60W	600
Onkyo TXSV 535R	80W	600
Onkyo TXSV 636	85W	800
Onkyo TXSV 727R	80W	800
Onkyo TXDS 838	100W	1,300
Onkyo TXSV 828THX	100W	1,300
Onkyo TXSV 919THX	110W	2,000
Onkyo TXSV 939THX	120W	3,000
Philips FR731	35W	250
Philips FR751	50W	300
Pioneer VSX-405RDS	50W	250
Pioneer VSX-505RDS	50W	300
Sansui RZ-5110AV	50W	190
Sherwood RV-4050R	35W	140
Sony STRD E405	50W	280
TEAC AG-V6200	90W	400
Technics SA-EX300	40W	250
Technics SA-EX500	60W	350
Technics SA-EX700	60W	450
Technics SA-TX50	120W	1,000
Yamaha RX-V392RDS	50W	250
Yamaha RX-V592RDS	70W	400



CABLES ANALOGUE INTERCONNECTS

KEY

Ⓢ - stranded construction.

Ⓢ - solid-core construction.

Prices for interconnects are for a one-metre terminated pair.

Apertura Model B	Ⓢ	260.00
Apertura Model A	Ⓢ	469.00
Art Yam Church 5000	Ⓢ	515.00
Audio Note AN-A	Ⓢ	18.00

Audio Note AN-C	Ⓢ	35.00
Audio Note AN-S	Ⓢ	99.00
Audio Note AN-V	Ⓢ	179.00
Audio Note AN-Vx	Ⓢ	450.00
Audioquest Jade	Ⓢ	30.00
Audioquest Turquoise 2	Ⓢ	40.00
Audioquest Topaz 2	Ⓢ	60.00
Audioquest Ruby 2	Ⓢ	80.00
Audioquest Quartz	Ⓢ	120.00
Audioquest Opal	Ⓢ	189.00
Audioquest Emerald	Ⓢ	249.00
Audioquest Lapis	Ⓢ	399.00
Audioquest Diamond	Ⓢ	549.00
Cable Talk Improved 2/CD	Ⓢ	26.00
Cable Talk Advanced 2	Ⓢ	35.00
Cable Talk Monitor 2	Ⓢ	50.00
Cable Talk Improved 2/T	Ⓢ	50.00
Cable Talk Studio 2	Ⓢ	65.00
Cable Talk Professional 2	Ⓢ	85.00
Cable Talk Broadcast 2	Ⓢ	100.00
Cable Talk Reference 2	Ⓢ	150.00
Cable Talk Signature 2 Gold	Ⓢ	300.00
Cambridge Atlantic	Ⓢ	10.00
Cambridge Arctic	Ⓢ	20.00
Cambridge Pacific	Ⓢ	30.00
Cambridge Studio Reference	Ⓢ	40.00
Cardas Audio 300B-Microtwin	Ⓢ	115.00
Cardas Audio Quadlink-Five	Ⓢ	200.00
Cardas Audio Cardas Cross	Ⓢ	360.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five C	Ⓢ	530.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Golden-5 C	Ⓢ	600.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross	Ⓢ	700.00
Connections Ultra	Ⓢ	28.00
Connections Midas	Ⓢ	39.00
Connections HD	Ⓢ	46.00
DNM-Reson TC75	Ⓢ	34.00
DPA Slink	Ⓢ	41.00
DPA White Slink	Ⓢ	75.00
DPA Black Slink	Ⓢ	245.00
Expressive Tech IC-1	Ⓢ	700.00
Gamma Wow Balance	Ⓢ	799.00
Goertz Interconnect	Ⓢ	135.00
GT Audio Intercon	Ⓢ	130.00
Henley HSP10	Ⓢ	20.00
Henley HSP50	Ⓢ	35.00
Henley HSP100	Ⓢ	65.00
Henley HSP200	Ⓢ	95.00
Heybrook Black Flash	Ⓢ	49.95
Ixos 104	Ⓢ	20.00
Ixos 103	Ⓢ	45.00
Ixos 102	Ⓢ	60.00
Ixos 101	Ⓢ	100.00
Ixos 100.X03	Ⓢ	150.00
Kimber PBJ	Ⓢ	68.00
Kimber KCL1	Ⓢ	96.00
Kimber Silver Streak	Ⓢ	180.00
Kimber KCAG	Ⓢ	390.00
Kimber KCTG	Ⓢ	720.00
Kronos Konnekt 3	Ⓢ	49.00
Kronos Konnekt 2	Ⓢ	99.00
Kronos Konnekt 1	Ⓢ	199.00
LAT International IC-50	Ⓢ	37.00
LAT International IC-80	Ⓢ	60.00
LAT International IC-100-D	Ⓢ	89.00
LAT International IC-200 Mk II	Ⓢ	151.00
Lieder Chanson	Ⓢ	340.00
Lieder Lek	Ⓢ	420.00
Lieder Het Lied	Ⓢ	420.00
Lieder Song	Ⓢ	580.00
Lieder Maas	Ⓢ	620.00
Lieder Rijn	Ⓢ	1,000.00
Lieder Waal	Ⓢ	1,400.00
Lumley Silver 12/2	Ⓢ	115.00
Lumley Silver 14/4	Ⓢ	175.00
Moth Leyline Black	Ⓢ	100.00
Moth Leyline Grey	Ⓢ	200.00
Nordost Magic	Ⓢ	30.00
Nordost Black Knight	Ⓢ	55.00
Nordost Blue Angel	Ⓢ	90.00
Nordost Blue Heaven	Ⓢ	135.00
Nordost Red Dawn	Ⓢ	260.00
Nordost SPM	Ⓢ	825.00
Ortofon 7N interconnect	Ⓢ	250.00
QED P2 Gold	Ⓢ	20.00
QED Incon P2 Screened	Ⓢ	23.00
QED Incon P1 Screened	Ⓢ	26.00
Roksan ROK-Intercon	Ⓢ	75.00
Siltech MC2-12	Ⓢ	308.00
Siltech MC4-24S	Ⓢ	400.00
Siltech FTM-3S	Ⓢ	730.00
Silver Sounds SS2	Ⓢ	99.00
Silver Sounds SS1	Ⓢ	199.00
Silver Tone Ex-Static	Ⓢ	35.00
Silver Tone Sci-Fi	Ⓢ	95.00
SME S2LB-4	Ⓢ	46.18
SME S3LB-4	Ⓢ	52.66
SME 4900A	Ⓢ	76.83
SME 5900A	Ⓢ	102.57
Sonic Link Bonus	Ⓢ	15.00
Sonic Link Red	Ⓢ	25.00
Sonic Link Silver pink	Ⓢ	35.00
Sonic Link Black	Ⓢ	49.00
Sonic Link White	Ⓢ	65.00

Sonic Link Brown	70.00
Sonic Link Violet	85.00
Sonic Link Blue Nickel	140.00
Sonic Link Vermillion	195.00
Sonic Link Red earth	300.00
Sonic Link Black earth	450.00
Sonic Link Blue earth	695.00
ChordCo Chrysalis	30.00
ChordCo Cobra	49.00
ChordCo Siren	65.00
ChordCo Chameleon	68.00
ChordCo Solid	99.00
Transparent Cable Musichord Int	48.00
Transparent Cable The Link	92.00
Transparent Cable Music Link	119.00
Trichord Pulswire 75	169.00
Vampire Wire CC	24.00
Vampire Wire CC/II	58.00
Vampire Wire SC/II	98.00
Vampire Wire SC/IV	144.00
Vampire Wire AI/2	259.00
Vampire Wire SL	412.00
Yan Den Hul Source HB	50.00
XLO Type 150	50.00
XLO Type 0.1	180.00



DIGITAL INTERCONNECTS

KEY
Prices for interconnects are for a one-metre terminated pair.

Apertura Model B	139.00
Apertura Model A	255.00
Art Yam Church 5000	275.00
Audioquest Digital/video 1	30.00
Audioquest Digital/video 2	60.00
Audioquest Optilink X	90.00
Audioquest Digital PRO	100.00
Audioquest Optilink Pro	149.00
Audioquest Optilink Z	179.00
Cable Talk Digital 2	75.00
Cardas Audio Lighting	190.00
DPA Opti-link	20.00
DPA Digi-link	28.00
Izos 105	25.00
Kimber Opti-link	50.00
Kimber Illuminati DV-30	55.00
Kimber Illuminati D-60	215.00
Kimber Illuminati DX-50	350.00
Kimber Illuminati Orchid	750.00
LAT International DI-20-D	79.00
Moth Layline Datalink	140.00
Nordost Moonglo	145.00
QED DigiTflex	20.00
QED Optiflex	25.00
Roksan ROK-Intercon	45.00
Siltech HF-6	145.00
Sonic Link Blue/black	10.00
Sonic Link Green	60.00
Sonic Link Green Earth	150.00
ChordCo Codac	33.00
ChordCo Prodac	50.00
Transparent Cable PDL	199.00
Trichord Pulswire 75D	75.00
Trichord Pulswire 110D	145.00
Vampire Wire DI/1	150.00



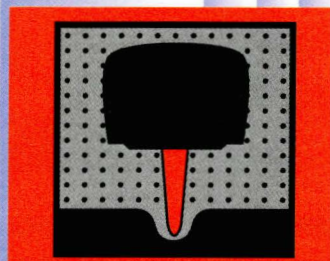
SPEAKER CABLES

KEY
Price per mono metre unterminated.

Apertura Silver	82.50
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Art Yam Church M2000	470.00
Art Yam Church 5000	795.00
Audio Note AN-D	4.50
Audio Note AN-B	16.50
Audio Note AN-L	29.50
Audio Note AN-SP	150.00
Audio Note AN-SPx	450.00
Audioquest Type 2	3.50
Audioquest Type 6	3.60
Audioquest Type 6	7.50
Audioquest Indigo 2	12.00
Audioquest Crystal	18.00
Audioquest Forest	65.00
Audioquest Argent	95.00
Audioquest Clear 3	150.00
Bandridge LC7409	4.00
Bandridge LC4110	28.00
Bandridge LC3410	40.00
Bandridge LC3210	75.00
Bandridge LC3219	75.00
Bandridge LC3220	90.00
Bandridge LC3310	95.00
Bandridge LC3240	125.00
Cable Talk The Flat One	2.00
Cable Talk Theatre 2	2.00
Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.25
Cable Talk Overture 2.1	4.00
Cable Talk Talk 3.1 Biwire	5.00
Cable Talk Talk 4.1	5.00
Cable Talk Concert 2.1	7.00
Cable Talk Talk 4.1 Biwire	9.00
Cable Talk Symphony 3	13.00
Cable Talk Concert 2.1 Biwire	14.00
Cardas Audio 300B-Microtwin SC	35.00
Cardas Audio Quadlink-Five SC	59.00
Cardas Audio Cross SC	99.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink-Five SC	109.00
Cardas Audio Hexlink Golden5 SC	175.00
Cardas Audio Golden Cross SC	239.00
DNM-Reson LSC	6.95
DNM-Reson LSCB	11.95
DPA Black Sixteen	100.00
Electrocompaniet EC-K2	30.00
Gale XL189	1.00
Gale XL315	2.00
Gale XL160-2	2.50
Gamma Wonder Line	60.00
Goertz M1	10.00
Goertz M2	20.00
GT Audio Speaker	50.00
Izos 607	2.00
Izos 605	3.00
Izos 606	8.00
Kimber 4PR	12.00
Kimber 4VS	12.00
Kimber 4TC	19.68
Kimber 8TC	40.00
Kimber 4AG	394.00
Kimber 8AG	656.00
LAT International SS 800	21.00
LAT International BIWIRE	27.00
LAT International SS 1000	42.50
Lieder Pad	460.00
Lieder Bel Canto	500.00
Lieder Spoor	660.00
Lieder Straat	1,080.00
Lieder Weg	1,400.00
Linn K20	4.00
Linn K400	10.00
Linn K600	15.00
Lumley Silver 12/2	35.00
Lumley Silver 14/4	40.00
Mission Duet	1.90
Mission Quartet bi-wire	3.90
Naim NACA 5	5.50
Nordost Octava	3.00
Nordost 4-Flat	10.00
Nordost Blue Heaven	50.00
Nordost Red Dawn	100.00
Nordost SPM	325.00
Ortofon SPK100	3.00
Ortofon SPK200	5.00
Ortofon SPK300	8.00
Puresonic 7845	2.00
Puresonic 7891	3.00
QED Qudos Micro	1.25
QED Qudos Bi-Wire	4.50
QED Profile 8	6.50
QED Profile 4x4	9.00
QED Profile Silver 12	15.00
Rega REGA	2.00
Roksan ROK-Speaker	6.00
Siltech LS2-45	109.00
Siltech FT-12 MkI	240.00
Siltech LS4-120	549.00
Silver Sounds 12 Gauge	15.00
Silver Sounds 10 Gauge	35.00
Silver Sounds 8 Gauge	75.00
Silver Tone Silver-Sonic	10.00
Silver Tone Silver-Sonic HC	15.00

Silver Tone Silver-Voice	55.00
Silver Tone Silver-Voice Ultra	85.00
Sonic Link AST50	1.95
Sonic Link AST75	3.00
Sonic Link AST200	5.95
Sonic Link AST200x2	10.00
Sonic Link S300	18.00
Sonic Link S300x2	35.00
Sonic Link S900	50.00
Sonic Link S600x2	70.00
Sonic Link RE3.1	90.00
Sonic Link RE3.4	330.00
ChordCo Myth	5.95
ChordCo Legend	15.00
Transparent Cable Musichord Sprk	11.00
Transparent Cable The Wave	23.00
Transparent Cable Music Wave Sprk	25.00
Vampire Wire SC-384	11.00
Vampire Wire SC-554	15.00
Vampire Wire ST-I	30.00
Vampire Wire SC-1108	30.00
Vampire Wire ST-II	48.00
Vampire Wire ST-III	73.00
XLO Pro 625	4.00
XLO Pro 600	16.60



CARTRIDGES

KEY
MM - moving-magnet type.
MC - moving-coil type.

Up to £100

Audio Note IO1	MM	99
Audio Technica AT-91	MM	13
Audio Technica AT-95E	MM	19
Audio Technica AT-110E	MM	24
Benz-Micro MC20EII	MC	70
Denon DL110	MC	70
Denon DL160	MC	90
Denon DL103	MC	100
Goldring Elan	MM	19
Goldring Elektra	MM	29
Goldring 1006	MM	59
Goldring 1012GX	MM	79
Goldring 1022GX	MM	99
Grado ZTE+1	MM	27
Grado ZCE+1	MM	37
Grado ZF3E+1	MM	48
Grado Prestige Black	MM	49
Grado Prestige Green	MM	59
Gr do Prestige Blue	MM	69
Gr do ZF1+	MM	83
Grado Prestige Red	MM	99
N'ham Tracer I	MM	18
Ortofon WMS2	MM	94
Ortofon OM 5E	MM	20
Ortofon OM 10	MM	30
Ortofon 510	MM	38
Ortofon OM DJ	MM	50
Ortofon 520	MM	65
Ortofon OM 20	MM	70
Ortofon MCI Turbo	MC	70
Ortofon Concorde DJ	MM	80
Ortofon OM 30	MM	90
Ortofon MC10 Super	MC	100
Ortofon 530	MM	100
Pickering TE-15	MM	20
Pickering VE-15	MM	25
Pickering T-E	MM	25
Pickering V15-DJ	MM	28
Pickering TL-E	MM	35
Pickering TL-2E	MM	45
Pickering XV15-625E	MM	50
Pickering XV15-150-DJ	MM	50
Pickering TL-2-S	MM	55
Pickering XV15-757S	MM	60
Pickering XV15-625DJ	MM	60
Pickering XV15-1800S	MM	70
Pickering TL3S	MM	80
Pickering XEV-3001E	MM	95
Pickering XLZ-3500	MM	100
Pickering TL-4-S	MM	100
Rega Bias	MM	39
Rega RB78	MM	39
Rega Super Bias	MM	59
Rega Elys	MM	85
Shur SC35C	MM	29
Shure ME95ED	MM	38

Shure M708X	MM	38
Stanton 500AL II	MM	34
Stanton 500EL	MM	37
Stanton 680AL/X	MM	56
Stanton 680EL/X	MM	70
Sumiko Oyster	MM	30
Sumiko Black Pearl	MM	50
Sumiko Pearl	MM	70
Sumiko Blue Point	MC	100
Over £100		
Audio Note IO2	MM	139
Audio Note Soara	MC	795
Audio Note IO1V	MC	1,095
Audio Note IO2V	MC	1,695
Audio Note IO1dL	MC	4,500
Audio Technica AT-OC9	MM	245
Audio Technica ART-1	MC	944
Benz-Micro The Glider	MC	650
Benz-Micro M090	MC	700
Benz-Micro L040	MC	700
Benz-Micro H200	MC	700
Benz-Micro Reference	MC	1,100
Benz-Micro Reference Ruby	MC	1,500
Benz-Micro Ruby Open Air	MC	1,600
Clearaudio Aurum-Alpha	MM	135
Clearaudio Aurum-Beta/S	MM	195
Clearaudio Gamma-S	MM	265
Clearaudio Signature	MC	745
Clearaudio Accurate	MC	1,595
Clearaudio Insider	MC	2,950
Denon DL304	MC	5,500
Dynavector 10X4II	MC	200
Dynavector 23RS	MC	189
Dynavector 17D2	MC	375
Dynavector XX-1L	MC	450
Dynavector XX-1	MC	998
Dynavector Te-Kaitora	MC	998
Goldring Eroica LX	MC	1,698
Goldring Eroica	MC	110
Goldring 1042	MC	110
Goldring Elite	MM	120
Goldring Excel VX	MC	220
Grado Prestige Silver	MM	495
Grado Prestige Gold	MM	119
Grado Signature Junior	MM	149
Grado Signature 8MZ	MM	150
Grado Signature MCZ	MM	250
Gr do Signature TLZ	MM	375
Grado Signature XTZ	MM	650
Koetsu Red T	MM	975
Koetsu Red K Sig	MC	1,550
Koetsu Urushi	MC	1,998
Koetsu Signature	MC	2,297
Koetsu Gold PR	MC	3,218
Linn K9	MM	5,498
Linn Klyde	MM	125
Linn Arkiv	MC	500
London Decca Maroon	MC	1,000
London Decca Gold	MM	259
London Decca Maroon Dp	MM	299
London Decca Gold Dp	MM	339
London Decca S Gold	MM	379
London Decca S Gold Dp	MM	399
London Decca Jubilee	MM	479
Lyra Lydian	MC	999
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	MC	645
N'ham Tracer II	MM	310
N'ham Tracer III	MM	410
N'ham Tracer IV	MM	660
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	MM	130
Ortofon MC15 Super II	MC	130
Ortofon 540	MM	130
Ortofon MC25E	MM	180
Ortofon MC25FL	MC	250
Ortofon MC10 Supreme	MC	300
Ortofon SPU mono	MC	350
Ortofon MC20 Supreme	MC	450
Ortofon SPU Classic	MC	425
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	MC	525
Ortofon MC2000II	MC	750
Ortofon MC Rohmann	MC	1,000
Ortofon MC3000 II	MC	1,100
Ortofon MC5000	MC	1,500
Ortofon MC7500	MC	2,000
Pickering TL-3003	MM	145
Pickering XLZ-4500	MM	150
Pickering TL-4004	MM	175
Pickering XSV-5000U	MM	200
Pickering XLZ-7500	MM	200
Pickering TLZ-7500-S	MM	200
Reson Mica	MM	150
Reson Aciore	MC	199
Reson Recca	MC	225
Reson Etile	MC	299
Reson Luxe	MC	899
Roksan Corus Black	MM	130
Roksan Shiraz	MC	970
Stanton 890AL/X	MM	118
Sumiko BPS	MC	250
Transfiguration Spirit	MC	1,000
Transfiguration Temper	MC	1,950

Van Den Hul MM-1	MM	250
Van Den Hul MM-2	MM	299
Van Den Hul DDT-II	MC	699
Van Den Hul MC-10	MC	799
Van Den Hul MC-One	MC	999
Van Den Hul MC-ONE Super	MC	1,150
Van Den Hul MC-Two	MC	1,349
Van Den Hul The Frog	MC	1,700
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IISLA	MC	2,200
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIGLN	MC	2,999
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIIGLA	MC	2,999
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIICMN	MC	3,000
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IIICHN	MC	3,400
Van Den Hul Grasshopper IVGLA	MC	3,450
Wilson Benesch Matrix	MC	786
Wilson Benesch Hybrid	MC	1,068
Wilson Benesch Carbon	MC	1,586
Wilson Benesch Analog	MC	1,850

Onkyo K 611	3-H	460
Pioneer CT-S550S	3-H	250
Pioneer CT-W803RS		300
Pioneer CT-S830S	3-H	500
Pioneer CT-95	3-H	1,000
Sony TC-KE500S	3-H	230
Sony TC-WE805S	3-H	250
Sony TC-KE600S	3-H	300
Sony TC-KA6ES	3-H	550
TEAC W-850R		250
TEAC W-1030	3-H	250
TEAC W-6000R		450
TEAC V-6030S	3-H	550
TEAC V-8030S	3-H	650
Technics RS-TR474		220
Technics RS-A26	3-H	230
Technics RS-TR575		280
Technics RS-A27	3-H	300
Yamaha KX-580SE		250
Yamaha KX-W592		280
Yamaha KX-690	3-H	400

Sony CDP-CE315		180
Sony CDP-XE510		180
Sony CDP-C325M		200
TEAC CD-P1800		130
TEAC CD-P3450SE		200
TEAC PD-H500		240
TEAC PD-D2200		250
Technics SL-PG380A		120
Technics SL-PG480A		140
Technics SL-PG580A		160
Technics SL-PD687		160
Technics SL-PD887		180
Technics SL-PS670A		200
Technics SL-PS770A		250
Yamaha CDX-390		130
Yamaha CDC-565		170
Yamaha CDX-490		170
Yamaha CDC-665		220
Yamaha CDX-590		230

Trichord Digital J'box 100		699
Trichord Revelation		799
Over £1000		
Alchemist Forseti		1,950
Audio Alchemy ACD Pro		1,395
Audio Research CD1		3,290
Audio Research CD2		4,100
Audiomeca Talisman		2,150
Audiomeca Talisman SE		2,300
AVI S2000MC		1,399
Cary CD-301		2,495
Copland CD277		1,800
Copland CDA288		2,199
Krell KPS30i		5,490
Krell KPS-20i		9,990
Marantz CD-17KI		1,300
Marantz CD-23		4,000
Mark Levinson 39		5,995
Meracrus Tanto		1,395
Meracrus Imago Player		4,495
Meridian 506		1,100
Meridian 508		1,685
Meridian 800		4,995
Micromega Solo		2,750
Musical Fidelity FCD		1,500
Naim CD2		2,000
Naim CDS		3,940
Orelle CD100eV		1,149
Pink Triangle Litaural		2,099
Primare 302		1,800
Roksan Attesa-DP3P		1,495
Sherwood CD1		1,100
Sonic Frontiers SFCD-1		3,495
TEAC VRDS-25		1,300
XTC CDP-1		1,250



CASSETTE DECKS

KEY

↔ - Autoreverse — no need to remove and turn round the tape.

3-H - 3 heads, i.e. separate record and replay heads.

Up to £200



CD PLAYERS

KEY

⇒ - multiplayer, can be loaded with more than one disc.

⌂10 - electrical (coaxial) digital output.

Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

Up to £250

Aiwa AD-F450		120
Aiwa AD-WX727		170
Denon DRM-550		160
Denon DRW-580		200
Denon DRS-640		200
Goodmans Delta 801		130
Grundig CCF3		200
JVC TD-W218BK		170
JVC TD-X372BK		170
JVC TD-R472BK		200
JVC TD-W318BK		200
Kenwood KX-W4080		160
Kenwood KX-3080		160
Kenwood KX-W6080		200
Kenwood KX-5080S		200
Marantz SD-555		200
Onkyo K 185		200
Pioneer CT-S250		150
Pioneer CT-W205R		160
Pioneer CT-W505R		180
Pioneer CT-S450S		200
Sony TC-KE200		120
Sony TC-WE405		150
Sony TC-KE400S		180
Sony TC-WE505		180
TEAC W-416		100
TEAC V-610		100
TEAC W-780R		180
TEAC R-560		200
TEAC R-H500		200
Technics RS-TR373		200
Technics RS-BX501		200
Yamaha KX-390		150
Yamaha KX-W392		180
Yamaha KX-430		200

Aiwa XC-300		150
AMCCD9		120
AMC CD8		150
AMCCD6		150
AMCCD7		250
Cambridge CD4		150
Cambridge CD4SE		200
Cambridge CD6		250
Denon DCD-625		200
Denon DCD-715		235
Denon DCD-825		240
Eclipse CD30		50
Eclipse CD50		60
Eclipse CD101		80
Grundig CDII		170
H/K HD710		200
JVC XL-V120BK		110
JVC XL-V184BK		120
JVC XL-V284BK		140
JVC XL-F116BK		180
JVC XL-F216BK		200
JVC XL-Z574BK		250
Kenwood DP-1080		130
Kenwood DP-2080		110
Kenwood DP-R3090		140
Kenwood DP-R4090		160
Kenwood DP-3080		170
Kenwood DP-R6090		200
Kenwood DP-4090		230
Marantz CD-46		150
Marantz CC-38		200
Marantz CD-48		200
Marantz CD-57		230
Marantz CD-67II		250
Marantz CC-47		250
NAD 510		200
NAD 512		250
Philips CD711		120
Philips CD721		130
Philips CD751		150
Philips CD751		180
Pioneer PD-104		130
Pioneer PD-204		150
Pioneer PD-M603		200
Pioneer PD-S505		200
Pioneer PD-F605		230
Pioneer PD-F25		230
Rotel RCD-930AX		180
Sherwood CD-4030R		180
Sony CDP-M205		110
Sony CDP-XE210		120
Sony CDP-M305		130
Sony CDP-XE310		140
Sony CDP-CE105		150

£251 to £500		
Aiwa DX-C100M		500
Arcam Alpha 7		320
Audio Alchemy ACD II		490
AudioInnev Alto		399
Aura CD100		400
Carver SDA-400		299
Carver MV-5		469
Denon DCM-260		300
Denon DCD-1015		350
Grundig CDC14		300
H/K HD730		300
H/K FL8300		300
JVC XL-2674BK		300
Kenwood DP-R7080		300
Kenwood DP-9090		300
Kenwood DP-7090		400
Marantz CD-67		270
Marantz CD-67SE		350
Marantz CC-870		400
Marantz CD-63III(KI)		500
Micromega Minium		400
Musical Fidelity E60		300
Musical Fidelity A2		500
NAD 513		290
NAD 515		350
NAD 514		370
NAD 517		400
Onkyo DX 7210		260
Onkyo C721		290
Onkyo DXC 320		380
Onkyo DX 7510		400
Onkyo CM 716		450
Pioneer PD-S705		300
Pioneer PD-F805		330
Pioneer PD-F905		400
Pioneer PD-S904		400
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision		460
Rotel RCD-965BX		300
Rotel RCD-970BX		375
Sony CDP-XE900E		300
Sony CDP-XA2ES		350
Sony CDP-CX200		380
Sony CDP-X3000ES		500
TEAC CD-5		350
Yamaha CDX-890		350

£501 to £1000		
Arcus ACD11		899
Alchemist Nexus		597
Arcam Alpha 8		520
Audiolab 8000CD		1,000
AVI S2000MC2		895
Creek CD42		599
Denon DCD-3000		1,000
DPA Renaissance int CD		950
Fase Evoluzione Laserdrive 1.0		995
Heybrook Signature II		989
Linn Mimik		875
Marantz CD-17		800
Micromega Stage 4		600
Micromega Stage 5		750
Micromega Stage 6		950
Mission dAD3		598
Mission dAD3Q		898
Monrio Privilege		995
Myriad MC100		700
Naim CD3		1,000
Orelle CD100eA		649
Orelle CD-100eSA		999
Pink Triangle Numeral		999
Quad 77 Bus		700
Quad 77 Mains		900
Roksan Caspian		895
TEAC VRDS-7		599
TEAC VRDS-9		700
TEAC VRDS-10SE		850
Technics SL-P2000		1,000
Thule CD100		849
Trichord Genesis		549
Trichord Digital Jukebox 25		599
Trichord Digital Jukebox 50		649



CD TRANSPORTS

KEY

⌂10 - electrical (coaxial) digital output.

Many players also include an optical (Toslink) output.

Over £200		
Aiwa AD-F850	3-H	230
Aiwa AD-S950	3-H	300
Carver TDR-1550		629
Denon DRM-650S		230
Denon DRM-740	3-H	270
Denon DRS-810	3-H	310
H/K TD420		250
H/K TD450	3-H	350
JVC TD-V562BK	3-H	220
JVC TD-W718BK		250
JVC TD-V662BK	3-H	270
Marantz SD-57		249
NAD 613		230
NAD 614		270
NAD 616		300
Onkyo TA 6210		230
Onkyo TARW 211		270
Onkyo TARW 311		320
Onkyo TA 6310		330
Onkyo KR 609		350
Onkyo KW 606		370
Onkyo TARW 411		370

Marantz CD-48		200
Marantz CD-57		230
Marantz CD-67II		250
Marantz CC-47		250
NAD 510		200
NAD 512		250
Philips CD711		120
Philips CD721		130
Philips CD751		150
Philips CD751		180
Pioneer PD-104		130
Pioneer PD-204		150
Pioneer PD-M603		200
Pioneer PD-S505		200
Pioneer PD-F605		230
Pioneer PD-F25		230
Rotel RCD-930AX		180
Sherwood CD-4030R		180
Sony CDP-M205		110
Sony CDP-XE210		120
Sony CDP-M305		130
Sony CDP-XE310		140
Sony CDP-CE105		150

Arcus ACD11		899
Alchemist Nexus		597
Arcam Alpha 8		520
Audiolab 8000CD		1,000
AVI S2000MC2		895
Creek CD42		599
Denon DCD-3000		1,000
DPA Renaissance int CD		950
Fase Evoluzione Laserdrive 1.0		995
Heybrook Signature II		989
Linn Mimik		875
Marantz CD-17		800
Micromega Stage 4		600
Micromega Stage 5		750
Micromega Stage 6		950
Mission dAD3		598
Mission dAD3Q		898
Monrio Privilege		995
Myriad MC100		700
Naim CD3		1,000
Orelle CD100eA		649
Orelle CD-100eSA		999
Pink Triangle Numeral		999
Quad 77 Bus		700
Quad 77 Mains		900
Roksan Caspian		895
TEAC VRDS-7		599
TEAC VRDS-9		700
TEAC VRDS-10SE		850
Technics SL-P2000		1,000
Thule CD100		849
Trichord Genesis		549
Trichord Digital Jukebox 25		599
Trichord Digital Jukebox 50		649

Arcam Delta 250		800
Audio Alchemy DDS III		700
Audio Alchemy DDS Pro		1,550
Audio Research CDTI		3,290
Audio Synthesis Transcend		1,395
Audiolab 8000CDM		1,400
Audiomeca Damnation		999
Audiomeca Damnation SE		1,100
Audiomeca Kreatura SE		1,400
Audiomeca Mephisto		2,350
Cambridge Discmagic One		300
Conrad-Johnson DR-1		1,795
DPA Enlightenment Drv		725
Jadis JD3		4,850
Jadis JD2		4,990
Jadis JD1		12,500
Krell KPS-20t		8,490
Linn Karik		1,850
Mark Levinson 37		3,995
Mark Levinson 31.5		9,295
Meracrus Imago		3,995
Meridian 500		1,245
Micromega Drive 3		750
Micromega Data		2,250
Monrio Bitmatch		875
Muse Model 5		1,800
Orelle CD100eT1		699
Orelle CD100eT2		799
Pink Triangle Cardinal II		875
PS Audio Lambda TR		2,500
PS Audio Lambda AT&T		2,778
Roksan Attesa-DP3		1,295
Sonic Frontiers SFT-1		2,295
TEAC VRDS-T1		550
TEAC P-30		2,500
Theta Digital Data Basic II		2,397
Theta Digital Data III NTSC/PAL		5,455
Thorens TCD-2000		999
Trichord Digital Turntable		699
Wadia 8		3,195
Wadia 20		4,370

SENNHEISER



THE ESSENTIAL ACCESSORY – SENNHEISER'S HD565

"Sound quality is exceptionally good... easily the best all-round model tested".

Alvin Gold, Hi-Fi Choice, September 1996.

Call (01494) 551551 for more information or your nearest stockist.



DIGITAL TO ANALOGUE CONVERTERS (DACs)

AMC CDM7DAC	100
AMC DAC8	130
AMC CDM7VAC	200
Arcam Black Box 50	480
Arcam Black Box 500	750
Audio Alchemy DAC Man	150
Audio Alchemy DDE v1.2	596
Audio Alchemy DDEv3.0	699
Atudio Note DAC1	675
Audio Note DAC2	1,099
Audio Note DAC3	1,750
Audio Research DAC5	2,148
Audio Research DAC5	2,335
Audio Research DAC3	4,195
Audio Research DAC3	4,555
Audio Synthesis DAX-2	2,195
Audiolab 8000DAC	900
Audiomeca Elixir	799
Audiomeca Ambrosia	1,850
Boulder 2020	25,000
Cambridge Dacmagic 2 Mk II	150
Chord DSC1100	2,575
Chord DSC1500	3,850
Conrad-Johnson D/A-3	1,195
Conrad-Johnson D/A-2b	1,990
Denon DCD-425	150
DPA Little Bit 3	325
DPA Renaissance DAC	570
DPA Enlightenment DAC	825
DPA SX128	2,000
DPA SX256	4,000
DPA SX512	8,000
Jadis JS3	2,129
Jadis JS1	8,068
LFD DAC2	1,950
LFD DAC3	3,000
Linn Numerik	1,500
Mark Levinson 36	3,995
Mark Levinson 35	7,995
Mark Levinson 30.5	15,950
Meracus Auriga	1,295
Meracus Flagrare	2,495

Meridian 566	1,095
Micromega DAC 2	750
Micromega Dialog	2,000
Monrio 18B2	875
Muse Model 2	2,190
Muse Model 2 Plus	2,500
Musical Fidelity X-ACT	200
Musical Fidelity X-DAC	300
On yo DX 7310	330
PS Audio DL3	777
PS Audio SL3	1,449
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDCD	2,590
PS Audio Ref Link	4,550
Roksan Atessa-DA2	595
Sonic Frontiers SFD-1 Mk 2	2,495
Sonic Frontiers SFD-2 Mk 2	5,295
Sumo Theorem II	945
Sumo Theorem IIB	1,155
TEAC D-11	500
TEAC D-700	600
Theta Digital Chroma Std	849
Theta Digital Pro Geny	1,145
Theta Digital Pro Prime II	1,800
Theta Digital Pro Basic III	2,990
Theta Digital Gen V SE	4,300
Theta Digital Casablanca LS	5,910
Thorens TDA-2000	700
Trichord Pulsar Ser One	1,395
Wadia 12	1,530
Wadia 15	3,790
Wadia 64.4	4,750
Wadia 16	7,395
Wadia 7	9,995
Wadia 9	12,790
Woodside DVAC-18	1,499



DIGITAL RECORDERS

Kenwood DM-7090	MD	500
Meridian CDR		4,500

Onkyo MD 122	MD	700
Pioneer D-05	DAT	900
Pioneer PDR-05		1,300
Pioneer D-C88	DAT	2,000
Sharp MD-R1E	MD	300
Sharp MD-MS200H	MD	350
Sharp MDXV300H	MD	1,000
Sony MZ-E40	MD	180
Sony MZ-E30	MD	280
Sony MDS-S38	MD	300
Sony MZ-R30	MD	300
Sony MDS-JE500	MD	300
Sony MDS-MX1	MD	500
Sony MDS-S1	MD	550
Sony MDS-503	MD	550
Sony DTC-ZE700	DAT	699
Sony MDA-JA3ES	MD	700
TEAC MD-H500	MD	650
TEAC MD-10	MD	950



HEADPHONES

KEY

'D' - dynamic type, compatible with virtually all normal headphone sockets.

'E' - electrostatic type; generally includes a separate power supply.

☉ - open-back construction.

☿ - closed-back construction.

Up to £40

Aiwa HP-X301	D	☉	20
Aiwa HP-VX303	D	☉	25
Aiwa HP-X705	D	☉	40
AKG Rox	D	☉	30
Audio Technica ATH-P1	D	☉	10
Audio Technica ATH-P3	D	☉	15
Audio Technica ATH-P5	D	☉	20
Beyer DT111 Beta	D	☉	20
Beyer DT111 Gamma	D	☉	25
Beyer DT211	D	☉	34
JVC HA-CD88	D	☉	18
JVC HA-D525	D	☉	20
JVC HA-F65	D	☉	20
JVC HA-D626	D	☉	25
Kenwood KPM-310	D	☉	18
Kenwood KPM-410	D	☉	25
Maxell HP-1000	D	☉	20
Maxell HP-2000	D	☉	25
Maxell HP-3000	D	☉	30
Pioneer SE-A40	D	☉	20
Pioneer SE-A20V	D	☉	23
Pioneer SE-M250	D	☉	25
Pioneer SE-M350	D	☉	30
Sennheiser HD56	D	☉	18
Sennheiser HD433	D	☉	20
Sennheiser HD435 Vegas	D	☉	30
Sennheiser HD435 Manhattan	D	☉	30
Sennheiser HD60TV	D	☉	40
Sony MDR-W20G	D	☉	18
Sony MDR-E837	D	☉	18
Sony MDR-009TV	D	☉	20
Sony MDR-A34L	D	☉	20
Sony MDR-E848	D	☉	20
Sony MDR-CD170	D	☉	20
Sony MDR-ED238	D	☉	25
Sony MDR-P1TV	D	☉	25
Sony MDR-CD270	D	☉	30
Sony MDR-E868	D	☉	35
Sony MDR-IF120	D	☉	35
Sony MDR-CD370	D	☉	40
Technics RP-HT280	D	☉	30
Technics RP-HT300	D	☉	40
Vivanco SR250	D	☉	19
Vivanco SR150	D	☉	20
Vivanco SR200	D	☉	25
Vivanco SR300	D	☉	30

Over £41

AKG K301	D	☉	80
AKG K2221R	D	☉	100
AKG K401	D	☉	120
AKG K501	D	☉	150
AKG K3331R	D	☉	150
AKG K4441R	D	☉	180

AKG K290S	D	☉	250
AKG K1000	D	☉	700
Audio Technica ATH910PRO	D	☉	90
Beyer DT311	D	☉	57
Beyer DT411	D	☉	69
Beyer DT331	D	☉	82
Beyer DT431	D	☉	98
Beyer IRH890	D	☉	117
Beyer DT511	D	☉	117
Beyer DT531	D	☉	135
Beyer DT770 Pro	D	☉	152
Beyer DT100	D	☉	152
Beyer DT801	D	☉	172
Beyer DT990 Pro	D	☉	187
Beyer DT811	D	☉	200
Beyer IRS890	D	☉	222
Beyer DT901	D	☉	222
Beyer DT911	D	☉	235
Denon AH-D210	D	☉	45
Denon AH-D350	D	☉	65
Denon AH-D550	D	☉	80
Denon AH-D650	D	☉	95
Denon AH-D750	D	☉	130
Denon AH-D950	D	☉	150
Grado SR40	D	☉	45
Grado SR60	D	☉	79
Grado SR80	D	☉	100
Grado SR125	D	☉	150
Grado SR225	D	☉	200
Grado SR325	D	☉	300
Grado RS1	D	☉	695
Jacklin Float Model 1	D	☉	79
Jacklin Float Model 2	D	☉	99
Jacklin Float ELS	E	☉	399
JVC HA-D727	D	☉	43
JVC HA-D910	D	☉	65
JVC HA-D1000	D	☉	250
JVC HA-F25	D	☉	699
Precide Ergo Model 1	D	☉	120
Precide Ergo Model 2	D	☉	140
Sennheiser HD445	D	☉	45
Sennheiser IS 380	D	☉	55
Sennheiser HD455	D	☉	55
Sennheiser HD465	D	☉	65
Sennheiser HD475	D	☉	80
Sennheiser HD25 SP	D	☉	90
Sennheiser HD535	D	☉	105
Sennheiser IS450	D	☉	120
Sennheiser HD545 Ref	D	☉	125
Sennheiser HD250II	D	☉	150
Sennheiser HDC 451-1	D	☉	150
Sennheiser HD565 Ovat'n	D	☉	150
Sennheiser HD265 Linear	D	☉	150
Sennheiser HD25-13	D	☉	160
Sennheiser HD25	D	☉	160
Sennheiser HD 580 P'cision	D	☉	200
Sennheiser HD600	D	☉	250
Sennheiser Lucas	D	☉	280
Sennheiser IS850	D	☉	859
Sennheiser HE60/HEV70	E	☉	998
Sennheiser Orpheus	E	☉	9,652
Sony MDR-IF50K	D	☉	50
Sony MDR-IF120K	D	☉	50
Sony MDR-CD470	D	☉	50
Sony MDR-E888	D	☉	55
Sony MDR-CD570	D	☉	70
Sony MDR-IF320BK-MK2	D	☉	80
Sony MDR-CD770	D	☉	100
Sony MDR-NC5	D	☉	100
Sony MDR-D77	D	☉	130
Sony MDR-NC20	D	☉	150
Sony MDR-NC10	D	☉	150
Sony MDR-CD1700	D	☉	200
Stax SR-0001	E	☉	280
Stax SR-Lambda Nova C	E	☉	370
Stax SR-Lambda Nova Basic	E	☉	449
Stax SR-Lambda Nova S	E	☉	450
Stax Omega	E	☉	1,695
Stax SR-Omega Ref	E	☉	1,700
Technics RP-HT400	D	☉	50
Technics RP-HT600	D	☉	60
Technics RP-HT700	D	☉	70
Vivanco IR5700	D	☉	50
Vivanco IR5000	D	☉	50
Vivanco SR850	D	☉	50
Vivanco SR650	D	☉	50
Vivanco SR750	D	☉	60
Vivanco IR6000	D	☉	70
Vivanco SR909	D	☉	70
Vivanco IR6500	D	☉	90
Vivanco SR10001FL	D	☉	110
Vivanco IR7100	D	☉	120
Vivanco IR7600	D	☉	140
Vivanco SR200IFL	D	☉	140



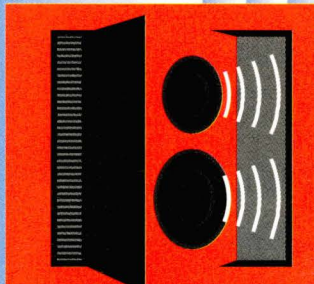
EQUIPMENT SUPPORTS & SPEAKER STANDS

Alphason NCI	47
Alphason RS1	49
Alphason NCII	84
Alphason Titan S	125
Apollo AZ6	80
Arcici Q-1	299
Arcici Q-2	299
Atacama BD21	55
Atacama BD17	55
Atacama BD25	60
Atacama SE16	65
Atacama SE12	65
Atacama SX500	67
Atacama F2	70
Atacama F1	70
Atacama SX600	70
Atacama SL200	70
Atacama SE24	70
Atacama SE20	70
Atacama SX700	73
Atacama SL300	73
Atacama TP600	75
Atacama TP500	75
Atacama SE615	75
Atacama SE515	75
Atacama SE415	75
Atacama SL400	76
Atacama SE1000S	80
AVF Tower	40
Chord CEL 01	387
Credo STD 001	284
Custom Design CD 500	35
Custom Design AS 130	35
Custom Design Tri 100	50
Custom Design RS 200	50
Custom Design R/S300	70
Custom Design Tri 300	85
Custom Design SCS 24	85
Custom Design C 20	109
Custom Design H1	275
Deadrock 903	60
Deadrock 902	60
Deadrock 901	60
Dynaudio Trophy	120
Dynaudio Master	200
Dynaudio Ultima	290
Harbeth HL-Stands	249
Heybrook Stand-ULT	55
Heybrook Stand-S6	59
Heybrook Stand-S4	59
Heybrook Stand-S1	119
JPW HS1	120
JPW HS2	120
Kudos Audio Arrow	50
Kudos Audio S-50	100
Kudos Audio S-100	270
Mission Micrometer	70
Mission Entasis	98
Pioneer CP-7	50
Pioneer CP-8	80
Projekt Signature	80
Revolver RS1	70
Royd Royd	99
SD Acoustics SD Alexandra	369
Silverado Silverado 1 Stand	350
Sonus Faber Ironwood	475
Sonus Faber Stonewood	497
Sound Org Z037	55
Sound Org Z027	55
Sound Org Z026	55
Sound Org Z524	65
Sound Org Z518	65
Soundstyle X6118	100
Soundstyle X6124	100
Soundstyle X020	105
Stands Unique Speaker support	159
Stands Unique Tuned Spkr Support	220
Stands Unique Tuned Carbon Fibre	299
Stands Unique Vivas CF Spkr Supp	349
Target TR60	68
Target R1	280
UKD-Opera S2	345
UKD-Opera S1	345
Alphason SM17	49

Alphason GSM17	75
Alphason VSM17	85
Alphason R17/17	120
Alphason GR17/17	150
Alphason VR17/17	190
Audiophile Base 01	79
Audiophile S4T120	280
Audiophile Furniture Base	480
Audiophile S4T120P	560
Custom Design CD-1	70
Custom Design WMB	100
Custom Design G5	160
Custom Design CD-3	200
Custom Design Aspect 650	230
Custom Design Aspect 850	250
Custom Design Aspect 500AV	270
Deadrock 701	60
Deadrock 802	90
Deadrock 703	130
Deadrock 704	190
Deadrock 705	230
Fi-Rax R4	399
Frameworks H175	130
Frameworks FS1	150
Frameworks FT2	285
Frameworks FT3	350
Frameworks H700	355
Frameworks H900	389
Frameworks H500/H175	404
Heybrook Stand-Signature	249
Impulse Iso-plate	190
JPW MS2	45
JPW MS3	55
JPW MS1	80
JPW 3 Tier	80
JPW 5 Tier	100
Kudos Audio Corinthian	600
Linn K3000	85
Mana Sound Frame	125
Mana Mini Table	150
Mana Power supply table	150
Mana Reference flat top	150
Mana Sound Shelf	175
Mana Sound Base	175
Mana Sound Stage	200
Mana Sound Table	235
Mana Ref Shelf	325
Mana Reference Table	350
Mana 2 Tier Amp stand	375
Mana 3 Tier Amp Stand	450
Mana 4 Tier Amp Stand	500
Mana 5 Tier Amp Stand	600
Mana 6 Tier Amp Stand	700
Mission Hark	298
Optimum G2	55
Optimum G2/Pedestal	85
Optimum G4/Pedestal	130
Optimum OPT 3406	149

Optimum G5/Pedestal	150
Optimum OPT 4906	199
Optimum OPT 6606	199
Optimum OPT 10206	299
Optimum AV 300	299
Optimum OPT 340	299
Optimum OPT 490	349
Optimum OPT 440	349
Optimum OPT 700	399
Optimum OPT 610	399
Optimum OPT 660	399
Optimum OPT 1020	449
Optimum OPT 1190	499
Projekt A3	145
Projekt A4	190
Projekt B3	255
Projekt A6	280
Projekt B3i	300
Projekt A5	320
Projekt B4	340
Projekt B Multi	345
Projekt B3ii	345
Projekt C3	375
Projekt D3	420
Projekt C3i	420
Projekt B5	425
Projekt C3iii	465
Projekt C3ii	465
Projekt D3i	500
Projekt C4	500
Projekt C3iv	510
Projekt D3ii	545
Projekt C Multi	555
Projekt D4	560
Quadraspire Q4 mini shelf	60
Quadraspire Q4 shelf	60
Quadraspire Cabinet shelf	80
Quadraspire AV shelf	120
Quadraspire Q4 mini table	200
Quadraspire Q4 table	200
Quadraspire AV table	300
Quadraspire Cabinet	400
Reson DOMOPS	195
Reson DOMOWS	195
Sound Org Z022	65
Sound Org 2021	78
Sound Org Z030	100
Sound Org Z060	120
Sound Org Z038	135
Sound Org Z540	140
Sound Org Z545	140
Sound Org Z560	160
Sound Org Z530	170
Soundstyle X300	180
Soundstyle X305	210
Soundstyle X053	210
Soundstyle X050	210
Soundstyle X6300	215

Soundstyle X100	220
Soundstyle X058	240
Soundstyle X310	250
Soundstyle X105	250
Soundstyle X6053	255
Soundstyle X6100	265
Soundstyle X6310	275
Soundstyle X6058	290
Soundstyle X6105	300
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	320
Stands Unique Isolation Platform	52
Stands Unique Sound Support	249
Stands Unique Sound Tower	289
Stands Unique Compact Sound Supp	315
Stands Unique Sound Support 10	315
Stands Unique Sound Twr Cabinet	369
Stands Unique Ref Wall Support	550
Stands Unique Ultimate Tower	689
Stands Unique Ultimate Tower	689
Stands Unique Ref Floor Support	799
System Tripod Z053	135
System Tripod Z050	135
System Tripod Z058	155
Target B5	175
Townshend Seismic Sink 1CD	99
Townshend Seismic Sink 1.3D	399
Townshend Seismic Sink 2.3D	449
Townshend S/Sink Stand 1SH	999
Townshend S/Sink Stand 2SH	1,199
Wilson Benesch Asside	720
Wilson Benesch Triptych	990



LOUDSPEAKERS

KEY

⌄ - floorstander; larger models requiring no separate stand.

⌄ - stand mount; smaller models designed to be raised above the floor.

⌄ - wall mount; designed to be hung on the wall or mounted in-wall.

You must listen to...Mission's 731i.

MISSION

"A combatant truly worthy of the budget speaker challenge".

Alan Sircorn, Hi-Fi Choice, July/August 1996.
Call (01480 451777) for more information or your nearest stockist.

☐ - box type, including infinite baffle, reflex and transmission line types.

▷ - horn type; mostly large and very efficient.

□ - panel type, including electrostatic and planar magnetic types.

Up to £130

Allison Micro Monitors	95
Allison Mini References	120
Celestion 12i	119
Denon SC-M2	80
Gale Mini Monitors	70
Genexxa GX300	80
Genexxa GX330	80
GLL Arena HF	99
Goodmans Active 75	65
Interaudio XL1000	100
Jamo Studio-80	70
Jamo SAT-90	90
Jamo Cornet 25	100
Jamo D-110	100
Jamo SAT-170	110
Jamo Studio-110	110
Jamo Cornet 35	120
Jamo Artina	120
Jamo D-115	120
Jamo 28	125
JBL TLX111	120
JPW Mini Monitor	60
JPW Gold Monitor	80
JPW IW51	80
JPW ML210	80
JPW ML310	90
JPW ML410	100
JPW IW61	100
JPW IW81	130
JVC SX-SC1VBK	60
JVC SP-V50	80
JVC SP-X220TBK	100
JVC SP-X550BK	130
KEF Coda 7	129
Kenwood LS-90UK	130
Mission 731i	130
Mordaunt-Short VS-100	100
Mordaunt-Short MS05i	100
NAD 801	100
Pioneer CS-3030	120
Polk AB410	100
Realistic Minimus 26	56
Realistic Minimus Pro-77	100
Revolver Beretta	100
Richard Allen Minette 2	129
Solid HCM2	130
Sony SS-86E	100
Sony SS-126E	130
Tangent Monitor 3	60
Tangent Monitor 5	80
Tangent Monitor 7	100
Tannoy Mercury M1	120
TDL Nucleus 1	60
TDL NFM 1	120
TEAC LS-X8 Mk II	80
Technics SB-CS55	80
Technics SB-CS75	100
Visonik 5202	129
Wharfedale Valdus 100	80
Wharfedale Diamond 7.1	100
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Quad ESL63	£	3,450
Rehdeko RK125	£	3,200
Rehdeko RK145	£	4,800
Rehdeko RK175	£	8,800
Shahinian Hawk	£	4,995
Shahinian Diapason	£	8,895
Shun Mook Bella Voce	£	5,500
Sonus Faber Electa Amator	£	3,293
Sonus Faber Extrema	£	6,500
Sound-Lab Dynastat	£	3,790
Sound-Lab Aura	£	6,490
Sound-Lab Pristine III+	£	7,990
Sound-Lab A-3	£	11,990
Sound-Lab Ultimate II	£	13,950
Sound-Lab A-1	£	13,990
Sound-Lab Ultimate III	£	18,950
Sound-Lab Ultimate I	£	23,950
Spendor SP9/1	£	3,450
Tannoy Edinburgh TW	£	3,250
Tannoy Definition D900	£	3,999
Tannoy GRF Memory TW	£	4,000
Tannoy Westminster TW	£	6,600
Tannoy Canterbury 15 TW	£	7,720
Tannoy Westminster Royal	£	14,920
TDL Ref Standard-m	£	4,999
Triangle Nemo Altair	£	4,250
Wilson Audio Cub	£	5,495
Wilson Audio WATT 5	£	8,750
Wilson Audio WITT	£	8,888
Wilson Benesch Actor	£	3,800
Wilson Benesch ACTI spkr	£	6,400



DEDICATED CENTRE SPEAKERS

KEY
 ◯ - magnetically shielded; allows positioning close to TV sets.
 THX - THX approved by Lucasfilm for use in Home THX installations.

Acoustic Energy AE107C	£	150
Allison Black Gold Centre	£	99
B&W CC3	£	150
B&W CC6	£	230
B&W Matrix HTM	£	500
Bandor Voice	£	317
Boston CR1	£	100
Boston Centre 6	£	130
Boston Micro 90 Cntr	£	180
Boston Centre 7	£	200
Boston CR2	£	200
Boston VR10	£	250
Boston VR12	£	300
Boston VR14	£	400

Castle Keep	£	249
Celestion CC1	£	89
Celestion CSC	£	129
Celestion Centre 2	£	149
Celestion C1i	£	150
Cerwin-Vega CC-240	£	80
Cerwin-Vega CC-250	£	100
Dali SC5	£	220
Def Tech C1jr	£	275
Def Tech C1B	£	395
Def Tech CLR1000B	£	595
Def Tech CLR2002	£	595
Def Tech CLR2000	£	845
Dynaudio Audience CC	£	425
Dynaudio Contour CC	£	850
Gale Centre 1	£	80
Gale Centre 2	£	120
GLL Arena AV Centre	£	100
Infinity SM Video	£	175
Infinity Centre	£	650
Jamo Centre 30	£	60
Jamo Centre 50.II	£	80
Jamo Centre 40	£	100
Jamo Centre 100 II	£	130
Jamo Centre 18	£	150
Jamo Centre 160	£	180
Jamo Centre 200	£	200
Jamo Concert Centre	£	500
JBL MR Centre	£	100
JBL TLX103	£	100
JBL SC305	£	150
JBL LX Centre	£	150
JBL L Centre	£	350
JPW Mini Monitor	£	40
JPW Gold Monitor	£	50
JPW CC40	£	80
JPW CC50	£	90
JPW CC60	£	100
JPW CC70	£	130
KEF Model 80C	£	129
KEF Q95C	£	199
KEF Model 100	£	359
KEF Model 200C	£	699
Kenwood CS-6	£	150
Keswick Centrali	£	359
Linn AV5120	£	650
Martin-Logan Logos	£	1,998
Meridian M60C	£	1,125
Meridian M60	£	1,125
Meridian DSP5000C	£	1,750
Meridian DSP5500C	£	3,095
Meridian DSP6000C	£	4,900
M&K S-85C	£	400
M&K S-125C	£	600
M&K S-150C (THX)	£	800
Mission 73C	£	150
Mission 75C	£	248
M-A CC300	£	300
M-A CC900	£	500
M-A CC70	£	600
Mordaunt-Short VS-100C	£	100
Mordaunt-Short MSCi	£	180
Mus Tec Merlin	£	200
Mus Tec Osprey	£	250
NAD 808CC	£	170
NHT AudioCenter-1	£	299
Polk M3 C	£	120
Polk CS101	£	120
Polk CS200	£	170
Polk AB705C	£	180
Polk RM2500C	£	249
Polk CS250	£	250
Polk CS350	£	450
Proac Response CC One	£	599
Revolver The Ricochet Ctr	£	50
Richard Allen Centre	£	49
Richard Allen Centre plus	£	99
Richard Allen Dimension Ctr Pod	£	149
Richard Allen Magnum Ctr Pod	£	249
Royd AV77	£	250
Ruark Dialogue One	£	289
Solid C100	£	130
Sony SS-CN15	£	40
Sony SS-CN35	£	70
Sony SS-CN65ES	£	130
Spendor 2010	£	249
Tannoy Profile Plus 621	£	99
Tannoy Profile Plus 622	£	179
Tannoy Definition D750	£	999
TDL Nucleus CCS	£	150
TEAC LS-CT8	£	80
Triangle Sat 1	£	399
Wharfedale Modus Centre Cube	£	50
Wharfedale Valdsu Centre	£	100
Wharfedale Modus Centre	£	120
Wharfedale Modus Music Centre	£	150
Yamaha NS-C60	£	60
Yamaha NS-C105	£	80
Yamaha NS-C150	£	110
ZYP AITAV Centre	£	109



DEDICATED SURROUND SPEAKERS

KEY
 ◯ - magnetically shielded; allows positioning close to TV sets.
 THX - THX approved by Lucasfilm for use in Home THX installations.

B&W SCM8	£	1,190
Boston VRS Micro	£	170
Boston CRX	£	200
Boston VRS	£	299
Boston VRS Pro	£	370
Celestion Little 1	£	99
Celestion MP1	£	199
Cerwin-Vega SA-140	£	100
Cerwin-Vega SA-150	£	140
Dali S55	£	220
Def Tech BP1X	£	395
Def Tech BP2X	£	595
Def Tech BPX	£	1,095
Dynaudio Audience 5	£	398
H/K Citation 7.3	£	1,750
Infinity Quadrapole	£	500
Jamo Surround 40	£	60
Jamo Surround 50 II	£	70
Jamo Surround 100 II	£	90
Jamo Cornet 35	£	120
Jamo Surround 160	£	130
Jamo Surround 200	£	170
Jamo Surround 300	£	280
Jamo Surround One	£	550
JBL LX Surround	£	180
JPW Satellites	£	80
KEF Model AV2	£	539
Kenwood RS-05	£	80
Kenwood CM-5ES	£	80
Kenwood RS-550	£	100
Kenwood CM-7ES	£	100
Kenwood Omni 7	£	170
Martin-Logan Stylos	£	2,872
Mission 73	£	100
Mordaunt-Short VS-100R	£	90
Mus Tec Kestrel SE	£	345
NAD 805RC	£	150
NHT HDP-1	£	299
Polk RM2000 II	£	350
Polk RT f/x	£	350
Polk LS f/x Surround	£	449
Revolver The Ricochet Rear	£	80
Richard Allen Satellites	£	99
Richard Allen Dimension Cubes	£	139
Sony SS-SR15	£	40
Sony SS-SR35	£	100
Sony SS-SR65ES	£	170
Tannoy Profile Plus 628	£	149
Triangle SAT II	£	250
Wharfedale Modus Cube	£	60
Yamaha NS-E60	£	80
Yamaha NS-E105	£	110

SUBWOOFERS

KEY
 ◯ - active; includes a dedicated power amplifier.
 THX - THX approved by Lucasfilm for use in Home THX installations.

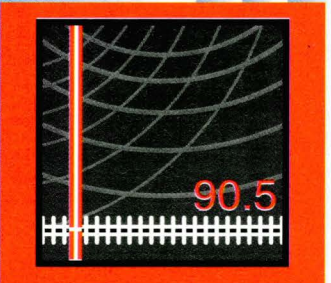
Aiwa TS-W9	£	170
Allison Mini Ref Sub	£	210
Alon Poseidon	£	15,000
AMC B1-20	£	350
Audio Physic Terra	£	3,499
B&W AS6	£	500
B&W Matrix 800ASW	£	1,500
Boston CR400	£	300
Boston VR500	£	450
Boston VR2000	£	800
Celestion CS135	£	139
Celestion CSW MkII	£	329
Celestion S1i	£	349
Cerwin-Vega HT-10D	£	200
Cerwin-Vega HT-12D	£	250
Crede SDC 001	£	3,054
GLL LE Bass	£	350

Hales Concept Zero	2,950
H/K Citation 7.4	875
Infinity SSW-10	500
Jamo 8605W	110
Jamo SW303E	220
Jamo SW400E	330
Jamo SW505E	400
Jamo Sub One	400
Jamo SW600e	530
JBL CM6	200
JBL PSW800	275
JBL Sub 10	300
JBL PSW1000	325
JBL PSW1200	375
JPW Subwoofer	130
JPW SW60	350
JPW SW120	500
KEF Model 20B	349
KEF Model 30B	499
KEF Model AV1	2,499
Kenwood SW500	250
Keswick Alto	1,299
Linn AV5150	2,850
L Voice RW24	11,500
Meridian Sub 1	1,500
Meridian M2500	1,595
M&K VX-7MkII	450
M&K V-75 MkII	650
M&K V-125 (THX)	800
M&K MX-70	900
M&K MX-150	1,500
M&K MX-200	1,800
M&K MX-300	2,500
M&K MX-5000	2,900
Mission 73AS	450
Mission 75AS	548
Mordaunt-Short T2000	500
Mus Tec Sub	650
Muse Model 22	1,890
Muse Model 18	3,790
Neat Gravitas	1,095
NHT SW2Pi	609
Polk PSW50	350
Polk PSW150	500
Polk PSW300	750
REL Q50	375
REL Q-100E	495
REL Strata II	575
REL Storm	695
REL Stadium II	995
REL Stentor II	1,795
REL Studio II	3,995
Revolver The Recoil	100
Richard Allen Gold Sub	149
Richard Allen Dim'n Active	499
Richard Allen Magnum Active	699
Rogers AB33	379
Rogers AB1	549
Roksan Ojan 3S	795
Sequence FW120	249
Solid PB100	350
Sony SA-W101	230
Sunfire True Sub	1,600
Tannoy 625ALFie	599
TDL Nucleus SBR	200
Triangle SATIII	650
Velodyne VA-68XII	399
Velodyne VA-79XII	499
Velodyne VA-810XII	599
Velodyne VA-1012XII	699
Velodyne VA-1215XII	999
Velodyne FSR-12	1,099
Velodyne FSR-15	1,299
Velodyne F-1800II	1,999
Wharfedale Modus Sub Bass	180
Wharfedale Modus Powered Sub	350
Wilson Audio Puppy 5.1	8,450
Wilson Audio Whow III	12,500
Yamaha YST-SW40	140
Yamaha YST-SW80	180
Yamaha YST-SW150	280
Yamaha YST-SW300	350

Air Tangent 10B	#	7,777
Air Tangent Ref. Sig.	#	11,000
Audio Note AN-ARM 1	⊙	169
Audio Note AN-0s	⊙	795
Audio Note AN-1s	⊙	995
Audiomeca SL5	#	2,500
Clearaudio TQ-1 Improved	⊙	1,950
Dynavector 507	⊙	1,995
Graham 1.5 Basic	⊙	1,695
Graham Mk 2.0	⊙	2,650
Helius Orion 4 Copper	⊙	549
Helius Cyalene 2	⊙	1,495
Kuzma Stogi	⊙	750
Kuzma Stogi Reference	⊙	1,250
Linn Akito	⊙	500
Linn Ekos	⊙	1,500
Manticore Musician II	⊙	595
Manticore Magician II	⊙	895
Manticore Magician 12	⊙	995
Moth Mk I	⊙	109
Moth MkIII Stainless	⊙	146
Moth Mk III Tungsten	⊙	174
Moth Moth 900	⊙	598
Naim ARO	⊙	1,040
N'ham Space	⊙	450
N'ham Paragon 3	#	550
N'ham Paragon 2	#	800
N'ham Mentor	⊙	800
N'ham Paragon 1	#	1,600
Rega RB250	⊙	109
Rega RB300	⊙	174
Rega RB900	⊙	598
Roksan Tabriz	⊙	320
Roksan Tabriz Zi	⊙	420
Roksan Artemiz	⊙	895
SME 3009 Ser II Imp	⊙	309
SME 3009 S2 Ser II Imp	⊙	338
SME Series II 3009-R	⊙	514
SME Series II 3010-R	⊙	526
SME Series II 3012-R	⊙	565
SME 309	⊙	668
SME 310	⊙	705
SME 312	⊙	802
SME Series IV	⊙	983
SME Series V	⊙	1,461
Townshend Excalibur	⊙	1,499
Wheaton Music Tri-Planar 4i	⊙	3,000
Wheaton Music Tri-Planar 5i	⊙	3,250
Wilson Benesch ACT1 Std	⊙	950
Wilson Benesch ACT2	⊙	1,350
Zeta AS	⊙	469
Zeta VDH	⊙	549

Marantz ST-57	P59	RDS	150
Marantz ST-65	P69	RDS	200
Marantz ST-17	P50	RDS	600
Meridian 504	P30		695
Meridian 604	P30		1,350
Michi RHT-10	P16		895
Micromega Minium FM Mk2	P39		329
Micromega Tuner	P39		750
Mission Cyrus FM7	P29		400
Musical Fidelity E50	P20		300
NAD 412	P24		190
NAD 414RDS	P30	RDS	250
NAD 710	P24		270
NAD 712	P24		330
Naim NATO3			595
Naim NATO2			1,080
Naim NATO1			1,730
Onkyo T 421ORDS	P30	RDS	180
Onkyo T 409	P30		230
Onkyo T 411RDS	P30	RDS	260
Pioneer F-204RDS	P30	RDS	140
Pioneer F-304RDS	P40	RDS	190
Pioneer F-504RDS	P40	RDS	250
Quad 77FM	P25	RDS	700
Rega Radio	P24		229
Roksan Caspian	P50		495
Rotel RT-835AX	P20		160
Rotel RT-990BX	P16		500
Sony ST-SE200	P30		100
Sony ST-SE300	P30	RDS	120
Sony ST-SE500	P30	RDS	140
Sony ST-SE700	P30	RDS	180
Sony ST-SA3ES	P30	RDS	250
TEAC T-R400	P20		120
TEAC T-H500	P30	RDS	170
TEAC TB-X10	P20	RDS	400
Technics ST-GT350L	P30		150
Technics ST-GT550L	P39	RDS	200
Technics ST-GT650L	P39	RDS	250
Thorens IRT-2000	P59	RDS	499
Yamaha TX-480L	P40		100
Yamaha TX-492RDS	P40	RDS	130
Yamaha TX-590RDS	P40	RDS	180

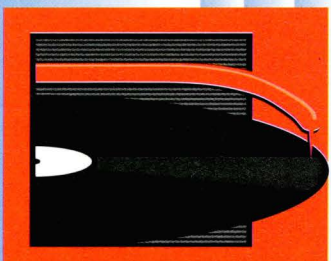
Thorens TD-180 AT91	⊙	190
Thorens TD-280 IV/UK	⊙	210
Thorens TD-166 VI/UK/RB	⊙	400
Thorens TD-318 III TP50	⊙	500
Over £500		
Audio Note AN-TT 2		995
Audio Note AN-TT 3		1,995
Audiomeca Romance	⊙	1,895
Audiomeca J1		3,500
Basis 2001		2,750
Basis Ovation II		4,800
Basis Debut Gold Std III		7,200
Basis Debut Gold Vacuum		9,250
Clearaudio Evolution	⊙	1,790
Clearaudio Reference	⊙	4,500
DNM-Reson Rota 1	⊙	3,900
DNM-Reson Rota 2	⊙	5,600
Impulse Moskito	⊙	695
Kuzma Stabi	⊙	1,950
Kuzma Stabi Reference		3,750
Linn LP12 Basik		1,100
Linn LP12 Lingo		1,750
Manticore Mantra 97		595
Manticore Mantra		895
Manticore Magister		4,400
Marantz TT-1000		6,000
Michell Gyrodek		825
Michell Orbe		1,950
N'ham Spacedeck		750
N'ham Graphic		1,200
N'ham HyperSpacedeck		1,500
N'ham Mentor		2,600
N'ham Anna Log		5,500
Oracle Paris		1,100
Oracle Delphi		3,370
Oracle Delphi 15th Anniv		3,800
Pink Triangle Tarantella		579
Pink Triangle Anniversary		2,500
Pro-Ject 6/Sumiko	⊙	850
Rega Planar 9	⊙	1,598
Reson RS1	⊙	675
Roksan Xerxes 10	⊙	1,295
Roksan TMS		2,750
SME Model 20/2		3,403
SME Model 20/2A	⊙	4,836
SME Model 30/2		10,675
SME Model 30/2A	⊙	12,135
Stratosphere ST1		6,500
Thorens TD-146 VI TP50	⊙	550
Thorens TD-2001 TP90	⊙	700
Thorens TD-520 SME		1,050
Townshend MkIII Rock		1,499
Well Tempered Record Player	⊙	1,850
Well Tempered Classic	⊙	2,980
Well Tempered Super	⊙	3,900
Well Tempered Reference	⊙	5,300
Wilson Benesch WB Turntable	⊙	1,775



TUNERS

KEY

⊙ - (etc.) number of presets.
 RDS - Radio Data System; receives text information on station, programme type etc.



TURNTABLES

KEY

⊙ arm included.
 ⊙ cartridge included.
 Up to £500

Audio Note AN-TT 1	⊙	349
Dual CS435-1	⊙	150
Dual CS455	⊙	190
Dual 505-4 UK	⊙	250
Eclipse TT430	⊙	70
Genexa Lab-710	⊙	60
Genexa Lab-810	⊙	70
Grundig TT1	⊙	180
Kenwood KD-492F	⊙	100
Michell Mycro	⊙	435
Moth Alamo	⊙	199
Moth Kanoot MkI Arm	⊙	279
Moth Kanoot Mk3 Arm	⊙	329
NAD 533	⊙	220
N'ham Interspace	⊙	500
Pioneer PL-J2500-C	⊙	80
Pioneer PL-990	⊙	130
Pro-Ject 0.5/OM10	⊙	160
Pro-Ject 1/510	⊙	200
Pro-Ject 2/20	⊙	300
Pro-Ject 6/MC15	⊙	450
Rega Planar 78	⊙	214
Rega Planar 2	⊙	214
Rega Planar 3	⊙	274
Roksan Radius	⊙	470
Sherwood PM8550	⊙	130
Sony PS-LX150H	⊙	90
Sony PS-LX300H	⊙	150
Systemdek I/920	⊙	136
Systemdek II/900	⊙	230
Systemdek I/920/Moth	⊙	235
Systemdek II/900Ap	⊙	388
Systemdek 960	⊙	500
Systemdek 2X2	⊙	500
Technics SL-BD20	⊙	160
Technics SL-BD22	⊙	180
Technics SL-1210MkII	⊙	500
Technics SL-1200MkII	⊙	500

Remember that all entries printed in RED refer to hi-fi products that we have reviewed. Turn to page 122 for a full summary of test results!



TONEARMS

KEY

⊙ - pivoted.
 # - parallel tracking.

Air Tangent IC	#	3,333
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Unwatchable.



Unmissable.

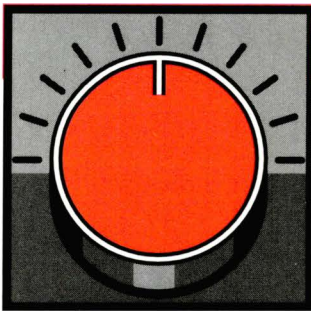


Home Entertainment



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO HOME CINEMA, DVD AND WIDESCREEN TV • NEXT ISSUE ON SALE AUGUST 28

THIS ISSUE • Watch TV - in the sauna! • Our experts rate over 300 pieces of kit • Europe's top home cinema



Amplifiers

Brought to you in association with **audio research**
HIGH DEFINITION

The amplifier sits at the heart of the system, processing the outputs from the various music sources as necessary and then driving the loudspeakers. These two (quite separate) functions are integrated into a single box at the low-to-middle price points, but become separated into preamps and power amplifiers. Even separate power supplies become increasingly common as one moves upmarket. Bear in mind that output power and sound quality are not necessarily

related. Some of the finest amplifiers available have outputs as low as 12 Watts, but team them with high-efficiency loudspeakers and you can achieve loudness aplenty. Power output is equally no indication of sound quality.

B

Best buy

R

Recommended

KEY	MC PHONO INPUT:	POWER OUTPUT (W):	information page.
LINE INPUTS: Amount of input sockets for non-vinyl sources such as CD players, tuners and cassette decks.	If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving coil (low output) cartridges.	Lab tested power output in Watts per channel.	
MM PHONO INPUT: If an amp has a vinyl phono input for moving magnet (normal output) cartridges.	RECEIVER: If an amp has a built in radio tuner.	FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback	ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.
	REMOTE CONTROL: If amp is couch potato ready.		
	HEADPHONE SOCKET: If an amp is can friendly.		

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	LINE INPUTS	MM PHONO INPUT	MC PHONO INPUT	REMOTE CONTROL	HEADPHONE SOCKET	POWER OUTPUT(W)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Maxim	319	Vivid and colourful sounding amp that's just too bold and brassy	5	●				30	1737	154
Alchemist Nemesis	700	Good if ultimately undistinguished amplifier whose strengths include warmth, authority and distinctive aesthetics	6					80		168
AMC 3050a	170	Tremendous value for money, and a full, big, if rather uninformative sound	4	●	●	●	●	45		167
AMC CVT3030a	400	Beer-budget valve amp, with quintessentially valve-like virtues (euphony with dynamics) and vices (system dependency, noise)	6	●				30		168
Arcam Alpha 7	250	Decent, if slightly system-fussy amplifier that generally pulls all the right strings	5	●				40		167
Arcam Alpha 8	350	Enjoyably soft-centred amp, won't frighten the animals. Upgradeable via preamp output, and R/C (not supplied)	5	●				50	1853	162
Arcam Alpha 9	500	Not quite as much a star as the Alpha 9/9P combo, the solo integrated is nevertheless colourful and explicitly detailed	7			●	●	70		168
Audio Innovations Alto	300	Probably because of a lack of deep bass, this stylish amp sounds open, natural and relaxed	6					35	1540	138
Audio Note Ongaku	56,000	A single-ended, zero negative feedback triode, line-level amplifier and a half. Probably the best amplifier in the world	3					26		C91
Audio Note O o SE	1,200	Transparent, dynamic, clear and subtle, but limited power	4					24		126
Audiolab 8000A	550	The 8000A remains a highly disciplined and mature-sounding amp	5	●	●			60	1581	140
Audiolab 8000S	750	Informative in every sense, only a slight lack of bite detracts. Perhaps Audiolab's best yet!	6			●	●	60	1740	154
Aura VA100 II	350	Big and smooth, yet slightly disjointed sound was equally familiar	5	●				70	1541	138
Cambridge Audio A3i	200	Maximum information design, with plenty of usable and reasonably refined power. A snip	4	●				60		167
Copland CSA8	945	Sophisticated yet transparent, this is one of those amplifiers that sounds good even when the gloss has worn off	5					60		168
Copland CSA-14	1,199	Great sound and looks, but watch out for high capacitance cables	4	●				60	1416	148
Denon PMA-350SE	200	Reinvented in the minimalist tradition, the new SE model is a control freak, but can sound wonderful	5				●	50	1856	162
Denon PMA-425R	230	Well-equipped and generally enjoyable but slightly ragged performer. You can do better	3	●	●	●	●	45		167
Denon PMA-725R	350	Warm, bold, up-front presentation, but musically unexciting	5	●	●	●	●	97	1802	157
Densen Beat B-100	600	Low feedback amp with passive internal preamp gives a bold, pacy and thoroughly involving sound. Phono option listed	5					60	1855	162
DeVa 125	249	Subjectively loud, this throws an unlikely quantity of music at the audience. Bouncy sense of rhythm	6					20	1464	149
DPA Renaissance	595	DPA's first integrated amp is typically innovative, but a little too 'crisp 'n dry' for our tastes	5	●				40	1582	140
EMF Audio Sequel	450	Relaxed and restrained design from Mike Creek	5	●				50		109
Exposure XX Super	700	Rather transistorised, unexciting sound. Good coherence and rhythm. Best played loud	6					55	1743	154
Gamma Acoustics Gemini	699	Genuine single-ended triode design, but low power, mundane sound and poor build	3					12	1416	148
Grundig Fine Arts V-11	160	Rhythmically dull. Never gets out of first gear	5	●			●	55	1803	157
Harman/Kardon HK610	180	Lively and friendly sound, but could prove too exciting for the faint hearted	6	●				30	1465	149
Harman/Kardon HK620	250	Capable and musical amplifier which is among the nicest available at the price. Optional add-in MM/MC board available	6			●	●	40	1858	162
Harman/Kardon HK1400	400	Relaxed, confident sound is only troubled by the most dense of recordings	5	●	●			40	1011	129
Harman/Kardon HK640	400	Breezy, nimble sounding amp, lacks grip and fortitude – it can sound artificial and insubstantial	6					55	1542	138
JoLida 202	695	Well-built and technically accomplished, affordable valve integrated with subtle and refined, if not quite gripping sonic performance	4					40		168
JVC AX-V4	200	Respectable performance for a Pro-Logic AV amplifier. Lacks resolution and sparkle, though	5	●			●	63	1805	157
JVC AX-R5	200	Versatile, and lots of even-handed, articulate detail; but let down by superficiality	5	●			●	45	1466	149
Kenwood KA-3020SE	200	Not a brilliant phono stage, but this is a lively, exuberant sounding amp via CD	5	●			●	50	1130	134
Krell Digital KAV-300i	2,490	EISA Award winner with balanced inputs and AV friendly outlook, sound is confident and three-dimensional (Statements)	5					150	1825	160
LFD Integrated Zero	549	Lively and brisk, but at the same time cold and unsympathetic	6					50	1584	140
Linn Majik (Phono)	800	The cornerstone of Linn's modular hi-fi system is innovative, but sounds vague and confused	5	●	●			33	1013	129
Magnum IA170	330	Gives a realistic sense of instruments playing within a very believable acoustic, preserves colour and dynamics well	6				●	96	1260	142
Magnum IA-200	495	Sweet, valve-flavoured solid state amplifier flatters where it doesn't cast light. Note: power output listed is peak	7					100	1860	162
Magnum Class A	690	Lashings of rich and compelling music, but the Class A trades lushness for accuracy	4	●	●			60		116
Marantz PM-66SE	230	A bit lush, and power output is limited, but it communicates well and gives airy, large-scale music. An excellent budget buy	5	●		●	●	50		167
Marantz PM66 KI-Signature	400	An amplifier that knows how to rock and roll with holographic detail and stereo, but prefers small/medium scale acoustic material	5	●		●	●	50		168
Micromega Minium Amp	350	Excellent musical performance but doesn't like high levels or low impedance speakers	6	●			●	40	1806	157
Mission Cyrus III	500	Beautifully presented, but mid-dominated balance and other anomalies were not liked. Upgradeable using PSX unit PSU	6	●			●	50	1854	162
Mission Cyrus SL	398	Sharp, articulate amplifier, and superb, outgoing midband with lean though well-extended bass – and build quality to die for	6					50		168
Musical Fidelity E10	300	Smooth and high-endish sound that is marred by a lack of dynamics and a touch of grain	5	●				40	1746	154
Musical Fidelity A2	499	Lucid, transparent midband and a full upper bass are provided by this highly proficient A1 replacement	5	●				25	1862	162
Musical Fidelity A220	700	Powerful, authoritative and well turned-out amplifier that is easy to match with comparably priced speakers and source components.	5	●				50		168
Myryad MI 120	530	Despite an ultra-modern appearance, the old-fashioned cold, dry transistor sound	5				●	60	1747	154
NAD 310	100	Fleet and sure of foot, it seems likely to set all appendages tapping with its blend of enthusiasm and artfulness	5					20	1468	149
NAD 314	260	Lively if coloured presentation that is musically engaging and easy on the ear	6	●				53	1807	157
NAD 317	470	Powerful, expandable and affordable, the 317 is short on refinement and resolving power	6				●	80		168
Naim Nait 3	575	Distinctive and highly musical sounding integrated amp. Perhaps too distinctive for some tastes	5					30	1748	154
Orelle SA-100	449	A musically rewarding amplifier that grows on you. Trace of coarseness in treble	5					50	1749	154
Pioneer A-300R	200	Its bright and breezy sound is a natural tonic to those of us worn down by the ongoing stress of life	5	●		●	●	50	1469	149

ISSUE NUMBER
FACTSBACK (W) REVERSE
POWER SOCKET OUTPUT (W)
HEADPHONE CONTROL
REMOTE CONTROL
MM PHONO INPUT
MC PHONO INPUT
LINE INPUTS

INTEGRATED AMPLIFIERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	6	5	4	3	2	1	50	1545	138
Pioneer A-400X	300	On second audition, this amp was tonally unchanged but less compelling	6	●	●				50	1545	138
Pioneer A-300R Precision	400	Sophisticated, breathed-on variant of the A-300R. Not an obvious winner, but will slowly win you over with its subtle charms	5	●		●	●	●	35	1863	162
Pioneer A-605R	400	Intriguing technology, but execution is certainly impeded by excessive gadget count	5	●		●	●	●	80		168
Prime Design A-100	650	Dynamic but somewhat aggressive powerhouse with limited stereo interest (either MM or MC phono)	4	●	●				100		168
Pro-ject Model 7	300	A minimalist amplifier brimming with good intent, but too quirky for its own good. Either MM or MC	5	●					40	1264	142
Quad 77 Integrated	700	Compact and sophisticated Quad system amp, limited range of inputs when used with 'foreign' components (optional system remote)	3						84		168
Rega Elex	398	Minimalist amplifier derived from Elicit, is a little uninspiring, though at least it is not badly behaved	4	●					50	1865	162
Roksan Caspian	695	Well-built, open and articulate amplifier, which is also consistent from system to system, and well built	6			●			70		168
Rose Scion	615	Unique two-box integrated gives real subtlety and low level resolution, but the sound lacks scale and weight	5	●	●				65		168
Rotel RA970BX	250	Lively, fresh and perky with plenty of power, but not so clever with complex recordings	6					●	60	1546	138
Sherwood AX-7030R	400	Versatile, and with truck-loads of power on tap, this model is disappointingly coarse and uninvolved on audition	5	●	●	●	●	●	95	1866	162
Sony TA-F246E	200	Relaxed quality that seduces with its guile and subtlety, MM input is a bit laconic but CD is very tidy and composed	3	●					40	1471	149
Sony TA-F448E	250	Confused and coloured-sounding, it needs a large dose of delicacy adding to its presentation	5	●				●		1809	157
Talk Electronics Storm 1	500	Good soundstaging and strong detail are provided by this unassuming and not especially powerful model	6						50	1868	162
TEAC A-BX7R	700	Characterful balance mars an otherwise meticulously designed amplifier. Includes a balanced input, optional MM/MC stage	5					●	50	1869	162
Technics SU-A700 Mk 3	250	Fully equipped, high-tech amplifier ultimately fails the 'is it Stork...?' test, and can sound messy and inarticulate	5	●				●	45	1870	162
Woodside ISA230 Disc	1,249	Smooth and inoffensive valve amplifier, though it lacks the sparkle and euphony required for a truly entertaining sound	3	●					30		116
Yamaha AX-490	250	Widgets aplenty, but unemotional sound evoked an uncertain response from panel	5	●	●	●	●	●	85	1473	149
Preamplifiers											
Alchemist raken Pre	519	Quirky Class A design with an equally warm and colourful sound	4								124
Acurus RL11	899	Well-featured US preamp with plenty of grunt and depth when used with the A150 power amp (Sessions)	6					●			1624
AMC CVT2030A	400	Budget valve preamp, modest build and a bit noisy, with fair sound	6	●				●			165
Audio Innovations L1	369	Reviewed with S800 Anniversary – explicitly detailed, conveys the message of the music as a whole	4								1300
Audiolab 8000C	550	Distinctive, stark neutrality that will not appeal to all. Good value engineering	5	●	●			●			97
Audiolab 8000Q	1,100	Tested with 8000M monoblocks	6					●			1301
Aura CA200	700	Flexible, well designed – can sound slightly aggressive, but it's fast, clean and dynamic, and makes compelling listening	10	●	●	●	●	●			165
Conrad-Johnson PV-10A	1,250	Beautiful imaging, superb detail, plenty of gain on the phono input; classy build too. Tested in Sessions	4					●			1560
Copland CTA-301MkII	1,399	Sweet sounding – but never gets bogged down in audio treacle	4	●							1630
Cyrus Pre	650	Tested with Cyrus Power. High-tech design, punchy, light-footed character with a sense of substance and natural warmth	5	●				●			155
Densen DM-20	1,200	Stylish Danish preamp with a pair of huge knobs and effortless resolution and a slightly dark balance (Statements)	6								164
DPA DSP200S	495	Dramatic but detailed and transparent sound belies modest power rating (tested with DPA-200S)	6								124
EAR 802MC	2,599	Tested with 509 Mk II - see comments in power amp section	4	●	●						63
ECA Vista	760	Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system (tested with Lectern)	5								1302
Exposure XVII	849	Superbly rhythmic; maybe a bit overpowering in the midband. Tested in Sessions with XVIII Super	5	●	●						142
Jadis JP-30MC	5,978	French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange. (tested with JA30)	5	●							60
LFD Mistral Linestage	499	Strong ergonomics, generally decent sound, but a little lacking in detail	6								165
Meridian 501	695	Tight, positive sound, but dispassionate; intense at high levels. Tested with 555	5	●				●			1303
Meridian 562V	995	Transparent and capable preamp, also features six digital inputs	9	●	●			●			140
Meridian 502	1,295	Extremely sophisticated analogue controller with tremendous flexibility and a fast and tidy presentation (Statements)	7					●			162
Moth 30 Passive	149	Modular system gives cracking results. Passive preamp and power amp warrant Best Buy (tested with 30/Stereo 60)	4								109
Moth 30 Active Line Stage	349	Excellent sounding ultra-simple miniature preamp	4								165
Muse Model Three	1,990	Natural sounding tranny preamp with useful audiophile features. Works beautifully with 160 power amp (tested in Statements)	5					●			166
Musical Fidelity F2	500	Subtle, sweet-sounding preamp with strong presence	5	●	●						165
NAD 114	270	Beer-budget preamp, sounds focused, detailed and consistent	6	●	●			●			165
Naim NAC92R	599	Upgradeable preamp uses proprietary socketry, etc. See NAP90 power amp for comments	5					●			165
Quad 77 Pre	850	Sophisticated design with 2-way remote control console; open colourful sound and very flexible	4	●	●	●					165
Rega Hal	998	Dedicated to Exon power amps – passive line stages	6	●	●	●					165
Rose RV-23	450	You can pay more to get a more transparent sound, but it's hard to criticise at the price	3	●							77
Rotel RC970BX MkII	175	Confident, consistent sound. reviewed (in Sessions) with RB970BX MkII power amps	5					●			144
Rotel RC980BX	375	Tames enthusiastically recorded material with a laid-back and occasionally smeared sound (tested with RB980BX)	5	●	●			●			155
Sumo Athena IIB	767	Tested with Polaris III. Big, natural and tidy-sounding with very natural reproduction of acoustic and electric instruments	6								1305
Talk Hurricane 2L	649	Design of integrity which gets to the heart, if not the soul, of the music	6								165
Thorens TTP2000F	699	Glamorous, shoebox-format, minimalist pre with fine detail and some granularity	3	●	●	●					165
Woodside SC26 Phono	2,233	Synergistic with STA35, with a cool, controlled sound, good focus and transparency (tested with STA35)	5	●	●						100
Power amplifiers											
Acurus A150	899	Tested with RL11 preamp. Powerful remote-control US combo with a slightly forward inclination	1						150	1624	151
Alchemist Kraken/Pwr	399	Hardly accurate, but entertaining nevertheless	1						60		124
AMC CVT2100A	600	Astonishing value valve/MOSFET hybrid with KT88 output, but lacks the magic of the best valves	1						80		165
Arcam Alpha 9P	400	Clear, colourful and well-disciplined, the Arcam is a strong all-rounder that can compete with conviction	1								165
Art Audio Quintet	1,393	Switchable triode, ultralinear output stage. In triode mode, these are 15 of the sweetest Watts around. Surprisingly gutsy	1						15		109
Aura PA100	700	Can sound slightly aggressive, but it's fast, clean and dynamic, and makes compelling listening	1						100		165
Audio Innovations S800 Anni	1,475	Reviewed with L1 — Explicitly detailed, conveys the message of the music as a whole remarkably well	1						25	1300	145
Audiolab 8000M	800	Strong, controlled sound; confident bass, but colourless. Tested with 8000Q	1						125	1301	145
Audio Research VT60	2,395	Ranks as 'must try' American cultural item (tested in Statements). Tube design	1						35	1179	136
Copland CTA-505	2,099	Grown-up amplifier with a refined, yet never over-civilised air	1						67	1630	151
Cyrus Power	450	Tested with Cyrus Pre. Punchy, light footed character with a sense of substance and natural warmth (bridgeable)	1						50		155
Densen DM-30	1,200	Fluid, valve-like power amp with effortless resolution and a slightly dark balance (Statements)	2						100		164
DPA 200S	750	Dramatic but crisp, open sound belies power rating (tested with DSP-200S)	1						60		124
EAR 509 Mk II	3,699	Combining sonic strengths of transistors and valves, this amp warrants attention (tested with 802)	1						100		63
ECA Lectern	880	Tested with Vista. Wind up the volume and blow a breath of fresh music into your system	1						50	1302	145
Exposure XVIII Super	849	Slight dullness and hardness, but great 'boogie factor'	1						70		142
Jadis JA-30	5,980	French tubes, JP-30MC has beautiful build, nostalgic styling and delightful midrange (tested with £5,978 JP30)	1						30		60

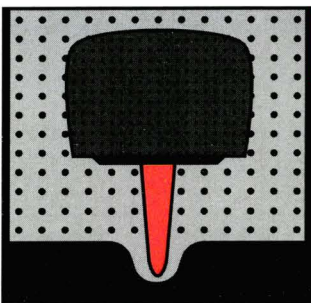


CABLES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments						ISSUE NUMBER	DIG CABLE TYPE
			SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER		
Ixos 104	20	Open and detailed presentation, full bass and silky if overly smooth treble			●	●		1692 131	
Ixos 103	40	Even-handed and generous sound, bass has a well-rounded, bouncy quality			●	●		1692 131	
Ixos 102	60	A bit bright and undynamic, this cable is nevertheless a good all-rounder, whose faults are largely subtractive			●	●		160	
Ixos 101	100	A cable with personality, its veiled and shut in quality brings an earthiness to vocals and rhythm guitar alike			●	●	●	1693 131	
LFD Spirolink I	35	Price for 0.7m length. Dynamic but smoothly detailed performance, but gives the impression of looking down on the music				●	●	1694 131	
LFD Spirolink II	70	Price for 0.7m length. Strong and confident sound enhancing bass depth and subtlety, concentrates on the meat of the music	●			●	●	1694 131	
LFD Trilink	150	Price for 0.7m length. Warm and luxurious sound but a little too fruity in balance, treble is a little subdued, bass detached	●			●	●	1695 131	
Linn Phono to Phono	47	Encourages a delicate performance underpinned by a strong and authoritative bass			●	●	●	1695 131	
Monster Interlink 200	20	Easy on the ear but rather contrived, slightly clanky treble fails to integrate with the smoother but splodgy midband	●			●	●	1696 131	
Monster Interlink 300	30	Richer, smoother more civilised sound than 200 with improved articulation and reduced sibilance	●			●	●	1696 131	
Monster Interlink 400	40	Compromised by a grainy top end, treble and vocal range sound particularly sharp and untidy	●			●	●	1697 131	
Monster Interlink 500	50	Sounds rather good, providing a livelier and more interesting account of music than most sub £100 cables	●			●	●	108	
Monster Interlink 800	80	Not as bright or aggressive as the 400 but treble is strangely lumpy, muted and manipulated - odd cable	●			●	●	1697 131	
Monster Interlink Reference 2	100	Easy on the ear but rather contrived, slightly clanky treble fails to integrate with the smoother but splodgy midband				●	●	1697 131	
Moth Ley Line Black	100	Offers a full and big sound, neutral yet very solid and confident in delivery. Expansive imaging retains music's energy	●			●	●	108	
Moth Ley Line Grey	200	Detailed enough but there's a sense of distance between the music and the listener, vox are coarse rather than liquid	●			●	●	108	
Nordost Black Knight	55	Flat black cable that is distinctive but slightly coloured - but not in a wholly negative manner	●			●	●	160	
Panasonic RP-CA910	50	Uncongested and even handed balance if slightly flat imagewise, retains impact but has a vaguely untransparent quality			●	●	●	108	
Silvertone Ex-Static	35	Pleasantly unfatiguing and competitively priced cable that lacks detail and insight			●	●	●	160	
SonicLink Silver Pink	35	Dynamically sensitive and muddle-free. Unsure about the flesh-coloured finish though...	●			●	●	160	
SonicLink Black	49	Encourages an upbeat and snappy sound that's driven by leading edges, full and rumbustious bass maintains an even tempo				●	●	1699 131	
Tara Labs Prism 11	45	Very compatible cable that wins through with a naturally balanced and realistically dynamic sound. 6N purity copper	●			●	●	1699 131	
Tara Labs Prism 22	56	Delivers a fresh and detailed sound with clear and bright treble giving it a free, quick and dynamic character			●	●	●	1700 131	
Tara Labs Quantum CD	75	Lacking in obvious vices, neutral and transparent, there's also a good solid bass. Vox are not always as intimate as possible	●			●	●	108	
Tara Labs Prism 33	90	A pedestrian cable that sounds lively but muddled. Quite dynamic, quite rich, quite smooth but also quite indistinct			●	●	●	1700 131	
Transparent Audio Music Link	119	No aggressive nasties to tax the ears, neither does it sparkle with inspirational detail. Only suited to low output impedances			●	●	●	1701 131	
van den Hul The Storm	25	Price for 0.8m length. Rich and warm but bass is rolled off, however there's plenty of drive and high frequencies are clean			●	●	●	1701 131	
van den Hul Source HB	50	Price for 0.8m length. Hybrid carbon-fibre/copper cable that is a paragon of naturalness. Airy and well controlled			●	●	●	160	
van den Hul The First	210	Using 12,000 carbon fibres, a gentle and subtle sounding cable that conveys oodles of information but lacks dynamic punch			●	●	●	1702 131	
van den Hul The Second	225	Wonderfully open and relaxing but also intimately detailed, slightly softens percussive dynamics	●			●	●	1702 131	
XLO Type 150	50	A restrained but useful cable for taming lively CD players, dynamics lack freedom, treble lacks clarity			●	●	●	1703 131	
XLO Type 0.1	180	Unusual but highly expressive and detailed with a hint of graininess on powerful vocals				●	●	1703 131	
Digital Interconnects									
Audio Note AN-V	110	Ostensibly an analogue cable but gives a meaty and natural performance when used for digital duty	●			●	●	E 1704 131	
Audioquest Optilink Z	120	Good level of midband detail but frequency extremes lack depth and extension						O 108	
Audioquest Digital Pro	100	A silver cable with all the drive of Video Z but lacking its clear cut transparency			●	●		E 108	
Bandridge AL4900G	40	Lacks deep rounded bass and treble is coloured with a spittiness, a little rough and ready				●	●	E 1705 131	
Chord Codac	32	A connection with a stranded inner core and a sound that lacks integration			●	●		E 108	
Chord Prodac	50	Price for 0.6m length. Lively detailed treble, drives music along confidently with no hint of fizz			●	●	●	E 1706 131	
DPA Opti-link	20	Very similar to Bandridge AL560; sound is lacklustre						O 108	
DPA Digi-link	28	Can seem slightly impassive but there's no avoiding its exceptionally detailed sound			●	●	●	E 108	
Ixos 105	25	Extended but soft-edged treble that's mercifully free of fatiguing colourations, plenty of weight, smooth vox			●	●	●	E 1707 131	
Kimber Kable Opti-link	50	Appears to be a bog-standard PMNA fibre, yet sounds a little brighter and livelier than most						O 108	
LFD DigiLink Copper	30	Slightly grainy highly compatible cable with coherent and forward dynamic quality	●			●	●	E 1708 131	
Moth Leyline Datalink	140	A thin, coaxial version of Leyline Black with a rather hard and unforgiving character. Too expensive			●	●	●	E 108	
QED DigiFlex	20	A top performance, low-loss 750hm coax with a very open, almost liquid quality			●	●	●	E 108	
Siltech HF-6	150	Sounds detailed, very clean and very extended, but bass is less well resolved - a treat for high-end systems			●	●	●	E 1709 131	
SonicLink Green	60	Spacious, positive and engaging if a bit over crisp at times, very compelling however			●	●	●	E 1709 131	
van den Hul MC Videolink 75	48	An AV-cum-digital cable that nearly beats QED's DigiFlex, but emphasises sibilants			●	●		E 108	
van den Hul The First	120	Exceptionally natural albeit slightly dark or cautious compared to some, plenty of subtle information and beautiful integration			●	●		E 1710 131	
Loudspeaker Cables									
Audio Note AN-D	4.50	Supplied in linear, non-polarised lengths that should be twisted into stereo pairs. Sounds rather grippy and forward				●	●	109	
Audio Note AN-B	16.50	Well suited to valve systems, elastic bass, methodical but unintrusive and musical				●	●	1711 133	

CABLES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SYMMETRICAL	COAXIAL	STRANDED	SOLID CORE	COPPER	SILVER	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Audio Note AN-L	29.50	Fruity bass and expressive vocal rendition was appreciated by the panel which was happy to accept its foibles	●				●	●	1712	133
Audio Note AN-SP	125	A calm and civilised presentation, very quiet in the way it reveals subtle low level detail. Great poise and clarity	●				●	●		109
Audioquest F-14	1.95	Ideal for laying under carpets, F-14 encourages a slightly warm and vibrant sound					●	●		109
Audioquest Type 4	4.95	Four 18-gauge OFHC copper conductors wound in a Litz-type fashion increases capacitance but restrains the cable's 'bite'	●		●			●		109
Audioquest Cobalt 2	45	A rather polite and anaemic sound that bubbles gently with detail and is largely uncoloured and cautiously spacious	●		●			●		133
Audioquest Crystal	18	Neutral balance is spoiled by some graininess and smearing	●		●			●		168
Bandridge SF LC1070	42p	Basic figure 8 bellwire, lightweight balance and a softness that dilutes even the strongest bass	●		●			●	1713	133
Bandridge SF LC1259	1	Fresh and open, bubbly and naturally colourful soundstage that's neither forced or unduly edgy. Treble is slightly messy	●		●		●	●	1713	133
Bandridge Highflex LC2604	3.50	Substantial 6mm2 conductor produces weighty but ploddy music that lacks transparency	●		●			●	1714	133
Bandridge LC7409	3.85	Detailed and up-beat cable. A bit too steely for classical strings					●	●	1800	157
Cable Talk Talk 3.1	2.25	Quite well-balanced but tends to lose bass lines in complex music	●				●	●		168
Cable Talk 4.1	4.25	Smooth and cultured sound that lacks fine detail and is a bit too restrained					●	●	1800	157
Chord Myth	5.95	Light and airy tonality may please, but bass is recessed and detail not outstanding	●				●	●		168
DNM LSC350	6.95	Majors on midband and lower treble lucidity at the expense of bass and extreme treble extension	●				●	●		168
DNM LSCB500	5.95	High impedance can influence the treble response, but this was a winner on sound per pound. Bi-wire					●	●	1716	133
DPA Black Sixteen	90	Unflappable resolution of fine musical details, there's no dampening of dynamics, simply oodles of taut information	●				●	●	1717	133
Gale XL189	0.99	Slightly bright and not that subtle, but a perfectly acceptable cable for any starter system	●				●	●		168
Gale XL315	2	A little lacking in detail but plenty of life and excellent value					●	●	1800	157
Gale XL160-2	2.50	Rhythmic and bouncy-sounding bi-wire cable. Can be slightly manipulative					●	●	1800	157
Goertz M2	20	Remarkably detailed, smooth, neutral and with excellent bass; check amplifier compatibility	●				●	●		168
Heybrook Heywire	4	This well-meaning facsimile of earlier ribbon cables ends up sounding lumpy and uneven					●	●		109
Ixos 603	2	Big and expansive-sounding cable, full and engaging while retaining a high degree of neutrality					●	●	1718	133
Ixos 604	5	Midrange is detailed and surprisingly smooth but treble is hard and synthetic and the bass no better					●	●	1719	133
Kimber 4TC	19.68	A well-balanced cable with good performance in all areas	●				●	●		168
Kimber 4TC Double-wire	40	A variation on a Kimber classic which produces a rich and weighty sound, but isn't quite as transparent as single runs					●	●		133
Mission Quartet	7.90	Mixed, inoffensive sound, adds guttural resonance to vocals and could be generally more coherent. Bi-wire					●	●	1722	133
Monster Cable XP	1.50	XP offers plenty of slightly soft bass and a slightly rounded treble, a relaxed cable whose indiscretions are not bothersome			●		●	●	1723	133
Naim NACA 5	5.11	Described as a 'dinosaur of a cable', this stiff wire rod doesn't belong outside Naim systems. But it works a treat in them					●	●		109
Nordost Octava	2.95	Fair bass but confused treble and some coloration	●				●	●		168
Ortofon SPK100	3	Grey-sounding and strips instruments of their natural richness and resonance, a bit bass shy too					●	●		133
Ortofon SPK300	8	Tremendously open and atmospheric with robust full blooded bass, and dynamic too if slightly bright at times					●	●		133
Puresonic 7845	1.95	Big, weighty sound — but too messy and bloated for its own good					●	●	1800	157
Puresonic 7891	2.85	Chunky cable design, shame about the sound quality	●				●	●	1800	157
QED Qudos	2.50	Despite high-tech design and excellent Air-Loc plugs, the music failed to gel					●	●	1800	157
QED Profile	9	Good midrange and treble balance, but bass is rather slack and detail not outstanding					●	●		168
QED Profile 8	5	Sophisticated flat cable that lacks decent bass and get up and go					●	●	1800	157
Silver Sounds 12 gauge	12	Basic 'homemade' construction gives fairly neutral sound, though not outstandingly competitive	●				●	●		168
Sonic Link S300	18	Happiest with simple music; tends to smudge detail in complex pieces	●				●	●		168
SonicLink AST50	1.95	It may look like bell-wire, but AST50 sounds detailed, ordered and balanced					●	●	1800	157
Transparent Audio Musichord	11.42	Sweet, open and refined treble, a bit of breathy exuberance and can und slightly lackadaisical	●				●	●	1728	133
Transparent Audio Wave	22.84	Very close to the sound of 'no cable', one of the very best. Slightly softens treble detail	●				●	●	1728	133
Tech + Link OFC79	1	Bargain basement cable that sounds cosy, but suffers from a wobbly bass					●	●	1800	157
van den Hul The Clearwater	6	Despite its evocative title, the Clearwater turns out to be a disappointingly murky-sounding cable					●	●	109	
van den Hul CS122	19	Smooth and articulate with superb focus and control, its sheer coherence makes it a winner (tested in Sessions)					●	●	153	
van den Hul The Magnum	31	Touted as vdH's most prestigious twinlead cable, Magnum sounds soft and old fashioned					●	●	109	
van den Hul The Wind	35	'The Wind' kicks up a storm with its lush midrange and bone-crunching bass!					●	●	109	
van den Hul Revolution	64	Silver-plated OFC combined with carbon fibre prompts a sombre character with an easy and relaxed treble					●	●	1726	133
XLO Pro Type 625	4	Lively but natural and relaxed-sounding but a hint of congestion at frequency extremes					●	●	1726	133
XLO Pro 600	16.60	Basically neutral tonality but can become aggressive and two-dimensional	●				●	●		168



Cartridges

Cartridges fall into two groups: high output MM (moving magnet) models, capable of working directly into most phono inputs; and generally more expensive low and very low output MC (moving coil) models. MC cartridges usually have better mechanical integrity, tighter tolerances and give better performance. Many amplifiers are no longer equipped with the necessary phono input for a cartridge, and a separate phono stage is necessary. Phono input equipped valve designs need a

transformer to cope with MC cartridges.

Cartridge/amplifier interfacing can be very subtle, but even basic high output MM designs benefit in overall balance from optimised amplifier capacitance loading.

B Best buy **R** Recommended

KEY

MM: Moving magnet cartridge with a normal output suitable for all vinyl disc amplifier inputs.
MC: Moving coil cartridge with a low output only suitable for high-

sensitivity vinyl disc amplifier inputs.
REPLACEABLE STYLUS: Most MM cartridges have a stylus that can be removed and replaced.

OUTPUT (MV): Cartridge output in millivolts.
MASS (g): Cartridge mass can affect arm choice.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax

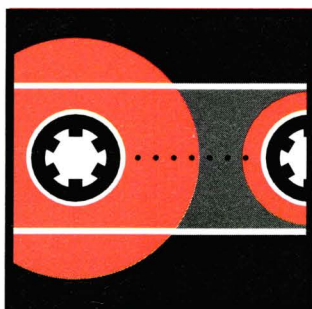
copy of the review.
ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

CARTRIDGES

Product	Price(£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE STYLUS	OUTPUT (MV)	MASS (g)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Audio Note Io IIV	1,695	One of the best, giving an extraordinarily relaxed midrange clarity. Needs a transformer	●	0.1			100
Audio Technica AT-95E	19	Clear and dynamic, though richly balanced	●	2.8			48

CARTRIDGES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comment	REPLACEABLE STYLUS		FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
			MM	MC			
Audio Technica ART-1	944	This is a delicate and very fluid-sounding MC that tracks well	●	●	0.4	9	72
Denon DL110	70	A fine all-rounder, this high output MC model is likely to perform well	●	●	1.0	6	48
Denon DL160	90	Although listeners just preferred the 110, its brother here survived lab tests and is still 'thoroughly competent'	●	●	0.1	6	43
Denon DL103	100	Good performance in bass and good 'life'. Is seriously let down by its spherical stylus which kills subtle detail	●	●	0.1	6	103
Denon DL304	200	Uncoloured, detailed, tracks superbly. Top notch altogether and a bargain too	●	●			103
Dynavector Karat 17D2 mk2	449	Clean and controlled sound with taut, tuneful bass. Detailed and musically cogent	●	●	0.15	5.3	158
Dynavector XX-1L	998	Very clear, very detailed; a response lift around 20kHz seems to do no harm	●	●	0.25	12	84
Dynavector XX-1	998	Good, but not immensely competitive at the price, and not helped by comparison with the low output version	●	●	2.0	12	84
Goldring Elan	19	A lightweight and frisky-sounding MM apparently based on Nagaoka MM4 body	●	●	5.0	7	67
Goldring 1012GX	79	Slightly harsh but plenty of life and detail. Some high frequency colouration apparent	●	●	6.5	7	85
Goldring 1022GX	99	As with 1012, a touch harsh; detail and transient purity improved	●	●	6.5	7	85
Goldring Eroica LX	110	Not the most subtle cartridge in the world: can sound edgy at times, but lively and informative	●	●	0.5	8	84
Goldring 1042	120	Not terribly subtle, and not such good value alongside 1012 and 1022. Quite lively though	●	●	6.5	6	91
Goldring Elite	220	The basics are right, and it will cheerfully tackle any source material, but its sound has a certain dirtiness	●	●	0.5	8	103
Grado Prestige Gold	150	Rich sounding with an unusually refined top-end for a moving magnet-type cartridge	●	●	4	6	158
Linn K9	125	Linn improved this model by beefing up the Basik's bodywork and adding a super stylus	●	●	4.5	5	Col
London Decca Maroon	259	Now manufactured under the London brand name, this Decca cartridge is as iconoclastic as ever	●	●	5.0	6	67
London Decca S Gold	339	Immediate and detailed, but coloured, nonlinear with a questionable effect on records	●	●	5.0	6	84
Lyra Lydian	649	Superbly capable all-round musical performer that improves markedly when its body cover is removed	●	●	0.3	7	158
Lyra Clavis Da Capo	995	A stable tracker, and one of the finest cartridges we've heard	●	●	0.1	7	143
Ortofon 510/P	38	For the price, a good blend of virtues – weight, clarity and neutrality	●	●	3.0	5	85
Ortofon 520/P	65	Sensitive to load capacitance, the 520/P has a lively, effervescent sound	●	●	3.0	5	67
Ortofon MC10 Super	100	"What a delightfully sweet-sounding cartridge this is..." we said	●	●	0.3	7	48
Ortofon MC3 Turbo	130	The 3 Turbo is bright, cheerful and bouncy, but unsubtle – take it as it comes	●	●	3.3	4	103
Ortofon MC15 Super II	130	A good all-rounder, with outstanding resolution, if slightly bright and close up	●	●	0.35	7	103
Ortofon MC25E	180	An excellent upgrade for a mid-price turntable	●	●	0.5	11	139
Ortofon MC25FL	249	A bit too stark and honest, but faithful to what's on the LP	●	●	0.5	11	139
Ortofon MC30 Supreme	525	Highly detailed and even-sounding cartridge that has a special affinity with female vocal recordings	●	●	0.5	10.7	158
Ortofon MC3000II	1,100	A real eye-opener. Nothing to criticise anywhere, one of the very best	●	●	0.12	10	84
Ortofon MC5000	1,500	Limited tracking ability, bright and forward sound, but good stereo	●	●	0.12	10	91
Rega Bias	39	Difficult to mount in some arms due to its shallow build, the Bias offers a gentle, refined sound	●	●	5	4	67
Rega Elys	85	Clearly superior to the Bias, the Elys is more detailed, accurate and convincing	●	●	5.0	5	67
Roksan Corus Black	130	Recognisably related to the Corus Blue, but smoother and more civilised	●	●	6.5	5	91
van den Hul MM-1	250	If woody midrange could be tamed, imaging and security would pull it through	●	●	5.5	6	103
van den Hul DDT-II	699	Outstanding stereo imaging and neutral balance are appealing, but rhythmically the DDT-II is a bit lazy	●	●	0.35	7.6	158
van den Hul MC-10	799	A neutral, balanced performer, gives fine depth and focus and a firm, extended bass	●	●	0.4	6	60
van den Hul MC-One	999	This extended all the positive qualities of the 10, but added greater authority and scale – worth all the extra money	●	●	0.4	6	60
van den Hul MC-Two	1,349	MC-Two rewards with a highly detailed yet fluid and musically convincing portrayal	●	●	0.4	6	72
van den Hul G' hopper III GLA	2,999	Undoubtedly one of the finest cartridges available, it has tremendous bandwidth, energy and finesse	●	●	0.4	6	122
Wilson benesch Matrix	786	Extraordinarily well balanced cartridge: neutral and detailed yet lively and rhythmically assertive	●	●	0.58	6	158



Cassette Decks

The compact cassette is still the world's most versatile and ubiquitous music storage medium. Buffs may wrinkle their noses, but they all use it.

There should be no problems in connecting a cassette deck to any normal amplifier, but some care needs to be taken in choosing the best tapes for a specific machine. (Trial and error is one effective technique, but many decks have manual bias adjustment and some match up to the tape automatically.)

Twin decks offer the option to dub tapes and play two cassettes sequentially. Autoreverse is a useful feature, but usually implies some mechanical compromise. Useful facilities include tape monitor switching and Dolby S.

Best buy

Recommended

KEY

DOLBY C: A rather extreme noise-reduction system not usually associated with high sound quality.
DOLBY S: A desirable derivative of the Dolby SR professional noise-reduction system.
DOLBY HX-PRO: System designed by B&O to extend headroom

for cassette recording.
3-HEAD: If you want to monitor a recording while you are making it, a third head is essential.
TWIN DECK: Contains two decks for dubbing and continuous play. In most instances only one deck will record.

AUTOREVERSE: Automatically plays both sides of the cassette.
AUTO CALIBRATION: The deck will automatically set up bias and EQ for any tape.
ADJUSTABLE BIAS: Bias can be manually set to suit the tape being used.

FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which the original review appeared.

CASSETTE DECKS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	DOLBY HX PRO		DOLBY S		3-HEAD		FACTSBACK NUMBER		ISSUE NUMBER	
			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Aiwa AD-F450	120	Basic but well-designed budget deck, astonishing value; only the poor metering gives the game away	●	●	●	●	●	●	1513	136	●	●
Aiwa AD-WX727	170	High-class twin for those who want bells, whistles - and music	●	●	●	●	●	●	1377	146	●	●
Denon DRM-550	160	There are some technical limitations, but this remains a fine sounding deck, and excellent value	●	●	●	●	●	●	158	●	●	●
Denon DRS-640	200	Draw-loading deck, with simple facilities and smooth, well-adjusted sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	1591	140	●	●
Denon DRM-650S	230	An all-round improvement on predecessors, offers a wide-ranging, disciplined sound. Dolby S is not the best feature	●	●	●	●	●	●	164	●	●	●
Denon DRM-740	270	Breathed-on DRM-710, with good external treatment, offers good, if somewhat detached sonics	●	●	●	●	●	●	1514	136	●	●
Denon DRS-810	310	Draw-loading deck, carefully designed yet lacking in subtlety on audition	●	●	●	●	●	●	127	●	●	●
Grundig CCF3	200	Simple, sensible and well-built twin, but lack of pitch stability compromises performance	●	●	●	●	●	●	1379	146	●	●
Harman/Kardon TD420	250	Minor inconsistencies detract from a well-conceived, minimum features design	●	●	●	●	●	●	1592	140	●	●

DOLBY BXC PRO
DOLBY S
DOLBY C

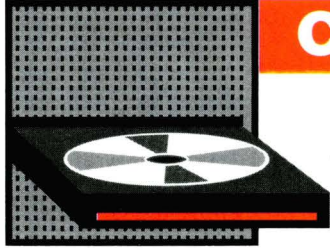
3-HEAD
TWIN HEAD
AUTO CALIBRATION
AUTOREVERSE

FACTSBACK NUMBER
ADJUSTABLE BIAS

ISSUE NUMBER

CASSETTE DECKS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	DOLBY BXC PRO	DOLBY S	DOLBY C	3-HEAD	TWIN HEAD	AUTO CALIBRATION	AUTOREVERSE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ADJUSTABLE BIAS	ISSUE NUMBER
JVC TD-R472	200	Excellent auto-reverse deck which doesn't suffer the usual disadvantages and is very sharply priced	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			158
JVC TD-V562BK	220	Ultra-sophisticated transport at a silly price; sound quality is stable but slightly opaque	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			123
JVC TD-V662BK	270	Assured, clean and agile sounding recorder, if not quite the most refined in its class	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1380	146	
Kenwood KX-7060S	329	Although slightly dull-sounding with prerecorded tapes, this is a well equipped and fine-sounding deck	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1381	146	
NAD 613	230	Rough and ready, but enjoyable sound, though marred by mechanical motor noise	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			158
NAD 614	270	Solid, workmanlike and ungimmicky player with a sound to match, a little pricey by the standards of its class	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			164
NAD 616	300	Double deck whose music sounded shut-in and prosaic, as though its energy content had been ironed flat	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1648	152	
Onkyo K-611	460	Cute drawer loading mini-size component with 3-heads and dual capstan transport	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1384	146	
Pioneer CT-S830S	500	High-class mechanism, if lacking in battleship externals, and superb sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1385	146	
Sony TC-KE550S	230	Warm, enjoyable music-making, but assisted tape setup routine gives inaccurate results	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			164
Sony TC-KE600S	300	Mild setting-up problems notwithstanding, this UK-tweaked design has a smooth, open and un-cassette-like sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			158
Technics RS-AZ6	230	For those who can't afford the RS-AZ7; exquisite clarity over the widest bandwidth thanks to AZ thin-film head	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			164
Technics RS-AZ7	300	Thin-film head gives a solid, almost CD-like bass and midrange. A clear advance in the state-of-the-art	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			158
Yamaha KX-490	199	Electrifyingly transparent and capable deck whose only flaw is a trace of audible wow and flutter	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			158



CD Players brought to you in association with MISSION

All CD players offer a basic selection of facilities, and some can keep you entertained for hours as you programme in disc names and track orders. All but the excessively inexpensive feature remote control. Most CD players can be upgraded by adding an outboard DAC (see below). To do this the player needs a digital output of either electrical or optical persuasion; sonically the former is preferable. A CD player can be split into two basic components: the disc drive or transport, and a device which turns the digital bitstream coming off the disc into an analogue audio signal. This is called a digital to analogue convertor, or DAC. Although most players are contained in a single box, expensive players are usually two-box affairs.

B Best buy **R Recommended**

KEY

ELECTRICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT: For electrical connection to an outboard DAC.

AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUTPUT: Balanced digital output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.

OPTICAL DIGITAL OUTPUT: For optical connection to an outboard DAC.

AT&T OPT DIG OUTPUT: High-speed optical output to be used with similarly equipped DACs.

BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT: Balanced analogue output for amplifiers equipped with balanced inputs.

HEADPHONE SOCKET: For can users.

VARIABLE OUTPUT: Remotely adjustable, volume-controlled output.

MULTI-DISC: Equipped with a carousel or multi-tray system for continuous play of multiple discs.

DAC TYPE: Digital to analogue convertor: BS - Philips Bitstream, MB - multibit, Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bit-stream technologies, 1bit - single bit types such as MASH, bitstream, PWM, etc.

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ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

CD PLAYERS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	ELEC DIG OUT	OPT DIG OUT	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUTPUT	HEADPHONE SOCKET	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	DAC TYPE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Alchemist Nexus APD32A	597	Refined treble, constrained yet capable bass and attractive all-round presentation distinguish this player from the crowd	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	169	
Acurus ACD11	899	First-rate if costly player from the US, which combines a delightful transparency with an unconvinced naturalness	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	166	
Arcam Alpha 7	320	Very detailed for a budget player with a slick and free sense of dynamics, needs careful ancillary matching	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	1872	163
Arcam Alpha 8	520	Refined, intricately detailed but a little cautious, this should be broadly compatible with a variety of amps	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1873	163
Audio Innovations Alto	399	Refreshing piece of audio sculpture belies inconsistent audio behaviour	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1635	151
Audiolab 8000CD	1,000	Developed according to the Green Cross Code of digital audio with an elegant but safe musical presentation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1874	163
Audio Research CD1	3,290	Suspends disbelief with a frighteningly real yet obviously coloured sound. A rare proposition among CD players	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1875	163
AVI S2000MC Reference	1,399	Lean, dry, high resolution player, built to outlast most of us, and a fine performer in a sympathetic system	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	169	
Cambridge Audio CD4	150	Basic appearance and sluggish track access/track search belies its up and at 'em sound quality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	1268	147
Cambridge Audio CD4SE	200	Among the best players we have encountered at the price, considerably more refined and convincing than CD4	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1877	163
Cambridge Audio CD6	250	A sharp, lively and articulate player, a real thoroughbred in fact, perhaps too sharp and lively for some systems	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	159	
Copland CDA-288	2,199	A gentle giant of a player that errs in favour of pastel shades rather than bold daubs of colour, one for refined tastes	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1880	163
Denon DCD-625	200	DCD-615 replacement is generously equipped but lacks sophisticated sound of its forebear	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1269	147
Denon DCD-825	240	Despite extensive revisions, this latest player still sounds like a typical 18-bit Denon, which is no bad thing!	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1531	137
Denon DCD-1015	350	Excellent, mid-range player - fast, fluid and lean	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1599	141
Denon DCD-3000	1,000	Sings with the temperament of a huge orchestra under the baton of a timid conductor, but very agreeable at that	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1881	163
Eclipse CD101a	80	If you want to know the sound of high order distortion, this is probably as good a place to start as any	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	144	
Harman/Kardon HD710	200	A player of integrity, but can sound a bit hard and rough when extended, and is somewhat amplifier fussy	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159	
Harman/Kardon HD730	300	Competitive at the price, with a coloured but dynamic and outgoing sound supported by a raft of user features	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	166	
Heybrook Signature	989	Coarse, edgy and some times inconsistent sound, which is incompatible with the ambitious specification and engineering	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	169	
JVC XL-V284BK	140	Featuring a new set of bitstream innards, this flexible player has a refined, if occasionally unpredictable sound	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1270	147
JVC XL-Z574	250	Strong resolving power and good midband and dynamics, but slightly raw and thin	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159	
JVC XL-Z674BK	300	Even-handed, but glosses over the most intimate moments	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	1637	151
Kenwood DP-3080	170	Bold, dynamic and outgoing sound, though somewhat aggressive. Poor build quality and finish	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159	
Kenwood DP-7090	400	A lively and compelling performer with an even-handed and coherent disposition	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1885	163
Krell KPS 20i	9,990	For hright, edge-of-the-seat sound with outstanding bass performance (tested in Statements)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	1734	155
Linn Mimik	875	Useful multi-room features matched to strong bass, but poor imagery and transparency	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	1762	155
Marantz CD63MkII KI Sig	270	It's the quintessential sound of Marantz - warm, open, and smooth almost to a fault	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	Hyb	169	
Marantz CD-67	500	Dynamic, authoritative, and wide tonal response, but also shut-in and mid-forward balance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159	
Marantz CD-67SE	350	Refined, enjoyable player, though ultimately a little soft-centred	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	166	
Marantz CD-17	800	Fabulous packaging and an excellent all round performer: smooth, detailed and consistent	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1763	155
Meracus Tanto	1,395	Believable tonal colours and textures, refinement takes preference over dynamics - but it's not cheap	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	DS	169	
Meridian 508 (20-bit)	1,685	Combines a delicate mid and treble with rich, opulent bass and has impressive low-level resolution	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1886	163
Micromega Minium	400	Dynamically weak and some roughness offsets the pleasing tonal balance, articulate mid and strong bass	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	1bit	159	
Micromega Stage 6	960	Lucid, open sound quality with some dynamic limitations with cer ain discs. Upgradeable from lesser Stage models	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	169	
Mission dAD3	598	This front loader has a relaxed style of delivery that convinces with guile and subtlety rather than orchestral ordnance	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	BS	1887	163
Mission Cyrus dAD3Q	898	Lucid, transparent and uncontrived sound quality, superb build, and readily upgradeable	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	MB	169	

AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT
OPTICAL DIG OUT
AT&T OPT DIG OUT
BAL ANALOGUE OUT
HEADPHONE OUTPUT
VARIABLE OUTPUT
MULTI-DISC
FACTSBACK NUMBER
ISSUE NUMBER

CD PLAYERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	AES/EBU ELEC DIG OUT	OPTICAL DIG OUT	AT&T OPT DIG OUT	BAL ANALOGUE OUT	HEADPHONE OUTPUT	VARIABLE OUTPUT	MULTI-DISC	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Monrio Privilege	995	Costly and well-engineered, but ultimately rather heavy-handed and dull, if refined player	●							MB	166
Musical Fidelity A2	499	Warm (too warm), attractive and open player, a great improvement on (related) E60	●	●						BS	169
Musical Fidelity E60	299	This entry-level player lacks proper stereo localisation and clarity	●			●				-	166
Musical Fidelity FCD	1,500	A forward disposition makes this perfect for Fenders but less appropriate to Guarneris						●		BS	163
Myryad MC100	700	A little extra get-up-and-go wouldn't go amiss, but its sheer maturity and composure ensure listenability	●							BS	1889 163
NAD 512	250	Simple, well-focused presentation, and articulate with it, though hard-nosed quality is not everyone's cup of tea	●							1 bit	159
NAD 514	370	Boisterous sound, but undeniably attractive	●							BS	1639 151
Naim Audio CD3	1,000	The idiosyncratically packaged CD3 is solid and highly articulate. Always has its feet on the ground though								MB	1765 155
Naim Audio CD2	2,000	Provides bags of detail with a solid stereo focus but not all the romanticism we know to be possible								MB	1890 163
Onkyo DX-7210	260	Well-bred CD player features an unusual digital filter, is smooth and cultured without appearing grey or boring	●	●				●		BS	1273 147
Onkyo DX-7510	400	Strongly flavoured, assertive sound	●					●		BS	1640 151
Orelle CD-100EA	649	Excellent imagery, timing and transparency, and readily upgraded or reconfigured	●	●	●					MB	166
Philips CD-721	130	Surprisingly well-sorted, articulate if slightly glossy and attractively presented sound. Captive signal lead								1 bit	159
Pioneer PD-204	150	Generally easy on the ear, but can bite back, especially with complex high-frequency music content. Well endowed							● ●	1 bit	159
Pioneer PD-S705	300	A dichotomy, this machine was loved by some for its articulacy and disliked by others for sounding too impressive!	●				●			BS	1891 163
Pioneer PD-S904	400	Too much legato – literally – in sound, but a very smooth performer	●							1bit	1641 151
Pioneer PD-S505 Precision	460	Assured, fluid-sounding player, with great spatial coherence	●							1 bit	166
Quad 77	900	A true thoroughbred combining a penetrating insight into detail with poise rarely found at the price								Hyb	1893 163
Roksan DP3P	1,495	Dramatic and compelling, classical listeners should be ready to 'air conduct' when auditioning this player	●							BS	1896 163
Roksan Caspian	895	Solid, articulate, and fundamentally well-engineered player, but with some subtle low-level limitations	●							Hyb	169
Rotel RCD-970BX	375	A combination of solid build, useful facilities and an attention grabbing sound make this a winner	●							BS	1897 163
Sherwood CD-4030R	180	Easy on the ear, smooth-sounding player, with limits set by the slightly soft, compressed quality – and messy fascia					●		● ●	BS	159
Sherwood CD1	1,100	A very neutral, even handed sounding player with a rather flat, lifeless sound. Beautiful construction	●				●			BS	1899 163
Sony CDP-XE900E	300	Refined and analytical disc scavenging tool, but there are some distinctive colourations making auditioning vital					●			BS	159
Sony CDP-XA2ES	350	Strong willed, heavyweight sound; not for the faint hearted	●					●		BS	1642 151
Sony CDP-X3000S	500	Shoebus format player, with looks to die for, and switchable digital filters to tweak the already excellent sound	●	●						-	169
Teac 3450SE	200	For once a budget player where the gadgets take second place to respectable, budget amplifier-friendly sonics					●		●	1 bit	166
Teac CD-5	350	Bright, breezy and up-beat – but short in the trouser department	●					●		BS	1643 151
Teac VRDS-7	599	Although bold and outgoing, this player can sound both intrusive yet lacking in fine detail	●							BS	1769 155
Teac VRDS-10SE	850	Superbly built and presented, but rather leaden bass, with an over-prominent and not ideally refined mid/top	●							BS	169
Teac VRDS-25	1,300	A solid player in all respects combining powerful sound with state-of-the-art technology	●							MB	1903 163
Technics SL-PG480A	140	Full driving sound, but somewhat uneven in balance with a unsubtle, slightly harsh top end								1 bit	159
Technics SL-PS770A	250	A mellow-sounding player that never quite rouses from its slumber to really tackle the music at hand	●							BS	1278 147
Trichord Genesis	549	Breathed-on Pioneer is warm and mellifluous, but ultimately lacks drive and authority.	●							Hyb	169
Trichord Revelation	799	Well-ordered and clean sound that may be a little too refined for some, images well	●							1 bit	166
Yamaha CDX-490	170	Big, blowsy sound, is undermined by lack of precision and focus						● ● ●		1 bit	159
Yamaha CD-X890	350	Clearly a quality product in every sense, the Yamaha provides a spacious, refined and tuneful account of the music	●							● ●	166
TRANSPORTS											
Arcam Delta 250	800	Arcam's best effort yet is a new design based on Philips CDM9 transport. Specification includes Sync Lock facility	●				●		●	-	1491 130
Audiolab 8000CDM	1,400	Super-slick transport and basically very honest sound, but lacking the last degree of fine detail	●	●						-	162
Audiomeca Kreatura SE	1,400	Superb combo for those who like the sound of valves (tested with Elixir DAC in Sessions)	●							MB	141
Audiomeca Mephisto	2,350	Tested with Trichord Pulsar, the duo provides a highly composed and tactile sound	●							-	1320 144
Linn Karik	1,850	Based on early Linn transport, the Karik is dry but very positive, detailed and engrossing	●							-	1323 144
Meridian 500	1,245	Used with the 563 DAC, the combination is thin, brash and uncomfortable	●							-	1103 133
Mission Discmaster	1,900	Powerful performance – large and beefy without sounding fierce or aggressive (price includes Dacmaster)	●							-	1104 133
PS Audio Lambda	2,250	With Ultralink Two, sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail	●	●	●					-	1106 133
Roksan Atessa ATT-DP3	1,295	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of good excitement with the right material	●							1 bit	162
Teac VRDS-T1	550	Superb quality engineering is mated to tidy and composed sound (tested with D-T1)	●							-	1325 144
Teac P-700	900	Tested with D-700, low resolution sound is warm, bubbly and entertaining	●	●						-	120
Theta Data Basic II	2,397	Uses a Philips CDM-9 Pro mechanism and works a treat with more lively DACs	●							-	1494 130
Thorens TCD2000	999	Lively and up-front presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble	●							-	162
Trichord Digital Turntable	699	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer	●							-	162
Wadia 8	3,195	Budget version of Teac's VRDS mechanism in a fancy case; just too expensive for the performance on offer	●	●	●	●				-	1495 130
DACS											
Arcam Black Box 50	480	Measured and sophisticated sound from a DAC that leaves plenty in reserve for future upgrades								Hyb	1506 133
Arcam Black Box 500	750	Sophisticated unit with sync lock and discrete DAC								BS	1519 136
Audio Note DAC1	675	Oddball DAC with manual de-emphasis switch. Needs a high preamp input impedance or bass will suffer								MB	127
Audiolab 8000DAC	900	Basically very honest sound, but lacking the last degree of fine detail								BS	162
Audiomeca Elixir	799	DAC was tested with Kreatura SE – see above								BS	141
DPA PDM256	3,650	Highly advanced, with adjustable dither. but the different settings only lead to compromise								BS	133
Linn Numerik	1,500	A new 20-bit DAC and revised Karik transport have cleaned up; but sounds a bit dry and humourless								MB	1323 144
Meridian 563	795	Warmer but no less detailed than the earlier 200-series, the 563 flies with a top-rate transport								DS	1103 127
Mission Dacmaster	1,900	Powerful performance – large and beefy without sounding fierce or aggressive (price includes Discmaster)								MB	1104 133
PS Audio UltraLink 2 HDAC	2,590	With Lambda transport, the sound positively sparkles with colour and resonant detail								MB	1106 133
PS Audio Ref Link	4,550	Consolidates reputation of PS Audio for high performance digital electronics						●		MB	1069 132
Roksan Atessa ATT-DA2/DS5	1,145	Not the most detailed or refined but capable of good excitement with the right material								1 bit	162
Teac D-T1	500	Teamed with VRDS-T1 for test, this superb quality unit is tidy and composed								BS	1325 144
Teac D-700	600	With P-700, the D-700 may lack the resolution, but is bubbly and entertaining								MB	120
Thorens TDA 2000	700	Lively and up-front presentation not helped by rather loose bass and splashy treble								BS	162
Trichord Pulsar Series One	1,395	Very detailed, precise, controlled yet involving; a first-rank performer. Switchable phase, dither etc								Hyb	162

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Digital Recorders



Digital recorders come in a variety of different guises, but have yet to make much of an impact on the domestic market. At present there are three types to choose from: DAT (digital audio tape), MD (MiniDisc), and CD-R (CD Recordable). MD's claim to fame is its optical disc format, which offers instant track access and can't be worn out like a tape. DAT has been on the market for quite some time now, but has never really 'made it' as a consumer medium due to the dearth of pre-recorded material. However it has begun to carve itself a

niche in the top end of the market, replacing reel-to-reel as the audiophile's tape based medium. Home CD-R is coming into its own with Pioneer's PD-R05 machine attempting to set a trend.

B Best buy **R Recommended**

KEY

FORMAT: Type of recorder, see above for descriptions.
DAC TYPE: Digital to analogue converter: BS - Philips Bitstream, MB - multibit, Hyb - hybrid of multibit and bitstream technologies, 1bit - single bit types such as MASH, bitstream, PWM etc.

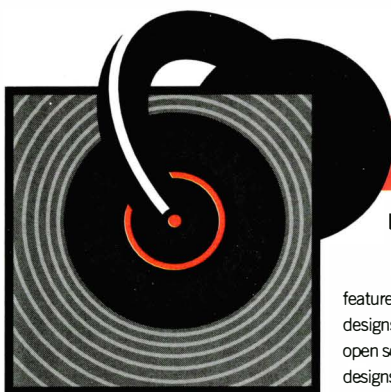
ADC TYPE: Analogue to digital converter types as per DACs.
PORTABLE: Can be run off batteries but not necessarily personal stereo size.
OPTICAL IN/OUTPUTS: Digital socketry for optical cable.

ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS: Digital socketry for electrical cable.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.

ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which the original review appeared.

DIGITAL RECORDERS

Product	Price (£)	Comments	FORMAT	DAC TYPE	ADC TYPE	PORTABLE	ELECTRICAL IN/OUTPUTS	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Pioneer D-05	900	Second generation 96kHz DAT recorder can offer startling realism with the right software - ie first generation	DAT	BS	BS		● ●	1652	152
Pioneer PDR-05	1,000	CD recorder that uses domestic blanks only (limited to 62 minutes), write once but excellent sound quality	CD-R	BS	BS		● ●	1652	152
Pioneer D-C88	2,000	State-of-the-art portable 96kHz DAT recorder, the size of a lap-top computer this Nagra country on the cheap	DAT	BS	BS	● ●	● ●	1431	150
Sony MDA-JA3ES	700	Full-width MD recorder that makes a decent job of recordings but is less impressive with pre-recorded material	MD	BS	BS		● ●	1216	152



Headphones

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There are a variety of different approaches to headphone design. Among the more expensive models, electrostatic drivers are used in open-backed phones. Most models feature dynamic (moving coil) drivers in circular, open or closed-back designs. The advantage of open backs seems to be a correspondingly open sound, but one can also hear external noise, of course. Closed-back designs are useful in situations where it is necessary to block out noise.

There are three styles of headphone: circumaural models enclose the ear; supra-aural designs feature a flat pad which presses on the outer ear; and intra-aurals (in-ear) rest inside the ear itself, à la personal stereos. For best results a separate headphone amplifier is recommended.

B Best Buy **R Recommended**

KEY

TYPE: Operating principle: D - dynamic, E - electrostatic.
SUPRA-AURAL: Style where a flat pad presses on the outer ear.
CIRCUMAURAL: Style which encloses the ear.
OPEN BACK: Offers an open sound but lets in noise.

CLOSED BACK: Keeps out external noise.
WEIGHT (G): Mass in grams
IMPEDANCE (Ω): Load offered to the headphone amplifier. All else being equal, the lower the impedance the louder the sound for a given

amplifier output.
3.5MM JACK ADAPTOR: Can be used with mini-jack-equipped components such as personal stereos.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for

ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
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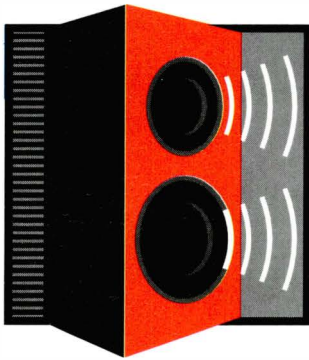
HEADPHONES

Product	Price (£)	Comments	CIRCUMAURAL TYPE	SUPRA-AURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	WEIGHT (G)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
▲ AKG K1000	700	One of the best dynamics on the market, hooks directly into speaker outputs	D	●	●			270	120		99
▲ Audio Technica ATH910PRO	90	The closed back 910s are an improvement on the 909s, with a nice rhythmic quality rarely found with headphones	D	●		●		280	40		55
Boyer DT100	152	Rugged, modular professional design, but bass is woolly and treble lacks detail	D		●	●		350	600		157
Boyer DT311	57	Uncharacteristically tight, unrefined sound quality from this otherwise well engineered 'phone	D	●		●		124	40	●	1098 133
▲ Boyer DT331	82	Tonally bright and deficient in bass, but exceptionally comfortable, articulate, detailed and refined	D	●	●			210	40	●	1801 157
Boyer DT411	69	A reasonable but not very thrilling headphone that doesn't really offer enough at the price	D	●		●		120	250		111
▲ Boyer DT531	135	A good buy for serious, heavy-duty music making	D	●	●			245	250		144
▲ Boyer DT811	235	Probably too revealing for many headphone amps, these are very subtle and fine, if expensive cans	D	●	●			275	250		111
Denon AH-D550	80	A competent 'phone with integrity, but little panache or charisma. Hard headband causes brain strain	D		●	●		200	35	●	1801 157
Grado SR-80	100	Clear, open and dynamic with pedantically open mid-band. Crude physical design, rough frequency extremes	D	●		●		60	8	●	1801 157
▲ Grado SR225	200	Warn, darkly-coloured tonally and ultimately lacking in clarity, but true to the spirit of the music if not the letter	D	●	●			200	32	●	1883 163
▲ Jacklin Float Model 1	79	While very unusual in appearance, the Floats give remarkable sound quality and openness at a reasonable price	D	●	●			400	200		55
▲ Jacklin Float Model 2	99	Helmet shaped, but open sounding and comfortable in the long term, despite lack of adjustment	D	●	●			400	200		63
JVC HA-D910	65	Broadly acceptable if unexciting design with low level losses and some colourations	D	●		●		220	32	●	121
Kenwood KH-1000	20	First step-up from a true mini: a near miniature which is cheap, comfortable and inoffensive	D	●		●		30	32	●	121
Maxell HP-3000	30	Solid, smooth-sounding supra-aural headphone, but congested and undynamic. Includes in-lead controls	D	●		●		120	32	●	1099 133
Precide Ergo Model 2	140	Still has much of the spaciousness and detachment of the Float from which it is derived, but has a coarse mid/top	D		●			380	100		1892 163
Ross RDH-300CD	17	In-lead controls are the highlights of this shoddy, sometimes aggressive-sounding design	D	●		●		155	8	●	133
▲ Sennheiser HD455	55	Inoffensive, if nondescript sound, modular, but can become dislodged from head	D	●	●			185	60	●	1801 157
▲ Sennheiser HD565 Ovation	150	Wide bandwidth design which is refined, expressive and extremely comfortable	D	●	●			255	150	●	1801 157
Sennheiser HE-60/HEV70/UK	998	Very nearly a superb electrostatic, with an achingly pure midband, but top end is sibilant and edgy	E	●	●			260	n/a		1898 163
Sony MDR-CD770	100	Neutrality and comfort make the Sony easy to live with. Technically correct-sounding too, yet musically unrewarding	D	●		●		-	-	●	1801 157

HEADPHONES (CONTINUED)

Product	Price (£)	Comments	TYPE	CIRCUMFURAL SUPRA-AURAL	OPEN BACK	CLOSED BACK	WEIGHT (g)	3.5mm JACK ADAPTOR	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Sony MDR-CD1700	199	Astonishingly detailed, uncoloured and free of the usual artefacts from a sealed back headphone. Tremendous value	D	●	●	●	325	32	●	1901 163
Stax Lambda Nova Basic	449	Refined, articulate, yet with real presence – and a notable bargain by electrostatic standards	E	●	●	●	347	n/a	●	1902 163
Technics RP-HT700	70	Well-finished but physically crass and grubby sounding	D	●	●	●	255	-	●	1801 157
Vivanco SR650	50	Unusually comfortable 'phone with excellent detail resolution but aggressive, thanks to tweeter resonance	D	●	●	●	175	-	●	1801 157
Vivanco SR750	60	Cossetting physical design, attractive sound an pricing, though suffers overhang and lacks ultimate dynamics	D	●	●	●	188	-	●	1801 157
Vivanco IR7100	120	Infra-red phones that work well but suffer from the limitations of the medium ie compression and hiss (Sessions)	D	●	●	●	265	-	●	149

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Hi-Fi Loudspeakers

Brought to you in association with **KEF**

As the last item in the hi-fi chain, the loudspeaker is merely the slave of what has gone before; it is only as good as the signal it is fed. Nevertheless, the distortions introduced by loudspeakers (and rooms) tend to be the most obvious. The average loudspeaker consists of an enclosure plus a couple of drive units behind a removable grille. Inside the box lurks a simple electrical circuit known as a crossover, which divides the incoming (full range) signal into the right bits for the drivers to handle. The designer's primary

task is to balance the 'sensitivity' of the loudspeaker (how loud it goes for a given electrical input) against the bass extension (how low it goes), for the given box size. Subwoofers augment the bass and come in passive and amplified active form. They are less sensitive to placement than regular speakers.

B Best Buy **R** Recommended

KEY

SIZE WxHxD (cm): Width by height by depth in centimetres.
FLOORSTANDER: As opposed to requiring a dedicated stand.
SENSITIVITY (dB/W): Efficiency: how much volume you get for a given input; the higher the louder.
IMPEDANCE (Ω): Measured in Ohms impedance it is a measure of how hard a loudspeaker is to drive: the lower the number the more powerful the amplifier needs to be.
BASS FROM (Hz): The lowest frequency that a speaker can reproduce, based on in-room measurements.
FREE SPACE: Speakers should be placed away from walls.
CLOSE TO WALL: It is recommended that these speakers be placed close (between 3 and 12cm) to the rear wall.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback page.
ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of Hi-Fi Choice in which the original review appeared.

HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS

Product	Price (£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD (CM)	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY (dB/W)	IMPEDANCE (Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
Acoustic Energy AE109	350	Lots of mass-loaded twin-driver speaker for the money, especially for loud, driving bass	18,90,25	●	88	4	25	●	1904	164
Acoust c Energy AE120	500	Attractive presentation and good sonic headroom, but a heavy, uneven overall balance, and a difficult amp load too	18,98,28	●	89	4	25	●	170	
ATC SCM20	1,599	Massively built, invariably informative but the rather forward presentation can be uncomfortable	24,44,31	●	83	8	28	●	86	
Audio Gem Emerald	540	Pretty compact floorstander with lively if lightweight sound	18,94,21	●	87	6	40	●	1905	164
Audio Note AN-J/D	930	Light damping and local unevenness add some colouration, but don't spoil the speaker	38,58,25	●	93	8	25	●	110	
Audio Note AN-E/D	1,520	Coherent, dynamic and transparent, with extended bass and high sensitivity - but ugly!	36,84,28	●	94	8	20	●	106	
Audio Physic Tempo	1,999	Tall and unusually-styled floorstander has stunning stereo but suspect bass tuning	22,107,47	●	88	8	28	●	1344	143
Audiovector 3X	1,500	Superior time coherence, a wide dynamic range and exception bass/mid balance	19,32,98	●	89	8	20	●	1345	143
B&W DM302	150	Highly competent and neutral all rounder; clever Prism enclosure	19,32,22	●	88	4	45	●	1778	156
B&W DM601	200	Great main driver for the price, entertaining dynamics	20,5,35,5,23	●	88	6	30	●	1779	156
B&W DM602	300	Prefers tall stands and space, but offers impressive midband dynamics and musical tension	24,49,31	●	90	8	30	●	1654	152
B&W 305	350	Ridged paper cone gives lively sound, clever box, but a little uneven	22,87,31	●	89	4	40	●	1908	164
B&W 603	500	Squat floorstander with decent dynamics and well-judged, restrained balance; bass could go deeper	23,5,88,29	●	89	7	45	●	170	
B&W P4	675	Strikes a nice balance between all-out studio monitor sound and bass-filled crowd pleaser (tested in Sessions)	20,81,25,6	●	88	8	50	●	156	
B&W CDM1	600	Gorgeous stand-mount delivers unusually good bass for its size	22,38,28	●	88	6	30	●	1818	160
B&W Matrix 805 V	1095	Stylish, remarkable imaging, good balance and low colouration	33,33,21	●	87	8	30	●	98	
B&W Matrix 804	1695	A great all-rounder which combines exceptional bass extension with fine sensitivity	26,96,26	●	88	4	20	●	167	
B&W Matrix 801S3	3,995	Lacks transparency and the drama of the best dynamics, but acoustically a tour de force	44,100,56	●	87	8	20	●	81	
B&W Nautilus	35,000	Radical design results in one of the finest loudspeakers available. Active x-over needs 4 power amps (Statements)	42,105,90	●	87	4	10	●	166	
Bose 305	430	Fine dynamic liveliness and a good room match counter strange imaging and treble	23,45,28	●	-	8	40	●	78	
Bose 401	500	Cheaply built but distinctively styled, the 401 suffers from heavy midband	30,30,76	●	-	4	28	●	110	
Cadence ES	3,500	Hybrid electrostatic/dynamic design from India that excels with classical material (Statements)	33,108,37	●	91	8	35	●	1798	157
Castle Isis	230	A great miniature at a very competitive price. Sound is lightweight but very coherent, with a fine overall balance	17,35,5,21	●	87	8	45	●	170	
Castle Severn	539	Light and bright, but sound is open and communicative. Looks good too	23,77,20	●	88	8	47	●	1655	152
Castle Avon	700	Lovely box and lovely voices from carbon-fibre composite cone	22,91,28	●	85	8	22	●	1909	164
Castle Harlech	849	Handsome big-sounding floorstander, great value and dynamic midrange	20,96,33	●	88	8	28	●	1820	160
Castle Howard S2	1,200	Ably fills the gap between Chester and Winchester; has a rich, laid-back balance	26,104,41	●	90	8	40	●	1078	132
Celestion A1	899	Rich, warm and laid-back, but a true quality sound; lovely build	24,41,35	●	88	6	25	●	1910	164
Cerwin-Vega VS10	350	Not all that refined but ballsy as heck, these rock boxes have no shortage of gung-ho	33,70,29	●	95	6	37	●	1758	155
Chario Syntar 100	250	Pretty with a pleasantly easygoing balance, but not the most communicative or exciting sound around	18,32,27	●	87	6	45	●	170	
Dali 104B	370	Lively, rich sounding and communicative. Shame about bland styling and dull balance	22,86,27	●	93	4	28	●	1657	152
Dynaudio Contour 1.8	1,842	Wonderful voice-band delicacy and loads of deep bass from a very elegant and compact box	21,95,29	●	85	4	20	●	167	
Electrofluidics Sonolith 2.2xt	5,999	Polymer concrete cabinet with aluminium cones produces world class imaging and very serious bass (Statements)	38,95,42,5	●	86	4	n/a	●	139	
Epos ES12	500	High quality luxury stand-mount has great midband and stereo imaging	20,38,25	●	85	8	45	●	1823	160
Epos ES14	675	Substantial stand-mount delivers delightful midrange focus and delicacy with good bass control	23,49,29	●	87	8	25	●	98	
Epos ES22	1,185	Elegant floorstander with 'safe' balance that can be enlivened with the right cable and energetic material (Sessions)	21,88,25	●	87	6	58	●	1629	151
Epos ES25	1,655	Handsome floorstander with a rather uneven and bass heavy balance	24,90,35	●	88	6	22	●	1346	143
Faraday Siren	445	High mass concrete cabinet is let down by imbalance of ageing driver combination	25,27,46	●	90	4	48	●	94	

HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

SIZE (WxHxD(CM))
 FLOORSTANDER
 SENSITIVITY(dB/W)
 IMPEDANCE(Ω)
 BASS FROM (Hz)
 FREE SPACE
 FACTSBACK NUMBER
 CLOSE TO WALL
 ISSUE NUMBER

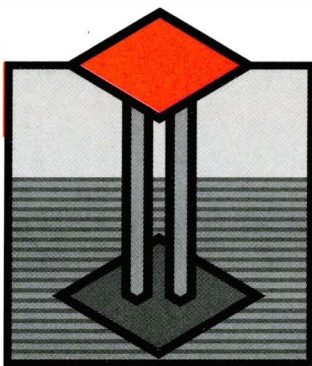
Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE (WxHxD(CM))	FLOORSTANDER	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FREE SPACE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	CLOSE TO WALL	ISSUE NUMBER
Gale 2i	140	Unspectacular sound and appearance fail to help this solid little miniature stand out from the crowd	22,40,27		88	7	40	●			170
GLL Imagio IC130	530	Lots of speaker for the money, but sound is decidedly dull and shut in	22,112,29	●	88	4	20	●		1824	160
Harbeth BBC LS3/5A	699	Still a classic miniature, though not to every taste, and none the better for the recent update	19,30,18		82	10	80	●			66
Heybrook Prima	139	Fine pace and timing, but balance is forward and bass is tight	20,29,18		87	6	50	●			110
Heybrook Heylette	269	Attractive traditional-style near-miniature has fine bass-to-mid integrity, but dull and shut-in top end	19,5,30,20		89	6	45	●			170
Heybrook Heyfios	389	Great all-round performance in a pretty package at a sharp price	24,36,27		87	6	25	●			164
Heybrook Heylo	439	Good vocal reproduction, but sounds thin and bass seems an afterthought	23,73,19	●	88	8	30	●		1658	152
Heybrook Quartet	649	Solidly large bookshelf model with good sensitivity and a lively, forward sound	24,41,22		90	8	48	●			122
Heybrook Sextet	1,299	Coherent and highly analytical, partly due to distinct upper-mid forwardness	27,90,20	●	88	8	25	●			102
Infinity Reference 1i	150	Although not to our tastes, this is a competent speaker, and decent material value	20,34,20		89	6	50	●		1403	148
Jamo BX100A	350	A cracking output for their size, these rock boxes can be a bit bright but have decent bass	31,5,54,28		91	8	40	●		1758	155
Jamo Classic 8	400	A lot of speaker for the money; good when playing quietly, but boom 'n tizz character sounded crude	22,90,29	●	90	4	28	●		1659	152
Jamo 477A	500	Very prettily styled, but build and sound quality are disappointing at the price	19,77,28	●	88	4	40	●		1549	138
Jamo Concert 8	1,300	Employing a die cast magnesium cone with a charming open and detailed midband (Statements)	24,5,38,31		90	4	38	●		1822	160
JBL X2	250	Lively and invigorating, if a touch crude, this good-hearted speaker reproduces music with considerable enthusiasm	22,40,27		87	8	40	●			170
JBL L20	700	Pricey, heavy and a bit laid back, but this is a fine rock 'n' roller which is dynamic and communicative	26,42,28		86	8	30	●		1550	138
JBL L40	1,000	Classic, large, stand-mount 3-way is full of vim and vigour, with a superb sense of balance	30,65,31		88	4	23	●			167
JBL L90	1,500	A classic monitor which communicates with gusto and enthusiasm, though it can sound a bit crude	24,94,35	●	91	6	23	●		1348	143
Jordan Watts JH400	565	Piano-finish hexagon has controversial sound, with uneven balance but delightful mid	28,38,21		86	8	50	●			106
JPW Mini Monitor	60	Ultra-cheap miniature works well in a limited way	18,27,17,5		86	8	50	●		1781	156
JPW Gold Monitor	80	More informative than Mini Monitor - but fiercer too	18,27,17,5		86	8	50	●		1782	156
JPW ML510	140	Lots of good-quality speaker for the price, but not an ideal match for cheap budget components	20,34,22		88	5	50	●			169
JPW MS1010	400	A seriously substantial speaker for the price, and an obvious choice for those who like their music loud	22,5,115,40	●	91	6	25	●			170
JPW Ruby 1	400	Very pretty but pricey luxury metal-cone miniature has good, if slightly edgy balance	19,32,21		87	6	55	●		1572	139
KEF Coda 7	130	Lovely open voice reproduction, but bass could be tauter; build tougher	18,30,23		88	6	50	●		1783	156
KEF Coda 8	190	Outstandingly well-balanced, bass is deep but a little vague	20,32,5,29		86	6	28	●		1784	156
KEF Coda 9	300	Uneven budget 3-way floorstander with poor bass definition	20,86,28	●	89	6	30	●		1785	156
KEF RDM One	500	Cute and tiny, nice midband but lack of bass warmth and weight	23,30,24		88	6	70	●			164
KEF Reference Model 2	1,599	Classy, large floorstander that has massive headroom and clean mid-to-treble, but limited deep bass for size	23,103,34	●	89	4	30	●			167
Keswick Audio Aria II	329	Confident and dynamic sound, if a little crude and shut in	21,42,24		89	8	20	●		1405	148
Keswick Audio Torino	900	Good value, lively contender with distinctive shape and styling. Goes loud and deep but could be smoother	18-26, 93,28	●	90	4	20	●			167
Linn Keilidh Passive	750	Stunning timing and coherence, and awesome bass drive	20,83,28		87	4	22	●		1552	138
Linn Kaber Passive	2,000	Dry, bright balance emphasises dynamics and transients, but can sound unforgiving	20,90,28	●	87	4	25	●			118
Living Voice Airscout	19,500	You want dynamics? Get a horn, get a very, very good horn. This is a very, very good horn. Tested with RW24 horn sub	62,5,115,57	●	104	8	60	●			163
Living Voice Air Partner S	37,200	Outstanding transparency and dynamics from remarkably solid and fast mega horn	64,160,90	●	108	8	40	●			138
Meridian DSP6000	9,400	Sophisticated digital design, with a wide-ranging, refined and detailed sound. Has on-board amplification	28,133,43	●	-	-	35	●		1226	140
Mission 731 PRO	140	Cautious balance makes a fine match with budget equipment. A classy baby for smaller rooms	17,5,31,5,20		89	8	55	●			169
Mission 733i	330	New tweeter gives this floorstander a more open sound; a good all-rounder that doesn't sound as big as it looks	20,5,88,30	●	88	8	45	●			170
Mission 753 Freedom	798	Great styling. New, more restrained tweeter reveals fine midband dynamics	21,90,31	●	89	4	40	●			164
Mission 754 Freedom 5	1,298	Tall but exceptionally elegant floorstander gives fine midband projection; goes loud but limited deep bass for size	22,111,31	●	88	4	40	●			167
Monitor Audio Monitor 3	400	An exceptionally discreet floorstander; sonically uneven, it's capable of fine results if used in a sympathetic system	16,91,21	●	88	5	30	●			170
Monitor Audio MA700 PMC	600	Good-looking luxury compact with all-metal diaphragms, lovely midrange, but occasionally edgy	22,35,26		89	8	45	●		1661	152
Monitor Audio MA703 PMC	800	Lovely but pricey floorstander has up-front, coherent 'shiny' sound	20,89,27	●	88	8	50	●		1826	160
Monitor Audio Studio 12	1,000	A real looker, but sound and content are a bit on the small side for the price	17,92,20	●	90	8	28	●		1349	143
Mordaunt-Short MS10i	140	Up front, bouncy and a whole lot of fun	18,5,30,5,20		86	8	50	●		1789	156
Mordaunt-Short MS30i	275	Slightly shut-in and coloured quality is compensated by fine bass and impressive communication	25,43,28		90	8	28	●		1662	152
Mordaunt-Short Perf 860	1,895	Although a very neutral loudspeaker it can, with the right ancillaries, pack a serious punch (Statements)	26,86,35	●	90	6	35	●		1367	146
Musical Technology Kestrel SE 300	400	Brighter and drier-sounding than the standard Kestrel (and not the better for it)	20,84,19	●	84	5	50	●			164
Musical Technology Harrier	400	Very pretty package, good measured performance and even sound. Sensitivity is low, and dynamics limp	25,80,23	●	86	8	25	●		1663	152
Naim Intro	660	Great dynamic range and info retrieval, but thin, lacks warmth	24,89,27	●	89	6	30	●			164
Naim SBL Passive	1,970	Lively and punchy - smoother but more upfront than before	27,89,27	●	88	6	25	●		1352	143
Neat Mystique	575	Elegant compact floorstander has good all-round sound and value	20,85,18	●	84	8	25	●		1827	160
Neat Petite II	745	Compact design now utilising ribbon tweeter with a fine sense of timing and surprising musicality (tested in Sessions)	20,30,18		86	8	33	●			160
Neat Petite II/Gravitas	2,000	Beautifully presented miniature/subwoofer combo with ribbon tweeter gives smooth, laid-back sound	23,105,40	●	85	6	25	●			167
NHT SuperOne	358	A fine compromise between size and performance, though sensitivity and loudness capability is modest	18,5,29,5,23		85	8	30	●			170
Origin Live Conqueror	1,650	Chunky floorstanding 3-way has lovely cabinetwork and lively sound, but limited deep bass	24,94,27	●	88	8	30	●			167
Pink Triangle Ventrical	999	If you are after Quad Electrostatic-type transparency but can't afford the price... (Sessions)	15,80,32		86	11		●			142
PMC TB1	410	Superb transparency, subtle laid-back sound, well worth seeking out	20,40,31		87	8	45	●		1830	160
PMC LB1	935	Delightful smoothness and transparency, though bass and treble are both limited	18,53,25		89	4	33	●			110
PMC AB1	1,496	Lovely panel-like transparency, slightly shut-in balance, needs a big room	26,79,43		89	6	22	●			114
Polk LS50	800	No enthusiast tweaks here, but powerful and beautiful balance	27,83,29	●	89	8	25	●		1155	138
Polk RT16	800	Bass rich, lively and powerful, but suspect top end; big and not very pretty	22,105,39	●	91	4	22	●		1831	160
Polk LS70	1,200	High sensitivity, but balance has too much midbass boom; mid-top is laid back	31,94,37	●	90	8	22	●		1084	132
Proac Response 2.5	2,700	For aspirant high-enders looking for seriously good conventional boxes, this speaker should be first port of call	22,107,25	●	86	8	30	●		1457	149
QLN Qubic 222	400	Ugly but good value floorstander with loads of bass and a smooth balance	21,87,29	●	88	6	25	●		1832	160
QLN Signature	1,000	Attractive pyramidal stand-mount with heavy, laid-back balance but remarkably unboxy sound; superb stereo	27,37,36	●	83	4	25	●			167
Quad ESL-63	3,450	Classic electrostatic lacks punch, but has strengths some can't live without	66,93,27	●	86	8	34	●			60
Rega KYTE	198	Has splendid timing and coherence, sounds very explicit and informative	19,31,19		87	8	50	●			114
Rega EL8	298	Kyle drivers in compact floorstander gives more bass but less coherence	17,72,20	●	86	8	55	●			122
Rega ELA Mk II	498	Pretty and smooth, the latest incarnation has a superb midband and excellent communicative skills	30,80,20	●	87	8	40	●		1578	139
Rega XEL	1,040	Looks and sounds great: balance bright but even, with delightful coherence and timing	20,82,30	●	89	6	40	●		1083	132
Rehdeko RK 115a	1,700	Single-driver system has limited bandwidth and obvious coloration, but wondrous dynamic and temporal coherence	34,42,27		95	8	55	●			167

HI-FI LOUDSPEAKERS (CONTINUED)

Product	Price(£)	Comments	SIZE WxHxD(CM)	SENSITIVITY(dB/W)	IMPEDANCE(Ω)	BASS FROM (Hz)	FACTSBACK CLOSE TO WALL FREE SPACE	ISSUE NUMBER	
Revolver Beretta	100	Great bass for the price, a bit crude further up	19,35,22	87	8	45	●	1790 156	
Revolver Colt	139	A good all-rounder, if a little bland, and excellent value for money	30,19,22	88	6	48	●	1407 148	
Revolver 250	250	A nice price for a floorstander, but over-bright sound balance has potentially fatiguing consequences	21,85,5,20	●	87	8	22	●	170
Revolver 260	350	A no-nonsense presenter of rock with plenty of dynamics, not too refined (tested in Sessions)	21,5,91,6,30	●	89	6	40	●	1731 154
RMS Revelation Series 1	1,300	Innovative metal-box compact with integral port/stand – clean with good timing but very laid-back balance	20,99,24	●	81	8	22	●	167
Rogers LS1	149	High grade miniature	20,20,30	87	6		●	1408 143	
Rogers dB101	250	Style par excellence, this shapely sub-miniature is fast and agile but lightweight and forward: great voices; lacks bass	20,26,20	88	6	45	●	170	
Rogers Studio 3	499	Pricey LS3/5A derived miniature, excitingly coherent if lightweight, can't go loud	19,30,16	85	8	30	●	118	
Rogers LS3/5A	699	Clever AB1 stand/subwoofer helps the classic 3/5A monitor give its best shot	19,31,17	●	82	12	45	●	1354 143
Rogers Studio 5	699	Luxury finish bookshelf-size model has genuine monitoring capabilities	25,25,48	89	8	40	●	1556 138	
Rogers Studio 7	899	Latest variation on classic BBC-monitor theme has beautifully voiced, laid-back sound	30,63,30	90	8	30	●	122	
Rogers C6/28	1,303	Large floorstander with carbon-fibre tweeter. Sounds much better than it looks, especially through the midband	25,103,29	●	88	6	20	●	167
Roksan ROkone	595	Large stand-mount is musically very communicative if a little coloured	21,45,33	89	6	30		1834 160	
Roksan Ojan 3 Black	795	Squat, stylish and black, great bass extension and somewhat uneven balance	28,76,46	●	88	8	20	●	1082 132
Roksan OJ3X Black	995	Innovative low-line, 2-way floorstander with decoupled tweeter; great bass and fine dynamic range	28,79,46	●	84	8	20	●	167
Royd Minstrel	269	Not much wellie or loudness but fine coherence and timing, a bit bright	18,69,12	86	8	30	●	1167 135	
Royd Doublet	450	Great value compact floorstander; lively and very informative, if a little uneven	18,93,19	●	90	4	28	●	1835 160
Royd The Sorcerer	595	Extremely musical and communicative speaker that's fun to listen to. Aesthetics could use improving though	20,31,18	86	8	35	●	139	
Royd Abbot	665	Dynamic and fine transient qualities are hampered by a rather coloured mid-forward balance	20,81,30	●	90	8	43	●	118
Ruark Talisman II	749	Less ideologically committed than some, strength lies in fine all-round coherence	23,84,32	●	88	8	30	●	118
Ruark Crusader	1,600	Elegant luxury 3-way with wonderfully even-handed, if rather laid-back balance	24,94,31	●	85	6	22	●	167
Ruark Equinox	1,849	The primary strength of this speaker is its ability to remove itself from the picture	25,88,34	●	88	6	45	●	1227 140
SD Acoustics SD3R	649	New SD3 has the agility and charm of a quality miniature, good bass and low sensitivity	20,38,30	87	8	25	●	106	
SD Acoustics SD5	1,549	Bass suspect but forward midband is delightfully smooth. Has ribbon tweeter	20,110,30	●	88	8	30	●	1081 132
SD Acoustics SD1E	2,995	Two-part design with four rear firing bass drivers that has vibrancy, transparency and energy (Statements)	25,120,40	●	90	6	25	●	159
Sequence 400	330	Clever hang-on-wall panel is well voiced, though bass isn't too great	25,100,7	86	8	45	●	114	
Shahinian Arc	1,875	Occasionally wonderful small floorstanding omni; bright but coherent and revealing	35,69,25	88	6	24	●	160	
Silverado Raider	695	Beautifully built audiophile compact, neutral if bright, tough work for amps	20,40,25	83	3	30	●	164	
Sonus Faber Concerto	1,098	Beautiful Italian bookshelf design with superb midrange but limited loudness capabilities (Statements)	22,5,36,34	87	8	45		165	
Spendor 2020	399	Utilising an oval drive unit in a stylish cabinet, this is a neutral design with AV inclinations (tested in Sessions)	18,34,26	87	8		●	1756 155	
Spendor 2030	599	Discreet slimline floorstander with delicately coherent, laid-back sound	18,89,27	●	87	8	30	●	1836 160
Tangent Monitor 5	80	An uneven performer best suited to small rooms and generous volume levels	17,5,27,18	83	8	55	●	169	
Tangent Monitor 9	150	Budget floorstander that can motor when the music demands with a solid bass but occasionally raw treble	19,5,75,5,22,5	●	90	6	45	●	165
Tannoy Mercury M2	140	A fine all-rounder with big box and deep bass for the price; could be sweeter and tighter	20,5,38,28	87	8	25	●	169	
Tannoy Profile 631	150	Balanced, open, unboxy and quite lively, but lacks muscle	19,34,15	87	6	60	●	1616 141	
Tannoy Profile 631SE	170	Very refined midband; maybe too laid-back for some	13-19,34,16	86	7	45	●	1791 156	
Tannoy Mercury M3	230	Good-looking fine value floorstander is very neutral and evenhanded, with fine midband but weak dynamics and drive	20,5,87,28	●	87	7	20	●	170
Tannoy Profile 633	300	Impressive bass and balance from very compact floorstander. Upper midband could be cleaner	29,75,28	●	89	85	20	●	1665 152
Tannoy Profile 635	450	Beefy low-line floorstander packs real bass punch and an up-front balance	17-29,85,27	●	90	6	22	●	1665 160
Tannoy Profile 637	550	Good value package but a rather heavy, thick, big-bass sound	17-29,84,27	●	90	3	20	●	164
Tannoy D300	1,000	Gorgeous-looking compact floorstander. And a fine all-round performer too	16-24,85,23	●	87	6	26	●	167
Tannoy D500	1,999	Plenty of muscle and stereo, but short of poise and delicacy. Hard work for amps	31,93,34	●	91	6	20	●	1355 143
Tannoy Westminster TW	6,600	These awesome horn-loaded speakers are remarkably controlled and impressive	large	●	99	8	38	●	C93
TDL Near Field Monitor	120	Despite low price, this is an unimpressive performer, poor low frequency resolution and analysis being main flaws	18,30,17	87	8	50	●	1043 130	
TDL RTL2	280	Spacious, weighty and enveloping sound if you can accept the laid-back balance	20,73,22	87	8	25	●	1412 148	
TDL RTL3	400	Bargain-price floorstander has rich, heavy and bright sound with a good scale	20,90,37	●	90	8	25	●	126
TDL T-Line 3	750	Plenty of bass and treble, but broad midband is rather repressed	20,97,38	●	86	8	20	●	164
TDL Studio 1m	899	Transmission line helps bring the best from metal cone driver	23,77,34	86	8	20	●	118	
Technics SB-M20	200	Well-balanced with natural perspectives and fine midband coherence, but bass is a bit boxy and uneven	20,32,23	70	8	50	●	1413 148	
Technics SB-M500	450	This model offers a clean, open sound, offset by midbass, heavy balance and low sensitivity	25,78,37	●	100	8	25	●	1666 152
Totem Model One	1,195	Utterly delightful but exasperatingly expensive luxury miniature sets the benchmark for its size	17,31,23	87	4	28	●	122	
Vandersteen 2Ce	1,395	Elegant staggered baffle contributes to a refreshing freedom from boxiness	41,101,27	●	88	7	23	●	86
Wharfedale Diamond 7.2	140	A good-hearted, lively and up-front performer that's a little lacking in subtlety and smoothness	19,29,5,23	88	4	45	●	169	
Wharfedale Valdus 400	199	Goes very loud with a minimum of amplification, but the sound is very thick and uneven, with a heavy upper bass	25,80,26	●	91	8	30	●	1414 148
Wharfedale Valdus 500	299	Offering a large version of events these rock boxes can move plenty of air, albeit not as subtly as alternatives	25,108,26,5	●	91	4	40	●	1758 155
Wharfedale MFM-3	350	Smooth broad midband gives fine voice rendition; bass could be better	22,89,28	●	87	8	40	●	164
Wilson benesch ACT1	6,400	Stylish, technically advanced and sonically as clean as a whistle, this is truly a high-end loudspeaker (Statements)	23,108,37	●	89	6	40	●	1852 162
ZYP AI	199	Cute metal cased micro-miniature is quite coloured but great fun	14,22,12	88	8	30	●	110	
SUBWOOFERS									
B&W AS6	500	Good material value with a fair amount of low bass from 100W active design	45,51,45,5	●		30		1736 154	
Celestion CS135	139	Compact hideaway passive sub lacks deep bass for high sensitivity speakers	52,19,34	●	86	8	45	●	128
Jamo SW600	530	Has some neat styling touches and remote control but deep bass is limited (active)	38,41,53	●		30		1736 154	
KEF Model 30B	500	Commendably discreet with good sense of timing but limited extension (active)	38,5,37,43	●		45		1736 154	
KEF AV1	2,500	Works well, looks great, shakes the windows but costs a lot and is bulky	56,43,50	●		45		128	
Living Voice RW24	11,500	The only horn subwoofer on the UK market brings new meaning to low frequency energy, speed and resolution	146,84,59	●	104	8	40	●	163
M&K VX-7B	450	Baby of a big range this active design delivers deep, plenteous bass albeit lacking in transparency	35,25,37	●		40		1736 154	
Rogers AB1	549	Subwoofer-cum-stand designed as partner for LS3/5a or similar miniatures	19,57,16	●	82	8	●	1354 143	

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Stands & Supports



Hi-fi furniture is more important than you might imagine. The effect it can have on the sound of your system is far from subtle. Hi-fi furniture can be split up into two categories — equipment supports and loudspeaker stands. It is not entirely clear what makes a great equipment support, but some are definitely more equal than others. There's a variety of approaches and materials used, including particle board, glass and

all manner of steel tube and section. Speaker stands come in a variety of sizes and styles to suit different models. Use dealer or manufacturer recommendations to narrow down the choice, but as a rule you want the tweeter at ear height.

B Best buy **R** Recommended

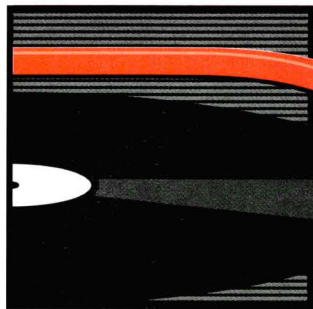
KEY

HEIGHT (CM): Height of stand or equipment shelf.
TOP PLATE SIZE (CM): Dimensions of top plate on speaker stand or equipment support.
FILLABLE: Some speaker stands can be filled with sand and/or lead to increase mass, which affects sound.
WELDED: The better stands and supports are welded rather than bolted together.
NUMBER OF SHELVES: The amount of tiers on an equipment rack or support.
SHELF TYPE: Material that shelves are made of on an equipment rack. Wood generally means MDF.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.
ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which the original review appeared.

STANDS & SUPPORTS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	TOP PLATE SIZE(CM) HEIGHT(CM)	FILLABLE	WELDED	NUMBER OF SHELVES	SHELF TYPE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
Equipment Supports										
Audiophile Furniture Base	480	Easy to set up, well-ordered sound	40			4	Wood	1633	151	
Custom Design Classic Four	270	Glass-shelved stand with octagonal wooden uprights with upward facing spikes isolating the top shelf, adjustable shelf height	81	46,37		4	Glass		166	
Fi-Rax R4	250	Lively, exuberant sound, slightly weak bass				5	Glass	1633	151	
Frameworks H500/H175	404	Two-shelf stand and isolation platform combo in tubular steel that made a spectacular impression on audition	70	52,34		3	Glass		166	
Mana Acoustics Ref. Table	350	King of its type, angle iron, chipboard and glass combined to make a significant difference to sound quality				1	Glass		147	
Mana 5 Tier Sound Table	600	Infinitely upgradeable. Persuasive and thrilling glass and angle iron design that adds speed and bandwidth to components upon it				5	Glass	1633	151	
Optimum Int 2000 OPT490	350	25kg stand with shelves sandwiched between variable height tubular uprights. Sounds smooth and relaxed with sturdy bass	50	60,40		4	Glass		166	
Quadraspire Q4	200	Easy to live with, and tonally neutral				4	MDF	1633	151	
Sound Organisation Z038	130	Too lively and lacking order — but cheap	50	84,40		5	Wood	1633	151	
Organisation Z560	150	A mix of welded and bolted members gives good structural integrity. While performance is not up with the best, it's great value	90	46,36		5	Wood		166	
Soundstyle Select 6105	280	Respectable sonics, structurally solid and smart				5	Glass	1633	151	
Soundstyle Finewoods W105	320	Veneered shelves clamped between tubular uprights that delivers with classical material	82	48,27		4	Wood		166	
Stands Unique Sound Tower	249	Wooden uprights combine with glass shelves to provide a fresh, forward sound, but bass could be quicker	81	72,42		5	Glass	1633	151	
Target B5	175	Free of colorations, fine grip and good value				5	Wood	1633	151	
Speaker Stands										
Alphason NC I	45	Filled single-column design without threaded spike holes that's appropriate for non-critical applications	40-60	16,16					1373	146
Alphason NCII	80	Tall, slim and elegant, though sound and value are unexceptional	40-60	17,17					159	
Alphason Titan	120	Excels in the midband and allows voices to come across in a detailed and expressive fashion	40-60	16,16					1373	146
Apollo AZ6	80	Fine engineering value, but sound unexceptional and top-plate small	66	15,13					159	
Atacama BD21	55	Good-looking and good value but doesn't match the SE24's sound quality	56	15,17					159	
Atacama SE24	70	Stands out from the budget crowd because of the consistency and overall quality of the performance	61	19,5,17					1373	146
AVF Tower 400	35	Ridiculously cheap and much better than no stand at all	54	17,20					159	
Ixos Deadrock 903	50	Smooth and tonally even but short on definition. Deep bass is soft which doesn't help timing	60						1373	146
Gale Reference 600	60	Smooth sounding with impressive bass well suited to less civilised speakers							1373	146
Kudos S50	100	Better sound than the budget stands, particularly at the bottom end	60	15,21					159	
Kudos S100	270	The best all-round stand around... Probably...	63	15,21					159	
Mana Soundframes	125	For use under floorstanders and equipment racks, these make music effortless and natural, can be stacked for greater effect	5						1373	146
Partington New Meriin	60	Although light in weight, the stand's performance seemed remarkably muscular but musical rendering lacked a little precision							1373	146
Partington Discovery	80	The depth and substance of the presentation truly added to the convincing nature of the system's portrayal							1373	146
Partington Trophy	100	Four-column design with damped top and base plates, sound is tight and cogent with smoothly integrated detail							1373	146
Revolver RS1	70	A good blend of performance and appearance for the price	53	18,18					159	
RMS/Stands Unique Vivus	550	Pricey carbon fibres give ultra-clean sound with exceptional voices	50	N/A					159	
Soundstyle 124	100	Big, shiny and solid, with fine midband projection	65	17,16					159	
Stands Unique HP	220	Real wood disguises high performance tuned technology	59	22,23					159	
Target R1	280	Truly high-mass four-pillar design with superb weight and speed, giving music delicious attack and outstanding imagery	53	15,21					1373	146
Target TR60	68	Lively, dynamic midrange and detailed treble from a less-than audiophile oriented twin column design	60	15,15					1373	14

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Tonearms

Turntables at the cheaper end of the market tend to be supplied with a matching tonearm, and often include a 'starter' cartridge. Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units and tonearms. Careful partnering and set-up is essential for these components.

Although the turntable is the most important part of a record player, the tonearm is the second most important, and the quality of

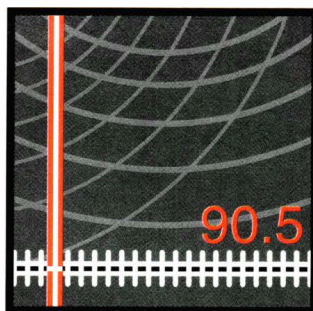
its construction and design have a significant bearing on sound quality. There are three basic types of arms listed in the key and each has its strengths, but pivoted designs are the most popular, for reasons both practical and economical.

B Best buy **R** Recommended

KEY	
EFFECTIVE MASS: This relates to cartridge compliance. Generally high mass arms are suitable for low compliance cartridges and vice versa.	PARALLEL TRACKING: An arm which allows the cartridge to track the disc in a linear fashion.
PIVOTED: Arms which allow the cartridge to describe an arc as they traverse the record.	UNI-PIVOT: Pivoted arms with a bearing that allows movement in two planes.
EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm): Length of arm from bearing to cartridge mounting.	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT: Important for accurate cartridge set-up.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback.	ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of <i>Hi-Fi Choice</i> in which the original review appeared.

TONEARMS

Product	Price(£)	Comments	PARALLEL TRACKING	EFFECTIVE MASS	PIVOTED	EFFECTIVE LENGTH (cm)	UNI-PIVOT	ADJUSTABLE HEIGHT	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
A Alphason HR100S	490	S-shaped arm sounds smooth, but nevertheless reproduces transients with fine attack	Medium	●	●	229	●	●	86	
A Kuzma Stogi Ref	1,000	Large, solid and well-made arm, gives exceptionally clear sound with just a hint of brightness	High	●	●		●	●	79	
A Linn Ekos	1,297	Superb, state-of-the-art design which builds significantly on predecessor's strengths	Medium	●	●	229	●	●	6	
B Moth Arm	95	The ultimate budget arm? Refined, sweet, detailed and natural	Low	●	●	237	●	●	60	
B Rega RB300	139	Despite its modest price it sets exceptional standards and could be used on many high-end turntables	Low	●	●	237	●	●	60	
A Roksan Tabriz Basic	275	Targeted at the Xerxes, this is a good alternative to the Rega arm in many cases – a touch bright though	Low	●	●	240	●	●	91	
A SME Series 300-309	657	Beautifully made and finished: fully adjustable and a highly neutral performer	Low	●	●	238	●	●	79	
A SME Series IV	936	Superb engineering and finish with a finely balanced sound, impressive stereo focus and low coloration	Low	●	●	233	●	●	60	
A SME Series V	1,391	Excellent in all respects, this arm arguably sets the standards for pivoted arms, regardless of price	Low	●	●	233	●	●	60	



Tuners

The radio medium operates at a lower profile than TV, but in areas outside pop music the BBC service is the envy of the world. Live concerts rival all other sources from a hi-fi perspective.

Though tuners might seem something of a hi-fi afterthought, the task they discharge is far from simple, since it requires the skills of RF (reception) and audio (signal processing) engineering. The importance of the former will depend on reception conditions, but a high-quality aerial system is

well worth having. Tuners come in two basic types. Analogue models tune gradually and can have analogue or digital displays; they are often preferred for sound quality. Digital tuners offer convenient automatic tune facilities and pre-set memories.

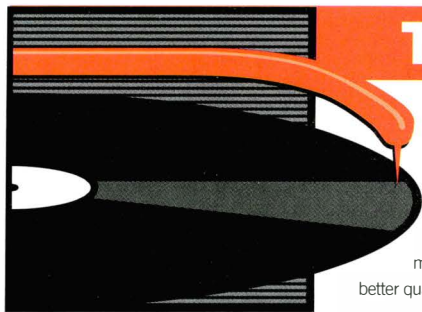
B Best buy **R** Recommended

KEY	
WAVEBANDS: Only the FM (VHF) bands give stereo hi-fi sound, though AM (MW & LW) are useful for receiving certain transmissions in the UK.	PRESETS: Number of station frequencies that can be stored.
RDS: (radio data system) was originally designed for in-car applications. Basically RDS tuners can identify and display the name of the radio station being received, but they offer a variety of other features as well.	REMOTE CONTROL: Couch-potato friendly.
SIGNAL STRENGTH METER: Indicates strength of signal from aerial, useful for aligning your 'twig' during installation	ROTARY TUNING KNOB: The ergonomically attractive approach to dial-surfing.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.	ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of <i>Hi-Fi Choice</i> in which the original review appeared.

Tuners

Product	Price(£)	Comments	WAVEBANDS	PRESETS	RDS	SIGNAL STRENGTH METER	ROTARY TUNING KNOB	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER
R AMC T7	130	Performance adequate but price is sharp, especially with remote control. Some hum	FM, M	30	●	●	●		166
A Arcam Alpha 7	230	Indifferent RF performance but a touch of audiophile sound quality with clean, strong signals	FM,M,L	24	●	●	●		166
A Arcam Delta 280	399	Fine sound quality marred by mild synthesiser whine; RF performance only average. Remote £60 extra	FM	20	●	●	●		120
B Audiolab 8000T	750	Unusual combination of fine sound quality and RF performance (inc AM), and superb ergonomics	FM,M,L	39	●	●	●	1254	142
B Denon TU-260L	120	Careful minimalist design promises a surprisingly open and vivacious sound	FM,M,L	20	●	●	●		93
B Denon TU-425RD	200	A fine all-rounder with advanced RDS, good RF performance and decent sound. Remote extra	FM, M	40	●	●	●		166
B Harman/Kardon TU950	200	Bulky but effective, delivering fine RF performance and good sound for the price	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●		166
A Linn Kremlin	2,600	Controversially good sound at a very high price. The reviewer's saving up but you should check it out for yourself	FM	80	●	●	●	1254	142
A Magnum Dynalab FT101	825	Although fairly expensive given its minimum set of facilities, its excellent sound provided ample compensation	FM		●	●	●		72
A Micromega Tuner	700	Has digital output but even without the Micromega DAC, this provides exceptional sound quality. Looks good too	FM	39	●	●	●	1810	157
A Mission Cyrus FM7	400	Open, generous soundstaging gives the music plenty of foundation, if a touch shut-in at the top	FM	29	●	●	●	1254	142
A Musical Fidelity E50	300	Sounds involving if coloured and with a subjectively larger-than-life presentation	FM	20	●	●	●		1810 157
A Naim NATO1	1,645	There may be better sounding tuners in the world, but we have yet to hear one	FM		●	●	●	1254	142
A Pioneer F-504RDS	250	Cable-friendly with advanced RDS and excellent RF performance, slightly disappointing sound	FM,M	40	●	●	●		166
A Rotel RT-935AX	160	Good ergonomics and sound quality at a realistic price, but limited features and RF selectivity	FM,M	20	●	●	●		166
A Sony ST-SA3ES	250	Clean, lean presentation but needs a quality aerial to perform at its best	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●	1810	157
A Technics ST-GT350L	150	Decent RF performance is offset by sound quality more typical of a mini/midi system	FM,M,L	30	●	●	●	1254	142
A Thorens TRT2000	450	Not exactly neutral sounding, it nonetheless makes listening fun	FM,M	59	●	●	●	1810	157

Turntables



Specialist turntables are what high fidelity sound is all about. CD players may offer silent backgrounds and flat frequency responses, but they can't match the dynamics and superlative timing that serious turntable users take for granted. Turntables at the cheaper end of the market tend to be supplied with a matching tonearm, and often include a 'starter' cartridge. Still better quality is found at higher prices among the separate motor units

and tonearms. Careful partnering and set-up is essential for these components, but many so-called 'sympathetic' combinations exist.

Because turntables are mechanical devices that are designed to retrieve modulations as small as a micron, engineering quality is of paramount importance. It is also the reason why turntables cost as much as they do, and require high quality support systems.



KEY

MANUAL: You do it all: put the needle on the record and take it off.
AUTO: The record player does it all.
SEMI-AUTO: You share the work: you put it on, it takes it off.
SPEEDS: In RPM to correspond with your platters.
SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS: Sprung suspension to minimise

structural interference.
EXTERNAL PSU: Outboard power supply; generally it indicates high quality.
SUPPLIED WITH ARM: Many turntables require a separate arm to be fitted; if not, this tells you so.

SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE: Most turntables do not come supplied with a needle.
FACTSBACK NUMBER: The Factsback reference for ordering a fax copy of the review. Use the contents page to find the Factsback information page.

ISSUE NUMBER: The issue of *Hi-Fi Choice* in which the original review appeared.

TURNTABLES

Product	Price (£)	Comments	MANUAL	EXTERNAL SUSPENDED SUBCHASSIS	SEMI-AUTO	AUTO	SPEEDS	SUPPLIED WITH CARTRIDGE	FACTSBACK NUMBER	ISSUE NUMBER	
Alphano Sonata	835	Good sound in all areas - bass, clarity and neutrality all in top class (tested with HR100S MCS)	●					33	●	●	79
Clearaudio Reference	2,500	Opulent beast tested with Souther TQ-1 arm. Tends to gloss over detail with a fizzy character but is quite bold	●					33/45	●	●	1328 144
DNM Rota 2	4,800	Tonally slightly bleached, but extracts detail like few others. Works well on own table	●					33/45	●	●	1328 144
Dual 505-4 UK	200	Consistent sounding and well isolated turntable. It is slightly lacking in oomph	●				●	33/45	●	●	103
Kuzma Stabi/PS	1,200	(Tested with Stogi Reference) Solid oak plinth; sound is very clear, detailed and extended	●					33/45	●	●	91
Linn LP12 Basik	1,050	Trails the full LP12 significantly, but pace, rhythm, timing etc still top rank	●					33	●	●	103
Linn LP12 Lingo	1,750	The classic reference is improved by the Lingo, but charming character remains	●					33/45	●	●	91
Michell Gyrodec	765	Sweet and natural-sounding player, well matched to Rega RB300 arm	●					33/45	●	●	55
Moth Kanoot	329	Rather coarse-sounding deck that requires decent isolation and comes with a Rega RB300 arm	●					33/45	●	●	164
Notts Analogue Spacedeck/Arm 1,125		No frills, just a first-rate, outstandingly natural-sounding deck that will last forever	●					33/45	●	●	159
Pink Triangle Anniversary	1,980	Possibly the most detailed, clear and neutral-sounding deck around. Likeness to master tape is uncanny	●					33/45	●	●	91
Pro-ject 2	299	Remarkably effective at the price with decent timing and a generally well defined sound	●					33/45	●	●	164
Pro-ject 6/Sumiko	699	Don't think of this as a mid-price deck with a good arm, but as a scaled-down Oracle Delphi - it's that good	●					33/45	●	●	138
Rega Planar 2	214	A remarkable product at the price, surprisingly articulate and confident	●					33/45	●	●	48
Rega Planar 3	274	The '3 sounds musical in a balanced and coherent manner, needs decent isolation and suffers a little pitch instability	●					33/45	●	●	164
Rega Planar 9	1,598	Featuring the RB900 arm and a ceramic plinth, this deck puts Rega into contention with the best decks available	●					33/45	●	●	151
Reson RS1	675	Supplied set-up and ready-tuned, this unconventional deck is packed with mid-band detail	●					33/45	●	●	159
Rivelin Eclipse	1,100	Tested with SME 309. Tends to simplify things and add a slightly ragged edge to the proceedings	●					33/45	●	●	1328 144
Roksan Radius 3/Tabriz zi	890	Elegant-looking turntable with a tidy, ordered sound. Bright and breezy if a shade lightweight	●					33/45	●	●	159
SME Model 20A	4,631	Supplied with Series V arm. Engineered to last a lifetime, giving excellent stereo and detail retrieval	●					33/45/78	●	●	118
Systemdek I/920/Moth	235	The motor is derivative of the Rega Planar 2 with a Moth arm. Up-tempo, even bright at times but never lacks enthusiasm	●					33/45	●	●	115
Systemdek 2X2	499	Neutral, flexible and dynamic deck that begs to be used with a good arm and cartridge	●					33/45	●	●	159
Thorens TD166 VI/UK/RB	300	Refined and solid sound with well-focused imagery; suitable for use with good MM and budget MC cartridges	●					33/45	●	●	103
Thorens TD2001	700	Balances convenience and sound well, but deck lacks detail and bass could be better controlled	●				●	33/45	●	●	159
Well Tempered Record Player	1,800	Intriguing and challenging. Musically it is not ideal, but has a limpid quality and a lack of artificiality that sets standards	●					33/45	●	●	1180 136
Wilson-benesch TT/Act 2 arm	3,249	Carbon fibre is extensively used in this neutral and well-resolved turntable with its fabulous unipivot tonearm (Statements)	●					33/45	●	●	1775 156

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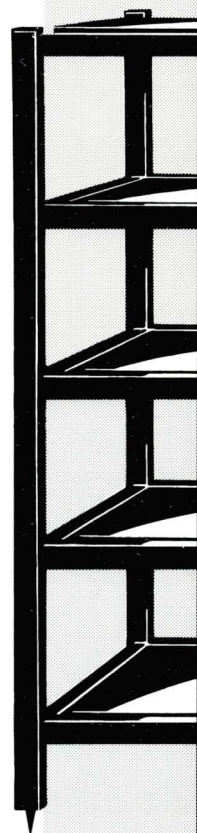
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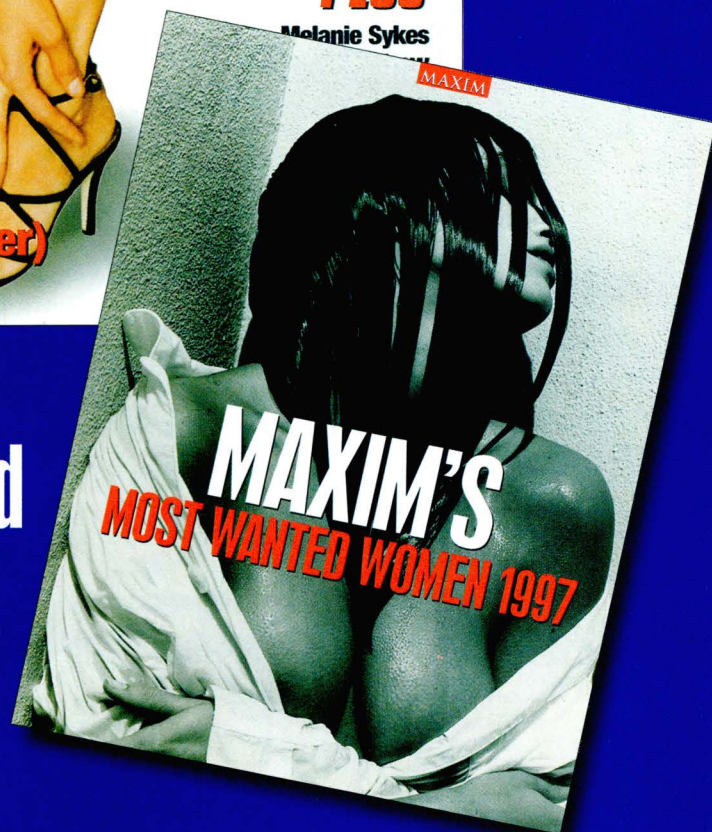
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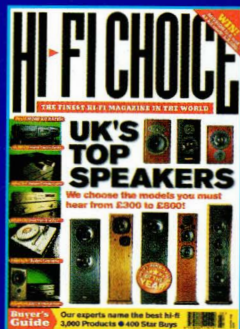
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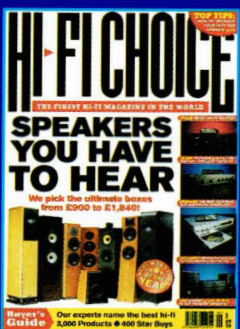
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DOUBLE TROUBLE

It's third time lucky for this long-awaited review of cassette options open to home tapers. In particular: how good are the latest twin-deck machines compared to Yamaha's new 'UK-tweaked' KX-580SE?

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

We have a treat in store for High End fans, with in-depth reports on four new audiophile stalwarts: Linn's new Linto phono preamp and Arkiv cartridge; Concentra amps from Jeff Rowland (marking this brand's return to the UK market); Pioneer's new £700 CD-recorder; and the Audio Research CD2, successor to the CD1 Recommended in *HFC* 163.

A FRENCH CONNECTION

Next month's Instant System has a Gallic flavour imparted by a YBA CD player and amp with new Triangle speakers.



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THE NOVEMBER 1997 EDITION OF HI-FI CHOICE WILL BE ON SALE THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 25, 1997. DON'T MISS IT!

Ultra Do CD players still improve by the month? **David Vivian** compares a new Technics with a two-year-old Pioneer to find out.

Vivian Scene

Organic semi-conductive electrolyte capacitors. Japanese 'take' bamboo separators. Non-switching bipolar transistors. An S-Advanced multi-stage noise shaping (MASH) Class A DAC. Virtual Battery Operation power supply. What high-end madness is this? Organic hi-fi. Bamboo widgets. Virtual batteries. Are we looking at a four-figure price tag here, or a trip to the funny farm?

Neither. The Technics SL-PS770D, to which the abstruse componentry listed above belongs, is as mainstream as Cornflakes and costs £250.

But that, as I'm sure Technics would want it, can be our little secret. The fact is, Technics doesn't make expensive CD players for Britain, just players that look and feel expensive with exotic specifications. Okay, that's not strictly true. There is the genuinely glamorous £1,000 SL-P2000 but next down is Technics' "real world" flagship, the new 770D.

It's got the first impression thing down cold: more features than your local multiplex cinema; the sort of button-count that could cause confusion aboard the Space Shuttle; the build values of a BMW — cutely radiused corners, sheen-smooth surfaces, precision control actions (apart from the flimsy-looking transport drawer... it purrs nicely, though); big, clear, bright displays; and rattle-free construction. Slot it into your equipment rack and it's an instant star. It looks, well, a thousand bucks at least.

None of this, to be honest, is very surprising. We know the score with CD players — like personal computers, they've got galloping technology. Even though the rate of improvement seems to be slowing (unsurprisingly as the actual limitations of the current 16-bit CD format are approached), the £500 player your mate bought today will probably still outperform the £1,000 player you bought 10 months ago. Upsetting, but that's progress. It would exist even if there weren't manufacturers trying to massage it to gain a commercial edge. Market forces rule and most people have twigged that there's little to be gained in spending over £1,000 on a CD player. Build quality maybe, sound quality rarely. £500 buys the best CD player

most people are ever likely to need. £250 should secure something that makes you question the need to spend more. That's why the £200-300 competition is so savage and, inevitably, why the standards are so high.

Regular readers of this column will know how much I like this state of affairs. It makes the enjoyment of reproduced music an unusually democratic business. Look at it this way. It's hard to imagine a Ford Mondeo performing as well or giving as much satisfaction as a Ferrari F50, but the equivalent often happens in hi-fi. And it's entirely right that the true dynamic of domestic audio should be value for money at the affordable end of the spectrum — something that can be enjoyed by the many, rather than ever dimin-

ponent, though, was my drinking buddy, Steve, whose listening skills I often call on when I want to purge my own judgements of a tendency towards self-fulfilling prophecy. In fact, I sat back and let Steve do most of the work. It wasn't a blind test, just a straight fight between the Pioneer and a Technics of "unknown value". We listened to everything from the Bee Gees to Anita Baker, from Robben Ford to Rachmaninov. I prepared for the Pioneer to be beaten into pulp.

The Technics, Steve decided, was a useful player. It had a well-ordered sound and taut bass. It was articulate and clear. You didn't feel you were missing anything. Anita's voice was well projected into the room while top-to-bottom coherence was excellent.

Plenty of smoothly delivered detail, too. But not much warmth. And, as the evening wore on, the words "processed" and "synthetic" cropped up more and more.

All this analysis was rather academic, though, because on every single track he simply preferred the Pioneer by a large margin. With a live Marcus Miller set, the American bassmeister's band sounded more

open, powerful and expressive than it had done with the Technics. The venue had more width and depth as well. Anita B was an alto-gether different singer with a richer, less nasal voice. For Steve, the Pioneer sounded warm and involving whereas the Technics was merely clean and controlled. The Technics had a very "correct" sound but the more expensive player thumped when it came to making the music sing.

I agreed. When the Pioneer was playing, it sounded as if we'd switched from an integrated amp to a meaty pre-power combo. Technics had written a convincing script but couldn't perform it. At the last minute, I co-opted the well-regarded £239 Denon DCD-825 into the comparison and a sense of perspective returned. The multi-bit Denon made the Technics sound even more anaemic than the Pioneer, and was instantly more engaging and enjoyable.

It could be system synergy, but I doubt it. It may be true that things can only get better but it's equally true that some £250 CD players are born more equal than others. ▲

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So what's all this MASH and voodoo bamboo stuff all about? The usual reductionist thing, says Technics: less digital noise, lower crosstalk between channels for better stereoimaging. And virtual battery operation isolates the electronics from mains grunge.

Trusting, aren't I? All a manufacturer has to do is wave a right-on pricing policy, a fancy fascia and a few esoteric-sounding components in front of me and I'm reaching for the plastic. I can't help it. My instinct and experience tell me, to modify that New Labour anthem, that CD players can only get better (and cheaper). But would I buy one without listening to it first? Course not.

To find out if the right stuff is, indeed, made of bamboo, I used my own Pioneer PDS-904 as a fairly "soft" benchmark (the 904 costs £400 but it's getting on for two years old now), with a Pioneer A-300 Precision amp on duty and Mission's big-hearted 735i floorstanders (reviewed last month) hitched up to the usual short runs of Audioquest cable. The most important com-

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